

Lan Xang Village: Place-making in Louisiana's Iberia Parish

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In the wheelhouse, Papoose scans the two-way radio, and we overhear fishermen speaking Cajun English and French. We hear the twang of Texas oil workers heading out to offshore platforms and the exotic language of exiled Vietnamese shrimpers who've fished these waters since the 1975 fall of Saigon, drawn to America's own elaborate version of the Mekong Delta. Completing the ethnic gumbo are French-speaking Houma Indians, driven by European settlers over the centuries to the farthest ends of the bayou country where they now survive as expert fishermen.¹

This passage from journalist Mike Tidwell's *Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast* (2003)—a regional and ecological history tracing the environmental losses occurring in Louisiana's Mississippi Delta—introduces the history of the Cajun coast and those who live along the bayous, including Texas oil workers, Vietnamese fisherfolk, Houma Indians, and Cajuns. It simultaneously sheds light on the socially and spatially uneven ways some stories are muted while others appear front-and-center.² In fact, across Acadiana, nearly 15 percent of residents are Black, and in some parishes such as Iberia, Black residents make up at least 30 percent of the total population.³

In Iberia Parish and Lafourche Parish, Latinx residents make up 4.3 percent and 4.4 percent. Building on Carl Bankston III's and Phanat Xanamane's scholarship on the stories of one such frequently overlooked group—a Lao community of about 400 people on the northern edge of New Iberia, the largest city in Louisiana's Iberia Parish—this article explores how place-making plays an integral role in belonging and experience for immigrants and refugees. Although this article focuses on how Lao immigrants negotiate their spatial practices and experiences in Louisiana, I also deliberately use data about Vietnamese and Cambodians and apply it to the Lao community under examination. This reflects both in terms of very little scholarship examining Lao immigrants in the region and as subjects of U.S. militarism and imperialism, Southeast Asian refugees experienced similar, yet different processes of displacement and resettlement to America.

Set against Louisiana's coastal south landscape and local distinctiveness, Lan Xang village is home to refugees from Laos who resettled with sponsorship from the Catholic Diocese in the 1970s and 1980s, and through secondary migration after learning of federally funded job training made available. Like many newly arrived Southeast Asian refugees in the Gulf Coast, Lao refugees landed job opportunities produced by the oil boom, while others filled the demand for unskilled labor in peeling shrimp, shucking oysters, picking peppers at the Tabasco factory, and working in food processing and textile mills. As Bankston writes, "Laotians began moving into Iberia Parish during the early 1980s, the peak period of Lao resettlement in the United States. Their concentration in this area was a consequence of secondary migration in search of job opportunities.... Those who arrived in New Iberia came with little capital, often relying on the help of friends and relatives, and on the public assistance made available under the provisions of the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980."⁴ Today, the small community off Melancon Road consists of three residential streets and a main avenue. At the heart of Lan Xang village, a Buddhist temple serves as an ordination hall where monks are ordained, and a sanctuary and gathering center for the community. In their efforts to belong and stay, I suggest place-making practices by Lao refugees in Lan Xang village make visible their multiple displacements but also make evidence of their collective process to belong and endow their place with value and attachments in New Iberia. This practice can be seen in places where temples serve as the center of the community such as Morganton, North Carolina and Willington, Connecticut.

I approach place-making as work-in-progress and as an active space imbued with purpose, identity, and meaning whose final form is always contested. This approach acknowledges the complex relationships between people and place, and the stories created and shared. In "Space and Place," Yi-Fu Tuan states, "place incarnates the experiences and

aspirations of a people... a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning."⁵ Namely, people imbue space with meaningful attachments and connections to make a place home (a cultural creation). They endow it with value as a way to know and understand their environment. In defining and coming to know place, Dolores Hayden writes, "'place' is one of the trickiest words in the English language, a suitcase so overfilled one can never shut the lid. It carries the resonance of homestead, location, and open space in the city as well as a position in a social hierarchy."⁶ As such, a sense of place allows one to imaginatively produce, live, and experience, while simultaneously serving as a source of memory encompassing the richness of everyday life. Here, I am interested in how place-making become a resource for residents of Lan Xang Village. Simultaneously, how do place and place-making continue to persist despite the temporal and spatial dimensions of environmental displacement? The use of archival analysis, census data, newspaper articles, and YouTube videos alongside Tidwell's *Bayou Farewell* can shed light on how a small Lao community makes place as they navigate histories of their multiple forced displacements. The article begins with a historical context for understanding the nature of Southeast Asian refugees' resettlement to the United States, specifically refugees from Laos. This is followed by place-making and the ways in which Southeast Asians make place despite the threat of ongoing displacement in the region. Lastly, I provide an analysis of Lan Xang village and the importance of place-making and place-naming in Iberia Parish where Asians make up 2.7 percent of the total population. This paper concludes that refugees' experience of repeated displacements in their homeland and new home compels an active and ongoing process of place-making and belonging.

Laotian Resettlement in the U.S.

Overshadowed by the war in Vietnam, America's covert military intervention in Laos since 1954 and bombing campaign from 1964 to 1973 resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people to fend for themselves. By 1971, America's failed war in Laos to contain the spread of communism became public in several congressional hearings with focus on the devastating impact of refugee and civilian war casualty, its political-military significance, and effectiveness of U.S. aid programs. As the war wound down and the United States withdrew its forces from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, a large percentage of refugees resettled in the United States under both the 1975 Indochina Refugee Migration and Assistance Act (amended in 1976 to include refugees from Laos) and the Refugee Act of 1980, which provided for an annual number of admissions for refugees.⁷ With little coordination, the U.S. federal resettlement policy conducted an *ad hoc* admission process in 1975 for

the first wave of Southeast Asian refugees (predominately Vietnamese), of whom the majority were academics, military officials, professionals, and people who worked for the United States government. By the end of the 1970s, media reports and images of an increasing exodus of refugees led to the passing of the Refugee Act of 1980. By comparison with the first wave, the second wave (1978–1982) of refugees tended to be rural, less affluent, poorly educated, and largely unskilled individuals who escaped harsh political and economic conditions under newly installed governments in the former French Indochina.⁸ Between 1975 and 1981, over 500,000 refugees resettled from Vietnam (346,654), Laos (109,811, including Hmong and ethnic Laotians), and Cambodia (60,422) to America.⁹

Fears and concerns of burdening receiving communities, particularly during an economic recession in the late 1970s and early 1980s, along with facilitating cultural adjustment, assimilation, and economic self-sufficiency into American life, the U.S. resettlement policy emphasized dispersal of refugees throughout the country to prevent the settlement of large ethnic communities. Although well intended, the policy's incohesive programs and resources to state and local agencies reflected refugees' resettlement process. In the hands of voluntary organizations subcontracted by the United States government to provide counseling and placement with sponsors, some refugees were resettled in impoverished neighborhoods with affordable housing. Others were assigned sponsors from local church congregations who handled housing logistics, job training, and English language instruction. The majority of refugees from Laos resettled in California, Texas, Minnesota, and Washington because of the growing ethnic communities in urban areas. After their initial resettlement, some refugees opted to resettle near relatives to further access support, information, comfort, and protection from hostility and racism. Many others chose to resettle in semirural areas or migrate to areas for job opportunities and better climate. Due to fragmentary data, resettlement for refugees from Laos tend to suggest they either stay in their initial place of resettlement or move for job opportunities that were often hazardous, low-income, and low-skilled.¹⁰ In their 1987 study, Amy Zaharlick and Jean Brainard demonstrate that in comparison to Hmong refugees, "ethnic Lao appear to exhibit a relative lack of clustering in ethnic communities due to more scattered initial placement and lower rates of secondary migration."¹¹ Today, 254,000 Laotians (not including Hmong) live in the U.S., and established a community where many refugees resettled, such as San Diego and Fresno in California, Seattle in Washington, and New Iberia in Louisiana.¹²

In Louisiana, Lao families relied on kinship networks, little capital, and public assistance to resettle in Iberia Parish in the 1980s. According to

Carl L. Bankston and Min Zhou, "Laotians first established a community on the southwestern of the city, in a large complex of federally-subsidized, Section-8 housing."¹³ As is the case with many Southeast Asian refugees' resettlement processes in the United States, the reliance on nongovernmental and faith-based organizations relocated many to federally subsidized, low-income housing.¹⁴ For example, in the eastern section of Orleans Parish in Louisiana, nearly 1,000 Vietnamese refugees moved into a 402-unit Versailles Arms apartments and surrounding subdivisions (Versailles Gardens and Village de L'Est) which changed the makeup of the neighborhoods. The surrounding subdivisions were first occupied by whites who gradually left in the early 1970s and later replaced by African Americans. Stacy Seichcnaydre et al. trace the long history of housing policy in New Orleans and show how housing projects built for whites during the New Deal era "were located on higher elevation and closer to the front of town, while the black-only projects occupied lower spots in the back of town" or in economically isolated and racially segregated areas.¹⁵ Explicitly designed and implemented, segregated public housing programs in New Orleans and nationwide defined where whites and African Americans lived, and later where Southeast Asian refugees would be resettled. In fact, due to their status as poor racial minorities, Southeast Asian refugees' resettlement into already racially segregated public housing (Versailles subdivisions and Village de L'Est) and unhealthy neighborhoods illustrate the "continued violence, uncertainty, and itinerancy" experienced after resettlement as Eric Tang states in *Unsettled: Cambodian Refugees in the New York City Hyperghetto* (2015).

Lao families with dual incomes and who could afford to move out of the apartment complex began settling in small clusters in northern Iberia Parish "outside of established residential, commercial, and industrial zones, and at the time unused for farming."¹⁶ As Bankston and Zhou state, "by 1986, the Laotians had established themselves sufficiently to begin planning their own community and cultural center. They found a [relatively inexpensive] tract of land in a semi-rural area on the northern edge of the county."¹⁷ The purchase of the land began the process of formalizing their community that included a temple built in 1987, three residential streets, and a main avenue. This initial act of place-making cultivated socioeconomic mobility within the community and provided a sense of familiarity of a Lao village for families who moved into Lan Xang. As Phanat Xanamane writes, "Through kinship clustering they are able to create networks that provide income and emotional support, forming a social group similar to a Lao homeland village but set in a suburban American neighborhood context."¹⁸ The act of place-making can also be seen through the use of land for community gardens. This active process of planting familiar vegetables and herbs gives meaning

to place, but also serves practical needs for refugees and immigrants in their attempt to live in often unsustainable environment. For example, despite toxic exposure in the soil, Lao, Khmu, and Mien ethnic groups in Richmond, California found ways to sustain their agrarian background through communal gardens by revitalizing unmanaged backyards in public housing complexes.¹⁹ As Tim Cresswell notes of gardens created by the Puerto Rican community in New York City, "The gardens are the result of the efforts of immigrants and others to carve out a place from a little piece of Manhattan for their community to enjoy nature. Some of the community gardens—often the first to be leveled—are the sites of casitas—little houses made by the Puerto Rican community to replicate similar buildings from 'home.'"²⁰

Creating Place After Resettlement

What might place-making practices in the U.S. look like for racialized minorities whose stories and histories begin with dispossession and displacement? How might a refugee-centered approach shed light on displacement, race, and violence in Louisiana and elsewhere? These questions both capture complex connections to how individuals and communities enact ways of sustainability and create alternative places in efforts to express and preserve language and cultural practices. Simultaneously, in an era of the Anthropocene—the growing human activities on the planet that have polluted the oceans and altered the atmosphere, among other lasting impacts—the collective act of place-making is out of necessity for communities to survive and belong. Yet, for Southeast Asian communities who have resettled and relocated in the Gulf Coast, they know too well their experience of displacement and precarious life is ongoing. The threat of vanishing land and surrounding water levels make the region the most vulnerable place in the country when it comes to climate change and human-made disasters. Such as, the BP oil spill in 2010 disproportionately impacted Southeast Asian American communities "who make up one-third of the seafood industry workforce in the region" according to Miya Saika Chen and Audrey Buehring.²¹ Many individuals who work in specialized trades such as seafood processors, fishers, crabbers, boatwelders, the BP oil spill and effects on Louisiana's economy have resulted in an uncertain future, and the only choice to consider is to wait and see what happens. A choice for many who remain to stay after building a livelihood in the seafood industry. For example, in the coastal community of Bayou La Batre, Alabama, while several hundred Southeast Asian refugees took advantage of work in the shrimp and crab industries that were abandoned by white and Black workers who left for higher-paying jobs in Mobile, the majority of Vietnamese refugees made the city home as Daniel Le states, "eventually people find their way to the place they feel the most comfortable and find work."²²

The region is home to approximately 200,000 Southeast Asians.²³

In the opening passage of this article, Tidwell uses water in his evocation of the similarities between Louisiana's waterways and the Mekong Delta, a region in southwestern Vietnam where the Mekong River empties into the South China Sea, that culminated in "Vietnamese shrimpers" resettlement and place-making in Louisiana, and home to one of the largest concentrated settlements in the country. Throughout *Bayou Farewell*, Tidwell seeks to engage with members of the Vietnamese fisherfolk community. On a trip with Tim Melancon (the surname is also the main road off Lan Xang village), a Cajun shrimp who is proud of "still liv[ing] off de land," Tidwell comes across a shrimp shed owned by a Vietnamese family who "seems to inhabit a parallel universe."²⁴ The scenes of Vietnamese taking breaks, eating together, smoking cigarettes, and squatting "Asian-style" are separate from scenes described about Cajun people, mostly English-speaking white Americans who are not in the shrimp business for money. These scenes conceptualize Vietnamese lives and histories as "Other" in contrast to the Cajun people. Although both groups found shelter in Louisiana as refugees after forced displacement and have colonial proximity to the Francophone, their interactions are scant in *Bayou Farewell*. At the same time, the minimal presence of Vietnamese reflects the tensions between Cajun people, and recently arrived Vietnamese refugees who keep to themselves. Complicated by cultural and language barriers, the separation of both communities inevitably led to prejudice and resentment spurred by economic uncertainty. Despite the racial and economic tensions, both communities relationally stand to lose their livelihood and way of life as they feel the impact of environmental and human-made disasters happening at a speed that sees large chunks of marshland disappearing every year.²⁵ While *Bayou Farewell* locates complex stories of the Cajun people and articulates environmental and human disasters as an endemic crisis of the Louisiana coast, the book has largely reduced Vietnamese refugees to a depoliticized "object" of inquiry: the "exotic" and "exiled" who are not here to stay and seen as perpetual new arrivals.

For example, on one of his tours of the bayou, Tidwell finally manages to meet Tri Dong Phu, a Vietnamese man who owns the crab shed in Golden Meadow, and Phan Duc Nguyen, who works with Tri. Tidwell arranges a day ride with Phan down the bayou and learns of Phan's multiple displacements—Vietnam, the Philippines, Guam, Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, and Breau Bridge, Louisiana—that led him to Bayou Lafourche and ultimately with the hope of returning to Vietnam after he saves enough money from crabbing. Tidwell's story of Phan ends with a gloomy outlook of the vanishing "huge estuary system of the Mississippi River, this Mekong Delta of America" and the locals who call

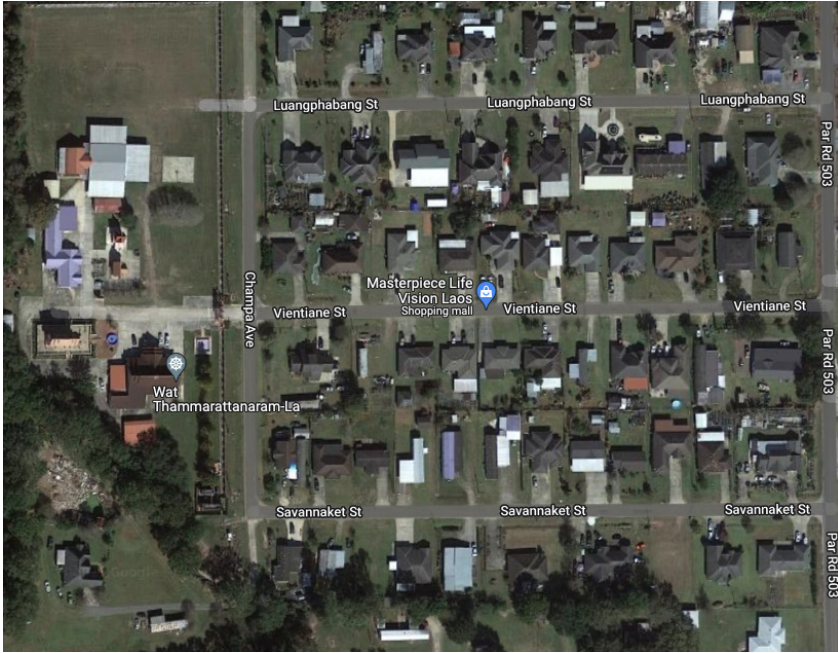


Figure 1: Satellite Google image map of Lan Xang Village, New Iberia Parish, Louisiana.

this region home, except the Vietnamese “are mostly unburdened by any emotional ties to this land, free to walk away since the region is not and never has been truly ‘home.’”²⁶ His concluding remark disregards Phan’s “stories, actions, and inactions—simultaneously trouble *and* affirm regimes of power,” as Yén Lê Espiritu writes, resulting in his multiple forced displacements.²⁷ Similar to many Southeast Asian refugees who resettled in the United States, Phan’s multiple routes of displacement make visible the local, national, and international acts of racialized and militarized violence. His movement and itinerancy, including the criminalization of his drug use and low-wage work, must be understood in relation to the U.S. empire and wars in Southeast Asia. In connecting the dots of the U.S. military empire and exposing the militarized violence of refuge and refugees, Espiritu emphasizes the geographic points of refugees’ journey beginning in Vietnam, the Philippines, Guam, and the U.S. as a violent process.²⁸ Eric Tang argues this racialized violence is unsettled, which defines the precarious nature of refugee experience of displacement and captivity. That is, refugees are subjects of a “long, unresolved colonial and imperial project carried out by the United States, a white supremacist project that wrought unprecedented death.”²⁹

Despite the scant mention of Vietnamese in *Bayou Farewell*, the ways in which Southeast Asian Americans demonstrate they are here

to stay is through place-making, whether in the form of rebuilding in the aftermath of major disasters or preserving their culture through home and community gardens. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the recovery of the Vietnamese enclave in New Orleans East illustrates cooperative social relations and close-knit communities based on shared sense of ethnicity and cultural traditions as noted in Karen J. Leong, Christopher A. Airries et al. study of immigrants' profound attachment to place, which contributed to their strong community identity.³⁰ Although much that has been written in news media about the Vietnamese community reflects their resiliency and adaptation, additional scholarship demonstrates a deeper relationship to place and community. In their qualitative study of Vietnamese in Biloxi, Mississippi, Yoosun Park, Joshua Miller, and Bao Chau Van demonstrate Little Saigon's long roots in the city and profound attachment to place, either through the relationship to the community or the workforce in the Gulf Coast.³¹ Similarly, "For Laotians, the environment of Louisiana bore a resemblance to their homeland. ... Louisiana was familiarly agricultural, its land full of lakes for fishing and woods for foraging mushrooms and palmetto shoots—all common ingredients in Laotian cuisine. The climate, too, agreed with them," as As Emily Carmichael writes.³²

Lane Xang Village: Placemaking as an Act of Belonging

The importance of placemaking can be seen in the three residential streets named after cities in Laos (Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Savannakhet) and the main avenue named after Laos' national flower, Champa. The symbolic meaning of naming represents and reflects the genesis of place-making, in that meaning and familiarity are assigned in connection with collective memories of "home" and "homeland." In other words, transforming the location into place invites analysis of ways in which communities create familiarity and comfort of the homeland while constructing their new lives in America. Tim Cresswell notes the concept of place is simple, yet complicated. Broadly defined, place is a setting for everyday encounters and practices, a location where meanings, memories, ideas, and social positions are lived and layered, and a site of histories and identity. Place is a "meaningful location" teeming with social purpose, meanings, memories, identities, and histories.³³ In the case of Lan Xang village, referencing street names after cities in Laos highlights the importance of place-making and bridges familiar places in the homeland and America. For example, Luang Prabang was once the capital of Lan Xang Kingdom from 1353, until it moved to Vientiane. In northern Laos, Luang Prabang remained the royal residence and religious center until 1975 when the communist forces seized power and dissolved the ancient monarchy. Vientiane, the largest city and capital of Laos is situated in the middle of the country near the Thai

border. Lastly, Savannakhet is the largest province of Laos located in the central-southern panhandle and the second largest city after Vientiane. Moreover, naming the community as Lan Xang references the Kingdom of a Million Elephants that ruled the north for centuries before the French took the country as a colony and mapped the boundaries of Laos. In her comparative approach examining Vietnamese American communities in Orange County, California, and Boston, Massachusetts, Karin Aguilar-San Juan formulates a critical theory of place to underscore the significance of place and the place-making process for Vietnamese Americans, which is active and holds great value.³⁴ The notion of “staying Vietnamese” in a social and spatial context serves as an act of “purposeful and ultimately strategic, shifting and changing to arrive at new ways of being Vietnamese in a U.S. context.”³⁵

In Iberia Parish, the small rural neighborhood also arrives “at new ways of being” and “staying” Lao in a U.S. context. As Aguilar-San Juan shows, “staying Vietnamese” is to have some connection to themselves, their histories, and their cultures—a lens that further grasps a deliberate belonging and a deliberate resistance to forgetting the homeland. In his research on resilient landscapes, architecture, and local residents, Phanat Xaname’s study “suggests that the process of Lao-immigrant cultural adaptation translates the American suburb environmentally, socially, and psychologically into a resilient Lao-American village landscape.”³⁶ Examining settlement patterns through the lens of architectural and urban design, Xaname shows how Lao refugees’ interpretation of the ecologies directly links to their previous patterns of living. Their deliberate design of Lan Xang to be similar to villages in Laos include the temple serving as the central place to gather and make merit by giving alms to monks, bringing offerings, or participating in labor by cooking, sharing, and eating together. Adorned in gold and intricate details, the design of Wat Thammarattanaram, a Theravada Buddhist monastery on Champa Avenue mimics Lao-style Buddhist temples. As Xaname demonstrates, first-generation immigrants translated small villages based on kinship ties in Laos to Lan Xang. He writes, “Louisiana Lao immigrants use a small-village-based relational system to structure a Lao-American immigrant urbanism with unique social interactions, micro-economies, and cultural dynamics. This made way for the emergence of a spatial network of Lao ethnic enclaves that adapted on a physical and architectural level in the Louisiana rural-suburban landscape.”³⁷ In areas with a sizable Lao population, community members pool their resources together to build Lao Buddhist temples. For example, in Morganton, North Carolina, where approximately thirteen Lao families lived, they came together and bought the plot of land nearby to build Wat Lao Sayaphoum.³⁸ In Lan Xang, the importance of community donations and mutual aid relationships to build the temple serves as an act of continuity by bringing aspects of Laos to Louisiana. Seen through this lens of placelessness, the desire to make

place frames the loss of homeland. In "Bayou Lotus," Bankston shows Buddhism allows Laotians to make sense of their new environment, and to help "establish continuity between the familiar and the unfamiliar."³⁹ Today, the temple is an established place that functions as a community center for residents, and continues to serve the needs of other small clusters of Lao, Thai, and Cambodian residents in neighboring towns such as Lafayette and New Iberia area.⁴⁰ Place-making is also about finding connections between Lao and Cajun culture by inviting the community to the annual Songkran Festival of parades, pageantry, traditional dances, and ceremonies.⁴¹

The settlement today represents the culmination of years of saving to make place while "staying" Lao within Iberia Parish. Initially, Lao refugees settled in ethnic concentrations and the first "took root in a complex of federally subsidized, low-income apartments on the western edge of the city of New Iberia," as Bankston notes.⁴² Deemed "out of place" as refugees, the creation of Lan Xang village and other Southeast Asian communities in various locations throughout the United States can be viewed as places of refuge, familiarity, and sameness. A form of resistance to mistreatment and exclusion, these places serve as havens for residents who established stores, restaurants, and religious sites. For example, in a documentary series *Finding American: Stories of Immigration* by Colin Boyd Shafer,⁴³ Phanat Xanamane and his family resettled in New Iberia in 1983, and after working sorting potatoes into cans, peeling crawfish, and shucking oysters, his mother opened Asia Market in 1985. The market offers Thai and Lao videos, staple foods like rice and sauces, Asian produce grown from their backyard, and small loans to help others start their own business. As Phanat states, "The store became a mecca of Southeast Asian culture. There was an economy that was independent of the mainstream economy that was built in the Asian community."⁴⁴ Today, the market is an extension of the Lao community, and the space not only functions as a typical market, but as Xanamane writes, there are "two housing complexes, a greenhouse, extensive gardens, orchards, vertical trellis-growth structures, ponds, bean sprout stations, and a large warehouse for storage, as well as pavilions and picnic tables."⁴⁵ This description reveals the market is much more than a storefront, but a place that acts as a center for social and cultural connections, as well as for practical needs where Asian products and produce sold remain a source of identity for Lao immigrants.

Conclusion

Like other racialized ethnic groups, early Asian immigrants and laborers forged their communities and enclaves in both rural and urban areas imbuing spaces with their meanings and familiarities of homeland through sights, sounds, smells, and names. After years of pooling their

money together, Lao refugees' efforts to make place in Louisiana and elsewhere demonstrate the many ways they endow place with value and attachments formed out of a sense of belonging, stability and security, even if under the threat of disaster displacement in regions such as the Gulf Coast. What begins as an undifferentiated space in New Iberia Parish off Melancon Road becomes a place for Lao immigrants to develop their understanding and perceptions of a built environment. Creating Lan Xang village is one specific instance in which they endowed the place with value and attachments that cannot be washed away. This has been seen in other small communities throughout the U.S. For example, in her study of a Lao community located north of Fort Worth, Texas, Sadhon Bhookong demonstrates the importance of refugee community and kinship network in the adaptation process in assisting integration to American society and in preserving traditional Lao way of life.⁴⁶

This article attempts to think through place-making, and I plan to expand this article into a larger study of Lao American communities in the U.S. I thank the anonymous reviewers for providing constructive suggestions and comments. I also thank Giselle L. Anatol and Joo Ok Kim for their critical and editorial support to strengthen the article.

Notes

1. Mike Tidwell, *Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003): 15–16. Tidwell is founder and director of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness about the impacts and solutions associated with global warming.

2. See also Carl A. Brasseaux and Philip Gould, *Acadiana: Louisiana's Historic Cajun Country* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011). Brasseaux demonstrates that the idea and image of Acadiana region as homogenous is false and exists for tourism.

3. The population of Black residents in the following parishes: Lafourche, 13.5 percent; Jefferson Davis, 16.5 percent; Acadia, 18 percent; Vermillion, 14.3 percent; Terrabonne, 19.2 percent; and St. Charles, 26.2 percent. The population for Latinx residents in the following parishes: Lafourche, 4.4 percent; Iberia, 4.3 percent; Acadia, 2.8 percent; and St. Charles, 6.4 percent. *United States Census Bureau 2020*.

4. Carl L. Bankson III and Min Zhou, "De Facto Congregationalism and Socioeconomic Mobility in Laotian and Vietnamese Immigrant Communities: A Study of Religious Institutions and Economic Change," *Review of Religious Research* 41, no. 4 (2000): 453–470; 462.

5. Yi-Fu Tuan, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective," in *Philosophy in Geography*, eds. Stephen Gale and Gunnar Olsson (D. Reideal, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1979), 387.

6. Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 15.

7. These acts also represent the two major waves of refugee resettlement. Moreover, for the first time the 1980 Refugee Act defined refugee and all refugees were eligible for cash payments and medical assistance for the first 36 months after arrival. For more on definition of refugee, see 96th Congress, Public Law 96-212-March 17, 1980, which amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to revise the procedures for the admission of refugees.

8. I want to note during the resettlement process between 1975 and 1982, the data for refugees from Laos includes ethnic Lao and Hmong.

9. Woodrow Jones, Jr. and Paul Jones Strand, *Indochinese Refugees in America: Problems of Adaptation and Assimilation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985).

10. In their 1987 study assessing Southeast Asian refugees experience and resettlement, anthropologists Amy Zaharlick and Jean Brainard note, "studies of local populations have been few in number to date as well as limited in their ethnic group coverage. The majority have focused on the Vietnamese and Hmong, while ethnic Lao and Cambodian refugees have been relatively neglected" (337). Today, studies examining ethnic Lao and other groups such as Khmu and Lu-Mien continue to be limited. "Demographic Characteristics, Ethnicity and the Resettlement of Southeast Asian Refugees in the United States," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 16, no. 4/3 (1987): 327-373.

11. Ibid., 353-354.

12. Abby Budinam, "Laotians in the U.S. Fact Sheet," *Pew Research Center*, April 29, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/fact-sheet/asian-americans-laotians-in-the-u-s/#top-10-u-s-metropolitan-areas-by-laotian-population-2019>.

13. Carl L. Bankston III and Min Zhou, "De Facto Congregationalism and Socioeconomic Mobility in Laotian and Vietnamese Immigrant Communities: A Study of Religious Institutions and Economic Change," *Review of Religious Research* vol. 41, no. 4 (2000): 453-470; 462.

14. Christopher A. Aierriess and David L. Clawson, "Versailles: A Vietnamese Enclave in New Orleans, Louisiana," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 12:1 (1991): 1-13. See also Allison Truitt, "Bringing Buddha to the City: Metropolitan New Orleans and Vietnamese Buddhist Communities," *City & Society* 3:1 (2019): 17-33. Truitt writes, "The Archdiocese rejected the federal government's model of dispersing refugee families by instead settling them in three different apartment complexes, a decision facilitated by a newly created, federally funded program called Section 8 Housing in 1974" (22).

15. Stacy Seicscnaydre, Robert A. Collins, Cashauna Hill, and Maxwell Ciardullo, "Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk," *The Data Center*, April 2, 2018.

16. Phanat Xanamane, "Lao Immigrant Cultural Adaptation in Southwestern Louisiana's Urban Landscapes," *Nakhara*, 102.

17. Bankston and Zhou, 463–464.

18. Xanamane, "Lao Immigrant Cultural Adaptation," 100.

19. For more on the Laotian community in Richmond, California and toxic exposure, see Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN). <https://apen4ej.org>.

20. Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 10.

21. Miya Saika Chen and Audrey Buehring, "The Impact of the Gulf Oil Spill in AAPI Communities," *The White House President Barack Obama Archives*, June 17, 2010. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2010/06/17/impact-gulf-oil-spill-aapi-communities-0>. See also Antonia Juhasz, "BP Oil Still Tars the Gulf," *The Progressive*, March 4, 2012. Juhasz provides a slightly higher number of the workforce of Bayou La Batre prior to the BP gulf oil spill in 2010. Juhasz writes, "an estimated 80 percent of the workforce made its living from the commercial seafood industry. A large percentage of this workforce is of Southeast Asian descent, primarily from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia."

22. Victoria Macchi, "Half a World Away, Vietnamese Build Lives on the American Bayou," *VOA News*, <https://projects.voanews.com/all-over-the-map/vietnamese-bayou/>.

23. Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, "2020 State Factsheet Louisiana." <https://aapidata.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Louisiana-2020.pdf>. (Accessed September 15, 2021). In the 2018 Louisiana State Fact Sheet produced by AAPI Vote, data for Laotian is available. There were 3,725 Laotians living in the state. According to the US Census Report 2020, Asians (1.8 percent) and Native Hawaiians (0.1 percent) account for 1.9 percent of the total population in Louisiana (4,648,794). The largest Asian American Pacific Islander ethnic groups include Vietnamese (32,984), Filipino (20,015), Chinese (13,908), Indian (11,405), Other/not specified (5,538), and Japanese (4,745), and with the highest populations in Jefferson Parish (18,185), East Baton Rouge Parish (14,170), and Orleans Parish (11,410). See also, Eric Tang, "Vietnamese," *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 262–265.

24. Tidwell, *Bayou Farewell*, 201.

25. See also Simi Kang, "States of Emergence/y: Coastal Restoration and the Future of Louisiana's Vietnamese/American Commercial Fisherfolk," *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, Issue 10 (Spring 2018). <https://editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers/article/states-of-emergence-y/> (accessed October 5, 2021).

26. Tidwell, *Bayou Farewell*, 298.

27. Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)*

(Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 2.

28. In *Body Counts*, Espiritu calls this journey "militarized refuge" which examines the very space that rescued refugees and made possible the war in Asia/Pacific.

29. Eric Tang, *Unsettled: Cambodian Refugees in the New York City Hyperghetto* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013), 13.

30. Karen J. Leong, Christopher A. Aierriess, Wei Li, Angela Chia-Chen Chen, and Verna M. Keith, "Resilient History and the Rebuilding of a Community: The Vietnamese American Community in New Orleans East," *The Journal of American History* (December 2007): 771.

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32. Emily Carmichael, "The Buddhists and the Catholics: In a Tiny Corner of Broussard, A Laotian Community Flourishes," *CountryRoadsMag.com*, April 20, 2020, 42-46.

33. Cresswell, 7.

34. Karin Aguilar-San Juan, *Little Saigons: Staying Vietnamese in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

35. *Ibid.*, xxvii.

36. Xanamane, "Lao Immigrant Cultural Adaptation in Southwestern Louisiana's Urban Landscapes," 97.

37. Xanamane, "Lao Immigrant Cultural Adaptation in Southwestern Louisiana," 100-101.

38. For more on the Lao community, see Kathryn Anne Clune, "Home in a New Place: Making Laos in Morganton, North Carolina," Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2015).

39. Carl L. Banskton III, "Bayou Lotus: Theravada Buddhism in Southwestern Louisiana," *Sociological Spectrum* 17, no. 4 (1997), 463-468.

40. *Ibid.*, 463.

41. For more on the Lao New Year Celebration at Wat Thamarattanam Temple for April 2022, see Iberia Travel, <https://www.iberiatravel.com/events/lao-new-year-celebration-0>.

42. Banskton, "Bayou Lotus," 463.

43. Colin Boyd Shafer, "Phanat's Immigration Story—Phanat Nikhom—Refugee Camp, Thailand to New Iberia, Louisiana," *Finding American*, April 21, 2020. <https://findingamerican.com/phanat-thailand-louisiana/> (accessed July 8, 2022).

44. Colin Boyd Shafer, "Phanat's Immigration Story."

45. Xanamane, "Lao Immigrant Cultural Adaptation in Southwestern Louisiana," 107.

46. Sadhon Bhookong, "A Laotian Refugee Community: Its Impact on Adaptation," Dissertation, Texas Woman's University, May 1990.

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