

Approximately 75 million Vietnamese people live throughout the world. More than 70 million inhabit all parts of Vietnam. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War (which ended in 1975), refugees made their way to dozens of countries around the globe. Today there are large communities of Vietnamese in different parts of the world including 1.2 million in the USA; 300,000 in France; and 150,000 in Australia.

The Vietnamese, who call themselves Kinh or Jing, have a long history. Their ancestors were already occupying northern Vietnam 2,000 years ago. In 1471 they destroyed the Chamba kingdom and migrated to the southern extremities of Vietnam. The Chinese ruled Vietnam as a vassal state from about 200 BC to AD 938. Their influence has been felt by all generations of Vietnamese since. Ethnic, cultural and dialect differences continue to exist between Vietnamese from the north of the country and those from the south.

Theravada Buddhism was brought to Vietnam from India by pilgrims at the end of the 2nd century AD. At about the same time, Chinese monks introduced Mahayana Buddhism. Neither sect of Buddhism enjoyed widespread popularity until centuries later. Between the 10th and 13th centuries,

Buddhism received royal patronage. Today, Mahayana Buddhism is by far the largest Buddhist sect in Vietnam—with approximately 40



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million adherents<sup>1</sup>—although there is Theravada influence in the south of the country among both Khmer and Vietnamese people. If asked their religion, ‘the Vietnamese are likely to say that they are Buddhist, but when it comes to family or civic duties they are likely to follow Confucianism while turning to Taoist conception in understanding the nature of the cosmos. . . . The function of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk is to minister to the spiritual and superstitious needs of the peasantry, but it is largely up to him whether he invokes the lore of Taoism or the philosophy of Buddhism. A monk may live reclusively on a remote hilltop or he may manage

a pagoda on a busy city street. And he may choose to fulfill any number of functions: telling fortunes, making and selling talismans, advising whether a

house should be constructed, reciting incantations at funerals or even performing acupuncture.<sup>12</sup>

Catholic missionaries from Portugal, Spain and France began work in Vietnam in the 16th century. By 1685 there were already an estimated

800,000 Catholics in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> Many believers were martyred for their faith.<sup>4</sup> Protestant work did not get underway until the early 1900s. The Christian and Missionary Alliance spearheaded the Protestant enterprise. Today there are an estimated 6.2 million Vietnamese Christians in Vietnam. This figure includes about 5.8 million Catholics and only 400,000 Protestants, who meet in both government-sanctioned churches and illegal house church gatherings.<sup>5</sup> Persecution of Christians continues throughout the country, with dozens of pastors in prison at any given time.



#### Population:

72,031,700 (2000)  
83,340,700 (2010)  
96,425,100 (2020)

**Countries:** Vietnam, USA, Cambodia, France, Australia, Thailand, Laos, Germany, Canada, China, United Kingdom, Norway, Netherlands, New Caledonia and many other nations

**Buddhism:** Mahayana, some Theravada

**Christians:** 6,500,000

## Overview of the Vietnamese

**Other Names:** Viet, Kinh, King, Gin, Jing, Ching, Annamese

#### Population Sources:

69,373,700 in Vietnam (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk)  
1,200,000 in USA (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk)  
620,000 in Cambodia (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk)  
300,000 in France (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk)  
150,000 in Australia (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk)  
89,000 in Laos (2001, P Johnstone and J Mandryk)<sup>6</sup>  
60,000 in Germany (1999, Asian Minorities Outreach)  
60,000 in Canada (1999, Asian Minorities Outreach)<sup>7</sup>

**Language:** Austro-Asiatic, Mon-Khmer, Viet-Muong, Vietnamese

**Dialects:** 3 (Northern, Central, Southern)

**Professing Buddhists:** 65%

**Practising Buddhists:** 35%

**Christians:** 9%

**Scripture:** Bible 1916; New Testament 1914; Portions 1890

**Jesus film:** available

**Gospel Recordings:** Vietnamese; Vietnamese: Hue; Vietnamese: North; Vietnamese: South

**Christian Broadcasting:** available

**ROPAL code:** VIE

## Status of Evangelization

