

# Hmong 101:

---

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL HMONG AND WESTERN  
HEALTH CARE



# CONTACT INFORMATION

---

Name: Khong Meng Her

Email: [herkm@uwec.edu](mailto:herkm@uwec.edu)

Phone# : (715)- 836-4304



# DISCLOSURES

---

❖ Nothing to disclose

# Objective

---

- ❖ Discuss the basics of Hmong culture and how to overcome challenges when combining common western-medical practices with traditional Hmong medical practices

1. History

2. Language

3. Community Structure

4. Religion & Beliefs

5. Health System/Providers

Overview

Who are we...

---

in the room

as a community

as Health Care Providers

# Introduction

---

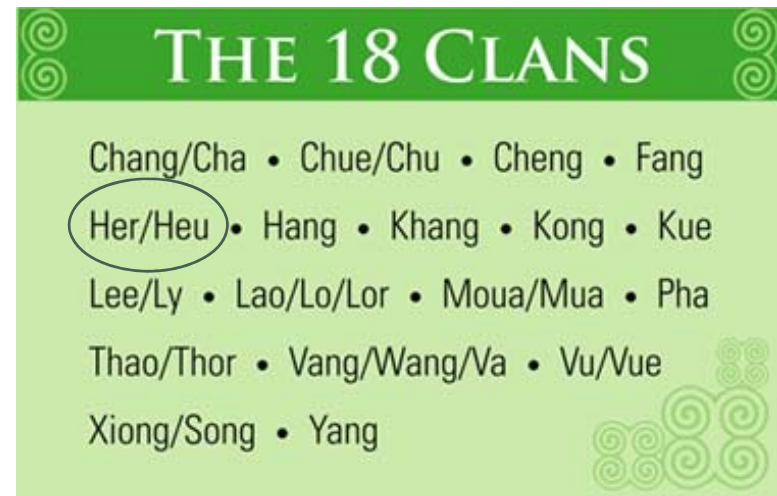
Khong Meng (Koob Meej)

Koob = famous or needle

Meej = Finish, clear, or concise

Last Name/Clan

“Hawj”



# WHO ARE THE HMONG?





# History

---

- Led by Chi You (Chih Yu, Txiv Yawg)
- Located next to the Yellow River
- Lived side by side until Huang-Ti (the Yellow Emperor) came into power
- Migrated down to Northern Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Burma



<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0193945916636484>



# Hmong in Laos

- Moved into Southeast Asia/ Laos around the early 1700s
- An agrarian society
- Got caught in war conflict



<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0193945916636484>

# The Secret War

-Recruited by the CIA to fight and retrieve fallen U.S. pilots during the Vietnam War

-Promised they will be taken care of if the U.S. lost the War

-In 1975 the CIA withdrew their troops and the Hmong fled to Thailand



# A New Beginning

- Stayed in the Thai Refugee Camps for over 20 years
- Relocated to a new home across the globe
- Started a new life



# The United States

---

Hmong Population in the U.S. (2010 Census Hmong Populations by State)

United States – 260,076

## Top 10 Hmong Populations by State

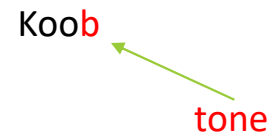
1. California – 91,224
2. Minnesota – 66,181
3. Wisconsin – 49,240
4. North Carolina – 10,864
5. Michigan – 5,924
6. Colorado – 3,859
7. Georgia – 3,623
8. Alaska – 3,534
9. Oklahoma – 3,369
10. Washington – 2,404

# The Hmong Language

---

- The language is a tonal language consisting of 8 tones
- The first letter of a word directs the tone of the word
- The last letter is the tonal direction
- Do not use “s” for plural and “ed” for past tense
- The Hmong Roman Popular Alphabet was put into written form in the 1950s by missionaries
- The two most common dialects in the U.S are known as White Hmong (also called Hmong Dawb) and Green Mong (also called Mong Leeg or Mong Ntsuab)

Koob  
tone



## White Hmong

Hmoob

Mus

Siab Me

## Green Hmong

Moob

Moog

Sab Me

# The Clan

---

- The Clan is the extended family unit; it serves as both a social and political organization in the Hmong Culture
- It unites Hmong people into organized kinship groups, while it also divides them along mutually patrilineal lines
- The Hmong practice marriage by clan exogamy, which means that they must marry from a clan different outside of their own

Chang/Cha (Tsaab)

Chue (Tswb)

Cheng (Tsheej)

Fang (Faj)

Her/Herr/Heu (Hawj)

Hang (Taag/Haam)

Khang/Kha

(Khaab)

Kong (Koo)

Lee/Ly (Lis)

Kue (Kwm)

Lor/Lo (Lauj)

Moua (Muas/Zag)

Pha (Phab)

Thao/Thor (Thoj)

Vang (Vaaj/Vaj)

Vue/Vu (Vwj)

Xiong/Song (Xyooj)

Yang (Yaj)

# Family Structure

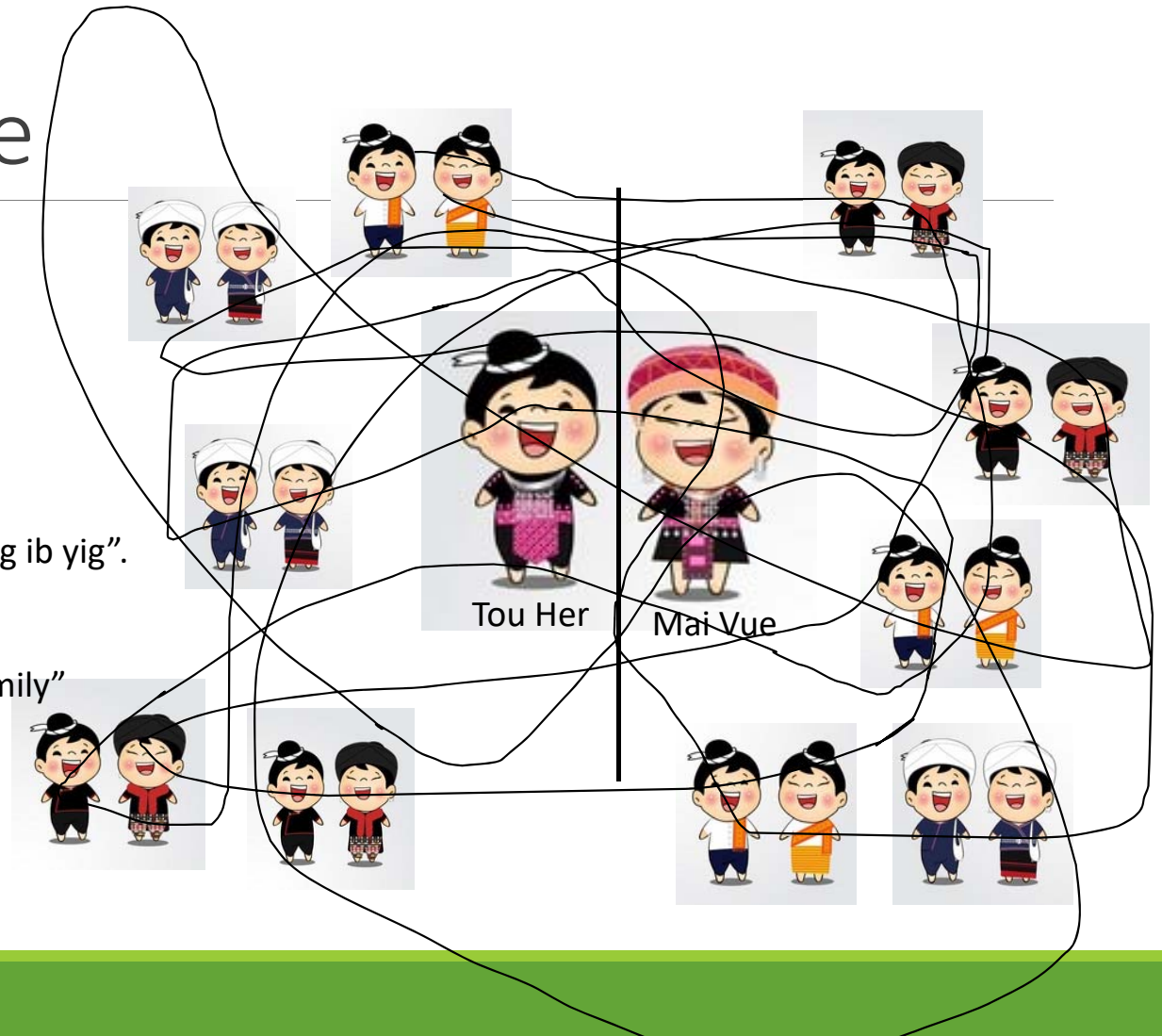
- Not an adult until you marry
- 18 years in Hmong vs. U.S.
- Precedence of age

Hmong Proverb:

“Qhib roog ces yog ib zog, qos rooj ces yog ib yig”.

English translation:

“Open door is a village; close door is a family”



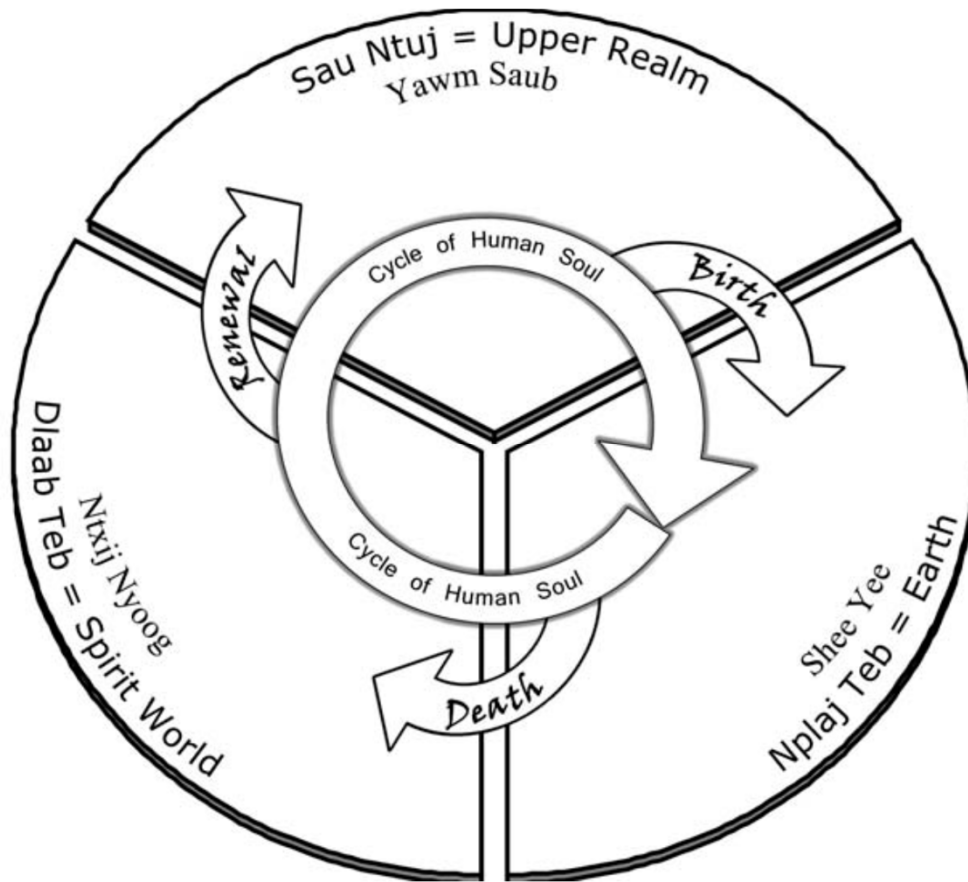


# Religion

---

- Animistic – The belief that all plants, animals, and object have spirits
- Although they believe in spirits, they do not worship bad spirits and endeavor to exorcise them
- Similar to Chinese ancestors worship, however the Hmong do not see their ancestors as deities
  - The term “Shaman”
  - Are you a Shaman?
  - Are you old tradition or new tradition?

Some have converted to new tradition, mainly Christianity



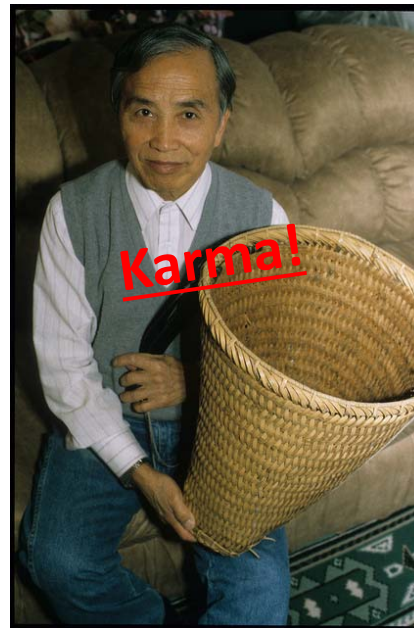
# Religion

---

# Grandpa & the Bamboo Basket

---

- Usually the youngest son takes care of the parents
- If there is no son, they will live alone, but receive aid from other relatives
- Go live with another cousin's son





# Becoming a Shaman

---

- Become extremely ill and have a Shaman come ua neeb saib (come and look)
- Find a master shaman to come and teach you
- Can either be male or female
- Must be a benevolent person

# Role of the Shaman

- Hu Plig - Soul calling ceremony
- Ua Neeb – Enter trance and look for the sick person's soul/spirits



# Tools



# Hill, War, Camps, & U.S.

---

## Hill

Herbal Medicine

Shaman



## War

Exposure



## Camps

Interactive

Built trust



## U.S.

Education vs. Norm



# Hmong Health Beliefs and Practices





Copyrighted Material

*The*

SPIRIT CATCHES YOU  
AND YOU FALL DOWN

*A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors,  
and the Collision of Two Cultures*

ANNE FADIMAN

WINNER OF  
THE NATIONAL  
BOOK CRITICS  
CIRCLE AWARD



WITH A NEW  
AFTERWORD BY  
THE AUTHOR

## Beliefs

---

“There was obviously a great difference between American doctors and Hmong shamans. A shaman might spend eight hours in a Hmong home while an American doctor demanded the patient come to the hospital where the doctor might only see him for twenty minutes; shamans never asked the rude questions American doctors did”.

# Operations

---



IMMUNIZATIONS



SURGERY



ORGAN DONATION/  
BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS



# Choice of Provider

---

## Visible Manifestations

Fracture

Burn

X-ray

Swollenness

---

Western Care

## Non-Visible Manifestations

Pain

Fear

Lack of Energy

Pallor

---

Traditional

# Result

---



The Hmong community believes in both traditional and Western health beliefs...

So what does this mean = more of holistic care model

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Cross-Culture Healthcare

Healthy House within A MATCH Coalition

Identify health needs of immigrants and refugees.

Outcomes: decreased hospital stays and fewer complications

Mission Statement:

“MATCH will increase provider sensitivity to different cultures and their beliefs about health and illness. This program will give accurate information about the health care delivery system, medical programs, diagnostic procedures, medical treatment and illness prevention to members of the ethnic populations of Merced County.”

# Tips

---

-Explain, explain! (more detail the better)

-Use Interpreters

-Building Trust

-Losing Face / Respect

-Eye Contact

-Body Language / Tone

-Hmong Time

-Clan Meeting = Community vs. Individual

-Precede with caution with anything that has to do with their heads (always ask them permission first or inform them that their heads will need to be touched in a procedure)

Go the extra step

# Bibliography

---

<http://hmonglessons.com/the-hmong/hmong-language/rpa-hmong-writing-system/rpa-writing-structure/>

[http://englhmoob.wixsite.com/hmong-presentation/shamanism\\_vs\\_western\\_medicine](http://englhmoob.wixsite.com/hmong-presentation/shamanism_vs_western_medicine)

<http://healthyhousemerced.org/>

<https://nccc.georgetown.edu/documents/Hmong%20Refugees.pdf>

<https://www.dimensionsofculture.com/2012/01/providing-healthcare-to-hmong-patients-and-families/>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0193945916636484>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akrYIJyMuB8>

[http://thebestnotes.com/booknotes/Spirit\\_Catches\\_You\\_Fadiman/The\\_Spirit\\_Catches\\_You\\_Study\\_Guide09.html](http://thebestnotes.com/booknotes/Spirit_Catches_You_Fadiman/The_Spirit_Catches_You_Study_Guide09.html)

<http://hmongstudies.org/HerHSJ6.pdf>

QUESTIONS?

