

# UNDERSTANDING AN EPIC SONG OF THE HMONG IN LAOS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ORAL COMPOSITION

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## Abstract

This article looks at an epic song performed by Hmong in Laos from a perspective of oral composition by analyzing a wedding song *Leuangtengdong*. Through detailed musical and textual transcription, several compositional devices are identified and discussed. My study explores oral composition of the song focusing on its material and structure. I argue that music plays an important role in its oral composition: material-wise, music functions both as formulaic music-text association/unity and by careful music-text interactions; structure-wise, the song is organized in a multi-layered framework realized by the hierarchical music-text formulas, with music-text ‘theme’ in critical structural positions.

## Keywords

Hmong, Epic song, Oral composition, Music, Laos

## INTRODUCTION

Oral-formulaic theory has a major influence on the studies of epics in an oral tradition. The theory was developed primarily by Milman Parry and Albert Lord in mid-twentieth century, identifying the recurrent phrases found in ancient epics as “formulas”, an improvisation and performance device used by epic performers (Lord, 1960). The theory has undergone significant criticism and development ever since, providing a useful account of how literary formulas can be used to quickly assemble an improvised performance in various oral traditions. However, a majority of discussion has centered on the linguistic/literary aspect of oral epic. There is still uncertainty how epic as a sung expression has been orally composed. It is particularly unclear in the case of Hmong epic tradition, either in a global (Hmong) or Chinese (Miao) academic context.<sup>1</sup> This article attempts to expand the scope of oral theory into musical composition in the field of Hmong epic, through an analysis of Lao Hmong epic song *Leuangtengdong*.

The song was recorded by Gisa Jähnichen in her field work in Ban Vanglom, Laos in 2000. In Jähnichen’s research, it was described as an old Hmong wedding song as well as an epic song, which seemingly used a very archaic melody (Jähnichen, 2006: 161-212). Regarding the issue of genre, despite discussions concerning the differentiation of ‘epic and ‘archaic song’ in Chinese Miao scholarship (Hong, 2017: 84-124), there has not been a clear-cut boundary between the two. They both belong to an old oral tradition, narrate stories from the past, and share similar literary and musical styles. In this article I do not make distinction between the two, using “epic” interchangeably with ‘archaic song’.

Another key aspect is the performance context. The song, according to Jähnichen, was performed by an approximately 70-year-old male singer (Jähnichen, 2006: 161-212). Among

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<sup>1</sup> Hmong in Laos are descendants of Hmong immigrants originally from the territory of recent China. Hmong living in China are commonly considered sub-groups of Miao, one of the largest minorities in China. Relationships among different groups are widely studied.

other wedding songs, it is part of the Hmong marriage ritual which could in total last for 3-4 days. From a local perspective of the Hmong, the wedding song performance practice is passed down in their tradition of thousands of years (Thao. 2006: 69). A key role to facilitate the whole process is called *mej koob* (marriage negotiator) (Thao 2006:68-69). When I showed the song to Hmong language and culture expert Zhang Yuan Qi<sup>2</sup>, he immediately recognized it as a wedding song sung by a *mej koob* from the groom's side. *Mej koob* is above all a practical role that facilitates and supports the marriage ritual, a negotiator, rather than a performance specialist that demonstrates singing virtuosity. The performance seems to be extemporized and could be interpreted afresh each time. It is a fluid text also in terms of individual and time, from a living oral tradition.

The aim of this article is to understand the oral composition of this epic song through analyzing *Leuangtengdong* performed by Hmong in Laos. The article attempts to show that music plays an important role in its oral composition, both as music-text association and by music-text interactions. The remaining part of the article proceeds as follows: The first section examines the narrative and speech-like quality of the song and investigates the relationship of pitch and tone; the second part identifies music-text-associated "formula phrases" as crucial building material of the song; and the third section is concerned with the song structure in terms of a hierarchy of formulas.

## MUSIC AND TEXT

Preliminary music analysis of the song reveals high monotonicity in its musical language:

- Dynamics: quite stable, slightly louder in the beginning
- Tempo: stable, moderately accelerating over the course
- Rhythm: largely syllabic and isochronic; one syllable mostly corresponding to one rhythm unit, representing 1-2 pitch positions
- Melody: 5 pitch positions across a space of minor 7th, with a major position in the center; melodic intervals including major 2nd, minor 3rd, perfect 4th and minor 7th
- Form: main body framed by a heightened opening and a short closing, divided by performer's breath into lines of irregular lengths
- Singing: monotonous singing technique and style, non-ornamental, solo, unaccompanied aged male voice

Moreover, the ambit, tempo and rhythm are comfortably set to the range of human speech. The music, with weak sense of turning or direction, displays a narrative and speech-like quality. Limited use of musical devices, speech-like quality as well as the ritual functionality imply "language" as a critical dimension for both performing and understanding of the song.

Hmong language is a subbranch of the Western (Chuanqiandian) branch of Miao Languages. It is tonal and mostly monosyllabic, composed of an initial consonant or consonant group, a vowel, and a tone. The language used in the song is believed to be the White Hmong dialect, which has 7 tone levels.

It is necessary to transcribe the song into fixed visual forms for detailed analysis, with the knowledge that the performance is just one realization of many possible ones from a living oral tradition. Recording and transcription are only compromised attempts to represent a reduced life of the tradition.

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<sup>2</sup> Zhang Yuan Qi is a Chinese Hmong language and culture expert based in Wenshan, Yunnan Province. He recognized the song as a wedding tune immediately by its melody.

The literary transcription uses Lao RPA (Romanized Popular Alphabet), under which system each syllable is constructed in 3 parts: vowel, consonant and tone. The task of literary transcription is particularly challenging due to the lack of local Hmong language expertise and the innate difficulty to identify tones from a sung expression. With the assistance of Hmong language expert Ran Hai Bo<sup>3</sup>, a portion of the text is transcribed with tones and greater accuracy. The rest is mainly dictated without tones, marked as “-ø” (mid-level) in the transcription (excluded from tone analysis). Thus, the overall textual transcription should be considered neither a complete nor an accurate one. However, it is reliable in capturing certain sound patterns and structural features of the text.

For effective and wholistic visualization of the song, an adapted form of numbered notation is developed and used (FIGURES 1, 2a and 2b). The notation foregrounds pitch position – the musical element with greatest flexibility in the song. 5 pitch levels are represented by numbers ‘3’ (#C), ‘5’ (E), ‘6’ (#F), ‘1’ (A) and ‘2’ (B) from low to high. The melodic and poetic lines correspond to the performer’s breath and rest.

The correlation between speech tone and melodic pitch immediately surfaces as a key question to understanding of text-music relationship of the song. The left half of below table in FIGURE 1 shows the markers and values of the 7 phonemic tones, and the right half examines the characteristics of corresponding melodic pitches and tone-pitch relationship.

Orthographic tone symbol	Tone value (5-point scale) <sup>4</sup>	Typical representation in song (pitch value in numbered notation)	Tone-pitch relationship
-b	55	High note (1, 2)	Consistent
-ø	33	Mid to high note (6, 1, 2)	Wider range in singing
-s	22	Central note (6)	Consistent
-j	52	Low note (3)	Consistent with tonal ending, lower in singing
-v	24	Mainly 1, 2, occasionally 6, upward movement	Higher in singing, consistent in movement direction
-m	21	Low to mid note, upward movement (3, 5, 6)	Opposite movement direction
-g	42	Central note (6), downward movement	Consistent

**FIGURE 1: Tone-pitch comparison table (compilation by the author).**

The correlational analysis leads to the conclusion that the melodic pitch is highly related to but not simply mirroring speech tone. The tone-pitch relationship varies from ‘opposite movement direction’ (-m) and ‘loosely related’ (-ø) to ‘somewhat consistent’ (-j, -v) and ‘consistent’ (-b, -s, -g).

The findings differ from those of previous research conducted by Amy Catlin in 1997 (Catlin, 1997: 69-81), which could be a result of geographic and temporal differences of source material. Nonetheless, both researches agree that melodic pitch is a different but relevant system to speech tone. Reasons for tone-pitch deviations could be subject of further research.

As can be seen from the table, it is possible to set a single tone to multiple pitch positions. The pitch choice and treatment can be intricate. When (textual) phrases repeat, the melodies usually stay the same. However, if a word repeats itself in a single phrase and is placed close to each other, such as in ‘ABAC’ form, the two ‘A’s can be sung in different pitches, possibly to create

<sup>3</sup> Ran Hai Bo is a Chinese Western Hmong language expert based in Chongqing.

<sup>4</sup> The tone values follow a system developed by Smalley, W. (1976) and Ratliff, M. (1992), also cited in Christina M. Esposito (2012).





The scale of such identically recurring ‘stock phrases’ ranges from 2 to 24 syllables. I take out 18 ones that appear at least 4 times for further analysis. The 18 phrases are color-coded in the transcription chart.

Phrase marker	Textual content (2-8 syllables)	Number of repetitions	Number of melodic forms <sup>5</sup>
A	zoo li	8	1
B	zoo coj	4	1
C	tuaj saum	8	2
D	nplooj mog	4	1
E	sawv daws	5	1
F	los rau	4	1
G	ua tsis nyog	6 (2 overlapping with “nyog cuaj paj yim ntim”)	1
H	nyog lia law	5	1
I	tsam qaug lig	4	1
J	rooj nqaij rooj hno	8	1
K	kuv niam kuv txiv tom	10	2
L	nyog cuaj paj yim ntim	4	1
M	kev neej kuv kev tsa	8	1
N	peb plaub txi meej koob	4	1
O	tej laus thaum ub tus tsa	4	2
P	nws ua (tsis) nyog rev paj tawg	4	1
Q	nws muab (tsis) yog nws pua tsa raw	4	1
R	nws ua (tsis) nyog hwm txai raug li	4	1

FIGURE 3: Statistics of 18 formula phrases (compiled by the author).

These recurring stock materials are called ‘formulas’ in oral composition theory. The analyzed 18 formula phrases (FIGURE 3) take up over 60% of the whole song in syllable count, strongly placing the performance in an oral tradition. A majority of the phrases are also formulaic in melodies, indicating the characteristic music-text association of formulas in the song. However, 3 of them are set to multiple melodic forms.

Text	Melody 1	Times	Context (numbered pitch level)	Melody 2	Times	Context (numbered pitch level)
tuaj saum	3-36	7	various	6-61	1	recurring sound pattern
tej laus thaum ub tu tsa	3-6-36-2-6-65	2	before “txu (3)”	3-6-36-2-6-1	2	before “pee (2/62)”
kuv niam kuv txiv tom	2-36-1-2-6	9	before “ub” (2) or “nlaa” (2)	2-36-1-2-2-61	1	before “li” (6)

FIGURE 4: Statistics of 3 formula phrases with multiple melodic forms (compiled by the author).

FIGURE 4 presents the summary statistics for the melodic variations of 3 mentioned phrases. For the first case, ‘*tuaj saum*’ has a dominant melody of ‘3-36’, with one exception of ‘6-61’ in line 27 (FIGURE 5).

2	6	2	6	1	3	6	6	6	3	36	3	6	1	61	6	1	6	61	1
Ntsh e	nw s	u a	nyo g	re v	pa j	taw g	li g	lia g	tua j	sau m	nploo j	mo g	txi v	txi v	li s	lia b	tua j	sau m	ca g

FIGURE 5: Transcription of line 27 (by the author).

<sup>5</sup> In this study, two-note syllables that share one same note are considered to have a same form.

Within the line, a repeating sound can be recognized:

... *lig liag tuaj saum ... lis liab tuaj saum ...*

Translation: ... afraid it will bloom on the tree... bear fruit on the root...

Ambit flows upward in the second appearance of ‘*li lia tua sau*’ (tone markers removed as heard in sung expression) while the melodic contour stays. The purpose is perhaps to create contrast between two phrases considering their similar phonation. In doing so, music provides a melodic context for the audience to distinguish the two sounds as distinct phrases with their separate meanings. Moreover, a parallel (and reverse) structure is recognized between the semantic and melodic movement of two phrases, creating interesting rhetorical effects.

In the case of ‘*tej laus thaum ub tu tsa*’, two melodic forms vary only in the last syllable – ‘65’ vs ‘1’. This can be explained in terms of the intervallic relationship with the following pitch. ‘1’ and a subsequent ‘3’ create a major 6th that does not make valid melodic interval in the song’s musical language, while major 3rd and major 2nd can be well expected.

‘*Kuv niam kuv txiv tom*’s melodic variation concerns rhythm rather than pitch level. The musical difference is likely related to the linguistic context.

Music can also take a dominating role. It is shown in several cases that melody could function as placeholder to allow for different text setting. In the case of previously mentioned ‘*kuv niam kuv txiv tom*’, the phrase is most often followed by ‘*ub ces*’ or ‘*nlaa tse*’ that are both set to a same melody ‘2-1’. In a second case, line 30 and 33 are almost identical, with their only difference in the final syllable, where ‘*ceg*’ and ‘*cag*’ are set to a same note, respectively. Another case can be found in the first 7 syllables/notes of Line 25 and final 7 syllables/notes of Line 30. Above three cases demonstrate how melody is used as placeholder for various metrical devices of vowel, consonant or tone.

Another identified formulaic form, less visible but as effective, is ‘loosely arranged recurring expression’. A case study on the four segments between ‘*rooj nqaij rooj hno*’ and ‘*peb plaub txhu meej koob*’ helps provide an understanding. As shown in FIGURE 6, words are inserted freely into core material ‘*ncuav nthwv los puv*’, with all expressions rhyming on ‘e’ in the end. This indicates the performer’s skill of reusing material beyond simple repetition, meanwhile following a metric scheme to create poetic as well as musical beauty and consistency.

<b>ncuav nthwv los puv tse</b> v	Line 25
los <b>ncuav</b> lis <b>nthwv los puv</b> pla tse	Line 28
<b>ncuav nthwv los tsis puv tse</b> v	Line 31
<b>ncuav nthwv los puv</b> pla es	Line 34

FIGURE 6: Four segments between ‘*rooj nqaij rooj hno*’ and ‘*peb plaub txhu meej koob*’ (compiled by the author).

In summary, ‘formula phrases’ are the key material in oral composition of Hmong epic song. To a large extent, the formula is a recurring unity of music and text. When necessary, music stands out for various purposes including better delivery of textual meanings, rhetorical effects, and consistency in musical language.

## STRUCTURE

This section examines the relationship between formula phrases and investigates the song structure, in an attempt to answer the question how the song is built up from formula phrases.

Section	Paragraph	Sentence	Phrase	Material arrangement	Line	
Opening			A		1	
1	1.1	A	K	"K"	2	
		B	"tse nws tsa ru"		2	
			O		3	
		B	"tsaj neeb... neeb yoos"		4	
			O			
	1.2	A	A	A	"AK"	5
				K		
B		"tse nws tsa ru"			5	
		O				
	B	"tsaj neeb... neeb yoos"			6	
		H	added			
		O			7	
2	2.1	A	K	"K"	7	
			R			
			L			
			F			
			M			
			E			
		C	R			
		L				
		F				
		M				
		E				
	2.2	A	A	A	"AK"	11
			K			
			R			
C		G	added			
		L				
		F				
		M	"E" removed			
	R					
	G					
	L					
	F					
	M					
3	3.1	A	A	"AK"	15	
			K			
		D	P		15	
			I		16	
			"coj los ua"			
			J			
			"rhua li du yoo"		17	
			H			
		D	P		17	
			I		18	
		"coj los ua"				
		J				
		"rhua li du yoo"		19		
		H				
	3.2	A	K		"K"	19
			P			20
		D	I			
		G	added			
	J					
	"ncuav nthw yoo si"					
	H					
3.3	A	K		"K"	22	
		P			22	
	D	I				
		G				
		J		23		
	"ncuav nthw yoo si"					
	H					



Section	Paragraph	Sentence	Phrase	Material arrangement	Line	
4	4.1	A	A	"AK"	24	
			K			
		E	Q			24
			C			
			D			
			C			25
		E	J			
			"ncuav nthwv"			
			N			26
			B			
	M					
	Q			27		
	4.2	A	E	Q		
				C		
				D		
				C		
				J		28
		"ncuav nthwv"				
		N		29		
		B				
M						
E		added				
4.3	A	E	K	"K"	30	
			Q		30	
			C			
			D			
			C			
	A	E	G	added	31	
			J			
			"ncuav nthwv"			
			N			
			B			
A	E	M		32		
		E				
		"sib tsaa daws nroo"	added			
		A	"A"-break-"K"	32		
		K		33		
E	E	Q		33		
		C				
		D				
		C				
		G		34		
E	E	J				
		"ncuav nthwv"				
		N				
		B		35		
		M				
Closing			E			
			"sib tsaa daws nroo"		36	

FIGURE 7: Structure chart of the evolved song (compilation by the author).

'Phrase group' is a combination of multiple phrases, fixed or not. For example, 'zoo li' almost always comes before 'kuv niam kuv txiv', while 'rooj nqaij rooj hno' can be paired with 'coj los ua' (twice), 'nws ua nyog' (three times) or 'ua tsis nyog' (four times). 'Phrase group' is not a definitive structural unit but it helps to understand 'formula' as a layered concept. A 'sentence' is formed by phrases, groups and possible adjuncts following a specific sequence. 'Sentences' are also formulaic that they themselves become a material unit to assemble into a larger

structure – ‘paragraph’. Likewise, formulaic ‘paragraphs’ comprise a ‘section’ of the main body of composition, and ‘sections’ further constitute the main body according to similar structural forms. The hierarchy of formulas is clearly outlined in the structure chart (FIGURE 7). The chart shows some of the main characteristics of the composition.

### ***Structural tightness***

The main body is comprised of four parts with their respective internal structures of ABB-ABB, ACC-ACC, ADD-AD-AD and AEE-AE-AE. The patterns show certain continuity and yet are developing in scale and complexity over the course. The same development is observed in the internal structures from B to E.

The observation suggests a structural mindset in composition. The performer, at the same time the composer, makes use of formulaic stock material of different levels and build into a well-structured framework.

### ***Use of ‘theme’***

The term ‘theme’ here refers to musical and literary material of at least phrase-length that can be found throughout the composition, with or without variation. A melodic ‘theme’ of ‘2-36-1-2-6-2-x’ over the text of ‘*kuv niam kuv txiv tom ub ces / nlaa tse*’ is identified, in which ‘x’ usually takes the pitch ‘1’, sometimes going down to ‘16’ or ‘6’.

Sometimes partnered with ‘*zoo li*’, this is the only ‘theme’ heard in each section and each paragraph. In fact, taking the form of either ‘*zoo li kuv niam kuv txiv tom*’ (referred to as ‘AK’ in chart) or ‘*kuv niam kuv txiv tom*’ (referred to as ‘K’ in chart), this phrase (group) initiates every sentence of the main body.

Appearances of the ‘theme’ follow a designed order (FIGURE 8) that reminds of the sectional internal structural pattern.

<b>Section of main body</b>	<b>Forms of ‘theme’</b>	<b>Sectional internal structure</b>
1	K-AK	ABB-ABB
2	K-AK, same as section 1	ABB-ABB, same as section 1
3	AK-K-K	ABB-AB-AB
4	AK-K-(A)K, similar to section 3	ABB-AB-AB, same as section 3

**FIGURE 8: Structural comparison between ‘theme’s and sections (compiled by the author).**

Starting from a well-designed framework and applying a ‘theme’ as paragraph starter, the system serves as an effective device for performer’s extemporization.

### ***Cumulative material development***

Inside an ‘ABB-ABB’ or ‘ABB-AB-AB’ structure, the ‘B’s are not necessarily identical. Constituent phrases can be removed or added, and the new combination will be reserved into the next appearances, thus forming a cumulative process of composition. For example, in the structure ‘AEE-AE-AE’ of section 4, phrase ‘E’ is added to sentence ‘E’ on the sentence’s first repeat. Phrase ‘E’ remains a constituent of sentence ‘E’ in all of its following appearances.

This cumulative and linear approach of development frees the performer from the burden of memorizing excessive materials and provides a comfortable composition speed.

### *Disagreement between performative phrasing and formulaic structuring*

The performative phrasing is marked by the performer's breath and short rest, represented in transcription in the form of 'lines'. 'Line' however is an ambiguous structure in the system of hierarchical formulas which is defined on a material basis. The difficulty reflects a lasting debate on approach of line division in transcription, where Dennis Tedlock took the performative side (Tedlock, 1972) and Dell Hymes cared more about patterned forms of words (Hymes, 1981).

As can be seen from the transcription, performer's breath and rest (transcribed as line break) do not interrupt the flow of textual meaning.<sup>6</sup> Certain phrase groups exist in both forms of one line and run-on line. How do we understand the line breaks and enjambments then?

The case study on line 33 supports an explanation in terms of metrics and practicality of composition. Line 33 is started with 'kuv niam kuv txiv' that follows 'zoo li' from line 32. The 'zoo li' at the end of line 32 could be confusing at first. However, from a perspective of the paragraph structure, line 33 is almost a duplicate of line 30. By placing 'zoo li' in the previous line, the performer can conveniently construct line 33 by reusing almost a whole big part of line 30. In this case, enjambment assists to create metrical symmetry and also works as a convenient compositional device.

One might suspect if the physicality of performers would also be a factor causing unequal line lengths.<sup>7</sup> However, even for a less trained singer, one's breathing capability is relatively stable. While the performer is able to deliver 27 syllables in one breath (line 5), it is less convincing that fewer syllables would be a challenging task.

Moreover, line break can be musically understood with regard to the melodic feature. In initial musical analysis I had the impression that the song lacks sense of gravity or direction of movement. To an extent, it seems that a line could almost comfortably end in any position. However, pitch analysis tells a different story. As FIGURE 9 shows, melody is organized primarily on a tetrachord of '3-6-1-2', with occasional bridging of '5'. The overall pitch heavily centers on '6', the central note of the ambit, while '1' is a least frequently used pitch level in the tetrachord.

Pitch	3	5	6	1	2
Overall times	149	11	<b>294</b>	129	166
Times at ending	1	-	<b>19</b>	13	3
Times at caesura	1	-	2	<b>12</b>	4

FIGURE 9: Pitch statistics (compiled by the author).

Investigating into the ending note of each line, '6' remains a major pitch, while '1' grows in importance. Further examination of the caesuras reveals that '1' even becomes a major pitch level. This shows that besides the key note '6', '1' also provides certain sense of completion and stability into the melodic flow.

This analysis reflects the performer's melodically purposeful choice of place to stop, or in another way, material to end a performative phrase / poetic line.

<sup>6</sup> Chao Ge Jin talks about the dilemma in transcription between word-based and performance-based line division in *Oral Poetics: Formulaic Diction of Arimpil's Janger Singing* (2000). He believes that the problem is yet to be solved, and the issue is particularly challenging for verses with less strict metrical and syntactical scheme.

<sup>7</sup> Pu Heng Qiang suggests that "performer's physical limits" could be a reason for the "free" rhythm pattern of Miao folk songs, in *Studies on Miao Folk Songs* (1988).

## CONCLUSION

This essay has identified and discussed several oral compositional devices that deal with material and structure through an analysis of the Hmong epic song *Leuangtengdong*. Melodic pitch in the song is highly relevant to but not a simple mirroring of the speech tone in the text. Recurring music-text associations/unities, called ‘formulas’, are used prevalently as stock material to build the song. Formulas range from phrases and phrase groups to sentences, paragraphs, and even sections. The composition is structured by different levels of formulas, into a well-designed multi-layered framework. A ‘theme’ is used throughout the song, initiating each paragraph. Variations of formulaic paragraphs are developed in a cumulative style. Enjambment, when necessary, can be applied for metrical or musical reasons.

Besides being part of the formulaic music-text association, this research has provided a deeper insight into the important and unique role music plays in oral composition. In tone-pitch mapping, flexibility in pitch choice allows for performer’s subtle melodic arrangement for certain musical effect. Within a formula, same text could be set to different melodies for rhetorical, narrative or musical reasons. It is also possible to set different texts to a same melody, whereas melody functions as metrical placeholder, enlarging the formulaic scope. With regard to the enjambment question, pitch affects where and how to end a line.

The major limitation of this study is lack of local Hmong language expertise and small sample size. Further research should be undertaken to examine the linguistics and investigate the literary poetics of the song in detail, including the textual meanings, grammar, syntax and metrics. To develop a full picture, additional studies will be needed to involve a wider range of performance practices from different performers, ethnic groups / performance traditions, and sub-genres of Hmong epic songs performed in Laos. Based on linguistic affinity and historical connection, transnational studies across Laos, Vietnam and China on the current topic are recommended.

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#### Recording:

“*Leuangtengdong*.” duration of 5’13’’962’’, live performance of an old Hmong wedding/epic song sung by one approximately 70-year-old male singer, recorded by Gisa Jähnichen, WAV file, created 14 Jan. 2000, in Ban Vanglom, district Sam Neua, Laos. This audio file is publicly accessible at the National Library of Laos in Vientiane and at the Berlin Phonogram Archive under the code number ATML00234.