

RITES IN THE LIFETIME OF H'MONG PEOPLE

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Abstract: The paper describes rites taking place in the lifetime of a H'mong person in Vietnam at present, including: the birth-giving rite, the rite of choosing adopted parents; the second-naming rite for men, and the funeral rite. According to the author, the rites in the lifetime of a H'mong person have changed both positively and negatively. The State should have appropriate policies to preserve and develop positive cultural values, while minimizing unsound customs in those rites.

Key words: Rites in the lifetime, birth-giving, marriage, funeral, naming, choosing names.

By now, H'mong people in our country have still kept many traditional rites in the lifetime that are full of their culturally distinguished features. Some rites have, however, changed in accordance with the modern society. Following is the description of the major rites taking place in the lifetime of H'mong people in Vietnam at present.

1. Birth-giving Rite

In preparation for the birth-giving, H'mong people in Dien Bien Province usually make the worship called "*uo nenhz kho*" to pray for a successful birth-giving. When the mother is about to give birth, she sits on the ground next to the end of the bed. The delivery is carried out by her mother in law, her younger sister in law, her husband's sister in law, her husband, or some woman from the same village. H'mong people think it is easy to carry out deliveries and anyone can do it. Consequently, they usually give birth at home instead of doing it at the clinic, except for special cases. At present,

some of H'mong women, who are going to give birth soon, still have to work hard in the field. As a result, some of them even gave birth right in the field, indeed.

For difficult labors in the past, the birth-giving women were considered not to have behaved well towards their parents-in-law, according to the misconception of H'mong people. The women, therefore, had to make a rite by prostrating three times before her parents-in-law; or by drinking a bowl of water, into which her parents-in-law already dipped their index fingers or a bowl of washing water, in which the shirt flaps of her parents-in-law were soaked. H'mong people thought the women would give birth easier, only after the rite was done. Such misconceptions almost no longer exist at present.

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After a child is born, the placenta will be buried in the ground under the base of the pillar that supports the ridge of the house roof, if the child is a boy. It will be buried in the ground under the bed of the child's parents, if the child is a girl⁽¹⁾.

According to the conception of H'mong people, children have no spirit yet as soon as they are born. That's why people make a rite called the spirit-awaking (*hu pli*), 3 days after the childbirth (in the morning of the third day). This is one of the most important rites in the lifetime of H'mong people, as it officially informs of the birth of a new member in society. The rite is held in a large or small scale, depending on the family economic conditions. For poor families, it is held with participation of all the family members and some neighbors. For families, whose economic conditions are better, however, they invite members of the whole clan and even all families of the village to the rite. The offerings at the rite are a couple of chicken (one cock and one hen), one chicken egg, and 3 incense sticks, of which all are put in a basin of rice. The basin is then placed on a chair next to the main entrance of the house. For some families, they also cook a pig, of which the weight ranges from 10 to 30 kg, for the offerings. The spirit-awaking rite starts in early morning, when the sun hasn't risen yet. The ritual activity is usually carried out by maternal grandparents, or paternal grandfather, or someone from the village, who knows how to do this. They make a statement to awake the spirit and give a name to the child. The statement means:

"From this moment of today, the child is a member of the family; the spirit of the child will stay with the family". They give the child a silver necklace and a T-shirt to keep the child's spirit stay with his/her parents, grandparents and siblings. This will prevent the spirit from wandering away, which is considered to cause sickness and diseases for the child⁽²⁾.

After awaking the spirit and giving a name to the child, the house owner makes a rite called *phix*. They place a table right in front of the main entrance of the house. There are 2 or 4 cups of rice wine, 4 bunches of paper, 3 incense sticks, and a couple of chicken (1 cock, 1 hen and still alive) put on the table. This shows the idea that the child has officially become a member of the family and the clan, so the family has alcohol and chicken to worship deities, asking them to protect and help the child grow fast without sickness. When the chicken, egg and rice have been cooked, they do the spirit-awaking and worship the deities (*phix*) once again. Afterwards, they burn the paper bunches, while inviting deities as well as ghosts to have the wine and chicken in the hope that they will protect the child.

⁽¹⁾ According to the conception of H'mong people, sons will play the role of the family bread-winner (*support*) and daughters will undertake the task of bringing up children and doing housework in future.

⁽²⁾ For some clans of H'mong people in Dien Bien province, only when a child is exactly 1 month old, does the child's family carry out a rite called *uo nenhz*, to which they invite a shaman to make the worship. And then, the shaman will wear a silver necklace for the child.

After the spirit-awaking and *phix* (deity-worship), the person, who did the spirit-awaking, asks some people, who are mainly old people, to have a look at the chicken's legs, head, tongue, and eyes in order to make a prediction about luckiness and hazards of the family and the child as well. If there is someone coming incidentally to the rite without invitation, he or she will be considered to bring luck to the child, so he or she will be asked to bind a thread around the wrist or neck of the child as well as to make a wish that the child will grow fast without sickness and will become a helpful person for society in future. If a child unfortunately died before the spirit-awaking rite, they must not take the child's body through the main entrance of the house, when bringing it to the cemetery to be buried. At that time, they have to remove a wall wooden plank away to make a way to bring the child's dead body out. This results from the conception of H'mong people that the child hasn't had a spirit yet, so the child is not an official member of the family or the clan.

2. Parents-adopting Rite (*Txir Kruor*)

If a child is often sick, the family will hold a rite, in which the child will get adopted parents in the hope that the child will be sponsored and protected. On a certain lucky day that was chosen before, the father goes to the forest. He cuts a big tree, which still has a top, and then cleaves it into planks, which will be used to make a bridge. Next, he places the bridge in a three-way crossroad or across a narrow stream, where people often go through in

order to get to the village. After praying for luck, he hides himself into a secret place, waiting for someone to cross the bridge incidentally. The first person to cross the bridge will be chosen as the child's adopted parent. He or she will be then invited to take the child's hand or carry the child, while crossing the bridge again. He or she will bind a thread around the child's wrist, saying wishes to protect the child. The child is wished to have good health without sickness, to grow fast, to be good at school, and not to make troubles for parents. The adopted parent also gives the child some money. After that the child will take the surname of the adopted parent as a new name. For some families of H'mong people, adopted parents are chosen according to instructions of the shaman. The adopted parents are also chosen, based on some criteria. For example, they must be healthy; they have a happy family; and they get business prosperity...

Apart from the parents-adopting rite, H'mong people also have another rite called "praying for a child" (*tuov qox tuz ci*). If a couple hasn't had a child, although they have been in the marriage for several years, they will carry out this rite, asking the spirit of a child to come to the couple.

3. The Second-name (*Middle Name*) Giving Rite for Men

In some groups of H'mong people such as White H'mong and Hoa or Lenh H'mong, especially those in Dien Bien province, there is a rite to give the second name (middle name) to men. This is an indispensable rite for men. According to H'mong customs,

the middle name is given to a man, after he gets married or after he has the first child. The second-name giving rite (*ti pe lau*) varies slightly from location to location in Dien Bien province. In some areas of Muong Lay town, for example, they make the rite to give the middle name to a man, when they carry out the spirit-awaking rite for his first new-born child. For some areas in Tuan Giao, Dien Bien, and Eastern Dien Bien districts, however, after having the first child, a man has to raise one or two pigs. When the pig weighs 60 kg or more, he invites his parents-in-law to come in order to make the spirit-awaking rite for his child and to give the middle name to him.

The offerings of the second-name giving rite include: a couple of chicken (one cock and one hen), one egg put on the top of a bowl of rice, and some incense sticks. All the offerings are put on a chair placed in the main entrance of the house. The family head invites someone, who is representative for his parents in law, to make the spirit-awaking. They then kill one or two pigs, of which a half is given to the parents in law and the rest half is used to make food for the rite⁽³⁾.

The middle name is chosen according to the “Yin and Yang” principle. After they have found a name to be the middle name, they throw a pair of coins into ground. If the upward faces are not the same, they will have to choose another name and then throw the coins again. They have to do it until the faces of the two coins show the same, the name will be used⁽⁴⁾.

The party of the second-name giving rite

must be also organized according to their custom. Usually, the party is arranged for three times: the first one as the breakfast (it consists of rice and water); the second one as the main meal; and the third one as the farewell meal. At the breakfast and the farewell ones, people drink 6 large cups, 1 ox’s horn and 1 tiny cup of rice wine. At the main meal (*Piav thax*), however, each member has to drink at least 9 large cups, 1 ox’s horn and 1 tiny cup of rice wine. Everyone enjoys the happiness. They give some gifts and make wishes to the owner, who has just got the middle name.

4. Funeral Rite

According to the conception of H’mong people, the world is divided into three layers. The upper one is the heaven, where ancestors are living. The middle one is the earth, where people are living. The lower one is the hell. Man has 3 spirits (*pli*). After a person dies, the 3 spirits leave the body for three different places. The original spirit goes to the heaven and stays with the original spirits of ancestors there. The second spirit reincarnates in the earth. If a person has done a lot of good things in life, the second spirit will reincarnate into human in the earth after he or she dies. On the contrary, if he or she has done a lot of

⁽³⁾ When the parents in law have a pig and rice wine, they make a rite called *phix menhg*, to which their son in law and his wife (their daughter) are invited. A half of the pig is also given to the young couple.

⁽⁴⁾ Middle name is usually placed between last name (surname) and first name. For instance, a man has the name in the birth certificate as Mua A Pao, but after “Dzung” is chosen as his middle name at the rite, his name will be Mua Dzung Pao.

bad things, the second spirit will reincarnate into an animal to serve human. The third spirit is the grave - keeping. This spirit frequently gets in touch with descendants. It will support or disturb them. Descendants, therefore, have to worship this spirit.

As soon as a person dies, the family informs all relatives and people in the village of this⁽⁵⁾. And then, the family members and relatives of the same clan have a meeting to assign work at the funeral. Some are assigned to invite a shaman; some undertake the task of meeting guests and showing the way. The team of clarinet and drum players assigns someone to be the chief mourner. They discuss and decide the way to carry out the funeral. The family members boil water to be used to wash the dead. They cut out a piece of new linen fabric to be used as a face-flannel. They wash the face and body of the dead and then change clothes. Next, they wear a skirt outside for the dead. Although the dead is a man, he must be worn with female clothes outside. After all, the dead is bound carefully and placed on a plank next to the stove near the central pillar of the house. The head of the dead faces to the pillar; whereas the legs head to the sub-entrance or the altar, depending on the clan's custom. Then, they ask the shaman to make the speech to show the spirit of the dead how to go to the ancestors. His speech is followed by a musical passage of the pan-pipe (*khen*) titled "the breathe-stopping". It takes about 2 or 3 hours to complete the way-showing speech and the breathe-stopping passage.

Next, they hang the pan-pipe on the wall that separates the house owner's bedroom from the main pillar room; they suspend the drum with a wooden bar placed on the house beam near the stove. After a break, the pan-pipe player continues to make the horse-riding passage (*tra nenhk*) or the shrouding passage (*du sa*). Finally, the dead is moved and placed on a stand called as funeral horse (*nenh da*) in the center of the altar room. This rite is named as *tra nenhk* in H'mong language. For some families at present, they place the dead into a coffin in the same place so that people can visit and express their condolences. The dead body is kept at home from 2 to 5 days, depending on the lifespan, position of the dead and the family economic conditions as well⁽⁶⁾.

4.1. The Ghost Eviction Rite

The rite to drive ghosts away is carried out three times a day (in the morning, at noon, and in the evening). They organize a formation (like the combat formation) that consists of 2 to 5 people (or 5 to 7 people, in some local areas). The first person in the line is the horn player (or the pan-pipe player). Next is the one, who takes a crossbow. And then, one takes a scimitar; one takes a sword; and one takes a shield

⁽⁵⁾ In the past, when a person died, the family had to shoot 3 bullets of the musket to inform the village people, relatives and the heaven of this. At present, most of H'mong people in Dien Bien province use mobile phones to do this.

⁽⁶⁾ In the past, the dead body was kept at home for 6 or 7 days. It sometimes even lasted for 9 days with a lot of unsound customs that wasted a lot of money. At present, however, it lasts from 2 to 5 days. And, many families make the shrouding at home during the *Tra nenhk* rite.

etc... They run around the house 7 times clockwise and then 7 times counterclockwise (if the dead is a man) or 9 times clockwise and then 9 times counterclockwise (if the dead is a woman). Whenever passing the main entrance and the sub-entrance of the house, they blow the horn for 3 rolls, stab with the sword, and cut with the scimitar. The drummer also makes drum-rolls. In the meanwhile, the pan-pipe player also runs, jumps and blows the pan-pipes continually inside the house. This stirs up the house, as if they were fighting against ghosts, who came to disturb the dead spirit. At the same time, it simulates the fighting of H'mong ancestors against invaders in the past. The battles took place drastically, but their ancestors also failed for many times. They are, therefore, afraid the spirit of dead people cannot rest in peace. Although the ghost-eviction rites may vary from location to location, from clan to clan, and from branch to branch of H'mong people, it always has the same content and meaning.

4.2. Funeral Visiting Rite

The funeral visiting rite is highly appreciated by H'mong people. The main funeral visiting rite (*kruo txuk to kruo*) is often held before the day of burying the dead. In the funeral of H'mong people, the funeral visiting day is the day when most of people come to the funeral. All family members, siblings, both paternal and maternal relatives, friends and neighbors turn out that time. Paternal siblings and relatives are considered as the mourning hosts (*shov chuo*); they, therefore, have to

take some incense sticks, while standing or kneeling in the main entrance to welcome visitors and express thanks to them.

The mourning hosts decide about the list of those, who will be invited to take part in the funeral visiting team. And then, the mourning hosts have to come by themselves to the home of those people to invite them. They have to take 2 boiled chickens, some rice mixed with chicken livers, 2 bottles of rice wine, a cloth 2 meter long, a bunch of paper, and some money to be given to those people. If those, who are invited to take part in the funeral visiting team, have good economic conditions and they live near the home of the dead, they can bring a jar of rice and a pig that weighs from 10 to 20 kg as offerings to the deceased person. For uncles and aunts of the dead, they necessarily have to bring to the funeral a pig that weighs from 20 to 30 kg, in addition to the above-mentioned things. The uncles and aunts will take 2 or 3 others with them in order to carry the jar and play the pan-pipe for the funeral visiting team.

When the team almost comes to the home of the dead, they stop for a while in order to appoint someone to carry the offerings. They hang a paper in one end of a rod. Someone will raise the rod up, when visiting the family of the dead⁽⁷⁾. If the funeral visiting team is led by a pan-pipe

⁽⁷⁾ In the past, the funeral visiting team had to shoot 3 bullets to inform that they would visit the funeral. Inside the house, the funeral hosts also shot 3 bullets to welcome the team. This ritual no longer exists at present.

player, the pan-pipe player of the funeral host will play a pan-pipe, coming out of the main entrance to meet the team. They both will play pan-pipes together and come into the house. All those, who go after the pan-pipe player, will lower their head and take hand of each other, while going nearer to the dead body to express their condolences.

4.3. The Pan-pipe Playing Rite (*Khen*)

If they want to carry out all the ritual activities for a funeral of H'mong people, it will be necessary to play fully all the pan-pipe passages, including the breathe - stopping passage, the sleeping - place removal passage (for the dead, who was sick for a long time before the death), the horse-riding passage, the passages called *tra tro* and *hu gau*, the passages for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, the passage called *nong txu*, the passage to welcome funeral visitors, the passage for the time, when people come to visit the dead body, the passage for paper-burning, the passage for the time the dead is moved out of the house, and the passage for the time, when the dead is carried to the grave. .

Since the horse - riding passage, drums start to be used together with the pan-pipe⁽⁸⁾. Nowadays, H'mong people no longer play fully all the passages for a funeral, but they just play some of them.

In the obsequies of those, who died at the old age, if the family has good economic conditions, they will carry out the rite called *trong ntenh* and the performance called *chi say*, in which songs are sung to retell about good things that the dead

person did for his or her children as well as retell about the relationships of the dead with ancestors. The songs also advise children of the dead how to earn a living, how to do business, and how to live as a man etc⁽⁹⁾. This *trong ntenh* rite is often held at the night before the day they take the dead to the grave to be buried. It starts at 8 or 9 o'clock at night and lasts till 4 or 5 o'clock the next morning. Two people, who sing at the *chi say* performance, are the head and deputy-head of the funeral procession. When they sing songs, children of the dead are kneeling on the ground and listening to the songs. After each song, the children have to kiss the ground once.

4.4. The Dead-removal Rite

Before the dead is carried to the grave to be buried, the dead body is moved out of the house with legs first⁽¹⁰⁾. After the dead body is carried out of the main entrance of the house, it is placed on a floor prepared earlier in the vacant ground. The location of the floor must be used for the first time; i.e. it has been never used for any funerals before. They then stick green leaves around the dead body and make a roof to keep it away from sunlight and dew. The main rite held in this place is to give sacrificial

⁽⁸⁾ According to the conception of H'mong people in Dien Bien province, the drum represents for men (*Txir txauk druok*); whereas the pan-pipe represents for women (*Muov gaux kenhx*).

⁽⁹⁾ This rite is just carried out when a person died at the old age and his/her children have been already married. For those, whose children still remain little or who had no children, this rite is not carried out.

⁽¹⁰⁾ For some clans, the dead body is moved out of the house at early dawn.

offerings to the dead. The head of the funeral procession carries out ritual activities with every sacrificial animal. He binds one end of a string into the coffin and the other end with the sacrificial animals⁽¹¹⁾, while he says some sacrificial statements. And then, he kills the animals one by one. In the meanwhile, children and close relatives of the dead weep and moan; the drum is played all the time; and, the pan-piper plays his pan-pipe, while jumping around the dead body. This sacrificial rite lasts from the morning till 2 o'clock in the afternoon. They cook and have meals in the very vacant ground. In some areas, it has changed and ones now have meals far from the place of the dead⁽¹²⁾.

4.5. The Inhuming Rite (Lowering the Coffin into the Grave)

At the time considered lucky, the head of the funeral procession makes the statement for burying the dead. The drum and pan-pipe are played with the farewell passage. Young and healthy men are chosen as representatives for uncles, aunts, and the funeral host to carry the coffin to the grave.

When the coffin is lowered into the grave, at first one person is assigned to bring spirits of all people back home, because they are afraid those spirits will accompany the dead. The person takes a handful of the grave earth to put on the back tail of his or her shirt and goes home. On the way home, he or she mustn't look back or the spirits will go back to the grave with the dead.

Before filling in the grave, the head of

the funeral procession opens the coffin's cover three times and says: "look at the sky, look at the earth for the last time of a life". In some areas of Dien Bien province, H'mong people no longer do this now.

How to fill in a grave also depends on the custom of specific clans or branches of H'mong people. For some clans, they just fill in the grave with earth; for others, they use stone to make 7 steps (for men) or 9 steps (for women). After burying the dead and filling the grave, everyone go back home. They have to wash hands in a basin of water, which have been already placed in front of the main entrance, and step over a burning bar of wood, which have been also placed right at the main entrance of the house. This is understood to prevent the dead spirit from catching the spirit of living people and taking it away.

4.6. The Three-day Rice Sacrificial Rite

For the first three days after burying the dead, the family has to bring rice to the grave once a day to be sacrificed to the dead. For some clans, in the first day, they bring rice to be sacrificed but they just go for a third of the way to the grave. In the

⁽¹¹⁾ In the past, the dead body was placed in a stretcher to be carried to the grave, in which a coffin was earlier placed. At that time, they bound one end of a string with the hand of the dead and the other end with sacrificial animals during this rite.

⁽¹²⁾ For some clans alone, which carry the surnames as Laux po or Muok pok, they do not move the dead body out of the house, but they make the sacrificial rite inside the house. They bind one end of a string with sacrificial animals, which are kept outside the house, and the other end with the dead body. All other ritual activities are done the same, anyway.

second day, they go for two thirds of the way; and the third day, they bring rice to the very grave and then decorate the grave by putting stone and making a fence. For other clans, in the first day, they come to the grave, but they invite and take the spirit of the dead for a third of the way back home. In the second day, they take it for two thirds of the way. In the third day, after filling more earth and putting stone on the grave as well as making a fence around it, they take the spirit of the dead back home, where they make the rice sacrifice. What they use to invite the spirit of the dead consists of 3 bamboo cylinders, which are fully filled with rice and wine. They hang the bamboo cylinders on a small branch of a tree on the way to the grave. In addition, at the main meals every day, the family has to put a bowl and a spoon in one place in the tray so that the spirit of the dead can use it. Only after the spirit-releasing rite is done, will they no longer have to do this.

4.7. The Spirit- releasing Rite

According to the conception of H'mong people, this rite is necessary to be done, in order to get the spirit of the dead to come home and visit family, siblings, children and relatives for the last time, before being reincarnated in the next world. It usually takes place in 13 days after the funeral. If the family has favorable economic conditions, it can hold the ceremony party to release the spirit. For those families, who have difficult economic situations, they can hold it several years later.

To carry out the spirit-releasing rite, they

make a dummy⁽¹³⁾. On the 13th day after the funeral, the family assigns somebody to go to the grave to take the spirit of the dead home so that it will be then incarnated into the dummy. If the dead person was a woman, the family will invite an uncle to carry the dummy; if the dead person was a man, they will invite the husband of an aunt to carry the dummy. The pan-piper goes first and he is followed by the dummy carrier. After they go away from home for 100 to 300 m, they stop to put the dummy there. They set two stakes in the ground on both sides of the dummy. Then, they kill a dog and cut its four legs. The four legs are stuck in stakes. They bake the dog's liver, which will be used as a sacrificial offering at the worship for invitation of the spirit of the dead person. After they make the worship on the road, they take everything and go back home. They move three times around the kitchen, before putting the dummy nearby the main pillar of the house for the next worship. After the worship nearby the main pillar is done, they move the dummy and place it in the altar room for other worships. The sacrificial animal is a pig that weighs from 30 to 60 kg. In the

(13) They put a used winnowing basket on the ground. Then, they stick pieces of bamboo on the basket. They bend the bamboo pieces to make a dummy. The head of the dummy is bound with linen cloth. They cover the dummy with a shirt (a male shirt, if the dead was a man; or a female shirt, if the dead was a woman). Looking from a certain distance, it looks like a person, who is sitting with the back and the face bending down. This symbolizes a dead person. They also put 3 or 4 rice cakes on the basket.

evening, when all worship procedures and all passages of the pan-pipe and drum have been done, they move the dummy to the place on the road, where they put it in the morning to get the spirit of the dead. Now, they make the farewell worship to say good bye to the spirit for the last time and everyone get some rice cakes. Afterwards, they take off the shirt of the dummy, place it stand up and then push it away. If the dummy falls and lies face down, it will mean that the spirit agrees to go away. If the dummy lies face up, it will mean that the spirit does not want to go away. In that case, they have to drink some wine and push the dummy again, until it falls and lies face down. Only at that time, can everyone go home.

4.8. The Cow Ghost Worship

The cow ghost worship is also called as the dry-ghost rite. When children of the dead person raise a cow or have money to buy a cow, they will start the cow ghost worship to the dead parent. The way they carry out this worship is similar to that of the spirit-releasing rite or that of the bedroom ghost worship. However, they do not weep or moan at the worship. The sacrificial animal is a cow, which can be big or small, depending on specific conditions. This worship is sometimes carried out, because the spirit of their dead parent comes back to ask for a cow through sickness or a dream of a family member or through a statement of the shaman.

5. Several Remarks

Traditional rites in the lifetime of

H'mong people carry particular cultural features of this ethnic group. Basically, they have been still kept and realized in practice by H'mong people until now.

H'mong people mainly live in high mountainous areas with difficult transportation. In the past, they were completely self-reliant in economy. At present, the political, socio - economic, and cultural life of H'mong people has been really improved. Ritual activities in the lifetime of H'mong people have, therefore, changed at some extent. Some unsound customs that waste a lot of time and money are no longer suitable with the present modern society. When a H'mong woman has a difficult labor, for example, family members will take her to a medical clinic instead of doing the previous ways such as forcing her to prostrate three times before her parents in law; or drinking a bowl of water, into which her parents in law already dipped their index fingers or a bowl of washing water, in which shirt flaps were soaked. For a funeral at present, in some areas they just keep the dead body at home from 2 to 5 days (instead of 7 or 9 days as before); the dead body is put in a coffin; meals are served far from the place of the dead body; instead of shooting to inform relatives and villagers of a funeral, they use a drum or a pan - pipe; and, recently they use mobile phones to do it.

There are, however, still unsound and backward customs relating to traditional ritual activities of H'mong people. They are no longer suitable with the modern life

and they result in obstacles against socio-economic and cultural development. Besides, there is a latent danger that may gradually deprive of the original cultural values, which have been accumulated by many generations for thousands years. A part of H'mong people have changed their religion and have become Protestants. They reject completely all the traditional beliefs inherited from ancestors. They no longer make the worship to ancestors; they get rid of ritual activities as well as the trust in guardian deities; affection expressional songs, pan-pipe and flute passages, and other traditional musical instruments are gradually left in oblivion.

Due to the above-mentioned practice, it is necessary for the government to promulgate socio-economic and cultural development policies that are appropriate with distinguished features and conditions of H'mong people. The policies should aim at preserving and promoting original and particular cultural values. At the same time, they should aim at eliminating step-by-step unsound and unsuitable customs of the traditional ritual system generally and the lifetime rites specifically. This will help to meet cultural, spiritual and belief demands of H'mong people.

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