

# **HMONG HISTORICAL FIGURES PRESENTATION**

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# King Chi You

King Chi You is an ancient hero of the Hmong people in China. King Chi You, along with Huang Di and Yan Di, is regarded as one of the three great ancestors of the Chinese Nation.

King Chi You was a key descendent of the Hmong nationality. It is believed he was the chieftain of a tribal alliance formed by several nationalities in southern China about 5000 years ago.

King Chi You still retains an important place in Hmong mythology and customs.



# Lor Kia Tong

Blia Yao Lor, known as Lor Kia Tong, was one of the first Hmong to assume a leadership position in the government of Laos.

Lor Kia Tong was one of the Hmong leaders allied with the French between 1919 and 1935.

Lor Kia Tong was the grandfather-in-law of Touby Lyfoung, another important Hmong leader. Lor Kia Tong died in Nong Het, Laos.



# Ly Xia Foung

Ly Xia Foung was born in 1888 in the village of Ha Klua Lia, Nong Het, Laos. He was a very well respected person in the Hmong community and was one of the first Hmong to gain a prominent position in Lao society.

Ly Xia Foung was a farmer, craftsman and a traveling tradesman. He helped the Hmong minority liaison with the Lao government in relation to the issues of health, well-being, and education. Ly Xia Foung strongly encouraged Hmong children to attend school so they could better their lives. Ly Xia Foung was very skilled in farming, blacksmithing, carpentry, and basket weaving. He was also creatively talented in singing, playing the flute, and qeej instrument playing. He was multilingual and spoke Chinese, Laotian, and a bit of Vietnamese, in addition to Hmong. Ly Xia Foung died of tetanus in 1939, in the village of Phak Khe where he had been the District Administrator of Keng Khuai.

The photo and most of the bio information were derived from Touby Lyfoung: An Authentic Account of the Life of a Hmong Man in the Troubled Land of Laos, Touby Lyfoung Foundation, 1996.



Ly Xia Foung, 1936

# Shong Lue Yang

Shong Lue Yang was a popular messianic leader and teacher of a Hmong writing system in Laos. During the time that Shong Lue Yang was teaching in the 1960's, there were over 300,000 Hmong in Laos.

Gradually, Yang chose Hmong and Khmu' teachers to help him teach and he also built a school. As the news spread of his work, the Communist government heard about Shong and his teaching. They saw Shong as a threat because of his invention of a Hmong writing system, and were out to kill him. He was pursued first by the Vietnamese Communists, but is believed by some to have been killed by anti-Communist Hmong. He had been accused by both sides of assisting the other. Today, Shong Lue Yang's Pahawh Script for the Hmong language continues to be taught in the Hmong community in California, Minnesota and elsewhere

(Most of the information for this bio was derived from Mother of Writing: the origin and development of a Hmong Messianic script by Smalley, W. A., Vang, C. K and Yang, G. Y. University of Chicago Press, 1990). The bio was composed by Ka Yang.





# Touby Lyfoung

Mr. Lyfoung was a Hmong political leader. He was born in 1917 in Nong Het, Laos. He graduated from a French high school in Vinh, North Vietnam and he attended an administration training in Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

In 1940, Mr. Lyfoung was elected as Chief of Nong Het District in Xieng Khouang province, Laos. In 1945, he organized the anti-Japanese resistance in the Xieng Khouang plateau. As a result, in 1964 he was appointed Deputy Governor of Xieng Khouang province and became Chaomoung (Mayor) of the Hmong population.

Lyfoung took sides with the Royal Lao Government to fight the Communists in Laos and led a Hmong anti-Communist movement against the Pathet Lao. In 1958, Mr Lyfoung won the legislative elections in Xieng Khouang province and was elected as Vice-President of the National Assembly. In 1960, he served as Minister of Justice and Social Welfare. In 1961, he became Minister of Health. In 1964, he joined the King's Council. In 1972, he was appointed as the Inspector General of the Southern Province in the Ministry of the Interior. In 1974, he served as Deputy Minister of Telecommunication in the Provisional Government of the National Union.



## Touby Lyfoung (Continued)

Mr. Lyfoung was not only a Laotian national political leader. His contribution to building modern Laos is universally known. His efforts focused on the integration of all ethnic groups into the Laotian nation. In 1939, he built the first village school in Nong Het for the Hmong and minority ethnic groups and developed the school system in the Xieng Khouang plateau.

As a politician, Touby Lyfoung participated in the peace process and worked toward the Laotian National Reconciliation in 1974. After the takeover of Laos by the Communist Pathet Lao in 1975, he was arrested and sent to a labor camp along the Vietnamese border where he died in 1979.

Mr. Lyfoung was a man who offered strong political leadership and a great sense of responsibility. He was a role-model for today's Hmong leaders and for generations to come.

Text prepared by Hmong Pride Connection.



# Tougeu Lyfoung

By: Mai Na M. Lee

\*Tougeu Lyfoung, interview with author, Herblay, France, 9 & 10 July 2002.

Phaya Tougeu Lyfoung was the seventh of ten children born to Va Yang [Vab Yaj], Ly Fong's first of four wives.\* Tougeu was born in the district of Nong Het in March 1921. Ly Fong, Tougeu's father, first instilled the value of education upon him and his brothers by hiring a private tutor to instruct them in Lao. Later, Tougeu, Toulia, and Touby attended primary school in Xieng Khouang where they learned French.

From Xieng Khouang, Tougeu went on to obtain a baccalaureate at the secondary school in Vinh and, then, a two-year degree in agriculture at Hanoi. From 1957 to 1960, Tougeu would obtain further training in law at the Ecole Nationale France Outre Mer in Paris. In the meantime, however, Tougeu returned from Hanoi to Laos on the eve of the Japanese occupation to find himself on the side of the French. He became an anti-Japanese resistance leader, serving in the battlefield next to Free French officers like Maurice Gauthier, Jean Sassi, and Andre Chenivresse from 1945-48.



Tougeu lyfoung, as Director-general of the ministry of justice in laos. ຕູ້ເຍີລີຝູງ ເປັນເອກອະທິບໍດີກະຊວງຍຸຕິທັມໃນລາວ



# Tougeu Lyfoung (Continued)

Tougeu's collaboration with the French was fully recognized by the French government in 1998 when he was awarded the distinguished French medal of honor, being inducted as chevalier de la Legion d'honneur. Tougeu's brother, Touby, had already gotten this medal in 1945. After Tougeu's immigration to France in 1975, Lieutenant-Colonel Chenivresse felt that Tougeu deserved equal recognition and led the investigative work to petition the French government to extend the same honor to him.

Following the conclusion of World War II when Laos became an independent state, Tougeu Lyfoung found the honor as well as the heavy burden of national leadership upon his shoulders. Being noted among the only half dozen or so Laotian intellectuals with his level of education, Tougeu was immediately summoned by His Majesty King Sisavang Vong to be an advisory member of the King's Council. Tougeu felt enormously honored for he was the first minority called to occupy a position that had traditionally been the exclusive preserve of royal princes, and he served the king dutifully from 1948 to 1951. From this initial appointment, Tougeu Lyfoung went on to occupy many distinguished positions in the Royal Lao government some of which included being provincial representative (1951-55), public prosecutor (1956-57), and general director of the Ministry of Justice (1960-75). Because of his educational pursuit in different places, Tougeu Lyfoung was fluent in many languages including Hmong, Lao, French, Vietnamese, and English. Tougeu Lyfoung died in 2004.



Tougeu lyfoung, as Director.general of the ministry of justice in laos. ຕູ້ເຢີລີຟຸງ ເປັນເອກອະທິບໍດີກະຊວງຍຸຕິທຳມໃນລາວ

# General Vang Pao

General Vang Pao was born in Laos. Vang Pao joined the anti-Japanese resistance led by Touby Lyfoung at a very young age in 1945. Vang Pao fought as a corporal, sergeant and then as an officer under the French Union Army flag against the Communist Viet Minh until 1954 when the Geneva Conference granted independence to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Vang Pao was named a Brigade General in the Royal Lao Army in 1964. With CIA assistance, General Vang Pao led a fierce resistance to the North Vietnamese and the North Vietnamese Communists from 1961-1973. General Vang Pao left Laos in 1975. General Vang Pao is the founder of Lao Family Community, a Hmong social service organization with offices in several states.

The photo shows General Vang Pao in Laos in the 1960s. Photo by Paul White.



# Lee Lue

A warrior, without fear and courageous. These are the words historians and colleagues use frequently to describe Hmong T-28 pilot Lee Lue. In his brief piloting career, it is estimated that Lee Lue flew more than 5,000 combat missions. His significance to the secret war effort in Laos was considerable. A quarter century after Lee Lue's death, those who know of his heroics still speak in awe of his contributions to the war. This is the story of an ordinary man who through his exploits became a legend, earning the respect and admiration of many.

Lee Lue was born sometime in 1935 to Chong Ger Lee and his wife Pa Vang in Xieng Khouang Province's Phou Pheng village. After giving birth to three children, Lee Lue's mother suddenly passed away. Chong Ger valued his wife's relatives enormously. Fearing that the relationship with Pa's relatives might grow distant after her death, in 1947, Chong Ger requested the engagement of his son Lee Lue to his brother-in-law's daughter Jou. "We never dated before we got married," Jou recalled. She said their villages were separated by a whole day's journey on foot so Lee Lue and she didn't get to see each other often. They were further separated in 1953 when Lee Lue's family moved to Xieng Khouang City after the Vietnamese invaded Laos. After the war ended in 1955, Jou and Lee Lue were finally married. Their first child, a son named Ze, was born two years later.



## Lee Lue (Continued)

Lee Lue was only one of a handful of Hmong to receive an education. He studied in Xieng Khouang City with other Hmong students and when he finished the ninth grade, he enrolled in teacher training school. In 1959, he took a position as an elementary school teacher in Lat Houng.

In 1967, when Touby Lyfoung and (General) Vang Pao requested volunteers for flight training in the larger, faster T-28s; Lee Lue and Vang Toua volunteered. Within six months of intensive training, Lee Lue and Vang Toua became the first two Hmong T-28 fighter pilots. Lee Lue excelled quickly and became arguably the best T-28 bomber pilot in the country. With stellar accomplishments, he was promoted to be the leader of the Chaophakaow.

As Lee Lue continued to be successful flying aerial support for ground troops, his reputation and fame grew. According to Christopher Robbin's book, *The Ravens*, respect for Lee Lue and his skills was shared by everyone, not just the Hmong. Seasoned American pilots marveled at what Lee Lue was able to achieve. "They'll never get me," Lee Lue was quoted as having said.. "...I'm too good."

On July 11, 1969 one of the darkest days of the secret war came and the unimaginable occurred, Lee Lue was finally shot down in his airplane. Source: (Xai Xiong, *Ink Magazine* 1997)

