

Shifts in Diasporic and Buddhist Identities Among Second Generation Cambodians in Ontario

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Abstract:

Second generation Cambodians born and/or raised within Canada have experienced an incredible range of family and social disruption, influenced as much by their parent's survival of the Khmer Rouge genocide as their extensive difficulties in resettlement. In comparison to other North American Asian communities, adaptive strategies for long-term integration were hindered by the absence of Buddhist temples, ritual/monastic specialists, and community leadership. More than twenty-five years later, as the second generation youth increasingly access post-secondary education (initiating patterns of upward mobility) and Cambodian communities across Ontario begin to establish Buddhist temples with full-time monastics, clear disparities exist within and between the generations in understanding the role of Buddhism and Buddhist monks, the meaning of traditional rituals, and the identification of Buddhism as an integral part of personal or cultural identity. This paper details some of these disparities among Cambodian youth in Ontario, and highlights how new cultural symbols of belonging are increasingly utilized to validate innovate ways in being Khmer. For many second generation Cambodians, a positive diasporic Buddhist identity arises within the context of their first visit to Cambodia as young adults and their subsequent experiences of meeting extended family members, visiting sacred sites (archaeological and

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genocide memorials), and participating in special rituals that call them back to the roots of Khmer identity. Analysis of the extent to which religious identities and understandings transform through migration and generational change contributes to this research on Buddhism and diaspora in North America.

Religious and Ethnic Identities in Transition

Religious identities among the estimated 10,000 Cambodian refugees in Ontario are closely tied to the effects of war, genocide, seeking asylum, refugee camp life, and the process of sponsorship, particularly the correlation with Christian conversion (McLellan 2009). Ontario Cambodians' pre-migration experiences, in conjunction with the chronic shortage of Cambodian Buddhist monks, most of whom were de-robed or killed by the Khmer Rouge, have negatively influenced their efforts to re-create, transform, or maintain traditional Buddhist religious identities, practices, and temples. In spite of their extensive struggles to adapt and integrate into Canadian life, first generation Cambodians have retained a strong adherence to traditional Buddhist moral ideals, monastic and lay inter-dependency, the honouring of ancestral spirits, and structuring ritual and ceremonial activities in line with the Cambodian times and seasons. They are similar to other Khmer in diaspora, particularly in the sense that Buddhist definitions of self and community remain the foundation of their ethnic and cultural identity. It is increasingly evident, however, that there have been significant shifts in religious and ethnic identity construction, particularly among the second generation born and/or raised in Canada. Unlike their older siblings who arrived in Canada as children and dealt with the classic contradictions of "dual identity," the younger second generation are engaged in creating a range of "Khmer-Canadian" identities that are rooted in local as well as transnational diasporic contexts. The continuum of Khmer identities developed may or may not include Buddhism as a defining characteristic; and when it does, Buddhism is understood and expressed differently from that of the first generation.

Across North America, first generation Asian Buddhist immigrants and refugees generally tend to continue the expression of strong interrelationships between ethnic/nationalistic identity retention and traditional religious beliefs and practices. Several scholars (Kashima 1977; Kendis 1989; Dorais 1991; Canda & Phaobtong 1992; Van Esterik 2003; Numrich 1996; McLellan 1999; Zhou et al. 2002; Suh 2004)

demonstrate that Buddhism plays a significant role in their resettlement and life long adjustment process, contributing positively to ongoing adaptation and integration within North American life, psychological health, social affiliations (local, national, and global), culturally familiar authority patterns and gender roles, and overall community social cohesion. Involving their North American born and/or raised children in different types of Buddhist rituals and cultural practices has helped to maintain a continuity of both ethnic and religious identities. Traditional ritual services and celebrations provide North American born and/or raised children with opportunities to identify with and wear clothing associated with their parent's homeland, to participate in communally prepared food that represents cultural familiarity, to retain some degree of family language(s), to learn and perform non-Western forms of literature, music and dance, and to share social and psychological well-being with others from a similar background. Numrich's (1996:105) comparison of Thai Wat Dhammanram of Chicago and Sinhalese Dharma Vijaya of Los Angeles noted that while first generation immigrant identities in the United States tended to be more "Asians-in-America" maintaining primary reference to the homeland, the second generation favours a hyphenated identity predicated ethnicity and heritage, for example, as "Thai Americans" or "Sinhalese Americans", with a primary orientation towards being American.

Generational differences regarding ethnoreligious identities are consistently noted within immigrant and refugee communities (Ebaugh & Chafetz 2000:395-444; Peek 2005), with the recognition that resettlement and integration itself is a multidimensional and dynamic process (Leonard et al. 2005; Lorentzen et al. 2009:xx). Like religion, the persistence of ethnicity through generations of Asian Buddhists is not static. The content of ethnicity transforms in response to changing social reality (locally, nationally and globally), and on the basis of individual and group needs. Buddhist temples and associations simultaneously attempt to retain ethnoreligious identities and traditions and provide a context for innovation, becoming sites to mediate new changes, beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, and ways of life that orientate immigrants and refugees to North American life (McLellan 1999:200-205; Zhou, Bankston & Kim 2002; Chun 2009:91;106). The ability to succeed in both facets depends to a large degree on the level of financial and social capital they bring with them or develop within new contexts and opportunities. Social capital is increasingly utilized as a key interpretive category in the ability of

communities to negotiate identity and adaptive success for both the first and second generations.

Stepick (2005:20-221) notes that social capital involves social ties that become the basis for community cohesion and systems of support that benefit individuals within the group (such as housing or employment opportunities) as well as to advance the group's recognition and representation within the larger society. Social capital can be identified with particular individuals who are seen as representatives of their religious tradition (Wuthnow 2002; McLellan 2006:97); within a specific sub-group identification (Chandler 1999, Guest 2003; Chen 2003; Chun 2009); within different communities of the same religious tradition (McLellan & White 2005); or can entail the resources of others within bonds of fictive kinship (Curry & Ebaugh 2000). Padgett (2002) notes extensive social capital within the Florida Wat Mongkolratanarm through its strong leadership, public representation, and multiethnic connections, similar to the strength of the interracial and interreligious bonds at the Thai/American temples studied by Pereira (2004) and Bankston and Hidalgo (2008:61). Among certain refugee groups with particularly harsh pre-migration experiences that destabilized levels of trust, solidarity, and social cohesion, the resulting low levels of social capital in resettlement inhibits their rebuilding of Buddhist temples and their retention of traditional patterns of ethnoreligious identities and practices (McLellan 2004). McLellan (2004; 2006: 91-100; 2009:9-13) identifies this lack of social capital within Cambodian refugee communities in Ontario. She argues that it has directly contributed to the difficulties among the second generation who have lacked the variety of youth educational programs evident in other Asian immigrant and refugee communities that developed programs specifically to help inculcate Buddhism as an integral part of their personal, cultural, or ethnic identity.

Availability of Youth Educational Programs within North American Asian Buddhist Temples

For more than thirty years at the Dharma Vijaya temple in Los Angeles, educational programs for Sinhalese youth have ranged from formal classes in traditional Buddhist instruction to various youth associations that sponsor, plan, and facilitate activities such as the full-moon poya celebration or fund-raising activities for Sri Lanka (Numrich 1996:103). Similarly, the Thai Wat Dhammaram temple in Chicago provides a well-attended Sunday School program (first established in

1977) that includes formal Buddhist teachings with Western perspectives and Thai cultural activities (art and dance) (ibid: 97, 100). It also runs a summer day camp with emphasis on the Thai language, culture, Buddhism and the arts (ibid: 99). The Sinhalese and Thai temples utilize a combination of homeland-based textbook material published in English and the homeland language, and North American guidelines. The Sri Lankan-American Buddha Dharma Society follows the ways by which the Japanese Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Churches in America during the 1930s developed their own curriculum of Japanese influenced Buddhist training in English through the Young Men's Buddhist Association (Kashima 1977:40-41). Age related Jodo Shinshu religious education was balanced by American activities such as baseball, and opportunities to cook traditional Japanese food, aid seniors, or help in the annual bazaars that highlighted Japanese culture and ethnicity (ibid: 138). Toronto Buddhist Church has provided the same model of religious instruction and cultural activities for youth since the 1950s, and although the Dharma School summer camp is no longer held, youth tours to Japan are highly supported and financially supplemented (McLellan 1999:71). Since the 1980s, Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Associations, first founded in Vietnam in 1941, have become an integral part of many North American Vietnamese Buddhist temples, often being run autonomously from temple organizations (McLellan 1999:231; Hyunh 2000:53). Age related classes are led by volunteers (male and female) providing instruction in Buddhism, Vietnamese language, culture (dance and poetry), and traditional crafts. For youth in the Vietnamese Buddhist Associations, uniforms are required, clearly identifying the members as they socialize together before and after classes or when they help assist during major religious observances within their own temple, larger community events, or intra-faith activities such as Wesak celebrations (McLellan 1999: 33).

Attempts to separate Buddhist training from ethnicity and homeland cultural programming (including language instruction) can become a contentious issue, a situation Numrich (1996:102) noted among the Los Angeles Sinhalese temple, and one that arose in the early years of the Sinhalese temple in Toronto (Hori and McLellan 2010:380) and later observed in Bhikkhu's (2010) thesis on the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in Toronto. Youth themselves can become confused with the seemingly contradictory priorities between the retention of traditional culture and religion and being American to an extent that they refer to themselves as "guinea pigs" (Numrich 1996:97). Among youth at a Thai temple, part of their response was to negate the cultural and religious expectations

through utilizing temple space primarily for their own social connections and activities (ibid:106). Some Vietnamese youth find stronger connection with their parent's cultural background through the Buddhist Youth Associations or innovative practices at particular temples and develop a confident hybrid identity; others do not, and completely reject their ethnic and religious heritage to identify only with American culture (McLellan 1999:121; Hyunh 2000:64-65; Do and Khuc (2009:137). Nguyen and Barber (1998:144) suggest that the cultural and identity crisis that many second generation Vietnamese youth go through will necessitate that they look for ways to eventually return to and understand their roots. This process follows the pattern established earlier among third generation Japanese who, in search of ethnic comfort and socializing, return to the temple after a long separation (Kendis 1989:74, 90; Tanaka 1999:9; McLellan 1999:58). The pattern is different among the second-generation youth at the Toronto Sinhalese temples who don't leave, but "re-claim Buddhism" as a process of constructing their own religious identity, distinct from that of their parents (Bhikkhu 2010:45). Soucy (1994) and Do and Khuc (2009) demonstrate that innovative Buddhist leaders, especially female monastics, can provide creative programs to overcome traditional gender segregation and bridge generational gaps, as well as adapt Buddhist teachings to emulate North American environmental ideals. Suh (2004:171), however, identifies a different pattern among youth at Korean Buddhist temples in the United States when she notes that although they are "conspicuously absent" from regular worship services, parental concerns are alleviated if they continue to maintain friendships with other Koreans (regardless of religious identity) thus prioritizing cultural and linguistic continuity, similar to what Kashima (1977:34) noted within Japanese temples in America. Suh also suggests that the subsequent "Christianization" of many Korean youth becomes viewed as an unintended consequence of the Buddhist emphasis on karma and self-agency (ibid:170). These diverse examples of second generation youth from various Asian Buddhist communities demonstrate that there is no one definitive pattern or process that can characterize how they accept, reject, or modify their Buddhist identities, or their sense of incorporation and identity with North America. Instead, the range of Buddhist identities reflect complexity, selectiveness, and unique particulars for each community, and entails a diverse, multi-directional trajectory that Portes and Rumbaut (2001) refer to as "segmented assimilation."

Religious Attitudes and Concerns Among Second Generation Cambodian Youth

The contradictions and confusion faced by second-generation youth within relatively well-financed and readily available religious and cultural educational programs are exacerbated among those from communities who lack both social and financial capital. During the first twenty years of their resettlement, several Cambodian communities throughout Ontario did not have the financial or social capital resources to support Khmer monks or establish a Buddhist temple; and even when monks or a temple became available, they could not provide Buddhist educational programs to effectively support youth initiatives and activities (McLellan 2009:114-119). As a result, several consequences have arisen.

Many second-generation Cambodian youth have completely rejected Buddhism. Part of this rejection involves the smaller numbers of youth who became evangelical Christians. The larger representation are youth whose parents converted to different forms of Christianity for a variety of reasons (in Thai refugee camps and through sponsorship and support by Canadian Christian groups), but retained some connection to Buddhism and traditional cultural celebrations (ibid: 123-140). A high proportion of these youth were raised in single parent families that, as refugees, were initially dependent upon assisted housing and welfare in poor, racially mixed neighbourhoods. Many youth were exposed to confused and conflicting cultural and religious identities, uncertain of who they were or what was expected of them (ibid: 153). In renouncing their Khmer identity and its correlations with deprivation and inadequacy for Canadian society, they have sought alternatives to develop self-identify, self-esteem and success elsewhere (ibid: 160).

A smaller number of second-generation Khmer youth, primarily from Kampuchean Krom families (ethnic Khmer from Vietnam) in Ontario (less than 100 families), have retained strong bonds with Buddhism and Kampuchean Krom Buddhist monks. Young men and women both participate in part-time ordination opportunities and teachings regarding philosophy and meditation (ibid: 100). What is of significance is that the small numbers of Kampuchea Krom households in Ontario are actively engaged in building local Kampuchea Krom temples (Hamilton, Windsor, London) and maintaining strong global linkages with Kampuchea Krom organizations and advocacy support for Kampuchea Krom interests (ibid: 73-74). The Kampuchea Krom provide a more 'modernist' approach to Buddhism following the Thommayuth that emphasizes rationalism, monastic reform, and textual studies, while the

majority of Khmer Buddhists from Cambodia adhere to the traditional, more rural-based practices of Mahanikay. Kampuchea Krom monks in Ontario are younger, have higher levels of education, and are willing to experiment with innovative ideas and practices. Most speak English, and some are multi-lingual (Khmer, English, French, Vietnamese). To date, they have not developed weekly educational programs or maintained close relationships with the large numbers of second generation Khmer from Cambodia.

While the majority of Cambodian youth in Ontario have had exposure to Buddhism through traditional beliefs and practices, most do not understand the nuanced meanings of the rituals and have conflicting attitudes towards Buddhist monks, including the cultural constraints associated with them (ibid: 164-9). As noted in the comments (McLellan 2009:115-116) of three second-generation Cambodians from different cities in Ontario, traditional attitudes not only inhibit the youth from spontaneously seeking religious connection with monastics, but also restrict innovative ideas they have regarding the temple, and contribute to their lack of comprehension regarding rituals:

1. I've never been able to talk to the monks. I just never had the opportunity to talk to them because I'm afraid I might do things that might upset them. When a monk passes by you, you have to bow your head down, and put your hands together. And I don't want to offend them by any way of not doing it right. And some of my words may not be acceptable to them, because the monks have different words for everything. Right now I am hesitant to approach the monks. I am concerned about not knowing the right behaviour. This concern plays a big role in why a lot of young people don't talk or connect with the monks. For instance, you want to thank the monk and you touch his hand, I believe that it is wrong, because, I don't know, I just think it's wrong. And if I was to do that in front of all these adults they would be like "Oh why are you doing that, you can't do that!" The older adults are very critical, even the friends. When a monk comes by, you have to behave, unless you are really old or something.

2. At first, we just wanted to have the group affiliated with the temple, but for a variety of reasons it wouldn't work out: the elders want and need to be acknowledged for leadership roles; older people resisted the idea of the youth group because the youth weren't organized yet and the older people had too much of their old way of thinking and had

specific ideas; and there was no immediate support for the youth ideas, just “no, it won’t work.” So, it seems the process with the elders is to have the youth prove themselves first and only then will they actually look. At this point, people at the temple are very comfortable, and they don’t want to see any change. They don’t see any new level of interactions, or the need for them.

3. When I go to the temple, or to the celebrations, no one tells what it is for. I just show up. Every New Year they always have a monk bless the community and stuff like that, but I wasn’t interested in it. I am not a strong Buddhist because I haven’t been exposed to it much. It’s just a heritage, just what the family does, and I really don’t know why they do it, but it’s there.

Second generation youth question traditional views concerning the activities and involvements of monastics that focus primarily on their exemplary role as spiritual and ritual specialists, their strict adherence to the Vinaya (monastic discipline/rules for deportment, eating and so forth), and their carefully regulated participation in the affairs of secular society and the laity. Unlike the older generation who tend to have lower expectations on the quality of the monk’s personality or social interaction ability, but high expectations for traditional rituals, blessings, and religious presence, youth have more respect for innovative monastics who connect with them through friendly conversation and who show interest in the social issues that concern them. Two youth, one from Toronto and the other from Ottawa explain (McLellan 2009:117-118) their position: We want to interact with the monks too.

1. “When I say we, I am speaking for my friends too. They would love to have that kind of connection. Even with the language issues, I believe we would do fine and we would ask a lot of questions. I would prefer the talk to be in English, but the monks have their own dialect. They speak in big words that I can’t even imagine...I don’t really understand what they say. But I would be interested in coming to the temple if they had a translator. My friends would too. I want the monks to interact with the youth too. I want [to find out about] their teachings, their ways of life, their philosophies, their discipline, things like that. I believe finding out about meditation would come afterwards, because monks can provide support for youth, and help them move on in life. I believe a monk can change anyone, because their words are so powerful, yet so kind. I would like to have these teachings even once a week...Once

a week at the night, or anytime when there is a bunch of youth and the monks, just come and teach them, because they are the future generation. Without them, Buddhism could be destroyed, especially the Cambodian community, because not much people go to the temple. Youth rarely go to the temple.”

2. “A Khmer monk from Thailand visited for one year. He was very open minded and visited the Cambodian houses, but the other monk did not think this was appropriate. Yet, this monk from Thailand wanted to talk to the children and their families about activities in Cambodia, to get news from the internet. He was very interactive with the community and when he spoke, he was speaking in ways which the young people liked. He made jokes, and he smiled. In comparison, the head monk is more reserved. The head monk is really knowledgeable about Buddhism but is reserved with social interaction...Another young monk from Cambodia, now in Montreal, used to want to visit, but was not encouraged, we don’t know why because we liked him.”

As youth advocate for change in monastic roles, especially to meet the multiple generational needs, they also remain doubtful if the traditional system of monastics and temples would be sustained if monastics responded to youth needs for more active involvement in their lives, modern teaching formats, and more personable relationships.

Cambodian youth’s confusion, disaffection, and unease with traditional forms of hierarchy (particularly elders and monastics unfamiliar with North American culture or English), the difficulty parents and elders have in supporting youth initiative, and their own lack of connection to Buddhist ritual ceremonies or scriptural teachings, is similar to other second generation youth dynamics at North American Chinese (McLellan 1999:181; Chandler 1998:23), Japanese (Tanaka 1999:12), Lao (Van Esterick 1999:62), Korean (Suh 2004:183;), Thai (Numrich 1996:106), and Vietnamese temples (Hyunh 2000:64; McLellan 1999:129; Nguyen & Barber 1998:144). Like many other second generation Buddhists, Cambodian youth are highly critical of what they perceive to be their parent’s superstitions and beliefs in astrology, the supernatural and multiple spirits (McLellan 2009:102). In response, a large number of these youth disengage and find themselves with what Gans (1994) refers to as a “symbolic” Buddhist religiosity that is tied closely to traditional Khmer ethnocultural practices (food, music & dance, respectful language and behaviour, life passages), and visiting the temple only during large

ceremonial festivities. The Buddhist significance in their lives is connected with family, and they tend to compartmentalize this identity from other arenas of social involvement, such as school, work, or friendship networks. As they age, get married, have children of their own, and face the death of older family members, however, the Buddhist mediation of these life passages often revitalizes their sense of place within the temple and larger ethnic community. Since the late 1990s, more young adult Khmer attend Buddhist celebrations and events with their own children. It remains uncertain though if this degree of symbolic religiosity will continue into the third and fourth generations, particularly as inter-ethnic and inter-racial marriages increase.

Renewing and Revitalizing Identity through visits to Cambodia

In contrast to the majority of their peers who reflect symbolic religiosity, small numbers (less than 100) of highly committed Cambodian youth throughout the last ten years in several Ontario cities have become deeply engaged in Buddhism and formed their own associations. They work within their local Khmer temples to develop innovative youth projects (a Cambodian youth magazine, meditation classes, a library), to promote classes in Cambodian dance or literature, or to participate in organizing New Year's activities (arranging children's games, music). The significant characteristic of these second generation youth is their experience of travelling to Cambodia as young adults and spending time with extended family to participate in complex and elaborate memorial, ancestral, and healing rituals, that reify and enhance their sense of being Khmer. For these Cambodian youth, finding their Khmer identity is something that cannot be taught or inherited, but requires search and discovery. As several youth explained (McLellan 2009:186-187), parental experiences and identities are not easily communicated or transmitted to the second-generation; one needs to go to Cambodia to find out for oneself:

(2nd gen. woman - Toronto) I grew up in Canada. I came here at about five months old. As a Canadian, I didn't know my own roots. I got lost, and then I went back to Cambodia to embrace my roots, my culture"

(2nd gen. man - Brampton) Like a lot of Khmer kids who grow up in Canada, I didn't know what it is to be Khmer. I heard stories from my mom, but I didn't know.

(2nd gen. man - Windsor) You have to go back. This is where you come from, and that's your identity, and it's your homeland, and no matter how you try to deny it, it's where you're from. And no matter what happens, you'll always know that's where you're from.

(2nd gen. man- Hamilton) A trip home is to find your identity, the identity of your parents...I saw what made up the characteristics of being Khmer and that's an important recognition for me. We're all evolving as Khmer. I realized that I would always be Khmer, even though no matter where I go.

(1st gen. young man - Toronto) Sometimes when you [meet people in Cambodia]...you ask them "where are you from? What do your people do there? And they ask me the same thing. Lots of people return home from other countries. That's because they are connected. Regardless of what happened to them, they're connected.

During trips to Cambodia, most youth visit their parent's villages and meet extended family members who encourage them to participate in complex and elaborate memorial and ancestral Preah Ros rituals, and be given special healing ceremonies referred to as Hau Bralin (Thompson 1996:3) that will call back and reconstitute their Khmer soul. The Hau Bralin is an important ceremony, performed by several monks and achaas (experienced elders) and sponsored by family members specifically for those who return home to Cambodia and need to revive continuity with the extended community and a generic Khmer identity. As Canadians (or from other countries in diaspora), the second-generation youth are especially assumed to have little understanding of who they really are (i.e., the numerous components of their Khmer being comprised of Bralin spirits and the 5 skhandas - matter, sensation, perception, mental formations & consciousness). Within the Hau Bralin ceremony instruction and explanation is given in some detail thereby enabling diasporic youth to recognize not only their own spiritual significance in being Khmer, but also that of specific rituals and their consequences for social cohesion. Both the explanation and experience of the ritual becomes an important means of communication and communion, merging normative codes and expressive values within a reaffirmed collective Khmer identity. The

ritual reification of Khmer identity intensifies religious and ethnic belonging among these second-generation youth. They note a significant shift in their attitudes and lifestyles as they develop what Bottomly (1992:34) refers to as “counter-memories” or “new narratives” that makes it easier for them to live with cultural hybridity, to be fully Khmer while being Canadian.

Upon their return to Canada, this deepened sense of “being Khmer” frequently results in their undertaking committed involvements with community and temple activities. The discovery of and connection to Khmer roots, referred to as an “experiential reification of identity and belonging” encourages an engaged participation in temple and community life (McLellan 2009:191). Part of this involvement is shaped by their exposure to the extreme disparity in the quality of life between Canada and Cambodia, and realizing the vast opportunities available to Khmer Canadian youth. Similarly, Numrich (1996:104) noted that among Theravada Buddhist youth, their “Americanness” becomes most apparent through visiting their parent’s Asian homeland. As these small numbers of Ontario Cambodian youth embrace their newly enhanced sense of being Canadian, they also encourage others to become as involved. They encouraged their temples to implement a process of democratic or egalitarian ideals through new models of leadership, and they seek more input concerning temple administration and religious programming, particularly regarding participation in Canadian events, such as Canada Day celebrations, charity fund-raising walks for the United Way, or operating food bank collections. In their new confidence, these youth actively address generational concerns, develop successful programs to teach younger children the basics of Cambodian Buddhist teachings and practices, and forge new links with mainstream Canadian society as Khmer Buddhists (such as participating in an annual multicultural festival to publically represent Khmer religion, dance, music, and cuisine).

They attempt to explain how Buddhist rituals help clarify traditional patterns of relationships and the emotional commitments upon which they depend, and to help other youth recognize that the cultural symbols of ethnic and religious distinctiveness embodied in the Buddhist rituals can help them negotiate their presence and place in Canadian society. The motto of the Cambodian Canadian Youth Society of Ottawa (CCYSO), which is part of the Ottawa Buddhist temple, is “honouring our past as we enter our future,” indicating their attempt to balance both traditional and modern facets. Traditional activities include helping to

organize the Cambodian New Year (Chaul Chnam Khmer) in Ottawa, promoting classes in Cambodian classical dance, and hosting parties/picnics. Modernist or innovative projects include Canadian-based field-trips, such as skating on the Rideau Canal or visiting a local Pancake House and Sugar Bush, arranging school scholarships, or creating an internet Cambodian youth magazine that gives updates on current news in Cambodia, leadership profiles, entertainment, sports, culture, Cambodian history, interviews, business, science, education, health issues and general commentary, research and analysis. In comparison, a new youth group started in 2005 called the Cambodiana Society of Windsor targets youth from age eight and up, and is more traditional in its emphasis on inter-generational activities, and the reification of Khmer cultural identity through Buddhism. These Windsor youth leaders feel that the lack of Buddhist significance in the daily lives of Cambodian youth has contributed to their alienation from their parents and Khmer culture. Simultaneously, however, these youth are pivotal in providing opportunities for the public recognition and representation of Cambodians. Under their leadership, the Windsor Cambodian community first participated in the annual city-sponsored multicultural festival where they performed traditional Khmer dance and music and provided Khmer cuisine. Twenty-six years after their initial resettlement, the rising social capital of the second generation enabled Cambodians to receive strong encouragement and praise from others outside their own community.

Having participated in unabridged and 'authentic' rituals in Cambodia, and with a better understanding of them, when they return, these youth are treated with more respect when they offer organizational assistance to the temple elders, or make requests of the monastics for more 'modern' teachings. Yet, even as they attempt to develop deeper levels of involvement with Cambodian temples and monastics, youth leaders continue to encounter difficulties relating to the restrictive and limited attitudes of the monks, the lack of concern for English instruction and North American relevance, and temple elders who dismiss their interests and ideas (ibid: 115-119).

Conclusion

Being raised within competing value systems and changing expectations of cultural behaviours and relationships provides second-generation youth with multiple religious, ethnic, and social alternatives of identity. For some second generation Cambodian youth, the deliberate 're-ritualization'

of social life requires an experience of intense cultural changes and/or challenges (Cheal 1992:366) as well as engaging in rituals that redefine personal, social, and religious identities, both of which are acquired through a visit to Cambodia. For Cambodian youth, a visit to the homeland can significantly change how they view religious, ethnic, and civic identities, and affect their relationships with the organizational structures and practices that frame traditional religious traditions. As youth move towards implementing more democratic leadership, they attempt to alter formal decision-making structures, innovate new forms of youth membership, new types of interaction with religious specialists, and different criteria for authority positions.

Based on evidence from other immigrant groups (Ebaugh & Chafetz 2000; Yang & Ebaugh 2001; Peek 2005; Devries et al. 2010; Williams 2011), the results of youth engagement involve a complex interplay between traditional continuities and modernist transformations entailing a mix of hybrid combinations of homeland and localized North American loyalties that shift and are expressed according to context and situation (Stepick 2005:15; Guest 2003:205). Within the various Ontario Cambodian communities, each Buddhist temple reflects their specific dynamics of educational and ethnic differences, which specific religious practices and beliefs are retained as representations of homeland-based ethno/cultural identity, the kinds of transnational networks and linkages developed to inform and influence particularized Buddhist identities, and the levels of social capital that already exist, or which can be brought into it by the second generation.

The initial lack of social and financial capital in Cambodian communities throughout Ontario and the subsequent absence of Khmer Buddhist temples meant that second generation Cambodian youth have missed many of the kinds of programs offered in other Asian Buddhist temples, such as family outings and events, study sessions, after-school programs, summer youth camps, regular children's outings and weekly Dharma school (usually on Sunday). The current involvement of the second generation to develop and maintain youth programs and activities comes at a particularly crucial time as demographic shifts move towards increased numbers of those born and raised in Canada, and the aging of the first generation. The demise of the first generation will necessitate that the second generation become more involved in organizing annual rituals and ceremonies (arranging monastic presence, hiring a hall, organizing invitations and advertisements, preparing music and sound systems),

ensuring that special honouring, blessing, or fund-raising celebrations continue, and moving the community into mainstream activities and participation in local multicultural events. Through these involvements, youth forge and solidify their own community ties, as well as strengthen their relationships with older Khmer, becoming an effective bridge to carry on religious and cultural traditions to the third generation and beyond.

The interests of the second generation, however, remain distinct from that of their parents, and although youth may involve themselves in Buddhism they do not show an inclination towards ceremonial sutra chanting, merit-making, appeals to the power and presence of ancestors, healing or protection rituals, or the use of various divination techniques. As they seek religious guidance that is relevant to their everyday lives, they also require monastics and leaders who can provide English translations of Buddhist concepts or terms and who can transmit important symbolic nuances for Khmer ethnic and religious identity within the rituals. Second generation Cambodian youth prefer monastics with whom they can ask questions, share ideas, argue, and even joke or play sports, and avoid those who display hierarchal and unapproachable attitudes. Second generation youth leaders do not consider the Buddhist temple as an arena to satisfy social needs or to gain status recognition, but as a repository for their ethnoreligious heritage that they hope eventually will reflect contemporary needs and issues. These would include democratic or egalitarian ideals, and models of leadership with decision making shared between monastics and elected directors who represent a cross-section of membership.

A common attitude among second generation Cambodians is that there are as many ways to be Khmer as there are in being Buddhist. Cambodian diasporic music, for example, plays a fundamental role in shaping their identity as Khmer in ways that have nothing to do with religion. The second generation have been raised listening to their parents' music and dance videos and cassettes, especially music from the fifties and sixties. It is predominately through this format, and increasingly through the internet, that youth in Ontario gain access to Cambodian classical traditions. Youth, however, do not relate nostalgically to Khmer music and dance, but actively seek new meanings through merging traditional, popular, and modern forms arising within Cambodia and transmitted to transnational contexts (McLellan 2009:174-178). Being raised within competing value systems and changing

expectations of cultural behaviours and relationships encourages youth to develop a strong sense of personal autonomy, self-responsibility, materialism, and competitiveness that exists alongside their community-based connections and pride in having Khmer heritage, even if that does not include Buddhism. These multiple influences provide an alternative sociocultural relevance that is contrary to the first generation who find a comforting consistency in traditional Cambodian Buddhist values and practices. Reconnecting symbolically through music or physically visiting Cambodia to connect with relatives, parental home villages, and historical monuments (holocaust museums; palaces; Angkor Wat), provides a crucial step in accepting Cambodia as their ancestral homeland, and once acknowledged, becomes a crucial element of their identity as Khmer Canadians and/or as Buddhists, however that may be understood.

Second generation Cambodian leaders face several future challenges. These include their generational cohort's religious participation being primarily symbolic and limited to extended family involvements in special festivals or ceremonies, a continued dependence on the homeland for religious leaders, spiritual authority and doctrinal legitimacy, and the increased presence of non-Khmer as well as racially and ethnically mixed children that will further shift religious affiliation, different kinds of hybridity, and multiple ethnic and religious identities. Eventually there may be the necessity to transform the Khmer temple from an ethnic to a multiethnic organization. First identified by Mullins (1987) as an eventual result awaiting all ethnic churches, multiethnic temples are more recently understood as a strategic effort to maximize monastic leadership and religious opportunities for smaller Buddhist communities (Padgett 2002:205; Bankston and Hidalgo 2008:61). Since these challenges are similar to those faced by other Asian Theravada Buddhist communities in North America, it remains to be seen if successful strategies will better reflect those who have had strong social capital and cohesive educational programming for the second generation to draw upon and continue, or those whose youth leadership arose through their own initiatives and struggles to identify and re-define religious, ethnic, and cultural identities. Similar to what Williams (2011:138) depicts among Muslim youth in America, the creation of second-generation Buddhist identity "is happening at the intersection of on-the-ground practices of people who are negotiating a public identity with the symbolic boundaries of a larger cultural imaginary." Asian Buddhist youth do not easily fit within the dualism of Baumann's (2002) "traditionalist/modernist" Buddhist categories, or of Cadge's (2005:45-47) schema of

“ascribed/achieved” Buddhist status. Cambodian Buddhist youth in Ontario who struggle to achieve religious identities distinct from the ascribed forms of their parents embody a simultaneous retention of traditional facets within modern twenty-first century lives. Their openness to new memories and narratives enable them to cultivate shifting nuances of cultural and religious hybridity that reflect a strong confidence in being Khmer Canadian and a more secure place in Canadian society.

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