

Abstract

Hmong in Comparative Contexts: Reinserting Non-Hmong Actors into Political and Military Resistance Organizations Opposed to the Lao PDR Government since 1975

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In 1975 the communist Pathet Lao seized control of Laos, a bold move that culminated with the official establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on December 2nd. Since then, and especially during the late 1970s and 1980s, various groups have politically and militarily organized in opposition to the Lao PDR government and their Vietnamese mentors. The Hmong are generally recognized as having been the main opponents of communist rule in Laos. General Vang Pao has been the only well-recognized leader of the United Lao National Liberation Front (ULNLF), commonly known as the *Neo Hom*, while Pa Kao Her has been depicted as the only leader of the Ethnic Liberation Organization of Laos (ELOL), more commonly known as the *Chao Fa*. While the involvement of ethnic Lao people has sometimes been acknowledged in relation to the ULNLF, non-Hmong involvement in the organization has, nonetheless, been underrepresented. For the ELOL, which is generally characterized as being a strictly Hmong organization fighting for a Hmong autonomous state in Laos, the role of non-Hmong has especially been underemphasized. The purpose of this paper is to ethnically contextualize both the ULNLF and the ELOL in order to demonstrate how non-Hmong have played significant roles in both organizations, in cooperation with Hmong associates. In doing this, I theorize about how struggles in Laos have been important for Hmong identity production in the America, and propose that ethnic politics and Hmong identity production outside of Laos has been a large part of the reason why non-Hmong have frequently been extracted from discourses related to Hmong opposition to the Lao PDR government.