**Analysis of a Hmong Mythical Figure: Chi You (Txiv Yawg)**

**Choua Xiong **  Dr. Ezra Zeitler & Dr. Kelly Wonder  University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

---

### Background

This research exploration is a part of the China Hmong History research project that was conducted by eight UW-Eau Claire (UWEC) students and two UWEC professors in Yunnan Province, China during the summer of 2012. On this trip, our research focused on analyzing the validity and complex story of the Hmong mythical king Chi You (Txiv Yawg). Hmong diaspora and transnational situations that created a demand for "the Homeland" and the story of Chi You has offered a sense of "origin" for the Hmong people (Yang 2009). Because the history of the Hmong has been told through oral storytelling and Hmong communities continuously debated the validity of Chi You's origin story (Lemone 2008). It is important to recognize that Chi You is nationally recognized as the Miao king and not the Hmong king.

### Chi You as the Hmong King

According to numerous scholars, the consistent story of Chi You is as followed:

The story of Chi You begins some 4,700 years ago, when Chi You was the great ruler of a strong and powerful kingdom. But, (Yu Cui Cui Li) Ioji, located along the Yangtze River. The Chinese Yellow Emperor, Huang, was Chi You’s greatest achievement and he was a great warrior. After countless battles, Huang’s soldiers forced him to fight Yen Di. Huang Di and Yen Di were powerful enough to kill Chi You in the famous Battle of Zhuolu (current day He Bei). After Chi You’s death, Huang Max, established this kingdom southwards into southern China (Guizhou, Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guangxi). (Thao 2006, Chu 2010, Yang, Z. 1998, Yang, K. 2009, Xiong, Y.P 1997).

### Methods & Participants

The research employs a participant-observation method to collect qualitative data. Participant observation was conducted as follows:

- Researchers engaged in informal conversation about the validity of Chi You with inhabitants through focus groups and personal interviews.
- Participants were asked to tell the story of Chi You in their communities.
- Observations of participants’ living resources, educational demographics, and community involvement were considered when asking participants questions.
- When participants were not questioned, I observed their homes, offices, or alters and visual display for their relations of Chi You.

### Participants

- 11 communities and focus groups showed a common acknowledgment of Chi You: “Chi You as the Miao king”
- 7 communities were observed.
- The number of people in each community varied from place to place because some places we saw a couple of households and others only one.
- In conclusion, I found that the majority of interviewees did not provide any evidence that validate the story of Chi You. While many people claim that Chi You is a recognized king, they did not express any connection to him. Participants were asked about Chi You’s origin story, but none of them acknowledged Chi You as the Hmong king. The myth of Chi You still remains a mystery. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) suggests that there is an underlying institutional power that western imperialism has on indigenous communities. To complicate this debate, it is possible that the idea of a "Homeland" exists in many western ideas, however, this topic needs further examination.

### Findings

Out of the 16 communities interviewed:

- 11 communities did not give any clues to validate Chi You’s role in their lives.
- 5 communities acknowledged Chi You as the Miao king.
- Thao Li (Xu Xiong) from Qian Jin
- Thaj-Lis-Xyooj from Qian Jin
- Hawj Muas from Taj Sawv Toob
- Vaj from Pa Tawg Lai (Wanpeh)
- Vaj performed a dance mentioning Chi You’s kingdom and migration.
- Hawj Muas from Tai Sawv Toob
- Not many people talk about the story of Chi You or show much evidence of Chi You’s existence in their village.

### Discussion

In conclusion, I found that while the majority of communities did not provide any evidence that validate the story of Chi You. While many people claim that Chi You is a recognized king, they did not express any connection to him. Participants were asked about Chi You’s origin story, but none of them acknowledged Chi You as the Hmong king. The myth of Chi You still remains a mystery. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) suggests that there is an underlying institutional power that western imperialism has on indigenous communities. To complicate this debate, it is possible that the idea of a "Homeland" exists in many western ideas, however, this topic needs further examination.

Some of the limitations to this research are as followed:

- Environmental and Political Influences
  - Government’s reorientation of generating income for economic purposes - in creating an immersive environment.
  - Many commented that they do not have the luxury of learning and teaching about the Hmong history because they have to be in the fields.
  - Exposure to Hmong American and Tourism
  - Exposure may create a preconceived mindset when interacting with us.

### References


### Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, International Freeman Foundation Student Faculty Fellowship, and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for funding this project. We are also indebted to L.e Pao Xiong for connecting us to Yu You Xiong to be our tour guide in Yunnan. Additionally, this project would not be successful without the willingness and engagement of the Hmong Chinese communities. Last but not least, we would like to thank Dr. Ari Anand, Dr. Christian dePouw, Mr. Ka Yang, and Mr. Charles Vue for their collaboration and constant support on this research.