

**Welcoming Remarks by Dr. Yang Dao at the Hmong Across Borders
Conference, University of Minnesota, October 4, 2013.**

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Abstract

Text of the Welcoming comments made by Dr. Yang Dao to attendees at the Hmong Across Borders Conference held at the University of Minnesota in October 2013.

Keywords: Hmong History, Hmong Studies

Honorable Dignitaries,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am a Hmong from Laos. I have received my Ph.D. Degree in social sciences at the University of Paris, France, in May 1972. After my education in Europe, I went back to Laos and I worked, from July 1972 to March 1974, as Director of Human Resources Department in the Ministry of Planning of the Royal Lao Government. In April 1974, I was appointed by His Majesty Sisavang Vatthana, the last King of the Kingdom of Laos, as a member of the National Political Council which functioned as a Laotian National Congress. In May 1975, due to international political circumstances, I was forced to leave my country and to take the road of exile. In July 1976, I went back to France to take political refuge in Paris where I worked in different educational and journalistic capacities. In January 1983, I was offered a research and teaching position at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Therefore, I migrated to the United States of America. Today, I am a U.S. citizen and live as a retired resident of the city of Brooklyn Park in Minnesota.

This morning, I have the honor of welcoming each and every one of you to the Hmong Across Borders Conference which takes place at this very moment at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all the prestigious researchers and experts, who have sacrificed their precious time to come from many states of the U.S.A. and from all over the world to share their knowledge on Hmong history, culture and traditions and to present their visions on the future of Hmong cultural identity which is faced with the impact of globalization.

From time memorial, the Hmong people have constituted one of the most ancient peoples in China. However, the vicissitudes of history have brought them from the Yellow River, near the border with Mongolia, more than two thousands year ago, to the Southern part of China where the Hmong population is estimated, today, at more than 11 million people. Then, at the beginning of the 19th century, because of wars, persecutions and poverty, many of them migrated to Southeast Asia. Today, there are more than one million Hmong living in North Vietnam, about 600,000 Hmong in North Laos, less than 200,000 Hmong in North Thailand and about 12,000 Hmong in Burma. After the Secret War of Laos, which was the extension

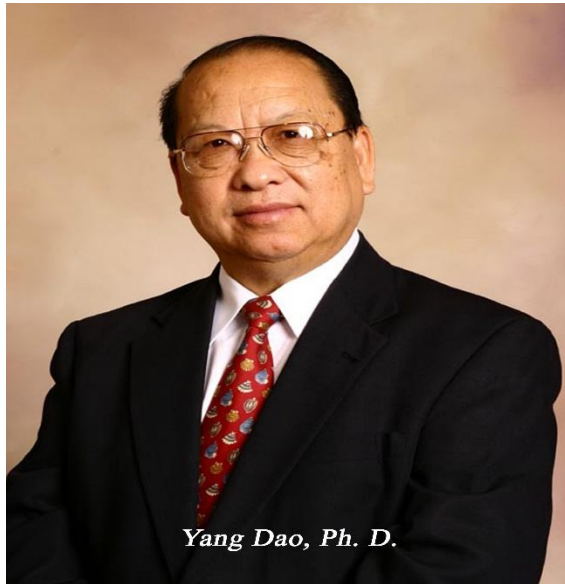
of the Vietnam War in 1975, more than 150,000 Hmong were forced out of their home country of Laos to take the road of exile to resettle themselves as refugees in Australia, France, Germany, Canada and mostly in the United States of America. Thus the vicissitudes of history have transformed, across the centuries, the Hmong people into a stateless ethnic group, today scattered all over the world.

In this context, this Hmong Across Borders Conference, which takes place in this welcoming city of Minneapolis, is very meaningful. I strongly believe that our speakers, who are experts on Hmong issues, will contribute to shed a light to the future of the Hmong cultural identity under the social and economic effects of Hmong contemporary migrations and in the globalization of our humanity.

Now, I have the great pleasure in introducing our keynote speaker of this historic event, Dr. Prasit Leepracha who is a Hmong born in Nan province of Northern Thailand. He got his B.A. Degree in political sciences from Ramkhamhaeng University of Bangkok in 1984. In 1987, he received his MA in Social Sciences and Population Research from Mahidol University. He completed his MA in Anthropology in 1997 and achieved his Ph.D. degree at the University of Washington in Seattle in the United States of America. Today, Dr. Prasit Leepracha is a professor on Social Sciences at Chiang Mai University in Northern Thailand.

Would you please help me welcome our keynote speaker, Dr. Prasit Leepracha, to the podium.

About the Author:



Dr. Yang Dao is a Hmong from Laos. He received his Ph.D. in social science from the Sorbonne, University of Paris, France, in May 1972. From July 1972 to March 1974, he worked as Director of the Human Resource Department of the Ministry of Planning in the Royal Lao Government. In April 1974, he was appointed by His Majesty King Sisavang Vattana to the National Political Council of Coalition (Laotian National Congress) of the Kingdom of Laos.

After the takeover of Laos by the communists in May 1975, Dr. Yang Dao took the road of exile and migrated to France, where he served in a variety of educational and journalistic capacities in Paris. From January 1983 to June 1994, he successively served as Southeast Asian Specialist and faculty member at the University of Minnesota, Hamline University, and Metropolitan State University in Minnesota, U.S.A.. From July 1994 to June 2002, Dr. Yang Dao worked as Assistant-Director of the English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) Program and Director of Multi-Language Communications Department of the Saint Paul Public Schools. From July 2002 to June 2005, he taught Hmong history, culture and traditions at the Department of Asian Cultures and Literatures of the University of Minnesota. Today, he is retired and is a consultant on South-East Asian Education and Cultures.

Dr. Yang Dao speaks and writes fluently in Hmong, Lao, French and English, and he has a good command of the Vietnamese and Thai languages. He has authored and co-authored several books in French and English: *The Hmong-French Dictionary* in 1964; *The Hmong of Laos in the Vanguard of Development* (in French) in 1975; *The Fabulous Adventure of the Poppy People* (in French) in 1978; *The Dragon, the Master of Sky and his Seven Daughters* (in French) in 1978; *The French-Hmong Dictionary* in 1980; *Handbook for Teaching Hmong-Speaking Students* (in English) in 1988;; *Minority Cultures of Laos* (in English) in 1992; *Hmong at the Turning Point* (in English) in 1993; and *Hmong/Miao in Asia* (in English) in 2004. Dr. Yang Dao has also published, in French and English, numerous articles on Lao and Hmong contemporary history, cultures and traditions. Dr. Yang Dao has been a keynote speaker on Lao-Hmong history and Hmong Literature at national and international

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conferences, from French universities to American college universities to the Institute of Nationalities of Beijing, China. Finally, he is a writer and composer of several Hmong modern songs (1965-2011).