

By the end of the book, the clash has taken even more subtle but also more sinister overtones. After having documented the progressive degradation of human relations that sugar production entailed throughout the body of the book, Aguilar almost ends his analytical effort on this sobering comment (p. 226):

Having little choice but to live in the material world of the Negros *haciendas* sugar workers have accepted their lots with submission as well as quiet resistance. To fight Mestizo Power in the spiritual terrain is useless because of the ruling class's powerful ties with the spirit-world, whence they have acquired mystified wealth and the prowess to make themselves invulnerable to competitors and recalcitrant workers who might resort to sorcery and black magic. To fight through the courts would be even more daunting since, due to mestizo power's peremptory control of the state apparatus, the complainant could lose his job, land in jail, or be brutalized by hired thugs.

One senses that Aguilar perceives the bleakness of the picture he has drawn and adds another two pages not to let the reader end on such a bleak note. And the book ends with the legend of Baringkot, the crawling creature who "promised to share his riches with everyone, especially the poor workers" (p. 226), became human and rich, but forgot about his promise, eventually lost all his wealth, and was turned back into a crawling creature.

Divine retribution may loom in an elusive, ideological, distant, other-worldly future. Meanwhile, down to earth, the sugar workers are stuck with their social conditions. Deprived of *suwerte*, the luck "conceived as somehow preordained yet amenable to purposeful circumvention" (p. 74), deprived of *dungan*, the strength "indicative of favor from and rapport with the spirit-world" (p. 29), the sugar workers are indeed "unlucky players in the game of life" (p. 228). Inheritors of a tradition shaped during colonial times, the sugar workers are left to gamble endlessly at card games and cockfights, betting and hoping to win, subjected yet complicit (agency obliges!) in the concomitant acceptance and rejection of their social and historical fate.

In addition to being a talented researcher, Aguilar writes with ease and grace. His book is particularly insightful, albeit a definite downer.

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*Changing Lives of Hmong Refugee Women*. By NANCY DONNELLY. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994. 208 pp. \$30.00 (cloth); \$14.95 (paper).

Nancy Donnelly has written what likely will stand as the definitive account of Hmong refugee life in the United States. *Changing Lives of Hmong Refugee Women* is well written, well documented, and informed by Donnelly's more than fifteen-year involvement with Hmong refugees in Seattle. This experience has included her status as founding board member of the Indochinese Farm Project, her volunteer work with the Indochinese Women's Project where she taught "Survival English" to a group of refugee women, and her volunteer work with the Auxiliary to the Hmong Artwork Association. Through these experiences she befriended a number of Hmong women

and households and gained more intimate knowledge and access to the Hmong community.

Chapter 1, "Discovering the Hmong," describes Donnelly's initial contact with the Hmong community in Seattle. These experiences suggested that the Hmong have very different assumptions about society and reality itself: learning is based upon experience in the material world, which made it difficult to understand abstract concepts and examples. Hmong culture is defined by specific relationships among men and women. When she tries to explain the intricacies of the P-Patch Program to Hmong elders, she is told, "You are a city woman, and we are men, and farmers. You can tell us nothing." Donnelly's research questions are shaped by these experiences: does the sharp contrast between Hmong culture and American practices lead the Hmong to question their cultural practices? Have gender relationships and family relationships been altered?

Chapters 2 and 3, "Hmong Society in Laos" and "Changing Times," present an overview of Hmong life in Laos, and chapter 4, "The Hmong in Seattle," describes the resettlement of Hmong households in Seattle. This material is likely to be familiar to persons who have read other research on Hmong refugees; to readers who are new to the subject, the chapters will provide a useful background to Hmong culture and case study of refugee resettlement in the United States.

Chapter 5, "Selling Hmong Textiles," documents the development of Asian Needlecrafters, a nonprofit cooperative that marketed Hmong textiles at street fairs and public markets and, in 1982, opened a shop at the Pike Park Public Market. Of special interest is the patron-client relationship that develops between the Hmong women and their sponsors and supervisors. The cooperative itself developed out of the Indochinese Women's Project and consisted of American women as officers, the refugee women (Hmong and Mein) as members, and "other American volunteers as an auxiliary." The American volunteers made decisions about which pieces to accept for sale, which pieces to retain as inventory, and which cloth and thread to order—as well as setting store hours, contracting for advertising, and other business decisions. It was the American women who decided that the goal of the organization was "cultural preservation" and refused to accept needlework made by the refugees' families in relocation camps.

These and other conflicts led a group of Hmong Christian women (with the support of the Hmong Women's Assistance Project Association, an auxiliary of American women) to form the Hmong Artwork Association. Donnelly explains that those working with the Hmong refugees "had observed close cooperation between Hmong and assumed that this indicated democratic ideas, socially validated concepts of generosity, and affective loyalties. They concluded that the egalitarian ideology of cooperation was similar to Hmong social ideals, and that Hmong refugees would feel at home with cooperative principles" (p. 96). In reality, the new association was dominated by a husband and wife team who used day-to-day decisions about who would staff the booths, whose textiles would be displayed, and the like to accumulate resources and redistribute them to followers just as they had done in Laos. Beyond the economic and social relationships demonstrated by this history of the Hmong textile cooperatives, Donnelly notes that older meanings associated with the needlework have diminished: clothing is supposed to be sown by daughters, not purchased in stores, and the display of traditional garments might now represent household income rather than the woman's skill at needlework.

Chapters 6 through 8 present extensive information on domestic relations within and among Hmong households, topics which have not been described from a woman's

perspective elsewhere in the scholarly literature. Of particular interest in "Courtship and Elopement" (chapter 6) is Donnelly's discussion of earlier literature (from Geddes, Bernatzik, and Savanna) on premarital sexual relations in Laos (a topic that is not often discussed in Hmong households where Hmong Christian beliefs have conceptualized sexuality as a sin), and of unwanted first marriages. After presenting several narratives of courtship and marriage by Hmong women, Donnelly writes that "all of these arranged marriages involved a positive choice by the girl." Earlier patterns of courtship are changing rapidly as Hmong girls delay marriage to complete their education and begin careers, and American laws concerning rape, bigamy, and divorce have negated earlier male prerogatives. Donnelly tells the story of a Hmong girl, kidnapped by a boy in a "catch-hand" marriage, who refused her parent's wishes to continue marriage negotiations and threatened instead to call the police, report the rape, and have the family deported.

Chapter 7, "Wedding Negotiations and Ceremonies," recreate the social relations identified by the Hmong themselves as being central to Hmong identity. Marriages were often accompanied by written contracts and included a bride price (although the formal "bride's wealth" was not always paid). While the marriage ceremony continues to offer opportunities for Hmong clans and families to build social networks, it too has changed. Donnelly describes one such negotiation in which the groom's family brought the traditional two cooked chickens. The interpreter explained that if the toes curled up parallel to one another, the couple would walk together in life. But for this ceremony, the chickens had been purchased in a supermarket, there was no way to determine if they were male or female, and they came without toes.

In chapter 9, "What Does Change Mean?," Donnelly suggests that despite severe strains and challenges from the larger society (she assumes that change is imposed upon the Hmong from the outside), first-generation Hmong show a stubborn resistance to any change in household interactions and family relationships. Donnelly states that, "even when the values or goals of a community shift or surface behaviors change through interactions with a new environment, the basic organization of a society need not necessarily be changing" (p. 191). Examples from earlier chapters are discussed, and in each case she concludes that whatever changes might have taken place have occurred within the existing set of family and gender relationships. Many readers will likely question whether the examples presented in the book fully support her position; in several instances, it appears that younger Hmong have challenged these relationships and that significant change is underway (Donnelly explores this possibility, but seems to dismiss it). When reading this book, it is important to remember that the emphasis is on the first-generation Hmong, and that some (or many) of these conclusions may be different for the second- and third-generation households.

Although *Changing Lives of Hmong Refugee Women* and other recent work (such as Jeremy Heim's *From Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia: A Refugee Experience in the United States* [Twayne, 1995] and Jo Ann Kotyk's *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin* [Allyn and Bacon, 1998]) provides substantive information about the experience of Hmong refugees in the United States, the picture is very incomplete. We know much more about the experience of Hmong women than we do about Hmong men (an interesting change from the classic anthropological studies of the Hmong). And while this literature has focused on the experience of Hmong adults (usually just the first generation, with examples of what is called the one-and-a-half generation), we know relatively little about the experience of Hmong youth born and raised in the United States—the group whose children are now entering elementary

schools in many areas across the country. This sets a new agenda for research on the experience of immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia. It is likely that Nancy Donnelly's work will provide the base line for future research in this area.

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*Vietnam's Reforms and Economic Growth.* By CHARLES HARVIE and TRAN VAN HOA. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 256 pp. \$65.00 (cloth).

Vietnam remains one of the world's most enigmatic countries. Misunderstood by casual observers, scholars, and investors, to this day the name "Vietnam" conjures myriad images. Most of them are dated or simply false. All too often the name Vietnam evokes grisly recollections of war, boat people, and poverty. To many analysts, Vietnam's contribution is the lesson it continues to teach us about the geopolitical dangers and tragic consequences that result from interventionist foreign policy driven by hubris and ignorance. Despite this important lesson, it is unfortunate that too often Vietnam still is perceived only as a war, rather than as an extraordinarily unique, complex, and dynamic country struggling to find its way and to join the global economy.

In *Vietnam's Reforms and Economic Growth*, Charles Harvie and Tran Van Hoa help to dispel false perceptions and introduce readers to many of the complex and interactive forces that constitute today's Vietnam. To this end the book makes contributions, some of which are discussed below.

The book is well organized and shares with readers a sound overview of important issues. Chapter 1 provides a nice introduction and frames the issues well. Unlike many economic analysts, in chapter 2, Harvie and Tran integrate and discuss many forces and factors that helped to shape and continue to shape present-day Vietnam. The importance of the influences of history, geography, demographics, and social indicators, as well as recent regional trends, are often greatly underappreciated and cannot be overstated. Thus, the brief discussions of geography and human resources, for example, are welcome. Similarly, the authors' examination in the context of regional developments and comparisons, particularly the discussion of other East Asian models of development (chapter 5), and Vietnam's interpretation and operationalization of market socialism—in comparison to China's interpretation, and programs (chapter 8)—also are important inclusions. Readers should note, however, that chapter 5 clearly was written before the 1997 economic crisis, from which many countries in the region only now are emerging. In this light, the references to the "East Asian Miracle" in chapter 5 seem somewhat simplistic and fail to address some of the problems associated with this generalized model of development. Given that the Communist Party of Vietnam seeks to emulate some of this model—heavy state intervention in and guidance of a market-oriented economy—it would seem a discussion of some of the shortcomings is warranted. In fairness to the authors, however, their sentiments are consistent with the *zeitgeist* prior to the crisis.

The description of events that led to *doi moi* and the articulation of *doi moi* (chapter 3) also is good. The overview of the macroeconomic results from *doi moi* (chapter 4) is good as well. Again, however, some of the statistics seem somewhat dated since many references were only as recent as 1994. Chapter 6 provides a worthy needs assessment and offers generally accepted advice on important steps to sustain economic