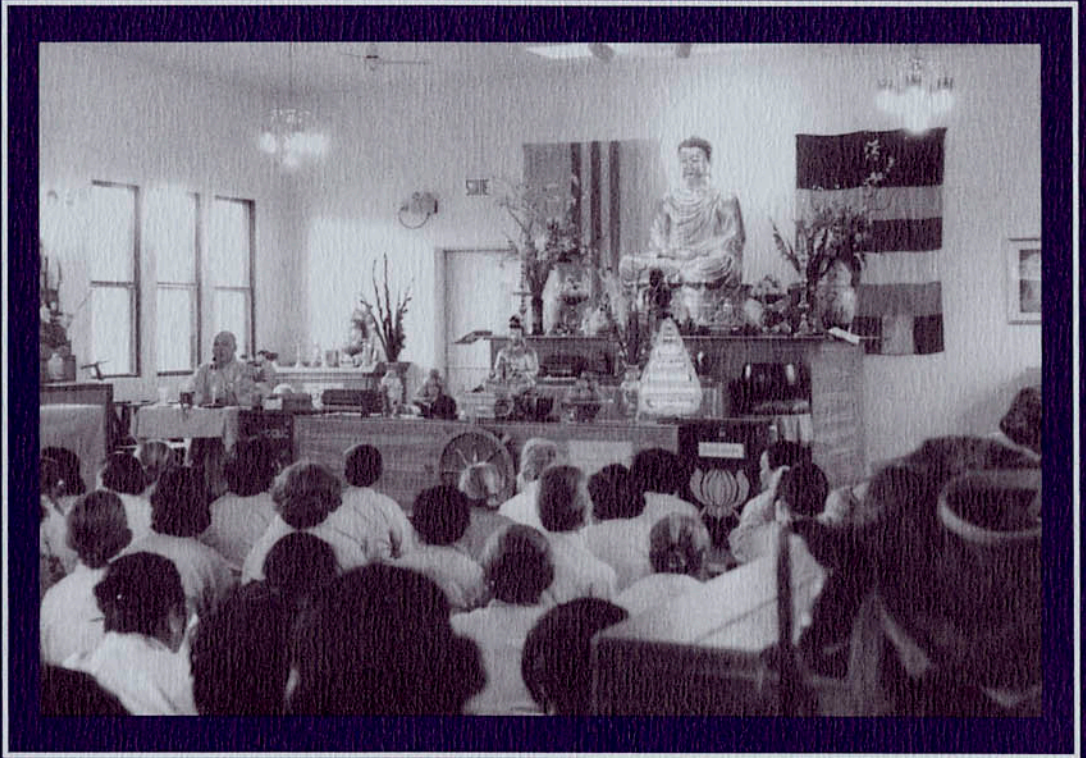


# **The Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese in Canada**



**Louis-Jacques Dorais**

**THE CANADIAN  
HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

**CANADA'S ETHNIC  
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# **The Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese in Canada**

## **1. Who Are They?**

Since the end of the 1970s, the Canadian mosaic has been enriched by the arrival of several thousand refugees and immigrants from three countries of Southeast Asia which, until then, had been little represented in our population: Cambodia (or Kampuchea), Laos and Vietnam (or Việt-Nam). For the most part, these people came to Canada seeking the peace of mind and freedom of thought that they felt were threatened in their countries of origin.

Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese belong to very different civilizations, each of which has a particular identity. For this reason, it is difficult, if not impossible, to refer to them by a common name. At the time of their mass immigration between 1978 and 1982, they were first identified as “Indochinese refugees,” referring to the fact that Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam belonged to French Indochina between 1887 and 1954. But because this term with its colonialist overtones was generally rejected by those to whom it was applied, it was gradually abandoned in favour of more neutral expressions: “refugees from Southeast Asia” or “Southeast Asians.” However, even this description is inadequate. Besides Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, Southeast Asia includes several other countries (the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia, among others) that have contributed to Canadian immigration without having taken part in the migratory movement discussed here.

It is preferable, therefore, to refer to each group in the study by name, while emphasizing the multiethnic character of these countries. Other than their majority population – the Khmer in Cambodia, the

Lao in Laos and the Việt (or Kinh) in Vietnam – they include many diverse linguistic and cultural minorities. A significant minority of ethnic Chinese resides in the countries of the former Indochina, and several thousand of them have come to Canada. Generally, however, only the members of the majority ethnic groups have immigrated to Canada. Although the Chinese stand out as an exception, there are a few Hmong families, a minority from northern Laos who live in the Kitchener-Waterloo area in southern Ontario, and several hundred Khmer born in southern Vietnam live in Quebec and the Toronto area.

In the following pages, the terms “Cambodians,” “Laotians” and “Vietnamese” will refer to the Khmer, Lao and Việt majorities. Any reference to those of Chinese origin (Sino-Cambodian, Sino-Laotian, Sino-Vietnamese) will be explicitly mentioned.

## **2. Colonial and Post-Colonial Indochina**

The emigration of Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese is directly linked to the political upheavals that shook the former French Indochinese territories since the Second World War. It is, therefore, necessary to describe briefly the historical context at the time of their departure.

Cambodia (population 10 million in 1995), Laos (5 million) and Vietnam (75 million) grew out of monarchical states, often with origins in antiquity. Occupying the lower portion of the Mekong River, Cambodia is the direct heir of the Chen-La and Fou-Nan empires from the turn of the Christian era, and the Khmer empire of Angkor, which reached its peak between the 9th and 13th centuries of our era. At first confined to the Red River delta, Vietnam was under Chinese occupation for a thousand years from 111 B.C.E. to 939 of our era before establishing itself as an independent kingdom and expanding gradually to the south, along the eastern edge of continental Southeast Asia, to the Mekong delta. Laos became a kingdom in 1350, when a prince of the Mekong middle reaches declared independence from the sovereign of Siam (Thailand).

While the three countries share a largely agrarian economy based on rice cultivation in irrigated paddies, their majority languages,

as well as their cultures, differ completely. The Khmer, Lao (related to Thai) and Vietnamese languages belong to three distinct linguistic families and are completely unintelligible to one another. Under the influence of Indian culture, Cambodians and Laotians adopted Theravāda Buddhism as the main religion and their writing systems were inspired by those of India. Conversely, in Vietnam, the thousand years of Chinese occupation brought about the adoption of Confucian social philosophy, Taoist cosmology, Mahāyāna Buddhism (the Great Vehicle) and ideographic writing now replaced by the European alphabet.

Interested in trading with these rich and distant countries, Europe sent merchants and missionaries beginning in the 16th century, but it was only in 1859 that a European power, France, imposed its political will. In that year, France occupied the south of Vietnam creating the “colony of Cochinchina” in 1867. It extended its control to Cambodia (which became a protectorate in 1863), to the north and centre of Vietnam (protectorates of Tonkin in 1883 and Annam in 1884), and then to Laos in 1893. In 1887, the French territories of Southeast Asia were brought together within the Indochinese Union, under the rule of a governor general residing at Hanoi, in Tonkin.

It was not long before Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese reacted against their unwilling submission to a sometimes very harsh colonial regime. From 1885, the mandarins or ministers of the Imperial Court of Vietnam tried unsuccessfully to raise the people against the French. Other revolts took place in succeeding decades. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that there emerged a more systematically organized opposition which, although at first divided, came progressively under the control of the Indochinese Communist Party, founded and directed by Nguyễn Ài Quốc, a Vietnamese revolutionary trained in the U.S.S.R. When the Japanese occupied Indochina in 1940, leaving in place a French administration prepared to collaborate with them, Communists and nationalists united to resist them. After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Nguyễn Ài Quốc, who then took the name Hồ Chí Minh, proclaimed Vietnam’s independence on 2 September 1945.

France quickly tried to retake control of the region. This provoked a major armed confrontation, the Indochina War, between French troops and local revolutionaries, which would last nearly eight

years from 1946 to 1954 and end in French defeat at Diên Biên Phu. In July 1954, an international conference at Geneva ratified the independence of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam which was divided into two states, one Communist, in the north, the other supported by the Americans, in the south. Armed conflict soon resumed, this time between the pro-Communist and anti-Communist Vietnamese, Vietnam War. The United States became involved, sending troops to Vietnam starting in 1965. The war spilled over into Laos and then Cambodia.

Shortly before 1954, Canada received its first Indochinese nationals, Vietnamese students who had come to attend this country's French language universities. Throughout the Vietnam War, a few thousand young men and women from South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos went to France, land of Indochinese immigration since the First World War, the United States, Canada and a few other countries, in order to complete their studies. The war ended with the withdrawal of American troops in 1973 and victory of the Communists in 1975 who took power successively in Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Saigon (South Vietnam) and Vientiane (Laos).

The events of 1975 caused the first wave of refugees. Just before the Communist victory, several thousand people, mostly members of the urban middle-class and of the South Vietnamese armed forces, left their country in a mad rush, by sea and air, for reception camps hastily set up by the Americans. In the months that followed, all had succeeded in reaching countries of permanent resettlement: the United States, France, Canada, Australia. They were joined by their Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian compatriots who were visiting abroad and did not want to return to their country of origin, as well as by people who got away from the region after the 1975 victory.

Despite the advent of peace, the situation in the countries of the former Indochina showed little improvement. The creation of authoritarian regimes, which left little room for freedom of expression, the economic difficulties aggravated by the refusal of several Western countries to send aid to the region, the removal of thousands of people to re-education camps, and the forced conscription of the whole population in often deadly work camps in Cambodia, convinced many people that they had to leave as soon as possible. The opportunity arose in 1979, when events suddenly took a dramatic turn.

At the end of December 1978, Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia. They drove out the radical Marxist Khmer Rouge leaders and installed a puppet regime. This prompted tens of thousands of Cambodians to flee across the Thai border to the camps set up by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Cambodia's principal ally, China, retaliated by briefly invading North Vietnam in February 1979. The two or three million Vietnamese of Chinese origin quickly became *personae non gratae*, and many of them were obliged to flee the country. About 250,000 Sino-Vietnamese found refuge in China, but tens of thousands of others, living in the south of the country, left Vietnam on unseaworthy boats. A large number of ethnic Vietnamese soon joined this movement. The 'boat people' who did not perish during the trip found their first asylum in the camps opened by the UNHCR in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Faced with this growing movement, several governments, including Canada's, met in Geneva in July 1979, in order to establish an intake policy for all these refugees, (who had been joined by a large number of Laotians), and to negotiate the legal bases for migration from the countries of the former Indochina. Because of the slowness of the process, illegal departures (also encompassing North Vietnamese departures to Hong Kong) continued by boat or on foot for several years. As of 1983, however, legal immigration, generally within the scope of family reunification programs, began to overtake spontaneous emigration. It is still going on today, although its size has greatly reduced since the early 1990s by the relative stabilization of the political situation in Cambodia and the economic and social liberalization in Vietnam and Laos.

### **3. Waves of Immigration**

Although the majority of Canadians of Cambodian, Laotian or Vietnamese origin arrived in Canada only after 1979, some of them were already living in Canada before the events of 1975. As mentioned earlier, these were people who had come to complete their university training in francophone universities in Quebec, as well as in Ottawa and Moncton, or, more rarely, in Canadian anglophone institutions, and who had decided to live here after their studies. Canadians from

the former Indochina can therefore be divided into two main groups: former students (and a few other immigrants) from before 1975 and refugees who arrived after this date.

The very first Indochinese to settle in Canada were Vietnamese. Beginning in 1950, a handful of all male students received scholarships from the Catholic church to study at the Université Laval in Quebec City and the Université de Montréal. In 1954, they were joined by about twenty Carmelite nuns from Hanoi, capital of North Vietnam, who received political asylum following the Communist takeover of power and were settled in a convent in the Lac Saint-Jean area in Quebec.

By the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s, the student group began to grow rapidly. A few Cambodians and Laotians joined the South Vietnamese who remained the overwhelming majority. Most had scholarships offered through the Colombo Plan for development aid to Asian countries. When, for international political reasons, the government of South Vietnam cut its diplomatic relations with France in the middle of the 1960s, Vietnamese students wanting to enrol in a francophone university found Canada an increasingly attractive destination.

Many graduates returned home at the end of their studies, but many others preferred to settle in Canada where the economy was rapidly expanding. They easily found work as university professors, engineers, computer scientists or professionals in the public service. Since male students were much more numerous than females, there were dozens of mixed marriages between ex-Indochinese men, most often Vietnamese, and usually French-speaking Canadian women. On the eve of the events of 1975, Canada had about 1,500 Vietnamese residents, 200 of Cambodian and as many of Laotian origin. They were mostly students, former students and their children born in this country. Three-quarters of them were living in Quebec, mostly in Montreal. In English-speaking Canada, only the Toronto area attracted some because of its economic prosperity, but also because it had become the destination for a number of opponents to the pro-American regime in Saigon who had claimed and obtained political asylum in Canada after their studies in the United States.

This population grew dramatically in 1975 and 1976, with the arrival of the first wave of refugees – the professionals, bureaucrats,

business people and military personnel coming from urban areas, who had succeeded in leaving South Vietnam or, to a lesser degree, Cambodia and Laos, before the Communist takeover. Their choice of Canada as a country of asylum was often linked to the fact that they had family here – children, brothers or sisters already settled – or that they were quite fluent in French. This explains why more than 65% of the some 7,800 Vietnamese, 250 Cambodians and 150 Laotians arriving between 1975 and 1978 settled in Quebec. The others went mostly to Ontario.

As we saw in the preceding section, the turmoil of 1978-79 in the countries of the former Indochina provoked a new exodus: Vietnamese and Sino-Vietnamese boat people; Cambodians fleeing after the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime; Laotians trying to escape the hardening of Communist power in their country. Numerically greater than in 1975, this wave comprised people belonging to all sectors of society: professionals, business people, workers, peasants, fishermen, etc. In Vietnam and Laos, thousands of people unable or unwilling to leave their country in 1975 seized the opportunity to take to the China Sea – or to the Mekong, in the case of Laos – in unseaworthy vessels. A good many of them were of Chinese origin. The disputes between Vietnam and China and the nationalization of trade, historically controlled by the Chinese, had made the Sino-Vietnamese, Sino-Laotians and Sino-Cambodians undesirables in their countries of residence.

As of 1979, Western countries agreed to take in hundreds of thousands of exiles, many of whom had found refuge in neighbouring countries – Thailand, Malaysia, China, Indonesia, the Philippines – where they were placed in generally overcrowded transit camps. The majority eventually ended up in the United States, France, Australia or, to a lesser degree, other Western countries (Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, the Scandinavian countries, New Zealand). A leader in the crisis, Canada opened its doors to more than 60,000 refugees from the former Indochina in 1979 and 1980 alone. In total, this country accepted almost 58,000 people from Vietnam, 7,000 from Cambodia and 7,700 from Laos. About 40% of the Vietnamese refugees, 25% of Cambodians and 20% of Laotians were of Chinese origin.

Despite some reluctance, this intake movement led to an unprecedented effort on the part of the Canadian people. A federal

act of 1976 allowed any non-profit organization or any group of at least five adult citizens to sponsor a family of refugees, by housing them on their arrival, finding them work and/or enrolling its members in school, underwriting their needs for a maximum of one year. For every person sponsored by the private sector, the federal government assumed the cost for another. Across Canada, thousands of individuals and organizations mobilized to welcome the refugees. Several provinces opened language or acculturation schools for the new arrivals, such as the Centres d'orientation et de formation des immigrants (COFI) in Quebec.

This general mobilization explains why the refugees of 1979-82 were spread throughout Canada, settling where sponsorship groups or regional offices of Immigration Canada were ready to receive them: 38% were in Ontario, 24% in the Prairie provinces and northern territories, 22% in Quebec, 11% in British Columbia and 5% in the Atlantic provinces. Subsequent migrations within Canada motivated as much by employment opportunities as by the existence of already established ethnic communities, drew the great majority of the refugees to urban centres of more than 100,000 inhabitants. This led to the emergence of metropolises of ex-Indochinese immigration: Toronto for Sino-Vietnamese, Vietnamese and Laotians; Montreal for Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians; and Vancouver for Sino-Vietnamese and Vietnamese.

The newcomers were generally less educated than those in the first wave (1975-78). Few spoke English or French, or had relatives already established in Canada. Included in their ranks were many young, single men who came without their families. These factors, combined with the economic crisis of the 1980s, explain why this group of immigrants suffered serious problems of adaptation and insertion into the labour market.

Wanting to encourage family reunification after 1982, the Canadian government accepted increasing numbers of Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese sponsored by relatives already here. For example, more than half of the 34,400 Vietnamese and 1,500 Laotians who entered Canada between 1983 and 1986, as well as about 20% of the 6,330 Cambodians, came to join their near relations. This tendency towards family reunification did not diminish, even though after 1986, a degree of social and economic liberalization – the introduction of a

market economy – of the Vietnamese, Laotian, then Cambodian regimes, as well as the establishment of voluntary repatriation programs for people still living in transit camps, greatly slowed the flow of refugees. Since the early 1990s, Canada has received only a small number of immigrants from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam (less than 10,000 per year at the beginning of the decade, less than 4,000 per year since 1995). The majority are sponsored by family members. These people come from all regions of each of the three countries.

## **4. Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

The 1991 census, the last providing complete and reliable data, listed 94,255 Vietnamese, 18,620 Cambodians and 14,840 Laotians by single or multiple ethnic origin. In the three groups, there were more men than women: 50,260 as against 43,995 for the Vietnamese (a sex-ratio of 1.14), 9,335 as against 9,285 for the Cambodians (1.01), 7,885 as against 6,955 for the Laotians (1.13). Much less noticeable among the Cambodians than the other two groups, this slight imbalance should gradually disappear. It is due to the relatively high proportion of young, single men having left especially Vietnam and Laos without their families at the beginning of the 1980s.

The number of people giving a Cambodian, Laotian or Vietnamese origin in the census was smaller than that of Canadian residents born in Cambodia, Laos or Vietnam. For example, in 1991, while slightly more than 94,000 persons referred to themselves as Vietnamese, 113,595 persons said they were born in Vietnam. The difference was due to the presence of several thousand Sino-Cambodians, Sino-Laotians and Sino-Vietnamese claiming an ethnic Chinese origin, as well as a certain number of Khmers originally from Vietnam, of Vietnamese from Cambodia and Hmong from Laos.

To get a clearer idea of the total number of Canadians originally from the countries of the former Indochina, it is necessary to add to the data on ethnic origin mentioned above those concerning persons born or having resided in Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos and who declared themselves to be of Chinese or other origin, at the time of the census. A number of crosschecks provided an estimate of their numbers at about 50,000 Sino-Vietnamese, 2,000 Sino-Cambodians

and 1,500 Sino-Laotians living in Canada in 1991, plus about 3,000 of “other” origin (1,000 per country). This means that Canada had some 145,000 residents from Vietnam or whose parents were born or lived a good part of their lives there, 21,600 from Cambodia and 17,500 from Laos.

It is difficult to compare the 1996 census data to those of 1991, since Canadian residents were allowed to declare up to four different ethnic origins in 1996. It seems that a number of people who claimed Chinese origin in 1991 identified themselves in 1996 as being both Chinese and Vietnamese, Cambodian or Laotian. One cannot otherwise explain the fact that between 1991 and 1996, the number of Canadians who said they were of ethnic Vietnamese (single or multiple origin) went from 94,255 to 136,810, an increase of 45%. Neither a constantly declining immigration, nor natural growth could have produced a similar demographic jump in only five years. It is therefore preferable to revert to the data of 1991, which seem more reliable.

The census revealed that, in 1991, the number of Canadians of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian origin varied greatly from one province to another. The census does not enable us to measure the groups of Sino-Vietnamese, Sino-Cambodians and Sino-Laotians by province. Table 1 shows that the three groups were for the most part established in the most economically dynamic regions (Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia), as well as in Quebec, the traditional home of francophone ex-Indochinese. This province alone housed nearly 47% of all Cambodians living in Canada. A number of Laotians were also found in Manitoba, a province with a relatively high rate of unemployment, but where the Mennonite church – very active in refugee camps in Thailand – had considerable influence and promoted many sponsorships.

**TABLE 1****DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCE OF PERSONS OF VIETNAMESE, CAMBODIAN AND LAOTIAN ETHNIC ORIGIN (1991)**

<b>Province</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>		<b>Cambodians</b>		<b>Laotians</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Newfoundland	65	0.1	–	–	–	–
Prince Edward Island	–	–	–	–	20	0.1
Nova Scotia	645	0.7	15	0.1	–	–
New Brunswick	250	0.3	–	–	35	0.2
Quebec	21,800	23.1	8,720	46.8	4,715	32.0
Ontario	38,550	40.9	5,585	30.0	6,180	41.6
Manitoba	3,545	3.8	560	3.0	1,195	8.0
Saskatchewan	1,530	1.6	210	1.1	615	4.0
Alberta	15,135	16.1	2,195	11.8	1,015	7.0
British Columbia	12,595	13.4	1,335	7.2	1,065	7.1
Yukon Territory	30	0.05	–	–	–	–
Northwest Territories	120	0.15	–	–	–	–
<b>Canada</b>	<b>94,255</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>18,620</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14,840</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This population was essentially urban, with more than 90% of its members living in a census metropolitan region (in contrast to 56% for all Canadian born). The three largest Canadian urban areas – Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver – alone had 57% of the Vietnamese, 56% of the Cambodians, 49% of the Laotians and nearly 60% (estimated percentage) of the Chinese from ex-Indochina living in Canada in 1991, distributed in the following manner:

	<b>Toronto</b>	<b>Montreal</b>	<b>Vancouver</b>
<b>Vietnamese</b>	24,550	19,260	10,090
<b>Cambodians</b>	1,925	7,325	1,100
<b>Laotians</b>	3,025	3,550	715
<b>Chinese Origin</b>	18,000	6,600	7,300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,500</b>	<b>36,735</b>	<b>19,205</b>

Three other urban areas – Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa-Hull – each had more than 6,000 residents originally from the countries of the former Indochina, while four cities – Kitchener, Hamilton, Winnipeg and London – had about 3,000. These residents did not form ethnic neighbourhoods, although their numbers in certain urban districts and suburban cities, such as North York and Mississauga in Toronto, Côte-des-Neiges and Brossard in Montreal, and Richmond in Vancouver, were above the average for families originating in Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos.

The population was quite young. Still in 1991, 46% of Vietnamese, 55% of Cambodians and nearly 53% of Laotians were under 25 (Table 2), while youth accounted for 39% of the total Canadian population. Among the Vietnamese, however, the proportion of individuals over 44 years of age was markedly higher (12.6%) than among the Cambodians (9.8%) and Laotians (9.4%). This was due to the greater number of people in the first category coming to the country as students, even before 1975, or arriving with the first wave of refugees (1975-78), as urban executives and professionals.

**TABLE 2**

**DISTRIBUTION BY AGE GROUPS OF PERSONS OF VIETNAMESE, CAMBODIAN AND LAOTIAN ETHNIC ORIGIN (1991)**

<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>		<b>Cambodians</b>		<b>Laotians</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Under 15	26,040	27.7	7,420	39.9	4,840	32.6
15 – 24	17,305	18.4	2,820	15.1	2,985	20.1
25 – 44	38,850	41.3	6,540	35.2	5,620	37.9
45 – 64	8,800	9.3	1,485	7.9	1,165	7.8
65 and older	3,155	3.3	355	1.9	230	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>94,255</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>18,620</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14,840</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The presence of executives and professionals is also reflected in the average level of education, which was higher among the Vietnamese (Table 3). In 1986 (the last figures available), the percentage of men of ethnic Vietnamese origin 15 years and older who

had not completed nine years of education was lower than that of Canadian males of all origins with the same level of education (14% as against 17%). Among the Cambodians, however, 36% had not completed grade nine, while among the Laotians, the percentage was almost 21%. The proportions were considerably higher among the women in the three groups. A quarter (26.5%) of Vietnamese, two-thirds (63.5%) of Cambodian and two-fifths (43.5%) of Laotian women had not completed nine years of schooling, while among Canadians of all origins, the percentage was only 18%.

Such differences were also apparent in higher education. While 29% Vietnamese men (higher than the Canadian average) had undertaken or completed university studies, especially in engineering, computer science, and health or administrative sciences, only 19.5% of women had done so. Only 15.5% of Cambodian men and 4.8% of women had attended university, while the proportions were 13.7% and 4.6%, respectively for the Laotians. In contrast, in the first and the third groups, the percentages of persons of both sexes having studied from 9 to 13 years hovered around 40-45%, but among the Cambodians, it stood at 34.7% for men and 21.9% for women. These statistics do not of course take into account English and French courses taken by the refugees in the camps in Southeast Asia or after their arrival in Canada.

**TABLE 3**

**RATE OF EDUCATION FOR 15-YEAR-OLDS AND OLDER (1986)**

**Ethnic Vietnamese Origin**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 9 years	3,540	14.0	5,450	26.5	8,990	19.5
9 to 13 years	10,560	42.5	8,800	42.5	19,360	42.5
Occupational school	315	1.5	250	1.0	565	1.3
Other non-university	3,235	13.0	2,165	10.5	5,400	12.0
University	7,250	29.0	4,045	19.5	11,295	24.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,900</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>20,710</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>45,610</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Ethnic Cambodian Origin

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<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 9 years	1,230	36.2	1,930	63.5	3,160	49.1
9 to 13 years	1,180	34.7	665	21.9	1,845	28.7
Occupational school	50	1.5	40	1.3	90	1.4
Other non-university	410	12.1	260	8.5	670	10.4
University	525	15.5	145	4.8	670	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,395</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,040</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6,435</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Ethnic Laotian Origin

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<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 9 years	755	20.7	1,430	43.5	2,185	31.5
9 to 13 years	1,785	48.8	1,315	40.0	3,100	44.7
Occupational school	50	1.4	40	1.2	90	1.3
Other non-university	565	15.4	350	10.7	915	13.2
University	500	13.7	150	4.6	650	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,655</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,285</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6,940</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Since 1986, access to secondary or post-secondary studies for young Cambodians or Laotians of both sexes born or raised in Canada has gradually closed the gap separating them from the others. Their level of schooling now compares favourably with the national average.

## 5. Economic and Linguistic Integration

The mass migration of the boat people and of refugees from Cambodia in 1979-80 sparked debate about the possibility of their integration into the Canadian work force. Many Canadians doubted their ability to obtain a suitable employment – or any employment at all – in a country heading into an economic recession. While the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians who had come before 1975 or in the first wave of refugees had generally been able to find work in a still expanding market, thanks to their education and their knowledge of the official languages, this did not seem likely for the newcomers.

Such predictions proved to be somewhat pessimistic. Despite real problems of integration, in the majority of cases the refugees in the second wave also succeeded in finding a job. In 1986 (last complete statistics available), irrespective of their year of arrival, 69.2% of all residents of ethnic Vietnamese origin, 53.9% of Cambodians and 72.7% of Laotians between the ages of 15 and 64 were active in the work force, that is they were either already employed or seeking employment. Their unemployment rate ranged from 10% (Vietnamese) to 26% (Cambodians). Their average annual income was \$12,859 (Vietnamese), \$10,293 (Cambodians) and \$11,731 (Laotians). By comparison, the participation rate of all Canadians in the work force stood at 66%, and their average annual income was over \$17,000. Vietnamese and Laotians, many among whom were holding unsteady or badly paid jobs, were working more, but earning less than the national average.

Women were working less and earning less than men. Only 61.1% of the Vietnamese (compared to 75.9% of men) were part of the work force. Their average annual income did not go above \$10,113 (compared to \$14,822 for men). The participation rate of Cambodian women was 41.9% (64.6% for men) and their average annual income was only \$8,328 (in comparison to \$11,705 for men). Finally, the Laotian women's participation rate was 64.1% (compared to 80.6% for men), with an average annual income of \$9,068 (compared to \$13,718 for men).

The employment distribution reflected the disparity between the sexes and ethnic origins. As a general rule, men and Vietnamese (men as well as women) occupied better-paid jobs than women and Cambodians (Table 4). The relative seniority of Vietnamese immigration to Canada, with its greater complement of ex-university students from before 1975 and middle-class members of the first wave, largely explains this variation. For example, a quarter (25%) of workers of Vietnamese origin held jobs as professionals, managers, professors or office workers, while only 16% of Cambodians and 11.7% of Laotians did so.

Among some Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians a trend was observed and later confirmed relating to the opening of small businesses as an alternative to the problems of insertion into the work force. This pattern, most strongly observed among the Sino-Cambodians, Sino-Laotians and Sino-Vietnamese (missing from Table 4), is at the origin of hundreds of restaurants, grocery stores and other Southeast Asian businesses found throughout most of Canada.

**TABLE 4**

**EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYED PERSONS  
AGED 15 TO 64 (1986)**

**Ethnic Vietnamese Origin**

<b>Employment Category</b>	<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Professional/manager	3,270	18.2	1,765	14.8	5,035	16.9
Office worker	960	5.4	1,465	12.3	2,425	8.1
Sales/service	3,700	20.6	3,105	26.1	6,805	22.8
Primary sector	320	1.8	215	1.8	535	1.8
Industry worker	7,110	39.7	4,705	39.6	11,815	39.6
Other	2,565	14.3	645	5.4	3,210	10.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,925</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11,900</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29,825</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Ethnic Cambodian Origin

Employment Category	Men		Women		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional/manager	235	10.4	125	9.6	360	10.1
Office worker	110	4.9	100	7.7	210	5.9
Sales/service	625	27.7	235	18.1	860	24.2
Primary sector	125	5.5	45	3.5	170	4.8
Industry worker	890	39.5	725	56.0	1,615	45.5
Other	270	12.0	65	5.1	335	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,255</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,295</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,550</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Ethnic Laotian Origin

Employment Category	Men		Women		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional/manager	230	8.1	125	6.2	355	7.4
Office worker	125	4.4	85	4.3	210	4.3
Sales/service	440	15.6	450	22.5	890	18.5
Primary sector	130	4.6	125	6.2	255	5.3
Industry worker	1,425	50.5	965	48.3	2,390	49.6
Other	470	16.8	250	12.5	720	14.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,820</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,820</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The end of the 1980s seems to have been a period of slow employment, if partial statistics of Citizenship and Immigration Canada are to be believed. In 1991, only 66% of men and 54% of women aged 15 to 64 and born in Vietnam (excluding, therefore, young Vietnamese born in Canada, but including the Sino-Vietnamese) had jobs. This apparent reduction with respect to the 1986 census could be due to three factors. First, it is possible that the recession hit immigrants with unsteady jobs the hardest, resulting in the loss of some of the jobs that they had held five years earlier. Second, the presence of the Sino-Vietnamese in the 1991 statistics (they were absent from

those of 1986) no doubt helped change the apparent rate of employment, as the Chinese from Vietnam, who had all come with the second wave of refugees, had more difficulty inserting themselves into the work force than the Vietnamese from before 1979. Finally, in 1991, 69% of youth, aged 15 to 24, born in Vietnam were pursuing their higher education rather than working (a proportion most likely higher than that in 1986), which placed them in the rank of the unemployed.

We do not have equivalent data for the Cambodians and the Laotians, but there is every reason to believe that the gradual entry into the work force of youth of Cambodian, Laotian or Vietnamese origin with university degrees has caused the rate of professional employment in the three groups to climb somewhat since 1991. The presence in large Canadian cities, of these young technicians, professionals and business people speaking Khmer, Lao, Vietnamese or Cantonese, provides immigrants from the former Indochina with access in their language to a complete range of commercial, administrative, medical, legal or other services. In Toronto alone, there were some 60 doctors, 60 pharmacists and 60 dentists from Vietnam.

The majority of Canadians from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam continue to speak their languages of origin, which in no way interferes with their learning Canada's official languages. In 1991, only 17% of Vietnamese, 22% of Cambodians and 13.7% of Laotians did not yet speak either English or French, indicating a fairly rapid linguistic integration. The following is a breakdown of the three groups according to their knowledge of the two official languages:

<b>Official Language(s) Known</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>Cambodians</b>	<b>Laotians</b>
English only	61.5%	43.4%	55.3%
French only	7.5%	22.6%	18.0%
English and French	14.0%	11.7%	13.0%
Neither English nor French	17.0%	22.3%	13.7%

French was more widely spoken by Cambodians and Laotians (34.3% and 31% respectively) than by the Vietnamese (21.5%). In the three groups, however, English had become the principal second language. It was known by 75.5% of Vietnamese, 55.1% of

Cambodians and 68.3% of Laotians, and had superseded French, the former colonial language of Indochina.

By 1991, the languages of origin were still known by more than 80% of these people. Under the category "Mother tongue", 82,745 claimed to speak Vietnamese, 15,835 Khmer and 12,680 Lao. To these figures must be added about 40,000 people, born in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, whose mother tongue was Chinese (Cantonese, Teochiu, etc.). More than 95% of Vietnamese and Lao speakers, as well as the great majority of Chinese speakers, and 77% of Khmer speakers, daily spoke their language at home.

## **6. Family and Community Life**

### **The Family**

The preservation of heritage languages is for the most part due to the primary role played by the family in the three communities. Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese greatly value family life. They devote much effort and financial resources to the support of their relatives still in the country of origin, and many try to get them to Canada through family reunification programs. The desire to be near to loved ones was one of the major reasons for internal migrations, prompting second-wave refugees to leave regions of initial settlement to join together in a small number of Canadian cities. Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese living in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton or Ottawa generally have close relations living in the same city, whom they have come to join or brought there. Family relations are therefore primary social links for refugees and immigrants of the former Indochina.

Living conditions in Canada generally do not allow for extended families (parents living with their married children and their grandchildren), to live together, as is the case still in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. It is, however, customary that youth live with their parents until they are married, unless their studies or employment oblige them to settle elsewhere. As far as possible, married couples try to live very near their siblings and parents. When the latter reach an advanced age, they are generally taken in by one of their

children, often a son, or by another member of the family, rather than being sent to a retirement home. In 1991, only 6% of people 65 years and older born in Vietnam lived alone, compared to 29% of all the elderly born in Canada.

In Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the family is bilateral, but it is the father who is supposed to lead it and serve as its spokesperson. Especially among the Vietnamese, as well as the people of Chinese origin, the teachings of Confucius governing family and social life in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, insist on the subordination of the wife and children to the father of the family. Ancestor worship – the offerings and periodical prayers to the deceased members of the family unit – is the responsibility of the head of the household, and the boys are often considered superior to the girls.

In reality, though, the situation of women is not as bad as is sometimes thought. In the three countries of the former Indochina, it is usually the mother who holds the family purse strings. All the members of the family, including the father, turn over their earnings to her, and it is her responsibility to use this money for the common household needs. Women often work outside the home – in small business, for example – and their earnings are their own. When they have the means, they ensure that their daughters are as educated as their sons.

Immigration to Canada, where equality between men and women and respect for the rights of children are valued, has often reinforced the position of the wife and the children. At times, this has caused tension. In many cases, women refugees found work more easily than their husbands, while the children learned English or French more quickly than their parents. Accordingly, some men felt diminished with the erosion of their role as principal provider and head of the family. This loss sometimes led to conjugal violence and eventually to divorce. In all cases, the roles of females and males within the household had to be redefined.

At present, the family holds great importance for Canadian residents originally from Cambodia, Laos or Vietnam. The majority of marriages still involve partners of the same origin, often found in the native country or in another community in the diaspora. The children who are born of these unions are generally raised to respect Asian family values.

## Community Organizations

Apart from their immediate or extended family, Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese maintain more or less frequent relations with friends and acquaintances residing in the same place or in another city. Among first-generation immigrants and refugees, who are still the majority of the population, these friends and acquaintances belong most often to the same ethnic group. There are few relations with Canadians of different origins other than utilitarian ones. In contrast, among the youth born here, integration in mainstream society occurs without too many problems.

The intra- and, at times, interethnic links thus established form more or less extended and fluid social networks, that structure daily life. Among Laotians, these networks often take the form of patron-client relationships, as in Laos. People have a tendency to gravitate toward individuals – always of the male sex – whose professional and linguistic abilities, or length of stay in Canada, make them useful social (but not economic) brokers between recent immigrants and the host society. In exchange for the recognition and support of their clients, these individuals guide and represent them in various procedures related to their integration. The links thus created frequently find expression in the celebrations and receptions serving to reinforce relationships among members of the network.

Client-based groups often take the more structured form of ethnic associations. In Montreal, for example, there are a good dozen formally constituted Laotian associations that act as the spokespersons for a variety of groups based on family origin (such as the Alliance des familles lao) and/or region (Association des familles du Sud-Laos, Communauté laotienne du Québec). Similar organizations exist in Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, etc.; many of them are part of the Canadian Federation of Lao Communities, with headquarters in Montreal. In various places, Laotians have also formed housing cooperatives, using contributions, loans and grants to buy and renovate buildings whose apartments are then occupied by the member families of the cooperative. There are a half-dozen in Montreal, notably in Côte-des-Neiges and Saint-Laurent.

There is no doubt that Canada's multiculturalism policy, whose implementation in the mid-1970s coincides with the arrival of

the first wave of refugees, explains in part the formalisation of Laotian patron-client relations. The management of ethnic relations in Canada requires that each of the diverse components of the “cultural mosaic” be represented, at the national and local level, by a representative duly selected by democratic bodies. To achieve this goal, the federal government – as well as a few provincial, and even municipal, governments – makes grants and technical support available to ethnocultural groups, in order to help them establish representative organizations. As soon as they arrived, the Laotians, as well as the Cambodians and the Vietnamese, were strongly encouraged to found mutual-aid associations in the main cities where they settled.

This official encouragement contributed to the expansion of formal groups. Before 1975, for example, there was only one Cambodian association in Canada, that of the Khmer students at the Université de Montréal. At present, there are nearly fifty, scattered across the country. They represent national (Association of Cambodians in Canada and Khmer Community in Canada, both established in Montreal), provincial (Association des Cambodgiens du Québec, Cambodian Association of Ontario, etc.), local (Association des Cambodgiens de Montréal, de l’Outaouais, etc.) or specific interests (Club des femmes cambodgiennes de Montréal, Fondation des étudiants khmers, etc.). The Sino-Cambodians have their own association (Union of Chinese Cambodians in Canada), as do the Sino-Laotians and Sino-Vietnamese. The members of the three groups of Chinese origin also take part in activities of numerous Sino-Canadian organizations in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, etc.

It is, however, among the residents of Vietnamese origin that we find the greatest variety of community organizations. This is due both to their number and to the fact that they have a substantial professionally developed élite easily able to play the role of ethnic leader. Since the beginning of the 1960s, Vietnamese students in Montreal and Quebec City had each founded their own association, which provided for the reception of new arrivals and the annual celebration of the *Têt* holiday, the lunar New Year, at the end of January or beginning of February. These associations declared themselves anti-Communist. In 1970, the Association of Vietnamese Patriots, an international organization devoted to promoting the cause of the National

Liberation Front that fought against American intervention in South Vietnam, created local branches in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Quebec and Moncton.

At the time of the arrival of the first wave of refugees, in 1975-76, the Vietnamese associations had to modify their goals, devoting their efforts to welcoming and escorting newcomers. They also changed their names. The *Association des étudiants vietnamiens de Montréal* became the *Communauté vietnamienne au Canada, région de Montréal*; the Association of Vietnamese Patriots was renamed the General Union of Vietnamese in Canada and then, in 1989, the Congress of Vietnamese in Canada. There were also new organizations created to defend the interests of particular professional or religious groups: Canadian Association of Vietnamese Physicians, *Association des pharmaciens vietnamiens du Québec*, Association of Vietnamese ex-Servicemen in Canada, Vietnamese Buddhist Association of Canada, Vietnamese Protestant Association, etc. The arrival of the second wave of refugees, beginning in 1979, led to the proliferation of Vietnamese mutual aid organizations. Established in all major cities where they had previously not existed, they participated actively in the sponsorship and resettlement of the boat people. Other societies also came into being: the Vietnamese Women's Association in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Quebec, the *Association amicale des personnes âgées vietnamiennes*, Vietnamese student associations at various Canadian universities, the Overseas Vietnamese Pen Club, the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce, etc. In Montreal alone, there were more than 60 Vietnamese community organizations in 1990.

In 1980, all the local mutual aid associations defining themselves as anti-Communist became affiliated with the Vietnamese Canadian Federation/Fédération Vietnamienne du Canada, established in Ottawa. This organization thus became the main voice of Canadian residents of Vietnamese origin. Its objectives are to maintain solidarity between Vietnamese associations in Canada, to preserve and develop Vietnamese culture, and to encourage a spirit of mutual aid and community responsibility. The Federation has fifteen member associations, in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, London, Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa, Gatineau-Hull, Montreal, Sherbrooke, Quebec and Halifax.

Community life is very active among Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians. Organizations spearheaded by immigrants from the former Indochina play an important role socially, culturally and even economically. The Vietnamese Association of Toronto, for example, administers an annual budget of one million dollars, and it employs about a dozen permanent staff. Canadian residents originally from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam have shown skill in organizing their community life.

## **7. Religion and Culture**

### **Religious organization**

Community life owes much to the groups' religious activities. In contrast to the majority of Canadians whose culture stems from the Judeo-Christian tradition, Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese for the most part follow the Buddhist tradition (or Confucian-Buddhist in the case of the Vietnamese). They have had to build from scratch places of worship and a religious organization in this country that conform to their cultural identity.

The vast majority (90%) of Canadians of Cambodian or Laotian origin practise Theravāda (Doctrine of the Elders) Buddhism. Originally preached by Buddha Śākyamuni – who lived in northern India in the 6th century B.C.E. – this philosophy values detachment from all things. It is only by realizing that the world is just an illusion and by relinquishing desire that human beings can escape the cycle of reincarnation and enter Nirvana, a state of non-being where desire and suffering no longer exist. To reach this state, one must respect a number of principles known as the “right path”, under the leadership of the Buddhist clergy.

In pre-1975 Cambodia and Laos, all aspects of social life were intimately connected to Buddhism. The view of the world, the periodic festivals, the education of the young, were directly inspired by the teachings of Buddha. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that Cambodian and Laotian refugees attempted to establish places of worship that conformed to their traditions from the time of their

arrival in Canada at the end of the 1970s. However, they ran into considerable obstacles. The Khmer Rouge regime, in power in Cambodia from 1975 to the end of 1978, had liquidated nearly all the Buddhist monks, while those in Laos were obliged to become laymen. It was, therefore, difficult to find the religious personnel to run Canadian temples. As recently as 1993, only five Cambodian and a handful of Laotian monks had been able to come to Canada. The two groups often had to share their resources and at times call upon their compatriots settled in the United States to ensure a proper religious life.

In spite of these difficulties, Cambodian and Laotian Buddhist temples were established in a dozen Canadian cities often without a resident monk. These play a double role as places of worship and community centres. It is usually their religious or lay leaders who, along with the community associations, organize the celebration of the main communal holidays marking the Cambodian and Laotian year: New Year (spring), Buddha's birthday (spring), Feast of the Dead (autumn). The hundred families converted to Christianity – especially Mennonite or fundamentalist – sometimes refuse to participate in these celebrations whose religious and ethnic natures are inextricably linked.

The Vietnamese did not experience this kind of problem, given that the major annual celebrations, the lunar New Year in January-February and the mid-autumn celebration in October, do not have a real religious character, and are organized by the associations rather than by temples. This does not prevent religious life from playing an important social and cultural role for a number of Canadians of Vietnamese origin.

The majority religion in Vietnam – as well as among people of Chinese origin – is the *tam giao* or “three teachings”, a harmonious mix of Confucian social morals, Taoist cosmology or a vision of the world founded on the complementary principles of yin and yang, and Mahāyāna or the “Great Vehicle” Buddhism. This is distinguished from Theravāda by its tenet that salvation, that is the end of reincarnation, can be obtained by praying to the Bodhisattvas, the saints who promised not to enter Nirvana until all living beings had been saved. The Mahāyāna has temples and a clergy of men and women, but it does not play the community role of Theravāda, and it has fewer practitioners.

In Canada, this form of Buddhism still contributes significantly to the maintenance of Vietnamese cultural identity. The temples are often, in fact, places for the preservation of the culture and language of origin. In 1975, a group of refugee faithful established a Buddhist congregation, the Liên Hoa pagoda, in Brossard, a suburb to the south of Montreal. They brought in a monk three years later. This congregation eventually split and a dissident group, led by another monk, settled in Côte-des-Neiges district in 1980. After the arrival of the second-wave refugees, the people of Liên Hoa and the break-away group helped the newcomers to establish Buddhist pagodas in Canada's main cities.

In this way the two main federations were born that now bring together most of the Vietnamese temples in the country: the World Vietnamese Buddhist Order to which are affiliated pagodas in France and the United States and the Union of Vietnamese Buddhist Churches in Canada. The number of pagodas steadily increased with support from these federations and affluent immigrants, as well as because of the relatively easy movement of Vietnamese Buddhist monks. In 1998, there were about 30 in the country, including seven in Montreal, six in Toronto and three in Vancouver.

About 15% of Canadians of Vietnamese origin belong to the Catholic Church and 3% to various Protestant churches. As a result, there are several Vietnamese as well as Cambodian and Laotian Christian congregations in Canada. A small number of people adhere to Caodaism, a syncretic religion born in Vietnam in the 1920s, while others are devotees of Spirit worship. Finally, nearly everyone, with the exception of some Christians, practises family ancestor worship at home.

## **Cultural life**

After their resettlement in Canada, Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese created a rich and varied cultural life. The two first groups formed dance and traditional music ensembles in many Canadian cities, and several recordings of ancient and modern music circulate in the community. Their associations publish magazines and diverse newsletters in the Khmer and Lao languages, and some of them now have their own website on the Internet.

Among the Vietnamese, cultural life largely expresses itself in written form. Besides newsletters and magazines published by different political, religious, professional or mutual-aid associations, there are numerous papers and other periodicals dedicated to news and culture. Vietnamese bookstores in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver offer hundreds of books in Vietnamese, published in Canada or in other countries of the diaspora, especially the United States. There is also a very large number of discs and cassettes of traditional or contemporary Vietnamese songs on the market, as well as films and musicals in the Vietnamese language, on video cassettes. In addition, Vietnamese artists from the United States, France and increasingly from Vietnam, do tours in Canada.

## **Conclusion**

As was clear in the preceding pages, Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese immigration to Canada is characterized by a certain number of common traits. It is a recent immigration, motivated by political and family reasons, rather young, whose key players have worked to put in place the basic elements of a social organization according to their own cultural values.

In addition to these shared traits, however, there are others that clearly distinguish Vietnamese, on the one hand, from Cambodians and Laotians, on the other. The size of the communities is radically different. There are six or seven times more Canadian residents of Vietnamese origin than there are of Cambodian or Laotian origin. Vietnamese also have a much higher proportion of persons who arrived in Canada before the second wave of refugees (1978-80), as well as a few thousand highly educated executives and professionals, and these two phenomena are in correlation with each other.

These distinctions, to which must be added the cultural habits of each group, have led to the emergence of different forms of community organization. Among the Vietnamese, different social, professional, political, religious interest groups generally work through the voluntary associations founded and managed by the educated elite of the community. In contrast, the organizational patterns of the Laotians are inspired by their traditional cultural habits. People

prefer to gather around individuals with whom they maintain a highly personalized client-patron relationship. Often but not always, these groups take the form of a duly constituted association or a housing cooperative. Finally, among the Cambodians, it is the Buddhist institution (monk, temple and rituals) that serves as the anchor for individuals and associations who were highly traumatized by the Khmer Rouge experience and still have difficulty integrating into the work force.

The members of the three communities now consider themselves to be part of Canada. Even if most of them continue to be interested – at times actively – in politics and developments in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, few envisage returning to settle there. The majority of the refugees and immigrants originally from the countries of the former Indochina, as well as their children, define themselves as Canadian. This does not prevent them, however, from also identifying with their cultures of origin. For them, integration and adaptation in the host society are not necessarily synonymous with assimilation.

Louis-Jacques Dorais holds degrees in Anthropology and Linguistics from the Universities of Montréal and Paris-III. He has taught in the department of Anthropology at Laval University since 1972. His interest in studying the relations between language, culture, and identity led him to do research in three very different fields: the Inuit of the North American Arctic (Canada, Greenland, and Alaska); the Vietnamese (and by extension Cambodian and Laotian) diaspora in Canada; French minorities in North America. His current research is on the transnational identities of the Vietnamese of Quebec, as well as the linguistic practices in Iqaluit, capital of Nunavut. His recent publications include four books and two articles: *Aspects de l'immigration asiatique au Québec* (Documents de recherche du Laboratoire d'anthropologie de l'Université Laval, 1996); *La parole inuit* (Paris, Éditions Peeters, 1996); *Quaqtaq: Modernity and Identity in an Inuit Community* (University of Toronto Press, 1997); *Aboriginal Environmental Knowledge in the North* (Groupe d'Études inuit et circumpolaires de l'Université Laval, 1998); "Vietnamese Communities in Canada, France and Denmark" (*Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11-2, 1998, p. 107-125); "Vietnamese" (in *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*, Toronto, 1999, p. 1312-1324).

## Suggestions for Further Reading

As immigration from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam is a recent phenomenon, it has not yet been the subject of a complete historical synthesis. Instead, we glean elements of information on the history of the settlement of refugees and immigrants from the former Indochina in Canada through studies of their adaptation and community organization.

These studies – the first of which date from 1979 – encompass four major themes: 1) the geo-historical and political background of the waves of refugees; 2) the refugees' problems of adaptation; 3) the social organization of communities of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese origin; 4) the specific characteristics of the culture and identity of these communities.

One book dealing with the first theme is that edited by Elliot L. Tepper, published first in English as *Southeast Asian Exodus*, Ottawa, 1980, then in French as *D'un continent à un autre* (1981). Appearing during the boat people and Cambodian "crisis," this book was the first to point out the historical and immediate causes of this migratory movement and to highlight particular adaptation problems of the refugees. *The Indochinese Refugee Movement* (Toronto, 1980), edited by Howard Adelman, which appeared about the same time, analysed certain structural factors behind the reception of nationals of the former Indochina, such as Canadian and international policies with regard to refugees and the major means of their adaptation. In the following years, C. Michael Lanphier published several articles, among others "Refugee Resettlement: Models in Action", *International Migration Review* 17-1, (1983), comparing resettlement policies for the boat people in English Canada, Quebec, the United States and France.

The very real problems of resettlement and adaptation of the refugees from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam gave rise throughout the 1980s to the publication of a great number of research reports, articles and conference papers intending to help the work of various practitioners in the field. Among the most interesting works is the report by Gertrude Neuwirth and al., *Southeast Asian Refugee Study* (Ottawa, 1985), and that of Gilles Deschamps, *Étude longitudinale sur l'adaptation socio-économique des réfugiés indochinois au Québec* (Montreal,

1985), as well as the papers presented at a conference held in Vancouver in 1983, edited by R.C. Nann, Phyllis J. Johnson and Morton Beiser, *Refugee Resettlement: Southeast Asians in Transition* (Vancouver, 1984). Towards the end of the decade, a work edited by Kwok B. Chan and Doreen M. Indra, *Uprooting, Loss and Adaptation* (Ottawa, 1987), synthesized the refugees' problems of adaptation.

A few authors were particularly interested in questions of mental health. We can mention, for example, the recent book by Morton Beiser, *Strangers at the Gate* (Toronto, 1999), as well as the articles by San Duy Nguyễn, "The Psycho-Social Adjustment and the Mental Health Needs of Southeast Asian Refugees," *The Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa*, 7-1, (1982) and by Kwok B. Chan and Lawrence Lam, "Resettlement of Vietnamese-Chinese Refugees in Montreal: Some Socio-Psychological Problems and Dilemmas," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 15-1, (1983). In 1990, Lam renewed contact with his Sino-Vietnamese interviewees in Montreal and subsequently published a longitudinal study of their adaptation entitled *From Being Uprooted to Surviving* (Toronto, 1996).

With regard to the third theme, a description of the community organization of the Vietnamese refugees in the first wave (1975-78) was completed in 1979 by Bong Quy Nguyễn and Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Monographie sur les Vietnamiens établis dans l'est du Canada / Monograph on the Vietnamese in Eastern Canada* (Ottawa, 1982). In 1987 and 1988 two works appeared on the Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian communities in Quebec City: *Exile in a Cold Land* by Louis-Jacques Dorais, Lise Pilon and Huy Nguyễn (New Haven, 1987), and *Les communautés cambodgienne et laotienne de Québec* by Dorais and Pilon (Quebec, 1988). Also in 1988, Dorais, Kwok B. Chan and Doreen M. Indra edited a book on the social organization of communities originally from the former Indochina, from Victoria to Moncton entitled *Ten Years Later* (Montreal, 1988).

In the 1980s and the 1990s, there also appeared a number of writings on different aspects of the culture and identity of Canadians of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese origin. These writings concerned, among other subjects, ethnicity: Yuen-Fong Woon, "Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Boundaries: The Sino-Vietnamese in Victoria, British Columbia," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*,

22-4, (1985); gender relationships: Doreen M. Indra, "Resettlement and Gender Differences, A Lethbridge Community Study," *Canadian Woman Studies*, 10-1, (1989); religion: Penny Van Esterik, *Taking Refuge. Lao Buddhists in North America* (Tempe AZ and Toronto, 1992), Louis-Jacques Dorais, "Vie religieuse et adaptation: les Vietnamiens de Montréal," *Culture*, 13-1, (1993), Janet McLellan, *Many Petals of the Lotus* (Toronto, 1999); the situation of youth: Caroline Méthot, *Du Viêt-Nam au Québec. La valse des identités* (Québec, 1995). We must also mention a general bibliography on the subject: Véronique Béguet, *Les réfugiés indochinois au Canada / Indochinese Refugees in Canada* (Quebec, 1992).

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