

STARTTS Mission

To develop and implement ways to facilitate the healing process of survivors of torture and refugee trauma and to assist and resource individuals and organizations who work with them to provide appropriate, effective and culturally sensitive services.



STARTTS

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**NSW Service for the Treatment and
Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors**

152-168 the Horsley Drive, Carramar NSW 2163

PO Box 203, Fairfield NSW 2165

T: +61 2 9794 1900 F: +61 2 9794 1910

www.startts.org

THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IN SYDNEY – A RESOURCE BOOK

THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY In Sydney A Resource Book



**A Community Development Project
STARTTS
2008**

The Vietnamese Community in Sydney – A Resource Book, 1st Edition
By Tiep Nguyen, Hien Le and Huong Kieu

Proofreading by Martha Mollison
Layout and artwork by Tung Pham and Hoa Nguyen
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1. A Community Profile
2. Cultural Information
3. Healing Customs
4. Emotions
5. Community Organisations

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NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This resource was designed to provide essential background information on the Vietnamese community in Australia, especially in Sydney, which aims to assist field workers, Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese alike, in providing quality care to Vietnamese people.

This resource developed from an original concept of Margaret Cunningham's, former Director of STARTTS. The first edition was produced in 1995 owing to her continual support.

A dozen years has passed since then and it is the right time now to produce a second edition in response to community need and public demand. Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward, the current Community Services Coordinator of STARTTS, has provided timely support and necessary funding for the completion of this edition.

The following people also deserve a special acknowledgment, as without them this revised edition would not have been possible:

-  Lisa Saar, social work student on placement at STARTTS in 2005, who has patiently re-typed most of the resource book and simultaneously done the proper editing of its language and style;
-  Susan Nguyen, volunteer with Friends of STARTTS (FOS) and Joseph Nguyen (Nicholas Group) who have given plenty of their time to compile statistical data, design the front cover and set the layout;
-  Nguyen Thi Hop, Vo Thanh Van, Jeffery Mellefont of Australian National Maritime Museum, Children's Festival Inc., VCA-NSW and Vietnamese Scout Groups whose picture and photos are inserted in the book.

Thank you also to the staff of STARTTS and many Vietnamese workers for their comments; contributions were made specifically by Rebecca Hinchey, Emma Pittaway, Felix Ryan, Elizabeth Schaffer, Paul Smith, Thuy Tran, Hien Dang and her partner and Thao P.T.Nguyen.

INTRODUCTION

(First Edition)

In 1988 when STARTTS began its work in NSW of “developing treatment and rehabilitation services for survivors of torture and trauma”, we were faced with what seemed an impossible and improbable task. With two clinicians and the first bicultural counsellors employed in the Department of Health (NSW) our challenge was:

To develop a therapeutic context which assisted people to heal the traumatic experiences they struggled with, in a manner which acknowledged their ethnicity, culture and life experience.

From this challenge the outline for this manual developed. We needed a means through which those of us trained to be counsellors, therapists and healers could understand the healing contexts and traditions of

those clients whose cultural background we did not share.

Our courage and capacity to face an uncertain future is often steeped in the cultural practices, symbols, stories and traditions which give us hope.

It is with great delight and pleasure that we offer you this manual. In its draft form (developed by Mr Tiep Nguyen in 1989), it has educated, reminded and encouraged workers at STARTTS working with clients from Vietnamese backgrounds, to see beyond cultural information and to develop creative clinical practices which combine all modalities to assist torture survivors to create their vision of a new life in Australia.

It is our hope that this manual will provide you with a basis to develop your creativity and responsiveness to working with

clients who do not share your cultural origins.

I wish to thank Tiep and all those associated with this project for their commitment to completing this manual for your use.

I also wish to thank the Vietnamese community associations for their support of STARTTS work with the Vietnamese community in Australia.

Margaret Cunningham

Director / STARTTS

1989 -1997



INTRODUCTION

(Revised Edition)

***Có công mài sắt,
có ngày nên kim.***

The hard labour and continuing effort in sharpening or moulding a piece of iron will one day become a precious and well-defined piece of metal.

(Vietnamese proverb)

Welcome to the second edition of the Vietnamese Resource Book published by the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). In 2004, when STARTTS consulted with the Vietnamese community, we were told that the first edition of the Resource Book was excellent but that an updated version was seriously overdue. STARTTS made a commitment to produce the second edition and the project was taken up by the STARTTS longest serving staff member and Vietnamese Bi-cultural

Counsellor/Project Officer, Mr. Tiep Nguyen.

Tiep convened a small and energetic working group consisting of Vietnamese community workers who proceeded to record and tell the story of the Vietnamese community in NSW. It is a story of triumph over adversity, building on strengths and rich cultural diversity. It is a story that should be told to educate, inform and inspire.

STARTTS has a long and proud history of working with the Vietnamese community. This history is marked by mutual support and ongoing collaboration on a variety of projects – the last one being “Sharing Our Stories – Sharing our Strengths” Conference, a sharing Conference for members of various refugee communities, which sprung from an idea from the Vietnamese community.

This book is another such project. I hope that you will find it an interesting and useful resource. I also hope you will continue to

return to it as you think of a question or face a dilemma. Please think about the book as a trusted travel companion in the journey of learning about the Vietnamese community in NSW.

Those of you from small and emerging communities – I hope that this book will be a source of inspiration. Your community can achieve what the Vietnamese community achieved. Do not be afraid to pick up the phone or send an e-mail to the various organisations listed in the book and ask them how they achieved it. The Vietnamese community told us they are happy to share what they have learned with others and help those who came after them.

This book and the Vietnamese community's success are products of effort and striving. As per the proverb above, they are the precious metals brought forth from a piece of iron. The Vietnamese community also embodies the spirit of the proverb below.

Cái khó ló cái khôn

Adversity brings wisdom
(Vietnamese proverb)

Please enjoy your journey....

Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward
Community Services Coordinator
STARTTS



THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IN SYDNEY

A RESOURCE BOOK

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	III
Introduction (First Edition)	IV
Introduction (Revised Edition)	VI
 Contents	 VIII
 1. A Community Profile	 01
 2. Cultural Information	 10
2.1 Names and addressing systems	10
2.2 Family	12
2.3 Food habits	15
2.4 Festival & Celebrations	17
2.5 Beliefs	20
2.6 Wedding Ceremonies	22
2.7 Funeral ceremonies	23
2.8 Infant-feeding and child-rearing practices	24
2.9 Perspectives on Conduct Disorders	27
2.10 Traditional Music and Traditional Musical Instruments	30
2.11 Vietnamese Society over Time	32

3. Healing Customs	35
3.1 Xông (steam bath)	35
3.2 Chườm (hot water bottle)	36
3.3 Cạo gió (skin rubbing) & Bắt gió (skin pinching)	36
3.4 Giác (cupping)	37
3.5 Lệ (blood-drawing)	38
3.6 Đấm bóp (remedial massage)	38
3.7 Thuốc Nam & Thuốc Bắc (herbal therapy)	39
3.8 Châm cứu (acupuncture)	40
3.9 Ăn chay (vegetarian diet)	40
3.10 Ngồi thiền (sitting in meditation)	41
3.11 Sám hối (repentance)	42
4. Emotions	43
4.1 Anger	44
4.2 Sadness	46
4.3 Grief	49
4.4 Joy	51
4.5 Loneliness	53
4.6 Love	55
5. Community Organisations	58
5.1 An Overview of Vietnamese Community Organisations	58
5.2 Structure of VCA – NSW	63
5.3 Churches and Religious Organisations	64
5.3.1 Vietnamese Buddhism	64
5.3.2 The Vietnamese Catholic Community in the Archdiocese of Sydney	69
5.3.3 Caodaism	71
5.3.4 Hoa Hao Buddhism Association in Australia	73

5.3.5 Vietnamese Evangelical Church in Australia	74
5.3.6 Vietnamese Baptist Church in Australia	75
5.3.7 Vietnamese Anglican Church in Australia	77
5.3.8 Vietnamese Uniting Church in Australia.....	77
5.3.9 Vietnamese Independent Church in Australia	77
 5.4 Political and Human Rights Groups	 77
 5.5 Business and Trade Initiative	 79
5.5.1 Business Golden Guide	79
5.5.2 Vietnam Information Services	79
 5.6 Cultural and Educational Groups	 80
5.6.1 Vietnamese Traditional Music School	80
5.6.2 Vietnamese P.E.N. Australia – Sydney Centre	80
5.6.3 Vietnamese Traditional Dancing	80
5.6.4 Ha-Duc-An Performance Studio	80
5.6.5 Vietnam Kich Nghe Sydney	80
5.6.6 Viet Joeys	81
5.6.7 Vietnamese Language Classes	81
 5.7 Social and Friendship Groups	 83
5.7.1 Ex-Military Groups	83
5.7.2 Students and Youth Groups	85
5.7.3 Sports and Gymnastics Clubs	87
5.7.4 Elderly Groups	88
5.7.5 Mutual Support Groups	92
5.7.6 Voluntary Service Groups	93

5.8 Other Professional Groups	94
5.8.1 Australian Vietnamese Health Professionals	
Association NSW	94
5.8.2 Vietnamese Australian Medical Association	95
5.8.3 Vietnamese Professionals Society – NSW Chapter	95
5.8.4 Vovi Learned Society	96
5.8.5 SVWI	97
5.9 Meditation Centres	98
5.9.1 Vo Vi Esoteric Science	98
5.9.2 Quan Yin Method	99
5.10 Welfare Organisations within the Vietnamese Community	100
5.10.1 Vietnamese Community in Australia – NSW Chapter	100
5.10.2 Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association	102
5.10.3 Vietnamese Women’s Association in NSW	103
5.11 Welfare and Health Organisations with a Vietnamese Program	105
5.11.1 Anglicare	105
5.11.2 Asian Women at Work	105
5.11.3 Burnside	106
5.11.4 Cabramatta Community Centre	107
5.11.5 Centacare	107
5.11.6 Drug Health Services	108
5.11.7 Open Family Australia	108
5.11.8 Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors	109
5.11.9 Sydney Indochinese Refugee Youth Support Group	109

5.11.10 Transcultural Mental Health Centre	111
5.11.11 Women's Health Centres	111
5.11.12 Community Health Services	112
5.12 Ethno-specific Accommodation Services	116
5.12.1 Kingston House	116
5.12.2 Lotus House	116
5.12.3 The Hearth	117
5.12.4 Van Lang Housing Co-Op	117
5.13 The Vietnamese Media	118
5.13.1 Radio Programs	118
5.13.2 Newspapers and Magazines	119
APPENDIX: READINGS	121
<i>Reading 1: Vietnamese Culture in a Pluralist Australia:</i>	
Conflict or Harmony?	121
<i>Reading 2: Rediscovering Our Roots</i>	132
SELECTED REFERENCES	134

1. A COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Communist take-over by force of South Vietnam in 1975 and the subsequent exodus of Vietnamese out of their homeland have resulted in thousands of Vietnamese being accepted for resettlement in Australia.

Prior to this crucial national event, the Vietnamese people lived separately under the two antagonistic political regimes of North and South Vietnam, set up by the Geneva Accords of 1954. This international agreement marked the end of the first phase of the Vietnam War from 1946 to 1954 against French rule and led to the mass exodus of nearly one million people from the North to the South. The years 1954-60 were the period of peace and reconstruction for both regions. After this, the second phase of the Vietnam

War commenced, which was known by Hanoi as the war for national liberation from U.S. imperialism and by Saigon as the war of self-defence against Communist subversion and invasion. It culminated in bombings over North Vietnam and Communist offensives in the South. Its conclusion was the control of South Vietnam by the North and, with the fall of South Vietnam, the collapse of neighbouring Laos and Cambodia to the Communist movements in those countries.

The conclusion of the war and the reunification of the divided nation under Communist rule have brought about several waves of Vietnamese people from both North and South fleeing to the West.

In Australia there are 194,855 Vietnamese-speaking persons in the total national population of 19,855,288 (1). They concentrated largely in the Local Government areas of Fairfield, Bankstown and Marrickville in Sydney; Footscray, Richmond and Springvale in Melbourne; West End in Brisbane; Girrawheen in Perth; and Woodville in Adelaide. It is the clustered pattern of residence of this minority group, rather than its size in relation to the total population, that has highlighted its visibility to the larger society.

In their dealings with the government and other ethnic groups, Vietnamese refugees are represented by a nationwide organization, the Vietnamese Community in Australia, and in each state by its state chapter. Under this umbrella organization, there are many smaller groups, political, social and professional, whose

activities are either within a state or nationwide. The community leaders and figures, whether elected or not, have accepted as collective goals the stabilization and development of their emerging community and the promotion of initiatives and efforts for the restoration of political freedom and liberal democracy in their homeland.

In terms of duration of residence the Vietnamese ethnic group is a young community and has been faced with various problems of settlement and adjustment such as language barriers, cultural differences, difficulties in finding employment, geographically split families and serious conflicts within the family as a result of migration and, above all, the pain and distress of coming to grips with the multiple traumas experienced prior to arriving in Australia.

In spite of these difficulties and adversities, Vietnamese people have participated in almost all spheres of Australian life and in their operation as a group have presented unique characteristics, political, social and cultural.

Politically, the Vietnamese community in Australia is firm in its anti-Communist attitudes and active in its campaign for a free and democratic Vietnam (2). No consensus is reached, though, among community members as to how to drive Communism out of Vietnamese society and to restore freedom, democracy and human rights for the Vietnamese people. Some still believe that armed revolution is the only way to remove the Communist Party from power. Many, having been exposed to a more liberal and democratic political system in Australia and having witnessed the collapse of many Communist states without the use of much

military force by anti-Communist movements, are keen on peaceful political solutions such as negotiations, reconciliation and collaborative conflict resolution. Others claim that improving the living standards of the people will gradually undermine Communist ideology and dictatorship and so they favour economic and technical aid from the West for Vietnam and the lifting of the trade embargo by the United States.

In terms of employment, Vietnamese people are now employed in almost all areas of industry in both the government and non-government sectors. However, the unemployment rate among Vietnamese-born is high compared with the rate in the wider Australian community. Of those who are employed, many are underemployed and the overwhelming majority are in positions with responsibilities to carry out pre-defined technical

or manual tasks and to perform duties or roles that require supervision. Few have succeeded in obtaining higher executive and managerial positions that entail responsibilities for policy planning, decision-making and program supervision. (3)

Due to the lack of employment or suitable employment, a drop in their socio-economic status after migrating and the satisfaction found in “being their own boss”, a small number of Vietnamese have decided to take up self-employment through setting up small businesses, offices and shops. Those in the medical profession are the most visible with private practices in many areas dominated by Vietnamese (4). No less visible are the Asian groceries, bread shops and small restaurants. The number of Vietnamese small business operators is, however, small compared with

the rest of the Vietnamese population (5).

With regard to education, which is highly valued in Vietnamese families and communities, there are records of both encouraging successes and discouraging failures. Vietnamese prowess in the academic field is well known and the Australian learned society is beginning to recognize that “Viet refugees (are) in the academic ascendant” (6). Not all of them have succeeded, though, and many have gained their success at the price of enormous hard work, deferment of immediate gratification and, for some, excessive worry about failure. It is also shown that Vietnamese students do best in analytical subjects, especially in mathematics and science, and somewhat less well in English and subjects that require strong verbal participation. This may explain why they figure disproportionately in many

secondary and tertiary education courses.

A comprehensive view of Vietnamese community life in Australia cannot ignore its mode of cultural expression. This is not to be found in ubiquitous grocery stores, take-away restaurants and bakeries, which are just temporary and preliminary ventures for those who have come here empty-handed and after some years of working in factories have managed to save a small capital to start small businesses. Nor should it be found in frequent vehement, sometimes violent, political meetings, conferences and demonstrations to protest or to support, which are merely reactions or responses in the short-term to the political situation in the home country.

In order to have a better view of significant Vietnamese cultural expression (7), one should look

at the array of mass media organs: newsletters, newspapers and magazines, which come out daily, bi-weekly, weekly, monthly, or periodically. In Sydney alone, there are no less than four daily and weekly papers, which have a nationwide circulation. These newspapers include, in addition to the news and information, short stories, poems, literary and art reviews and commentaries. One should also look at the numerous works or publications by poets, writers and authors, some of which have a readership in other resettlement countries as well. The subject matter of many of these works is mainly the lost homeland now relived in remembrances and past images. Together with the increase in creative writings and artistic activities is the grouping or re-grouping of young talents or veterans in performance or production groups: literary clubs,

performing and fine arts groups, choirs and music bands.

In short, Vietnamese presence in the Australian ethnic press and ethnic literary and artistic activities is surprisingly rich in quality as well as quantity and has significantly contributed to the successful resettlement and well-being of Vietnamese residents.

A quote from an outsider (8) describes succinctly the inner resources and deeper values displayed by the Vietnamese in exile:

While they and their families have worked to be self-supporting, the (Vietnamese) artists paint, draw, make prints and continue, as serene as if there had been no drama in their life.

It is wonderful to see the art of Vietnamese who go deeper than

the grubby surface of the day, and whose works go beyond the leaking and crowded boats, beyond loss and death, into serenity. This celebration of life has always been the source of the creative urge.

Escapist? No. It is an elemental and courageous understanding of reality, where the human spirit harvests beauty from despair.

As a young ethnic group, will the Vietnamese be successful in their transitional process of relocation and social adjustment? This would depend on their predisposition to change, their level of expectation and the orientation of the host society (9).

From a Vietnamese perspective, most Vietnamese did not change their country of origin voluntarily, but on the other hand are happy to consider Australia as their permanent settlement location.

Their expectations are high – unrealistically high perhaps – but these are being steadily achieved by their young people in education and employment. They arrived at the time of Australia's economic recession with high unemployment and inflation, but their arrival also coincided with a new national policy of multiculturalism proclaimed as a framework of inter-group relations in this racially and culturally diversified nation.

Thus looking ahead, these new citizens have good reasons to believe that their ethnic community will soon be well established, like other older ethnic communities, and will be able to contribute its talent, energy and determination to the advancement of the new homeland, AUSTRALIA.

Notes

- (1) 2006 ABS Census. Note the difference between these categories:
 Vietnam-born: 159,850 = 0.8% of total population.
 Vietnamese ancestries: 173,700 = 0.9% of total population.
 Vietnamese spoken at home: 194,855 = 1% of total population.
- (2) Please note that the emblem used to represent the Vietnamese community is the Freedom and Heritage Flag, of yellow background with three horizontal red stripes. This is the flag that has been used in Vietnam since the early years of the 20th century. The red flag with a yellow star at the centre, the emblem of Communist Vietnam, is not recognised by Vietnamese refugees.
- (3) The 1991 Census shows that 60.7% of the Vietnam-born in NSW were wage and salary earners in low skilled or unskilled jobs and only 4% were managers and administrators with another 11.7% being professionals and para-professionals. In: "Indochinese Refugee Families in Australia: A Multicultural Perspective" (published in *Cultural Diversity and the Family*, Ashfield: Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, 1997). <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~yeulee/Other/Indochinese%20refugees.html>
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Greg Sheridan, Viet Refugees in the Academic Ascendant, *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, February 7-8, 1987, p.10.

- (7) This paragraph was written with special reference to Frank Nhat Trinh, A Decade of Vietnamese Cultural Integration in Australia, Paper presented at the International Conference on a Decade of Indochinese Resettlement, Chicago, Illinois, April 18-20, 1985.
- (8) Ruth Talovich, Voices: Émigré Artists, *Thế Kỷ 21* (21st Century), June 1993, p.45.
- (9) Judith T. Shuval, Refugees – Adjustment and Assimilation, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Macmillan, New York, 1972, pp 373-377



VIETNAMESE DEMOGRAPHICS *

<u>POPULATION</u>		% of Australian population	
Australian Population	19,855,288	100.0%	
Vietnam born	159,850	0.8%	
Vietnamese Ancestries	173,700	0.9%	
Vietnamese Speaking	194,855	1.0%	

<u>GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION</u>	Population	Vietnamese speaking Males	Vietnamese speaking Females	Vietnamese speaking Total	% of population
ACT	324,034	1,463	1,601	3,064	0.9%
NSW	6,549,179	35,891	38,696	74,587	1.1%
NT	192,898	396	363	759	0.4%
Queensland	3,904,537	8,433	8,711	17,144	0.4%
South Australia	1,514,336	6,752	7,012	13,764	0.9%
Tasmania	476,484	69	63	132	< 0.1%
Victoria	4,932,421	34,773	37,389	72,162	1.5%
Western Australia	1,959,083	6,552	6,691	13,243	0.7%
Total		94,329	100,526	194,855	

<u>MAJOR CITIES</u>	Population	Vietnamese speaking Males	Vietnamese speaking Females	Vietnamese speaking Total	% of population
Adelaide	1,105,839	6,624	6,908	13,532	1.2%
Brisbane	1,763,129	7,728	8,097	15,825	0.9%
Canberra	323,058	1,456	1,601	3,057	0.9%
Darwin	105,989	336	312	648	0.6%
Hobart	200,524	50	43	93	< 0.1%
Melbourne	3,592,592	34,240	36,881	71,121	2.0%
Perth	1,445,073	6,295	6,463	12,758	0.9%
Sydney	4,119,189	34,911	37,704	72,615	1.8%
Total		91,640	98,009	189,649	

<u>TOP LOCATIONS IN SYDNEY</u>	Population	Vietnamese speaking Males	Vietnamese speaking Females	Vietnamese speaking Total	% of population
Auburn	64,958	789	891	1,680	2.6%
Bankstown	170,489	6,877	7,216	14,093	8.3%
Canterbury	129,963	2,382	2,598	4,980	3.8%
Fairfield	179,892	14,778	15,888	30,666	17.0%
Liverpool	164,602	3,285	3,391	6,676	4.1%
Marrickville	71,812	1,415	1,531	2,946	4.1%
Total		29,526	31,515	61,041	

*Source: ABS 2006 Census

2. CULTURAL INFORMATION

2.1 Names and Addressing System

The order of the parts of a Vietnamese name is in reverse of an Australian name. For example, Nguyễn Văn Sang - *Nguyễn* is the surname, *Văn* the middle name, which is written in the middle and *Sang* the given name last. On a form that asks for surname separately to given names, a Vietnamese person will still list their middle name prior to their first name. As a result, workers unfamiliar with this practice will call clients by their middle name.

A middle name will often indicate the gender of the person. *Văn* often indicates the person is male while a female name may have the additional part *Thị* directly after the surname prior

to the middle name. A name such as Nguyễn Thị Kim Liên is a female name. Alternatively if *Thị* is not used as a feminine gender indicator, the translation of a middle name can indicate gender as words are more effeminate, for example; Cao Lệ (tears) Hằng, Võ Ngọc (jade) Hương, Trần Ái (love) Vân. However this is not always the case as they can be used as male middle names also or as first names for either gender.

Another interesting fact around names is that a Vietnamese married couple will use different surnames when filling out documents and in interviews.

Legally in Vietnam women keep their family name after marriage. Also the given name is more

important for identification than the family name because there are only a couple of hundred of family names, the so called 'bách tính' or 'trăm họ' (100 surnames), for 80 million people. In contrast given and middle names have precise meanings. Thus in Vietnam, Dr Sang or Dr Nguyen Van Sang are identifiable whereas Dr Nguyen is not.

In Vietnamese there are many different lexical forms, often referred to as 'status pronouns', to mean the same English personal pronouns *I* and *you*, depending on the quality of the relationship between two people. A quotation from Bang follows to clarify this point.

The English have only one way of addressing: You call me 'you' and I call you 'you'. But when I, as a Vietnamese person, approach a person older than me, for example, a husband in a

family, I would call him 'uncle' and he would call me 'niece'. And the wife I would call 'auntie', and the children I should call 'smaller sister' and 'smaller brother' or by their name...

A Vietnamese teacher would call a single young man his name, while the young man calls the teacher 'teacher'.

The English people can only call their clients 'you' and 'you' and 'you'. Our system helps and gives a secure and warm feeling. (1)

Titles are another aspect of the addressing system. Vietnamese do not address a person so much by his or her personal name as Anglo Australians do. They usually like 'Sir' or 'teacher', 'father' (to a priest), 'Madam' or 'Mr Director'. Social status, education and age are pivotal to determining which form of address to use.

- (1) Suzanne Bang, *We come as a friend: Towards a Vietnamese Model of Social Work*, Refugee Action, Leeds, 1983, pp 12-13.

2.2 Family

There are a number of notable characteristics of a Vietnamese family in the context of Australian society.

First, family, for the Vietnamese, can be a much extended group (1). Many refugees, when asked about family, stress those remaining in Vietnam, in France or in another state of Australia. The transfer of goods or money revitalises contact with these members. The extended sense of family partly reflects the reality of many families being separated with a parent or sibling left in Vietnam and so family reunification is a task families are working towards while establishing themselves in the country of resettlement.

While the family is extended, the loss or absence of family support is difficult for some and other links are formed within the community to replicate family - 3



or 4 blood unrelated single people from the same factory or school living together and creating a supportive unit. People with close emotional and family ties who were dispersed all over the Australian continent through the migration process have begun to aggregate again. The tendency toward family regrouping and creation of “pseudo-families” or mutually supportive units are noted as adaptational measures of Vietnamese refugees (2).

Secondly, Vietnamese family life is unique. Adult children live in parents’ home until married. Children consider this as filial piety while parents consider it parental responsibility. Older people are rarely placed in retirement villages or nursing homes. They stay with family until their last days either as a result of their wishes or the wishes of their children.

Though family recreation is usually home-based and both adults and children spend most of their free time at home, less communication is entered into between Vietnamese parents and children than their Anglo-Australian counterparts and hitting is frequently used as a form of discipline. The notion of the state interfering in a child protection context is absolutely unbelievable to many Vietnamese. This appears to be a conflict of child rearing between the two cultures. (3)

Customarily Vietnamese people, no more virtuous than other people, avoid talking about sex in the family and sex education for children is practically nil. “In my family we don’t discuss it (sex), and personally, I am more comfortable when I discuss about it with my Western friends than with my Vietnamese friends, even if we left the

country while young and could be considered 'westernised'" (4).

Thirdly, marriage is viewed as a social contract between families more than between individuals and therefore both sides of the family often handle conflict within a marriage. When there are problems between husband and wife in a Vietnamese marriage, the conflict is often expressed much more violently than in a British marriage (5). Divorce is not common with women staying in unhealthy marriages 'for the sake of the children'. Statistically, Vietnamese marriages last longer than American (6). Finally, to talk about *feelings* in Vietnamese marriage seems less relevant than to talk about what the husband and wife are actually doing (7). A statement from a Vietnamese man follows to illustrate this last point.

If a Vietnamese husband loves his wife, he is not going to say, I love you or cuddle her or give her a kiss. He shows it by helping the wife, looking after the children, helping in the house, no words. (8)

Notes

- (1) D. Haines, D. Rutherford & P. Thomas, Family and Community among Vietnamese Refugees, *International Migration Review*, Vol 15, No 1, 1981, pp 310-319.
- (2) K.M. Lin, M. Masuda & L. Tazuma, Adaptational Problems of Vietnamese Refugees, Part III – Case Studies in Clinic and Field: Adaptive and Maladaptive, *The Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa*, Vol 7, No 3, September 1982, pp 173-183.
- (3) S. Bang, *We Come as a Friend: Towards a Vietnamese Model of Social Work*, Refugee Action, Leeds, 1983, p. 21.
- (4) "Talking about sex in Vietnamese families", <http://www.asiafinest.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=29129>
- (5) S. Bang, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
- (6) National Indochinese Clearinghouse, *A Cross-Cultural Glimpse of the Vietnamese People*, Center for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, Virginia, 1976-1977, p. 31.
- (7) S. Bang, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- (8) S. Bang, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

2.3 Food Habits

“Vietnamese culture is full of proverbs and mythology which centre on food” (1). This comment, made by a Western observer, points out a truth that in an agricultural society like Vietnam food is a consistently powerful mode of human expression.

The Vietnamese translation of having a meal means eating rice. This is the principal food on the dining table. The bowl is considered to measure a person’s capacity of food consumption and is taken to the mouth using chopsticks. Both lunch and dinner are main meals in Vietnam.

A Vietnamese typical meal comprises four dishes: rice, soup, a vegetable dish and a fish or meat dish. Rice noodles cooked with chicken or beef and special condiments make a special soup called *phở*. This is

a popular breakfast dish and is often served in restaurants. A meal in itself, *phở* can be taken at other times of the day as well. Dessert is usually fruit and tea is often drunk at dinner and coffee with canned milk for breakfast.

Some people claim that Vietnamese cuisine uses less oil and fat than some other Asian cooking styles and relies on *nước mắm* (fermented fish sauce) as a seasoning rather than soy sauce or salt. This sauce is often thinned with water, fresh lemon juice, sugar, fresh chillies and garlic to create *nước chấm*, a dipping sauce for a variety of snack foods such as spring rolls.

Other popular seasonings include chillies, garlic, mint, basil, coriander and spring onions, to name a few. These herbs are added not only to enhance food flavours and increase appetite but also to aid

digestion and preserve good health allegedly owing to their medicinal properties. Le Thanh Khoi (2) wrote in *Le Chant du Riz Pilé* that the delicate perfume of a herb or a leaf constitutes perhaps the greatest contribution of Vietnam to world cuisine.

In Western culture it would be polite to ask table companions to pass a dish or condiments beyond one's reach. Vietnamese believe that this causes unnecessary trouble to others and would instead reach across or stand up to reach. It is also customary for young people to invite older people to serve themselves first.

In a restaurant, who pays? A Vietnamese who invites someone out for a meal or a drink will pay for it and may not expect to pay if they were invited out. Separate bills are not the

norm in Vietnamese culture and are considered rather mean.

Notes

- (1) Annabel Doling, *Vietnam on a Plate – A Culinary Journey*, Round House Publications, Hong Kong, 1996, p. 30.
- (2) Cited in Annabel Doling, *ibid*, p. 26.



2.4 Festivals and Celebrations

The following poem captures the ritual of Vietnamese life and festivals.

*January, celebrate the New
Year at home*

*February, gambling, March,
local festivals*

*April, measure out beans for
cooking sweets*

*Celebrate the feast of Doan
Ngo at the return of May*

*June, buy longans and sell
wild cherries*

*At the mid-July full moon,
pardon the wandering spirits*

*August, celebrate the lantern
festival*

*When September comes,
trade lemons and persimmons*

*October, sell paddy and
kapok*

*November and December, all
work is finished. (1)*

The months in the poem are those of the lunar calendar,

which is still used for many traditional festivals nowadays. In Australia some of these festivals have been dropped, but the *Tết* is still widely observed.

Tết Nguyên Đán, or simply *Tết* (the Lunar New Year), usually falling in late January or in February of the solar calendar, is the most important festival for the community and the family. This celebration is considered both joyous and solemn and in Vietnam is marked with three public holidays when special rites and ceremonies are organised. New clothes are worn, traditional dishes prepared, houses cleaned up and decorated with boughs of peach or plum blossom, debts paid off, past mistakes forgiven, gifts delivered in person to people's homes and wishes of happiness, prosperity, good health, good luck, peace and longevity given to each other. David Tornquist has aptly

captured the spirit of the Vietnamese *Tết* when he wrote, “*Tết* is a celebration of renewal” (2).

Tết is also an occasion to pay homage to ancestors and to show gratitude to the people who are still alive: parents and grandparents, teachers, spiritual advisors and other benefactors. Usually on the eve of the New Year the family gathers in front of the ancestral altar and remembers the departed. As a custom children visit parents’ homes and students, teachers’ homes and not the other way around.

Other celebrations in the Vietnamese diaspora include *Lễ Vu Lan* (Wandering Souls Day) and *Tết Trung Thu* (Mid-Autumn Festival).

Lễ Vu Lan (Wandering Souls Day) is the second largest festival of the year (2) and is a

special occasion when “the living and the dead meet in thought” (3). It falls on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month but can still be celebrated at any convenient time during the second half of the month. Originally a Buddhist feast, this festival has become a tradition of Vietnamese popular culture.

There is an age-old belief that after sunset on this day the spirits of the dead are set free from hell for some time. Hungry, they roam about in search of food. Thus plenty of food is left at family altars for deceased relatives and outdoors to reach out to the wandering souls. Another belief, more religiously-based, is that the sinful souls can be absolved of their sins and delivered from hell through the prayers of the living said particularly on the Wandering Souls Day. Thus there are ceremonies, most often conducted at the pagoda, where

people call upon the Lord Buddha to grant general amnesty to all souls, of their ancestors as well as of the dead who have no descendants to pray for them.

Tết Trung Thu (Mid-Autumn Festival) falls on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month when the moon is full and at its brightest. An ancient festival to mark the end of harvest season in Southeast Asia, this seasonal event has become the children's festival. Many Vietnamese communities in Australia hold this Moon Festival for the children to enjoy themselves and learn about Vietnamese history and culture.

The festival begins at noon and ends at midnight. Highlights include lantern processions, colourful shows and traditional songs and dances. The lit lantern is important in this event because it is a wish for the

return of the sun's warmth and light. The dragon dance is a re-enactment of the earth and sky duality, the yin and yang of the World. (4)

There is a legend (5) associated with the Tết Trung Thu that parents would love to tell their children on this occasion. It is about a carp (6) that wanted to become a dragon (7). How could the carp become a dragon? The carp just worked and worked and eventually transformed itself into a dragon.

Notes

- (1) Dang Lam Sang, Lunar Time and Festivals in Vietnam, *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, Vol 1, No 3, 1990, p 47.
- (2) Ann Crawford, *Customs and Culture of Vietnam*, 1966, cited by Herbert Friedman in *Wandering Soul – Vietnam Psychological Operations*.
<http://www.psywarrior.com/wandering-soul.html>
- (3) Tet Trung Nguyen (Wandering Souls Day) Vietnam.
[http://www.asiarooms.com/travel-guide/vietnam.../tet-trung-nguyen-\(wandering-souls-day\)-vietnam.htm](http://www.asiarooms.com/travel-guide/vietnam.../tet-trung-nguyen-(wandering-souls-day)-vietnam.htm)
- (4) Tet-Trung-Thu (Mid-Autumn or Children's Moon Festival).
<http://www.csuchico.edu/~cheinz/sy>

- (5) Bet Key Wong, Tết-Trung-Thu. <http://www.familyculture.com/holidays/tettrungthu.htm>
- (6) Lanterns carried on parade have different shapes including carps.
- (7) In Vietnamese culture the dragon is a symbol of nobility.



2.5 Beliefs

Before the French colonial period, the main religions of Vietnam were Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Over the centuries, these religions became fused into a vague code of ethics and a philosophy of life rather than a practised religion. “The average Vietnamese is apt to mingle beliefs from all these sources without being aware either of their origin or their full meaning” (1). The fusion by the Vietnamese of different religious beliefs and practices has been seen as resulting from their “pluralistic approach to lifemanship, with a strong inclination for eclectic adaptations” (2). It has also been attributed to “Vietnamese syncretism”, the ability to reconcile opposing principles and practices in an effort to make them work harmoniously (3).

Vietnamese are taught to be proud of being descendants of dragons and fairies. This cultural belief holds great meaning for the Vietnamese. According to Whitmore (4), to be a Vietnamese is to be aware of mythic and historical events that go back more than 2000 years. This appears to be a folk sense emerging out of both mythology and history and helping to provide ethnic identity for the Vietnamese as they strive to achieve common goals. In Vietnamese culture the dragon is a symbol of nobility while in Western mythology it is a symbol of noxious strength.

Âm-dương is a metaphysical construct originating in Taoism and Taoism is believed by Vietnamese cultural historians to have played a very important role in the development of the Vietnamese cultural personality (5). The *Âm* (*yin*) and the *Dương* (*yang*) principles regulate the

functioning of human beings and the universe. Both the energy of the universe and the energy within the human body are under the influence of these two basic factors, which constantly interplay and interrelate with one another in opposing but complimentary ways.

Metaphysical determinism seems fairly dominant in Vietnamese thought, speech and action. Fate and destiny, karma and metempsychosis, hell and heaven, good and evil, reward and punishment by the Supernatural, are all common themes in everyday language as well as classical literature. Astrology and horoscopes have also been widely practised for centuries to date despite a ban on the practice by the Communist government.

Ancestor worship is also a cultural norm. Ancestral spirits are believed to be present

amongst their descendants on the family altar and temples are erected for national heroes.

Notes

- (1) Department of Education and Youth Affairs, *Cultural Background Papers – Vietnam*, Commonwealth of Australia, Woden, A.C.T., n.d., p 6.
- (2) National Indo-Chinese Clearinghouse (NIC), *A Cross-Cultural Glimpse of the Vietnamese People*, Center for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, Virginia, 1976-1977, p 26.
- (3) NIC, *Ibid*, p 29.
- (4) John K. Whitmore, The Vietnamese Sense of the Past, *The Vietnam Forum*, Yale University, USA. Reprinted in Sunday English Section, *Viet Luan Bi-Weekly*, 25 July 1987, p 20.
- (5) NIC, *op. cit.*, p 29.



2.6 Wedding Ceremonies

Marriage is considered a once in a lifetime event and a hugely important occasion; therefore families will often consult an astrologer when setting a date for the auspicious occasion.

On the wedding day the groom and his party either march or drive in procession to the house of the bride, with many presents, mainly jewellery and foodstuffs. Traditional weddings cannot go without betel leaves and areca nuts. Some food is placed on the ancestral altar to pay homage to the bride's ancestry and the jewels of course go to the bride. The bride also receives money and gifts from her own parents and relatives. Refreshments are served which is the only cost to the bride's family. Before leaving the parents' home the bride prostates herself and kowtows

three times to her parents as a sign of her filial gratitude.

The bride then follows the groom to his family home and both proceed together to the family altar. There the man's parents offer incense to the ancestors to inform the dead of the arrival of their daughter-in-law and the bride presents herself to the groom's ancestors by bowing at the altar. She has now become a part of his family.

Some couples prefer to have a religious marriage in a church or pagoda. Whether performed at home or in a religious setting the wedding ceremonies are always followed by a reception either in a restaurant or in the home of the man. Guests are invited to the reception but only family and close friends are invited to the private ceremonial stage. The reception, which includes activities such as introducing all relatives of both partners,

toasting, cutting a cake, music, singing and dancing and giving of money, is the 'public' conclusion of a familial contract.

2.7 Funeral Ceremonies

In Vietnam a deceased person is cleaned, shrouded, embalmed (if conditions allow) and cofined in the family home. Final respects are paid to the dead and the usual time between death and disposal of the body is from two to three days. However these rituals are not possible in Australia due to laws that require a body to be brought to a funeral parlour.

At the funeral the family of the dead would normally wear white mourning apparel, but during mourning periods after the funeral sombre colours would be worn to social occasions. The relationship between the living and the dead continues throughout the mourning period,

for example when a child is mourning for a parent the period is three years, one year when a husband is mourning for his wife, whereas a bereaved wife mourns for three years. Customarily Vietnamese parents do not attend the funeral of their children and do not go into mourning.

Special anniversaries are observed for the deceased on the third day, the 49th day and the one-hundredth day after the death, and then there are yearly anniversaries. On the yearly anniversary, family members gather together in front of the altar, present to the deceased some dishes that were their favourites and invite them to enjoy. After the commemorative ceremony, people share a meal, consisting of the dishes like those offered and conversation around fond memories of the deceased. This ceremony is underpinned by the belief that

the spirit of the deceased is always present in the home of the living people who loved them and were left behind and this commemoration is a link between the dead and the living.

2.8 Infant-Feeding and Child-Rearing Practices

Despite the challenges experienced by the majority of Vietnamese females in Australia, i.e. low incomes, employment as well as settlement difficulties, there is a 'baby boom' in the Vietnamese community (1).

Health care and family support services may find the contrasts between Vietnamese and Australian infant-feeding and child-rearing practices interesting and useful when working with clients.

In Vietnam a baby is breast fed for the first month. After this month rice milk or a thin gruel is added. From the fourth month

solids such as porridge made from rice or mung beans and flavoured with minced pork or sometimes beef, chicken or fish and a few vegetables such as potatoes, carrots and cabbage are introduced and condiments such as soy sauce, salt and sugar are used. Other foods are introduced gradually by the end of the twelfth month such as sweet fruit and other vegetables. 'Safe' meats and eggs are used by eighteen months. Raw vegetables and sour fruit are not introduced until a child is 5 years of age with the exception of orange juice for constipation or vitamin C (2).

Studies outlining changes in infant-feeding practices following migration from Vietnam to Australia suggest that there is a radical decline in the incidence and duration of breast-feeding and that commercially manufactured solids,

supplements and baby foods are introduced much earlier (3).

Childrearing does not appear to change as dramatically as child feeding practice. In some regards parents may be regarded as extremely permissive when it comes to issue such as toilet training, eating and sleeping schedule, access to TV and video programs and other modes of home entertainment and freedom to leave the house to play in the neighbourhood. While on another level parents are regimented when it comes to interpersonal behaviour, moral conduct and basic value systems. Clearly the Vietnamese child is subject to two widely disparate patterns of parental authority leading to two deeply divergent levels of behaviour. On one hand they are allowed "almost unlimited determination over needs and desires", which appears to offer

an “unrealistic sense of power”; simultaneously on the other hand they can exert “almost no influence” over their “personal destiny”, which appears to induce a profound “sense of powerlessness” (4).

Preparatory training for conformity to familial traditions and the code of social behaviour starts at a very early age as a ballad runs “train your child when they are three”. Failure to conform results in punishment of a physical, emotional or social nature depending on how severe the non-conformity is. A village father expressed the following view.

(When you are angry with the child, how do you discipline them?)

I hit them.

(With what?)

A switch.

(How do they react?)

First they cry, then they get up and fold their arms and apologise for having done wrong. Then they say that they won't do it any more.

(Is this how they always react?)

Yes, always! (5)

Other sanctions to ensure obedience may include isolating or ostracising a member from participation in family life, or even disowning that member potentially for life (6).

Though child rearing is considered a joint venture, roles are clearly defined with the father providing teaching and moral guidance and the mother responsible for tasks such as feeding, bathing and toilet training (7). Often both parents neglect the task of sexual education for adolescents and young people remain ignorant and naïve concerning sexual intercourse and contraception (8).

Notes

- (1) Phan Giang Sang, The Childbearing Customs, Beliefs and Practices of Vietnamese Culture, *Đặc San Y Tế* (Special Issue of Health Journal), Vietnamese Health Professionals Association in NSW, 1992, p 69.
- (2) Megan Mathews & Lenore Manderson, Infant Feeding Practices and Lactation Diets amongst Vietnamese Immigrants, *Australian Paediatric Journal*, 16 (1980), p 264.
- (3) Megan Mathews & Lenore Manderson, *Ibid*, p 265.
- (4) Walter H. Slote, Psychodynamic Structures in Vietnamese Personality, in William P. Lebra, ed., *Transcultural Research in Mental Health. Vol 2 of Mental Health Research in Asia and the Pacific*, the University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1972, p 125.
- (5) Walter H. Slote, *Ibid*, p 126.
- (6) Department of Education and Youth Affairs, *Cultural Background Papers – Vietnam*, Commonwealth of Australia, n.d., p 10.
- (7) Riaz Hassan et al., Vietnamese Families, in Des Storer, ed., *Ethnic Family Values in Australia*, Prentice-Hall of Australia, Sydney, 1985, p 273.
- (8) Riaz Hassan et al., *Ibid*, p 273.



2.9 Perspectives on Conduct Disorders*

Many pieces of Vietnamese folklore can be interpreted in the light of theoretical approaches to maladaptive behaviour.

One perspective regarding human behaviour within Vietnamese folklore is congruent with learning theory. The main idea behind this learning perspective is that behaviour is acquired as a response to stimuli in the environment. The response gets fixed through the process of cultural conditioning and social modelling. To change the behavioural response, it is necessary to change the environmental stimuli, reinforcing sources and role models.

The content of this Vietnamese outlook on behaviour can be seen in numerous popular wise sayings, ditties, tales, poems

and the like of the Vietnamese folk literary treasury.

Inexperienced children are warned about the risks of choosing friends with this proverb:

Near dark, you will get darkened.

Near light, you will get lightened.

Parenting lessons remind parents of their educative role:

Bend the plant only when it is still tender.

Train your child when he/she turns three.

If a critical stage has been missed, education becomes more difficult:

Bend the plant when it is already too big and you will certainly break it.

The irresistible effect of the conditioning process on the system of overt behaviour is pictured by the cliché:

The tree prefers to stand still, but the wind keeps swaying it.

Here, it appears that the tree is the whole personality, the wind the myriad of external events, and the passive swaying the learned response to the stimulating events. Through the conditioning process, some behaviours – adaptive or maladaptive – are acquired. Depending on the roles, models and circumstances that a child is exposed to, he/she can become ‘good’ or ‘bad’, a perfect fit or a misfit.

There is another view held by Vietnamese parents on conduct and misbehaviour. Examples to illustrate it again can be found in popular literature.

Eat sufficiently in order to live morally.

Wealth gives birth to manners.

Destitution leads to robbery.

Hungry, we steal food; destitute, we commit offences.

These and many similar sayings seem appropriate to illustrate the so-called community perspective on maladaptive behaviour. They clearly convey the message that our behavioural response at least in part results from our living conditions. Conduct disorders may result from the living conditions that inhibit personal development. Hence emphasis is placed on examining the individual's social support system, which has failed to back up the individual's developmental needs.

The backup system for a Vietnamese individual also

includes significant persons: the father to the son, the teacher to the student, and the king to the subject – the three basic social relationships. Vietnamese often use the metaphor *the house leaks from the roof* to refer to the moral responsibility of superiors for the decadence of those under their authority. In another allegory, parents are to children what salt preservative is to fresh fish ("Fish spoils more quickly without salt preservative, and children spoil more certainly without taking parents' advice seriously").

Clearly, authority or parental figures as well as stimulating physical surroundings and enriching socio-economic conditions play an important role in determining socially desirable behaviour patterns. A breakdown of this system creates an imbalance most likely to produce stress and stress-

induced behaviour in young people.

* This is a reproduction of part of a longer article entitled "Parents and 'Naughty' Children: Two Vietnamese Perspectives on Conduct Disorders and their Implications for Intervention" by Tiep Nguyen, published in the *Journal of Australian Social Work*, September 1993.

2.10 Traditional Music & Traditional Musical Instruments

Vietnamese traditional music has been brought to Australia as part of the cultural baggage of Vietnamese refugees and migrants. It includes folk music, classical chamber music and theatrical music. (1)

Among the most popular of Vietnamese traditional genres is *dân ca* (folk songs) (2), which includes *ru* (lullabies), *lý* (village songs) and *hò* (work songs). Two genres of classical chamber music, the *nhạc Huế* (Hue music) and the *nhạc tài tử*

(music for talented artists), which have flourished in Central and South Vietnam since the 17th and 19th centuries respectively, have been preserved by a small number of musicians in Melbourne and Sydney (3). The South Vietnamese music drama *cải lương* is the only form of music theatre maintained by the Vietnamese Australians (4). This theatrical form combines spoken dialogues, chanted poetry and the *Vọng Cổ* songs. In the opinion of a senior *cải lương* actor it is "the deepest voice of the Vietnamese" (5).

Vietnamese traditional music is played on various traditional instruments, which can be divided into four groups: plucked strings, such as *đàn bầu*, *đàn tranh* and *đàn nguyệt*; bowed strings, *đàn cò* or *đàn nhị* and *đàn gáo*; winds, different kinds of flute; and percussion, *sanh*

tiền, *trống cơm*, *mõ* and *phách*.
(6)

The main instruments being used in Australia (7) include:

- The *đàn tranh* is a zither, similar to the Japanese *koto* and the Chinese *zheng*. The standard version of this instrument has 17 strings. Larger *đàn tranh* of 22 and 25 strings are also used.
- The *đàn nguyệt* (or *đàn kìm*) is a two-stringed moon-shaped lute. It has a long fingerboard with very high frets.
- The *đàn bầu* (or *đàn độc huyền*) is a single-string instrument unique to Vietnam.
- The *đàn nhị* (or *đàn cò*) is a two-stringed fiddle with a tube resonator.
- The *đàn gáo* is a two-stringed fiddle with a coconut shell resonator.

- The *đàn tỳ bà* is a four-stringed pear-shaped lute, similar to the Chinese *pipa*.
- The *sáo* is a bamboo or wooden transverse flute.
- A variety of percussions instruments, including *sanh tiền* (coin clappers), *phách* (clappers), *song loan* (foot clappers) and drums.

Within the Vietnamese community, traditional music performances have been rare. Traditional music only appears as single items of a variety program in community functions (8). A number of amateur groups in Melbourne and Sydney such as the Hoa Tình Thương, Lạc Hồng and Hoài Hương perform *cải lương* at the Vietnamese New Year Festival and a number of charity events.

Notes

- (1) Le Tuan Hung, *Vietnamese Music in Australia – A General Survey*, 2004.
<http://home.vicnet.au/~aaf/vietoz.htm>

- (2) Dr Phong Nguyen, *Vietnamese Music in America*, Institute for Vietnamese Music, 2003. <http://www.vietnamesemusic.us.NTP1.html>
- (3) Le Tuan Hung, op.cit.
- (4) Le Tuan Hung, op.cit.
- (5) Dr Phong Nguyen, op.cit.
- (6) Vietnamese musical instruments, available at URL www.ncsu.edu/stud_orgs/vsa/www/music/music.html
- (7) Le Tuan Hung, op.cit.
- (8) Le Tuan Hung, op.cit.
Regarding the predominant music of choice for Vietnamese refugees, see also Adelaida Reyes, *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free: Music and the Vietnamese Refugee*, 1999.



2.11 Vietnamese Society over Time

Confucianism, originating from China, has been a great force of social cohesion for Vietnam. “A situational ethic”, “the ethic of the human being in society”, Confucianism emphasizes the five basic relationships: between ruler and subject, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder and junior, and between friends (1). These relationships are actually “moral bonds” and all, except the one between friends which is based on mutual respect, are governed by the norm of subordination – that of subject to ruler, son to father, wife to husband, and younger brother to elder brother (2).

The Confucian norms influenced the evolution of Vietnam as a hierarchic, authoritarian and patriarchal society in which Confucian scholarship,

monarchical absolutism, filial piety, the subordinate role of women and the family system were regarded as “integral to the natural order of the universe” (3).

The society was dramatically transformed in the mid-19th Century by the imposition of French rule. The old ruling class – the mandarinat – gave way to the new French-dominated governing class. New social groups emerged: the new intelligentsia which emphasized modern subjects like science and geography instead of the Confucian classics; the new white-collar group working in the French government bureaucracy and the private sector; a new class of workers introduced by the development of mining and industry; a new group of wage earners formed from the expansion of agriculture in the South and the cultivation of such crops as rubber, coffee and tea

(4). The French influence was also felt in the enthusiastic adoption of the new social ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity by almost all those who came into contact with French education and culture.

Vietnamese society was further transformed in the mid-20th century by the wars and eventually by Communist rule with its revolutionary socio-political practices of class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat, elimination of private ownership, collectivization of production and public ownership of all means of production.

The wind from the West and the tidal wave of Marxism have transformed in many ways the structure of society and the way in which people behaved. The strict ethical rules binding people together have relaxed. The Confucian code of filial behaviour, for example, may not be strictly followed nowadays as

it was in the past (5). The concept of spousal fidelity, which was once accepted as natural and proper, has shrunk to allow for marital separation and divorce.

Although modern Vietnam has experienced comprehensive changes in the context of reform and globalisation, to many Western observers, the Confucian social and moral philosophy has been and still is very influential in the structure of Vietnamese society and the social behaviour of Vietnamese people. Let us quote just a few comments.

“In many ways – especially in the Asian countries we call ‘Communists’ – Confucianism is still at the core of society ...” (6).

“In present times we have seen different political ideologies come and go through Vietnam.

However the foundation of Confucianism remains” (7).

“As Marxism continues to lose its grip over Vietnamese society and culture and the country is exposed to Westernisation in increasingly large doses, Confucianism may well re-assert itself as an important and positive force” (8).

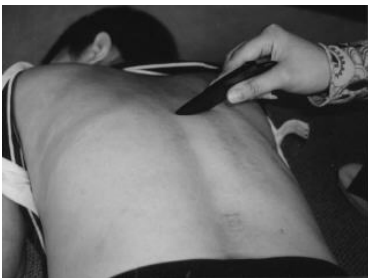
Notes

- (1) To Thi Anh, *Eastern & Western Cultural Values: Conflict or Harmony?* Hochiminh City, 1994, pp 8-9.
U.S. Library of Congress, “Vietnam - The Social System”.
<http://countrystudies.us/vietnam/38.htm>
- (2) James A. Crites, “Confucianism and its Spread to Vietnam”.
<http://www.angelfire.com/ca/beekeeper/cf.html>
- (3) U.S. Library of Congress, op.cit.
- (4) U.S. Library of Congress, op.cit.
- (5) Kimba Fung-Yee Chu & Robert Carew, “Confucianism: Its Relevance to Social Work with Chinese People”, *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 43, No.3, p7
- (6) Metanoiad! a weblog from China: Religion in Vietnam: Part One
http://www.metanoiad.com/archives/2005/02/religion_in_vie.html
- (7) James A. Crites, op.cit.
- (8) Bruce Lockhart, *Confucianism in Vietnam*, Hochiminh City, Vietnam National University and Hochiminh City Publishing House, 2002.
http://kyotoreview.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/issue/issue2/article_238.html

3. HEALING CUSTOMS

The following are only the principal forms of health practices as there are over 21 practices in Southeast Asia that have been identified in a review of literature and interviews with interpreters and a medical anthropologist (1).

- (1) D. Buchwald, S. Panwala & T.M. Hooton, Use of Traditional Health Practices by Southeast Asian Refugees in a Primary Care Clinic, *The Western Journal of Medicine*, No 156, May 1992, pp 507-511.



3.1 Xông (steam bath)

Xông is the Vietnamese style of steam bath where a potful of water is boiled and herbs and drops of hot medicinal oil are added, the person sits under a blanket by the pot with their clothes off and allows the steam to emanate to the upper body, especially the head and face. The person should stay under the blanket until the steam no longer reaches the face. The person is advised to keep a towel ready as excessive perspiration is the desired result of steaming.

An effective steam bath promotes good health as it stimulates blood circulation and helps eliminate toxins from the body through the pores of the skin. Such baths are

recommended for sufferers of flu, headaches and nasal congestion.

3.2 Chườm (hot water bottle)

This form of heat treatment is used to relax the muscles in a specific part of the body and ease many forms of pain including menstrual spasms. This method of thermogenesis also aids circulation of the blood within the body, and for this reason it is excellent when placed under the sole of the feet of the arthritic sufferer (1).

As an alternative to hot water bottles, cloth bags filled with hot salt are also often used.

- (1) Chee Soo, *The Taoist Ways of Healing*, The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1986, p. 69.

3.3 Cạo Gió (skin rubbing) & Bắt Gió (skin pinching)

Cạo Gió is the folk medicine technique of rubbing the skin vigorously with a coin or a spoon. The most commonly rubbed sites are the back, chest and neck. Often wintergreen or other oils are applied prior to the rubbing. The treatment may raise weals resembling bruising. *Cạo Gió* is used in the treatment of a variety of symptoms including colds, headaches, cough, fever and myalgias. *Bắt Gió* is used for the same purposes and involves pinching the skin between the thumb and the index finger to the point of producing an abrasion.

Both *Cạo Gió* and *Bắt Gió* are particularly popular in South Vietnam. It is the belief that people often get sick because the “wicked” wind and weather have penetrated the body and rubbing or pinching will release

them. It is also a more convenient method of treatment than approaching a doctor. The belief and procedure are aligned to the popular way Vietnamese people conceptualise the cause of their diseases and the method of treating them. Tran Minh Tung (1) sees in this popular healing practice a distinctive theory of “body humours”; the protagonist of these humours being *gió* or *phong* (meaning wind) and hence the *phong* theory. *Gió* or *phong* serves to indicate either the causal factor or an extremely acute disease or a pathological condition characterised by a skin eruption.

- (1) Tran Minh Tung, The Indochinese Refugees as Patients, *Journal of Refugee Resettlement*, I, 1, 1981, pp 53-60.



3.4 Giác (cupping)

Giác involves applying a hot cup to an exposed area of the body. This simple method of creating suction is a method used to heal arthritis, abdominal pains, paralysis caused by stroke, abscesses and other illnesses caused through being out in the cold weather and catching internal chills (1).

The practitioner soaks in alcohol a cotton wool ball, lights it and puts it inside a glass using tweezers. Once a particular degree of heat is reached the ball is removed and the cup is placed on the patients' body for ten to fifteen minutes. The skin may have a red mark when the cup is removed and the practitioner will smear the area with oil or ointment to alleviate discomfort.

- (1) Chee Soo, *The Taoist Ways of Healing*, The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1986, p. 63.

3.5 LỄ (blood drawing)

Blood drawing may be used together with cupping. It is used in extreme cases of strokes, high blood pressure, stings and snake bites (1). First the skin is punctured and a small amount of blood is discharged. The area is then immediately cupped and a considerable amount of blood flows into the cup.

Similarly, blood letting, which involves pricking of the skin with a triangular needle or magnetic disk, only allows a sufficient amount of blood to flow out. It is executed at specific points on the body to combat certain complaints, such as sunstroke or heatstroke, colic, diarrhoea, vomiting, shock and some injuries. Cupping is not used in this practice as the aim is to only release a small amount of blood (2).

- (1) Chee Soo, *The Taoist Ways of Healing*, The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1986, p. 64.
- (2) Chee Soo, *ibid*, p. 64

3.6 ĐẤM BÓP (remedial massage)

Đấm Bóp is well appreciated by the middle-aged and office workers. It is not known, however, when this dynamic form of therapeutics established itself in the healthy arts of Vietnam. It consists of two groups of techniques: stimulation techniques (grasping, kneading, pinch-pull, rubbing and tapping) and sedation techniques (pressing, rotating, rolling, wiping and scraping and pushing) (1). As these techniques are manual ones, a person wishing to practise massage should often exercise his/her fingers, hands, wrists and arms to ensure that these bodily parts are supple and flexible.

Simple as it first appears, this method of treatment is effective in taking away pain or stiffness from the muscles and joints, facilitating the circulation of blood, relieving cramps and spasms and chronic back troubles, breaking down the harmful effects of fatty tissue and strengthening muscular sinews.

- (1) Chee Soo, *The Taoist Ways of Healing*, The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1986, p. 73.

3.7 Thuốc Nam & Thuốc Bắc (herbal therapy)

Herbal therapy has long been a part of Vietnamese medical history, as it has also been with every other country in the world. Vietnam, however, through its historical links with the big northern empire, has been able to use both resources, Vietnamese and Chinese medicinal herbs. According to Tran Minh Tung (1) *thuốc nam*,

literally, southern medicine, is true folk medicine, properly indigenous, in contrast to *thuốc bắc*, literally, northern medicine, which is more scholarly and esoteric and derived from a Chinese model.

In South Vietnam after 1975 the policy of using indigenous drugs and traditionally trained doctors has been promoted to compensate for the shortage of Western medicine. In Australia many Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese from Vietnam still prefer traditional treatments and herbal drugs to chemicals and surgical operations.

As far as the medicinal power of herbs and spices is concerned, hundreds of indigenous prescriptions for many types of disease have been reported in curing not only common ailments and chronic diseases, but also such diseases as jaundice, hepatitis and gastritis.

A great variety of indigenous herbs have been brought into use for the treatment of fractures and wounds, tumours and other forms of sickness.

- (1) Tran Minh Tung, The Indochinese Refugees as Patients, *Journal of Refugee Resettlement*, 1, 1, 1981, pp 53-60.

3.8 Châm Cứu (acupuncture)

Acupuncture procedure involves the rapid insertion of fine steel needles at specific points of the body along an energy channel, or meridian, as it is commonly known, followed by gentle twirling between the thumb and forefinger. This will either stimulate or sedate the energy force that flows along that particular channel, which in turn has its links with a specific organ. Redirecting the energy flow along meridians helps restore balance and correct the disorder.

Traditionally acupuncture has been used to treat malaria, stomach upsets and rheumatic or arthritic disease, to restore hearing for deaf-mutes and to induce sleep. Modern surgeons also use it as a form of anaesthesia.

3.9 Ăn Chay (vegetarian diet)

An chay as a Buddhist religious observance suggests a holistic and austere approach. Practitioners abstain from eating living things like fish and meat, using hot stuff like chilli and pepper, smoking and drinking, swearing and lying and engaging in immoral sexual activities. Many practising Buddhists go on vegetarian diet on the first, fourteenth, fifteenth and thirtieth days of the lunar calendar month and some do so everyday of the month. The practitioners are after the ideal of self-discipline and self-discipline will help them to

eliminate craving and dissatisfaction.

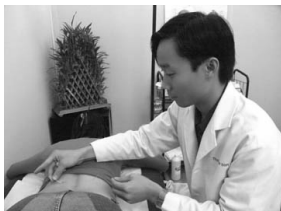
3.10 Ngồi Thiền (sitting in meditation)

Ăn chay also serves as a natural health therapy. The basic rules of health diets are:

- eat only when hungry and not just out of habit;
- eat only natural foods and avoid refined or processed foods;
- do not just gobble food or wash it down with liquid, but chew every mouthful of food really well in order to get the full benefit of saliva;
- do not overeat at any time because overeating is a crime against your system.

(1)

- (1) Chee Soo, *The Taoist Ways of Healing*, The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1986, p. 41

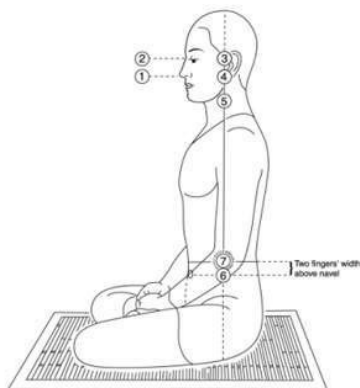


Meditation is a central discipline in Buddhism, but practitioners of meditation are not necessarily Buddhists. There are three major practices in meditation: one can focus on a riddle or *koan*, or simply sit with concentrated awareness and no external focus, or else practise *nembutsu*, which involves the continual invocation of Amida (1). Meditation, practised either way, is an important discipline for developing inner peace and calm, mental concentration and emotional balance.

Many Vietnamese prefer to combine the second and third methods, i.e. mental concentration coupled with constant mental chanting of a devotional formula such as *Nam Mô A Di Đà Phật* (Vietnamese for 'homage to Amida Buddha').

A Vietnamese modern school of meditation, the *Vô Vi* meditation method (2), which is fairly popular in some Vietnamese communities overseas, claims that by regular practice of *Vo Vi* improvement in physical and mental health may be noted within a relatively short period of time and, with an even longer period of regular practice, the effect of the meditative contemplation exercise will introduce the *Vo Vi* meditator into the world of energy.

- (1) Robert Frager & James Fadiman, *Personality and Personal Growth*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984, pp 446-449.
- (2) *Practical Method of the Meditative Contemplation according to the Esoteric Science of Non-Being*, VoVi Friendship Association, Fountain Valley, CA, 1984, pp 8-9.



3.11 Sám Hối (repentance)

Believers of both Buddhist and Christian faiths have certain ways of getting rid of guilt and regaining the peace of mind. Catholics generally confess their sins to the confessor who then prescribes acts of penance for them to perform as proof of their repentance. Buddhists show sorrow for their sins by self-prescriptions, e.g., charities to the poor and Buddhist institutions, vegetarian diet, release of living things such as birds and fishes and sometimes adoption of monastic life. Hair cutting, even shaving one's head bald, is another conspicuous practice.

Where healing ceremonies are required, an intercessionary mediator, e.g., priest, monk, or traditional healer, is often called on to perform rituals that are supposed to be directed at illness sources such as spirits, ancestors and the patient's soul.

4. Emotions

While Vietnamese culture is different from any other culture in many tangible aspects such as dress, food and arts it is harder to detect the cultural differences in the way Vietnamese navigate emotional challenges. “Understanding and responding effectively to the emotional and psychological needs of refugees is the least recognised and most difficult task facing the caring professions” (1).

This section will address these emotional expressions noting of course that the descriptions that follow are generalised guides and should be used with caution. As Saunders would suggest,

Look with open eyes; listen with open ears; don't allow the stereotypes of media images of cultures different from your own to blind you to the individualness of that person who seeks your professional expertise. Learn what you can of other cultures ... and then treat each person as an individual (2).

- (1) The Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, *Survival and Beyond, Vol 1, Refugee Services in NSW*, Sydney, 1979, p 46.
- (2) Ross Saunders, ed., *Cross Cultural Issues for Health Professionals in Australia*, The Multicultural Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1990, p 2.



4.1 Anger

While anthropologists have found that the experience of anger is universal, the expression of anger is undoubtedly cultural. Each culture forms rules, stated or unstated, about the acceptable practices for expressing anger.

Vietnamese believe that the moral ideal is to contain their antisocial emotions, so that social relations will not be adversely affected. The Vietnamese ‘quân-tử’ (closest English translation ‘gentleman’) is expected to behave in a manner described by Nguyễn Công Trứ, a 19th century poet,

*Close your ears to provocative comments,
Smile in spite of your deep resentment.*

Reflecting this, for the Vietnamese, smiling in many

cases is just as likely to be a cover for hostile or angry impulses as stoic behaviour in adversity (1).

There is a Vietnamese saying “*quân tử hận tam niên, tiểu nhân hận nhãn tiền*” which suggests that cultured people can bury their feelings for three years whereas unrefined people express them immediately. The line of social distinction is drawn between people who can or cannot maintain self-control, politeness and a neutral expression, even when angry. Anger in social relationships is forcibly discouraged with such discourse as ‘*giận mất khôn*’ – to get angry is to lose reason and ‘*một sự nhin, chín sự lành*’ – ignoring one bad thing done to you yields nine good things for you.

Even more critical are the rules around family and anger: “No hostility towards parents or

elders and stringently limited hostility toward siblings and peers” (2). Vietnamese state that they not only suppress outward shows of anger such as quarrelling or violence they also deny or repress conscious awareness of any hostile ideation towards parents.

While it is unacceptable for a younger person to express anger towards a parent or authority figure it is permissible for an older person to be angry with younger people. Traditional morality even suggests that corporal punishment of a child is motivated by love rather than anger or aggression. “*Yêu cho roi cho vọt*”, to love the child is not to spare the rod. Hostility is also permissible in situations involving transgressors of cultural or moral standards and foreigners – especially invaders or in the situation of colonisation.

It is possible that the tendency to bottle anger is linked to the harmony- oriented philosophies of Taoism, which have been practices in Vietnam for over two millennia (3). Harmony-oriented Vietnamese cope with conflicts either through suppression or withdrawal either physically or emotionally. Confrontation and assertiveness are not highly valued personal qualities in social encounters. “Reluctance to confront conflict situations, preference for allowing time to work out seemingly insoluble problems and reliance on personal inner strength in facing difficulties are inherent factors that discourage people from communicating their needs” (4).

As psychology would suggest that buried anger does not disappear but smoulders and can surface inappropriately when defence mechanisms are not strong enough to block it, for

Vietnamese a common outlet is nasty speech while physical fights are also not uncommon. Relationships may be damaged irretrievably as a result of a backlog of anger and hostility.

Notes

- (1) P.G. Bourne, cited in Imogene C. Brower, Counseling Vietnamese, *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, June 1980, p. 648.
- (2) Walter H. Slote, Psychodynamic Structures in Vietnamese Personality, *Transcultural Research in Mental Health, Vol 2 of Mental Health Research in Asia and the Pacific*, edited by William P. Lebra, the University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1972, p 125.
- (3) National Indochinese Clearinghouse, *A Cross-Cultural Glimpse of the Vietnamese People*, Center for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, VA, 1976-1977, p. 30.
- (4) The Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, *Survival and Beyond, Vol 1, Refugee Services in NSW*, Sydney, 1979, p.46.



4.2 Sadness

The title of Jenny Leak's report on the incidence of emotional stress in refugee children from Vietnam "*Smiling on the outside, Crying on the inside*" mirrors the verse by the Vietnamese poet Nguyen Du who in his masterpiece *Kim Vân Kiều* (The Tale of Kieu) suggests that Vietnamese people are inclined to cover their true feelings. He suggests that a smiling face cannot be taken as a true representation of inner feelings. Children are instructed to accept punishment in a cheerful way whereas they are not to be proud of their individual achievements and personal or emotional growth, as 'loud laughing leads to quick crying'. Other quotes that highlight these emotional discrepancies include 'when we are cheerful we feel like crying, when we are extremely sad we laugh instead'

and 'cheer up to mask the silent tears'.

expressions of sadness may be particularly cultural.

While it could be argued that there is some level of socialisation around tears being linked with sadness and smiling with joy, perhaps showing sadness on the face is universal. Vietnamese often say '*buồn ra mặt*', which exactly means that sadness reveals itself in facial features, but they also show sadness in other parts of the body. '*Buồn miệng*', literally sad in the mouth, is an expression that means the person finds something to eat because of their sadness. '*Buồn chân*' or '*buồn cẳng*', meaning sad in the feet or the legs, suggest that the person keeps active to avoid boredom. '*Buồn tay*', sad in the hands or fists, suggests a feeling of not knowing what to do with ones hands or fists but needing to do something, possibly to fight or destroy things. These

Other possible behavioural patterns include withdrawal, smoking, drinking, moping around, reluctance to engage in oral communications, staying in bed at unusual times or personifying their sadness. For example, if a Vietnamese person says that 'the weather is sad today' they may be feeling down. Similarly the poet Nguyen Du wrote 'when a human being is sad the scenery cannot be otherwise'. He goes on to point in other lines to the link in Vietnamese thinking between moods and nature:

*She sadly watched the harbour
in grey dusk -*

*Whose boat was that with
fluttering sails, far off?*

*She sadly watched the river flow
to sea -*

*Where would this flower end,
adrift and lost?*

*She sadly watched the field of
wilted grass,
The bluish haze where merged
the earth and clouds.
She sadly watched the wind
whip up the cove
And set all waves a-roaring
around her seat. (2)*

The Vietnamese are seen by cross-cultural specialists as 'heart-oriented' people in contrast, say, to Americans who are said to be 'mind-oriented' (3). This comparison suggests that Vietnamese behaviour is motivated by feelings, sentiments and emotions independently of the dictate of reason and rationality. According to the Clearinghouse study there seems to be a distinctive predilection amongst Vietnamese for literature and music dealing with deeply sentimental and sad themes (3). The Vietnamese classics such as, *Kim Vân Kiều* (The Tale of Kieu), *Chinh Phụ Ngâm* (The

Lament of the Warrior's Wife) and *Cung Oán Ngâm Khúc* (The Complaint of the Royal Concubine) all carry sad themes as do musical tunes such as *Vọng Cổ* which literally translated means yearning for the times of yore and has been reviewed as mirroring the deeply sentimental mood of the Vietnamese soul. The study also compared the Vietnamese phrase '*tủi phận*' or lamenting one's fate with the American attitude of not self pitying, feeling sorry for oneself or moping (4).

Notes

- (1) Jenny Leak, *Smiling on the Outside, Crying on the Inside – The Prevalence and Manifestation of Emotional Stress in Refugee Children from Vietnam, Aged 9-12 Years*, South Australian College of Advanced Education, Bedford Park, S.A., 1982.
- (2) Lines 1047-1054 of Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu*, A Bilingual Edition, translated by Huynh Sanh Thong, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1983, p 55.
- (3) National Indochinese Clearinghouse (NIC), *A Cross-Cultural Glimpse of the Vietnamese People 1976-1977*, Center for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, Virginia, p 21.
- (4) NIC, *Ibid*, p 21.

4.3 Grief

While Vietnamese tend to suppress many other feelings they are not culturally inhibited to publicly and profusely express feelings such as grief. “Unlike the stiff upper lip repressed suffering that the Anglo-Saxon Australian goes through and the backing off to bear grief alone, the Indochinese client is often very expressive and shows grief to a large extent and the anguish, sorrow, guilt and other feelings that make up grief are clearly ventilated, unashamedly” (1).

The most common expression of grief is crying. However there are social norms that govern this crying. People are allowed to cry loudly over the death of their dearest family members and there is even stigma attached to a lack of tears if a child does not cry profusely over a dead parent.

The rituals around the death of a loved one are also considered to be a crucial element to grieving. The deceased would be kept in the family home for a couple of days allowing friends and family to mourn. This would be followed by a loud mournful procession to the cemetery where it is not unlikely for mourners to down on the coffin as it is going into the ground. Back at the house there would be further condolences from community members and friends and more time allowed for the family to mourn. Afterwards the immediate family and relatives would observe ceremonies to commemorate the dead at 7 days, 49 days, 100 days and yearly anniversaries.

Crying is viewed as a connection to the painful feelings and in this situation Vietnamese usually choose to share their pain with a close friend or an older person, never with an outsider (2). Often

this sharing is non-verbal, like doing things together, showing attention in practical matters, physical touching, looks, etc. (3)

While grief can be the product of losing a loved one it can also be around the massive social losses caused by uprooting and migrating. Eisenbruch (4) labelled the catastrophic loss of social structure, cultural values and self-identity as cultural grief or cultural bereavement. The uprooted person or group “continues to live in the past, is visited by supernatural forces from the past while asleep or awake, suffers feelings of guilt over abandoning the homeland and culture, feels pain if memories of the past begin to fade, but finds constant images of the past (including traumatic images) intruding into daily life, yearns to complete obligations to the dead, and feels stricken by anxieties, morbid thoughts, and anger that mar the ability to get on with daily life”.

Eisenbruch (5) observed that the comfort from religious beliefs and religious practice seems to be an antidote to the refugees’ cultural bereavement. This can be seen in the participation by large numbers of Vietnamese from all walks of life at religious gatherings in churches, pagodas or temples.

Notes

- (1) R.A. Fordham, Social Work Practice and the Indochinese, *Occasional Papers*, No 16, the Clearing House on Migration Issues, Richmond, Vic., May 1982, p 5.
- (2) Suzanne Bang, *We Come as a Friend: Towards a Vietnamese Model of Social Work*, Refugee Action, Leeds, November 1983, p 22.
- (3) Ibid, p 28.
- (4) M. Eisenbruch, From Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to Cultural Bereavement: Diagnosis of Southeast Asian Refugees, *Soc. Sci. Med.*, Vol 33, No 6, 1991, p 674.
- (5) M. Eisenbruch, The Physical and Mental Well-being of the Indo-Chinese Communities in Australia, Plenary Paper presented at National Conference, Indochinese Communities: Health Needs and Responses, Melbourne, June 19-20, 1989, in *Australia and Indochinese Health Issues*, AAVS, Melbourne, 1990, pp 67-75.

4.4 Joy

Joy is expressed in different ways, depending on situations. The social or communal aspect of joy finds expression in the noisiest possible way, with use of drums and firecrackers a good example of this. The term for joy is also symbolised by colourful decorations around the home and is a wish given to each other at events such as New Year or weddings. The colours red and yellow cannot be missing from any ceremonial decorations. It is interesting to note that Vietnamese tend to show their happiness and inspiration by vocal music rather than by body movements; singing is present in social gatherings but dancing is not. This may be due to the traditional belief that dancing is royal entertainment and not for the masses.

Personal joy is not expressed outwardly as corporate joy is, instead like sadness it is considered too personal. Formerly virtuous girls were expected not to laugh loudly. There are smiles, which are forced, jokes, which are wry, and joys, which are muted. The joy of love or victory has clearly defined boundaries with kissing in public considered inappropriate, “who laughs last laughs longest” and other sayings that restrict public displays. These restrictions may also be viewed as a philosophical or moral stance as moderation is believed to be a virtue to cultivate or an ideal to achieve and while enjoying themselves people are to always be aware of the cloud of misfortune overhead, the impermanence of the existential moment and the frivolity of worldly pleasures.

While a smile and laugh may be indicators of real joy, they can sometimes be misleading and an enigma (1), as it is called, especially on social occasions. Duong Thanh Binh (2) describes the Vietnamese smile as follows:

The Vietnamese smile about almost everything and anything. In Vietnam they will smile when foreigners cannot pronounce their names properly; they will smile as a friendly but silent gesture to welcome foreigners to their homes; they will smile to please their superiors; they will smile to show their interest in what a speaker is telling them; they will smile to help their friend forget a mistake the latter made. On the other hand the Vietnamese smile can be used as a polite screen to hide confusion, ignorance, fear, contrition, shyness, bitterness, disappointment or anger... Smiling at all times and places is a common characteristic of all

Vietnamese. There are, however, no guidelines to tell foreigners what meaning each smile represents in each situation. Remember that the Vietnamese smile may mean almost anything and that people from other cultures need not feel frustrated, irritated or offended at not being able to guess its exact meaning.

Just as there are bitter tears, so there are tears of joy like those of the girl whose boy returns from the war, or of a girl on her wedding day. What a paradoxical way of showing happiness! Strangely enough, the tears of sadness can be concealed, but the tears of joy are seemingly uncontrollable.

Notes

- (1) Nguyen Dang Liem, Vietnamese-American Cross-cultural Communication, *Bilingual Resources*, Vol 3, No 2, 1980, p 13.
- (2) Duong Thanh Binh, *A Handbook for Teachers of Vietnamese Students*, Center for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, Virginia, 1975, p 23.

4.5 Loneliness

In a Melbourne-based longitudinal study of the mental health problems of Indochinese refugees aged 5-24, loneliness is reported as the greatest source of stress (1). Similarly Indochinese adolescents participating in camps with the Sydney Indochinese Refugee Youth Support Group indicated that the major issue they face is loneliness and homesickness (2). Again the most frequently reported stressor of Vietnamese women in Australia is homesickness (3). These findings are not surprising in view of the lack of traditional support networks in the Vietnamese community and the splitting of families due to geographical separation. While loneliness exists in the country of origin, it is aggravated in the new country by the unfamiliarity of physical surroundings, scattered community,

incomplete family and separated friendship networks,

Responses to this loneliness vary and include strolling the streets aimlessly, indulging in drinking bouts or smoking endlessly, engaging oneself in busy work or study almost around the clock and coming into non-conformist relationships like gang-style activities, de facto partnerships, etc. This need to belong has perpetuated the formation of mutual support organisations and networks. Lin, Masuda and Tazuma (4) noted a pattern of acculturation called traditionalism, the strong attachment to and awareness of the traditional culture, which many Vietnamese refugees use as a way of easing feelings of loss and reducing the impact of culture shock. Common themes of oriental decorations, Vietnamese magazines and novels, video tapes, CDs and

DVDs can be found in most Vietnamese homes.

This loneliness and need for company, support and care are clearly identified by young people who come to Australia without parents. The following poem, "Pain and Hope", was written by an unaccompanied minor.

*And how lonely I am now for my
parents*

Staying in this foreign country

Without parents beside me.

*So I need to share the love and
care*

With others round me

To warm my heart and my life

And to share my loneliness. (5)

Displaced Indochinese Refugee Children – A Successful Model of Community Health Intervention, *The Lamp*. September 1986, pp 15-17.

- (3) Trang Thomas, Mental Health Issues and Vietnamese Elderly Women, *Migration Monitor*, December 1991, pp 16-20.
- (4) Keh-Ming Lin, Minoru Masuda & Laurie Tazuma, Adaptational Problems of Vietnamese Refugees, Part III Case Studies in Clinic and Field: Adaptive and Maladaptive, *The Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa*, Vol 7, No 3, September 1982, p 180
- (5) Lee Borrodale, The Pain Behind the Smiles, *Perspective* (Educational Journal for M.S.C. Schools), No 21, Winter 1983, p 12.



Notes

- (1) Jerzy Krupinski & Graham Burrows, eds, *The Price of Freedom: Young Indochinese Refugees in Australia*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1986, p 241.
- (2) G. Thornton, C. Hepperlin & I. Ferguson, Preventative and Primary Mental Health Services for

4.6 Love

A pre-Second World War poet wrote,

How could you explain what love is!

Explanations do not make sense.

*It just came over me late one afternoon,
with pale sunlight, airy clouds
and gentle wind. (1)*

While it could be suggested that the emotion of love is universal there seem to be some traits that are culturally specific. There are a number of pieces of folklore to describe the passion of love, e.g.

*When love calls, you do not at all mind
Climbing high mountains,
Swimming across large rivers,
Walking over impassable passes. (2)*

Or,

The two young people loved each other dearly.

One took off his/her warm coat and put it on the other.

Upon getting home, he/she was confronted by Mother:

'What happened? Where was the coat?'

'The wind blew it away when I crossed the bridge.' (2)

Although the motive of love is strong, a Vietnamese girl and boy in love are normally reserved and self-restrained. Generally, Western girls would be proud to acknowledge that they have boyfriends. This may not be the case with Vietnamese girls who often deny having boyfriends when they do have. Vietnamese girls and boys are almost never found kissing each other in public; the most open loving act is no more than a touch of hands. "The prescription is: you are totally

free in loving another person, dreaming of an ideal person, and you are also free to keep it secretly, but as advised by the Vietnamese culture, you are not allowed to express it freely.” (3)

However, do not think that Vietnamese youth are unloving just because they do not kiss or do not admit they are in love. There is a linguistic clue for you to recognise two people being in love. Their forms of address have shifted from the equivalents of neutral English pronouns *you-me* to endearing terms of blood relationships *anh-em* (big brother-little sister).

The capacity to be loving or hating seems unlimited and non-discriminating:

*When two people love each other
They love each other's roads of travel too.*

*When two people hate each other
They hate each other's relatives too. (2)*

Two people who love and marry each other are said to have predestined affinity. Two people who love but eventually do not or cannot marry each other are said to have affinity but to carry no mutual debt. The literary reference about an old man reading in the moonlight a register of marriages fixed in advance, holding in his hand a bag full of red threads used to unite those who had been destined for marrying each other, illustrates the quite popular belief in the wedding predestination. Apart from this metaphysical reason used to explain the mutual debt, i.e. marriage, there is an evident social factor involved. The relative importance of one or the other is summarized by Kieu in

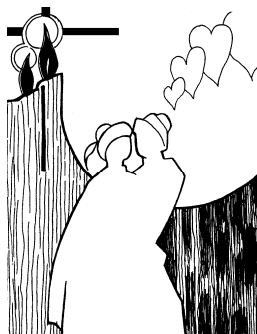
the classic *Kim Van Kieu* in two lines of verse:

*Whatever red love leaves or
rosy hymen threads may be,
They must depend upon my
parents' decision.* (4)

In old Vietnam marriages were normally arranged by parents and obeying one's parents' decision on marriage matters was a test of filial piety. "The parents or the members of the extended family such as your uncles and aunts have the right to transform your love into reality, not you" (5). For this reason, "girls in the past had only one way to refuse marriage: to commit suicide" (6).

There is hardly a case nowadays of two single people who are keen to tie a marital bond but are not allowed to do so. Today, parents only play an advisory role and the pre-arranged marriage system is

slowly and reluctantly giving way to courtship and dating.



Notes

- (1) Publication data not known. The poet referred to is Xuân Diệu, in the Vietnamese romantic poetry movement before the Second World War.
- (2) The Vietnamese folk lyrics quoted in this account are anonymous and transmitted orally from generation to generation.
- (3) Nguyen Xuan Thu, The Vietnamese Family Moral Code, *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, Vol 1, No 3, January 1990, p 34.
- (4) Le Xuan Thuy, *Kim Van Kieu – English Translation, Footnotes and Commentaries*, Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 1992, pp 84-86.
- (5) Nguyen Xuan Thu, *op. cit.*, p 34.
- (6) Nguyen Xuan Thu, *op. cit.*, p 35.

5. COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

5.1 AN OVERVIEW OF VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The need to get together around a common interest, a significant cause or merely to support each other has encouraged Vietnamese people to form groups. During their last 30 years of resettlement in Australia, many groups have been formed, some at the very beginning while others only recently (1).

In NSW alone, approximately 100 Vietnamese community organisations/associations operate, maintaining their activities on a regular basis. Their memberships range from 10 to a few thousand (2). Each

organisation has its own aims, objectives, rules and organisational structure and operates independently from the others. Based on their objectives and activities, these organisations can be grouped under the following categories:

- Political
- Religious
- Social Welfare
- Fraternal/friendly
- Cultural/educational
- Professional
- Business

In terms of structure and organisation, not all groups and associations are formally established and broadly based. Some are incorporated bodies and many are not. Some operate only within the

boundaries of NSW or Australia and some affiliate with bigger networks and centres worldwide, mainly in the USA, Europe and Asia.

Although these organisations are independent of each other and pursue differing interests in their varied activities, they all share similar aims. Overall, their general aims are: (1) to support members in their resettlement process; (2) to maintain and develop a cohesive Vietnamese community and participate in the promotion of a harmonious multicultural Australian society; (3) to preserve and promote Vietnamese language and culture within the Vietnamese community and wider Australian society; and (4) to support political initiatives and campaigns for a free and democratic Vietnam.

A few organisations receive funds supplied by government

departments to provide direct settlement and social welfare services or to improve access and equity to government and community services for Vietnamese people. Many others operate on their own funds from membership or fund raising, still they have played a significant role in the provision of resources, services and support to meet the needs of individuals, families and the community.

Apart from supporting members and the community in their resettlement process according to the very first aim mentioned, many organisations operate to develop a strong and cohesive Vietnamese community within the wide Australian community, to retain the Vietnamese language and culture in the multicultural society and to promote cultural understanding and tolerance between Vietnamese and other ethnic groups. Specifically, organising

or participating in various cultural and social activities such as school festivals, art exhibitions, multicultural events, commemorations of Vietnamese national heroes, Vietnamese cultural seminars, etc. has become an important part in the calendar of events of many separate community organisations.

Some community activities and projects, though, such as the Lunar New Year Festival and pro-democracy mass rallies, require joint efforts from many organisations. As a result, an umbrella organisation called the Vietnamese Community in Australia (VCA) was formed to represent all different associations and Vietnamese Australians and is responsible for co-ordinating these activities.

Apart from its coordinating role in these major events, the VCA is itself a social welfare

organisation and receives government funding to provide settlement and welfare services to members of the Vietnamese community. The peak representative body for Vietnamese Australians, the VCA is recognised by all levels of government and is the first point of contact for enquiries on many issues concerning the Vietnamese community.

The last but not the least aim that many community groups have pursued is to advocate for freedom and democracy in Vietnam. In fact they have maintained over the years a strong position against the current Communist dictatorial regime and incessantly pressed for drastic socio-political changes to its policies and practices for the sake of the Vietnamese people.

This strong position is not difficult to understand because

the painful experiences of what has come after the Vietnam War ended in 1975, such as concentration camps, dispossession of private property and especially the brutal, oppressive and treacherous nature of the Communist rule, are still vivid in the memory of many Vietnamese people. It is also because the socio-political situation in Vietnam continues to deteriorate, with children and women treated as sex slaves in neighbouring countries, with religious leaders, human rights activists and advocates of democracy being imprisoned, with lands and seas lost to foreign powers.

A question that easily comes to mind for any observer from outside or inside is why so many organisations and groups have developed in such a small

community like the Vietnamese community in Sydney. From a gloomy standpoint, this could reflect fragmentation, divisiveness, disunity and lack of coordination. From a brighter perspective this can be seen as a sign of unity within diversity, of a prevailing sense of community and mutuality and of the fullness of dynamism and vitality.

A psychologically-inclined point of view would see the formation of groups speaking the same language, sharing the same culture and having a common interest as “a manifestation of the refugees’ need to feel secure and to have their expectations met in their new home” (3). In their original country, extended families and close neighbouring networks provided the Vietnamese with emotional security and practical support. In their new homeland, where the family group is dispersed or incomplete and where

neighbouring networks became almost non-existent, the “alienated, bewildered and disoriented” refugees turn to their fellow countrymen “to regain the balance of life” (4). Seen from this viewpoint, the presence of many community groups in the Vietnamese community reflects the profound needs of many Vietnamese and is therefore an important and necessary factor contributing to the success of their resettlement efforts.

- (2) The count of groups is based on the lists prepared by the community development workers of the Vietnamese Community in Australia – NSW Chapter.
- (3) Ha Ton Vinh, Indochinese Mutual Assistance Associations, *Journal of Refugee Resettlement*, I, 1, 1982, pp 49-52, *Chomi Reprints* R447, p 2.
- (4) Ha Ton Vinh, *Ibid*, p 1.

Notes

- (1) According to SBS Radio (2002), Vietnamese refugee associations began in Canberra in 1975, the first Vietnamese community organisations in Sydney were formed in 1976 to provide educational, welfare and legal support and the first community school opened up in Adelaide in 1978.

www.radio.sbs.com.au/language.php?page=info&language=Vietnamese



5.2 STRUCTURE OF VCA-NSW

The Vietnamese Community in Australia – NSW Chapter (VCA-NSW) is the largest and most representative Vietnamese community organisation in NSW. Most other organisations or groups and many Vietnamese individuals residing in Sydney are members of this umbrella organisation.

The 1986 Constitution of the VCA-NSW set up two bodies: (1) The Management Committee and (2) the Advisory and Supervisory Council. It was amended in 1997 to allow for individual membership in addition to group membership.

The Management Committee of the VCA-NSW is comprised of the elected executive members and other committee members who are invited to join the management to look after different sections such as

community resources, women's affairs, youth affairs, etc. The Executive Committee is elected every two years by the member organisations and individuals and consists of a President, three Vice-Presidents, a Secretary and a Treasurer.

Members of the Advisory and Supervisory Council are also elected immediately following the conclusion of the election of the Executive Committee.

The VCA-NSW is widely accepted as a legitimate umbrella organisation to represent the general interests of the Vietnamese-speaking residents in Sydney. It is probably the only Vietnamese organisation that sets out to achieve all four objective categories as highlighted in 5.1 of the Resource Book. Australia-wide the VCA/NSW is a member of the Federal VCA, which is the

peak representative body for the VCAs in all states and territories.

In addition to the establishment of workable structures and service programs, the VCA-NSW has undertaken a project of great significance: the Vietnamese Refugees Community and Cultural Centre. The foundation stone of the Centre was laid on the 29th of July 1990 by the Hon. N.F. Greiner, MP, the then Premier of NSW. The project, now completed, has become a highly significant symbol of social integration and cultural preservation of the Vietnamese ethnic group in a multicultural Australia.

5.3 CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

Churches and religious organisations “play a major role in refugee life and enjoy a large

membership and, often, generous donations. Under the leadership of a monk, a priest, or a committee, members strive to foster the development of religious beliefs and programs. Houses have been purchased and converted into pagodas or temples. Religious studies and services are regular features of this type of organization.” *

* Ha Ton Vinh, Indochinese Mutual Assistance Associations, *Journal of Refugee Resettlement*, I, 1, 1982, pp 49-52.

5.3.1 Vietnamese Buddhism

The Vietnamese Buddhist Church in Australia, officially known as the Unified Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation of Australia and New Zealand, has a history of establishment and development of more than two decades, starting in 1981. In this short period of the Congregation’s existence, Buddhist followers

and members of the Sangha Clergy have made tremendous efforts to build their own temples for worship and social and cultural activities.

The Central Organisation of the Unified Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation of Australia and New Zealand is based at Phước Huệ Temple, 369 Victoria Street, Wetherill Park.

The Most venerable Thích Phước Huệ is the Patriarch of the Congregation and the abbot of the Temple. The central office of the Congregation comprises several commissions in charge of specific areas of activity, e.g. Dharma teachings, youth and laity affairs, educational and training services, social welfare, etc.

At the State level, there are State and Territorial Organisations of the Unified Vietnamese Buddhist

Congregation. In NSW the Unified Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation has the Venerable Thích Bảo Lạc as its spiritual leader and its office is located at Pháp Bảo Temple, 148-154 Edensor Rd., St. Johns Park.

The activities of the Unified Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation / NSW include establishment of the Buddhist Youth Family, a Prayer-in-Aid group to assist Buddhist members in case of bereavement, monthly study retreats, Zen retreats, etc.

The annual ceremonies specially organised at both the central and local levels of the Vietnamese Buddhist Church in Australia are the Vesak Day (Buddha's Birthday), Ullumbana (Wandering Souls' Day) and Lunar New Year. All its activities, religious as well as social and cultural are, in the words of the Most Venerable

Thích Phước Huệ, for “the propagation of Lord Buddha’s Dharma and the promotion of harmony amongst people of all backgrounds and faiths”.

Temples serving the NSW Buddhist congregation are:

Buddha Relics Temple (Tịnh Xá Minh Đăng Quang)
5 Coventry Road
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9723 0668
Ven. Thích Nữ Thanh Liên

Cát Tường Nunnery
2 / 53 The Esplanade
Guildford NSW 2161
Tel: (02) 9892 4117
Fax: (02) 9892 4117
Email: haithanh56@yahoo.com
Ven. Bhikkhuni Hải Triều Hạnh

Chung Đức Thiên Đường Association
56 Hughes Street
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9726 0748

Hưng Long Temple
175 Gladstone Street
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9726 0394
Ven. Thích Đào Thông

Huyền Quang Temple
188 Chapel Rd
Bankstown NSW 2200
Tel: (02) 9707 3347
Ven. Thích Bồn Điện

Liên Hoa Temple
210 Livingstone Road
Marrickville NSW 2204
Tel: (02) 9559 6789
Ven. Thích Nữ Tâm Lạc

Minh Giác Temple (Smithfield)
564 The Horsley Drive
Smithfield NSW 2164
Tel: (02) 9726 1030
Ven. Thích Hạnh Tri

Minh Giác (Cabramatta)
42 St Johns Rd
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9724 3480
Ven. Thích Hạnh Hiếu

Minh Quang Meditation Centre

(Thiền Viện Minh Quang)
30 - 32 Chadderton Street
Canley Vale NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9723 8700
Fax: (02) 9723 8701
Ven. Master Minh-Hiếu

Pháp Bảo Temple

148-154 Edensor Rd
St Johns Park NSW 2176
Tel: (02) 9610 5452
Ven. Thích Bảo Lạc

Phổ Minh Pureland Centre

59 Northam Ave
Bankstown NSW 2200
Tel: (02) 9709 6556
Ven. Thích Nữ Bảo Trừng

Phước Hậu Temple

292 Cabramatta Road
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9754 2092
Ven. Thích Quảng Nghiêm

Phước Huệ Temple

P.O. Box 6798
Wetherill Park NSW 2164
Tel: (02) 9725 2324
Fax: (02) 9725 5385
Email: phuochue@one.net.au
<http://www.vnet.org/phuochue>
Most Ven. Thích Phước Huệ

Quán Âm Temple

18 Yarran Street
Punchbowl NSW 2196
Tel: (02) 8725 4263
Fax: (02) 8725 4263
Ven. Thích Phước Đào

Thiên Ân Temple

71 Delamere St
Canley Vale NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9726 6964
Ven. Thích Như Định

Thiện Hòa Nunnery (Ni Viện)

Thiện Hòa)
153 Gladstone Street
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9727 2167
Ven. Thích Nữ Phước Hoàn

Thiên Phước Pagoda

29 Avenal Street
 Canley Vale NSW 2166
 Tel: (02) 9724 0362
 Ven. Thích Phước Sanh

Trúc Lâm Temple

13 Winspear Avenue
 Bankstown NSW 2200
 Tel: (02) 9708 6339
 Ven. Thích Tâm Minh

**Unified Vietnamese Buddhist
 Congregation of Australia &
 New Zealand Amitabha**

Temple (Chùa A-Di-Đà)

52 Bareena Street
 Canley Vale NSW 2166
 Tel: (02) 9724 1513
 Ven. Thích Nguyên Trục

Vạn An Meditation Centre

(Thiền Viện Vạn An)
 215 -223 Redmayne Road
 Horsley Park NSW 2164
 Tel: (02) 9620 1870
 Ven. Thích Quảng Nghiêm

Vĩnh Nghiêm Temple

177 John Street
 Cabramatta NSW 2166
 Tel & Fax: (02) 9723 3383
 Email: vinh12000@yahoo.com
<http://vinhnghiem.hypermart.net>
 Ven. Thích Viên Chơn

Buddhist Websites

<http://www.tinhthquan.com/>
<http://www.budsas.org/>
<http://zencomp.com/greatwisdom/uni/index.htm>
<http://www.quangduc.com/>



5.3.2 The Vietnamese Catholic Community in the Archdiocese of Sydney

Early in 1976, a Vietnamese priest from Noumea, New Caledonia arrived in Sydney to be the first Chaplain for the Vietnamese Catholics in Sydney. Since then the Vietnamese Catholic population has increased strongly to approximately 15,000 by 2007, scattering across the Sydney Metropolitan Area, Wollongong and Newcastle.

The Vietnamese Catholic Community of New South Wales was officially constituted in 1988, with its constitution ratified by the Archbishop of Sydney. The organisational structure of the VCC consists of the Chaplains Team, The Pastoral Council, the Associations and the Regional Communities.

The activities carried out by the VCC include pastoral and liturgical service (e.g. *Niềm Tin (Faith) Weekly Bulletin*), social welfare (with the cooperation of the St Vincent de Paul Society's St Andrew Dung Lac Vietnamese Conference), and cultural and educational activities (e.g. The Vietnamese Cultural School Association established since 1983 with 6 centres teaching Vietnamese on Saturday).

Vietnamese Catholic Community Pastoral Centre

20 Carr Rd, Bringelly NSW 2171

Tel: (02) 4774 8855

Fax: (02) 4774 8275

ttmv@vietcatholicsydney.net

Pastoral Office

92 The River Rd, Revesby 2212

Tel: (02) 9773 0933

Fax: (02) 9773 3998

info@vietcatholicsydney.net

<http://www.vietcatholicsydney.net/index.php>

St Joseph Retreat Centre

30 Tyson Rd

Bringelly NSW 2171

Tel: (02) 4774 8028

Fax: (02) 4774 8257

Regional Communities

➤ Bankstown Regional Community - Giáo Đoàn Thánh Simon Phan Đắc Hoà, St. Brendan Church, 54 Northam Ave, Bankstown 2200

➤ Cabramatta Regional Community - Giáo Đoàn Đức Mẹ Lavang, Sacred Heart Church, 13 Park Rd, Cabramatta 2166.

➤ Fairfield Regional Community - Giáo Đoàn Thánh Giuse Lê Đăng Thi, St. Therese Church, Crn. Boulevarde & Stella Sts, Fairfield Heights 2165.

➤ Lakemba Regional Community - Giáo Đoàn Chúa Kitô Vua, St. Therese

Church- 15 Garrong Rd, Lakemba 2195.

➤ Marrickville Regional Community - Giáo Đoàn Thánh Đaminh Vũ Đình Tước, St. Brigid's Church, Crn. Marrickville & Livingstone Rds, Marrickville 2204

➤ Miller Regional Community - Giáo Đoàn Đức Mẹ Fatima, St. Therese's Church, 125 Cartwright Ave, Sadleir-Miller 2168

➤ Mount Pritchard Regional Community - Giáo Đoàn Thánh Micae Nguyen Huy Mỹ, Our Lady Of Mt. Carmel Church, 230 Humphries Rd, Mt. Pritchard 2170.

➤ Revesby Regional Community - Giáo Đoàn Thánh Andrê Phú Yên, St. Luca' S Church, 92 The River Rd, Revesby 2212.



Associations and Movements

- Dominicans – Third Order
- Legion of Mary
- The Catholic Youth Association
- The Saint Le-Bao-Tinh Choirs Association
- The Eucharistic Youth Movement
- The St. Vincent de Paul Saint Andre Dung Lac – Vietnamese Conference
- Marian Family Devotion and Enthronement Movement
- The Cursillo Movement
- St. Minh' s Relief Association

Reference: *The Vietnamese Catholic Community* – NSW, VCC, Sydney, 1990.



5.3.3 Caodaism (Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ)

Caodaism, a religiously eclectic movement, had its beginnings in South Vietnam in the early 1920s. It was founded with the view to offering something particular to every belief. A religion which incorporates most of the main belief systems in the world, Caodaism is characterised by three main colours: red, yellow and blue representing Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Its symbol is the “Universal Eye”, which is painted above the entrance to all Caodaist churches.

The birth of Caodaism is a socio-political phenomenon of Vietnamese society in the first half of the 20th century. It can be seen as a typically Vietnamese quest for harmony, an attempt to reconcile conflicting forces that were tearing society apart in the

French colonial period. Today this religious sect has around 7 to 8 million followers in Vietnam and about 30,000 adherents elsewhere, primarily in Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States.

The religion was brought to Sydney in the early 1980s with the arrival of Vietnamese refugees and since then has spread to other states. The Caodaist Association of NSW was formed in 1983 and the first Cao-Dai temple, reflecting Cao-Dai architecture in Vietnam, was officially opened in 2000. It is located at

114-118 King Georges Road

Wiley Park 2195

Tel: (02) 9740 5678

Email: nguyencg@yahoo.com

[http://www.personal.usyd.edu.au](http://www.personal.usyd.edu.au/~cdao/ttnsw.htm)

[/~cdao/ttnsw.htm](http://www.personal.usyd.edu.au/~cdao/ttnsw.htm)

The opening of the Temple marked a new stage in the

development of Cao Dai Religion In Australia, which then took a new name, Cao-Dai Overseas Missionary (Australia) Inc. (Trần Đạo Cao-Đài Úc Châu).

A second Caodaist temple in Sydney is managed by the Caodaist Council of NSW (Hội Đồng Cao Đài Giáo NSW) and is located at

70 Railway Parade

Fairfield NSW 2165

Tel: (02) 9788 6115

Reference: *Our World in Colour – Vietnam* (Photography and Text), The Guidebook Company Limited, Hong Kong, 1993, p.19.

www.caodai.org/

www.caodaism.net/



5.3.4 Hoa Hao Buddhism Association in Australia (Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Hòa Hảo)

In 1939, Prophet Huynh Phu So, a native of Hoa Hao Village in a Vietnamese southern province, founded the Hoa-Hao Buddhism. Since then, it has grown rapidly into a major religion. Its influence spreads over the Mekong River Delta forming the Western part of South Vietnam. The number of faithful was estimated at over two million before 1975.

Many Hoa-Hao Buddhists have come to Australia where they have the freedom to practise their religious duties at home or in a preaching hall. The Hoa-Hao Buddhism Association was incorporated in 1987.

The Hoa-Hao Buddhism is considered a “puritan” reformed Buddhist approach to self-improvement. It discards all futile

rites and superstitious practices and advocates practices in accordance with the original genuine teachings of Buddha.

"Study Buddhism to improve ourselves" is the guideline of Hoa-Hao Doctrine. Hoa-Hao Buddhists practicing Buddhism for self-improvement must first of all do their best to comply with the Four Debts of Gratitude: (1) Thankfulness to our Ancestors and Parents; (2) Thankfulness to our Country; (3) Thankfulness to the Three Treasures: Buddha, Buddhist Law and Sangha; and (4) Thankfulness to our fellow countrymen and to mankind.

National Office

42 Dakota Drive
Bossley Park NSW 2176
Tel: (02) 9610 5228

New South Wales

1 Morgan Close
Parramatta NSW 2176
Tel: (02) 9757 1821
Mobile: 0431 647 989

Reference: *A Brief Description of Hoa-Hao Buddhism*, published by Hoa-Hao Buddhist Church Overseas Office, California, 1988.

<http://hoahaobuddhism.org/>

5.3.5 Vietnamese Evangelical Church in Australia (Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam Úc Châu)

Protestantism (the Christian and Missionary Alliance) was introduced in Vietnam in 1911 by a Canadian missionary named Dr R.A. Jaffray, and different Protestant denominations have been established since then. In 1975, however, all Protestant denominations in Vietnam were gathered by the Communist Government into a single organisation called the Evangelical Church of Vietnam, which had around 500,000 official members in 1997.

With the first Vietnamese Evangelical Church established in Australia in 1978, the Vietnamese Evangelical

movement has developed in two separate streams: the Vietnamese Evangelical Church in Australia (VECA) (Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam Úc Châu) and the Christian and Missionary Alliance Australia (C&MA) (Hội Truyền Giáo Phúc Âm Liên Hiệp).

Apart from worship, prayer and biblical study services, the Evangelical Protestant churches also run radio programs, youth camps and the Tabitha Fund, which for over twenty years now has provided relief aid to needy people in Vietnam. The C&MA has also sent Viet missionaries to work with Vietnamese residents in Cambodia.

Churches

Bankstown (C&MA)

(HTTL Quê Hương)

Corn Leonard & Stanley Sts

Rev Nguyễn Thân Ái

Tel: (02) 9885 0637

ainguyen@optushome.com.au.

Bankstown (C&MA)

Lighthouse Alliance Church

7 West Terrace

Rev Đoàn Trung Chánh

Pastor Đoàn Khoa Nam

Mob: 0415 133 698

Lighthousecma@hotmail.com

Fairfield (C&MA)

(HTTL Tình Thương)

Crn Barbara & Harris Sts.

Rev Đoàn Trung Chánh

Rev Tổng Đức Tùng Thiện

Pastor Đào Minh Sơn

Tel: (02) 9554 4075

Mob: 0422 883 275

tinlanhsydney@optusnet.com.au

Fairfield West (C&MA)

(HTTL VN tại Úc) (Sydwest)

296 Hamilton Road

Pastor Lý Thành Lợi

Pastor Dominic Fede

Tel: (02) 9824 0963

Kingsgrove (C&MA)

HTTL VN tại Úc (Sydney)

207 Stoney Creek Road

Rev Đoàn Trung Chánh

Rev Tổng Đức Tùng Thiện

Pastor Đào Minh Sơn

Tel: (02) 9554 4075

Mob: 0422 883 275

tinlanhsydney@optusnet.com.au

Marrickville (VECA)

Corner Illawarra & Warren Rds

Pastor Nguyễn Vệ Nhân

Tel: (02) 9724 2710

Mobile: 0421 733 437

jowhelan@hotmail.com

St. Johns Park (VECA)

73 Edensor Rd

Tel: (02) 9868 1442

Mobile: 0407 408 687

ledhong@tpg.com.au

<http://www.tinlanh.org.au/>

<http://www.tinlanhsydney.com.au>

5.3.6 Vietnamese Baptist Church in Australia

(Hội Thánh Baptist VN Úc Châu)

The Vietnamese Baptist Church in Sydney, a member of the Baptist Union of NSW, was

officially launched in April, 1982, assembling around 20 faithful and with the support of an Australian Baptist Church at Lugarno, Sydney. Later, it moved to Bankstown for easier access to public transport by the Vietnamese.

The Church was established for purposes of worship, preaching of the Good News and biblical study and biblical practice.

For the past many years, the Vietnamese Baptist Church in Sydney has sponsored Vietnamese from refugee camps and provided advice and moral support to family units experiencing family or social problems.

Churches

Cabramatta Vietnamese Grace Baptist Church

(Hội Thánh Baptist Ân Điển Cabramatta)

Cnr Mc Burney & Park Rds

Rev Nguyễn văn Ngon

Tel: (02) 9610 0059 (H)

Mob: 0413 071 679

Email: nvngon@tig.com.au

Canley Heights Vietnamese Baptist Church

(Hội Thánh Baptist Canley Heights)

Cnr Cambridge St & Canley Vale Rd

Rev Nguyễn Văn Công

Tel: (02) 9723 8205

Mob: 0431-642 805

msnvcong@yahoo.com.au

Hurlstone Park Vietnamese Baptist Church

(Hội Thánh Baptist Việt Nam)

Cnr Queen & Griffith Sts

Rev Nguyễn Hùng Vương

Tel: (02) 9785 5885

Mob: 0402 017 531

vuong.ng@optushome.com.au

Liverpool VN Baptist Church

(HTTL Baptist VN Liverpool)

222 Hoxton Park Road

Rev Nguyễn Hùng Vương

Tel: (02) 9785 5885

Mob: 0402 017 531

**5.3.7 Vietnamese Anglican
Church in Australia**

(HTTL Anh Giáo VN Úc Châu)

Regents Park

128 Kingsland Rd

Rev Phạm Quang Vinh

Tel: (02) 9644 2500

msvinhpham@optusnet.com.au

Rev Nguyễn Thanh

Tel: (02) 8704 4849

thanhchau58@yahoo.com.au

Yagoona

15 The Crescent

Rev Nguyễn Thanh Liêm

Tel: (02) 9645 6881

msliem@optusnet.com.au

**5.3.8 Vietnamese Uniting
Church in Australia**

(HTTL Thống Nhất VN Úc Châu)

Cabramatta

Crn Park Rd & Hughes Street

Rev Bùi Chí Ái

Tel: (02) 9724 1674

**5.3.9 Vietnamese Independent
Church in Australia**

(HTTL Độc Lập VN Úc Châu)

Condell Park

195 Edgar St

Rev Trần Ngọc Chánh

Tel: (02) 9729 0273

mschanhtran@yahoo.com

Punchbowl

1369 Canterbury Rd

**5.4 POLITICAL & HUMAN
RIGHTS GROUPS**

*The collapse of Indochinese governments and the changes in ideology have had a strong impact on refugees' life. Political demonstrations, meetings and conferences are organised in the new homeland to show support for the oppressed and to nurture a dream of eventual return to Southeast Asia... Official membership in these groups is limited but demonstrations and meetings often draw a remarkable number of participants. **

* Ha Ton Vinh, Indochinese Mutual Assistance Associations, *Journal of Refugee Resettlement*, I, 1, 1982, pp 49-52.

The Vietnamese media in Australia has carried news or reports about these political and human rights groups:

Vietnam Reform Party - NSW

(VN Canh Tân Cách Mạng Đảng
(Việt Tân) / Cơ Sở Sydney)

Email: Peterle@vietnam.net.au

<http://www.viettan.org>

[http://www.viettan.org/rubrique.](http://www.viettan.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=42)

[php3?id_rubrique=42](http://www.viettan.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=42)

**Alliance for Democracy in
Vietnam-Australia Chapter**

(Liên Minh Dân Chủ Việt Nam
Khu Bộ Úc Châu)

Tel: (02) 9728 6821

thuyennngoc@hotmail.com

<http://www.lmdcvn.net/vnn>

Free Vietnam Council – NSW

(Hội Đồng VN Tự Do NSW)

PO Box 831

Kingsford NSW 2032

**Worldwide Vietnamese
Nationalists Federation**

(Liên Minh Toàn Dân VN Quốc Gia)

Tel: (02) 9601 5475

**Alliance for National
Restoration of Vietnam**

(Liên Minh Quang Phục VN - NSW)

Tel: (02) 9727 2609

Dong Tam Co-op

(Tập Hợp Đồng Tâm)

187 The Horsley Drive

Fairfield NSW 2165

**Vietnam League of Ex-
Prisoners of Conscience and
Victims of Communism in
Australia - NSW Chapter**

(Hội Cựu Tù Nhân Chính Trị &
Nạn Nhân CSVN)

PO Box 125

Cabramatta NSW 2166

**National Movement for
Democracy of VN / Australia**

(PTQG Dân Chủ VN - Úc Châu)

PO Box 326

Bankstown NSW 1885

Association for Constitutional Reforms in Vietnam

(Hiệp Hội Dân Chủ Hiến Định, Pháp Trị & Đa Nguyên)

Tel & Fax: (02) 9863 2650

khaicat2@yahoo.com.au

In addition to the groups above, there have been *ad hoc* committees specially established by the concerted effort of the Management of the Vietnamese Community in Australia / NSW Chapter and/or the political and human rights groups and veterans associations to deal with particular current affairs, e.g. the S.O.S Boat People Committee in the 1980s and the Support Committee for the Voice of Freedom in Moscow in the early 1990s.

5.5 BUSINESS AND TRADE INITIATIVE

5.5.1 Business Golden Guide

The Vietnamese and Chinese *Business Golden Guide (BGG)*

is a business directory which is published in both Vietnamese and Chinese and caters for all Asian communities in the two main cities of Australia: Melbourne and Sydney. It consists of a *Buying Guide*, an *Almanac* with a monthly horoscope and a combined solar and lunar calendar and a *Community Information Guide*.

The *BGG* is distributed free of charge at the beginning of the Lunar New Year. The online edition is available for access at the same time.

Sydney Office

Tel: (02) 9725 7524

goldenguide@gmail.com

<http://www.goldenguide.com.au>

5.5.2 Vietnam Information Services Pty Ltd

50 Park Rd

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 9728 1666

Fax: (02) 9728 1600

info@danviet.com.au

<http://VietnameselnAustralia.com.au>

VIS opened its new office in the heart of Cabramatta Business Centre in August 2002. It operates the website <http://VietnameselnAustralia.com.au> and provides market research facilities related to the VN community in Australia.

5.6 CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL GROUPS

5.6.1 Vietnamese Traditional Music School

(Trường Âm Nhạc Dân Tộc)

42 Kirrang Ave

Villawood NSW 2163

Tel: (02) 9728 1934

Mob: 0403 178 753

Email: ttviethoc@yahoo.com.au



5.6.2 Vietnamese P.E.N

Australia – Sydney Centre

(Văn Bút Úc Châu -TT Sydney)

4 Chris Place,

Dean Park NSW 2761

Tel: (02) 9626 7468

Mob: 0410 405 471

5.6.3 Vietnamese Traditional Dancing

(Nhóm Múa Dân Tộc Việt Vũ)

24 Williamson Cres

Warwick Farm NSW 2170

Tel: (02) 9601 1224

5.6.4 Ha-Duc-An Performance Studio

(Trung Tâm Ca Múa Kịch Hà Đức Ân)

Contact: Ha Le

Tel: (02) 9786 4508

Mob: 0431 766808

5.6.5 Việt Nam Kịch Nghệ Sydney

PO Box 200

Bonnyrigg Plaza NSW 2177

Tel: (02) 9645 5668

Mob: 0412 824099

5.6.6 Viet Joeys (bilingual singing and dancing group)

Contact:

Anh-Linh Pham, (02) 9754 2655

Vi Nguyen, (02) 9723 2022

5.6.7 Vietnamese Language Classes

Vietnamese language is being taught in three settings: public primary and secondary schools, government-run Saturday Schools of Community Languages and community-run weekend centres.

Public Primary & Secondary Schools

- *In Metropolitan East Region*

Dulwich Hill Public

Dulwich High

Marrickville Public

Marrickville West Public

Punchbowl Public

Tempe High

Wiley Park Girls High

- *In Metropolitan South West Region:*

Bankstown Senior College

Bankstown Public

Cabramatta High School

Bonnyrigg Public

Cabramatta East Public

Cabramatta West Public

Canley Vale Public

Canley Vale High

Fairfield High

Fairvale High

Lansvale Public

Prairievale Public

Villawood North Public

Saturday Schools of Community Languages

- Dulwich High, Seaview St., Dulwich Hill: junior and senior classes

- Birrong Boys High, Rodd St., Birrong: junior and senior classes

- Liverpool Girls High, Forbes St., Liverpool: junior and senior classes

Community-Run Weekend
Centres

- Vietnamese Cultural Schools Association Inc (Liên Trường Văn Hóa Việt Nam)
Brother Liêm Võ
Tel: (02) 9772 7000
voliendls@yahoo.com
- Bankstown School:
St Brendan's Primary,
18 Cambridge Ave, Bankstown
- Cabramatta School:
Cabramatta High School,
Aladore Ave, Cabramatta
- Canley Vale School:
Canley Vale Public School,
Canley Vale Rd, Canley Vale
- Fairfield East School:
Sacred Heart Primary,
Carawatha St, Villawood
- Lakemba School:
St John's College,
39 Croydon St, Lakemba
- Marrickville School:
St Brigid's Primary,
17 Fletcher St, Marrickville

- Federation of Vietnamese Language Schools (Liên Hiệp Các Trường Việt Ngữ)
Contact: Mr Nguyễn Văn Giáo: (02) 9834 2014
john.nguyen2@optusnet.com.au
- Bodhi Vietnamese Language schools (3 schools)
- Chánh Pháp Vietnamese School (Fairfield)
- Huyền Quang Buddhist Youth Association Bankstown School (Bankstown)
- Pháp Bảo Buddhist Youth Language School (St Johns Park)
- Fairfield Heights Primary School, (Fairfield Heights)
- Nhi Đồng Language School (Busby)
- Hưng Đạo Language School (Plumpton)
- Sydney Virtue School (Đạo Đức), Caodaist Association of Australia (Fairvale)
- Văn Lang
- Hùng Vương

- Vietnamese Parents and Citizens Association Inc.
(Liên Trường Việt Ngữ
Hội Phụ Huynh Học
Sinh NSW)

Contact: Phùng Hồng
Chương

Tel: (02) 9607 4514

Mob: 0413 112659

- Bankstown Girls High School
- Bonnyrigg High School
- Cabramatta Public School
- Cabramatta West Public School
- Fairvale Public School
- South Granville High School
- Marrickville High School
- Rosemeadow Public School.



5.7 SOCIAL & FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

5.7.1 Ex-Military Groups

ARVN - NSW (Hội Cựu Quân
Nhân QLVNCH-NSW)

PO Box 91,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 9724 5193

**Ex-South Vietnamese Rangers
Association in NSW** (Hội Ái

Hữu Biệt Động Quân NSW)

30 Sutherland St

Canley Heights NSW 2166

**Family of the Vietnamese
Australian Red Berets** (Gia
Đình Mũ Đỏ Việt Nam Úc Châu)

PO Box 63,

Canley Vale NSW 2166

<http://www.nhaydu.com>

**Former Republic of Vietnam
Navy and Merchant Marine
Association in Australia**

Tel (02) 9758 1894

in NSW Tel: (02) 9823 3036

(Gia Đình Hải Quân Hàng Hải -
Úc) (Gia Đình Hải Quân Hàng
Hải-NSW)

**Thu Duc Ex-Reserve Officers
Association** (Hội Cựu Sinh Viên
Sĩ Quan Trừ Bị Thủ Đức
svsqtribithuducnsw@yahoo.com.au

Political Warfare (Gia Đình
Nguyễn Trãi Úc Châu),
Tel: (02) 9626 7138
Email: kiethoang@bigpond.com

**Vietnamese Australian Army
Marines Association** (Hội Ái
Hữu Thủy Quân Lục Chiến)
<http://www.tqlcvn.org>

Military Police (Gia Đình Quân
Cảnh), Tel: (02) 9821 4130

Police Association (Hội Cảnh
Sát Quốc Gia VNCH)
Email: khai_lan@yahoo.com.au

**The Vietnam Military Academy
Alumni Association in
Australia** (Liên Hội Cựu Sinh
Viên Sĩ Quan Trường Võ Bị
Quốc Gia Việt Nam)
29 Harrington St
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9757 3682
Email: vobiucchau@yahoo.com

**Vietnamese Army Special
Forces & Strategic Technical
Directorate's Family & 81st
Airborne Ranger Group** (Hội Ái
Hữu Lực Lượng Đặc Biệt – Nha
Kỹ Thuật & BK 81)
Email: tranthienco@hotmail.com
<http://bcdlldb.com>

Vietnam Air Force Family (Hội
Ái Hữu Không Quân QLVNCH)
<http://www.vnaf.net>

**Descendants of the Republic
of Vietnam** (Hậu Duệ Tập Thể
Chiến Sĩ VNCH/NSW)
nhntran@community.nsw.gov.au

5.7.2 Students & Youth Groups

Padstow NSW 2211

Tel: (02) 9792 3320

Vietnamese Students Union of NSW (Tổng Hội Sinh Viên Việt Nam NSW)

PO Box 318,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Mob: 0413 670 341

0403 012 669

This is a general association of Vietnamese university students enrolling in the five universities in Sydney, namely Sydney University, University of NSW, University of Technology, Macquarie University and Western Sydney University. It was officially launched on 17 October, 1992. Of its general aims, the major ones are mutual support and preservation of Vietnamese culture.

Vietnamese Scout Groups

(Hội Hướng Đạo VN NSW)

Nguyễn văn Thuất

14 McEvoy Rd,

The Scout Movement came to Vietnam in 1930 and the Scout Association of Vietnam became a member of the World Scout Organisation in 1957. By that time there were about 16,000 Scouts in Vietnam. The political takeover in Saigon in April, 1975 led to the dissolution of all non-communist associations including the Scouts. The Scout Association of Vietnam no longer existed after May, 1975, but thanks to the good educational methods of the Scout Movement, the Scouting spirit still exists in Vietnamese communities, both inside and outside Vietnam.

In Sydney, there are two Vietnamese Scout Groups: *Bách Việt* and *Văn Lang*.

Bach Viet Bankstown Scout Group

70 Restwell Street

Bankstown NSW 2200

Contact person: Chanh Ho

Tel: (02) 9750 0705

Van Lang Canley Heights Scout Group

Cnr. Gladstone and Derria Sts

Canley Heights NSW 2166

Contact: Mr Chinh Dang

Tel: (02) 9726 0222

chinhdang@ozemail.com.au

These and other groups in other states are part of the Scout Association of Australia and together form the Australian branch of the Vietnamese Scout Movement around the world with its constitution and rules proclaimed at Costa Mesa, California, USA on 7 March, 1983. This is not an association, but rather a central council to coordinate activities of all Vietnamese Scout groups presently joining the national

scouting associations in resettlement countries. Every 4 years a Jamboree is held assembling active and non-active Vietnamese Scouts in the world; the first was in France, the second and third in Canada and the USA respectively, the fourth again in France in May 1993, the fifth in Australia in December 1995, the sixth in Washington D.C. in 1998, the seventh in Houston, TX in 2002 and the latest in Riverside, South California in 2006.

References: *Scout*, New South Wales Edition, June/July 1992.

Phù Sa, Hướng Đạo Việt Nam – Úc Đại Lợi, No 3, November 1992.

Sóng Việt Youth Group

(Nhóm Trẻ Sóng Việt)

Lâm Bích Huyền

PO Box 871

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Mobile: 0424 413 299

Vietnamese Youth Network

(Mạng Lưới Tuổi Trẻ Việt Nam
Lên Đường)

PO.Box 345,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

mangluoi@lenduong.net

www.lenduong.net

The Catholic Youth Association

92 The River Rd

Revesby NSW 2212

Tel: (02) 9773 0933

Fax: (02) 9773 3998

The St. Lê Bảo Tịnh Choirs Association

92 The River Rd

Revesby NSW 2212

Tel: (02) 9773 0933

Fax: (02) 9773 3998

The Eucharistic Youth Movement

92 The River Rd

Revesby NSW 2212

Tel: (02) 9773 0933

Fax: (02) 9773 3998

Chánh Pháp Buddhist Youth - Fairfield

hoang.tran@det.nsw.edu.au

Huyền Quang Buddhist Youth Association - Bankstown

Tel: (02) 8299 9291

Email: tnghuyen@cuscal.com.au

Pháp Bảo Buddhist Youth – St Johns Park

Tel: (02) 9607 0482

Email: cuomle@yahoo.co

5.7.3 Sports & Gymnastics Clubs**Dong Tam Martial Arts**

(Hội Quán Võ Thuật Đồng Tâm)

187 The Horsley Drive

Fairfield NSW 2165

Tel: (02) 9725 6874



Hội Việt Quyền Đạo Úc Châu

Nguyen Van Man

PO Box 166

Georges Hall NSW 2198

Tel: (02) 9728 4350

Vovinam (Việt Võ Đạo)

Dr Sam (Duc) Nguyen, Master

PO Box 135,

Lakemba NSW 2195.

Tel: (02) 9758 2003

Mobile: 0411 521 371

vovinamsydney@yahoo.com.au

<http://vovinam.com.vn/vn/index.php>

<http://members.aol.com/chieutra/vovinam.htm>

<http://www.kienthucvothuat.com/>

[YaBB.pl](#)

Vietnam Taekwondo of Australia (Tổng Liên Đoàn Thái

Cực Đạo Úc Châu)

Contact: Võ Tấn Khoẻ

9 Sandiland Rd.

Bonnyrigg NSW 2177

Mob: 0403 530 012

5.7.4 Elderly Groups

Vietnamese Elderly Friendship

Association Inc. (Hội Thân Hữu

Cao Niên VN-NSW)

65 Bartley St, Canley Vale 2166

PO Box 458 Cabramatta 2166

Tel: (02) 9725 7459

Fax : (02) 9726 6415

This is a self-help group for the Vietnamese elderly residents of Cabramatta, Fairfield and adjacent areas. The group meets monthly, holds regular excursions and special walkathons, runs English and health and fitness classes, provides temporary accommodation and recreational facilities at its headquarters and administers a Mutual Aid Fund for the purpose of covering funeral costs incurred by families of deceased members. The Association obtained funding from the Community Relations Commission to employ a part-time welfare worker.

Bankstown Vietnamese Elderly Friendship Group Inc.

(Hội Ái Hữu Cao Niên Bankstown)

17 Saurine St

Bankstown NSW 2200

Tel: (02) 9709 5480

Contact: Mr Phạm Hữu Nghi

The Bankstown Vietnamese Elderly Friendship Group officially began on 19 July 1993. Urged by the need to belong, the members get together and share their experiences of losing the war and the homeland, or of struggling with the difficulties in contact with their younger ones and the new society. They also have group activities, such as study of English, sightseeing, and entertainment.

As of November, 1994 its membership is well over 100 and its weekly meetings are often attended by no less than half of this number.

Vietnamese Seniors Association of Marrickville

(Hội Cao Niên VN Marrickville)

PO Box 391,

Marrickville NSW 1475

Tel & Fax: (02) 9591 1760

Meeting Venue: Herbert Greedy Hall

79 Petersham Rd

Marrickville NSW 2204

The group has been running with the support and liaison of a Home and Community Care (HACC) worker based at May Murray Neighbourhood Centre. The group has regular monthly meetings and outings. Friday and Saturday activities include Taichi classes, dancing classes, reading and playing chess.



Vietnamese Seniors Association Canterbury Inc.

(Hội Cao Niên VN Tự Do Canterbury)

2/32 Arthur St., Marrickville 2204

Tel: (02) 9558 8215

Mob: 0409 284 479

Contact: Ms. Phạm Ngọc Trinh

Meeting venue: 44 Rossmore Ave
Punchbowl NSW 2196.

The Vietnamese Seniors Association of Canterbury Inc. is a supportive network amongst the Vietnamese elderly living in the areas covered by Canterbury Council including Lakemba, Belmore and Canterbury. It was established in 1990 through the initiative of a community worker for the Vietnamese Community in Australia/NSW Chapter and is still running with the support of a Vietnamese worker. The membership has increased from under 30 in the beginning to over 130 at the present time.

Since June 1992, the group has met weekly on Thursday. Generally, at each weekly gathering the participants do Taichi exercises, share information, have a light meal together and chat informally. On the last Thursday of the month there are special celebrations of the birthday anniversary of those members whose birthdays fall in the month. Now and then they go on a day excursion to scenic spots and not infrequently do home visits to members having special difficulties.

The Auburn Asian Elderly Friendship Group (Hội Cao Niên Á Châu Auburn)

39 Sixth Ave, Berala NSW 2141

Tel: (02) 9649 8967

Contact: Mr. Nguyễn Hữu Đức

Meeting Venue:

Lidcombe Community Hall

The Auburn Asian Elderly Friendship Group was formed in October 1991 with a small

membership of 10. Today the group has approximately 160 members and keeps growing. The aims of the group are to develop mutual support and healthy lifestyles, to establish friendship and to break social isolation. With the assistance of the Auburn Asian Welfare Centre, the group has achieved a rapid growth in membership, obtained funding from the Department of Planning under the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme and offered to members a variety of activities with low or no cost

Indochinese Senior Citizens Association of NSW (Hội Cao Niên Đồng Dương NSW)

41 Marion Street,
Bankstown 2200
PO Box 128,

Bankstown NSW 1885

Contact: Mr. Trương văn Quang

Mobile: 0418 210 507

The Indochinese Senior Citizens Association of NSW was the first elderly group to be organised in Sydney. It started in 1981 through the initiative of an ethnic health worker based at Bankstown Community Health Centre.

For more than 20 years now, the association has maintained regular weekly, monthly and yearly activities. English classes, members' birthday anniversary celebrations, picnics and interstate travelling are among those activities. The association, with financial contributions and donations from various sources, has also managed to buy two plots of land in the Leppington and Lidcombe cemeteries, large enough for 440 graves.



5.7.5 Mutual Support Groups

The Vietnamese Australian Mutual Support Association of NSW Inc

(Hội Tương Trợ Người Việt Hải Ngoại Tiểu Bang NSW)

110 John Street,

Cabramatta 2166

Tel: (02) 9727 3768

Founded on 1 January, 1994, the Vietnamese Australian Mutual Support Association of NSW recruits members from different ethnic groups, including Vietnamese, whose common purpose is to share with each other material and moral assistance, general welfare and settlement support.

Since its formation, the association has got a membership of nearly 500 and organised several significant activities for both members and the public, including wedding receptions, obsequies,

sightseeing tours and free English classes

Vietnamese Women Support Association (Hội Tương Trợ Phụ Nữ Việt Nam Hải Ngoại)

PO Box 326, Bankstown 1885

Mob: 0404 678 081

Tây Ninh Đồng Hương Hội

Contact: Mr. Nguyễn Văn Thiệu

6 Monash Rd.,

Menai NSW 2234

Tel: (02) 9543 8730

vtnguyen28@hotmail.com

Hội Thụ Nhân NSW

Contact person: Mr Lê Minh Đạt

39 Weeroona Rd.

Edensor Park 2176

Tel: (02) 9823 9368

Hội Ái Hữu Trường Bưởi NSW

Contact: Mr. Nguyễn Đình Mạnh

PO Box 268,

Greenacre NSW 2190

Tel: (02) 9624 5289

chuvanannsw@hotmail.com

Hội Ái Hữu Tây Sơn

Contact: Mr. Trần Phú Hảo
73 Cantrell St,
Yagoona NSW 2199
Tel: (02) 9791 5669

Hội Ái Hữu Nghệ-Tĩnh-Bình Úc Châu

Contact: Mr. Nguyễn Văn Trị
peternguyenvantri@hotmail.com

Hội Ái Hữu Trưng Vương Úc Châu - NSW

Contact: Ms. Vũ Thị Phụng
PO Box 91
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9726 7468
(02) 9826 7354
trungvuongnsw@yahoo.com.au

Vietnamese National Institute of Administration Alumni Association (Hội Cựu Sinh Viên

Quốc Gia Hành Chánh NSW)
Contact: Tran Van Phan
Tel: (02) 9644 5127

5.7.6 Voluntary Service Groups

Voluntary Association in Support of the Forgotten Invalid Veterans in Vietnam Inc

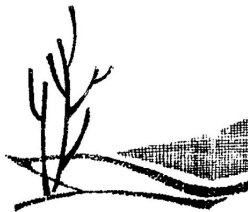
(Hội Thiện Nguyễn Cứu Trợ Thương Phế Binh Bị Quên Lãng tại Việt Nam)

Contact: Nguyễn Cảnh Tân
42 Cardwell St,
Canley Vale 2166
Tel: (02) 9728 3640
Fax: (02) 9726 5003

Vietnamese Leprosy Relief Association Inc (Hội Trợ Giúp

Người Cùi Tại Việt Nam)

Contact: Mai Hồng Châu
19/11 Edmonson Cr,
Carramar 2163
Tel: (02) 9724 1119
Mob: 0411 293 641



NSW Vietnamese Refugee Support Committee (Ủy Ban Yểm Trợ Đồng Bào Tị Nạn NSW)

Recipient of Austcare's Paul Cullen Award 2002

PO Box 34, Bankstown 1885

Tel: 9796 8035 (B) - 9789 0734 (A)

5.8 OTHER PROFESSIONAL GROUPS

5.8.1 Australian Vietnamese Health Professionals Association NSW Inc. (Hội Y Tế VN NSW)

Contact: Dr. Lê Đình Cường

Tel: (02) 9755 9040

Mob: 0412 565 065

dr.cuongdle@gmail.com

The Australian Vietnamese Health Professionals Association NSW Inc. (AVHPA) was formed in 1990, with a current membership of up to 500

enlisted from medical and health-related sciences practitioners (Pharmacists, Dentists) and students. Its aims are networking and resourcing among people working in the health industry and promoting community health. Doctor-members devote a lot of energy to helping medical colleagues from Vietnam prepare for their Australian accreditation exams. They had put out brochures in Vietnamese on many health issues before they started the publication of a two-monthly magazine – the *Medicine and Life Magazine* (*Y Học & Đời Sống*).

Medicine & Modern Life Magazine (*Y Học & Đời Sống*)
PO Box 215,
Bankstown NSW 2200

Tel & Fax: (02) 9796 7545

medicinemodernlife@yahoo.com.au

5.8.2 Vietnamese Australian Medical Association (VAMA)

(Hội Y Sĩ Việt Nam tại Úc)

PO Box 215, Bankstown 2200

Contact: Dr. Liêu Vĩnh Bình

Tel: (02) 9796 7545

(02) 9724 5580

vinhbinhlieu@yahoo.com.au

lvbinh@ozemail.com.au

In early January of 2008 a new professional group – VAMA – was established, providing a venue for Vietnamese medical practitioners throughout Australia to participate in continuing education programs related to public and private health care issues, diagnoses and treatments of diseases and community outreach programs. Though similar in its aims to the AVHPA, VAMA is Australian-wide and open only to medical professionals

5.8.3 Vietnamese Professionals Society - NSW Chapter

(Hội Chuyên Gia Việt Nam – Phần Hội NSW)

Main Office (USA)

5150 Fair Oaks Blvd, Ste 101-128

Carmichael, CA 95608-5758

<http://www.vps.org>

Sydney Chapter

Đỗ Trung Trực

PO Box 187, Bankstown 2200

Mobile: 0401 993 946

Email: nsw@hcgvn.net

The Vietnamese Professionals Society - NSW Chapter is one of the 25 chapters in the world of the American-based Vietnamese Professional Society. The purposes of VPS are:

- To act as a clearing-house of information exchange, mutual assistance and professional advancement for Vietnamese professionals;

- To provide a medium of learning and training on the issue of Vietnam reconstruction for Vietnamese college students and youth;
- To provide professional expertise and advice to the rebuilding and modernizing of a Vietnam free of Communism;
- To provide support to the cause of freedom and democracy for Vietnam.

Any Vietnamese national or descendant of a Vietnamese national with college or college equivalent education can be qualified as an active member of VPS. This requirement can be waived for non-Vietnamese who have made positive contributions to Vietnam or its people. Undergraduate students are welcome to join VPS as associate members. Upholding

the values of human rights, freedom and democracy, VPS does not accept as member any person advocating totalitarianism and dictatorship of any kind or form.

5.8.4 Vovi Learned Society (Hội Hàn Lâm Vô Vi)

This is an incorporated non-profit society founded as a tribute to the Kungfu master Ly Hong Tuan, a refugee resident of Sydney. It has three divisions: VoviKungfu teaching kungfu and health fitness, VosiSoft teaching IT skills and VoviCare giving financial support to students in dire need in Vietnam.



VoviSoft Office

950 Woodville Road

Villawood NSW 2163

Tel: (02) 9153 7241

Mobile: 0416 106 725

<http://www.vovisoft.com>

VoviKungFu

1 Caranya Place

Cabramatta West NSW 2166

NhanLy@cheerful.com

Vovicare

3 Linda Street

Fairfield Heights NSW 2165

vovicare@vovisoft.com

Tel: (02) 9153 7241

Mob: 0402 877136

0416 106725



5.8.5 SVWI

The Sydney Vietnamese Workers Interagency (SVWI) meets every two months,

convened and chaired by participants in rotation. The meeting venue is not fixed (currently at Centacare, Bankstown). The language of discussion is Vietnamese but the minutes are taken in English.

The aims of the SVWI are to share working experience and professional expertise and to provide a forum for health, education, housing and other welfare issues related to the well-being of members of the Vietnamese community in Sydney.

Since its first meeting in mid-1990, the SVWI has become a network of support for many new field workers, a forum for discussion of issues of concern to the participants and a source of help and ideas for projects or research.

Contact: Convener

Email: svwi@googlegroups.com

5.9 MEDITATION CENTRES

5.9.1 Vo Vi Esoteric Science (Pháp Lý Vô Vi Khoa Học Huyền Bí Phật Pháp)

Vo Vi* Esoteric Science is a practical spiritual method which helps practitioners establish equilibrium and harmony within themselves. This dharma practice is neither attached to any religion nor to any rites. Simply it is a technique for self-culture and self-realisation, which begins with silent prayer, followed by four physical and spiritual exercises and closes with overall massage. The four exercises are concentration of spiritual energy, abdominal breathing while lying down, cyclical breathing of nonretention and meditative contemplation.

Vo Vi method was initially preached by Lương Sĩ Hằng,

popularly known as Ông Tám (Mr Tam), in the early 1970s in Saigon, South Vietnam. Nowadays this method has been practised by a large number of Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese people.

There are many Vo Vi centres and meditation halls around the world. In Sydney there are:

VOVI Friendship Association of Sydney Inc (Hội Ái Hữu Vô Vi Sydney / Thiền Đường Dũng Chí)
922 Hume Hwy,
Bass Hill NSW 2179
Tel: (02) 8704 4829
Mob: 0414 508194
Email: htthai@iinet.net.au

Thiền Đường Minh Hòa
6 Linderman Cres
Green Valley NSW 2168
Tel: (02) 9608 6012
babyboy@ozemail.com.au

Thiền Đường Ngọc Minh

28 Rundle Rd

Green Valley NSW 2168

Tel: (02) 9826 0648

Email: ngocminh@ccis.net.au

* “Vo means nothingness or void. Vi is the minuteness or the infinitesimal existence that is to be also simplified to void. Thus the void of void is the state of perfect harmony and lucidity.” (*Vo-Vi Esoteric Science*, 1990, p 5)

<http://www.vovi.org>

<http://www.vovi.org/en/about/index.htm>

5.9.2 Quan Yin Method

Contact person: Thanh Ly

Tel: (02) 9823 8223

Mob: 0430 486 834

anbinh.sydney@yahoo.com.au

<http://suprememastertv.com>

<http://www.godsdirectcontact.org>

Quan Yin Method is the meditation on inner Light and inner Sound. The inner Light, the Light of God, is the same Light referred to in the word

"enlightenment". The inner Sound is the Word referred to in the Bible: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God..." It is through the inner Light and Sound that we come to know God...

Master Thanh Hai (Ching Hai in English texts), a Vietnamese-born, initiates sincere people longing to know the Truth into the Quan Yin Method.

The initiation into the Quan Yin Method is not an esoteric ritual or a ceremony for entering a new religion. During the initiation, specific instruction in meditation on the inner Light and inner Sound is given and Master Ching Hai provides the "Spiritual Transmission". This first taste of Divine Presence is given in silence. Master Ching Hai need not be physically present in order to open this "door" for you.

The Transmission is an essential part of the Method.

Master Ching Hai accepts people from all backgrounds and religious affiliations for initiation and the initiation is offered free of charge. However, you will be asked to become a vegetarian. A lifetime commitment to the vegetarian diet is a necessary prerequisite for receiving initiation.

Daily practice of the Quan Yin Method of meditation and the keeping of the Five Precepts are your only requirements after initiation. The Precepts are guidelines that help you to neither harm yourself nor any other living being. These practices will deepen and strengthen your initial enlightenment experience, and allow you to eventually attain the highest levels of Awakening or Buddhahood for yourself.

References:

Ching Hai Wu Shang Shih, *The Key of Enlightenment*, Book 3, Infinite Light Publishing Co., Taiwan, 1992.

5.10 WELFARE ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY

At a glance there are three significant Vietnamese specific organisations that are a reference point for all other services linked to the Vietnamese community.

5.10.1 Vietnamese Community in Australia - NSW Chapter

The mission of the Vietnamese Community in Australia-NSW Chapter Inc. is to:

- Preserve Vietnamese culture among the Vietnamese community in Australia in line with the Multicultural policy of Australia;

- Assist the Vietnamese refugees, migrants and their family successfully resettle in Australia;
- Create and enhance a communal spirit among the Vietnamese community;
- Promote cross cultural understanding and community harmony.

Programs and services provided include Settlement Grants Programme to provide community development and information and referral services; Problem Gambling Program to provide information and counselling services to gamblers and their families; Personal Support Program (PSP) to provide counselling and personal support to job seekers; Links to Learning Program to provide support, social and educational activities for young people who have left school or are at risk of leaving school

early; Youth Development Service to create and organise social, recreational and sporting activities to Vietnamese youth in partnership with relevant youth groups and service providers.

Offices are located at:

Bankstown

Level 2, 300 Chapel Road South
Bankstown NSW 2200

PO Box 34,

Bankstown NSW 1885

Tel: (02) 9796 8035

Fax: (02) 9796 3794

Email: vca@bigpond.net.au

Cabramatta

First Floor, 5/50 Park Road
Cabramatta NSW 2166

PO Box 106,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 9727 5599

Fax: (02) 9727 5276

Email: vcansw@bigpond.net.au

Campsie

Bankstown / Canterbury Migrant
Resource Centre

Level 2, 59 Evaline Street

Campsie NSW 2194

Tel: (02) 9649 6955

Fax: (02) 9649 4688

Liverpool

Liverpool Migrant Resource
Centre

108 Moore Street

Liverpool, NSW 2170

Tel: (02) 9601 3788



5.10.2 Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association (VAWA)

1st Floor,

6-8 Bankstown City Plaza

Bankstown NSW 2200

PO Box 577

Bankstown NSW 1885

Tel: (02) 9793 7129

(02) 9707 1519

Fax: (02) 9793 7895

Email: vawa@bigpond.net.au

In 1989 the idea of forming a group which could reflect the developmental changes in the Vietnamese community and in the workers themselves was initiated by some Vietnamese workers in the social welfare field. The idea of such a group was soon transformed into the reality of an incorporated association whose major aims are to contribute to community development and to provide mutual support to its members.

Target Group: Young
Indochinese background (12-
25). Referrals: not required

Services:

- Educational and social activities
- Providing information on community services
- Casework to individuals
- Group work & school holiday activities
- Family reconciliation
- Advocacy
- Non therapeutic counselling
- Accommodation (for Young Indochinese)
- Community/Policy Development



5.10.3 Vietnamese Women's Association in NSW

The Vietnamese Women's Association in NSW Inc.(VWA), which began in 1984, is one of the very first organised groups in the Vietnamese community. A charitable non-profit organisation, VWA first operated with voluntary contributions in time and effort from many dedicated women and only some years later did it receive funding from the government to employ workers.

As the only one welfare service to cater for Vietnamese women in NSW, the VWA enjoys credibility with government and non-government organisations, but unavoidably faces an ever-increasing exhausting demand from its clientele. The formation of the Federation of Vietnamese Women's Associations in Australia is the latest step in the development of the VWA as a

national voice for Vietnamese women in Australia.

Objectives:

- Support and assist Vietnamese women and their families to resettle in Australian society;
- Promote women's rights, opportunities and social participation;
- Maintain and promote Vietnamese cultural heritage in a multicultural society.

Services:

- Casework:, advocacy, information, support and referral services
- Group work and community development:, job seeking and support groups
- Training: English classes, seminars, workshops



Cabramatta Office

Corner Mc Burney Rd & Railway Parade

PO Box 256,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 9723 2022

Fax: (02) 9723 3033

Email: Vwa_nsw@bigpond.com

Bonnyrigg Office

53 Tarlington Parade

Bonnyrigg NSW 2177

Tel: (02) 8786 2601

Bankstown Office

Room 7, AMES Building

2 Jacob Street

Bankstown NSW 2200

Tel: (02) 9205 4373

References:

Between Two Cultures –Vietnamese Women in Australia, Special Issue of the Vietnamese Women's Association in NSW, 1994, pp 3-5, 9-10.

Integration – The Magazine for Vietnamese and Multicultural Issues, Vol 1, No 2, August 1993, p 36.

5.11 WELFARE & HEALTH ORGANISATIONS WITH A VIETNAMESE PROGRAM

5.11.1 Anglicare

Anglicare, the urban mission and welfare arm of the Sydney Anglican Church, has provided special programs and services for Vietnamese people through its special team, the Migrant Services Team. The Team operates mainly from the Cabramatta Office.

40 Cumberland St
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9728 0200
Fax: (02) 9755 0841

Its programs and services include JPET (Job Placement, Employment and Training) targeting 15-21 years old people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless or come from a refugee background or have been involved with the police or are or have been a

ward of the state and are experiencing any barriers to education and employment; JOSP (Juvenile Offender Support Program) providing support for young people in the juvenile justice system, pre and post release; Reconnect Service targeting young people between 12-18 years and their families with the support and assistance they need to achieve family reconciliation and enhanced involvement with the wider community; and Family First Program for families with children from 0 to 8 year-old in Fairfield LGA.

5.11.2 Asian Women at Work

Main Office

114 Restwell St
Bankstown NSW 2200
PO Box 253,
Bankstown NSW 1885
Tel: (02) 9793 9708
Fax (02) 9793 9106

Cabramatta Office

156 Cabramatta Rd

Cabramatta NSW 2166

PO Box 1109

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Ph: (02)9728 1086

coordinator@awatw.org.au

Asian Women at Work is working to empower Asian migrant women workers who experience significant injustice and exploitation in the Australian labour market. These women have the ability to stand up for their rights and contribute more significantly to Australian society as they gain access to information, resources, relationships and confidence in themselves. Services include information, referral and casework, social activities, English classes and support groups.

5.11.3 Burnside

32 Railway Parade

Cabramatta NSW 2166

PO Box 450,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 9781 3333

Fax: (02) 9724 6762

vnguyen@burnside.org.au

Burnside is the welfare division of the Uniting Church in Australia. It has more than 80 programs across 27 locations in western and south western Sydney, the central and mid north coasts and the Orana Region. *Moving Forward* is an intensive support program for young people and families affected by drugs in Cabramatta & Fairfield.



5.11.4 CCC

Cnr Railway Pde & McBurney
Rd Cabramatta NSW 2166
PO Box 367,
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9727 0477
Fax: (02) 9728 6080
Email: info@cabracc.org.au
<http://www.cabracc.org.au/Index.htm>

Cabramatta Community Centre (CCC) is a large community-based organisation with several divisions, programs and services. Most relevant for migrant and refugee families of non-English speaking backgrounds is the Bilingual Welfare Service. The Service is currently providing assistance to clients from the Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish-speaking and Bosnian communities.

5.11.5 Centacare

Centacare Catholic Community Services is the official welfare arm of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Sydney. Centacare provides a range of services for individuals, families and communities. For Vietnamese in particular, there are the Child Protection Service and the Family and Child Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Child Protection

12 Yerrick Rd
Lakemba NSW 2195
Tel: (02) 9740 9055
Fax: (02) 9740 8615
anhdo@centacare.org

Vietnamese Family & Child Mediation and Conciliation

7Jacobs Street
Bankstown NSW 2200
Tel: (02) 9793 7522
Fax: (02) 9709 6637
thuy.phan@centacare.org

5.11.6 Drug Health Services - SSWAS

The following services affect to a significant extent the lives of many Vietnamese living in the Sydney South West Area.

- Pathways Drug Health Service
Corner Restwell St. & Praierievale Rd.
PO BOX 5
Fairfield NSW 1860
Ph: (02) 9616 8888
Fax: (02) 9616 8880
(Vietnamese D&A Counsellor available f/t)
- Vietnamese Drug Health Information
1 Campbell Street
Liverpool NSW 2170
PO Box 39
Liverpool BC NSW 1871
Ph: (02) 9828 4892
Fax: (02) 9828 4855
(Vietnamese worker in charge)

5.11.7 Open Family Australia

94 Broomfield Street
Cabramatta NSW 2166
PO Box 104,
Cabramatta NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9727 0100
Fax: (02) 9727 0177
sydney@openfamily.com.au

Open Family Australia is a Not-For-Profit organisation working to improve the well-being and self-worth of alienated and excluded street children through unconditional support, whenever and wherever necessary, with the view to reconnecting them with the community. In 1997 Open Family established an operation in Cabramatta and now has several experienced outreach workers around that area and in the Sydney CBD.



5.11.8 Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

152-168 The Horsley Drive
Carramar
PO Box 203,
Fairfield NSW 2165
Tel: (02) 9794 1900
Fax: (02) 9794 1910
<http://www.startts.org>

The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) helps refugees recover from their traumatic experiences and build a new life in Australia. Opened in 1988, STARTTS is one of Australia's leading organisations for the treatment of torture and trauma survivors. Services include counselling and therapy for individuals, families and groups, physiotherapy and bodywork, group work, referral and case management, community development projects, advocacy, training and research.

5.11.9 Sydney Indochinese Refugee Youth Support

Rivendell Child, Adolescent and Family Health Services,
Thomas Walker House,
Hospital Road,
Concord West NSW 2138
PO Box 170,
Bankstown NSW 2200
Tel: (02) 9736 9822

The Sydney Indochinese Refugee Youth Support Group (SICRYS) is an incorporated association which has operated since 1984. It was developed in response to the difficulties experienced by Indochinese refugee young people in their adjustment to their new life in Australia. Many of these young people arrived in Australia unaccompanied by their parents or close relatives and lacked well integrated support from their wider communities. Health, education and welfare personnel were having difficulty in providing effective services

because of the lack of familiarity with their cultures and their refugee experiences, because of the limited number of staff available, and increasingly large number of Indochinese young people needing help. Many of these young were severely distressed, lonely and were having problems coping with the demands of learning a new language, adjusting to a new culture, and furthering their education. Many were becoming sick and depressed. Some were developing uncharacteristic behavioural problems, and accommodation arrangements were breaking down.

As a result of these needs, the support group was established. The primary aims of this group are: to provide an effective support system and resource network among education, health and welfare personnel working with these young

people, and to organise and develop effective therapeutic programs and inventions.

The central focus of the group's interventions with these young people is the running of residential school holiday and weekend camping programs whose aim is to provide these young people with:

- A wide range of enjoyable leisure activities
- Formal group experiences which assist in the development of communication, leisure and stress management skills
- Advice on school and career issues; and
- Specific assistance with health, education and welfare needs when necessary.

On a more informal level, the program allows for the development of friendships, a chance to share more common experiences, and an opportunity to have positive experiences of Australian life and culture.

(S.I.C.R.Y.S Pamphlet)

5.11.10 Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC)

Cumberland Hospital,
5 Fleet Street
North Parramatta NSW 2151
Locked Bag 7118
Parramatta BC NSW 2150
Tel: (02) 9840 3767 - 9840 3899
Website: www.tmhc.nsw.gov.au

The Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC) is a state-wide organisation that works in partnership with mental health services, consumers, carers and the community to improve the mental health and wellbeing of people of non-English speaking

background (NESB) living in NSW. Clinical intervention is offered through 125 bilingual mental health clinicians speaking over 50 community languages including Vietnamese.

The role of the bilingual clinician is to provide psychosocial, psychological and psychiatric assessments, family assessments, psychoeducation for the client and their family, grief and trauma counselling and short-term therapy.

5.11.11 Women's Health Centres

These are community-based health services, funded primarily by the NSW Department of Health and the Department of Community Services. They focus on women's health and related issues and provide medical and preventative health

services, education and self-help groups to all women regardless of age, nationality or creed. Not limited to a particular catchment area WHC offer its services to women from a wide geographical area. Specific services for Vietnamese women include counselling, health education and support groups.

Bankstown Women's Health Centre

74 Restwell Street
Bankstown NSW 2200

Tel: (02) 9790 1378

(02) 9790 8982

(02) 9790 0682

Fax: (02) 9790 1456

Email: bwhc@swsahs.nsw.au

Contact: Kim Phuong Nguyen

Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre

55 Thornley Street
Leichhardt NSW 2040

PO Box 240,

Leichhardt NSW 2040

Tel: (02) 9560 3011 (ext 22)

Fax: (02) 569 5098

Email: thao@lwchc.org.au

Contact: Thao Bich Do

5.11.12 Community Health Services

Community health has different meanings depending on the context where it is used. A field within public health, it is a discipline that concerns itself with the study and betterment of the health characteristics of a community (1). It may also mean an approach to dealing with the main health problems and issues experienced by the community from a social health perspective (2). The phrase used in this resource refers to a network of services at the primary (or first) level of the health system provided to meet the health needs of the population living in a geographic area.

In that sense, a few community health services are included in this section. These services cover areas where there is a sizeable number of Vietnamese residents and so try to meet their health needs by creating culturally appropriate programs and/or employing workers speaking their language.

Auburn Community Health

9 Northumberland Road

Auburn NSW 2144

Ph: (02) 9646 2233

Fax: (02) 9749 1749

Areas covered: Auburn, Lidcombe, Berala, Regents Park, Silverwater, Newington and parts of Granville, Guilford and Merrylands.

The Migrant Health Team provides services to the Arabic-speaking, Turkish, Chinese and Vietnamese communities. Services provided include

assessment, referrals, support and health education groups.

Contact: Theresa Chow

(Vietnamese & Chinese speaking)

Theresa_chow@wsahs.nsw.gov.au

Bankstown Community Health

Bankstown Community Health Service provides most community health services at Bankstown Community Health Centre.

36-38 Raymond Street

Bankstown, NSW 2200

Tel: 02 9780 2777

Fax: 02 9780 2899

Areas covered: Bankstown, Bass Hill, Birrong, Chester Hill, Chullora, Condell Park, East Hills, Georges Hall, Greenacre, Milperra, Mount Lewis, Old Guildford, Padstow, Padstow Heights, Panania, Picnic Point, Potts Hill, Punchbowl (part),

Regents Park (part), Revesby, Revesby Heights, Sefton, Villawood and Yagoona.

Four Ethnic Health workers are available at Bankstown Community Health Centre covering the following languages: Arabic, Macedonian, Polish and *Vietnamese/Chinese*: 9780 2807

Canterbury Community Health

39 Thorncraft Parade

Campsie NSW 2194

Tel: (02) 9787 0600

Fax: (02) 9787 0700

The areas served by the Canterbury Community Health Service are in the district of the Canterbury Municipal Council.

Contact: Kim Bui

(Viet Mental Health Counsellor)

Kim.bui@email.cs.nsw.gov.au

Fairfield Community Health

This Service provides community health services from three centres: Fairfield, Cabramatta and Prairiewood.

Fairfield Community Health Centre

Cnr The Horsley Drive / Mitchell Rd
Carramar NSW 2163

Ph: 02 9794 1700

Fax: 02 9794 1777

The *community mental health service* of this centre provides assessment to determine what sort of mental health issue someone has and put them in contact with the services that will best meet their needs. It may also provide treatments to help people manage a mental illness while living at home.

Contact: Anh Le

(Viet Mental Health Worker)

Anh.Le@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

**Cabramatta Community
Health Centre**

7 Levuka Street

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Ph: (02) 8717 4000

Fax: (02) 9724 6270

The counselling service of this Centre provides counselling to help children, adults and families overcome a wide range of difficulties, e.g., behaviour problems, depression, anxiety, domestic violence, grief and loss, family separation and trauma.

Contact: Viet Thang TRAN

(Vietnamese Counsellor)

Viet.Tran@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

MarrickvilleCommunity Health

155-159 Livingstone Rd

Marrickville NSW 2204

Ph: 02 9562 0500

Fax: 02 9562 0501

Areas covered depend on each particular service; generally the

catchment is the suburbs in the district of the Marrickville Municipal Council.

Marrickville Health Centre is a modern purpose built complex providing a wide range of health services to a diverse community.

The Migrant Health Services Team provides services to the Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Portuguese, Turkish and *Vietnamese* speaking communities. These include health education, consultancy and information to health professionals on cultural issues.

Contact: Xuan Duong

Xuan.duong@email.cs.nsw.gov.au

Notes

(1)http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_health

(2) Helen Hentschke, "Community Health Philosophy", South Coast District Hospital, 16 February 2007.

5.12 ETHNO-SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATION SERVICES

5.12.1 Kingston House

8 Kingston Road

PO Box 120

Camperdown NSW 2050

Tel: (02) 9519 3149

Kingston House, a Barnado' s residential care unit, provides medium to long term supportive accommodation for Indochinese young people, aged 12 to 18, who are behaviourally and severely emotionally disturbed. It does not accept referrals of clients who have a history of excessively violent behaviour or intellectual disabilities.

The unit is staffed 24 hours a day by a caring team of workers, most are bilingual and are of ethnic background. Up to eight young people can be accepted into the unit at any time. Young people are accepted on a one-month assessment basis after

which a decision is made as to whether they are appropriate for the program. Applications are considered jointly by the Senior Youth Worker and the Director of Kingston House.

5.12.2 Lotus House

PO Box 679,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 9727 0836

Email: lotushouse@ihug.com.au

Lotus House, funded under the Support Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) by the Federal Department of Health, Housing and Community Services and the State Department of Community Services, provides accommodation for young homeless women aged 14-18 from an Indochinese and CALD background.

The service is staffed 24 hours a day by residential youth workers from CALD background. The

service also has an Indochinese street worker based at Cabramatta Community Centre, who can assist residents to find accommodation, apply for income support and get information about other services. Young Indochinese women who require low cost supported accommodation are eligible and can stay for up to 12 months. Young women with drug and alcohol dependencies, those who require psychiatric treatment, have dependent children or who are extremely violent are not eligible.

Lotus House assists by providing a stable and secure place to live, independent living skills training, support and advice, self-esteem and social skills training, good nutrition, information and referral to other services, culturally appropriate services and support and recreational activities.

5.12.3 The Hearth “Mái Ấm”

PO Box 577,
Bankstown NSW 2200
Tel: (02) 9707 1519
(02) 9793 7129
Fax: (02) 9793 7895
Email: ailevawa@bigpond.net.au

The Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association (VAWA) operates two houses for homeless young Indochinese people aged 16-24 years who are living in Fairfield, Bankstown and Canterbury Local Government Areas. The Hearth has two separate houses: one with two bedrooms for girls and the other with 3 bedrooms for boys.

5.12.4 Van Lang Housing Co-Op

13 Vale Street
Canley Vale NSW 2166
Tel: (02) 9726 1851

The Van Lang Housing Cooperative was established in 1988 by a group of community

workers and Vietnamese elderly in Fairfield LGA. In 1991 it received a grant of one million dollars from the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services to build a housing complex for the aged experiencing housing and family difficulties.

The complex was officially opened on 19 June 1993 in Sydney West. It has 10 units totalling 14 bedrooms, presently occupied by those who have put a small deposit before the building project really started. The tenants only have to pay affordable rents and can choose to stay permanently or move out whenever they wish.



5.13 THE VIETNAMESE MEDIA

5.13.1 Radio Programs

SBS Radio Sydney

Locked Bag 028

Crows Nest NSW 1585

Tel: (02) 9430 2848

(02) 9430 2849

(02) 9430 2837

Fax: (02) 9438 1114

bach.phan@sbs.com.au

peter.vu@sbs.com.au

hoa.hoang@sbs.com.au

<http://www.radio.sbs.com.au/language.php?language=Vietnamese>

Frequencies: 1107 AM & 97.7 FM

Broadcasting times: 9-10am & 7-8pm

2VNR

PO Box 284,

Yagoona NSW 2199

Tel: (02) 9786 7314

Fax: (02) 9786 7315

2vnrradio@optushome.com.au

<http://www.2vnrradio.com.au/welcome.html>

2VNR Radio, on air 24/24, was established in 1998. It is the first commercial Vietnamese radio station in Australia. It covers most of the areas in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

Vietnamese Radio in Australia

(VNRA) (Việt Nam Úc Châu)

PO Box 630,
Punchbowl NSW 2196

khanh@vnra.net
<http://www.vnra.net>

Broadcasting in Sydney on
100.9 FM

Monday : 7.00pm to 10.00pm

Tuesday: 8.00pm to 10.00pm

Wednesday: 6:30pm to 0:00pm

Thursday : 6.00pm to 10.00pm

Vietnam Sydney Radio

PO Box 200

Bonnyrigg Plaza NSW 2177

Mob: 0412 824 099

Fax: (02) 9792 1115

vietnamsydneyradio@ozemail.com.au

98.5FM: Wed-Thu 5:00–6:00pm

98.7FM: Sat, 9:00pm – 12:00am

88.9FM: Sun, 9:00 – 11:00am

5.13.2 Newspapers & Magazines

The Sunrise Daily Newspaper
(Chiêu Dương)

PO Box 64,
Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 9725 6444

Fax: (02) 9725 6446

Email chieuduong@bigpond.com
vietnamesedaily@bigpond.com

The Vietnamese Tribune
(Dân Việt)

15/49 Park Rd

Cabramatta NSW 2166

P0 Box 368,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 9728 1666

Fax: (02) 9728 1600

Email info@danviet.com.au



Saigon Times

PO Box 409,

Bankstown NSW 2200

Tel: (02) 9785 8431

Fax: (02) 9790 3557

Email Saigon@bigpond.net.au

*Medicine & Modern Life
Magazine (Y Học & Đời Sống)*

PO Box 215,

Bankstown NSW 2200

Tel & Fax: (02) 9796 7545

medicinemodernlife@yahoo.com.au

The Vietnamese Herald

(*Việt Luận*)

Suite 6, Lvl 2,

300 Chapel Rd South

Bankstown NSW 2200

PO Box 99,

Bankstown NSW 1885

Tel: (02) 9796 3922

Fax: (02) 9707 1572

Email Info@vietluan.com.au

www.vietluan.com.au

Viet's Business Lifestyle

(*Doanh Nghiệp Đời Sống*)

P.O. Box 794

Cabramatta, NSW 2166

Te;; (02) 9726 0966

Fax: (02) 9725 6778

doanhnghiepdoisong@bigpond.com

Entertainment Weekly

Newspaper (Văn Nghệ)

2/271 Cabramatta Rd

Cabramatta NSW 2166

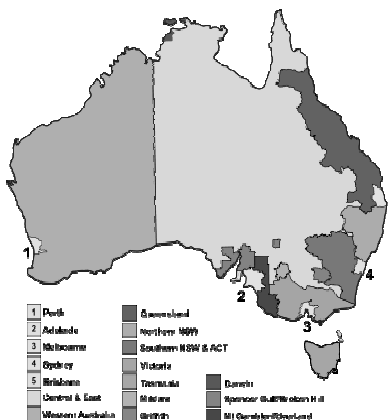
PO Box 926,

Cabramatta NSW 2166

Tel: (02) 8704 6444

Fax: (02) 8704 6222

vntb@optusnet.com.au



APPENDIX: READINGS

Reading 1

Vietnamese Culture in a Pluralist Australia: Conflict or Harmony?

By: Nguyen Hoang Cuong *

It has been said that most non-Aboriginal Australians do not understand how the Aborigines feel about their land and what it means to them.

The Vietnamese – although the newest settlers in this country – certainly do.

To both peoples, land is part of their very existence: what Henry Bergson would call *élan vital* (thrust of life) definitely comes from the land on which they live.

As put by a boat person, “we Vietnamese are stubborn and arrogant. We Vietnamese

cannot live happily anywhere except in Vietnam”.

Vietnam, their fatherland, is still there, looking like a beautiful dragon resting along the shore of the South China Sea. To make the Vietnamese flee from the land of their ancestors, something very wrong must have happened there.

Bruce Grant, in his book *The Boat People*, has touched upon that point, writing:

At times, when telling the story of the boat people, it seemed that Indochina had become the vortex of all that is wrong with

mankind... The boat people have indeed made us all again look at ourselves and at the state of our world.

I could have come to this great seminar just to listen, learn and try to understand some of the issues confronting the multicultural society of Australia to which I now belong. However, the organising committee has kindly asked me to represent the Vietnamese community to address this formidable issue of Vietnamese culture in Australia. What, then, is Vietnamese culture? What will become of it in a pluralist Australia? Is it a source of conflict or can it co-exist in harmony with other cultures in this new environment?

The issue appears to be so large that nothing short of an in-depth treatment would do it justice. Within the time frame I have been given, I can only mention a few basic points. Such an approach is bound to be unsatisfactory, especially for

students of Asia and the Far East. Please accept my apologies for the shallowness of my remarks.

To understand the Vietnamese, one must look at their culture in the setting of their country and their history.

The land of Vietnam is beautiful but it is not a free gift from Nature. Year after year, century after century, generation upon generation of Vietnamese have had to wrest it from bush and swamp, save it from flood, drought and typhoons. Having poured sweat and tears on it, they also have had to defend it against foreign invaders.

Of the two thousand years of recorded Vietnamese history, about half was spent under Chinese domination. During this long and harsh period (111 BC to 938 AD) the Vietnamese absorbed Chinese culture but rejected Chinese rule. The era of independence started in 938 and

soon afterward Vietnam emerged as a civilized country, which, in some respects, compared rather favourably with China. Indeed, although the Three Religions – Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism – were brought to Vietnam by the Chinese, there could be noticed in the ensuing centuries many periods when the teachings of Buddha, Lao-tse and Confucius were more in evidence in the Southern country than in the Northern empire.

A millennium of political independence was long enough for society to get organised, institutions to be established and artistic genres of many kinds to blossom. The blending of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism - especially the Vietnamese kind – resulted in an exquisite philosophy of life, full of wisdom and rich in moral comfort. It is something I would call “pastoral humanism”.

Throughout most of their nation’s history, the Vietnamese have been taught that true manhood consists in realising one’s true self and restoring the world’s moral order. A Vietnamese “gentleman” would understand the reason of the heart, penetrate to the source of the wandering principle, know the way of Heaven, practice the virtue of perfect humanity (nhân) and the duty of justice in interpersonal relations (ngĩa), embellish himself with the proper rites (lễ) and with good music (nhạc).

Perfect humanity (nhân) involves respect for others and respect for oneself. Perfect humanity requires an indivisible sense of respect for human dignity and human life. Perfect humanity knows of no national boundaries. “Within the four seas, all men are brothers.”

In days long gone by, all Vietnamese “gentlemen” would also think of ordering their

national life. But those who wished to order their national life would first set about regulating their family life. Those who wished to regulate their family life would first set about cultivating their personal life. Those who wished to cultivate their personal life would first set about setting their heart right. The heart set right, one's personal life is cultivated, one's family life regulated, one's national life orderly, then, there is bound to be peace in the world. There lie the precepts of the Great Learning.

The Vietnamese revere education and learning and therefore respect the teacher and the elderly. In society, at the top, the king personifies the law of Nature, the way of Heaven, the supreme authority. Next comes the teacher, who symbolizes culture and learning. At the base, the father is the head of the family, itself considered the building block of society.

Lin Yutang, the famous Chinese-American philosopher and writer, once proposed a test with the following question: "What type of husbands and wives and fathers and mothers does a civilization turn out?" Lin, then, claimed that "besides the austere simplicity of such a question, every other achievement of civilization – art, philosophy, literature, and material living – pales into insignificance".

This is how Lin Yutang explained his test:

Such a test has the strange effect of levelling all mankind by brushing aside all the non-essentials of civilization and culture, and bringing all under a simple and clear equation.

As biological beings, there is not getting around the fact that we are all born as babies, suck at mothers' breasts, and marry and give

birth to other babies. Every man is born of a woman. Some have refused to become parents, but no man can refuse to have parents. So, then, we come to the basic relationship between man and woman and the child.

Lin's point of view implies, whatever the reason may be, that a man or woman should not leave this world without children.

If the sterility is due to the body, then the body is degenerate and wrong. If it is due to the high cost of living, then the high cost of living is wrong. If it is due to a too high standard of marriage, then the high standard of marriage is wrong. If it is due to a false philosophy of individualism, then the philosophy of individualism is wrong. If it is due to the entire fabric of society, then the entire fabric of society is wrong.

But to the Vietnamese, the cult of life must be accompanied by the cult of harmony and the assuming of human responsibility. All the wisdom of the past combined with the harsh reality of life during long periods of foreign occupation has forged the Vietnamese personality into a three-pronged cultural stand: To Be – To Belong – To Behave.

The whole history of Vietnam constitutes a long and painful test for that national character, but it has repeatedly shown that the Vietnamese always stand up to each and every challenge. With this in mind, let us now shift our attention to another chapter of human relationship: their encounter with the West.

The French arrived in Vietnam in the middle of the nineteenth century. It took them many decades to overcome the resistance of Vietnamese patriots, but at the beginning of this century (20th century), the

whole Indochinese peninsula can be said to have been firmly under French control. A number of developments recorded at this juncture also prove that many Vietnamese by then realized that Buddhist compassion, Taoist metaphysics and Confucianist ethics were no match for French weapons. In other words, spiritual values may hold true in the very long run, but Western science and technology give overwhelming and immediate satisfaction. Western culture is so tangible that it can annihilate your thinking and feeling by shattering certain values in your way of life.

As they did with the Chinese threat before, the people of Vietnam resisted French rule but absorbed French culture. When World War 2 broke out, this catastrophe however opened up new opportunities for national independence and freedom from oppression for many nations of the world. The Vietnamese were not among these, though.

Already exacerbated by the harsh rule of French colonialism, Vietnamese patriotism gave way to a revolution, which claimed to be the champion of the poor and the oppressed, to be materialistic and invincible and to embody ineluctably the future of mankind!

Communism came as the greatest shock and challenge to Vietnam's most cherished traditions. Fatherland, independence, human values, the cult of harmony, the nation's roots and its culture... all disappeared in a sea of blood: the revolution that had fired the imagination of young and old, soon proved to be merely the seizure of power by a new ruling clique in whose eyes human life became less precious than that of an earth-worm and politics was downgraded to the level of animal taming.

That is how Vietnamese refugees are now in Australia.

What did the refugees bring along with them?

Clearly and simply, a belief in the family as the fundamental building unit of society, religion as a spiritual right, freedom of expression, choice of way of life for themselves and their children, respect for the law and social order. Have these values anything incompatible with Australia's mainstream cultural values?

What are the refugees deprived of?

In coming here, the refugees have severed all cultural ties with their country. Most have arrived on Australian shores without any money and more importantly, in most cases, without kith and kin. Most refugee families are still split, husbands separated from wives, children from their parents. Can you, in all honesty, imagine any more disadvantaged migrant category?

And now, in their new environment, what new challenges do the refugees have to face?

Once more, they are in full contact with Western civilisation. Once more, the old challenge is back but it is now one of cooperation rather than rejection, one of adaptation rather than disengagement, one of contribution rather than withdrawal. There possibly is another challenge: it is how they will contribute to Australia's multiculturalism, still in an early development stage.

But prior to contributing anything to their new country, refugees from Vietnam must start life anew in a rather difficult economic environment. They know they must succeed. For them, there is no other alternative. When assessing their resettlement efforts, please simply remember that the basic motive prompting them to come here is deeply political: they

would need more time to settle down than, say, migrants from a more peaceful background.

What I have just said only points to a formidable task lying ahead of them. It is an experiment of a totally new kind, too. It is finally a challenge, which will test this small community of theirs and their cultural values, and their ability to survive culturally intact in their new environment. So, then, should we expect conflict or harmony? Pessimists would expect conflict, optimists would hope for harmony.

But let us listen to what they themselves have got to say.

“Without work,” a Vietnamese Boat Person recently exclaimed, “I have to be on the dole, and so become a burden to society. If I am lucky enough to land a job, I am charged with depriving somebody of his bread and butter. You know I cannot go home. So, fair Australia, tell me what to do!”

“In Australia,” lamented another, much older, “the old are so free that they can go and live in a nursing home... and their children won’t say anything in objection. Children won’t even tell their parents they want to take care of them.”

Hearing these stories, one cannot help wondering whether the seeds of cultural conflicts are right there. Yes, they are. But a few decades ago, when the longest established ethnic communities first made their presence felt in Australia, were such seeds not there for everyone to see? Who can say that these seeds of conflict have totally disappeared? Who can point to these conflicts to denounce multiculturalism? Who can doubt the contributions of such communities as the Greek, the Chinese, the Italian communities and many other communities as well?

Ladies and gentlemen,

A pluralist Australia, in my humble opinion, is an ideal environment for different cultures to co-exist and foster their own contributions. I would say in great confidence that such conflicts, if there should be any, will not last long. I would even say that such conflicts are both ephemeral and superficial.

Looking at the basic components of our traditional culture – family love, human freedom, and respect for social order – who would say they are in conflict with Australian values? On the contrary, one can only come to the conclusion that Australians and Vietnamese have much in common and that common ground is bound to produce peace and harmony.

By mentioning their common ground, I only want to say that both Australians and Vietnamese do not wish to see churches and pagodas

destroyed as in some Communist countries; both want to be free to build temples of any denomination; both sincerely believe that through their votes, citizens of a country can choose the kind life they want to live; both Vietnamese and Australians do not want to see the day when our own children can be prodded to denounce us as has been the case in some police states.

By mentioning their yearning for Harmony, I only mean that both Australians and Vietnamese have so very much in common that the conflicts that keep them apart are necessarily superficial. By that, I also mean the various basic factors that have brought various ethnic communities together over the past fifty years.

Since the Vietnamese left their country, many Vietnamese communities have sprung up in Australia and elsewhere. In their attempts at starting a new life, they have not come across too

many difficulties. In this new environment, Vietnamese children have done particularly well and this allows us to nurture the hope that cultural harmonization will not be an empty phrase in this humane society.

In conclusion, please allow me to restate a few important points:

To understand us, one must keep in mind that Vietnam is a country with a long cultural past and many cultural values. Located at the crossroads of civilizations, Vietnam has resisted foreign rule but it has always tried to absorb the best these foreign powers had to offer it culturally. One thousand years of Chinese domination, ten centuries of national independence, one hundred years of French colonization and thirty years of a seemingly endless war have made the Vietnamese what they are today.

Were it not for the Communist regime, which took over the country and started a revolution that has systematically destroyed so many of their moral and traditional values, no Vietnamese would have thought of leaving their fatherland.

But now that we have been implanted into a new society, we shall do our best to adapt ourselves to our new environment. However, we shall do our best to keep our basic cultural stand – To Be -To Belong -To Behave - for we are all convinced that it constitutes a national feature that not only explains our attachment to family life and other traditional values but also holds the key to Vietnam's extraordinary vitality as a nation, especially in moments of great dangers.

Right here, behavioural differences between Vietnamese refugees and their hosts might cause some frictions in some areas. Their eagerness to do

well, start life anew from scratch, recover some social status, may lead to misunderstandings or create some conflicts of interests with the more established segments of the larger community. But these “conflicts” should be viewed as passing phenomena experienced by all new ethnic groups in such a free and open society as that of Australia. Abstraction made of these “passing phenomena”, human beliefs and social values shared by Australians and Vietnamese will help the new settlers’ social integration to a great extent.

Finally, I should like to say that the presence of a successful Vietnamese community in a pluralist Australia can only strengthen Australia’s position in this part of the world and

consolidate her ties with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Indeed, Australia’s “crimson thread” has never been, and will never be, severed. On the contrary, with a new wave of migrants coming from the Asia-Pacific region, Australia’s “crimson thread” is beautifully enhanced by the addition of a tiny golden filament to the already rich tapestry of Australian society.

* Deceased on 13 May 1990.

Paper presented at the Seminar *A Pluralist Australia* at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, on 6 October 1984. Reprinted with the kind permission of Mrs Nguyễn Hoàng Cương.



Reading 2

Rediscovering Our Roots *

By Phan Van Hung

I'd like first to share with you the story of my journey into music, because in some way it's also the story of my journey back to my roots. These roots, I did eventually find them, but not where I thought they would be!

When I was a teenager in Vietnam, not unlike many kids about my age, I learned to play guitar by myself and I used to sing while playing chords on my guitar. But I wasn't at all interested in Vietnamese songs, or in Vietnamese music in general. In fact I only played foreign songs, American, English, French or whatever. It was the time of the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel and I was fond of Peter, Paul and Mary, the American folk singers.

At the age of 17, I got the news that a scholarship was going to be offered to me to go and study

in France. It was a shock, because I suddenly realised that I didn't know one single Vietnamese song to take with me during my long years abroad! So in the following few months, I rushed to learn to play the Vietnamese zither (đàn tranh) and I discovered for the first time the works of the great Vietnamese songwriters such as Pham Duy.

That was for me a complete turn around – like a wake up call – and during my years in France, I left the Beatles aside to only play and sing Vietnamese songs. And I started to write my own songs as well, in Vietnamese naturally. What a contrast: in Vietnam, I only played foreign music. But now a grown up person living abroad, I was playing only Vietnamese music. Was it my way to get back to my roots? I did not know

then, but unconsciously I was trying to get back home somehow.

I came to Australia in 1982 as a refugee. My hope of soon returning to Vietnam had already long gone. It was a struggle at first. Understanding and speaking English was a problem. Earning a living was a problem too and I had various jobs, even at one stage making French pastry or selling computers. One day through a friend, I met an Aboriginal poet; her name was Margaret Brusnahan. Her poetry, so simple and so true, struck me in the sense that she talked about her loss of identity as a white person of Aboriginal descent, standing on the edge of both cultures. In her own words, she wrote:

*Please take my hand, I
need a friend,*

*Will you stick with me from
beginning to end?*

*Will you help me find out
where I belong,*

*Point out to me where I'm
going wrong?*

*I'm two people in one,
which is me?*

*Not knowing the real one is
misery.*

And it was my own misery too. I felt so deeply about what she said that I started putting her poetry into music, and I ended up performing these songs at various venues such as Tandanya and the Melbourne Museum. People were startled, because here I was, a Vietnamese guy singing Aboriginal poetry in an American folk style, complete with chords and picking technique! But the question is: Did I find my roots by doing so? The answer: Yes, I did ...

* This is part of a speech by Phan Văn Hưng at the Annual Conference for Teachers of Vietnamese, SA Vietnamese Teachers Association, Saturday 7/7/2007, Hindmarsh Education Development Centre, Adelaide. Posted on Vietland website on 13/7/2007 at <s152542055.onlinehome.us/xoops4/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=13618&forum=98post_id=5041#forumpost5041>

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