

Neo-Rural Hmong in French Guiana

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Hmong Studies Journal, Volume 20, 1-27 pages.

Abstract

The Hmong have been living in French Guiana since 1977. They are mainly market gardeners and live in two main villages, which are mostly mono-ethnic. At the end of the 1990s, a new Hmong settlement, Corossony, was founded by Hmong from mainland France, neo-rural and neo-agriculturalists, driven by a more individualistic lifestyle and aspiring to work towards ideals of freedom, a return to a more authentically Hmong existence and social success. This study examines the characteristics of these neo-residents who stand apart from other Hmong in French Guiana, living in a way they perceive to be at variance with their previous lives in France. Their situation must be analyzed less as a new relationship to the rural world and to agriculture or a reappropriation of a past way of life than as a counter-model to their integration in mainland France.

Keywords: Hmong, French Guyana, France, neo-rurality, authenticity, individualism

The economic integration of Hmong immigrants in Western countries since 1975 is indicative of a relatively widespread phenomenon: integration into host societies often co-occurs with a choice to take up farming (or rather, revert to farming). There are many examples of this: in mainland France, the Hmong living in the regions surrounding Nîmes and Bourges are massively dependent on market gardening (Gauthier 1999, 2001)ⁱ. This is also the case in the United States, Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Fresno metropolitan area (Vang 2010; Xiong 2016) and Australia (Tapp 2004: 91 *sq.*)ⁱⁱ. As far as the Hmong community of French Guiana is concerned, economic integration is characterized by the extensive practice of market gardening and processes of (re-)conversion to rural living: agricultural activity has been a constant reality since their arrival in 1977 (Géraud 1997; Clarkin 2005). The Hmong were settled in French Guiana in 1977 in the village of Cacao, 70 km south of Cayenne in the commune of Roura. A second village, Javouhey, was created in 1979 in the commune of Mana in western French Guiana. Since then, various settlements have been established elsewhere in French Guiana, of which only one, Corossony, really remains. According to the latest official figures published, the Hmong are close to a thousand inhabitants in French Guiana, of whom 8 out of 10 reside in Cacao and Javouhey. Eighty percent of the workforce is in agriculture and 2/3 of them have French nationality (*Atlas des populations immigrées en Guyane*, INSEE, 2006, p. 12). According to my own estimates, the Hmong population in French Guiana is larger, probably about 2,500 people, or almost 1% of the total population of French Guiana. By living in practically mono-ethnic villages, they have managed to sustain a form of autonomy from the world at large. They are

relatively homogeneous in terms of socio-professional and residential statusⁱⁱⁱ. Population movements to French Guiana began in the early 1980s when the Hmong of French Guiana obtained naturalization (and therefore the opportunity to apply for passports and foreign visas) and have continued on to this day. This high mobility is one of the characteristics of the Hmong diaspora community (cf. Yang 2013), and in French Guiana, villagers are still divided into groups, even among those currently moving, between "old arrivals" and "new arrivals."

Seen against this backdrop, the creation in 2000 of an ex-nihilo settlement in Corossony in eastern French Guiana, in the commune of Regina, represents a sort of rupture. Corossony does not result from the emergence of "dissident" families, but rather from the organized immigration of a large number of families from France to French Guiana to become farmers, despite their not having lived in rural parts of France, with few exceptions. Candidates for immigration were determined on an individual and voluntary basis rather than by invoking family solidarity bonds between Hmong communities. In this sense, Corossony is the result of a bona fide neo-rural movement, with those who take part in it exhibiting a "pioneering" spirit. In this text, I have focused on an anthropological analysis of the motivations and expectations of these neo-rural individuals, as well as the forms which take on their daily existence in French Guiana. These new farmers often set out to achieve a genuine "life plan" built around a specific understanding of social success but also a form of return to a lifestyle considered – ambiguously - as more free, more natural and more consistent with that which the Hmong used to lead in Laos. Two types of issues can inform the reflection I propose.

Many sociological studies have been devoted to the subject of transformation in rural areas and emergence of new agricultural practices and actors. This research highlights in particular the place of local actors in the transformation of the rural world, their creative capacities to invent new practices that respond to contemporary challenges (in particular environmental ones) and construct local responses to global processes. These studies emphasize the importance of local, family or individual, initiatives to co-create a rural space marked by the creation of new markets, new goods and services, re-invented links between producers and costumers, and actions between peasant and scientific knowledge (Milone, Ventura & Ye 2015; D' Allens & Leclair 2016; Van Der Ploeg 2018). These new farmers do not stand in an economic marginality (but sometimes in an alternative to mainstream agriculture) and aspire to regain or enlarge their autonomy in complex production models that intertwine new forms of production, distribution and consumption, new relations especially between the rural and the urban, new networks, specific uses of resources and forms of belonging that satisfy emerging societal values. Research on changes in the agricultural milieu has shed light on the situation of the Hmong in Corossony, especially on the importance of – individual – autonomy. But it is significant to note that neo-residents are not reinventing new forms of agriculture in French

Guiana, but rather taking up anew an activity already practiced by the inhabitants of other Hmong villages, market gardening, with less communitarian, more individualized and more contract-based social relations.

Moreover, a substantial body of academic literature is dedicated to the dynamics of migration to rural areas to experiment with rural lifestyles and processes of rural gentrification in Western countries, especially in Europe (Dooling 2009; Nelson & *alii* 2010; Phillips 2005, 2010; Smith, 2011; Smith & Phillips 2001, 2018). These reflections highlight several characteristics of these neo-rural settlers, especially their embodied and emotional connections with nature, what Smith & Phillips (2001) call 'greentrification'. However, in scientific literature, rural reinvestment processes generally involve actors who are not farmers, and who find themselves in sometimes conflictual interaction with peasants. In the case of Corossony, Hmong neo-inhabitants settle in rural areas to become expressly farmers and, as we will see, they do not really have to integrate into a pre-existing agricultural world. They convey characteristic urban values and lifestyles and are motivated by a desire to return to 'nature', but their presence does not fundamentally change the Guyanese peasant community or the social structuration of other Hmong villages in Guyana.

In short, the objective of Corossony's neo-rural settlers can be accurately summed up neither as the re-imagining of rural life or agriculture, nor the re-creation of an ideal Hmong community. While they certainly place their plans to settle in French Guiana in the light of an ideal of freedom and success sometimes conflated with a return to a more authentic way of life, these plans are less and less evocative of Hmong history and culture. However, the villagers propose neither an alternative model, nor any new forms of agricultural exploitation, nor a truly novel approach to social integration. My objective is to show that life in French Guiana appears to them as a broad-brushed counter-model linked to their prior integration in France: ideas about social success and nostalgic concerns form the counterpoint to their social realities in the diaspora and their dashed expectations.

My writing is based on field anthropological research I have been conducting in French Guiana since 1988. Most of my investigations about Hmong community have been carried out in the village of Cacao, using the methods of social and cultural anthropology, especially long-term stays on the field and qualitative surveys. A special attention has been given to the life history approach, genealogies, individual and family trajectories. A multi-site study was also undertaken, focusing on the way Hmong in different contexts of migration relate to heritage, cultural identity, their rural or urban condition, and Hmong cultural authenticity.

The Hmong community experienced important movements of population between Guiana and mainland France (and also USA by the way) and that's the reason why, at the same time, I have established regular contacts and conducted informal interviews with Hmong of mainland France who

travel to French Guiana, especially those having lived in the Nîmes and Bourges regions from the 2000s onward^{iv}.

Since the 2000s, I have visited several times the settlement of Corossony and I've carried out structured interviews with the members of fifteen households on their reasons for settling in Guiana. I've also met many Hmong people living in France who had visited the Hmong villages of French Guiana, especially the settlement of Corossony; these interviews were more formal, consisting of a scheduled meeting at participants' residences in which they told the story of their journey to French Guiana and gave their impressions. During these meetings, I would ask to see the photos interviewees had taken during their trip and requested they provide commentary. This article is based on this specific research about the Hmong villagers of Corossony.

1) Living in Corossony, farming in French Guiana

At the origin of the Corossony settlement was a Hmong man who had hitherto lived in France. Following a sightseeing trip to Hmong villages in French Guiana, he contacted the Guianese mayor of the municipality of Regina to discuss plans to settle several Hmong families on a set of agricultural plots located about ten kilometers from the village's center. About twenty families from mainland France came to settle in 1992, but due to precarious living conditions, most left a year later. The few families left behind had to struggle to obtain basic amenities (water, electricity, construction of an access road) from the mayor of Regina. Turning their sound knowledge of French administrative structures to their advantage, they applied to obtain subsidies to build farms and grow crops. Gradually a more steady flow of Hmong families from France immigrated to French Guiana in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The families involved belong to different clans. Though some of them are interrelated, genealogical relationships were not decisive in the choice to immigrate: the candidates decided to leave on a voluntary basis. Lineage-based bonds of solidarity may have played a role. As one Corossony resident said:

"What drives Hmong to move to French Guiana? The ease and convenience of getting settled. You have a family that already owns property on site: when you arrive, your relatives help you out. Above all, there are subsidies, and the Guyanese administration is not very strict. Those are some of the comforts that I've appreciated here."

As can be observed from these remarks, family assistance is perceived as one of the assets contributing to the sense of freedom that neo-rural Hmong often emphasize^v. However, these bonds of solidarity are far from being as constraining as those that bind Hmong from other villages, and the Hmong of Corossony are acutely conscious of this:

"In Cacao, there were a ton of problems. Those who were there at the beginning want to control everything. If you want land, they decide. If you want to apply for a grant, they decide. They keep information to themselves. Your parents are willing to help you, but the elders want to keep control of everything. You have your hands tied."

Some Corossony residents are keen to set up their own young adult children as farmers in French Guiana and to share the experience and advantages they have acquired there over the past twenty years with them, but solidarity and the transmission of social and economic capital remain concentrated at the innermost family circle. It should be noted that at least four of the families present in Corossony came at the behest of their parents, rather elderly and eager to rebuild a life similar to the one they had known in Laos, taking with them their youngest son (and their own family) to whom kinship obligations traditionally assign a duty to help his parents. Some houses in Corossony (at least three) are occupied by families having recently arrived in Cacao unable to obtain farmland and who therefore settled in Corossony.

In Corossony like in other Hmong villages, agriculture is set up as small-scale and urban-oriented farming, but the villagers do not practice exactly the same activities as those in Cacao and Javouhey: agricultural production is varied and more focused on growing fruit than vegetables, especially pineapples and melons, in accordance with public aid programs for the agricultural development of Guyanese territory. Given Corossony's distance from urban markets, particularly the Cayenne market, where other Hmong market gardeners sell their produce, Corossony farmers only go to market once a week at most, favoring other sales outlets: wholesale fruit and vegetable purchasing centers in Cayenne, creating of a processing plant for dried fruit, selling to a fruit juice factory, etc. Some of Corossony's farmers are tinkering with more innovative experimental practices (e.g. off-ground cultivation, eco-friendly production. To put in perspective these developments in various rural contexts, see in particular D'Allens & Leclair 2016; Van der Ploeg 2018). What is therefore sociologically significant in the agricultural organization is that the families of Corossony have freed themselves from the Hmong community structures that held sway elsewhere, particularly in Cacao (cf. Géraud 1997): access to land, the allocation of market space, the fixing of identical selling prices and social control to ensure strict homogeneous forms of production. Thanks to their command of French and their familiarity with national laws and regulations, villagers deal directly and

individually with the French administrative structures that provide financial assistance or advice. In this respect, they are much more self-reliant than the inhabitants of other Hmong villages^{vi}. They experiment with more diversified activities, despite the material constraints weighing down on them (difficulty clearing land and distance from urban centers). This ability to contract individually with all economic and administrative partners fuels distrust among Hmong in other French Guiana villages, as this comment by a Cacao resident illustrates:

"They don't live like us; they don't help each other at weddings. They live like in mainland France. When they need money, they go to Cayenne. That's not family."

The infrastructure in Corossony is less well-developed than in other Hmong villages. Access roads are still unpaved and maintained with public subsidies. Certain construction works such as the cleaning of streams and ditches are carried out by villagers working together. Children don't attend local schools, but travel to the neighboring town of Regina, accommodated as boarders at Cayenne high school^{vii}. Unlike those in Cacao or Javouhey, these students speak French and Hmong as their mother tongues, since their parents speak both languages almost interchangeably. Some families even admit to experiencing difficulties expressing themselves in Hmong and have needed time to adapt in French Guiana to "relearn" how to use Hmong with people from other villages.

The village includes about twenty nearly identical permanent houses built with public subsidies. Each house is built on a parcel of farmland, which gives the site the appearance of a cluster of farms rather than a village of grouped houses. For several years, however, newly arrived families did not have access to an already-built house and had to settle for crude shelters built under tarpaulins. The village featured a curious mix of brand new buildings and squalid housing. A spacious outdoor venue was built for the celebration of Mass, the majority of the inhabitants being of Catholic faith; the venue sometimes serves to house the events of the Hmong New Year. An "Asian-style" restaurant, as described by its Hmong owner, makes it possible to serve meals to tourists who stop by in the village: Corossony and Regina have practically become must-see attractions for visitors driving along the National Route 2 from Cayenne to Saint-Georges-de-l'Oyapock on their way to Brazil. The most cost-intensive infrastructure, land clearing, purchase of farming machinery and construction of housing are to a large extent (about 75%) financed by public development aid subsidies in French Guiana.

2) The villagers of Corossony and the other inhabitants of French Guiana

The inhabitants of the Hmong villages of Cacao and Javouhey, especially right after they first settled in French Guiana, had little contact with the Guyanese general population. Interactions with the broader outside community were handled by a limited number of Hmong interlocutors who provided a kind of interface with the world beyond the villages (cf. Géraud 1997). On the contrary, since their arrival, the Hmong of Corossony have maintained close relations with the various political partners (mayors and elected representatives of French Guiana in particular), economic partners (Chamber of Agriculture) and public administrative bodies. Relations with the Guyanese elected representatives of the commune of Regina in which Corossony is located are not always simple and straightforward: though the settlement's location was decreed by the Guyanese mayor then in office, the local elected representatives fear in the long term that the Hmong villages will want to become independent communes. In the words of one of the first Hmong to settle in Corossony:

"The mayor brought us here to show that you can live in French Guiana without being a civil servant. But the Guyanese don't care much for us. They don't trust us. We have to keep a low profile, or they won't accept us."

However, some villagers have plans to run for public office to gain acceptance as full-fledged actors in the commune: in the last elections in 2014, a Hmong man was elected to the Regina Municipal Council (out of 14 council members).

Relations with Hmong from other villages are also fairly well established: invitations to New Year's celebrations held in each of the villages, Hmong visitors from France and the United States "on tour" in the Hmong villages. However, there is no real collaboration in the agricultural sector or to develop joint economic strategies. As I mentioned earlier, the villagers of Cacao or Javouhey are somewhat wary of these Hmong who have become "overly French" in their ways, who for their part do not shy away from criticizing opaque and burdensome community relations, or even outmoded attitudes unfit for the modern world. A young Hmong woman from Corossony said this about the other Hmong:

"Here, even for a Hmong, the mindset is very peculiar. You're not free to do as you please, you can't say what you want. Even for a Hmong like me, it's tough to deal with. I've felt like moving back to France several times".

A young farmer from Corossony also told me about the inhabitants of Cacao:

"I don't know how they manage, but they're totally in the dark when it comes to government assistance, they don't understand a thing. The Chamber of Agriculture staff, including myself, come to the village and go to each house, we chat with them. But in Cacao, when you talk to them, they're clueless."

An anecdote shall serve to illustrate the relatively tense climate between the inhabitants of the different villages: when Corossony was founded, a family from France sought financial help from members of their clan living in Cacao. Once the money had been collected and passed on, this Corossony family is rumored to have openly mocked the donors, who were too gullible and sufficiently bound by Hmong tradition to fall into the trap of clan solidarity. Those in Cacao were badly humiliated, saying:

"You can't be Hmong when it suits you and French when it doesn't. That's not what being Hmong is about. They have it easy; they come from France, they can go back. They think you can play at being Hmong."^{viii}

Playing a game or acting is the most apt metaphor for the way neo-rurals use what they call "the Hmong tradition"^{ix}: a card in hand, a resource to be leveraged among others according to the aims pursued, a social role that can be performed according to one's current interests. While the Cacao Hmong, especially among those who have been living in French Guiana for a long time, criticize this individualistic, opportunistic and distant use of the "Hmong tradition", residents of Corossony expressly claim it as one of the benefits of life in French Guiana. The following resident's quote attests to this:

"Here, the Hmong have held on to their customs and language. That's a good thing. Anyone can do so, if they like. In Corossony, people know how to juggle customs and French law. That's really cool. That's what I enjoyed about French Guiana. For that, it's better than France."

But the jabs that the inhabitants of Corossony and residents of the older villages make at each other are offset by a mutual admiration: Corossony residents do not want to succumb to the other villages' outdatedness, but they nevertheless praise their role as guardians of tradition. Residents of Cacao look askance at the liberties that neo-rurals take with regard to Community rules, but they are appreciative of their know-how and skills in dealing with global society and see in the village of Corossony an expression of "modernity". This is made evident in the appeal had by Corossony's urban and architectural design:

"Corossony isn't a village, like Cacao. It's flat, it's prettier; the houses are spaced out and new. That's unheard of in these parts. They have farmhouses nestled in the fields, like something in France or the US. It really looks modern."

This quote was uttered by a couple from Cacao. Just as the village of Cacao is widely acclaimed for being evocative of old Hmong villages in Laos, the village of Corossony is appreciated for embodying a trailblazing settlement, unencumbered by any solid geographical anchorage (French

Guiana) or historical or cultural reference point (Laos), a place beyond time where you can reinvent your own existence. This point will be further developed as it is one of the major arguments for settling in French Guiana for neo-rural people.

3) The social trajectories of Corossony families

An examination of the sociological trajectories of families present in French Guiana makes it possible to structure all the inhabitants according to two main criteria:

- firstly, a generational criterion separating those who lived in Laos before exile from people born in France as part of the diaspora. Everybody having lived in Laos will clearly affirm their nostalgic yearning to revert to a past life that they could retrieve by settling in French Guiana, a more obscure prospect among those born in France where rural life and traditional life are conflated as counterpoints to urban living conditions in France;

- a socio-economic and professional criterion: some have earned university degrees and experienced satisfactory professional integration in France (e. g. engineers, computer scientists, accountants, qualified technicians) while others were unemployed or working in low-paying and undervalued jobs. Those with recognized professional qualifications show a much more detached attitude towards the success or failure of their farming settlement in French Guiana. They have been able to return to France after having found life in French Guiana too harsh, or pursue more profitable activities in French Guiana in addition to agriculture (computer science, accountancy, professional photography, secretarial work and management, creation of micro-enterprises based on specialized agricultural projects such as the production of aromatic herbs). All of them are aware that their skills will allow them to remain mobile, both professionally and geographically.

These criteria play out in four scenarios:

- those who lived in Laos and came to French Guiana after a stint of relative poverty in France to find in Guiana a prosperous and easy-going life supposedly similar to that they experienced in Laos;

- those born and raised in France but confronted with sizable academic and professional difficulties who consider French Guiana as a place where economic success is finally within reach;

- those born and raised in France and well-integrated economically but who, for various reasons, lifestyle considerations or a yearning for a new beginning, have chosen to immigrate. We include in this category children who have come to French Guiana to accompany their aging parents. In their case, immigration is more undergone than chosen, but those persons are also characterized by successful prior professional integration in France (often resulting in regrets about having immigrated to French Guiana) and therefore they possess academic, professional and administrative skills.

- Finally, a singular but important case in the history of the village ought to be mentioned: the person behind the project to settle in Corossony is a Hmong man born in Laos in the mid-1950s. He had studied in Laos before becoming a schoolteacher^x. After taking refuge in Thailand, he moved to France because he was unable to relocate to the United States. He lived in the suburbs of Paris, performing a variety of odd jobs in trying conditions before setting up a garment workshop. He visited Hmong relatives in Cacao: he took to life in French Guiana and decided to settle there using a small sum saved up in France. But his plan wasn't to come to French Guiana whatever the cost may be: he insisted on remaining free and self-reliant in his projects, without subordinating himself to the already-established Hmong community. This is why he contacted a Guyanese elected official rather than enlisting mutual aid through family networks to immigrate to French Guiana as most newcomers to Cacao do. His children finished their studies in France, spent an unconvincing stay in Corossony and left for mainland France. Their father subsequently encouraged them to return to French Guiana in the early 2000s by offering them employment more in line with their aspirations (they are managers of the dried fruit processing plant and a wholesale center in Cayenne, commercial rather than agricultural jobs enabling them to spend part of their time in town).

This personal account is nevertheless representative of neo-rurality phenomena and condenses many characteristics that can be found in other actors' backgrounds: the nostalgia for life in Laos, the pro-active approach to individual entrepreneurship, the objective of accumulating material wealth in French Guiana ("*earning money, having a house and a car*" are the words most often echoed by villagers), a sometimes hard-to-achieve goal in France. The prospect of a better life is all the more present considering this person had experienced a form of social promotion in Laos which was shattered in exile, and which reinforced feelings of downgrading and social frustration. By comparison, about ten families of neo-residents from France move to settle in Cacao over the same period and speak of their similar trajectories in terms of social revenge: after having acquired valued positions in Laos and then having lost any form of social or professional recognition in exile, these families had the feeling of being able to sew together the broken thread of a social ascent that began before leaving Laos. It should be noted that none of the families had any farming experience before arriving in French Guiana, with the exception of a few young Hmong who worked as agricultural workers or helped market gardeners in France.

4) Moving to French Guiana: the words of Corossony families

I would like to start with a selection of remarks made by villagers that I considered representative of many of the motivations invoked by neo-rurals.

Excerpt 1: "I came to French Guiana as a child, but I left five years later. I subsequently came to visit Cacao: it had changed a lot, I thought it was great. So my husband and I decided to leave behind everything in France and move to French Guiana. We wanted to shake things up, work at our own pace, for ourselves. There's no stress here, no boss, we work whenever we want. That being said, we're getting by, but not making big money. We didn't really have any family in Corossony. Life's harsh; I'm used to a degree of comfort and it's a bit grueling. I don't see myself staying in French Guiana. On the other hand, with all the work we've put in, it's hard to just give up" (Hmong woman born in the early 1970s who arrived in French Guiana around 2000 and who was an employee in France before that).

Excerpt 2: "I have always felt homesick for life in Laos, I was fond of it. That's how I came up with the idea of coming here. Here you can get things done by yourself. In France, I don't even own a house. But you have to be very driven, because things move at a snail's pace in French Guiana. (...) With the benefit of hindsight, if I had to do it again now, I wouldn't." (Hmong man born in the mid-1950s in Laos, who worked as a small craftsman in France and who arrived in French Guiana in 1992, at the outset of the Corossony project).

Excerpt 3: "I want to live simply, like in Laos. Actually, I came to help out my parents, French Guiana wasn't really my thing. I had good career prospects in France. I tried to become a schoolteacher or work in Cayenne, but it's too far away. As it turns out, in agriculture, you get subsidies, you're given great support and you can manage yourself. I would like to gather together all of Corossony's young people. It's important to set up projects, otherwise it's rough. I know, I keep contradicting myself. I'm here in French Guiana, and at the same time it's really hard. But hey, it may sound weird, but when you've made a choice, you don't see things the same way. We do everything we can to keep believing." (Hmong man born in the early 1970s, arrived around 2000, computer scientist in France).

Excerpt 4 "I came because of my father. I didn't have a job in France, I wanted to get into market gardening with my uncle in Nîmes but my father wanted to go to French Guiana. The old people here are crazy, they believe that in French Guiana we can live just by putting our minds to it, by eating what we grow and going hunting. They have the old-fashioned Laotian mindset. They're satisfied with that. For them, it's nicer here than in France because it's quieter and they have a house. But if you want to become a farmer, you have to learn how and earn a

degree; only then can you apply for subsidies. You can't make it up as you go along. When I first came here, my father told me: this is your field. My field was a patch of forest. I cleared everything by myself, then we had to buy fertilizers and insecticides. The old people don't take all that into account. I wouldn't have come here by myself, it's too harsh here. I don't like hunting and fishing. I eat what I buy in stores (...) Here, the Hmong have held on to their customs and language. That's a good thing. Anyone can do so, if they like. In Corossony, people know how to juggle customs and French law. That's really cool. That's what I enjoyed about French Guiana. For that, it's much better than in France." (Hmong man born in the mid-1970s, arrived in Corossony in the mid-1980s, qualified technician in France).

Excerpt 5 "We lived in the US for five years, and then in the outskirts of Paris. After that, we decided to move to French Guiana. I'm an accountant, I also work part-time at the town hall. We really wanted to change around our lives, enjoy a quieter lifestyle. We'd like to earn some money here, then we'll move elsewhere." (Hmong woman born in the early 1970s, who arrived in French Guiana in the mid-1990s, and who worked as an accountant in France).

Excerpt 6 "When I first came here, I thought it was paradise. The jungle, the forest, I love it. I always watch adventure shows on TV. Adventure's what I'm into. Here you can always get by and make money. I don't have any family in French Guiana and Cacao is too urban. It's more pleasant here, more of a country feel. Even in France, I love the countryside, nature. But if you don't have any money, you've got nothing. In the forest you forget everything, the stress, the city." (Hmong man born in the late 1970s, who arrived in French Guiana in the late 1990s.)

As can be read in these interview excerpts and as I have repeatedly pointed out, the Hmong villages of French Guiana have for several years represented a kind of repository for the "traditional life" led by the Hmong in Laos. This nostalgic longing for the past is one of the major driving forces of the neo-rurals of Corossony, just as it fuels a large flow of Hmong diaspora tourists who come to relax and rediscover a cultural authenticity distorted or lost during their exile (Géraud 2003 ; 2018). But one can clearly distinguish between the generations who truly experienced Laos and those born since exile. While the former think they will become reacquainted in French Guiana with a lifestyle based on nearly self-sustaining food production (agriculture/hunting/fishing), younger people, aware of the real constraints of agricultural activity, rather underline the allure of an existence more in tune with nature. A young man clearly voices this duality:

"My parents liked the Hmong life, the Hmong atmosphere. It's not the same for me. It may strike you as silly, but I was a Scout, and I love nature.

The idea of returning to "a Hmong life" is ultimately a rather nebulous one. In the other Hmong villages of French Guiana, the legitimate definition of tradition remains an important issue between different actors in the community^{xi}, partly as a result of traditionalist attempts to promote a Hmong culture redefined by missionaries^{xii} (cf. Géraud 1997, 2018). There is nothing like this in Corossony, neither folklorization, nor a deliberate attempt to transcribe or preserve Hmong culture, nor an affirmation of identity based on emblematic cultural events. The Hmong New Year concerns mainly the villagers and pulls in few tourists. The Hmong who founded the Corossony settlement had submitted to the competent administrative department in Cayenne a proposal for a small museum in the village, "*about Hmong culture*", with the aim of exhibiting "*Hmong cultural artefacts, photos of the settlement's beginnings, Amerindian objects uncovered in the fields. So tourists would have a purpose in coming here*". This project did not really aim to promote the heritagization of Hmong culture but to develop tourism-related activities. This undertaking has been unsuccessful.

When asked specifically about what they found of "Hmong tradition" in French Guiana, the inhabitants of Corossony will talk about family relations ("*We come for the family. He who has brothers has strength*") and the practice of the Hmong language. It is rather paradoxical to note that these two aspects have little practical relevance in the daily lives of neo-rurals, uninterested in lineage-based bonds of solidarity and not really concerned with expressing themselves in the Hmong language, which some people have trouble speaking.

As far as very young people are concerned, the Hmong "tradition" or "culture" to be retrieved is evoked by somewhat reifying expressions such as "*it is Hmong-like*", "*it is a Hmong atmosphere*", "*it is the Hmong mentality*", such words not being exempt from a form of essentialism: "*Hmong love nature and the earth*" or "*Hmong are materialistic and want things of their own. They are stubborn and proud, mindful of what people will say. That's why they want to succeed and they stay in Guiana.*" Such essentialism probably reflects the distance between them and a perception of Hmong society in a Laotian context, as well as their internalization of common sense Western notions on ethnic and cultural specificity. The moral judgment they make on the validity of this "tradition" is itself ambivalent: the "tradition" is both burdensome, a sign of backwardness (as are their judgments on the other Hmong villages in French Guiana testify^{xiii}) and a precious asset to be preserved. But beyond statements of principle on their attachment to Hmong culture (for example: "*I am Hmong, they're my people, it's good to live here*"), villagers born in France do not really actively work towards revitalizing practices designated as traditional, neglecting heritage-related undertakings

which have a greater presence in other Hmong villages in French Guiana^{xiv} and elsewhere in the department, in general^{xv}.

6) Relationship to nature and sense of freedom: narratives of origin, narratives of freedom

Everybody, young and old alike, stress the feeling of freedom they experience in French Guiana, most often linked to the feeling that they are in touch with nature. Their desire to connect with nature does not cover real ecological concerns (food sovereignty, sustainable development, protection of eco-systems). From this point of view, they are closer to the values of 'greentrification' (Smith and Phillips 2001) than to the objectives of 'ecological gentrification' (Dooling 2009) or environmental sustainability-oriented practices of the new peasants (Milone & *alii* 2015). Many Hmong also emphasize the material difficulties of life in Corossony, especially in the early days of their settlement. It is therefore not so much an "easy-going, relaxed lifestyle" that is sought, but a life of adventure, an unfettered existence (without social constraints should we say) and contact with an abundant nature.

While the relationship with the outdoors is supposed to harken back to "*a simple life, as in Laos*", for villagers born in France, it is grounded in a Western imagination shaped by television or cinema (adventure programs and films), or by teenage getaways (being a Scout). In concrete terms, beyond proclamations, this desire for nature is also embodied in recreational practices, hunting and fishing being now regarded as such. The villagers comment on these activities, insisting that they also provide more hedonistic opportunities for walks in the forest or along the river, sometimes even as a family activity. The inhabitants of Corossony do not shy away from appreciating French Guiana as "tourists", by travelling to visit the attractions promoted by French Guiana's tourism industry and focused on the enhancement of unspoiled wilderness (for instance the egg-laying of the leatherback turtles in the west of the department, head to the beach in Cayenne, or touring among Kaw wetland, a natural park which includes Regina and Corossony)^{xvi}. It should also be remembered that almost all neo-residents had their first *tourist* experience in French Guiana, visiting the Hmong villages before *choosing to* settle there.

This feeling of freedom is also fueled by the less burdensome administrative constraints in French Guiana than in mainland France: the department is large (1/5 of the French mainland), sparsely populated (about 500,000 inhabitants in all) and the institutional and regulatory grid may seem less tightly bound. "*Here, if you go hunting or fishing, you don't need a license. It's just like the old days.*" Or "*I liked all the obstacle-free possibilities here*". Other testimony:

"Here, you can set up a vendor stand in the village on a whim. You don't ask anyone's permission. Of course, that's not how you should go about it, it's not the proper way, but it's also handy. You don't make life complicated".

This feeling of freedom has been cited in previously mentioned interviews with women born in France. But it should be noted that they are often much more reserved than their husbands about the possibilities offered by French Guiana:

"My husband is living out a dream of freedom here. To be his own manager, his own boss. Go hunting whenever he wants, no schedules. For women it's very hard. Most of them come because they are compelled to. In France I have Hmong friends of course. But I chose them, they are like me, they have the same outlook. But this place is too Hmong. Men are fine with that, because they've always been farmers. But that's not the life I want my daughters to have. I don't want them to become farmers.

There are several reasons for this finding: it is often social downgrading (unemployment or a devalued profession) that drives Hmong men to leave. Women, wives and mothers, however, do not feel downgraded themselves (the position of housewife not being a degrading one); the urgency to immigrate and retrain for work is less pressing and the hardships of settling in French Guiana are therefore more acutely felt as they receive less in the way of compensation:

"I have always lived in mainland France. I'm used to a certain degree of comfort. It's very harsh here. Before, we used to have an apartment and a paycheck every month. It's not the same here at all. Here, even for a Hmong, the mindset is very peculiar. You're not free to do as you please, you can't say what you want. Even for a Hmong like me, it's tough to deal with. I've felt like moving back to France several times. My husband's the one who wants to stay." (Hmong woman born in the early 1970s, who arrived around 2000, and who was unemployed in France).

Another reason is that young Hmong women are experiencing real emancipation in France, where their situation now coincides with that of other young women in their social class and age group, while the weight of social control, pervasive in the villages of French Guiana, gives them the impression of being much more exaggeratedly scrutinized and restrained^{xvii}. In this sense, feelings of breaking free that come with immigration in French Guiana are more male than female ideals, which the Hmong exemplify in male-dominated activities (hunting, fishing, freedom of movement and lack of schedules) and never apply to the specific condition of women (domestic activities or care of young children, for example).

"I wasn't very well accepted in the village. I speak better French than my husband and write well, so I do all the paperwork. But the others say that I wear the pants, that I am not submissive like a proper Hmong woman. I've become accustomed to such remarks, but they're deeply shocking. I made a point of educating my children, enforcing homework schedules and sending them off to bed. But the others have told me that isn't the Hmong way. (...) I hope to return to France, my children have already left. It hasn't been very fulfilling here, either for them or for me. But my husband enjoys life here; in France he didn't have a regular job. So for him, it's paradise" (Hmong woman born in the late 1960s, who arrived in French Guiana in the late 1990s and worked as a secretary in France).

7) Discourse on individual initiative and social "success"

In most of the interviews cited, leaving for French Guiana is presented as a personal choice driven by a desire to pursue a life project. The actual objective reality of this choice has already been qualified, particularly on the part of women, as well as in the case of younger children who are forced to accompany their parents. But it is noteworthy that in this case, and with all the contradictions it entails, social actors try to conciliate constraints and free will (as shown in excerpt 3).

Corossony's inhabitants have all had a previous experience as visitors to French Guiana, and many claim to have looked at several possible destinations before deciding to immigrate to French Guiana, in a kind of comparative review of feasible professional conversions:

"I was uncertain, I wanted to go to the United States or Canada, so I visited family there. But French Guiana turned out to be the easier choice and it resembles how life used to be. I came to see Cacao and enjoyed it, so I decided to come and settle down." (Hmong man born in the early 1960s, who arrived in French Guiana in 2000, unemployed in France).

"We wanted to change our lives around and thought, 'why not French Guiana?' We could just as well have set off for Canada or Australia, though." (Man born in the late 1970s, who arrived in French Guiana in 2000 and graduated with a computer science degree in France).

This individualistic and pro-active discourse is coupled with a celebration of initiative and entrepreneurship:

"Nothing gets off the ground here without individual planning. Incentives from the Town Hall or the General Council are not enough. There has to be someone behind it, someone serious about pursuing a project."

This voluntarism is seen as crucial to overcoming the essentially material initial difficulties of starting a farm. This insistence on "getting started" can be analyzed in various ways: first and foremost, it comes up in the discourse of all the Hmong of French Guiana, who recount their individual and collective history in the area, such as their having transformed a wild habitat into arable, landscaped terrain (a theme clearly referring, literally as well as metaphorically, to "success"). In the case of Corossony's inhabitants, recalling hardships overcome further underlines newcomers' pro-activeness, as well as their pioneering spirit. It is undoubtedly this last point that best characterizes the inhabitants of Corossony for the other Hmong villagers, as evidenced by the above-mentioned comments on the architectural aspect of the settlement: a village of "settlers" as in other parts of the world, without any further references either to Asian villages or to other Hmong villages in French Guiana.

The pioneering spirit also mirrors a widely shared Western fantasy about French Guiana, often perceived as a part of the Amazon to be conquered. Likewise, the urge for break and change is an essential theme in the trajectories of professional or "existential" reconversion. In this sense, the inhabitants of Corossony are probably much more in keeping with other neo-rurals in Western countries than motivated by explicitly Hmong values (for comparison, see for instance Guimont & Simard 2010: 459). At the same time, their outspoken individualism and embrace of change are also part of the continuous flow of exchanges between diaspora communities. When candidates for departure consider French Guiana, the United States, Canada or Australia, they are not simply making an inventory of potential destinations; they are well and truly part of the social space of the diaspora, considering among or near which Hmong communities they would like to relocate.

This individualism tends to be at the root of the village's social bond: inhabitants insist more on what binds them as social actors in their endeavors than on their genealogical relations or real cultural proximity. If we refer to the typology proposed by Steven Emery (2015) analyzing individualism as a major value in peasant practices, Hmong villagers in Corossony are part of a desire for 'autonomy' and not for interdependence or real cooperation. The village is made up of atomized domestic groups, without any significant horizontal net-working or local/endogenous synergy. It is the feeling of freedom that is identified as a shared "tradition", which is more a matter of individualistic imperative than a specific cultural "value". The organization of Corossony itself is entirely dissimilar to that of other villages, with neither a council of elders nor a clan council. Relationships are not community based but association based, as the following statements illustrate:

"I wanted to gather together all the young people living in Corossony. We'd be better off if we got organized. I've formed a community association enabling us to apply for grants and acquire equipment."

In this respect, Corossony is less a Hmong village than a group of Hmong actors driven by a common ideal, which does not however include any non-Hmong residents.

One of the main objectives of neo-rurals is to achieve in French Guiana a form of tangible success often deemed difficult to achieve in mainland France. This success is essentially described as the opportunity to have a "chosen" (and not endured) professional activity and the accumulation of material capital (house, car, property, and cash savings):

"When you're out of a job in France, you can come to French Guiana, because you can always find work there. You earn money and you can afford your own house." (Hmong man born in the late 1960s, who arrived in French Guiana in 2005, unemployed in France).

"We want to make money here, and then we'll move elsewhere. We've always wanted to get a place of our own" (Hmong woman born in the early 1970s who arrived in French Guiana in the mid-1990s and who worked as an accountant in France).

"We come here to afford to buy a place of our own. My parents have nothing to show for their time in France. After living here for 10 years, you've got a house, a plot of land, a car, and money." (Hmong man born in France in the early 1980s, who arrived in French Guiana in 2005, and who worked as qualified technician in France).

But the desire to build up capital does not go hand in hand with the desire to "take root in French Guiana": many of the comments already mentioned show that the neo-residents of Corossony do not necessarily plan to remain in French Guiana. On the other hand, this capital will increase the possibility of being more mobile and therefore of feeling more free.

It should be noted that while neo-residents explicitly aspire to material success, this ideal remains tainted by moral discredit. The Hmong criticize themselves for being "*materialistic*", "*selfish*", "*cheap*": I had already noted comparable comments in the villages of Cacao and analyzed them as the internalization of Christian religious values imposed by the missionaries, (condemning money-hungry behaviors and a so-called thirst for individual success), from which the neo-residents are not totally immune.

8) Success and "living according to the heart" in French Guiana: a counter-model of integration in mainland France

The same may be true of the desire to escape wage labor and to "be one's own boss" and to associate "success" with the building of material capital, a practice that is almost recurrent in traditional rural societies and at least explicit in pre-diaspora Hmong society. Hmong specialists have repeatedly noted the desire for freedom as a community-held value and we can hypothesize that the desire to escape from all constraints may echo cultural values. Actually in Asian context in the 1960s, often monolineal Hmong villages were unstable, with parts of a lineage frequently breaking off to go reside elsewhere and assert their independence *vis-à-vis* the rest of the group (see in particular Jacques Lemoine's 1972 monograph). Moreover I have shown that rivalry and competition between genealogical groups, to avoid being subsumed by one another, constituted the main part of the collective memory of Hmong history during the past half century and remained one of the engines of the political life in Guyanese Hmong villages (Géraud 2005). But it would be wrong to interpret the aspirations of these visitors simply as the expression of a cultural specificity. In this sense, the freedom claimed and the pro-active declarations, the concern to be constantly mobile, the "free choice" proclaimed in daily life (choice of departure, choice of destination, choice of work, choice of playing the cultural card or not, choice of leaving again, etc.) are undoubtedly just as much part of a liberal model of society as they evoke specifically Hmong cultural characteristics.

This interpretation seems to me to be all the more justified since the motivations of neo-rural people and their perceptions of life in French Guiana don't so much make reference to a lifestyle of yesteryear in Laos than to a reality of their existence in mainland France. It is to avoid the fear, real or perceived, of a social and economic downgrading that the inhabitants of Corossony chose to come to French Guiana. Interview excerpts clearly illustrate that everyday life in French Guiana is seen as a counter-model to life in France, both economically (work for everyone, income-generating activities, no bosses or employees, no professional constraints) and socially (healthier, more natural, less strenuous lifestyle, more cordial social relations).

9) Conclusion

Despite the differences in the trajectories that lead some Hmong to settle in Corossony, a certain number of constants emerge. First of all, the fact that neo-rurals keep themselves at a distance as much from properly community-oriented Hmong relations as from the host society in which they've

settled. Certainly, they expressly plan to revert to an existence close to that of the Hmong people in Laos and enjoy living in a village where only Hmong people reside. As many of the Hmong of mainland France who come to French Guiana, they seek a 'place of origin' and show sure-fire signs of a "homing desire which is not the same as a desire for a 'homeland'" (Brah 1996: 180). This author argues that the concept of diaspora has to explore experiences of dislocation and of location, and must embody the subtext of 'home'. 'Home' could be both a place of origins, "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination, (...) a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of origins" (Brah 1996: 192) and also "the lived experience of a location" (*ibid.*) where feeling 'at home'^{xviii}. But they make sure that they are not entirely tied up by lineage-based solidarity, in particular by steering clear of other Hmong villages and by giving priority in social integration to the exercise of strictly individual and modern skills. The reference to the Hmong "tradition" is a resource among others to bring plans to live in French Guiana to fruition. The invoking of their Laotian origin or the desire to live in conformity with an authentic Hmong culture stands more as the counterpoint of life in France than a genuine reference to life in Laos.

At the same time, while processes trending towards individualized social relations and the relationship with oneself as an independent actor may seem firmly established, neo-residents do not move and evolve in a perfectly open field of possibilities: although they demonstrate a desire to promote entrepreneurship and pioneering spirit, they move only in the vicinity of other Hmong communities in the diaspora^{xix}. Prospects for professional success remain linked to already proven models such as market gardening, and to a certain representation of rural and farm life as a space of freedom but above all as a place sheltered from the vagaries of the modern world. In this sense, French Guiana is not really conceived as a social and geographical space for adventure, innovation or 'rural idyll' but as a safe haven or a place of refuge to live "according to one's heart". We can find in the motivations and words of Corossony inhabitants many topics which characterize new peasants (Milone, Ventura & Le 2015; D' Allens & Leclair 2016; Van Der Ploeg 2018) : pride to construct, endurance, conviction, and in some way a sort of resistance against global society. But agricultural practices in Guiana do not represent an alternative to mainstream agriculture or to the liberal global society (Hmong in Corossony are guided by liberal values of economic success, individualism and entrepreneurship). They don't try to save eco-systems, to imagine a new society or an original way for Hmong in diaspora, but they aspire to regain autonomy to protect themselves and to avoid the uncertainties of the global society.

More importantly, they don't stand in a long-term perspective. The relationship to time particularly reflects this feeling of balance and unsteadiness between contradictory injunctions; many neo-residents regret their choice or do not envision their futures in their country. On the other hand,

"all this could disappear," say many Hmong keen to preserve evidence of Corossony's existence by making films and taking photos. Some of them even wished to create a digital archive of the settlement, on the grounds that "It's going too fast; soon we won't be able to remember what it was like" or "In ten years, it won't look like this anymore. We have to keep photos"^{xx}. The very history of Corossony's settlement is governed by a sort of accelerated temporality: from trailblazing beginnings to a village of groundbreaking modernity, Corossony seems to condense the film of a made-from-scratch success story, but one which is fragile and fleeting. Everything proceeds as if the inhabitants were oscillating between remembrance of an idealized past and the projection into a future located "elsewhere". This "in-between" in terms of temporality denotes a sociological "in-between".

ⁱ The Hmong installed in France from 1976 onwards were supposed to help revitalize rural areas affected by depopulation. In reality, the Hmong moved en masse to cities for urban employment. Since the late 1990s, some have returned to agricultural activities for the urban market. It is no coincidence that many families are now travelling to French Guiana, reversing the direction of immigration, to become market gardeners and avoid proletarianization or unemployment in mainland France. For research about Hmong living in France, see Hassoun 1997. For more details on the integration problems had by young generations that grew up in France, see Gauthier 1999 and 2001.

ⁱⁱ These considerations must be integrated to an overview about Hmong economic situations in diaspora : see Chia Youyee Vang's article on the economic, political and cultural integration of the Hmong in the United States, as well as the collective work of Mark E. Pfeifer, Monica Chiu and Kou Yang (2013), in particular the first part, "Hmong Social and Political Adaptation in the United States". See also Tapp 2004; Tapp & Lee 2004; Tapp, Michaud, Culas & Lee 2004; Turner, Bonnin & Michaud 2015; Luesakul 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ It should be noted, however, that difference in trajectories in Laos and in exile can lead to sometimes fierce conflicts within villages (cf. Géraud 2005).

^{iv} There is little social science Hmong research specifically dealing with the Hmong of French Guiana: apart from the research of an anthropologist (Géraud 1997; 2001; 2002; 2005; 2018), of Clarkin (2005) in the *HSJ*, the work comes from ethno-linguists or specialists in issues concerning education among immigrant populations (see in particular Migge and Léglise 2010; Migge and Renault-Lescure 2009; Cho Ly 2007 and 2011). The Hmong have also been the subject of reports penned by agronomists on agricultural development or by doctors concerning the health status of these populations.

^v Nicholas Tapp has noted that the hmong kinship system is unexpectedly homogeneous among Hmong communities both in South East Asia and in diasporic contexts : "... one kinship system, knitted together by a strong unifying ideology of lineage reciprocity, operated across vast distances" (2004: 137).

^{vi} It should be noted that this process of empowering agricultural actors and rationalizing economic activity is also under way in the other Hmong villages: the land no longer belongs collectively to the villagers under the guise of an agricultural cooperative; rather, the plots have been

meted out individually and each farmer has gained ownership. Production and the methods of cultivation and sale have diversified significantly over the last 15 years or so.

vii On the schooling of Hmong children, see Migge and Légglise 2010; Migge and Renault-Lescure 2009; Cho Ly 2007 and 2011.

viii This anecdote was told to me by the Cacao family "victim" of this mockery but I did not get the other party's version. Regardless of the accuracy of the facts, it quite aptly reflects the sentiments of Cacao's inhabitants with regard to Corossony.

ix In this article, I will focus on using the terms of 'Hmong tradition' or 'Hmong culture' as they appear in the actors' discourse and trying to clarify the meaning they give to these expressions.

x For an overview of the sociological diversification initiated in Laos, see Yang Dao (1975); J.-P. Hassoun (1997: 87-95); Prasit Leepreecha (2013: 6-9); Jeremy Hein (2013: 212-213; 221-226).

xi The process of heritagization in Caco and Javouhey has been partly prefigured by concepts of culture defined by French missionaries living in Hmong villages in Laos or administrating schools where young Hmong were educated. These Catholic missionaries, — who were also behind the Hmong's planned settlement in French Guiana —, were strongly committed to safeguarding "traditional" Hmong culture. They undertook much collection, transcription and conservation of folklore (songs, myths, and objects), particularly by disseminating Barney and Smalley's Romanized Popular Alphabet. They trained their students, some of whom now live in French Guiana, to archive a Hmong culture whose present representation they helped to forge. As such, few should be surprised to learn that Hmong of Guiana have a predisposition to celebrating past ways of life, even if relationship to cultural identity and social usage has greatly evolved, especially under the influence of the younger Hmong relatively unaffected by missionary-imposed canons. In French Guiana, a degree of approximation is now accepted and Hmong raised in the host country mixes hybrid elements to claim their sense of belonging. For example, they sometimes claim an "Asian" identity, in loose reference to Japanese cartoons, movies from Hong Kong or the practice of martial arts. But Laotian influences, food and dance, costumes, reverence for the royal family of Laos, or speaking of the Lao language by the villagers raised and educated in Laos, are clearly affirmed as an integral part of the Hmong culture.

xii The French Catholic missionaries were mainly interested in ritual practices (wedding ceremonies, shamanism), what is referred to as "oral literature" (ball game songs, wedding songs and love songs) and mythological corpus. It was Father Bertrais who carried out an immense archival work in Laos, Thailand and French Guiana. Most of his works were published by the Hmong Community Association based in French Guiana. Father Bertrais was behind the initiative of the installation of Hmong in French Guiana, and lived himself for a long time in the Hmong village of Javouhey in western French Guiana. He died in 1997 (for a bibliography of Father Bertrais, see P. Chanson 2007). His role was essential to the constitution of a Hmong memory and identity through written documents — even to the traditionalist conversion to Hmong culture. One can get an idea of Bertrais' importance in the article by Roberta Julian (2012) analyzing the letters sent to Father Bertrais by different Hmong actors of the diaspora.

xiii One of the few anecdotes I have heard about intra-village socializing highlighted the importance of social control, including in Corossony. A resident had been singled out to run for municipal elections and then refused to do so in these terms:

"Here, the Hmong mindset holds sway. That would've been trouble. If someone from this clan was to assume such a position, he would have the information and not the others. Why

doesn't someone from another clan run? It would've placed us ahead of who were there at the very beginning. It would have been frowned upon and made a fuss.

^{xiv} However, it should be noted that symbolically, since the village was founded, the villagers have been planting plots of rice necessary to celebrate New Year festivities.

^{xv} In French Guiana official institutions exist to promote natural and cultural heritage. The Museum of Guyanese Culture, which includes a collection of ethnographic Hmong objects (this museum is scheduled to be renovated and transformed into a "House of Cultures and Memoirs of French Guiana". See the museum website <amazonian-museum-network.org>). The Hmong community do not feel very concerned about this museum, but the villagers of Cacao attach great importance to the French Guiana Regional Nature Park, which encompasses their village. This park was created in 2001 and aims, among other things, to preserve artisanal and agricultural know-how and to promote local agricultural products (<guyane-parcregional.fr>). On the question of the heritagization process in French Guiana, see Mam-Lam-Fouck and Hidair 2010.

^{xvi} This aesthetically-oriented understanding of French Guiana through leisure activities is also beginning to spread to other Hmong villages in French Guiana, particularly among newly settled residents from mainland France.

^{xvii} On the situation of women in the Hmong Diaspora, see Donnelly 1994; Julian 2004; Cha 2013.

^{xviii} If some of the Hmong of French Guiana could have visited Laos in the two last decades, very few Hmong of the diaspora have decided to settle back permanently in Laos (I know only one family in Guiana who went back in Laos fifteen years ago).

^{xix} It can be noted that diaspora represents more a connection as a "pluri-local" ethnic and family network (Zelinsky 2001) rather as a transnational diasporic group.

^{xx} About social uses of video and audio recordings in the Hmong diaspora practices (audio-letters, archives, documentary heritage), see for instance Schein 2004 and Ogden 2015.

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