

---

## BOOK REVIEW

### PEOPLE IN UPHEAVAL

Scott M. Morgan and Elizabeth Colson, editors  
New York: Center for Migration Studies (1987)

This volume of articles is the result of a year-long Anthropology graduate seminar on migration given at the University of California, Berkeley by well-known anthropologists in the field of migration: Elizabeth Colson and George De Vos (psychological anthropology). Colson's "Introduction" previews the papers and organizes the topical material into a perspective in which to view "a major 20th century phenomenon...massive population displacements." It is disappointing that the promised 'global view' excludes articles on Africa and the Middle East,

---

*Continued from page 14*

the repatriation operation. He also made available to UNHCR a nominal list of those returned, which was very carefully checked against the lists of refugees and asylum seekers.

The Djibouti Government, as well as UNHCR, is open to discussion with interlocutors and is glad to facilitate visits to see the repatriation operation and the situation of refugees in Djibouti, provided that reasonable notice is given. Similarly, the Ethiopian Government is ready to facilitate visits to see actual return movements and the integration of returnees.

### Conclusion

While the current emphasis in Djibouti is certainly on the voluntary repatriation exercise, UNHCR is well aware that there are refugees for whom repatriation is not the solution and therefore they wish to remain in Djibouti. Despite the difficulties, UNHCR will continue to pursue other solutions while discharging its protection responsibilities towards them and asylum seekers.

*Fiorella Badiani,  
London, England.  
7 February 1987*

where most of the world's 'people in upheaval' are located. Moreover, the importance of the "undocumented" refugee the world over is not ever mentioned. However, given Colson's quote of Said that "Ours is the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass migration", perhaps one such volume is insufficient as a "representative" sample of the world's uprooted peoples.

Eight of the ten chapters deal either with Asian ethnocultural groups in the U.S. or Asia, or with American government refugee policy as that concerns the Lao in Southeast Asia. A lone chapter focuses on Mexican American migrants' adjustment in the United States, while another compares the use of local settlement agencies by Soviet Jews and Vietnamese in the San Francisco Bay Area. Commendably, all authors have done participant observation field work for varying periods of time in their areas and some originate from the areas discussed.

A continuous theme throughout the book is that stock categories of 'political refugee', 'economic refugee', 'displaced person' and 'migrant' are, in fact, the very fluid outcome of complex and continuing social and political negotiations, most often not ones controlled by individuals with the affected groups. This is a very important point for policy makers to ponder as increasingly hard lines are being drawn on such distinctions in Canada and elsewhere today. In "International Refugee Policy: Lowland Lao Refugees", e.g., M. Lacey writes about the effect of the ideological battle between the U.S. and Soviet Union on uprooted people. She claims (p.28) that of the more than one million refugees accepted by the U.S. between 1956 and 1979, only 3,000 were from 'non-communist' countries. And, in 1982 the U.S. granted refugee status to 73,522 Southeast Asians but only 579 Latin Americans, despite massive displacements of people in Central America which the U.S. played a considerable role in creating. Similarly, shifting international relations often cause 'political refugees' to be reclassified as 'economic refugees'. Hence, they are eligible for resettlement. Lacey describes what happened to the Lao in Thailand as a result of Washington's desire for closer relations in Vietiane. On the American home front,

local host populations may themselves reclassify 'political refugees' as 'economic refugees' when economic recession threatens jobs for indigenous people. This touches on an important subject which is insufficiently developed in the book: in the First and Third World, do already disadvantaged minorities and majority group members disproportionately bear the cost of hosting migrants?

A second theme running through the many case studies in this volume is the interaction of host and newcomers. The article on Tibetan communities in South India, e.g., would be of special interest to many people. D. De Vos describes how Tibetans have opted to take on 'refugee' status, actively maintaining this in exile as a response to policies in their homeland. Indeed, Tibetan exiles strive to keep Tibetan culture and identity alive as their special personal mission (as have Palestinians). The Indian government response to this is to allow Tibetans to have near total cultural and political autonomy within their limited regions — something rarely granted to indigenous Indian minority groups. This theme is also addressed by W. Chao in his article on urban Chinese youths who were sent to the rural hinterlands to be educated by rural peasantry (mid-1950s through to the late 1960s). O. Abdoellah's article on the Indonesian government's programs to resettle Javanese and Balinese in outer "underpopulated" islands gives us a brief description of the effects of these programs on migrants, but mostly ignores the (mainly negative) effects which these programs have had on local peoples. A case in point is the widespread violence resulting from Muslim migrants appropriating land from Melanesian indigenies, and the consequent flight of Melanesians to Papua, New Guinea.

A third theme in this volume of studies relates to national and international agencies who assist refugees in transit camps and in countries where the refugees have settled permanently. S. Gold's article, e.g., compares the different modes of interaction of Soviet Jews and Vietnamese to local social service providers; this article contains insights that would be useful to anyone involved with crosscultural social

*Cont'd on page 16*

CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES  
**REFUGEE**

c/o Refugee Documentation Project, York University  
4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario M3J 1P3

Postage Paid in Toronto  
Second Class Mail Registration No. 5512  
Return Postage Guaranteed

*Cont'd from page 15*

service delivery. G. Bousquet's article sketchily describes life in an open Hong Kong refugee camp. Here again, more attention could have been given to individual survival strategies and methods of coping with people outside the Jubilee "apartment complex camp." It is unfortunate that Bousquet does not provide comparative data on local peoples. And my own experience in the field tends to confirm that refugees 'survive' more comfortably than do many of the local people. Thus, they are not unambiguously at the 'bottom of the heap.'

A fourth theme, "working out the processes of uprooting and readjustment in the life cycle of resettlement" is addressed by material treating Korean and Mexican immigrants to the U.S. under what are normally considered 'voluntary' migration conditions. In contrast, the mostly involuntary migration of

Vietnamese, Iu Mien and Hmong refugees to the U.S. is also described. And here an important issue emerges. When, why and under what conditions do migrants become 'successfully independent' while others do not? What is often attributed to 'culture' as the key to successful integration is critiqued in an excellent article by J. Habarad on the socialization of Lao Iu Mien into prolonged dependency on American government support. L. Shein's article on the Lao Hmong emphasizes the same argument: American society presents people with certain possibilities with which they must cope in terms of their limited resources, their previous experience and culturally-derived values. These two articles are insightful, valuable contributions.

To conclude the book, co-editor Morgan argues that many of the folk critiques against Southern and Eastern European immigrants during the early 20th century are still used today in reference to Asian

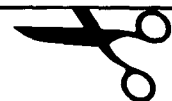
and other ethnocultural migrants to the United States.

As noted, this book is somewhat uneven in quality and certainly does not provide an overall orientation towards people in upheaval. Further, the complex subject of the inter-relationship between migrants and host peoples is somewhat neglected in this volume — but receives much better attention in Harrell-Bond's *Imposing Aid*. Nevertheless, I would recommend this book because it uses interesting (if short and largely American-centred) case studies to touch upon many key issues in migration and settlement today.

*Doreen Indra is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Lethbridge. She is co-author of CONTINUOUS JOURNEY: A Social History of South Asians in Canada, and co-editor of the recently published, UPROOTING, LOSS AND ADAPTATION: Indochinese Refugees in Canada.*

CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES  
**REFUGEE**

c/o Refugee Documentation Project, York University  
4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario M3J 1P3



**I wish to become a friend of the Refugee Documentation Project for the 1986-1987 academic year. I understand that all friends receive *Refugee* as well as information on the research activities of the RDP. My cheque for \$20 (or ) made payable to the Refugee Documentation Project is enclosed.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Province or State \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_