

The Cultural Landscape of the Hmong in Eau Claire, Wisconsin

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The arrival of the Hmong to Eau Claire, Wisconsin over the past thirty years has introduced the city to its first significant ethnic minority population. Despite being small in numbers, the Hmong have formed a unique ethnic landscape, rich with a mixture of both newly adopted and traditional cultural features. Through examination of the spatial patterns of residential, commercial, agricultural, and religious spaces, it is possible to learn about the Hmong, as well as about ways in which small ethnic groups evolve and adapt to life in places which had previously been without much cultural diversity. The result is a landscape that's new and vibrant, yet incredibly subtle, thus challenging us to look beyond the most obvious conceptions of ethnic enclaves to examine the smaller and more obscure.

Introduction

When Hmong refugees began arriving for resettlement in the 1970s, the city of Eau Claire lacked any sizable minority population (Hein 2006). Now Eau Claire's largest and most visible ethnic group, the Hmong make up over 80 percent of the vendors at the city's farmers market, run successful local businesses, and have their own churches. While they are small in total numbers, the majority of Eau Claire County's 1,566 Hmong people live in the city of Eau Claire, and in certain neighborhoods they make up as much as 30 percent of the population (Lor, 2009). As both the quality of refugee services and kinship ties encouraged chain-migration, a small ethnic enclave has grown up in Eau Claire, and with it a distinctive cultural geography has emerged with both highly visible, as well as extremely subtle landscape features.

Because the Hmong population in places such as Eau Claire is relatively small in comparison to the immigrant populations in urban centers like St. Paul, Minnesota, it is often over-looked in

studies of the Hmong. However, as Hein (2006) pointed out, these small insular Mid-Western cities, which had previously lacked the cultural diversity of their larger neighbors, offer a different glimpse into the adaptations of the Hmong to their new homes in the U.S., and to the manifestations of this on the landscape.

As implied by Zelinsky's Doctrine of First Effective Settlement, the recentness of the Hmong's arrival in Wisconsin has meant that the visible modifications the Hmong have made to the landscape are relatively minor (Zelinsky 1973; Wood 1997). However, although Germans and Scandinavians historically settled throughout Wisconsin, these ethnic groups generally didn't leave lasting ethnic imprints on the landscapes of Mid-Western cities. Tishler (1992) cites the disappearance of distinctive Norwegian landscapes as a resulting in part from a tendency by Wisconsin's Norwegians to adopt more "Yankee" building styles as their standards of living rose. The Germans also arrived at a time when manufactured building equipment was becoming less expensive, and

this contributed to the limited imprints left by them on the landscape (Wilhelm, 1992). There are notable reconstructed ethnic landscapes across the Wisconsin, such as in New Glarus, which markets itself as “America’s Little Switzerland”, but this ethnic re-identification is recent and largely symbolic (Schnell 2003). Thus, with a few scattered exceptions like Polish house styles in Milwaukee, the landscape that the Hmong are building upon is largely homogenous “Anglo-American” (Kenny 1997). The changes the small population of Hmong are making on the landscape are few and subtle, yet their status as one of the only ethnicities visible in Eau Claire make those minor alternations all the more distinct and important.

History of Hmong

Prior to the diaspora of the Hmong, they lived within Southeast Asia, and were scattered throughout Southern China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand (Keown-Bomar 2004). Within Laos, the Hmong have historically settled predominately in the mountains where they were able to live in relatively isolated agricultural communities. The Hmong existed almost entirely self-sufficiently, practicing slash and burn (swidden) agriculture, and living in villages of 40-50 families (Keown-Bomar 2004). They valued their autonomy and when Southeast Asia became a central front in the Cold War, the Hmong saw an alliance with the West as the path most likely to preserve their way of life (Keown-Bomar 2004).

During the Vietnam War, the Hmong communities in Laos became strategic allies of the U.S. in a conflict known as the Secret War (Pfaff 2005). After the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1962, which stated that Laos would remain neutral from the conflict in Vietnam, no

direct military intervention was allowed within the country (Keown-Bomar 2004). None the less, through the center of Laos ran the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which operated as a crucial supply route for the communist forces in Vietnam. Unable to send ground military forces into Laos to attack these supply routes, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency covertly recruited and equipped a Hmong fighting force to counter the Communist Pathet Lao in Laos (Pfaff 2005). Approximately 40,000 Hmong men and boys fought as partners of the U.S., of whom nearly 35,000 were killed in battle, an incredibly high mortality rate (Quincy 2000, as cited by Keown-Bomar 2004). In all, the Hmong in Laos lost approximately a third of their total population during the course of the war (Hones 2001).

When the United States withdrew from Vietnam in 1975, the Hmong were systematically targeted by the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese, and thousands of Hmong fled to refugee camps in Thailand to avoid retribution for collaboration with the U.S. military (Keown-Bomar 2004). Within the refugee camps, the Hmong lived in limbo, stuck in a country that did not want to host them, yet fearful of returning home. Restrictive U.S. refugee resettlement policies prevented large flows of Hmong refugees in Thailand from immigrating until 1978-1979, when federal policy shifted and extensive resettlement efforts began (Dearborn 2008). With families and clans already broken up by war, the choice to resettle in a third country, further scattering kin and leaving their home region was naturally not an easy decision for the Hmong migrants.

The United States, Canada, France, French Guiana, Argentina, Germany, and Australia all agreed to take in refugees. The U.S. was the most popular choice for the refugees, due in

part to the relationship between the U.S. and the Hmong during the war (Keown-Bomar 2004; Vang 2008). The U.S. federal government funded fourteen volunteer agencies to facilitate resettlement of the displaced people (Hein 1995). Hmong refugees arrived with the help of both religious and secular organizations, and through the sponsorship of churches, which saw the refugees' welfare as a moral obligation (Hein 2006). Upon arrival, the Hmong were provided support from these sponsors, as well as federal and state assistance, but the challenges of integrating into the mechanized, capitalist society were great.

Social service programs and Hmong support organizations, such as the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, emerged to help ease the transition into American culture. Services included housing support, language and skills training, translation, and job services. In addition, these organizations helped to provide a center for Hmong cultural and community solidarity through efforts such as supplying agricultural land to families and hosting the celebration of traditional Hmong holidays, like the New Year (Hein 2006).

Location of Hmong

Waves of Hmong immigrants arrived in the United States, beginning in 1975, peaking in the late 1970s and early 1980s and continuing well into the 1990s (Keown-Bomar 2004). The first and largest wave of migrants settled in California, closely followed by migrants to Minnesota, Wisconsin, and elsewhere (Lor et al. 2009). Through both refugee resettlement and high birth rates, the population of Hmong in the U.S. expanded rapidly (Keown-Bomar 2004), and between 1990 and 2000, the Hmong population increased nationwide from 90,082 to 169,428, an 88 percent growth in population

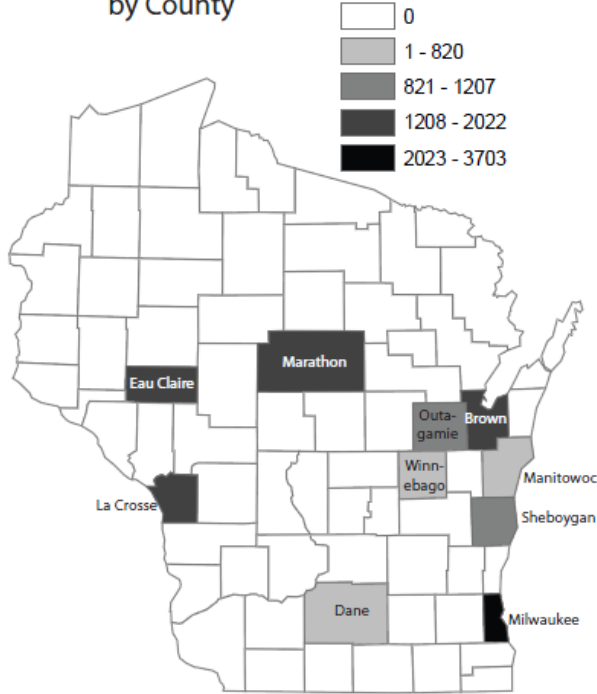
(Lor et al. 2009). Within Wisconsin, the population nearly doubled during that time period, from 16,373 to 33,791.

One factor that has contributed to the expansion of Hmong enclaves in certain locations is the Hmong value of closeness with family and kin. Federal resettlement policy had sought to scatter incoming refugees in small numbers across the country so as not to place too large of a burden on any one city or state and to better encourage assimilation into American society (Miyares 1997). However, the importance of clan and kinship, compounded with the high quality of services in places like Eau Claire, led to a good amount of secondary migration within the U.S., bringing Hmong back together in larger ethnic communities (Miyares 1997; Keown-Bomar 2004).

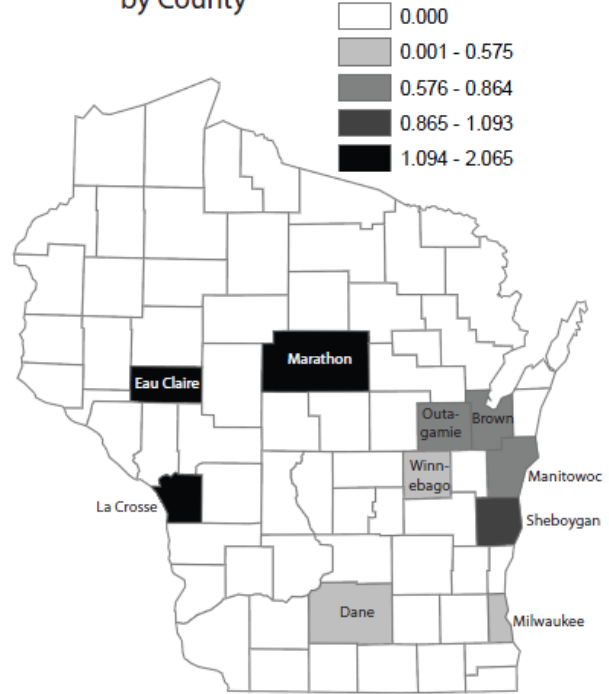
With over 30,000 people and approximately 20 percent of the U.S. Hmong, Wisconsin has the third largest Hmong population in the country (Dearborn 2008). The Hmong are concentrated in ten counties across the state (**Figure 1**), with the largest numbers in Milwaukee County, followed by La Crosse, Marathon, Brown, and Eau Claire Counties. Although Milwaukee has the largest population of Hmong, they make up a significantly smaller percentage of the total population than in the counties of Marathon, La Crosse, or Eau Claire, where they account for about 2 percent of the population. In these counties, which are much more sparsely populated on the whole, the Hmong stand out more singularly as an ethnic minority than they do in metropolitan areas like Milwaukee, which is already more racially and culturally diverse.

Location of Hmong in Wisconsin

Total Hmong Population, by County



Percent Hmong, by County



*1990 US Census

Figure 1 Distribution of Hmong in Wisconsin

Residential Hmong Landscapes

In Eau Claire, the Hmong are concentrated most densely in the low-income neighborhoods just north of the city’s downtown, as indicated by the map of the city (**Figure 2**). While this is the densest Hmong residential area, this area doesn’t correspond with the more diffuse commercial landscape. Many Hmong services, churches, groceries, and restaurants, are located outside of the primary Hmong residential areas, or even in areas with no Hmong population. This scattering of the ethnic economy reflects a pattern Zelinsky and Lee described as heterolocalism, in which modern communication and transportation has resulted in immigrant populations relying less upon

proximity to define ethnic identity (Zelinsky and Lee 1993, as cited by Wood 1997; Hardwick and Meacham 2005). This contrasts starkly with older, denser ethnic enclaves like Chinatowns, but mirrors patterns seen in other modern immigrant communities like the Vietnamese American communities in Northern Virginia (Wood 1997).

Despite a lack of clustering of services, most of the Hmong in Eau Claire are living in rental housing neighborhoods north of the downtown, as shown by the block group map in **Figure 2**, which is based on 1990 census data. (The 2000 Census only provides data on ancestry at the census tract level, which is too gross a scale to show the high concentrations of Hmong in small towns like Eau Claire.) The houses in this

residential area are typically 19th century working class homes of the Two-Pen and Up-Right-and-Wing styles. In contrast to these denser downtown concentrations, the other areas on the map with moderate-sized Hmong populations are more owner-occupied homes, or higher-income private rentals.

Although about 90 percent of Hmong families rent rather than own homes, the number of Hmong homeowners has been growing rapidly. Hmong homeownership in Wisconsin has expanded to nine times what it had been a decade earlier (Hall and Patton 2002, as cited in Keown-Bomar 2004). Despite a lower standard of living in comparison to the population at large, the trend of increased homeownership by the Hmong suggests an improving economic status.

The importance of homeownership to the Hmong in the U.S. was emphasized in one study in Milwaukee, which examined factors that Hmong consider when choosing residential locations, and the type of homes they find most ideal. One of the most powerful factors in choice of location is physical closeness to family and to a broader Hmong community (Dearborn 2008). Upon arrival, Dearborn (2008) argues, ethnic enclaves allow resettling refugees to regulate their full immersion into American society at their own pace, as well as providing safety nets and support in daily life.

In addition, homeownership was greatly valued by Hmong in Milwaukee because of the freedom it gave to the Hmong to practice their own cultural beliefs without outside judgment from the non-Hmong (Dearborn 2008). Particularly amongst the Hmong who practice traditional animist religion, discrimination and misunderstanding of religious practices, such as animal offering, have been a problem for

Hmong with non-Hmong neighbors (Trudeau 2008). This has led some Hmong homeowners to favor houses set back from the road, with many trees, a fence, and with larger spaces from the home to the home of the nearest neighbor (Dearborn 2008).

During their time in the U.S., Hmong households have also significantly changed in family size. Traditionally, Hmong families in Southeast Asia were large to meet the labor needs for their agrarian lifestyle. While the average number of Hmong people per household (6.3) in Wisconsin is still well above the average for the population as a whole (2.6), Hmong family size has gradually been decreasing (Lor et al. 2009). Nonetheless, the high birthrate still results in a large youth population, and subsequently there is a large Hmong student body in public schools serving the downtown and north side of Eau Claire. Five Elementary schools have Hmong students making up 10 percent or more of the student body, with two of these having over 17 percent Hmong students.

The education received in public schools by the youngest generations of Hmong in America plays a significant role in the acculturation, assimilation, and evolving identity of Hmong in the U.S (Miyares 1997). With much of a child's day being spent in the classroom, the second and third generation of American Hmong are often growing up with English being the language they are most comfortable speaking (Keown-Bomar 2004). In the area with the largest percentage of Hmong in Eau Claire, only 5.1 percent are actually Hmong speakers. As culture changes through each generation, there are many impacts on the spatial patterns of the Hmong result.

Studies of changing ideas of space and of the acculturation of the Hmong in California revealed that Hmong identity, which had previously been closely tied to clan and kin, is also being increasingly identified by the location of the one's home enclave in U.S.—such as Fresno, St. Paul, or even Eau Claire (Miyares 1997). While the importance of proximity to other Hmong, most specifically kin, remains a powerful factor in where Hmong choose to live (Dearborn 2008), the identity of Hmong as Hmong-American exists on a much larger scale than traditional clan-based identifications. This larger grouping, Miyares (1997) argued, resembles patterns the Hmong became accustomed to in refugee camps much more than original grouping patterns in Laos, and is continuing to change with each generation.

Commercial Hmong Landscapes

Commercial space is the most noticeable ethnic landscape, particularly to the untrained observer (Wood 1997). Although restaurants, groceries, businesses, and other services are relatively diffuse throughout Eau Claire, there is one noteworthy cluster of Hmong commercial space. Bellinger Street (**Figure 2**), which is just across the Eau Claire River to the west of the densest settled Hmong neighborhoods is the only location in Eau Claire with Hmong businesses lined side by side. Included are two “Asian” grocery stores, a restaurant, a Hmong-owned framing business, an alterations and tailoring shop that sells traditional Hmong clothing, as well as a Hmong Christian church. These businesses both are run by and cater to the surrounding Hmong population, and are located in older, pre-World War II commercial building space that are preferable because the rent is lower for these smaller stores.

Hmong Landscape Features in Eau Claire, Wisconsin

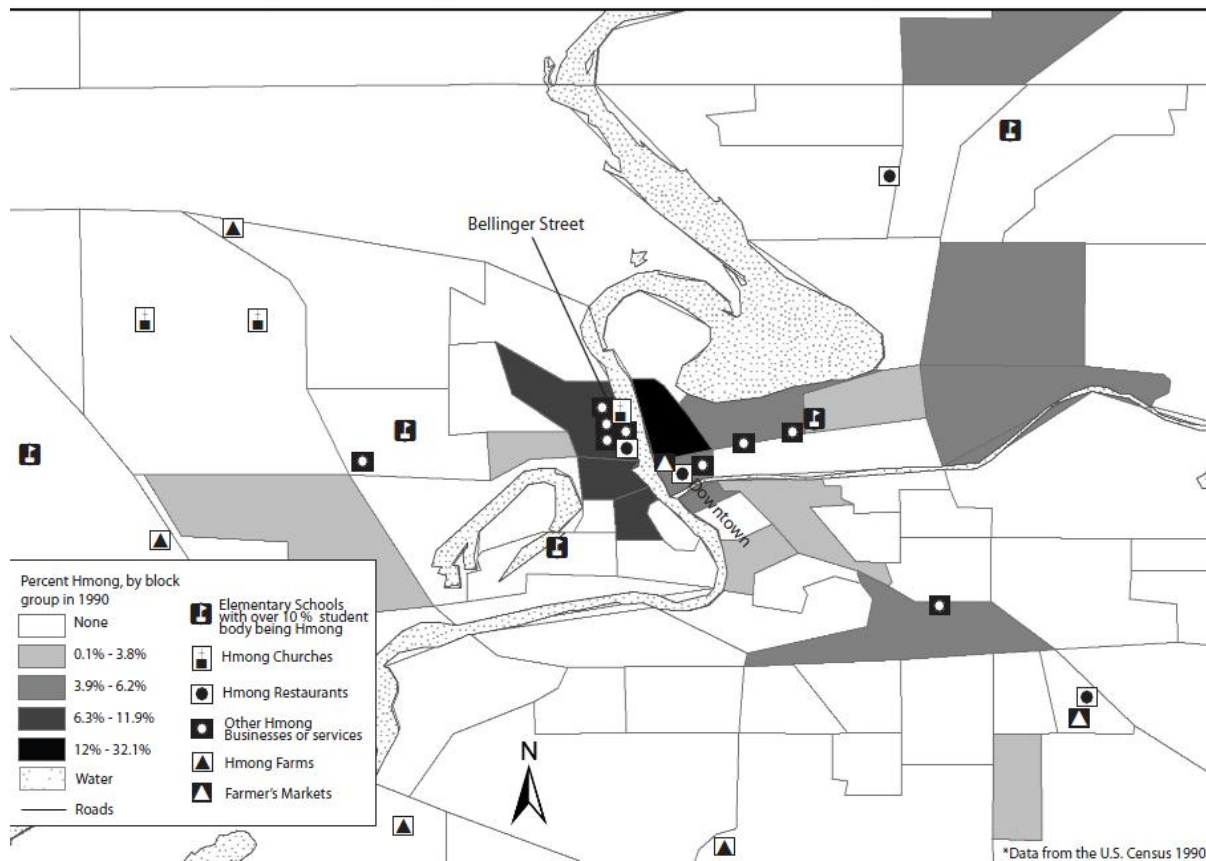


Figure 2 Hmong Landscape Features in Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Restaurants and groceries, serving the general public as well as the local Hmong, are the most visible of the ethnic commercial features. While the names of the framing and tailoring stores are not Hmong-identifiable, the names of the Hmong restaurants and groceries throughout Eau Claire reveal the complex combination of influences that the Hmong have encountered through their migration history. A prominent theme in the commercial landscape is an emphasis on Pan-Asian and Asian-American identity in the marketing of goods, most specifically foods. With names like “Amerasian Food Plus”, “L’Oriental Store”, and “Ameriental Food Store”, the grocery stores do not explicitly identify themselves as Hmong from the outside,

yet within, many of the goods sold are solely for the Hmong, such as Hmong-language music and videos, and traditional cloth.

Hmong restaurants in Eau Claire also market a broader spectrum of Asian cuisine through both their names and their menus. The sign for a restaurant called the “Asian Café” reads with the subtext “Delicious Pan-Asian Cuisine” and the restaurant “Pad Thai” is named for the most famous dish of Thailand, where most of the resettled Hmong had lived as refugees. Much of the food on the menus in Eau Claire’s Hmong-run restaurants is not traditionally Hmong, and the only restaurant sign that visually references Hmong cuisine reads “Hmong, Thai, and Asian Cuisine.” These signs

present the Hmong as members of the larger Asian-American community. Still, the fact that most of the Hmong businesses cater to Hmong customers reinforces Keown-Bomar's (2004) explanation of immigrant communities turning inward to their own ethnic group as an adaptation for survival and success in the United States (Keown-Bomar 2004). This is also reflected in the support that Hmong businesses offer to one another. Within the Hmong restaurants, business cards or fliers for other local Hmong businesses are often set on the counters or tacked to bulletin boards. These advertised non-food businesses include a couple Hmong insurance agencies located along the edges of the Hmong residential neighborhoods, in Eau Claire's older commercial districts. In the downtown, the Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association is also a focal point of Hmong unity and support through the process of adjustment to life in the city.

Hmong businesses and organizations fall in a pattern around, but not within, the Hmong residential areas. **Figure 3** illustrates this pattern. The residential area makes up the core of the ethnic landscape, the commercial landscape lies in the surrounding domain, and the Hmong farms lie beyond the commercial landscape, on the periphery of the city. The commercial landscape reinforces the presence of an evolving identity in which adaptations to the modern economy can also be means of cultural preservation.

Farmers' Markets and Agricultural Hmong Landscapes

Closely linked to the commercial landscapes of

Pattern of the Hmong Cultural Landscape

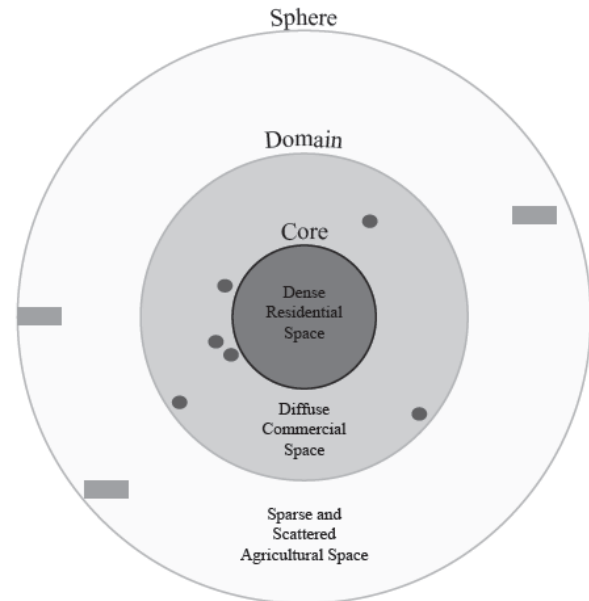


Figure 3 Hmong Core, Domain, and Sphere

Hmong ethnic cuisine is that of the Farmers Markets and Hmong agricultural space. During the growing season, Eau Claire's largest farmers market is held weekly at Phoenix Park, which is in the downtown near the Hmong residential areas. The Hmong make up a large majority of the vendors at this market, as well as at two other smaller farmers markets in shopping malls elsewhere in Eau Claire.

While those living within the city may have small gardens for personal-use vegetables, herbs, and flowers, the Hmong vendors at the markets have larger garden plots outside of the center of the city (**Figure 2**). The majority of these farmers rent the land that they cultivate, and the process of planting and tending their crops is a family responsibility (**Image 1**).

Farming and gardening within the Hmong community has a number of different roles, both economic and cultural. Traditionally an agricultural society, Hmong landscapes are still notable for their agriculture, even within urban U.S. settings. These gardens have been described as

“reconstructed landscapes”, where Hmong gardening knowledge, tools, techniques, and plant varieties are used to recreate the distinctly Hmong agricultural landscapes (Helzer 1994, as cited in Corlett et al. 2003).

Agricultural space also provides a pastime for some Hmong in Eau Claire who use farm space to raise birds for enjoyment. In recent years the training of pigeons became a popular hobby of the Hmong, and it was not uncommon to find a pigeon shed subtly tucked behind the house of home-owning Hmong. This trend has declined recently however, and many pigeon sheds have been torn down. In place of the pigeons, there is currently a rise in the number of Hmong who raise chickens. While they are a source of both pride and pleasure for some Hmong, the raising of chickens also offers the owners both meat and eggs, which are used for private consumption.

Hmong farms in the U.S. range in size from small urban gardens to larger farms outside of cities. These agricultural spaces provide food for the family, a marketable product to sell outside of the home, and a means of preserving culture. In a survey of Hmong urban gardens in the Central Valley of California, the gardens were



Image 1 Hmong garden: what is distinctive?

also revealed to be a significant source of self-worth for elderly women in the family who otherwise often felt overly dependent on their English-speaking children, and found gardening to be a means of remaining useful to the family (Corlett et al. 2003).

In Asia, the Hmong historically would cultivate three fields, with the primary crops being maize, rice, and opium, which was used ritually by the shaman in the community (Corlett et al. 2003). These staples would then be intercropped with other vegetables, fruits, and herbs, such as cucumber, ginger, taro, yam, banana, pumpkin, and cabbage (Corlett et al. 2003). Many of these plants are still grown by Hmong around the U.S., as well as additional crops not grown in Asia.

Not surprisingly, a survey of the Hmong in Green Bay, Wisconsin revealed frustration amongst the farmers that, due to the cold climate of the Midwest, they were not able to grow certain crops native to Laos (Wisconsin Public Television 2009). This survey led to an initiative called the Asian Trail Garden to determine which traditional crop varieties would grow in Wisconsin, beginning with purple

ball eggplant, mustard greens, asparagus beans, Asian cucumber, lemongrass, bitter melon, and squash. Many of these crops are staples in traditional Hmong diets and thus the ability to grow them is an important element of cultural preservation.

The Hmong vendors at Eau Claire's markets sell almost exclusively vegetables, berries, and flowers, while non-Hmong vendors are more likely to sell higher-value products, such as artisan cheese or organic meats. Most crops grown by the Hmong for sale at Eau Claire's Farmers Market are not traditional Hmong crops. Exceptions to this are bitter melon, pumpkin, mustard greens, and traditional herbs. Some of these, such as mustard greens, are sold at the Farmers Market primarily for purchase by Hmong within the community, rather than for the public as a whole.

Traditional herbs may be grown more for home use than for sale, and it is common to see Hmong homes with many plants in the windows for this purpose. Other plant parts used in Hmong cooking and not sold for the general public include the leaves of pumpkin and pea vines, which are typically cooked in a broth with meat.

While these farms are a form of cultural preservation, agriculture in Eau Claire is increasingly being rejected by the younger generations. Hones (2001) has documented in St. Paul that just as many young Hmong are pursuing higher education as their peers and fewer are continuing traditional work in agriculture. While the younger Hmong generations may currently participate in family-based farming, only a couple of the vendors at the Farmers Market are younger couples continuing agricultural practices of previous generations, and one might anticipate a declining Hmong presence in years to come.

Religious Hmong Landscapes

Traditional Hmong religion is animist, characterized by strong spiritual connections with the natural world, which is mediated by knowledgeable shamans. The practice of indigenous religion is still common in Hmong communities and shaman still perform religious ceremonies, although these practices leave fewer visible features on the landscape than the Hmong Christian congregations. Hmong homes that practice animism may visibly have items dangling above the outside of their doorways as means of regulating the passage of different spirits, and within the house there will often be an altar to pay homage to ancestors. Gatherings of people and their associated vehicles may also be seen on occasions outside houses when animal offerings or other ceremonies are being performed, but those who practice traditional religion lack houses of worship, in contrast to the Hmong Christians, who now have multiple churches within Eau Claire.

While some Hmong had converted to Christianity before the war, many more converted during the process of immigration and resettlement. In Eau Claire, the first churches to sponsor the Hmong were Lutheran (Hein 2006), and many Hmong have joined the churches, which brought their families to the U.S., such as St. Matthews Lutheran Church in Eau Claire.

In addition to joining pre-existing congregations, Hmong converts to Christianity have also opened their own churches within Eau Claire. One of the largest of these churches, the Eau Claire Hmong Alliance Church, is on Bellinger Street, which is near the largest concentrations of Hmong. Two more Hmong churches, one Baptist and the other Assembly, are on the northwestern edges of the city,

where locations were available for the new congregations (**Figure 2**).

Although the conversion of some of the Hmong to Christianity has often created rifts in families between converts and those still practicing Shamanism, death and burial is one area where new and old spiritual practices can blend. Generally grouped together in cemeteries, Hmong graves in Eau Claire provide one illustration of the mixture between traditional culture and Hmong Christianity on the landscape. Having a tombstone was not common for the Hmong in Asia, however within the U.S. many have been adopting markers.

Hmong gravestones are first recognizable on the landscape simply due to the Hmong surnames on the stones, which set them apart from other graves. Hmong graves are also often singularly distinctive in the images etched upon them, such as landscape scenes reminiscent of Laos or depicting traditional Hmong musical instruments favored by the deceased (**Image 2**).



Image 2 Hmong tombstone. Can you identify three distinctive elements?

Those who have converted to Christianity are distinguishable from those who had not due to the etching of religious imagery, such as crosses, on gravestones. Those who never

converted lack this iconography. But in either case, offerings, such as food or drink, are often left on graves for the deceased (**Image 2**). Also common among both the Christian converts and the non-Christians are portraits of the deceased, which are intended to remind the family of their relative.

While the practice of placing gravestones is new to the Hmong in the United States, the burial location is still culturally based. The Hmong believed that the deceased must be buried at a higher elevation and the head must be pointing to the east, so that the sun may rise over the head and set by the feet. This, they believed, would bring wealth and success to the family and their descendants. Both those who have converted to Christianity, as well as those who have not, still practice this tradition.

The adoption of Christianity by a many Hmong in the U.S. has occasionally resulted in feuds and challenged the cohesiveness of family groups split by faith, but that is not the only impact on the Hmong in America. Christianity, Hones (2001) argues, has also been a significant means of English-language development amongst Hmong refugees. The conversions also reflect pressure put on the Hmong community from non-Hmong Americans to join dominant mainstream culture, and the change in religion has served as an adaptation that has eased the assimilation of many Hmong (Hones 2001).

Future Hmong Research

This article provides an overview of the Hmong landscape features in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and builds on Hmong studies done in other communities across the country. While many of these research projects provide a foundation for interpretation of Eau Claire's Hmong landscapes, fieldwork addressing the issues of

these studies within Eau Claire provides great potential for future research.

Research has been done in other parts of the country examining the plant content of Hmong gardens and comparing them to traditional crops and usages in Southeast Asia. Most of this research, however, has been done in states with warmer climates such as California, the Carolinas, and Louisiana. In the Midwest, where the climate is so much colder, and where many indigenous Asian plants would be unable to survive, the Hmong have adapted their agricultural practices to their new environment. Some research has been done on medicinal plant usages in St. Paul, but detailed, field-based research on Midwestern Hmong gardens would be beneficial to enhance our understanding of the variations in Hmong agriculture in various resettlement areas.

Further research in Eau Claire might document the number of Hmong commercial gardens, their size, what they produce, what is sold and used for personal use, the value of these crops for family incomes, and which family members, by gender and age, do the agricultural work. Likewise, detailed, stall-by-stall analysis of the Hmong contribution to the city's three farmers' markets remains to be done.

In addition, similar studies of Hmong in other small towns in Wisconsin would allow insight into broader Hmong landscape trends. For example, study of the spatial patterns of Hmong residential, commercial, and agricultural space in La Crosse, Wisconsin would provide new basis for comparison in the study of Hmong adaptations in small, Mid-Western cities.

Conclusion

The Hmong cultural landscape of Eau Claire is typical of other Midwestern Hmong communities, yet they are rather distinctive

from traditional landscape analyses which have focused on such groups as the Mormons, utopian communities, and Mexican-Americans, for example. The Hmong are small in number and a newly-arrived cultural group to the United States and although they are heavily concentrated in a few states, counties, cities, and neighborhoods, their cultural imprint has consequently been more subtle and dispersed than traditional larger cultural groups. The Hmong population settled in generally older, poorer, and rental neighborhoods as other racial minorities have done throughout U.S. history, yet their relatively small numbers has meant that they often had to go outside their immediate high-density residential areas for their own commercial, educational, religious, and even social services. This is illustrated by the lack their own, separate cemeteries, yet their tombstones are one of the most distinctive landscape markers of their presence. Regardless of the uniquely subtle nature of the Hmong cultural landscape, geographers and their students should be aware of the importance of these small and less obvious ethnic landscapes, and their contribution to the place we call Wisconsin.

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