VIII. PROTESTANTISM IN SOUTH VIETNAM

The Protestant Church is represented by several denominations within South Vietnam. These include the French Reform Church, Anglican-Episcopalian, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Baptists, Church of Christ, Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, and Seventh-day Adventists. Other Protestant churches are represented in the various social services and, or welfare agencies, but do not seem to have formal church or missionary organizations.

Protestantism's 150,000 adherents represent about 1% of the total South Vietnamese population of fifteen million. Exact measurements of its influence on the national scene would be quite difficult to ascertain in view of the nonpolitical stance of the Protestant Church within Vietnam. While the Church makes no political pronouncements nor sponsors any organized political activities, its influence in some local areas is significant. Having only a small membership percentage of the total population, Protestants have been allotted six Chaplaincy billets in the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. The Buddhists and Roman Catholics share equally the remaining 176 positions, with each of the three faiths having its own Chief of Chaplains. This division of religious faiths with chiefs for the respective group is quite similar to the practice of many governments.

The French Reformed Church: is located at 2-bis Thong Nhut, Saigon. Here is its major church building, and the address at which its pastor may be contacted. In addition to being a "circuit-rider" for two other small groups of adherents in South Vietnam, the pastor is responsible also for divine services of French Reformed adherents in Cambodia. Though this faith has been in South Vietnam for many years, its activities seem primarily directed to the spiritual needs of the French rather than the Vietnamese.

The Anglican-Episcopal Church: is represented by St. Christopher's in Saigon. Their divine services are conducted at the French Reformed Church through a resident pastor to be found at 193 B Cong Ly, Saigon. Similar to the French Reformed, the Anglican-Episcopal appears to be oriented toward serving foreign adherents within the country rather than Vietnamese citizens.

The Church of Christ: is located at 28 Phung Khac Khoan, Saigon. This is a missionary effort by the Church of Christ denomination of the United States and divides its attention between the service connected personnel and the indigenous population. Being a recent arrival within South Vietnam, it does not yet have an extensive membership within South Vietnam.

The Evangelical Church of Vietnam (Christian and Missionary Alliance): is the oldest and largest Protestant Church in Vietnam. Pastor Robert Jaffray began the Protestant missionary effort in Vietnam in 1911, and since that time, the Church has grown to more than a hundred thousand adherents. Known in Vietnam as Tin Lanh, "Good News", the Church has an indigenous organization and a strong missionary drive which expands its efforts.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance headquarters in South Vietnam is located at 14 Hong Bang, Cholon (part of the greater Saigon) while the United States office is 260 W. 44th Street, New York, New York. From its first efforts in 1911 by pioneer Protestant missionary Robert A. Jaffray onward, determined efforts have succeeded in creating an indigenous church with its own administrators and staff of some 441 persons composed of 346 ethnic Vietnamese and 95 Montagnards. The total of 441 is made up of 296 pastors, 23 teachers, 20 nurses, 18 other medical workers and 84 other church employees.

In support of these Vietnamese citizens who are full-time church workers, the Christian Missionary and Alliance in Vietnam has 131 overseas missionaries laboring under the direction of Pastor Thomas Grady Mangham, Jr. These include 54 clergymen, 1 doctor, 8 nurses, 16 teachers and 52 unsalaried missionary wives. In a number of different locations and among various tribal peoples, the missionaries have been the first to succeed in transforming the spoken tribal language into written form with grammar, etc. This has enabled the reading of Scripture in the language of the individual and also opened the avenue of thought in other areas.
of human endeavor. The close cooperation between missionaries and the Summer Institute of Linguistics provides opportunities for the more rapid advancement of information and the development of rapport with the various ethnic groupings of South Vietnam.

The 572 member staff of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (Christian and Missionary Alliance) currently operates 341 churches, 14 elementary schools, 1 high school, 2 hospitals, 1 leprosarium, 3 seminaries or training schools for pastors and 1 printing house for the publishing of religious literature. While serving the 41,733 baptised members of this faith (baptism does not occur until the individual is mature enough to make this choice for himself), the Church continues to stress the responsibility which each adherent has for his fellow Vietnamese.

Vietnam Baptist Mission: under the sponsorship of the Foreign Missionary Board Southern Baptist Convention, Box 8597, Richmond, Virginia 23230, has a Saigon headquarters (Box 107 Saigon) with current church work being directed by Pastor Herman P. Hayes. The Baptists began their efforts in Vietnam on 1 November 1959, and have 300 baptised members and approximately 400 adherents at present. These figures do not include the American civilian and military personnel serving in Vietnam even though many attend and support Baptist activities.

The Vietnam Baptist Mission staff is composed of 15 ethnic Vietnamese and 27 overseas missionaries. Four Vietnamese are pastors as are 14 of the overseas missionaries, while the other 11 Vietnamese are engaged in other church functions. The church staff now operates eight churches, 1 publishing house or plant for the production of religious literature, and 2 training programs for pastors predicated on plans for the future and anticipated growth. Pastor Hayes expressed the Vietnam Baptist Mission's goals in the following words on 14 July 1966:

Baptists came late to Vietnam. Protestants had been in Vietnam about 48 years prior to the coming of Baptists. Our work on a comparative basis, therefore is small. We are now located in four major cities with plans to reach out into others. Our work is primarily church-centered. Our efforts are primarily in the direction of winning people to Christ, baptising them, teaching them, and leading them into active Church life. Out of these will grow many of the expressions of Christian Life and service such as schools, orphanages, etc. The Vietnam Baptist Mission (the organization of missionaries) does have hopes for medical work in the near future.

Worldwide Evangelization Crusade: Box A, Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, is active in Vietnam especially in I and II Corps. P.O.B. 101, Danang is the civilian mailing address for the organization popularly known as WEC with its Vietnam headquarters in Danang. The multiple activities of this Protestant Church are directed by Gordon Hedderly Smith and his son Stanley E. Smith. The formal start of this church in Vietnam is given as 1956 although the Smith family has been engaged in Protestant Church work in Vietnam for approximately 30 years. During this time, the Smiths pioneered in many areas and worked with tribes in the attempt to convey to them the Protestant faith prior to the establishment of Worldwide Evangelization Crusade in Vietnam.

At present the WEC with some 500 baptised members have more than 6,500 adherents who attend divine services and are influenced by the church teachings. Its overseas staff is composed of three clergymen, 1 doctor, 2 nurses, 3 teachers and 3 administrators for a total of 11, while the indigenous staff numbers some 70 persons. This indigenous staff is made up of 50 ethnic Vietnamese and 20 Montagnards. The staff consists of 30 pastors, 4 teachers, 5 nurses, 20 medical workers, and 10 miscellaneous church employees.

In spite of strife, war and Viet Cong activities among both Vietnamese and Montagnards, at least 21 of the WEC's 38 churches are still operating. The adherents of the other churches have generally either fled as refugees or have become casualties of the war. WEC has two elementary schools, 1 leprosarium, 1 training school for pastors, and one orphanage for both Montagnard and ethnic Vietnamese children. Though working among the ethnic Vietnamese, the major strength of the WEC's following is currently among the Hroy and Jeh tribes, with some 5,500 adherents for these two tribes alone. The activities and teachings of the WEC, like other organizations, have influences which cannot be measured in statistics alone.

Extended information may be gleaned about this Protestant missionary effort by reading Gordon H. Smith's book The Blood Hunters or
Laura Irene Smith’s Victory in Vietnam. Two color films produced by the WEC show many mission activities and also reveal many of the customs of the people among whom the WEC labor. Contact can either be made directly or through the I Corps Chaplain, Advisory Team #1, APO San Francisco 96337.

Seventh-day Adventist Mission: P. O. Box 453, Saigon, South Vietnam began its activities in Vietnam in 1930 as a part of the worldwide missionary effort of the Adventists with world headquarters at 6840 Eastern Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20012. Pastor Ralph E. Neall, the current director, heads a mission staff of 209 people working within Vietnam. This comparatively large group of workers for a baptised membership of 1300 is composed of 11 Western missionaries and 198 indigenous workers. The Western missionaries include one pastor, 2 doctors, 1 nurse, 2 business administrators and 3 unsalaried wives. The indigenous component includes 12 pastors, 16 teachers, 15 nurses, 85 other medical workers, and some 70 miscellaneous employees, many of whom are salesmen of religious literature.

The Vietnam Seventh-day Adventist Mission currently has 15 churches, 1 large elementary school (presently being converted into both elementary and high school), 1 nursing school for the training of fully qualified nurses, 1 hospital (with a new larger one in the plans stage), 1 publishing plant for the publication of religious literature in Vietnamese and 2 welfare centers for various social services provided to the community regardless of religious affiliation. With the exception of nurses, the training of other professional church employees is undertaken largely in the Philippines or other countries in Southeast Asia where the church has established schools for this purpose already. The educational opportunities offered within Vietnam will be expanded as will the other institutions normally operated by the church as a part of its church and community services as the membership grows.

Observations of Vietnamese Protestantism: For reasons not covered in this study, the Protestant churches represented in active Vietnamese endeavor are conservative. In spite of theological and organizational differences, the personnel of the various churches have cooperative rapport with the practice of friendliness and concern for each other. These conservative Churches practice baptism and membership based upon the believer’s profession of faith, so if children and non-baptised adherents are included the number of 150,000 or more is not unrealistic. The insistence of these churches on doctrines of belief so different from many of the Vietnamese cultural patterns may keep the percentage of Protestantism comparatively small. However, highly motivated by the sense of personal responsibility, the Protestants can make valid contributions to the community and the Vietnamese nation.

Other Religious Groups in Vietnam

Bahai World Faith: has a meeting place at 193/1C Cong Ly, Saigon. With a belief much like that of the Bahai of the United States, its adherents are few in number.

Christian Science: have a regular service in the Saigon area at 69 Nguyen Du, on the third floor. This denomination in Vietnam seems to be for service personnel of Christian Science persuasion as no Vietnamese adherents were discovered.

Latter-day Saints: 22 Gia Long, Apt. 12 also appears to be service oriented as it is not listed in the phone book nor do there seem to be any resident missionaries of the church in the country.
The CAO ĐÁI religion of South Vietnam, which first appeared in 1919, is an important segment of Vietnamese religious life. The CAO ĐÁI claim about two million adherents in all of South Vietnam, with some 60,000 in the five provinces which make up I Corps and another 60,000 in the six provinces of II Corps. "The Cao Daist Missionary Church" is the English name of this religion in I Corps, and the CAO ĐÁI Temple in Danang serves as headquarters for all of I and II Corps and the Saigon area. Because of its uniqueness, its comparative large membership within the total population of South Vietnam, and the various religious factors which have influence, it is imperative that Americans know what this faith is, what its adherents practice as a result of their beliefs, and what factors are basic in establishing and maintaining the Cao Đáist/American rapport insofar as religious beliefs and practices are concerned.

Cao Đáism began in 1919 as an indigenous Vietnamese religion composed of "spiritism" or "spirit mediums" and a "ouija-board" type device called corbeille a bec (beaked-bag). It sought to form a synthesis of the fundamental doctrines of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity and a Roman Catholic type church organization. It was formed in an attempt to create a universally acceptable religion in an area of the world where there is an intermingling of many religious beliefs often found in the same individual. A corollary goal was the promotion of harmonious human relationships by means of a common spiritual life devoid of any religious discrimination. Some Vietnamese religious leaders, who are not adherents of this faith, call it a "salad-religion" because of the bits of many religions which are blended together in it.

CAO ĐÁI Name: The CAO ĐÁI believe there have been three major revelations of divinity to mankind. The FIRST REVELATION was given to several "missionary saints": Nhiem-dang Co-Phat for Buddhism, Thai Thuong Lao Quan for Taoism, the Emperor Phuc-Hy for Ancestor Worship, and Moses for Judeo-Christian religious concepts. The SECOND REVELATION came later during the period of 500 B.C. to after 600 A.D. - through Lao Tse for Taoism, Confucius for Confucianism, Ca Kyamuni for Buddhism, Jesus Christ for Christianity, and the Prophet Mohammed for Islam. The crowning or THIRD REVELATION OF GOD, according to all Cao Daists, was given on Phu Quoc Island, South Vietnam, in 1919. The official title CAO ĐÁI translated into English is DOCTRINE OF THE THIRD REVELATION. This REVELATION was given by God to Ngo Van Chieu, the first CAO ĐÁI apostle. THE THIRD REVELATION is updated from time to time through the spiritual mediums who utilize the corbeille a bec which spells out current revelations by pointing at letters of the alphabet lying on a board, as some in the Western world use the ouija-board. According to the CAO ĐÁI, God first revealed himself in human form because the human spirit was not yet sufficiently advanced to receive God's teachings directly. At the present time, however, it is believed possible for divine messages to be given directly through spiritual mediums and the corbeille a bec.

Major Doctrines of the CAO ĐÁI: The major doctrines of beliefs of the CAO ĐÁI are:

1. That Cao Đáism is the THIRD REVELATION of Divinity to allow general redemption to all men and, as such, supercedes or corrects misunderstandings of previous teachings.

2. Cao Đáism worships the Absolute Supreme God who is eternal without beginning or end, and who is the Creator of all, Supreme Father of all, and unique Master who created and creates all angels, buddhas and saints.

3. Cao Đáists believe in the existence of three distinct categories of invisible beings. These are:
   a. the highest deities composed of buddhas, saints, and angels;
   b. the medium beings which include sanctified spirits and the great benefactors of mankind;
   c. the lower beings which include both phantoms and devils.

This belief includes the concept that all three orders must pass through human existence in order to help humanity, and normally move
from the lowest toward the highest forms. Of all living creatures, only man can become a devil or an angel because he has a special soul; and his position is determined by the effects of his works.

4. Cao Dai believe that the human soul may "go up" or "go down" the ladder of existence, and that man by his will and action determines the direction.

5. The ultimate goal of Cao Daiism is the total deliverance of man from the endless cycle of existence in order to realize a life of supreme perfection. To them, man is created through the natural cycle of life and death, and possesses an immortal soul which is sacred. This soul must eventually obtain release from the cycle for complete victory.

6. The worship of ancestors is a means of communication between the visible and invisible worlds; between the living and the dead; and forms a means of expressing love, gratitude and affection for the ancestors.

7. Cao Daiism also teaches, in its ethical concepts, equality and brotherhood of all races, the love of justice, the Buddhist Law of Karma, Buddha's Five Commandments, as well as the Buddhist Eightfold Path to Perfection and the Confucian doctrine of the Golden Mean.

8. Within Cao Daiism is a pantheon of saints and deities. On the front of the Tay-Ninh temple, there are paintings representing Joan of Arc, Sun Yat Sen (the founder of the Chinese Nationalist Party), Victor Hugo (the 19th century poet and writer), and Trang-Trinh (famed Vietnamese prophet of the 18th century), etc.

9. Last, but no means least, is the doctrine that Divinity speaks to mankind through spiritual mediums utilizing the corbeille a bec, which is a bag which has a beak-like projection. When this beaked-bag is held by two members of the Law Protective Body of the CAO DAI over a board which holds the alphabet, divinity causes his spirit to move the bag so that the divine communication is spelled out by the beaked-bag tapping appropriate letters which sometimes take the form of verse. Only one beaked-bag exists. For such messages to be accepted as valid and official, the revelation must take place at the Tay Ninh Temple. Other revelations may occur at the main temple of each sect.

Organization of the CAO DAI: The administrative tasks of the Church are conducted by three major bodies: the legislative, the law protective and the executive. The Legislative Body (Bat quai-Dai) is considered to be under the rule of the Supreme GOD who is regarded as the true and unique founder of Cao daism. The Law Protective Body (Hiep-Thien-Dai) has the Ho-phap as Chief. The Executive Body, or Cu Trung-Dai, runs the temporal affairs of the Church, and has a titular head called Giao-Tong or Pope. The Pope is reputed to be the Spirit of the poet Li Tai Pe (Vietnamese, Ly-thai-Bach), who lived during the Tong Dynasty. Le-van-Trung was until 1934 the interim Pope (the living head of the Church), but following his death, differences of personality and opinion have precluded any others having this title or honor.

The Executive Body is composed of a Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Monks, Nuns and some laity. The Law Protective Body is composed of a 15-man college of spiritual mediums that regulates the use of the beaked-bag. They therefore act as the interpreters and receivers of divine messages to mankind spelled out by the alphabet board and the beaked-bag.

The Executive Body is the third major body of the Cao Dai administration. This body has three agencies - the Administrative Agency, the Agency for the Propogation of the Faith and the Charity Agency. Each Agency has three institutes, each carrying on a specific task. The Charity Agency has the duty of caring for the sick by operating hospitals, aiding the needy, including orphans, the physically or mentally handicapped, and the aged.

Within the hierarchy of Cao daism are three major branches: the members of the Buddhist group (Phai Thai) who wear yellow robes as the symbol of the virtue of love; the Taoist group (Phai Chuong) who wear blue robes as the color of peace and the Confucian group (Phai Ngoc) who wear red robes as the symbol of authority. These vivid colors are normally worn only for special occasions and religious rites. Otherwise, the Cao Dai priestly ordered wear white robes, but the wearing of black robes has occasionally been observed.

Currently, Caodaism has the positions of Interim Pope, 3 Censor Cardinals, 3 Cardinals, 36 Archbishops, 72 Bishops, 3,000 Priests, an unlimited order of ritual priests, the order of ritual servers or temple servants, and the laity.

Ordinary members of the CaoDai clergy may marry and raise families, as do some of the members of the Eastern Orthodox and some of the Oriental Rites of the Catholic Church. Those above the rank of priest are not allowed to marry and must remain celibate in order to commit their total energies to the religious life. Nuns may occupy all positions up to Cardinal. Vegetarianism is required of all orders of the priesthood, but not for the laity.
Currently there are several major sects or denominations of the CAO DAI whose existence dated from the time of the French occupation in Vietnam. But these have considerable interaction as all recognize the core element which is kept at Tay Ninh Temple as the channel whereby dogma for the faithful adherents is pronounced for the first time.

The CAO DAI denominations and the locations of their headquarters are: (1) Chieu-Minh at Can-Tho; (2) Minh-Chon-Ly at My-Tho; (3) Tien-Thien at Cai-Lay and at Soc Sai Ben-tre; (4) Chinh-Dao at Ben-tre; (5) Minh-Chon-Dao at Bac-Lieu; (6) Ho-thanh Truyen-Giao Cao Dai (Cao Daiist Missionary Church) at Danang; and (7) the basic CAO DAI Church at Tay Ninh. In 1936 an association called the Lien-Hoa Tong-hoi was formed to unify all the CAO DAI denominations, and it does have some influence. In addition to the formal denominations, there are several other lesser divisions called Minh Ly, Minh Su, Minh Thien, Minh Tan, and Minh Duong.

The differences between the sects or denominations of the Cao Dai may be much less than the differences which divide the "liberal" and "conservative" churches in America, and are certainly not nearly so large as those factors which separate the CAO DAI from the other religions in Vietnam. While Cao Daism has a number of essentially Buddhist elements, the Buddhists of Vietnam disclaim any relationship to them. This attitude may be modified from time to time due to the religio-political struggles, but does not infer an acceptance of the CAO DAI as a valid expression of Buddhism. The CAO DAI, however, with a multi-source religious concept and the conviction that all religions proceed from the same God, might view the matter quite differently.

Holy City of Tay Ninh: The original center of the CAO DAI faith is at the city of Tay Ninh which is about 70 miles northwest of Saigon, and within fifteen miles of the Cambodian border. The TAY NINH TEMPLE to the CAO DAI is the equivalent of ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL to the Roman Catholics. The Temple is built on the same pattern as other CAO DAI temples, but in a more grandiose style. Here in a large and an extremely well-ordered compound are found the Temple, a school, a hospital, an orphanage, a home for the aged, a residence for nuns, etc. The very order and neatness of this site, like that of other CAO DAI temple areas, is in stark contract to the disorder and disarray of the Orient as seen by the "western eye".

The Chinese-type ornamented temple at Tay Ninh, with its unusual architectural designs and features, has nine floor levels. These levels, which start at the front door of the temple and rise toward the altar, represent the nine levels of spiritual ascension possible to the CAO DAI adherent; and also represent the nine orders or divisions of the hierarchy of Cao Daism. This is still true even though the position of the Pope within Cao Daism has been vacant since the death of LE VAN TRUNG in 1934, who succeeded NGO VAN CHIEU as the Interim Pope. The CAO DAI founder, NGO VAN CHIEU, was the head of the church from 1919 until his death seven years later following an intensive practice of mysticism. Then LE VAN TRUNG became its leader until his death. It was during LE VAN TRUNG'S period that the CAO DAI developed a firm organization and had their greatest growth.

The main altar of the CAO DAI Temple is a huge globe of the world symbolizing the universe, and has a painted human eye on it, which symbolizes the all-seeing eye of Divinity and the source of universal life. Inside the globe is a spherical burning lamp which represents the universal monad (something which is absolutely indivisible). Lights on both sides of the globe represent the male and female elements of the world. The Supreme Eye is normally formed within a triangle, and serves to remind the CAO DAI worshipper that the Supreme Being witnesses everything, everywhere, all the time. Cao Dais believe the "sacred eye" on their altar observes, supports, helps, judges and impels them to the right course of action at all times. (Americans may be startled to discover the same triangle and eye on the back of the American dollar bill.)

Worship: The laity of the CAO DAI are to pray at least once each day, and may choose one of four set times each day at home or at the temple, at 0600, 1200, 1800, or 2400. Additionally, there are special occasions for services, such as the 9th of January, the anniversary of the First Cao Dai Revelation; and 15 August, which honors TAY YOUNG MAU, the "Holy Mother" of Ngo Van Chieu. A CAO DAI altar can be recognized by the picture of the all-seeing eye, which is often surrounded by painted cosmic beams which symbolize the Supreme Being's lightened glory.

Symbols: The CAO DAI use Tea, Flowers and Alcohol as offerings, representing the three constitutive elements of human beings - intelligence, spirit and energy. FIVE JOSS STICKS are used in worship and represent the five levels
of initiation, which are purity, meditation, wisdom, superior knowledge, and freedom from Karma (the cycle of existence). Also seen in CAO DAI temples is their religious flag, a three section horizontal flag with the top one third yellow, the middle third blue, and the lower one third red. These colors represent the major elements of Cao Daism and also the virtues or qualities admired by the CAO DAI. The red is for Confucianism or courage and authority, the blue is for Taoism or freedom, and the yellow is for Buddhism or the virtues of peace and love.

Major Appeal of Cao Daism in Vietnam: The appeal which has made the CAO DAI faith so successful in South Vietnam may be traced to several factors: (a) pride in the fact that this is an indigenous religious faith; (b) the appeal of pomp, pageantry and ceremonies of the temple rituals; (c) the content of CAO DAISM, which includes features and elements of the several religions of South Vietnam; (d) the claim of communication with the “world beyond” in a basically animistic culture; (e) the active missionary spirit and the sacrificial attitude which is encouraged; and (f) its organizational structure which provides methods, plans and techniques for a semi-unified working faith with some area in which every adherent may participate or make a contribution.

MISCELLANEA: The CAO DAI have a short history which includes involvement in religious, political, and military activities. The CAO DAI largely control certain provinces where they constitute the major population; while in others they often form a strong part of the governmental force. The continuing struggle in Vietnam has witnessed a number of violent actions by the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong, that in general have turned the CAO DAI away from the communist way of life. Particularly offensive was the massacre of 2,791 Cao Dai priests and followers by the communist Viet-Minh in Quang Ngai in August 1945.

The CAO DAI recognize education and cultural and social action as methods whereby good can come to Vietnam and to the CAO DAI. In Quang Tin City within I Corps, the CAO DAI operate a grammar school, a high school and an orphanage. Present plans in Danang include the erection of an orphanage, a socio-cultural center, and the first college in the Danang area.

To coordinate activities between the CAO DAI of I Corps and the United States Marines, the III MAF Staff Chaplain nominates a chaplain as liaison to insure that all help rendered is relevant, practical, and consistent with the overall objectives and policies of the Navy/Marine Team in I Corps, South Vietnam.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PERSONAL RESPONSE PROJECT FILES

The files of this office contain information gathered by onsite interviews and visits with CAO DAI officials at Tay Ninh, Danang and Tra Bong, and with other Vietnamese observers of the CAO DAI.


Nguyen Trung Hau, Histoire Sommaire Du Cao Daisme, Saigon, South Vietnam, Pham Van Son; 1956

Vietnamese Province Population and CAO DAI Percentage of population according to CAO DAI Figures.

1965-66 Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>CAO DAI</th>
<th>Approx'mate Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tay Ninh</td>
<td>232,357</td>
<td>91,000</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long An</td>
<td>373,512</td>
<td>68,252</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dien Tuong</td>
<td>531,258</td>
<td>54,353</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kien Hoa</td>
<td>537,323</td>
<td>43,247</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phong Dinh</td>
<td>360,547</td>
<td>40,370</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh Binh</td>
<td>541,834</td>
<td>31,506</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinh Long</td>
<td>547,556</td>
<td>28,391</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kien Phong</td>
<td>291,116</td>
<td>27,887</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hau Nghai</td>
<td>228,377</td>
<td>23,739</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chau Doc</td>
<td>425,055</td>
<td>18,337</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bien Hoa</td>
<td>251,039</td>
<td>15,837</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuong Thien</td>
<td>248,437</td>
<td>14,554</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Giang</td>
<td>422,849</td>
<td>13,919</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba Xuyen</td>
<td>359,446</td>
<td>6,897</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Xuyen</td>
<td>224,000</td>
<td>4,958</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dien Giang</td>
<td>360,000</td>
<td>4,451</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dien Tuong</td>
<td>51,399</td>
<td>3,647</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binh Duong</td>
<td>243,105</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go Cong</td>
<td>171,051</td>
<td>3,130</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quang Tri</td>
<td>276,593</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thua Thien</td>
<td>555,321</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quang Nam</td>
<td>474,950</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quang Ngai</td>
<td>636,853</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quang Tin</td>
<td>554,058</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See map on following page)

Main Altar at Cao Dai Temple in Tay Ninh

The eye within a triangle is a symbol of the CAO DAI faith. This window is at the Tay Minh Temple
Heavier concentration of CAO DAI

Lighter concentration of CAO DAI (II Corps has approximately 60,000 adherents)
X. PHAT GIAO HOA HAO
(Normally only HOA HAO used; pronounced “Wah How”)

The HOA HAO is an indigenous Vietnamese religion founded in 1939 by HUYEN PHU SO. It is a Vietnamese development of Theravada Buddhism which emphasizes reforming and simplifying Buddhist doctrine and practice, and has a history of religious, political, and military organization and activity. Theravada Buddhism is that form of Buddhism prevalent in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, and Ceylon, in contrast to the Mahayana Buddhism of Japan, Korea, China, and the major Buddhist group of South Vietnam. The current membership of the HOA HAO in Vietnam is between 750,000 and 1,000,000.

Location: The HOA HAO are located in the Mekong Delta with the major concentration in the provinces of Chau Doc, Kien Phong, An Giang, Kien Giang, Vinh Long, Phong Dinh, Chuong Thien, Bac Lieu, Ba Xugan, and Kien Tuong. They form a belt across the delta from Cambodia to the South China Sea, and include the southern portion of South Vietnam with the exception of the extreme southern province of An Xuyen and the island province of Phu Quoc. While there are HOA HAO to be found scattered throughout other provinces of South Vietnam, their numbers give them neither political nor military significance on a par with the ten listed provinces.

The Founder of Phat Giao HOA HAO: Born in 1919 at Hoa Hao Village, in Chau Doc Province, HUYEN PHU SO, at the age of twenty, was the founder of this militant sect of Buddhists. Following the “miraculous” healing in 1939 of a lifelong weakness and infirmity, SO began to proclaim his doctrines of Buddhist reform while claiming himself to be the apostle of Phat Tay. SO had learned of Phat Tay, or Nguyen Van Quyen, while a student of a Buddhist bonze named Thay Xom of NuCam. Phat Tay had been a famous bonze (monk) who preached and wrote in the Mekong Delta about a hundred years earlier, during the Minh Mang reign (1820-1841). Moreover, SO’s teacher Thay Xom had taught him concerning acupuncture (the art of puncturing the body to relieve pain or cure disease and illness, and still practiced through much of Asia), hypnotism, Buddhist philosophy and some sorcery.

With convincing zeal and eloquence, SO proclaimed his doctrines, and later wrote them in his book SAM GIAN (Translated: “ORACLES and PRAYERS”). To help identify his teachings, he gave them the name of his village Hoa Hao, by which his religion is still known. His first converts were those who witnessed his “healing” and heard him preach. His apparent “gift of prophecy” which foretold the defeat of the French in World War II, the coming of the Japanese occupation, and the later arrival of Americans, added impetus to his appeal. His additional skills of healing by herbs and acupuncture made him appear almost supernatural to his audiences. His hypnotic stare caused them to call him DAO KHUNG or “Mad Bonze”.

In time, the HOA HAO adherents began to think of SO as Phat Song, or the Living Buddha. Because the French considered his preaching to be anti-French and strongly political, he was exiled to My Tho and Cai Be, where he gained many converts. The French then placed him in a mental institution in Cholon, only to have the director, a psychiatrist, become a convert. Declared sane and released, SO was exiled to Vinh Loi in Bac Lieu Province, where he again converted many. In desperation the French administration exiled him to Laos, only to have the Japanese insist upon his return to Saigon as their protege in October, 1942.

Upon the surrender of the Japanese, SO led the HOA HAO into the National United Front, a Viet Minh organization. It was soon evident, however, that neither the Cao Dai nor the HOA HAO would accept the leadership of the Viet Minh, so the latter caused the United Front to be dissolved. SO then entered politics as the anti-French, anti-communist leader of his adherents. Even so, the Viet Minh, hoping to use him, appointed him a Special Commissioner to the nine-member Executive Committee for South Vietnam, six of whom were communists. However, the differing opinions and ideological clashes between the Viet Minh and the HOA HAO caused SO to flee for his life to Duc Hoa in December, 1946.
In April, 1947, while traveling to a conciliation meeting sponsored by the Viet Minh, he was captured, tried and executed by the communists in Long Xuyen. While the HOA HAO leaders tried to keep the murder “quiet”, it turned their full wrath against the Viet Minh, although they informed the faithful that SO had only temporarily withdrawn, but would return. After twenty years, the HOA HAO still do not care to discuss the subject. Yet this is the basic reason that HOA HAO are noted for their opposition to everything the Vietnamese Communists want or fight for, and the HOA HAO do not hesitate to destroy communists who enter their strongholds.

Religious Doctrines of the HOA HAO: Four major precepts of this faith are: (a) honor parents; (b) love country; (c) respect Buddhism and its teachings; and (d) love fellow man. The Eight Points of Honesty form parts of the HOA HAO ethical teaching as do the virtues which HUYEN PHU SO stressed. These virtues insist that marriage partners be faithful to each other, and that officials be just, honest, and faithful in behalf of their people even as parents care for their children.

The HOA HAO are forbidden to drink alcohol, to smoke opium, or to kill either oxen or buffalo for food. In order to make such restrictions more acceptable to the adherents, the ban on killing oxen or buffalo does not preclude eating beef when it is offered by one’s host. But even in this matter, the faithful HOA HAO must not eat either meat or greasy food on the 1st, 14th, 15th, or 30th days of the lunar month, as these are days of abstinence.

The HOA HAO is Theravada Buddhism. The older form of Buddhism has encouraged repeated reforms, aimed at conserving the purity of the teachings of the elders, with this teaching being more correct or closer to Buddha’s doctrines than Mahayana Buddhism. But stress is given to austerity and salvation by personal example. As in all forms of Buddhism, salvation is a result of personal achievement.

SO taught the absence of statues, temples, bonzes, etc., provides a means whereby an individual worshipper may have a richer spiritual experience. SO wrote, “The cult must stem more from internal faith than from a pompous appearance. It is better to pray with a pure heart before the family altar than to perform gaudy ceremonies in a pagoda, clad in the robes of an unworthy bonze.” (The Political-Religious Sects of Vietnam, Pacific Affairs, XXVIII, No. 3, September 1955, page 224.)

Confucianism and Animism were included in SO’s “reform” Buddhism, but on a more restricted scale than found in other Vietnamese religions. Prayers and offerings might be offered to Buddha, to Vietnamese national heroes or to personal ancestors, but not other deities and spirits, except some small offerings of the various incenses used to frighten away the evil spirits who might be lurking nearby.

The natural consequence of such concepts taught by SO was a de-emphasis of pagodas and other elaborate structures as well as increased value given to rituals, symbols, and the Songa, which is the Buddhist order of monks. SO violently attacked the Vietnamese custom of elaborate and often expensive funerals also. This funeral custom has been brought from Tibet and China by the Chinese and absorbed into Vietnamese Buddhism and Confucianism so that it became a national custom. In SO’s words, “The body should be interred simply and without great ceremony so that its decomposition should not incommode the living. Why spend lots of money under the pretext of materializing feelings of filial piety, fidelity and friendship toward the dead, when it should have been greatly preferable to show them such feelings when they are alive...?” (P. 245, Bernard Fall, “The Political-Religious Sects of Vietnam”, Pacific Affairs, XXVIII, No. 3, September 1955.) In accord with these views, the HOA HAO have no Scriptures peculiar to themselves, and have little need of an extensive clergy or of large offerings.

While having doctrines based upon Theravada Buddhism which has a long history of semi-passiveness, the HOA HAO are aggressive, and quite acceptable fighters when well-led. While giving allegiance to no religious figure as such, the fighting adherents of Hoa Haoism seem to have an almost fanatical willingness to follow and obey their HOA HAO immediate superiors without regard for personal loss. At the same time, neither does the HOA HAO shrink from acquiring possessions or seeking to improve himself instead of resigning to fate. Non-adherents of Hoa Haoism in areas of that faith often point out that HOA HAO don’t seem to follow the Eight Points of Honesty in their relations with non-members of the faith.

The HOA HAO Flag: Like the other religious bodies in Vietnam, the HOA HAO have a distinctive religious flag, rectangular in shape and solid maroon in color inasmuch as the HOA HAO believe that maroon is the combination of all colors and thus signifies unity of all people, regardless of race, color, or language.
The small and simple altars, normally covered with a single red cloth, in either home or temple, may have one to three bowls of fruit or flowers as well as three bowls of water on them. The red cloth is a symbol of universal understandings, as Vietnamese think red to be the all-embracing color. Just as the ability of the HOA HAO adherent to communicate directly with the supernatural removes the need of a large clergy, so the offering of water and flowers in place of wine and food reduces demands on the peasant worshipper. Undoubtedly, such factors tend to make this faith more acceptable and more solidly established among the Vietnamese delta peasantry where it had its origin and now has most of its current membership. Within the home of the HOA HAO, the picture of SO is normally found hanging above the altar or table reserved for the practice and worship of the religion.

The adherents of Hoa Haoism are largely ethnic Vietnamese, even though the religion itself springs from Theravada Buddhism. Thus the customs and patterns of life are similar to the Vietnamese except where the tenets of faith cause differences. Normally, only the alert and informed observer can quickly distinguish between the HOA HAO and other faiths in the delta. In this respect, it is well to know that the HOA HAO are members of the sixteen member Unified Buddhist Association of Vietnam, in contrast to the Cao Dai who are not normally accepted by the Buddhists as belonging even faintly to Buddhism.

Organization of the HOA HAO: In 1964 an election among the HOA HAO created a sixteen member Central Executive Committee; the members hold a two-year term. The elected chairman is Mr. Loung Trong Tuong; others are elected vice-chairman, advisors, secretary, assistant secretaries, etc. Moreover, this type of structure is duplicated in each level of organization down to the hamlet. While basically designed to function only in the area of religion, the influence and interest of this organization undoubtedly affects both political and military concepts inasmuch as the HOA HAO have a history of religio-political-military involvement. But when it is recalled that this religion has never experienced a time of peace, its involvement in the religio-military scene may not be too strange.

Many observers say the HOA HAO troop commander is the unquestioned leader of his religio-military unit, and that his troops will obey him to the extent that one observer has remarked: "They would follow him off the side of a cliff." This loyalty is not normally found in units of HOA HAO where non-HOA HAO are in command. According to some adherents, the HOA HAO, like the Moslems of the Middle East under the influence of Islam, have sometimes exerted forceful persuasion in effecting conversion. Several Vietnamese have remarked on occasion that while sometimes divided among themselves, the HOA HAO will more often be united together against non-adherents, and seem to prefer to have local government officials of their own faith.

Miscellanea and Guidelines of American/Vietnamese/ HOA HAO Report: Because of the political and military conditions under which it was founded in 1939, as well as the attitude of its founder, HUYEN PHU SO, the HOA HAO is a religio-political-military organization. The
death of SO, with his prophetic gift of leadership, disrupted the movement and the HOA HAO quickly demonstrated the splintering so typical of a people without firm goals, guidelines and leadership. Yet the fact of the survival of the HOA HAO makes an understanding of the followers a necessity for all who serve in their area or make decisions affecting them. Created in violent stress, the HOA HAO have been involved with and against the communists, with and against the French, also with and against the Japanese as well as with and against various Vietnamese governments.

While the HOA HAO may be politically and militarily divided from time to time, the adherents seem to have a consistent loyalty to the religion itself. Since HOA HAOISM originated in time of Vietnamese national crisis and stress, it has existed under threat of annihilation by one force or another, and so has been aggressively hostile itself. At least it has been able to convey this impression to the noninvolved Vietnamese peasant of the delta.

In spite of the reputation which the HOA HAO soldier has established, some observers believe that the average one is much the same as other Vietnamese servicemen; he may be either a poor, average or excellent fighter depending upon his background, his training and his personal motivation. However, his loyalty to HOA HAO leadership is sufficiently strong that good leadership can compensate for other factors.

The HOA HAO seem to like Americans, or demonstrate little hostility or non-acceptance toward them. This may grow out of SO's early prophecy of the coming of the Americans as well as the relationships experienced thus far between the HOA HAO and the American military personnel. Yet their loyalty toward immediate HOA HAO leadership requires that all Americans must establish rapport and acceptable relationships with these leaders. To be successful, national objectives must be accepted by the HOA HAO as their own goals. Wisdom dictates that private conferences with the leaders at all levels will allow them to present the national program as one to which they have agreed. The attainment of the goals will then reflect to their credit. Experience has shown that some HOA HAO leaders will resign when their men fail to achieve an objective, unless they are convinced that factors beyond their possible consideration affected the outcome.

To ascertain who the HOA HAO leader is may be difficult sometimes; but discreet observation normally reveals this in spite of the fact that the "front-man" is often only the agent of the individuals who control the funds. Experience makes it possible to "play the game" and still secure objectives while staying on good terms with all.

Since most of the HOA HAO adherents are ethnic Vietnamese, the same courtesy and understanding extended to other Vietnamese is normally sufficient, particularly if one remains alert to their religious tenets. This includes discretion in comments or questions pertaining to HUYEN PHU SO's death or "current location", as some adherents believe that SO is still alive and will return at the appropriate time. Such adherents tend to refer almost unconsciously to SO as "My Master".

It is obvious that strong religious factors of the Vietnamese must be carefully considered in any effective national endeavor. These factors must be recognized on both the policy and the implementation levels. Especially in the latter, the attitude and actions of each American become vital. Military objectives in strong religious communities must weigh the religious forces, concepts and practices. This sometimes necessitates decisions that give first priority to religious considerations and second priority to the usual military procedures. Damage may result if influences are ignored, as some Vietnamese adherents are "forceful" in maintaining their practices.
Provinces of Vietnam
Approximate 6% of the population
Percentages according to the best available figures:

- An Giang: 75%
- Chau Doc: 53%
- Kien Phong: 28%
- Kien Tuong: 26%
- Vinh Long: 20%
- Chuong Thi: 2 to 3%
- Pho Quoc: 10%
- Bac Lieu: 1 to 1.5%
- Kien Giang: Less than 1%
- Bo Xuyen: Less than 1%
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chaffard, George, Indochine dix ans d'indépendence, Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1964

Donoghue, John D. and Vo-Hong-Phuc, My-Thuan: The Study of a Delta Village In South Vietnam, Saigon, Vietnam, Advisory Group, Michigan State University, 1961

Fall, Bernard, The Two Vietnams, A Political and Military Analysis, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1963


Nguyen Phut Tan, A Modern History of Vietnam, Saigon, Nha Sach Kha Tri, 1964


PERSONAL RESPONSE PROJECT FILE

Magazines


Jones, P.H.M., "Khanh In Command", Far Eastern Economic Review XLIV #5, April 30, 1964
XI. RELIGION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

A. SCENES OF VIETNAMESE LIFE

A tribesman of the hills and mountains of South Vietnam.

For many Vietnamese, the village encompasses their lives. They are born, grow up, marry, have children, grow old, if fortunate, and die, often without ever having left their village environment. And some 80% of the Vietnamese are villagers.

Since religious beliefs affect every phase of Vietnamese life, and because these are quite different from Judeo-Christian beliefs, the resulting value systems determine patterns of thinking, habits, customs, and taboos quite different from those found in America. Because religious beliefs so richly color and tint almost every Vietnamese action or thought, it is imperative that Americans understand these if we are to live and help others to live through shared understanding and partnership.

The use of religious concepts in everyday life is more evident among the Vietnamese than among Americans. Americans tend to compartmentalize religion into a limited part of the week - in many cases to less than one hour per week. Most of the Vietnamese religious beliefs affecting daily life are so complex that they do not easily lend themselves to precise statements, definitions, beliefs, or creeds which can readily be understood by Americans.

Tribespeople often store grain in small houses to protect it from fire or rats.
Tribeswomen share the labor

The Vietnamese wooden bed also serves as the family table at meal time.

A Montagnard Village

Water buffalo are an important part of the Vietnamese economy.
The coffin of a Vietnamese peasant brought to the burial site by two men using a bamboo pole.

The commercial drying of joss sticks.

Mobile "Hot Shoppes" are everyday sights in Vietnamese towns and cities.
Scene along a canal in Siagon

Tilling the fields for the planting of rice

Vietnamese women washing their family's clothing
B. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES

Gassho: is a form of greeting or the highest form of respect, in which hands are placed palms together, fingers pointing upward, in front of the chest. In showing respect to clergy or respected persons of high honor, the hands are placed in front of the face instead of the chest. The form also represents unity. It is often used as a means of greeting in lieu of the American handshake. The gassho is also the position in which worshippers hold their hands while listening to sermons in the pagoda, or to the advice and counsel of a bonze.

Joss Stick Lighting: Worshippers normally light three joss sticks (the Cao Daiist use five) in the courtyard of the house of worship, and place them in sand-filled containers or in specially prepared racks. Then moving to the center of the patio or pagoda front, they perform the gassho three times. This is quite similar to the Japanese version of clapping the hands three times from a similar location. "Money" made of golden or red crepe paper may also be burned at this time in an outdoor fire so that the ascending smoke may supply the needs of the spirits or gods. Unless specifically invited to do so, it is not proper for non-adherents of the faith to light joss sticks.

Worship in the Pagoda or Temple: takes place after the worshipper removes his shoes at the temple door and, if wearing one, removes his hat. He moves to a position in front of the altar, be it one of Buddha or of Spirit Veneration; and performs the gassho three times. He then kneels, and from this position lowers his forehead to the floor three times. Once these acts are completed, the worshipper stands, bows to the altar or to the Buddha statue, then moves away. This may complete the worship. Sometimes the worshipper may shake a container of numbered sticks until one or more fall away. The sticks which drop are then taken to an attendant who gives a printed answer to the worshipper for each stick, the written material supposedly giving answers to the desires of the one who has performed the service.

Funerals: Dependent upon locality and ethnic group, as well as upon religious beliefs, funerals will vary in accordance with wealth and social position of the family. The head of the home is normally given a more elaborate funeral than is a wife or children. This is equally true when cremation is the method for handling the corpse. Burials may be in cemeteries or on family property, in simple round graves or in elaborately constructed and decorated graves. Normally the cities have cemeteries and funerals are more elaborate than in villages. But even in the latter, it is necessary for descendents to conform to a pattern of "entertainment" often beyond their means. The amount of food, drink, music, etc., provided at a funeral is considered by some as indicative of the amount of respect the family had for the deceased.

Because embalming is not practiced in Vietnam, funerals normally take place shortly after death. There are exceptions, however; and on such occasions the body is placed in a casket with sand about it, and perfume is used to conceal odors of decay. Because of the heat and humidity, however, even this practice must be short-terminated.

In the typical procession, the eldest son of the deceased leads the march to the place of burial. He is followed by the clergy, relics of worship, and a picture of the deceased. If within the means of the family, a hired band is next in line, followed by the hearse. Female members of the family, dressed in white and wearing white head-bands which signify mourning, follow the hearse on foot. Other mourners follow to complete the procession.

For many villagers, the funeral may be quite simply the choosing of a burial spot, the digging of a shallow grave, the placing of the casket, and the closing of the grave. In such cases the casket may be attached to a bamboo pole and carried to the gravesite on the shoulders of two men. In most cases the grave is tended time to time; the dirt is repiled and shaped to mark it as a grave; and grass and weeds are removed.

In reference to death and funerals in Vietnam, it is important to remember the following:
1. Jokes about sickness and death are in very bad taste among Vietnamese.
2. Treat graves as you would desire those of your own loved ones to be treated.
3. Beliefs about death and afterlife are utilized by the Viet Cong as part of psychological warfare.
4. Treat the dead in the same manner that you would desire for yourself or loved ones to the extent that conditions permit.

Graves: A variety of gravesites dot the countryside of Vietnam. Many graves are merely round piles of dirt in the form of a circle, and may be found in rice paddies, on hill sides, etc. Treatment of these sites ought not to be less than that expected for cemetery plots in America.
Vietnamese believe that the individual must earn the right to be buried, and will therefore often bury the deceased at a prime location on his land. They will then farm around the grave. Those who are financially able often erect barriers and decorations around the grave, utilizing the same type of materials and decorations found on pagodas and temples. Wisdom dictates that extra trouble be taken to avoid needless desecration of graves. Respect for grave sites not only promotes a "good neighbor policy", but reveals a feeling for Vietnamese beliefs. According to these beliefs, desecration of a grave not only affects the physical site itself, but angers the Spirits, who might directly attack the living. It is for the latter reason that any destruction of graves, purposeful or accidental, should be remedied without delay.

Communal Houses: The Communal House in Vietnam is often the place where memorial tables to the deceased are stored and is the location for occasional ceremonies of the clan, tribe, or village. Like the Wat, it must be treated with both respect and care. The pagoda or temple, the Communal House, and the market place are the three locations of most importance in any community, and none of them should be disturbed without clear orders.

Ancestor Veneration Temples: Temples for the veneration of Great Heroes are a vital part of the Vietnamese scene. Due to the influence of Confucianism, there are a number of temples where Vietnamese go for worship and prayer to the spirits of deceased heroes. Each temple is dedicated to a number of such spirits, and in view of legendary Vietnamese history, any listing of the various Veneration Temples would be quite lengthy. As a rule, these Temples do not have Buddhas or Buddhist symbolism; but are richly ornamented in Chinese designs, and contain altars covered with items acceptable to this type of worship (incense burners, candles, pictures of the deceased etc.).

Marriage: The mixture of various religious concepts into one culture (as found in Vietnam except among tribal peoples) tends to give a uniformity to marriage arrangements, ceremonies, feasts, dowry, etc. Because the individual is less important than the family, it is expected that the family will have a major voice in the selection of wives and husbands of their children. This is often done through a "go-between" (male or female) to save "face" in case it is deemed best to break off bargaining. Another major factor in the choosing of marriage partners is consulting of horoscopes. This is often done by a Buddhist bonze who practices the art.

The wedding ceremony can take place in either the home of the bride or the groom or of relatives. It consists mainly of pledges by the couple. Often the go-between acts as the officiating personality. Sometimes, scripture reading by a bonze is included. During the ceremony elder married relatives may pour holy water over the hands of the couple, signifying that part of the virtue of Buddha is granted them.

The wedding feast often takes place several hours after the ceremony, or even the next day. It is proper to give gifts to the young couple, but they should not be given in odd numbers. To do so would be, according to popular belief, to bring "bad luck" on the marriage. It is thus better to present two less expensive gifts rather than one expensive gift.

It is not proper for an American to attend a wedding ceremony or feast unless he is specifically invited to be there.

Spirit Houses: These little shelters, some simple and some elaborate, are to be seen all over Vietnam. They are erected by the devout for the happiness of the Spirits. These Spirits may be those of a particular location, or the Spirits of deceased relatives which must be placated lest harm come to the living. The little shelters, which remind Westerners of "bird-houses", often contain candles, Joss Sticks, toy furniture, and other useful items for the pleasure and use of the Spirits. Spirit houses reflect prevalent belief in animism and ancestor veneration, and are of vital importance to those who erect them. For the best rapport with the people, Americans are strongly advised to steer completely clear of spirit houses.

C. RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE AND CONCEPTS AFFECTING BEHAVIOR

1. Time Concepts
   a. Western: To Americans, time has a beginning, a span with fixed events, and an end. This time is divided into B.C. and A.D. measurement. This is linear time measurement. The linear concept of time motivates change, improvement, progress. Americans look for ways in which they can explore, dominate, and utilize the universe. Because of a sense of personal, individual dignity and value, they don't
hesitate to tamper with the world; to grasp and exploit its elusive secrets and make them man’s servants.

b. Vietnamese: The Vietnamese understanding of time and history is different. To them—except when influenced by Western thought—time is circular. As the twelve-year repeating calendar repeats itself, so historical events repeat themselves. There is little sense of progress. History possesses little value and few goals. Hence, the Vietnamese is not impressed by a need to “rush”. He has lots of time, but little money. His life span is already too short; so why rush it away? There is usually an abundance of labor and many mouths to feed; make do with what you have. Develop sufficient patience, and perhaps in the next existence your Karma will permit improvement. After all, the only way to make any real progress is by improving one’s merits and the practice of the Eight-Fold Path to Nirvana with the removal of the 108 desires.

This concept of time combined with poor diet and disease often results in less than the fullest possible effort. When climatic conditions are added to these three elements, along with the teachings of Taoism and Buddhism, it is to their credit that the Vietnamese have achieved as much as they have. So remember:

(1) Time is not as valuable to the Vietnamese as time-conscious Americans feel it is to them. For the Vietnamese, the ability to live each day and have sufficient food, etc., is more important than anything else.

(2) American exuberance tends to overwhelm and “smother” the Vietnamese.

Family Concepts: These are affected in Vietnam by Hinduism and Buddhism, and by the older concept of Ancestor Veneration encouraged by Confucianism. The latter ties people to the past and to the future so that they might be adjusted to the present. Each individual is taught his exact position in society. There is little confusion about place, and few decisions to be made. A part of the family, the individual is neither superior nor inferior, but is an integral part of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His life is bound by the family/clan/community—by those who lived before him, by those who live with him, and by those who will live after him. The individual feels secure because of his accepted role. This role does not require efficiency and productivity as much as loyalty and conformity to prescribed roles. Old age is respected by virtue of being a father, grandfather, or great grandfather in the community rather than because of acquired wisdom, skill, or wealth.

Thus ever grown people must consult grandmothers, parents, elder brothers, departed ancestors, etc., before making decisions. Business transactions take time because the whole community—living and dead—is involved. Embarrassment or shame is due more to violations of the socially accepted code than to a sense of moral wrongness. All proposed actions must be preceded by consideration of what consequences they will have on the total family. This is why even deceased ancestors are consulted.

The belief in ancestor veneration encourages early marriage and many children. It would be wrong to deprive ancestors of worship and lessen their estate in the spirit-world due to lack of descendents. The more respect shown for the spirits of the dead, the greater opportunity for them to be “good spirits”, who will help the living members of the family.

Because one’s estate in the spirit world is dependent upon worship given to the deceased, planned marriages by the family help promote and protect this veneration. Spirits not venerated may become “wandering spirits”, and can do harm. These are feared by one and all.

2. Concept of Spirits and Spirit-Controlled Environment

Belief in good and evil spirits, both animate and inanimate, is basic throughout Vietnam regardless of other religions professed. Some Americans are superstitious; but usually in spite of their religious beliefs. Many Vietnamese are superstitious because of their beliefs. Some Vietnamese are very serious in seeking to appease evil or harm-causing spirits and the spirits of deceased ancestors. Not to appease would be to create problems.

Thus the Spirit House, the Spirit Pole in the rice paddies, the mirror by the door of the home, the “ishi” lions at the Temples or homes, the Ancestor Altars or Shelves, etc., are attempts to be in harmony with the spirits, and to have the spirits to do the will of the appeaser. Moreover, pleased spirits can do much to counteract evil ones. It is widely believed by most classes throughout Vietnam that spirits have the power to do evil by causing sickness, death, and other troubles. It is because of such beliefs that:

a. Mirrors by the door frighten spirits and prevent them from entering the home.
b. Red paper representing the "Door God" does the same thing.

c. Buddhists desire that an even number of people be in a picture lest death be caused to one of the group.

d. Since the "life-stuff" of man lives in the head, patting the head is believed by some to be an attempt to steal away the spirit and cause death. NEVER PAT ANYONE ON THE HEAD. Better yet, simply keep your hands to yourself. Because the head is the residence of the soul, the feet are considered of lowest value. So do not sit with feet crossed, pointing the soul of the foot to anyone. This is considered gross insult by many Vietnamese.

e. Since spirits cause sickness and death, never joke about these lest the spirits be angered and take action.

f. Many of the rituals created by Animism, wherever found in Vietnam, are designed to ward off illness, death, etc., by requesting protection or by propitiating an errant or evil spirit. Many women have small shrines to Quang An for protection during childbirth and while children are small. The small children may also wear numerous amulets as charms against harm or ailments caused by errant or wandering spirits.

Many Vietnamese families have a service within the first twelve years of a child's life which is suppose to cleanse the child from the evils of its birth and allow intelligence while promoting a healthy adulthood. This service may consist of a small altar dedicated to the goddess of birth - usually Quang An - on which are placed twelve bowls of sweet soybean and sugar soup. Twelve pieces of paper with pictures of the calendrical cycle is then burned.

Because childhood is the time when the evil spirits are most zealous, the little ones must be carefully guarded. It is now that little boys especially must be protected and brass bracelets may be placed on the small child as the spirits do not like the feel of metal, or an earring may be worn by the male-baby to fool the spirits into thinking it is a girl. Likewise, the small children are sometimes cautioned not to play under the trees where the spirits "rest" for fear they may anger the spirits.

Pregnant women often observe many taboos in order that the strains of pregnancy be eased and that birth may bring forth well-formed children without deformity. They must not eat "unclean" foods such as the snake, rat, mouse, dog, or beef lest the child be retarded; this does not preclude the use of tobacco or betel-nut. Because her presence might create "bad luck" for a bridal couple, a pregnant woman is not supposed to attend weddings, nor is she to take part in funerals as this may cause her child to be a "crybaby". She is to also shun places of worship including the pagoda and shrines to avoid angering the resident spirits of these places: since the spirits often promenade at twelve and five o'clock, she must not be outside her house so the evil spirits will not see her and create harm for her or the baby. Within the house, she must always take care to avoid stepping over a sleeping place or the unborn child may be infected with lethargy so that it will take seven days after birth for its eyes to open. Moreover, stepping over her sleeping husband can afflicts him with sleeping sickness even as drinking from a cup which he is using may cause him to be a "crybaby".

3. Concept of individuality

In contrast to the Confucian teaching that the individual is merely a link between past and future generations, Buddhism stressed individuality. Among the Twelve Principles of Buddhism, the place and responsibility of the self is emphasized when it is declared that "self-salvation is for any man the immediate task". Man is not his brother's keeper; but must find his own way to Nirvana by escaping the Wheel of Existence through the use of the Eight-Fold Path and the elimination of the 108 Desires or Cravings. Because each individual has his own Karma which must be worked out for eventual salvation, it is necessary that merit be gained through good works in order to climb the ladder to Nirvana. For the Buddhist Bonze, this may be done through giving sermons, through meditating, etc. For the laity it will include meditation before Buddha's statue, and giving gifts to the pagoda and the bonze. The denial of the 108 Desires or Cravings means submission to fate and resignation to life as it is. This denial prevents involvement in the quest for a better life and the acquisition of material things, as these are thought to be illusory. The real virtues, by contrast, are patience and humility.

The preceding concepts create the following ideas and behavior patterns:

a. Avoid showing anger to anyone who offends. The more annoyed or perturbed the Vietnamese becomes, the more polite he will be, he will speak in a softer voice, and he will smile more. Therefore, loud speech, vulgarity,
and anger by Americans are acts which may create concealed or repressed anger and hostility.

b. Humility is revealed in attempts to make you feel completely at ease. You will be seated higher than your hosts. Dignitaries and officials walk in front of others. Places of honor are offered to guests. Humility prevents the Vietnamese from contradicting you, even if you are wrong. And verbal agreement may be given to your plan, even when there is no intention to follow it up with action.

c. Teachings of individuality and eternal Nirvana tend to hinder industrial growth, capital investments, and general economic progress. Such material developments run contrary to the idea that man can find ultimate success only in the denial of the very drives which facilitate them.

Men in all cultures - including the Vietnamese - respond to problems of life in one of four ways or modifications thereof: (1) Fight or resist; (2) Submit, accept, or surrender; (3) Take flight or flee; and (4) Ignore the problem: the "head in the sand" attitude. With the foregoing in mind, and in view of what you will observe and experience in Vietnam, it may be beneficial to mention some Guidelines for American Vietnamese Rapport:

Be prepared for differences in thought, behavior, customs, etc.
Be patient, persistent, consistent, acceptable, and accepting.
Be interested in people as individuals.
Be alert to areas of agreement rather than disagreement.
Be aware of possible long-range consequences of gifts, actions, and reactions.
Be adaptable when moral principles are not involved.
Be prepared to treat Vietnamese as you would desire to be treated.
Be aware of your attitudes. Your actions will produce good or bad for you, your buddies, and those who follow you.
Be understanding, compassionate, and concerned.
Determine to be the best American example possible.

D. EXAMPLES OF RELIGION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The following brief articles are included as a part of this study to show the effect of religious concepts and beliefs in daily life and are glimpses of everyday life among the Vietnamese. A Religiously Influenced Culture

Most of the Vietnamese habits, customs, and traditions are rooted in, and conditioned by, religious beliefs. Their culture was already middle-aged when Jesus was born in the far off land of Judea. It was a long time before any of the Vietnamese heard about that time-changing event - with most of the Vietnamese still knowing nothing of the religious facts that have so influenced American culture.

Vietnam has for centuries practiced the ingestion of both outside peoples and influences - either voluntarily or involuntarily. These have all influenced and modified her culture so that each concept has become, in time, part of its own tradition and folklore. India cast her influence largely through peaceful trade and religion. China has been more direct through the centuries. Using war, conquest, and occupation whenever possible. It is not difficult to understand why the Vietnamese, North or South, have little love for their giant northern neighbor.

While traces of Indian culture are embedded in Vietnam, it is the impact of Chinese culture, ideas, art, religion, etc., which is most seen and realized in every phase of life in Vietnam. This is so evident that it seems "The Vietnamese threw out the baby, but kept its bath-water" when they expelled the Chinese about 1,000 A.D. Though the Chinese have been back from time to time, it has always been without an invitation.

While Buddhism did originate in India as a revolt against Hinduism, its major impact in Vietnam came through the Chinese with the many modifications created by the more historic Chinese cultural patterns and beliefs. Nevertheless, it forms a basic part of the Vietnamese scene, and a valid understanding of Vietnamese life and thought cannot be gained without a keen awareness of the part which religion has played and continues to play in so many ways.

Into the "cooking pot" of Vietnam, the various ingredients of Animism, Ancestor Veneration or Worship, Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islamism, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, etc., have been tossed. To season and spice the dish, secular culture concepts of various origins have been added. This has bubbled and stewed through the centuries, so that few of the basic religions or religious ideas will be found identical to the original. Exception must be made for such religious ingredients as Protestantism which has been added too recently, and for the animism of the tribal people who have normally
stayed aloof from the whole "show" and have suffered with their "fear-controlled religion".

The imported religious ideas have induced permanent changes in the thought and behavior patterns of the people, and have become so deeply woven into Vietnamese daily life that Westerners tend to disbelieve their eyes, and fail to comprehend the resulting value systems. These ideas mixed with animism and ancestor veneration from South China have formulated the moral codes and standards. They have also established the various rules and systems of government, and have either promoted or hindered the growth of arts, crafts, industry and technological developments.

Until very recently, and in many areas is still fact, the pagoda, the wat, the shrine, the communal house, the mosque, have been the focus of village life. Birth, marriage, festivals, death, lunar occasions, etc., as well as health, posterity, travels, planting of crops, house building, are all governed by religious beliefs and ceremonies. The religious figures of the community are important personages because of either individual belief or community pressure. Social approval is essential to any Vietnamese. Many would rather die than to be held in disfavor with family or community. This would be the "sin" to many Vietnamese that creates guilt, rather than the concept held by many Americans that all men are accountable to a supreme God.

Vietnamese Village—Homes

About 70 to 80% of the Vietnamese depend upon agriculture for their livelihood, and normally live in small towns and villages along the coast and in the Delta of Vietnam. The tribespeople of Vietnam, the Montagnards, who form about 5% of the population live in 50% of the land area of Vietnam which is composed largely of the mountains. Generally, the Vietnamese rice farmer (rice raising is the major farm activity) lives in small villages and walks to and from his various rice paddies. Sometimes small boats are used to reach these fields by means of irrigation canals and ditches and the rice crop is sometimes transported to the village by boat when harvested. Since these folk constitute the primary groups of people that the Navy/Marine Team contact daily in pacification efforts, it is well to understand their way of life.

The farmer's house is built normally for practical uses rather than beauty. It may have roofs composed of thatch or palm leaves, tile or due to the current struggle in Vietnam, tin. Some Americans have observed walls and roofs of houses made of uncut beer company tin with the various advertisements of the companies already printed on the metal. The story of how such commercially marked tin has reached such remote areas and strange usage without first being formed into beer cans would probably be an interesting one.

The house is normally made of such local materials as are available. This may include bamboo, straw, mud, and other products of the area. The mud may be daubed directly onto the plaited bamboo to form the walls. It may be shaped as brick which can be sun-dried as adobe or, in more rare cases, dried in regular kilns. With the current war effort, cement has joined tin as a material used whenever it is available. Whenever the house is made of mud or clay, the eaves of the thatched or tin roof are extended well over the walls so that the heavy rains of the monsoons will not wash the walls away. They also act as an aid to keep the house cooler in the hot sticky climate of the major areas of Vietnam.

The house of the ethnic Vietnamese peasant class is normally divided into three to five rooms of varying size. The main room is the central one in which the ancestor shelf holds the place of honor. Even in the poorer home, there is always a display of candlesticks, incense, scrolls, tapestries, burners, and a shrine which contains the ancestral tablets. These "sacred tablets" contain the names of ancestors through the fourth generation to whom devotion is encouraged and expected. Ancestral spirits are regarded as always present to witness happenings in the family. Most Vietnamese, regardless of what other religious faith is professed, are devotees of ancestor veneration, which has grown out of the Confucian teachings instilled in Vietnam by the Chinese occupation of over 1,000 years. Exceptions to veneration of ancestors are the animistic tribespeople, who fear spirits but do not worship ancestral spirits, and the Protestants who represent a small part of the Vietnamese population. The Vietnamese Roman Catholic Church permits ancestor veneration as a cultural expression of the commandment to honor thy father and mother.

The main dwelling, even in the village, is normally built in a V shape with space reserved for grandparents, parents and children. Servants and hired farm hands may be quartered either in the main house or small houses of their own in the same compound. The family compound also contains shelters for the oxen or buffalo, farm tools, grain storage, the inevitable pig sty and chicken pen. Often a small garden of vegetables,
a tank for storing rain water, as well as a pond or pool where the children and adults bath and wash both clothing and dishes, complete the interior of the compound which may be enclosed in a wall of greenery. This screening wall of growing plants - areca palmas, guava trees, mango trees, bamboo clumps, banana trees, etc. - protect the occupants from curious villagers and others who pass by.

The streets of many villages are little more than winding paths. The barking of numerous dogs and the presence of many small children, make the arrival of a stranger in "town" a well known fact within an exceedingly short time. The attitude of both children and adult villagers quickly reveal indifference, friendliness, hostility, etc., as determined by the action of previous Americans or the villager's awareness that Viet Cong agents are present and watching. An awareness of such simple but obvious factors, as well as an understanding of the multiple involved pressures on the villagers, can do much to aid the success of assigned missions. The attitude, reaction and action of every American is a vital consideration as the lowest man may cause the loss of many lives or may promote such rapport that many lives are saved by the simplest acts of kindness, consideration, concern, or interest.

The American serviceman benefits many as he reveals interest in other people as human beings even if their language, their culture and their daily life patterns do differ from America.

Vietnamese Village Dinh, Market, School

The Vietnamese village constitutes the dwelling place of most Vietnamese and has several buildings or sites which Americans can best appreciate by understanding the purpose and use of the buildings. These include the Dinh, the school and the market places.

The Dinh is a combination of the temple and the community center in many Vietnamese villages. It is within the Dinh that the housewives offer prayers not said at home. It is here that they also offer food to the guardian spirit called "thanh hoang" in Vietnamese. At such times, the "thanh hoang" is asked for protection against the various natural disasters and for his good will toward the individual worshipper or the worshipper's family.

The "thanh hoang" can be a spirit (ghost) of someone who died a violent death, an unnatural death such as murder, childbirth or failed to be buried; or a supernatural or celestial spirit without human origin. Though the villager may claim his faith as Buddhism, Confucianism, or another of the ten or so faiths in Vietnam, the animistic belief of "spirits" who can affect and control destiny is very strong.

Often the courtyard of the Dinh or adjoining temple has a lotus pond with the large round green leaves floating on the water's surface. The lovely flowers of the several varieties of lotus rising above the dirty water, give color to the area. They remind the beholder that, as the beautiful flower grows in such a humble environment, so good may come from each regardless of surrounding conditions.

Should the village have a Buddhist temple or even a Taoist one, it will normally be the most elaborate structure in the village. As the foreigner listens in the quiet of the day, the sound of the monk's almost monotonous prayers and sermon recitations, with or without audience, will be broken from time to time with the rhythmic beat of the mo, which is a wooden instrument normally found on or near the altar, or the ringing sound of the altar gong being struck with a small wooden mallet. If the government does not have a school in the village, the chances are that an elementary school will be located near the temple and taught by someone of the religious organization of the community be it Buddhist, Roman Catholic or Protestant, except among the tribes people villages where many have no formal schooling.

Schools in Vietnam normally teach their students by rote with very limited supplies of books, pencils, paper, or the items which Americans take for granted in this generation, but under conditions similar to those experienced by Americans a hundred years or more ago. Often there are not enough seats for the children; desks are very scarce if present at all; lighting is normally inadequate; yet, while the teacher and student have all these and other similar problems, as well as the war conditions, the need for knowledge and development of youthful minds grows more pressing each day.

The village market place has many varieties of fresh vegetables, nuts of all kinds, fresh fruits, bananas, oranges, grapefruit, lemon, tropical fruits of all kinds, baskets of peanuts, trays of meat exposed to both dust and flies, fish, tobacco, sugar and salt. These are intermixed with stalls or crude spaces filled with items of clothing, cloth and small hardware items, making a sight to be remembered. The entire market, large or small, is often crowded with people who come to look, to buy or to gossip. As typical throughout Vietnam, it is the women who are merchants, and who seem to dominate the market place.
The important buildings of any Vietnamese farming or fishing village are the Dinh and/or temple, the market place and the school. The conduct of Americans both individually and collectively in these areas can be vital to the success of the present assignment of the Navy/Marine Team in Vietnam. Be alert to the differences between Vietnam and your home; ask questions in order to gain information, but ask them as you would desire a visitor in the States to ask about something in your hometown. By so doing you will establish friendships that could save your life.

Women

With the numerous cultures and societies in Vietnam, attitudes toward women and their status fluctuate widely. The individual who seeks in a few words to describe their life, place and influence in theory and fact is undertaking an impossible task.

The farming or village class woman works at hard labor just as does the man. Wearing black pajama bottoms and a short blouse topped by a conical hat of palm leaf with or without its plastic cover she may be seen at hard work everywhere, be it the rice field, the cane patch, the market place or along the streets. Often she is the business-head of the family and operates any financial endeavor which it undertakes. Such a business may be a small store, a mobile sidewalk cafeteria, etc. She is not normally a pedicab operator or a fisherman at sea, although she is often a fishmonger or peddler. Among the Viet Cong she is known to be a crafty and hardy warrior. Some Vietnamese government women have been similarly acclaimed.

Confucius taught that the young woman is subject to paternal authority; as a wife, subject to her husband; and as a widow, to her eldest son. While this may be the theory and outward affectation, the fact is that women play a vital role even though it is obscure. The man may be the head of the house, but the skillful and perceptive wife understands enough practical psychology to have her ideas followed most of the time. Many Vietnamese legends attest to this.

When children are small and the husband dies, the widow becomes the head of the household; she performs ancestral worship until the eldest son is old enough to assume this function; she handles property etc. If, however, she remarries, all of her authority over her children and of her husband’s property is lost.

The middle and upper class ethnic Vietnamese women wear the Ao Dai which is a slenderizing formfitting outer garment that extends from its choke-throat collar to below the knees with long sleeves and slit on either side to the waist. It is worn over a pair of pajama-type bottoms with shoes being either sandals or closed shoes as desired. The lovely pastel color combinations and their light graceful movements combined with well groomed hair and countenance make many Vietnamese women quite attractive.

Their skillful ability to ride bicycles, motor scooters, etc., so gracefully creates an amazement in most Westerners. In the cities many women are becoming educated and capable of performing technical tasks required in a changing society. Yet many of their attitudes are still largely moulded by traditions hundreds of years old.

Marriage

Marriage and death are perhaps the most sacred and solemn events among most of the Vietnamese people, either lowlander or mountaineer. To the lowland or ethnic Vietnamese, marriage is an affair of greater interest and concern to the entire family than to the man and woman to be married. It is arranged by the family with much care because to them the essential purpose is the procreation of male offspring to perpetuate the family and to assure a continuing ancestral worship.

The continuing cult of ancestral worship is one of the reasons that few families want a mixture of racial blood lines: it is feared that proper worship will not be maintained if such occurs. Marriages are arranged after social factors, horoscope readings, etc., have been studied and found acceptable. The ceremonial procedure of the marriage rite is in three parts; (a) official request for engagement, (b) the engagement, and (c) the marriage itself.

Among the non-Christian Vietnamese of the lowlands, the marriage ceremony seems to consist of ceremonial presentations of the bridegroom to the forebearers - living and dead - and family of the bride, with this taking place in front of the family ancestral altar; and the bride likewise presenting herself before the ancestral altar of the groom's family and pledging to henceforth give allegiance to them. This is followed by feasting and celebrations as marriage is an important step in assuring the living family that veneration of themselves as ancestors after death will be continued.
While there seems to be some change of marriage customs in the cities due to colonization and the movies, the traditional customs are very evident. A number of charming young ladies in their early twenties affirmed that their future husbands would be chosen by their mothers; avoiding making mother unhappy was more important than their own choice of mates, as violation of the customs would create much sadness.

Among Christians, a distinctly Christian ceremony is utilized, but cultural patterns not in conflict with Christian doctrines are firmly adhered to among the better classes of society.

Choosing Life’s Partner

The cyclical calendar of the Vietnamese is used in choosing marriage partners. The names of the animals of the zodiac are applied to the twelve years which repeat themselves endlessly. Visits to a number of temples or shrines will usually reveal somewhere a picture of the animal which stands for the current year. Then below is a listing of the animals and the approximate year for which it stands because the Chinese new year comes at a different time than does the Western or Julian new year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Animal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Serpent/snake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Monkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Pig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When an individual is born, regardless of his sex or social status, he is believed to have his destiny tied to the animal of his birth-year. Now while some of the animals can live on good terms together, others cannot: but it is generally accepted that the tiger and the pig, the cat and dog, the serpent and the monkey, the horse and the goat, the mouse and the buffalo and the dragon and the cock can do so. Yet most of these cyclical animals cannot stand one another, and according to the matchmakers’ guidebooks, this animosity is expressable in four degrees of difference. These degrees are luc sung (disagreement), luc hinh (argument), luc hai (violence or harm), and juc tuyat (kills).

The second degree is that of struggles between:
(a) The goat and the dragon
(b) The horse with the cock
(c) The serpent with the tiger
(d) The pig and the monkey
(e) The buffalo with the dog
(f) The cat with the mouse

The third degree of inflicting physical harm of the first to the second is:
(a) The mouse to the goat
(b) The buffalo to the horse
(c) The tiger to the cock
(d) The dragon to the dog
(e) The serpent to the pig
(f) The cock to the cat

The fourth and most permanent degree is that of killing of the second by the first:
(a) The mouse kills the serpent
(b) The buffalo kills the goat
(c) The tiger kills the cock
(d) The dragon kills the dog
(e) The serpent kills the monkey
(f) The cock kills the cat

A careful look at the above shows that a man under the auspices of the tiger might find happiness with a girl born in the year of the pig. He should avoid like plague anyone born in the year of the serpent, monkey and cock; a possible household with a girl born in the year of the serpent would be full of quarrels and even Solomon said it is better to live in the attic than with a quarrelsome woman; a girl born in the monkey-year would result in fisticuffs, and with one of the year of the cock, she would not live long enough to see if a union were successful or not.

While Communism might well have begun to make changes in the thinking of the Chinese in Red China, the consultation of a “learned man” or fortune teller is sought in much of rural Vietnam, and perhaps even in the cities more than generally admitted.

Vietnamese normally count age from the first day of the year in which the individual is born with that year being numbered one. This is true even if born just before the end of the year, for on the first day of the new year, they become two years of age. This of course is quite similar to the way that the racing stables count the age of their stock. This does not infer, however, that the genuine birthday is not celebrated, for often it is an occasion of special prayer to the ancestors, extra flowers or food on the god-shelf to be found in almost every non-Christian home, and perhaps the invitation of special friends for the occasion, sometimes including a meal.
Consulting the Astrologers

Within the Vietnamese cultures - arising out of religious beliefs - there is an emphatic belief in the validity of the many types of "fortune tellers". The geomancer aids in the determination of the proper location of houses and tombs and informs one as to the best orientation as to north, south, east or west; the physiognomist, like the old-time phrenologist of the western world, is supposed to be able to look at a person's features and tell not only what type of person he is, but also what the future holds for him. This is similar to the folklore of rural America in which people tend to judge an individual almost entirely by first appearances. There are also such people as the sorcerer and the astrologer or caster of horoscopes. Normally the astrologer is reputed to be the best educated, trained and most popular of all those who predict the future with the possible exception of the various bonzes who engage in this art also.

Without attempting to analyze the functional precepts of the astrologer or his art, we should recognize the place he fills in Vietnamese life. Among his various chores are such things as choosing wedding dates; funeral dates for prominent persons; and the choice of proper dates for many official occasions. Many people will not start a new business or a journey without first consulting this "artist" to ascertain if the cosmic forces are in harmony with their plans. Such a practice is not confined of course to the Vietnamese. The ancient Hebrews had to face this issue and the Scriptures tell how it was done; a casual look at American newspapers and newstands reveal that many Americans must also believe in this art, for otherwise such items or magazines like HOROSCOPE would not be evident. It soon becomes obvious that much of the Vietnamese art of astrology is based upon Chinese writings with the most famous being a fifty three volume set titled, So-Ly Tinh-Uan. The patron saint of Chinese astrology was an individual named Quy Coc Tien Sinh, who was reputed to be able to see the past, present and future; others claim the system of astrology based on the star Tu Vi did not come into existence until about 1,000 A.D.

Without discussion of the various methods whereby the astrologer makes his predictions, it ought to be noted that the following beliefs seem to exist: The stars belong to either a northern half or a southern half of the system into which they are divided, with either half being ruled by a major star. In addition there is a pre-arranged chart with many items of life on it; if the chart which has children in the square has more of the southern stars, you are to have more boys than girls; if, to the contrary, the northern stars predominate, then your children will be mostly girls. Such factors must be carefully weighed while the family is planning a marriage.

Each star is believed to be related to one of the major elements of earth, fire, metal, wood and water. There are other stars believed to produce either happiness and prosperity or their opposite numbers which bring woe, tragedy and decline of fortune: the stars so control the future that one might as well conform - otherwise failure will greet every effort. The system continues to exert an influence on many who have been educated in Western institutions, even if apologetically they say, "We go through the form to please our parents".

When a child is born, one of the first acts will be to have his horoscope prepared without delay in order to be prepared for what the future holds. From then on, either the prepared horoscope is carefully studied, or else an astrologist is consulted again and again until burial finally removes that individual from the scene.

Whether the American accepts the idea of astrology or not, he must be prepared to see his best laid plans sometimes go astray, or be delayed beyond effective use, because a horoscope indicated that any undertaking on that particular date will cause harm to befall the individual. While some Americans tend to believe in horoscopes, few are so firmly committed that it makes too much difference in their daily lives. Not so where so many of the Vietnamese are concerned; to ignore it would bring certain doom. Sufficient is a word to the wise - diplomatically ascertain the beliefs in such arts before attempting plans that require the full support of your loyal Vietnamese counterpart lest you suffer due to non-consideration of what seems such a small item to you.

Effects of Stars on Choosing Marriage Partners

The custom by which a wife is chosen for most Vietnamese men is quite different from the manner a young American uses to choose a wife. While the matter of astrology is not usually supposedly involved for Christians, it is for most of the ethnic Vietnamese. Factors to be seriously considered are the social status of the families, and the question of the mystical
affinities of the marriage partners. Compatible mystical affinities will allow them to marry in keeping with the harmony of the universe; incompatible readings indicate discord which will result in serious marital difficulty. This question of mystical affinities is based on the Chinese concept that three essential factors must be considered: (1) the influence of the earth, (2) the influence of nature, and (3) the actions of the planets. The five major planets with a significant influence on human lives and the items that represent them on earth are: (a) Venus, metal; (b) Jupiter, wood; (c) Mars, fire; (d) Mercury, water; (e) Saturn, soil.

Each of these elements can build up or destroy one another according to this theory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Helps</th>
<th>Destroys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>metal</td>
<td>soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soil</td>
<td>metal</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metal</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wood</td>
<td>fire</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>fire</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metal</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>soil</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metal</td>
<td>soil</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>metal</td>
<td>soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metal</td>
<td>soil</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>metal</td>
<td>soil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since individuals at birth come under the auspices of at least one of the above planets, it is imperative to make sure that two which oppose each other are not united. A man born under Venus marrying a girl of Mars would find arguments, unhappiness, etc., whereas the same man marrying a girl under Mercury's influence would be happy. Similarly, if the man is of fire influence and the wife of water, countless arguments, poverty and perhaps divorce is their predetermined fate; but if man is under influence of fire and the girl of wood, they will have many children and prosperity.

If both are born under the influence of the same planet or its earth representation, things begin to get complicated. Many books and "authorities" have to be consulted in order to determine the exact situation. However, astrology is only one of the three major factors which must be pondered in considering marriage. Strange to the western ear, the thought of romance is not a major factor, if considered at all. In fact, several lovely Buddhist young ladies informed the interviewer that the question of love would not be discussed inasmuch as marriage is a family affair and not the personal affairs of two people. One of them speaking for the group said that she would marry whomever her mother chose for her regardless of what she might think of the groom. She added that it would be better to be married to a poor man, an ugly man, or a bad man than to bring unhappiness to her mother. How different are the ideas of many young women in other parts of the world than which we are acquainted!

The Vietnamese and Children

The great Chinese Empire left a vivid and deep impression during its more than 1,000 years of social and political domination in Vietnam. One writer had said that the Vietnamese are more bound by Chinese tradition than are the Chinese themselves. Confucian values derived from ancient China saturate Vietnamese ideas of family patterns and behavior. For instance, Confucianism promotes marriage over celibacy, and defines women's happiness in terms of her ability of having many children. With few exceptions, even today in Vietnam, women are expected to be married not later than about twenty years of age and to have children frequently thereafter. Out-of-wedlock children are not generally approved; their birth is severely censored: in a family-centered society as Vietnam is, the place of such children is quite difficult.

While neither Confucianism or Buddhism makes much of an issue of childbirth, the Vietnamese varieties seem to offer both help and solace to women. The woman who is eager to have children may petition Buddhist divinities in especially auspicious temples, or appeal to family ancestors for help. Hannah, in the Old Testament, did a similar thing in appealing to God for the birth of Samuel.

Some barren women seek medical attention, others look to sorcerers, but it seems that an even larger number appeal to deities for children. It is doubtful that there is a non-Christian home in Vietnam that does not have its shrine. Many villages have a protective Spirit, and shrines dedicated to them and other Spirits are found in abundance. So serious is the lack of posterity to Vietnamese women, that few would hesitate to lodge appeals to the spirits which reside in such places. To obtain the intervention of these supernatural figures, tradition provides definite ritualistic activities.

The supplicant woman must prepare herself for communication with the "gods", and to promote rapport refrains from using meat, onions, garlic, etc., for strong odors - save those of burning incense are not acceptable. A number of baths as well as repeated washings of hands and face are part of the ritual also. Then wearing their finest apparel and carrying
the traditional offerings of vegetables, fruit, flowers, votive objects, betel nut, chicken, glutinous rice, incense, etc., they go to the temple. Having lighted their joss sticks, clapped their hands and bowed, they enter the temple from the courtyard and follow a standard pattern in bowing, reciting prayers, and expressing solemn wishes to have a child. Sometimes they have the bonzes write prayers on paper which is then burned so that the spirits may receive them.

Among the "gods" called upon in particular are Lieu Hanh, Tan Vien, and Hung Dao. These gods are the most frequently visited at the beginning of the lunar year. In the town of Huong Tich of Ha-dong province, now in North Vietnam, there is a grotto which has a number of vaguely human-shaped rocks called "Young Girls' and Young Boys' Rocks". After paying proper devotions, the supplicant woman chooses one of these "children of Buddha" and caresses it with exhortations to follow her home. She then goes home convinced that "Buddha's Child" is accompanying her, and in attempts to please it, she buys both sweets and toys, and will even pay double bus fare so that "it" can ride beside her.

From that day forward, a place for "it" is made at the family table, with a cradle being prepared at night until the day when the "invisible visitor" finally decides to become a member of the family. Such a child is referred to as a "prayed-for child" because he is an answer to fervent prayer and the parents tend to spoil it.

In Vietnamese homes may often be seen three porcelain or painted figures symbolizing happiness, wealth and long life. Long life is shown as a kindly old man with white snowy hair; a mandarin in fine robes symbolizes wealth; happiness is characterized by the figure of a father affectionately holding a smiling healthy child in his arms. The last is typical of the Vietnamese delight in children. The expectant mother often purposefully wears clothing which will call attention to her hopes, especially if it is her first baby. In accord with this, it is proper at TET, the Vietnamese New Year, when meeting a lady near delivery time to wish her "a boy at the beginning of the year and a girl at the end" implying a large family of course.

Different peoples look at the same events of life with differing attitudes. Who's right? Maybe both; maybe neither! But it's Vietnam!
Sometimes the sorcerer advises that her bones be reburied in a more favorable place. Likewise the spirit of stillborn children is greatly feared lest life be snatched away to give one of them life. Similarly, a bad name might be given the baby to fool the spirits, or a boy might be called by a girl's name for the same reason. In contrast to the American custom of remarking how healthy or lovely a child is, the Vietnamese fear to do this lest it excite an evil spirit who will then harm the child. Many similar customs have also been found in European histories of past centuries, but due to a more scientific understanding of sickness, death and health, most Americans find these Vietnamese customs "quaint".

Legend of Quan - Am

Thi-Kinh (better known as Quan-Am), a very beautiful and talented maiden, was of a humble family yet she was sought in marriage by many of the richest and most handsome of men. To the surprise of all she refused them and married a poor unattractive peasant. While life was difficult, Thi-Kinh shared the meagerest chores with her husband and found happiness in doing so.

During one summer solstice-time as her husband was asleep on the hammock, she noticed a stray hair of his beard growing in the wrong direction. Thinking to cut it off, she got a sharp knife and approached her husband. But her touch and the feel of the blade caused the man to jerk his head which wounded him. Frightened he began to call for help and accused his wife of attempted murder.

Utterly dismayed that her husband would think thus, Thi-Kinh offered no statement and her silence seemed to be an admission of guilt, so she was cast out of her home as an exile. None took pity upon her. Her family disowned her, her former suitors and the village women who never forgave her beauty treated her badly. Finally weary of this, Thi-Kinh sought to renounce the world and seek release in religion. She thus disguised herself as a man and entered an order of Buddhist monks.

Inspite of the simplicity of her religious clothing and "shaven head", she still was an attractive individual, and this was noted by the devotees of the temple. A young girl fell in love with this "handsome bonze". She pleading with Thi-Kinh to forsake the religious order and marry. Thi-Kinh cut her short by asking her to respect the holy vows. The young woman reacted by having an affair with the first man who sought her out, and when pregnant went to another village and gave birth to a child. The new mother placed the babe in a basket and left it at the gate of the temple after writing a note accusing Thi-Kinh of being its father. While the prior was reading the note, with all the men gathered about, the baby began to cry. With typically feminine reaction, Thi-Kinh reached down and picked up the baby to quiet it. This gesture seemed to confirm the charge, and she was expelled from the temple as she had been from her home.

Pity for the child forced her to beg for herself and the baby. She thus became a familiar sight as she walked about with the child in her arms and a begging bowl in her hand. The day came when she could no longer sustain herself, so she returned to the temple and knocked at the gate of Buddha. She revealed her secret and begged pardon for her sins as well as for forgiveness of those who had caused her misery. Then in typical Vietnamese story fashion, she sank to the ground and died.

When her story was heard by the Emperor of China, he was deeply moved by her abnegation and chastity, so by royal decree she was raised to the rank of divinity with the title of "Quan-Am Tong-Tu" - The Compassionate Protectress of Children. Today the cult has spread throughout the Far East.

Pictures of Thi-Kinh or Quan-Am are to be found rather widely in Vietnam, and if one visits the old Vietnamese temples and looks under smoke blackened rafters caused by incense burning and decades of dust there Quan-Am sits with child in arms, an unchanging smile on a beautiful serene face.

Fragrant Incense of Aloes Wood

Someone has remarked that Vietnam is characterized by two odors - that of Nuoc-mam (fish sauce) and that of incense. The Vietnamese reaction is that Nuoc-mam represents the material life whereas incense from the places of worship symbolize the spiritual life of Vietnam.

The incense trees and cinnamon which grow in the forests of Vietnam have long been known and utilized. The tribal people gather cinnamon bark and trade these to the lowland Vietnamese for essential supplies. They also gather the incense wood for a similar reason as the tribespeople do not seem to use incense for worship as do the lowland worshippers.
Aloes wood - used as incense - belongs to the Thy-melaeaceae family of trees. The Chinese, French, Cambodians, Hebrews, Greeks, Malaysians, Germans, Portuguese, Cham and English speaking people all have their own words for it. The walls and ceilings of many temples are much darkened by the smoke of burning incense.

For a small fee, incense may be purchased and set to burning either inside or outside the temple in the form of joss sticks. For about three dollars, one can secure spiral formed incense that will burn continually for three months or more.

In the ancient writing of the Egyptians, Greeks, Indians and Arabs aloes is mentioned. The Arabs use it as medication for the heart and burn it mixed with camphor in worship services. In India, aloes mixed with other products is used to annoint and perfume the dead. An additional aromatic product of the aloes wood is Ky-nam. Ky-nam is composed of aloes wood full of resin - if chewed, it tastes bitter and is gummy; when burned, its resin gives its own characteristic scent. Since Ky-nam is black in color with white spots like the feathers of eagles, it is sometimes called eagle-wood. It is also used as medicine against colds, fevers and dysentery, but with the warnings that if used by pregnant women it will cause miscarriage.

Normally, the aloes incense wood is of a brownish color and makes excellent incense sticks which are often made up into small packages for easy use. Similar to the cedar in the states, aloes is sometimes made into furniture, but is very expensive by comparison. The Portuguese tell of one piece of aloes wood four feet long and two feet thick valued at 54,000 English pounds (roughly $4,700,000) in the 17th century. An Italian missionary in Vietnam about the same time says the King of Vietnam had a piece of aloes wood weighing about 30 pounds in his office. If made into wooden pillars, only the very rich could own such rarities. Used as incense, the smoke is supposed to please either the spirits of the departed dead or to curry the favor of the gods.

Joss Sticks

Vietnam is a land of beauty and charm in spite of its horrors, uncertainty of life and the frequency of sudden violent death due to war. Added to a culture so different than normal for most Americans is the odor of Nuoc-mam (Vietnamese fish sauce) and the wispy smoke of joss sticks and incense burners, the latter two found on family altars, spirit houses, and temple courtyards and before the figures of Buddha which abound in great numbers.

Not all joss sticks are fragrant as some are primarily for smoke and have only the faintest odor. However, the more favored joss sticks are the ones with incense which serves both as a means of veneration and as a practical deodorizer.

Few homes in Vietnam are without a joss stick to be utilized for some reason, and in some seasons the burning of joss sticks seems to create distinct fire hazards. When it is remembered that joss sticks are all handmade, it does not take long to realize that this is quite an industry. Basically the joss stick is made with a thin bamboo stick, which is painted red. Part of the stick is rolled in a putty-like substance - the exact formulae are guarded by their owners.

The putty-like substance is composed of the sawdust of such materials as sandalwood and other fragrant plants mixed with water or another evaporating liquid. Normally at least three different kinds of sawdust are mixed for the best result. The ideal woods for this sawdust come from the mountain forests and from Laos. Once the sticky brown mixture is placed on 1/3 or more of the painted bamboo stick, it is placed in the drying racks in the sun. It takes about two days of sunshine to dry the mixture satisfactorily, and then these are brought indoors and placed so that several additional days of drying time is allowed. This helps to insure that all moisture has evaporated and makes a firmer better product.

Once completed, the joss sticks may be placed into packages along with a couple of candles for the altar, or placed loosely in larger boxes for wholesale or retail distribution. Most of the work is done by girls, who, with training and practice, can make about three thousand joss sticks a day. It is possible for a hard worker to earn perhaps the equal of a dollar for a full day’s labor.

Joss sticks are very reasonably priced, and it is good for the common people that this is so, for few acts of devotion could be complete without the lighting of joss sticks. These may be placed in sand-filled containers either in the temple courtyard or in racks located in front or on top of an altar. Sometimes after burning joss sticks are placed in front of a Buddha statue, the ascending smoke from the burning joss stick is thought by some to have beneficial aid in pleasing that power to whom worship is made, or prayers offered.
It is possible to purchase spiral or circular joss sticks which will burn as long as one to three months with incense and smoke being cast off night and day. Quite often walls, the ceiling and sometimes the figures of devotion or veneration are smoked or darkened. Where the buildings do not have adequate ventilation, the spaces above the doorway level may be perpetually gray with smoke. The overwhelming fragrance of the burning joss sticks may also cloak any unpleasant odors that might detract the worshipper from his devotion, or which could offend the one to whom petitions are being made.

While the Chinese families of Southeast Asia use many joss sticks, it is doubtful if they use more than the Vietnamese families who may combine animism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism and sometimes even parts of the Christian acts of worship. To so many of these folk, it would be more unwise to forget, ignore or omit the acts of worship where the joss sticks are a basic element, than it would be to step in front of a speeding truck. It might miss you, but the angered “spirits” would not!

Use of Votive Paper as an Act of Worship in Vietnamese Temples

Among the sights to be seen in South Vietnam are the temples of ancestor worship which normally have a fire into which worshippers throw money made of tissue-like paper. History reveals that in times past, when a member of royalty died, and was buried, living persons were often buried along with him so that he might still be waited upon by servants. His personal possessions were often included in this rite. Such customs seem to have been practiced in many lands. In at least one land, the widow was also slain and cremated when the husband died, so that he might have a wife in the “next world”. This custom was condemned by Confucius as being inhuman.

Feeling that such a custom might be unkind, or at least expensive, someone came up with the idea of using wooden or straw figures, representing common objects used in the persons lifetime. These figures were burned or buried with the deceased. Incidentally, such burial customs have provided archeologists with valuable information of bygone ages. According to tradition, about the first century B.C. a government official developed the idea of making votive offerings from the bark of a palm tree known as cay gio. These were used to imitate silver, gold, clothing, common objects, and could be burned as an offering during the funeral in place of valuable objects or human beings.

Vuong-Du, the legendary inventor of the votive paper idea, was apparently not able to sell much of his product. But then struck by a “clever” idea, he decided upon a surefire gimmick to sell his product. By agreement with his fellow-makers of votive paper, he arranged for one of his sickly companions to be put to bed and told everyone that he was seriously ill, and a few days later that he was dead. Placed in a coffin (with a previously bored air hole) the funeral proceeded toward the tomb accompanied by a great number of figurines made of votive paper.

Just as the heavy coffin was to be lowered into the tomb, the “dead” man was heard to groan and moan; then as the lid was raised, the haggard and pale “corpse” sat up and spoke to the mourners. He told them that while he had been taken to the Infernal Regions (Hell), he had been released because his family had substituted money and paper figures for his person. Apparently, the story was believed at the time, for sales boomed as many hurried to buy these votive items and burn them to the spirits of their ancestors.

Regardless of the truth of this legend which is recorded in a number of documents, the burning of votive paper seems to constitute one of the essential rites in homage or worship to the dead. In the courtyard or temples where worshippers may be found will be seen an open fire into which the worshipper casts votive objects including paper money as a part of their worship. Such votive paper, along with joss sticks and candles, can be purchased for a very small fee either on the sidewalk or in front of the temple, or sometimes in the temple itself. Votive paper burning in Vietnam preceded the arrival of Chinese colonists in the first centuries of the present era according to some students of culture.

While we may not understand or appreciate just what the burning of such votive items is to accomplish, the sincerity of the worshippers can be commended. Perhaps many of the worshippers who burn these items as acts of worship cannot give you an idea of why they do so, maybe it is done because that is the custom of the culture in which they grew up! How about you in your own worship? Do you ever question yourself or others why certain things are said or done? If not, a suggestion that you do so, if followed up, may really surprise you! At any rate, it would surely help to establish
rappor with those people among whom you are privileged to serve on this tour of duty.

The Lotus

Amid the dirty waters of small streams and rivers as well as from the semi-stagnant pools of water throughout the tropical area of Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, etc.) can be seen the bright green floating leaves and the lovely colors of the Lotus. Such is the contrast of the flower to the environment wherein it grows, that long ago, Buddha used it as a symbol of his teachings. Growing out of the impure, the dirty, and the waste products of civilization, where sanitation is practiced quite differently than in America, the Lotus lifts high its stately and lovely blossom in such unsullied and pure form that it is an object lesson. Buddha taught that as the flower achieves its mark in spite of its environment, so may men lose their passions and desires and thereby find release in the spiritual serenity of Nirvana.

The Lotus flower thus became a religious symbol as well as a popular food and a sight that creates aesthetic pleasure. The Lotus bud is perhaps the single most popular offering of the Buddhist as he worships at his temple, or his home altar. It is quite often held in the folded hands of the listener within the temple as sermons are given or meditation is practiced. Often in the early morning hours as the Buddhist bonze makes his way through the streets with the “merit bowl” wherein the laity may earn merit by giving cooked rice, there will be a Lotus bud or two within his hand. Likewise, it has come to form a part of Asian architectural and sculptural motifs.

Sometimes the Lotus is compared to the feet, the heart, or the life-giving attributes of the Buddhist female. Moreover it has a history that predates Buddhism as its symbolism was also of Hindu heritage. For instance, Brahman legend tells the story of how when Brahman, the god of the universe, was creating this universe, he went to sleep on the job; as he slept, the Lotus bud appeared from his naval and its petals opened, Vishnu emerged and finished the creation.

Buddha used its four stages to symbolize the four types of people and their distance from enlightenment. The four stages are: (1) the Lotus bud deeply submerged as it starts its development; (2) the bud about to reach the surface of the pond; (3) after the bud has cleared the surface, but with leaf and bud still folded; and (4) the bud standing tall and straight with its beauty undefiled by the mire from which it grows. Because of this symbolism, it is always proper to use it as a floral offering to bonzes when ceremonies are performed or as means of earning merit. The Lotus bud signifies in Buddhism that the worshipper is capable of reaching enlightenment because of the opportunities within his grasp. The unopened bud also tends to last longer than other flowers, and it has the capacity to bloom when placed in water and left before the altar.

Incidentally, there are at least five varieties of the Lotus with the water lily being included, even if not always accepted as a true Lotus; but the Thai people refer to the two types as “string Lotus” and “stalk Lotus” with several types of “string Lotus” with flowers of purple, white to pale blue, and red. There are also at least five kinds of “stalk Lotus”, with each having its own characteristics and charm when closely studied.

Apart from its religious symbolism and its aesthetic and, at times, almost ethereal beauty, the Lotus is also a food plant. As food it was known to the Greek Homer and was widely used by the Chinese, Japanese and Southeast Asians. Its seed may be eaten fresh or dried and used in sweet soups and deserts. The root may be used in salad, boiled in soup, or preserved in sugar and used as desert. From the root may also be extracted a fine starch used by the inhabitants of that area for certain special foods. Thus, while in many places it might be just a nuisance, the Lotus has been turned into food and given religious values while adding lovely colors in unexpected places.

The Meaning and Importance of TET

TET is actually a three day holiday which marks the beginning of the Lunar New Year, which synchronizes with the Chinese New Year and is closely tied to the Spring Equinox. To many this means the annual awakening of nature. 1966, for example, was the year of the Horse, and 1965 was the year of the Snake. Each year of the 12-year cycle has an animal name. While the Vietnamese celebrate TET, the Chinese in Thailand, Vietnam, etc., celebrate the new year with many festivities and ancient religious rites. Due to religious beliefs, age-old traditions and customs, TET is the single most important holiday season in Vietnamese life. The first visitor of the new year is vitally important to them as is the urgent necessity to avoid anything unpleasant or sick for fear that such will
be repeated throughout the year. Because of long Chinese influence and Confucian teachings, many of the customs and practices are familiar to the students of Chinese culture. For instance, this is the time when all debts must be cleared up, when ancestral graves must be visited and cleaned up; when ancestor family altars must receive special attention with incense, prayers and flowers as well as food offerings.

To many of the people in this beautiful land, TET is the opportunity to renew the communion of the dead with those of the future through the veneration offered by those presently living. It is a renewing of spirit and body, a settling of old accounts, financial and spiritual. TET is the time when families want to be together much as do Americans at Christmas. The longtime Chinese occupation planted the belief that at this time the “God” or “Spirit” of the Hearth must go and render account of the family to the Heavenly Emperor in the Jade Palace. To make sure that the report will be sweet, some families place honey or other sweets on their paper Gods of the hearth or kitchen before they are burned and sent on their way. To be sure of a good report for the home, gifts of fruit, a new paper coat and a paper carp (sacred fish) for riding are added as inducements, while in the delta, paper animals for burning may be added.

Sometimes at TET the number of fires in the shopping and industrial areas have caused the remark “Someone is trying to get insurance to settle accounts”. While firecrackers, and other explosives were used in peacetime to drive away evil or dangerous spirits, these are now strictly forbidden. One Celebration almost resulted in tragic deaths for many when illegal firecrackers were exploded near tense combat troops. But so that past, present and future may be joyfully united, the year-end ceremony of sacrifices still occurs as an invitation to the deceased to take part in the feasting.

Celebration continues for three days, ending the evening of the third day when all ancestral souls who have returned to the family for the occasion, must depart for their world. It is then that artificial silver and gold paper money is burned by the family. This allows the departing “ghosts” to hire sampans to transport them across the river that divides “spirit heaven” from the world of the living.

The Vietnamese TET NGUYEN DAN combines many of the secular features of the American Christmas holidays with religious features observed in All Souls’ Day, etc., with animism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism; each contributing sometimes conflicting features and ideas, but all combined to make a valid holiday season for our Vietnamese allies.

When the “hearth spirits” or “gods” are absent to make an annual report to the Jade Emperor, the Vietnamese peasant wants protection from evil spirits, etc. As a consequence, Buddhism plays an important role during the three day TET holiday period. The villagers feel that protection is gained by the special preparation of a long bamboo pole. The pole is stripped of all leaves but the very top ones and a red eight-sided paper, bearing the symbols of Buddha’s Eightfold Path of righteousness, is then attached. This pole, which may also have some areca nuts and betel leaves tied to it for the good spirits, is planted in their yards. Sometimes small bells which tinkle in the breeze and frighten evil spirits away, or a small plaited bamboo square symbolizes barriers which they cannot overcome are used. A small bronze gong, which serves as an emblem of the “Lord Buddha” may also be found attached to these poles.

Children are sometimes told the story of Buddha’s clever victory over demon spirits. These stories are repeated year by year and become a part of the heritage given to so many Vietnamese children that animism is quite evident in much of Vietnam. Briefly told, it seems that the land of Vietnam was being overrun by terrifying demons. The inhabitants were frightened, helpless, and always fleeing. But Buddha arrived in answer to their prayers to save them from their desperate situation.

Buddha sought to purchase some Vietnamese soil, but could buy only as much as could be covered by his cloak, for which he promised precious stones and many jewels. The demons, being quite greedy, agreed. Buddha then backed his demand for the departure of the demon spirits by throwing down his cloak which grew in size until it covered the land. He then turned the land over to the people. The raising of the simple bamboo poles about their homes on the 23rd day of the 12th month of each lunar year is in remembrance of Buddha’s power to deliver from evil. While Buddha may have this power in the minds of many Vietnamese, Buddhists from some countries would find this completely unacceptable. Whether or not you agree with the legend, the point is to remember that many of the ethnic Vietnamese do.

Naturally TET also is the high point of the year for foods, but a description of the more popular ones would take a number of articles,
and even then the sight and scent could not be conveyed to give adequate representation.

The Dragon in Vietnam

Perhaps the figure most used for decorative purposes in Vietnam is the Dragon. It is to be seen in temples, on silverware, and cloth of all kinds, and next to the depiction of bending bamboo is perhaps the most familiar symbol of that land. The dragon is the most important of the four symbolic animals of Vietnamese mythology - to the Vietnamese it symbolizes nobility and power and is believed to be immortal. It can live anywhere - in the air, underground, in water, etc.; it is believed to possess such power that, when provoked, it can spit a deadly vapor which it can turn into either water or fire at will.

While in Western mythology the dragon is an evil beast, and best illustrated by the story of St. George and the Dragon, in the East - especially in mainland Asia - it has an opposite significance. The dragon is the totem, the palladium and emblem, of Vietnam. It is the symbol of man in general, just as woman is represented by the phoenix, another of the four mythical animals of the land. When a dragon and a phoenix are shown together either in cloth designs or carvings, a marriage is represented; sometimes this is emphasized by the addition of a Chinese character meaning joy, and greater emphasis is achieved by repeating the character.

The dragon may be a fanciful elaboration of the several varieties of common lizards of Vietnam, but its symbolic use seems to be of ancient Chinese origin.

According to popular belief, the dragon is a genie that presides over the creation of meteors and other cosmic activity, and belief in cosmic activity is exceedingly strong in Vietnam. In addition, he is often considered to be the god of the waters who lives in the sea and other bodies of water.

According to the Chinese tradition, which is still prevalent in Vietnam, the dragon has the horns of a deer, the head of a camel, belly of a crocodile, scales of a fish, and buffalo-like hair. Its hearing ability is in its horns rather than the ears. The neck of a serpent, eyes of a demon, and claws of an eagle complete a figure which is rather strange to the Westerner.

There are many legends of the dragon with some being used to explain the origin of the Vietnamese people. One of these tells a story of a Vietnamese King named Lac-Long Quang (circa 2,500 B.C.) of the dragon race, who kidnapped the wife of his cousin, a Chinese king De-Lai, and got 100 eggs. From these came a hundred boys: fifty of these, taking after their father, becoming water geni - the other fifty took after their mother and became land dwellers. One of the latter founded the Hung-Vurong dynasty, but its kings were still more at home at the bottom of the rivers than in their palaces. While Vietnam had a dynasty and from time to time the ruler died, the Vietnamese did not say “The King is Dead” but rather “The Dragon has gone up into the upper regions”. A second proverb states, “When the Dragon (the ruler) is peaceful and happy, the fish (the people) swim freely”.

The reddish color of the Sai river is explained by the following legend. When the Chinese invaded Tonkin in ancient times, their general used explosives to break up the rocks blocking the river. This explosion wounded the dragon hidden in its depths and the wound, having never healed, continues to color the water with its blood. This is very similar to the Chinese legend that the dragons are found everywhere underground, and serious difficulties would result if a dragon were accidently wounded. His fury could result in untold catastrophe.

There are numerous other dragon tales which might be told, but they have a similar thought and seem to spring from the animistic concept of the earth having a “spirit” of its own which must be worshipped and appeased. These legendary stories have a present-day effect on the thinking of many common folk. To illustrate: a Chinese legend still current in Vietnam is that a three year old carp can be transformed into a dragon by certain rites. The Vietnamese, therefore, do not wish to eat large carp particularly if they are black as this may have dire consequences. While such concepts are entirely alien to the Western thought, awareness of such beliefs may help to avoid needless hostility.

Veneration of Vietnamese Benefactors

The evidence of ancestor worship in Vietnam is a constant reminder of Chinese religious influences. The Vietnamese do not hesitate to state that veneration is given to historical figures who made permanent contributions to Vietnamese life. These include Marshall DUYET, the Trung sisters, Nguyen Con Tru, as well as the discoverers of certain vocations, crafts and arts.
Much of the Vietnamese culture and development was largely in what is now North Vietnam. Only within the last century or two has the area known as South Vietnam become settled and developed to any substantial degree by the Vietnamese themselves. Perhaps this is one reason the southern Vietnamese seem to resent the northern Vietnamese; the cultural history and influence of the north is apparently not appreciated nor accepted. This is comparable to attitudes occasionally found in the United States between the East and West Coasts, or parts of the North and South as a result of economic, geographic, and cultural differences.

It was Tich-Quang, governor of what is now the area around Hanoi, who introduced the Chinese culture which colors every phase of lowland Vietnamese life. His successor introduced the reading and writing of Chinese which continued as the basic tool of written communication until Alexandre De Rhodes, a Roman Catholic Priest, introduced the present Vietnamese language.

It was a bonze who was credited with the origin of medical arts in Vietnam in the 10th century. Upon his death, a temple was erected in his name with an official cult instituted in his memory. Even this “holy man” learned his medical arts in China! Likewise, Luong-Thi Vinh introduced mathematics about 1700 after studying in China, he also translated Chinese mathematics books and introduced the abacus. To show gratitude, a temple was erected to honor him.

The brothers who introduced goldsmithry as a craft were honored after their deaths by having a temple raised in their memory. Likewise, the book Bac-Ninh-Chi gives credit for the origin of the craft of copper working to a bonze, Khong-Lo, of about 1250 A.D. who also had a temple erected in his memory, as did the maker of Vietnamese coinage, one Luu-Xuan-Tin. Because of his contribution, the king, Le Thanh-Ton, erected a temple wherein his cult could be perpetuated.

Even the individual credited with introducing mat making to the Vietnamese has a temple in his memory. Similarly, honor and veneration is given to that “clever” ambassador who learned from the Chinese the methods of silk weaving and the methods of growing soya beans and corn. In spite of Chinese embargoes against the moving of seed out of China, the ambassador did so. There is still a temple to his memory even though this was more than 400 years ago.

The facts of ancestor worship and Chinese cultural influences must be considered in evaluating the forces that have moulded culture in this part of Southeast Asia. No valid understanding of current thought and behavior patterns can be gained without awareness of the past and present Chinese influence.

Ancestor Worship

Non-Christian ancestor worship begins at the time of death. As soon as death is a fact, the ethnic Vietnamese cover the corpse with a square piece of red cloth. Often a bit of cloth is made into the shape of a doll representing the body so that it might receive the spirit of the dead one. Then the corpse is washed, clothed in best garments, and placed on a bier in the casket. Mourning is announced with such details being spelled out by law. Usually a complicated ceremonial rite is used for burials. The grave is often dug according to geomancy.

From the day of death, there will be a lighted candle on the ancestor altar with attempts to keep a flame there constantly; in addition food is placed there for the spirit of the dead individual. Mourning for members of the immediate family supposedly lasts for three years with yearly ceremonies on the anniversary of their deaths. When a father dies, his daughter may not marry for three years due to mourning customs. Most Orientals regard the death anniversary more important than birth dates, for who knows at birth what an individual will achieve or become.

While there are differences of opinion, it seems that death among the ethnic Vietnamese is believed to be part of the return to eternity. A reincarnation in some form will be decided by the sum and value of the life of the deceased as well as by the prayers said to one’s spirit. On death anniversary celebrations, the first day of the year, lunar festival holidays, and all important family events such as birth and marriage, worship at family ancestor altars is performed.

To the average family of ethnic Vietnamese the presence of the spirits of their ancestors is vivid and is as much a part of reality as are the living. No offense by word, deed or thought should be given; rather honor must be rendered so that one’s own moral and social standing is improved. One authority has pointed out that to the Vietnamese “a country is composed as much of the dead who laid its foundations as the living who perpetuate it".

81
The ancestral veneration of Chinese culture is a link uniting the dead and the living members of the family. The social virtue of filial piety, as taught by Confucianism, is greatly esteemed and is a cohesive element in binding the family and clan into a unit. The living believe that such worship provides a channel of valuable services between the living and the dead - careful observations reveal how deeply filial piety affects the social, political and economic structures in South Vietnam and demonstrate the necessity of understanding people as human beings wherever found.

Ancestor Worship - Worship of Nham-Dien

Among the gifts of the Chinese to Vietnam during 1,000 years of occupation, and as the big neighbor next door, is ancestor worship. Ancestor Worship is more than just the worship of "spirits" of one's deceased relatives; it is also the veneration and worship of great men, or at least the "spirits" of these great men, and many temples have been erected in which that particular personage may be worshipped. Among the recognized religions and places of veneration or worship in Vietnam are many of these temples - some quite small and simple, others large and showy.

Since rice is the major foodstuff and the staff of life to the Vietnamese, with the average consumption computed to be a bit over two pounds a day per adult, anyone aiding rice production in a notable way would become a famous man. One such individual who lived about the time of Christ was Nham-Dien, governor of Thanh-Hoa, which today is a province in North Vietnam. As rice growing seemed not to produce sufficiently for the labor expended, the farmers turned to fishing and hunting (wild game such as elephants, tigers, deer, are still available in Vietnam), and the people suffered from insufficient diet.

Nham-Dien - who apparently had been either raised or educated in China - taught the Vietnamese the art of wet rice culture. So that water might be readily available, he laid out canals and divided the lands into small plots which could be flooded readily from the canals and rivers that are abundant in Vietnam.

Two thousand years after Nham-Dien introduced wet rice culture to the Vietnamese, his methods are still used. Throughout the length of South Vietnam, the rice fields, divided into small plots and watered by canals that never seem to dry, are constant reminders of this long-dead governor. To the Vietnamese, who study and learn much of their material by rote, Nham-Dien is still a vibrant personality whose spirit can help those who worship him. To aid such worship, there are a number of temples - especially in his province of Thanh-Hoa - built in his memory. Because of his work with rice production, and his rules regarding marriage, Nham-Dien is considered to be among the great men of his country.

Vietnamese Self-Sacrifice Customs

Vietnam is a land of tradition and ancient customs. From time to time the American is "shocked" to see, read or hear of Buddhists who set themselves afire as part of a technique to achieve certain goals in which they believe. The difference of religiously influenced cultures may create an obstacle to ready understanding of this custom.

According to ancient Vietnamese custom, anyone who feels themselves to be mistreated, or has a claim which demands satisfaction but does not receive attention, may secure redress by going on a "hunger strike", by lying down and refusing to move until the "guilty party" gives in. This may continue until death occurs if necessary. The origin of this custom seems to have arisen from the Vietnamese horror of scandal in a society which has a basic tenet of getting along with one's fellowman. Such a sense gives vivid evidence that the accused must not be a good person, or such a scene would not be necessary.

By such actions as lying down, refusing to move or eat, etc., the victim attracts attention of neighbors and even the authorities to his claims, and these increase pressure on the "guilty" and promote chances of success in "obtaining justice". It is a personal martyrdom as a protest against bad judgment.

Suicide is not uncommon, but in such cases either someone is told the reasons of this drastic action or else a note is left in which the grievances are set forth as the cause of the action. Ancient Vietnamese law incriminates those who cause such suicide and classify it "murder by oppression".

The procedure for creating such scandal is an outgrowth of the Confucian teachings of the ideal relationships that are to exist between child and parent, wife and husband, ruled and ruler, individual and society. When the Buddhist concept of the endless "Wheel of Existence" is added, the climate is established wherein
suicide for cause is given a radically different slant than most Americans accept.

Awareness that hunger strikes and “suicide for cause” have a long tradition in Vietnam should provide a better understanding of such actions when these occur. Should one be present when self-destruction is about to occur, intervention to save life is acceptable if timed to “save face” as it provides adequate opportunity to express one’s grievance without the necessity of painful death. Since such possibly violent actions are viewed in a different context by the Vietnamese population as a whole than is normal for Americans, it is imperative that acceptable solutions which do not violate principles be sought when possible. Having considered all possible solutions to a situation and having accepted one as being the only valid recourse of action, it may be just as necessary to act or refrain from acting as it is for the sincere Buddhist to set himself afire to express protest.

Since it is normally the Mahayana Buddhists of Vietnam who engage in this fiery death voluntarily, the statement of a leading Vietnamese Buddhist monk may be of help in understanding just how such deaths are viewed by the Buddhists, and to what extent these may be either encouraged or discouraged by religious doctrines found in Vietnam. “Reverend” Tich Tam Giac is a graduate of the Vietnam Institute of Buddhist Studies, Saigon, South Vietnam and his statement “The Meaning of Self-Burning in the Doctrine of Buddhism”, was in December 1963 “World Fellowship of Buddhist Bulletin”, p. 3. Since he is a Mahayana Buddhist monk speaking about a Mahayana Buddhist custom in Vietnam, his words are quoted:

To burn oneself by fire is to prove that what one is saying is of the utmost importance. There is nothing more painful than burning oneself. To say something while experiencing this kind of pain is to say it with the utmost of courage, frankness, determination and sincerity. During the ceremony of ordination, as practiced in the Mahayana tradition, the monk-candidate is required to burn one or several small spots on his body in taking the vow to observe the 250 rules of a Ghiksu (Monk), to live the life of a monk, to get enlightenment, and to devote his life for the salvation of all beings. One can, of course, say these things while sitting in a comfortable arm chair, but when these words are uttered when kneeling before a community of Sangha (Buddhist clergy-men) and experiencing this kind of pain, they will express all seriousness of one’s heart and mind, and carry much greater weight. In the Sadharma Pundarika, one of the most famous sutras (Chapters of Scripture) of Mahayana Buddhism, we see a Bohhisattawa burning one of his arms to express the determination to work for the salvation of all beings.

The Vietnamese monk, by burning himself, says with all his strength and determination that he can endure the greatest of suffering to protect Buddhism, that he is protesting with all his being the policy of religious oppression and persecution. But why does he burn himself to death? The difference between burning oneself and burning oneself to death is only a difference in degree, not nature. A man who burns himself too much must die. The importance is not to take one’s life, but to burn. What he really aims at is the expression of his will and determination, not death. In the Buddhist belief, life is not confined to a period of 60 to 80 or 100 years. Life is eternal. Life is not confined to this body - life is universal. To express will and protest by burning oneself, therefore, is not to commit an act of destruction but to perform an act of consecration, i.e., to suffer and to die for the sake of one’s religion and one’s people. This is not suicide. Suicide is an act of destruction having the following causes:

- lack of courage to live and cope with difficulties
- despair of life and loss of hope
- desire of non-existence (Abhava)

This self-destruction is considered by Buddhism as one of the most serious crimes. The monk who burns himself has lost neither courage nor hope, nor does he desire non-existence. On the contrary, he is very courageous, hopeful and aspiring for something good in the
future. He does not think he is destroying himself; he believes in the good fruition of his act of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Like the Buddha in one of his former lives - as told in a story of Jataka - who gave himself to a hungry lion which was about to devour her own cubs, the monk believes he is practicing the doctrine of the highest compassion by sacrificing himself in order to call the attention of, or to seek help from, the people of the world.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archer, W. G., The Loves of Krishna, New York, Groves Press (no date)
Arvon, Henri, Buddhism (Translated by Douglas Scott), New York, Walker, 1963
Bodde, Derk, China's Cultural Tradition (Source Problems in World Civilization), New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957
Chao P'u-ch'u, Buddhism in China, Peking, Buddhist Association of China, 1960
Durbijn, Tillman, Southeast Asia, New York, Atheneum, 1966
Fa- hsien, A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms (Translated by James Legge) New York, Paragon Book Reprint Co., 1965
Fall, Bernard, Street Without Joy, Harrisburg, Stackpole, 1965
Fall, Bernard, The Two Vietnam, New York, Praeger, 1963
Goode, William J., Religion Among the Primitives, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1951
Hang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, New York, Praeger, 1964
Hart, Donn V., Phya Anum Rajadhon and Richard J. Coughlin, Southeast Asia Birth Customs, New Haven, Conn., Human Relations Areas Files Press, 1965
Hickey, Dr. Gerald Cannon, Village in Vietnam, New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1964
Landon, Kenneth P., Southeast Asia, Crossroads of Religion, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1947
Lebar, Frank, Gerald C. Hickey, John K. Musgrave, Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia, New Haven, Conn., Human Relations Area Files Press, 1964
Locher, Max, Buddhist Thought and Imagery, Cambridge, Harvard University, 1961
MATA, Customs, Religion, Education of Vietnam, Fort Bragg, N. C., U.S. Army Special Warfare School, (mimeographed Instructional Materials)
Mehden, Fred von der, Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia, Madison, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1961
Monier-Williams, M., Hinduism, Calcutta, Susil Gupta (India) Ltd., 1951 (Reprint)
Moore, Frank W. Editor, Readings in Cross-Cultural Methodology, New Haven, HRAF Press, 1961
Morgan, Kenneth William (Editor), The Path of Buddha: Buddhism Interpreted by Buddhists, New York, Ronald Press Co., 1956
Murdock, George P., et. al., Outline of Cultural Materials, New Haven, Human Relations Area Files, 1961
Radhakrishnan, Sir Sarvepalli, Indian Philosophy, London, G. Allen and Unwin, Ltd. 1931
Redfield, Robert, Peasant Society and Culture, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1956
Rosengrant, John, and others, Assignment Overseas, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1966
Ross, Nancy Wilson, Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1966
Roy, Jules, Battle of Dienbienphu, New York, Harper and Rowe, 1965
Tanham, George K., War Without Guns, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1966
Tran Van Trung, Vietnam, New York, Praeger, 1958
Trumbull, Robert, The Scrutable East, New York, David McKay Co., Inc., 1964
Wieger, Leon, A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China From the Beginning to the Present Time, (Translated by Edward Chalmers Werner), Hsien-hsien, China, Hsien-hsien Press, 1927
Zimmer, Heinrich, The Philosophies of India, New York, Pantheon Books, 1951

PERIODICALS

Practical Anthropology, William A. Smalley, Editor, (Box 307), Tarrytown, New York (10592)
Viet-My, (Quarterly) by Vietnamese American Association, 55 Mac-dinh-Chi, Saigon

Note: Since the gathering of these materials a most worthwhile volume has been published that is pertinent to these areas of concern. It is: Customs and Culture of Vietnam by Ann Caddell Crawford; Charles E. Tuttle Co., Publishers, Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo, Japan, 1966.
APPENDIX A

FOREIGN VOLUNTARY AGENCIES OPERATING
IN VIETNAM

WITH RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Agency | Director
---|---
American Friends Service Committee | David W. Stickney
c/o USAID/ORD | tel: 24554

AFSC is initiating two programs. A child day care center, largely staffed by Vietnamese, is being established in Quang Ngai. The primary objective is the education and health of refugee pre-school children; the long-term objective is to teach mothers better health and nutrition practices. A second project is being explored; to find places for young college graduates to work in programs directed by Vietnamese voluntary agencies such as labor unions, student groups, and educational institutions.

Asian Christian Service | U. Thaung Tin
91 Duong Pasteur | tel: 22268

ACS has provided one hundred ten hand looms to refugees in An Khe and Saigon through the Ministry of Social Welfare. Two multipurpose teams to work in refugee camps are being recruited. Tinned food has been provided to refugees and to montagnard training schools.

CARE | Felix Ashinhurst
27 Nguyen Thong | tel: 93156

CARE provides emergency assistance to needy families, including refugees. Included in CARE packages are locally purchased rice, salt and fish sauce; standard CARE textile packages containing fabric sufficient to clothe a family of five; sewing kits; blacksmith kits; and midwifery kits. Donated supplies such as foodstuffs and soap have also provided relief. A major emphasis is on self-help projects, e.g. the provision of fishing boats and nets.

Catholic Relief Services | Lawson B. Mooney
91 Duong Pasteur | tel: 92246

CRS programs are directed toward alleviating the needs of 1.3 million widows, orphans, refugees and other war and disaster victims. There has been an increase in food distribution to refugee centers. This year CRS will ship roughly one hundred five thousand tons of food, clothing, medicines, and bedding materials. CRS will also increase programs conducted by CRS and American military forces under the auspices of the military's Civic Action Program. The military assists, distributes, and monitors materials in areas CRS personnel could not teach.

Christian Children's Fund | Rev. Norman Turner
POB 1543, Saigon

CCF formerly conducted small scale program of assistance to institutionalized children. This year a child assistance program is being developed to reach five thousand families.

Foster Parent's Plan | Miss Elizabeth Brown
105 Yen Do | tel: 24493

FPP provides family welfare assistance, financial aid, supplies and counselling to 5,500 children and their families, about thirty thousand people. Emphasis is placed on education for the children. Because of the increasing need, the program is expanding and additional funds are being made available for self-help endeavors and emergencies.
IRC is providing supplementary funds for the purchase of food, clothing, educational materials, and additional personnel for institutions which care for war orphans. Seven hundred pounds of improved vegetable seeds have been supplied to montagnard refugees in Dak To, Kontum Province. A four man medical team is stationed in Quang Ngai and five other medical teams are in various stages of recruitment and processing. IRC has provided funds for the training of two hundred forty-four refugee teachers.

ISS provides assistance to persons wishing to make intercountry adoptions. Under the direction of a Vietnamese social worker, ISS will provide counselling services in the areas of child care and adoption.

IVS provides young college graduates to teach English and science, work with youth in slum clearance and rural development, carry out agricultural extension work and seed and fertilizer distributions, and promote self-help projects. It is expanding its present team of fifty to two hundred to work in the general fields of agriculture, education, refugee assistance, self-help and youth work.

NAEWRC has established a leadership training center in Hue. Practical, on-the-job training of youth in modern methods of agriculture and industry as well as the development and training of local leadership is emphasized. With the assistance of personnel from Vietnam Christian Service, the program is expanding to additional provinces to provide vocational training for refugees.
schools and indigent families. It supports hospitals in Nha Trang and Pleiku. VCS is expanding its staff and program to provide technical and Peace Corps type personnel to work with refugee populations in Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen and possibly Kontum. VCS staff will number approximately fifty-five by the end of 1966.

World University Service  
Mark A. Harpole  
111 Hong Thap Tu - WUS House

WUS provides thirty partial scholarships; a legal aid referral service in cooperation with the Saigon Bar Association; a health clinic; material aid to the student TB ward in Hong Bang Hospital; mimeograph facilities in Saigon and Dalat for the reproduction of educational materials; a reading and study room for one hundred twenty-five students, and a transient dormitory in Saigon.

World Vision Relief  
Rev. Harold  
Organization  
Datton  
329 Vo Tanh  
tel: 22429

World Vision operates relief programs, supports orphans in institutes under the supervision of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam, has built a technical and agricultural school for tribespeople near Dalat, and is providing wheel chairs and crutches for many crippled Vietnamese veterans.
APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES FOR UNDERSTANDING

The basic physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of man are universally the same, but the ways in which these needs are expressed and satisfied differ as radically as the language he speaks. The reason for this disparity is twofold. In the first place, varying geographical, historical, economic and religious factors determine the value systems of a people or locality. In the second, these various value systems then dramatically influence the manners, customs and daily behavior patterns of communities and individuals. So behavior, no matter how unusual or unique it may seem, is never haphazard, but habitually consistent with the structures of value built by a particular complex of influences.

In South Vietnam religion plays an unusually determinative role in the establishment and operation of the value systems of Indigenous peoples. This influence is observable not only in the presence of the bonzes and other clergy, men, temples, pagodas, dhams, and spirit houses, but also in the sacrifices, taboos, fetishes, magical practices, etc. so frequently encountered. The various religious rites and ceremonies can be individualistic, or may require collective community participation.

Americans cannot really understand the Vietnamese, nor work harmoniously with them, without an awareness of these religious beliefs and the ways in which they affect everyday attitudes and practices. Only when their seemingly strange and puzzling behavior is seen as reasonable and logical in its environmental context can it be fully appreciated. American patterns of thought and action might be just as bewildering and confusing to the Vietnamese as their ways are to us. Our familiarity with our own cultural values and behavior patterns should not be allowed to create a negative reaction toward differing systems of values and behavior. We can, instead, strive to comprehend their underlying motivations as a way of deepening and broadening our experience of life as a whole. SO:

(a) When moral principles are not involved, be prepared to adapt to local customs and etiquette in the interest of friendly relationships with the people.

(b) Search for areas of agreement, rather than disagreement, and as understanding develops, harmony and unity of purpose will result.

(c) Demonstrate a keen and vital interest in people as individual persons and in their personal beliefs.

(d) Be willing to ask genuinely interested questions of "Why...?" Questions which sincerely seek information are normally considered to be complimentary. The most foolish question is the one not asked!

The following are some positive attitudes and actions which can help you relate more effectively to the people of Vietnam:

DO TREAT TEMPLES, SPIRIT HOUSES, SACRED PLACES CAREFULLY

Reason: Vietnamese religions teach the presence of ancestors as spirits. Credits or debits may be earned for the future life through the faithful practice or neglect of veneration and respect for the spirits of departed ancestors. So treat these places like you would want others to treat places or things that are sacred to you.

DO TREAT RELIGIOUS LEADERS WITH RESPECTFUL COURTESY

Reason: Religious leaders are considered to be "holy" men and are very important in their communities regardless of different religious beliefs. Special courtesy is given them by the Vietnamese. Their friendship and support can often make your mission more successful; their opposition can mean its failure.
DO BE PREPARED FOR THE VIETNAMESE TO SMILE OR LAUGH AT UNEXPECTED TIMES

Reason: Confucius said, "The smiling face calms the anger". Buddhism teaches its adherents not to retaliate for wrongs done them, but rather to smile and turn wrath away. The Vietnamese often smile when in doubt, confusion or embarrassment. They may smile when they are most unhappy or use laughter as an antidote for weeping. A smile may also be used to conceal disagreement rather than risking offense. It may be used as a means of hiding genuine bewilderment as to just what the "strange" American wants. If directions are not understood the Vietnamese will sometimes try to "smile his way through" in the hope that all will be well.

DO BE PREPARED FOR POSSIBLE VIETNAMESE TARDINESS

Reason: Tardiness by American standards may be perfectly acceptable for the Vietnamese who utilize an entirely different concept of time. They do not normally compute time in a straight-line manner as do the Americans. Their religiously-influenced calendar year cycle repeats itself every twelve years, in contrast to our idea that once time and its opportunities have passed they are beyond recovery. Consequently, the pressure to get things done quickly is not felt as acutely by most Vietnamese as by Americans.

DO BE PREPARED TO BOW TO THE VIETNAMESE INSTEAD OF SHAKING HANDS

Reason: Many Asians, including the ethnic Vietnamese, bow to others with hands pressed together in front of their chests rather than shaking hands. Both excessive humidity and religious beliefs discourage touching people; it can be uncomfortable and may be regarded as over familiarity. Contrastingly, the tribespeople will often shake hands by grasping your hand with both of their hands. The friendly thing to do is to respond in a like manner.

DO BE PREPARED FOR HOROSCOPES AND OMENS TO CHANGE ACTION PLANS

Reason: Many Vietnamese believe, because of religious influence, that their lives are controlled by the stars or the relationship of the elements of the earth. A reading of a horoscope or earth element table may cause them to change proposed plans or action timetables. Thus, an individual or group of Vietnamese may fail to execute a previously agreed upon mission without notifying the other people involved. Superstitious tribesmen may also alter their actions upon observing certain negative omens such as the unfavorable movement of birds, animals or people. Such omens are strong enough reason for them to change plans and actions without advance warning.

Patience and understanding are necessary if success is to result from joint endeavors.

DO BE PREPARED FOR AN APPARENT DISREGARD FOR PERSONAL SAFETY BY VIETNAMESE

Reason: The Vietnamese are conditioned by religious concepts to ignore many safety factors and combat precautions deemed essential by Americans. Belief in reincarnation and karma, as well as the concept of resignation to fate, makes them more likely to disregard danger. This helps to account for the startling sight of rural villagers continuing their routine tasks while battle rages about them.

Another example of seeming indifference to personal safety is the Vietnamese failure to react to the sound of the horn of a moving vehicle. Most of them will proceed along their intended course without hesitation because of a culturally-determined interpretation of the horn's meaning that is different from that of Americans. An American regards the sound as a warning and reacts by getting out of the way. But the Vietnamese, influenced by religious ideals of patience, humility and restraint, interprets the horn to mean, "Continue what you are doing. I see you, so do not panic". The driver who fails to understand this interpretation, or who shouts or swears at those who do not clear the way, only creates confusion and hostility.

DO BE CONCERNED WITH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Reason: There is an obvious language barrier to quick and easy understanding between Vietnamese and Americans. Even in dealing with those who speak English, it is wise to remember that to them it is still a foreign language. Textbook English is quite a bit different from speech that has been "Americanized" both by accent and colloquial expressions. Since
Vietnamese is a tonal language, changes in the tone of one's voice can be interpreted as changing the entire meaning of his words. Faulty understanding can create havoc, especially when the Vietnamese will often indicate comprehension and agreement rather than risk offending the person with whom they are talking. Take the time to make sure that you are understood and that you understand what you have been told. Allow the tribesmen especially to talk over your ideas among themselves and reach agreement as to a course of action; once it is their decision they will hold to it tenaciously. Learn some Vietnamese to increase your chances of exchanging ideas clearly. It's not only good human relations, your life may depend on it.

DO BE AWARE OF FOOD CUSTOMS AND MANNERS

Reason: Good manners at a meal are highly regarded in almost every culture. To be invited to share the food of a Vietnamese family is an important gesture of friendship and an opportunity for improving cross-cultural relationships. Take an inexpensive gift to your hostess, but give it to the host. If there are children in the family, a small gift for each child is most appropriate. Remember that age is highly respected in Vietnam; let the older folk start eating before you do. Eat all the food on your individual dish, but never take the last food from the main dish. To do so is considered impolite and an insinuation that the hostess did not provide enough food. If offered the last bit of food, politely refuse. Express appreciation to the host, not to the hostess.

Since Buddha taught that life is not to be taken, some Buddhists are vegetarians. When inviting known Buddhists to eat with you, courtesy indicates that vegetarian fare be served. Bonzes are almost always vegetarians.

When informal visits are made in Vietnamese homes or shops, a hospitality drink is frequently offered. If it is hot it will not be harmful; if cold, it is better to risk an upset stomach than offend your host. If alcoholic beverages are offered and you are a non-drinker, you may simply state that they are "taboo" for you and no offense will be given. When it is possible your Vietnamese visitor should be accorded similar hospitality and offered something to drink. The use of cookies or small pieces of cake, etc. at such times is appropriate. Such small courtesies can pay rich dividends in good relationships in the days and months that lie ahead.

DO BE AWARE OF THE VIETNAMESE ATTITUDE TOWARD WOMEN

Reason: As a result of religious and ethical concepts Vietnamese women have a different status than American women. While exposure to our movies in the cities has modified traditional attitudes and behavior among the young, most Vietnamese still adhere to time-honored customs. Public displays of affection between the sexes (holding hands, kissing, embracing, fondling) are unacceptable. Since most marriages are arranged by the family, "nice" girls do not associate with Americans except in a properly chaperoned environment, nor can they have their pictures taken with any male except their own relatives. Girls seen in public with servicemen are considered to be involved in improper conduct and are regarded with disdain. Hostility toward the Americans is an understandable result and is often exploited by the communists.

Visits to Vietnamese homes should not be made without specific invitation and only when an adult male member of the family is present. At social occasions conversation is normally directed to those of one's own sex.

DO SHOW RESPECT TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Reason: The religions of Vietnam emphasize respect for village elders, older men and authority figures as a cardinal virtue. These leaders should be contacted and consulted before dealing with the people of a village or community. Their tacit consent or support will, not only avert resentment, but increase cooperation and friendliness.

DO LEARN TO CONTROL ANGER

Reason: A display of bad temper, like the public display of other emotions, is offensive to the Vietnamese. Their religious teachings encourage admiration for patience and composure under all circumstances. Any number of irritations can combine to make calmness difficult, but "letting off steam" by shouting, swearing or erratic behavior will only make things worse. Such actions can alienate the Vietnamese and give the communists an effective propaganda weapon.

The following are some attitudes and actions which should be carefully avoided in the interest
of wholesome and effective relationships with the people of Vietnam:

DON'T TAMPER WITH SACRED OBJECTS WITHOUT DIRECT ORDERS

Reason: Many Vietnamese are concerned with the welfare of the spirits of the deceased and wish to avoid giving any offense which might anger them. Some country areas, for example, have bamboo “spirit poles” which look identical to anti-helicopter landing devices. They have been placed about so that the spirits may have resting places as they move about through the rice paddies and fields. Their needless removal, like the desecration of graves and molestation of spirit houses, can create potentially dangerous antagonism among those who might otherwise be our friends. Similarly, mirrors or red crepe paper located about some Vietnamese homes are not merely decorations but are placed there to guard against evil spirits.

DON'T USE INAPPROPRIATE GESTURES

Reason: Vietnamese religions assign differing values to the parts of the human body. It is unacceptable for a stranger to touch people, particularly children, about the head since it is believed to be the residence of the soul. The feet are assigned the least value, so care should be taken not to point the sole of your shoe at a person or sacred object lest it be considered an insult. The best rule is to keep both feet flat on the deck. Do not beckon someone with a finger or point as we sometimes do; to the Vietnamese this is similar to snapping your fingers at a “naughty” child. If you want to signal to them the custom is to use the whole hand with the palm down and move all the fingers rather than just one.

DON'T JOKE ABOUT SICKNESS OR DEATH IN THE PRESENCE OF VIETNAMESE

Reason: Many Vietnamese believe that sickness, death, and other misfortunes are caused by angry “spirits”. Joking about such things is in bad taste since the spirits may be provoked into harmful activity.

DON'T USE OBSCENE OR DEROGATORY LANGUAGE

Reason: The religions influencing Vietnamese culture idealize the qualities of patience, quiet humility, restraint and unusual degrees of politeness and courtesy. The serviceman who staggered along the streets swearing in loud, vulgar language is particularly offensive and often creates hostility. It is possible for such action to create a negative impression that can outlast the memory of heroic deeds on the battlefield. Strangely enough, the “tough foxhole warrior” is often more concerned for the consequences of his behavior than are some servicemen who are not usually exposed to enemy fire.

Intentionally derogatory terms used to describe other peoples are obviously improper. Even such seemingly neutral terms as “native”, “foreigner”, etc. can be misunderstood. It should be remembered that language is comprised, not only of words, but of gestures, facial expressions, and tones of voice as well. Sometimes in these ways we convey attitudes that seem to imply that others don't count as people. American self-assurance and overt confidence can appear to disregard the needs and desires of others. Individual efforts must continually be made to make it apparent that the feelings and concerns of the Vietnamese people are of vital importance to us.

DON'T EXPECT EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION

Reason: Acts of charity and the giving of gifts are considered by many Vietnamese as a means whereby the giver can gain merit for future existences. He is the one, therefore, who should be grateful rather than the one who receives the gifts. The Buddhist bonze, for example, with his “merit bowl” into which people place rice is not considered to be begging but to be giving others an opportunity to acquire merit through their gifts. He does not thank people for the food; instead, they express their appreciation to him.

DON'T EXPECT A HOLIDAY FROM MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Reason: Many Vietnamese know what Americans claim to believe about acceptable moral standards. When they observe us in drunken or vulgar behavior which is outside these standards, they come to regard us as insincere and untrustworthy and will disbelieve our avowed standards and intentions in other things as well. The things we do speak so loudly that people cannot hear what we say in our idealistic speeches and publications. If you
transplant the experiences mentally to your own home town it becomes easy to understand Vietnamese resentment of increasing prostitution among their young women, of the growing “red light” and bar districts in their towns and cities, and of unwholesome advances toward their wives and daughters.

Friendly and mutually-enriching relationships with the people of Vietnam will become increasingly likely if the following realizations are kept in mind:

**REMEMBER THAT RESULTS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS MOTIVES**

Reason: The American serviceman is normally quite generous in helping those who seem to be in need. Sometimes, however, while the motive behind his gifts and actions may be excellent, the techniques and methods he uses can be misunderstood and do more harm than good. The random distribution of candles, money, cigarettes, etc., especially among children, may create a habitual attitude of dependence which can come to be resented by both Vietnamese and Americans. On the other hand, gifts and services that are carefully planned and administered in close cooperation with respected Vietnamese leaders can help bring about the self-respect and progress so vital to effective intercultural endeavors. Careful consideration should be given, both by individuals and organizations, to a determination of what practical help is needed, what indigenous peoples can - or prefer to - do for themselves, and how valid mutual involvement can be achieved. The finest gift that can be given is that one which helps a person, or a people, to help themselves.

**REMEMBER THAT NUMBERS ARE IMPORTANT TO MANY VIETNAMESE**

Reason: Because of deeply engrained religious and cultural traditions the Vietnamese regard numbers as significantly and directly related to their personal welfare. Even numbers are generally more acceptable than odd numbers. Many Vietnamese prefer not to pose for pictures with a small group of people unless the group is even-numbered. Good etiquette in the giving of gifts indicates the advisability of even-numbered giving; it is often better to present two inexpensive gifts than a single more expensive one. Incidentally, gifts should be offered with both hands rather than just one as an indication of your fullest personal participation in your gift.

**REMEMBER THAT SELF-SACRIFICE IS CONSISTENT WITH VIETNAMESE ETHICAL TEACHINGS**

Reason: Confucian and Mahayana Buddhist principles make it possible to witness for personal convictions by bearing pain. Hunger strikes, burning one’s self, or otherwise afflicting the body can be used to dramatize a grievance publicly and to bring “shame” to those believed responsible for the injustice involved.

**REMEMBER THAT “FACE” IS IMPORTANT**

Reason: Prestige in the eyes of one’s contemporaries is treasured by most people regardless of their cultural background. Vietnamese religious and ethical customs add significance to the importance of saving “face”. Extreme discretion is required in offering advice and practical suggestions so that others involved are not made to appear incapable. Private consultations should be held with Vietnamese leaders to avoid any possible public disagreement or seeming reprimand which might cause embarrassment. Such discussions allow ideas and plans of action to be their own rather than an external imposition by an outsider. The role of partners with, rather than benefactors to, the Vietnamese is the goal. Adequate public acknowledgement should be given for their part in planning and executing joint activities. A noteworthy example of the importance of “face” is the attitude of some Vietnamese toward education and manual labor. It is felt that education places one above the performance of manual labor in contrast to the American idea that any work well done is honorable. Personal example is more effective than exhortation in demonstrating that educated people can perform manual labor honorably in the interest of national security and development.

**REMEMBER THAT CULTURAL DIFFERENCES MAY BEWILDER BOTH VIETNAMESE AND AMERICANS**

Reason: Americans have a dynamic concept of life filled with needs and desires requiring satisfaction; while many Vietnamese think of the world, its social order and man’s place as essentially “pre-ordained”. American culture is often conceived as active, material, and logical, while that of the Vietnamese is primarily passive, spiritual and mystical. The abundant American vitality created by these concepts,
and by such factors as health and diet, sometimes seems to overwhelm the Vietnamese who by their religious and ethical backgrounds, and because of diet, climate and disease, are less exuberant and extroverted. Unless these cultural differences are remembered, American vitality can be mistaken for egotism and arrogance, even as Vietnamese passivity can be wrongly interpreted as lethargy and indolence. Awareness of these differences does not require the surrender or compromise of ideals and principles, but it can help develop attitudes of patience and understanding that supersede the differences.

REMEMBER THAT RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AFFECT WARTIME CONDUCT

Reason: Certain practices and reactions of the Vietnamese peoples under wartime circumstances seem bizarre and illogical without a comprehension of religious motivations. The mutilation of corpses, exposure of naked prisoners, removal and hasty burial of bodies, threats to mutilate the living are all traceable to religious beliefs. Proper funerals for the dead, for example, are believed necessary to prevent the wrath of the "spirits" which may cause grief and death. This explains the intense desire to recover and bury the dead. Bodily mutilation is feared because its effects are believed to continue in the spirit world or in future existences.

REMEMBER THAT GENERALIZATIONS ARE MISLEADING

Reason: Stereotypes of a people are usually superficial and unrealistic; they are often barriers to understanding and respect. The idea, for example, that Asians are cunning, devious, impassive and inscrutable can retard the development of effective interpersonal relationships. The notion that all Americans are rich, live in mansions, "drink like fish", and are completely sex-centered except while attending sporting events or committing murder, conveyed by our movies, magazines and unthinking Americans abroad, can create distrust or even hostility.

A good guide to intercultural understanding is to discard any preconceived notions about the Vietnamese based on rumor or distorted evidence and form your own opinions through personal involvement and a knowledge of the facts. Such personal investigation will not obscure the reality of cultural differences. In comparison with most peoples of the world, for instance, an American is rich. One pack of cigarettes a day burns up more money than most Vietnamese earn in a year. It becomes understandable that the "rich" American is a natural target for higher prices and other forms of exploitation. When we react with understanding rather than resentment we make it possible for the Vietnamese to re-examine his negative preconceptions about us and about others in general.

REMEMBER THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARE STRONGLY ORIENTED TOWARD FAMILY AND VILLAGE

Reason: Religious beliefs and traditional customs tend to make the family the important social, economic and religious unit in Vietnamese society. Most Vietnamese live in small, rural, agricultural communities which are rather isolated from meaningful contact with events larger than their local concerns. The lack of communications media, insufficient educational opportunities, and inadequate financial resources severely limit any world view and reinforce the importance of the family and local community. A sense of nationalism and its consequent privileges and responsibilities, as understood by most Americans, is a new and strange experience for them. This realization can help account for the seeming lack of courage and loyalty occasionally observed.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE A STRANGER IN TOWN

Reason: Strangers are always watched more closely and critically than those with whom we are familiar. Most people who have lived in small towns remember how the unusual or incorrect behavior of a stranger could cause indignation and be regarded as typical of all those who lived in his home locality. As foreign guests in Vietnam we are subject to the same type of scrutiny and reaction. An American stands out like a coconut tree in a rice paddy - every phase of his activity is carefully observed. In contrast, the Viet Cong, or even the Vietnamese violator of accepted mores, blends more readily with the environmental scenery. The end result is that a foreigner gets most of the unfavorable attention, and beyond this, his conduct will be considered typical of all his countrymen.

Certain courtesies and limitations of action are expected of strangers that are not required of others. The Vietnamese, for example, may come in contact with graves through the play of
children or as a laundry-drying site. After all, the spirits about the grave are all "in the family". But an American should avoid touching, molesting or damaging a grave; he is an outsider who could dangerously provoke the spirits about it.

You are a "Stranger in Town", a guest in this country, a representative of all Americans. When you behave accordingly, on duty, behind the wheel of a vehicle, or on liberty, you help build a bridge of understanding and respect between our nations.