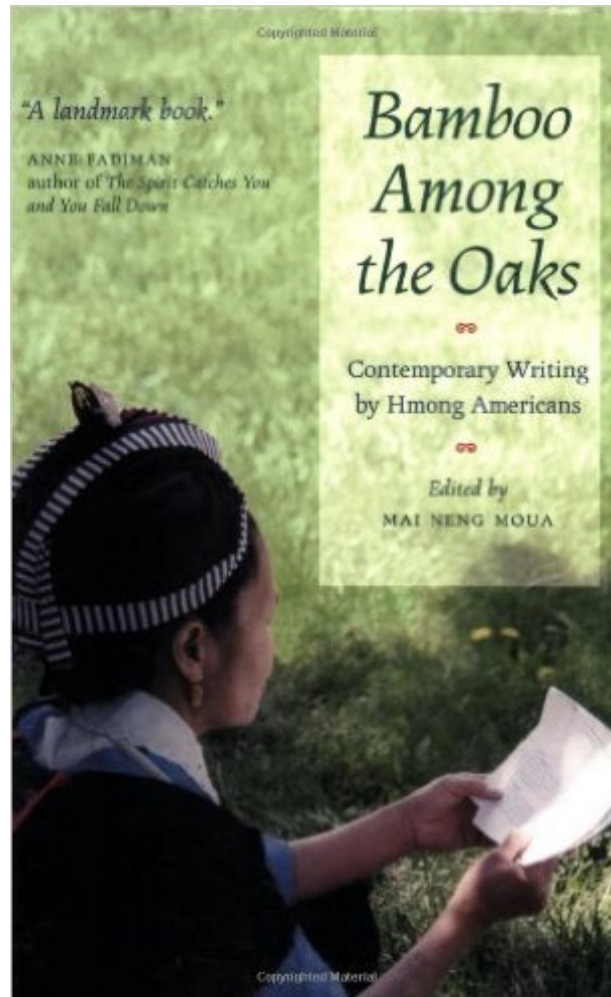


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Bamboo Among The Oaks: Contemporary Writing By Hmong Americans



Synopsis

Of an estimated twelve million ethnic Hmong in the world, more than 160,000 live in the United States today, most of them refugees of the Vietnam War and the civil war in Laos. Their numbers make them one of the largest recent immigrant groups in our nation. Today, significant Hmong populations can be found in California, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Michigan, and Colorado, and St. Paul boasts the largest concentration of Hmong residents of any city in the world. In this groundbreaking anthology, first- and second-generation Hmong Americans—the first to write creatively in English—share their perspectives on being Hmong in America. In stories, poetry, essays, and drama, these writers address the common challenges of immigrants adapting to a new homeland: preserving ethnic identity and traditions, assimilating to and battling with the dominant culture, negotiating generational conflicts exacerbated by the clash of cultures, and developing new identities in multiracial America. Many pieces examine Hmong history and culture and the authors' experiences as Americans. Others comment on issues significant to the community: the role of women in a traditionally patriarchal culture, the effects of violence and abuse, the stories of Hmong military action in Laos during the Vietnam War. These writers don't pretend to provide a single story of the Hmong; instead, a multitude of voices emerge, some wrapped up in the past, others looking toward the future, where the notion of "Hmong American" continues to evolve. In her introduction, editor Mai Neng Moua describes her bewilderment when she realized that anthologies of Asian American literature rarely contained even one selection by a Hmong American. In 1994, she launched a Hmong literary journal, *Paj Ntaub Voice*, and in the first issue asked her readers "Where are the Hmong American voices?" Now this collection—containing selections from the journal as well as new submissions—offers a chorus of voices from a vibrant and creative community of Hmong American writers from across the United States.

Book Information

Paperback: 205 pages

Publisher: Minnesota Historical Society Press; 1 edition (October 1, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0873514378

ISBN-13: 978-0873514378

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,051,243 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > United States > Asian American #549 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Asian American Studies #8858 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Criticism & Theory

Customer Reviews

The pieces that are collected in here cover a very wide range of subjects and approaches. It's a relief, compared to many other anthologies, which try to find an arbitrary common thread which runs through the works of particular writers, or that seem designed to showcase a who's who among the decade's latest MFA students. Most of the pieces are actually readable, which sounds like a strange thing to say, unless you've been going through a lot of anthologies these days. It's just the right length so you're not overwhelmed with material, but you also get a good snapshot of where Hmong writing is headed, and how good it can get. Not all of the pieces are perfect, mind you. Not all of them are family friendly. Some come from some pretty dark corners of the human mind, even. But for a culture and a community that is only just now starting to develop a written tradition, the results that are emerging are fascinating. Some will have very clear influences from other major writers and schools of thought, while others are immensely original. The great strength of this anthology, however, is that it does not allow you to walk away with a preset stereotype about who the Hmong are. You will see the great diversity of visions within the community, and you will walk away wanting more. And in the end, isn't that what any good anthology should do?

Finally the voices are coming together. For so long I've wondered if I was the only Hmong person plagued with the wonderful ailment of irrepressible thoughts that run through your mind and onto paper. Now I know that I am not alone. This is a great book, and it's so about time, that we produce a book about the Hmong people written by the Hmong people. I highly recommend it. Buy more than one copy, because it makes a great gift.

I like the book, its very interesting, however when i received my copy, pages 110 through 143 were upside down, and worst of all they were only duplicates of the next pages after 143. I don't know what went wrong with the printing, but I wish that the book had all the correct pages to read.

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