Cam an
A Fishing Village in Central Vietnam

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Cam an

A FISHING VILLAGE IN CENTRAL VIETNAM

John D. Donoghue

1963

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY VIETNAM ADVISORY GROUP
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Preface to the Vietnam Studies Publications

In 1955 Michigan State University began a program of technical assistance to the Government of South Vietnam, supported by a contract with the predecessor agency of the United States Agency for International Development. Through this program Michigan State University provided technical advisors in the broad field of public administration, including police administration. In recent years, most of this advisory service has been devoted to strengthening the teaching, in-service training, and research programs of the National Institute of Administration, an agency in Saigon created by the Vietnamese Government to strengthen the public service generally.

Members of the Michigan State University group have included specialists in the field of public administration, police administration, economics, anthropology, psychology, sociology and other special fields. In the course of over seven years of technical cooperation in Vietnam, members of the Michigan State University group have contributed a large number of surveys and studies of various types, training documents, and reports containing recommendations on various administrative problems.

This document is one of many prepared in Vietnam as a part of the work of the Michigan State University group. It was written for a specific purpose and under particular circumstances and should be read with these qualifications in mind. It is being reproduced and made available at this time for the use of the Agency for International Development, and is not intended for general circulation. We suggest that this study be used with the understanding that additional materials are available from the earlier MSUG studies which appeared in mimeographed form, and that it fits into the broad context of a technical assistance program as part of the U. S. foreign aid program in Vietnam.
This study is the result of the second cooperative village research effort by staff members of the National Institute of Administration (NIA) and the Michigan State University Advisory Group (MSUG) in Vietnam. The first such study, published in two parts, was carried out in the Mekong Delta region of southern Vietnam. The present volume is concerned with the social, economic, and administrative characteristics of a central Vietnamese lowland fishing village.

These village studies were conceived as a part of the provincial-local administration series initiated by joint National Institute of Administration-Michigan State University Group teams. In addition to the village level research, studies were concurrently conducted at the district and province levels, not only to afford an over-all view of provincial administration, but also to allow members of the various teams to follow through from one level to another the ramifications of data collected. For example: In Cam An Village a dam was constructed

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which the villagers considered detrimental to their interests. Although interviews were held with a number of village officials and ordinary fishermen, we were unable to discover the rationale behind the decision to build this dam. That evening when the teams from the three levels met to discuss the day's activities, the matter of the dam was called to the attention of the other groups. On the following day interviews in the district and province headquarters led to a satisfactory explanation of why the project was undertaken. A number of such problems were resolved, or in part explained, because of easy access to the various levels of administration.

The advantage of this "wholistic" approach to provincial administration also operated in reverse and permitted us to better understand district and provincial matters because of information gathered in the village. The Chief of Dien Ban District, for instance, called a meeting of elders from the villages of the district to discuss problems of local government; information was gathered in Cam An on the process of selection of elders to attend this meeting. Thus, the monographs of the provincial-local administration series should be regarded as separate enterprises which combine to contribute to a clearer comprehension of the total matrix of local administration in Vietnam.

Another, and equally important, objective of this monograph series is to make available for classroom use up-to-date, empirical observations of practice and problems in provincial and local administration. Each monograph is published in both English and Vietnamese and made available to the students of the NIA and the University of Saigon. The research experiences of the NIA and MSUG faculty members are incorporated into their lectures, bringing to their students a better understanding of actual administrative processes. Thus, the monograph series plays the dual role of providing readings in the Vietnamese language and illustrative, concrete cases to support the instruction of administrative theory.

It is hoped that the results of these studies will be of some value to the Vietnamese Government and the personnel of the various American agencies in Vietnam, as well as to scholars and other individuals interested in learning more about the Vietnamese and their problems.

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Prior to the actual field trip to Cam An, Quang Nam Province, members of the NIA-MSUG staff met with provincial officials to plan the

research. Together we considered the security problem, chose the district and village to be studied, and arranged for living quarters and security while in the field.

Back in Saigon a general research design for the village study was outlined, and team members were assigned to various project areas according to their competence and interest. During the two weeks in the village, continual communication, cross-referencing, and feedback among the members of the research group constantly guided and, when necessary, reoriented the course of the interviews and observations.

Thus, although each individual team member was responsible for a given body of data, the research was a unified effort aimed at discovering over-all patterns of life in Cam An Village. At the completion of the field work, each team member submitted a working paper encompassing his field notes. These were then distributed to the rest of the members for discussion, criticism, and modification.

The preparation of this volume was undertaken by Dr. John D. Donoghue with the assistance of Mr. Nguyen Van Thuan. The research responsibilities were divided as follows:

Professor Truong Ngoc Giau of the NIA spent one week with the village chief observing his work patterns and the types of problems he handled, and recording his daily activities. Much of the information throughout the volume on administrative activities is a result of these observations.

Mr. Nguyen Duy Xuan, an economist with the NIA, undertook the arduous task of collecting information relative to the economic activities of the Cam An people. This included detailed information on a variety of subjects such as fishing techniques, marketing behavior, and many others.

Mr. Tran Quang Thuan, NIA anthropologist, probed into such aspects of the social structure as kinship and clan organization. Much data on behavior, as related to the family structure, were also collected.

Miss Vo Hong Phuc, a sociologist with the Michigan State University Group and lecturer at the University of Saigon, was primarily interested in the areas of religion, beliefs, and attitudes.

Dr. John D. Donoghue, anthropologist, and Mr. Nguyen Van Thuan, research associate, both with the Michigan State University Advisory Group, did their research on village administrative structure. This included the organization of the village, hamlets, and fishermen's associations.
The information on the police and security situation was collected by Mr. Paul Shields, police administration advisor of the Michigan State University Advisory Group.

Although the data were collected by the team, and this work must stand upon that data, any errors of interpretation and judgment are the responsibility of the author. We are grateful to Myrna Pike for her editorial assistance, and, of course to the people of Cam An Village who so generously contributed their time and hospitality.
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Introduction

A number of studies have recently appeared on village life in farming districts in the southern part of the Republic of Vietnam. However, there have been few works which have been concerned with the social, economic, and administrative activities of villages in central Vietnam, and no recent systematic descriptions of fishing villages anywhere in the country. This study is an attempt to rectify both deficiencies. The lush Mekong River Delta of the south and the overpopulated, sandy, sterile, lowland coastal strip of the center differ significantly in history, geography, and culture. These differences are reflected in village organization, economic activity, social structure and the nature of the security problem.

The purpose of this study is to provide information on certain key institutions in a central Vietnamese village similar to that already available on southern villages so as to readily facilitate comparison between the two areas.¹

The southern delta provinces of Vietnam are newly settled frontier lands whereas the central lowlands, core of the ancient Champa civilization, have been inhabited by Vietnamese for more than 700 years.²

²James B. Hendry, The Study of a Vietnamese Rural Community—Economic Activity, Michigan State University, 1959; L. W. Woodruff, The Study of a Vietnamese Rural Community—Administrative Activity, two volumes, (Saigon: Michigan State University, May 1960); Donoghue, op. cit.
³For a brief survey of the History of Quang Nam Province, see Allen and An, op. cit., pp. 27-43.
This historical factor is an important variable for the understanding of the differences between the two areas. The plains of the central lowlands supported a dense population and intensive agriculture for centuries; the delta area is still underpopulated and agriculturally underdeveloped. The sedentary population of the center live in tightly agglomerated settlements, while the farmers of the south live in noncontiguous isolated farmsteads.

During the migrations to the south, traditional clan organization, lineages, and kinship ties were by necessity altered and disorganized. These structures continue to operate in central Vietnam, and, together with the highly developed territorial organization of the village \((\text{lang})\), hamlet \((\text{thon})\), and subhamlet \((\text{xom})\), form the basic social units of the people of the central lowlands. In the south, although ancestor worship and various forms of animism persist, a degree of secularism has developed in belief and ceremony, possibly resulting from the de-emphasis of clan and lineage relationships and the breakdown of territorial ties through emigration and mobility. The religious life of the center is more active than that of the south, with numerous village, hamlet, clan and lineage ceremonies. The long, close relationships that have developed around the family and neighborhood group have apparently been conducive to the maintenance of these religious activities.

In the delta region, there is a relative absence of voluntary, spontaneous, territorial or occupational associations. This may be a result of government measures to counter Viet Cong terrorism, or it is possible that such groups never existed in the areas studied. In the center, local associations based on occupation and territory form an intricate part of the organization of the villages. In many instances these associations exist parallel to, or are complementary to, formal administrative structures prescribed by the government.

Security conditions at the time of the studies in the southern and central regions differed markedly: the delta provinces were under threat of the Viet Cong; the lowlands were relatively free of terrorism, although propaganda campaigns were beginning. This fact may account, at least in part, for the separateness of village life in the south as opposed to the interrelatedness of the various group activities, associations, and beliefs in the central lowlands.

The remainder of this monograph is devoted to the investigation of a number of aspects of life in Cam An Village which we hope will illustrate or highlight some of the general observations above.

\(^{9}\)Dunsilus, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 22-44.

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A. THE SETTING

Cam An is one of 30 villages in Dien Ban District. Located 4.5 kilometers from the provincial capital of Hoi An, its 6,166 inhabitants live in three agglomerated settlements on a 12-square kilometer, narrow, sandy peninsula at the mouth of the Thu Bon River. Another 325 persons live on the Cham Island in the South China Sea, 16 kilometers from the coast. The dwelling units on the mainland are oriented more toward the river than the ocean front (see Figure 1) because the coconut trees and sand dunes afford a break from the seasonal winds. The soils of the peninsula are sandy and unsuited even for the cultivation of garden crops. A kind of pine tree is raised throughout the area as a source of wood for timber and pine needles for fuel. Women and children assiduously rake and sweep the needles into large piles giving the village a neat, clean appearance.

Since there is no agriculture, fishing and allied trades, such as net making and boat building, are the major sources of income in the mainland hamlets of Cam An. The island hamlet of Tan Hiep is located on the largest of the three Cham islands where there is some wet-rice cultivation to supplement fishing. Here the population is concentrated along the coast facing the mainland. On the northern tip of the island is a Chinese enterprise subsidized by the government, which produces salangane (bird’s) nests, a Vietnamese delicacy. Communication between the mainland and the island hamlet is infrequent and sporadic.
The one available motor boat in the village makes the trip in 1½ hours; by sailboat it takes more than 3 hours. When weather conditions are poor and the seas rough, passage is sometimes halted for weeks.

The fishing cycle, as well as the round of ceremonial activities in Cam An, is related to the climatic conditions of the area. From the first to the third lunar month the weather is cool and pleasant, and from the fourth to the sixth month it is hot and clear with calm seas. The height of deep-sea fishing activity is reached during these first six months. From the seventh to the ninth lunar month the rainy season begins and continues through the tenth to the twelfth month. This is the season of rough seas and cool weather; fishermen's activities are confined to offshore fishing and net and boat repairs. Religious events and various social activities mark the beginning and end of these major climatic periods.

The village of Cam An is composed of four hamlets which were, until 1956, four administratively separate units. The largest of these units, or villages, are now the hamlets of An Ban and Tan Thanh. Phuoc Trach, now the most populous hamlet, had only ten households in 1953. In that year, the French built a garrison there, and people migrated to Phuoc Trach to gain protection and to exploit the rich fishing grounds. The island hamlet of Tan Hiep with its small population was previously a hamlet with its own administrative body.

The village council, during the early French period, consisted of an elected village chief, who apparently was the only village official responsible to district and provincial mandarins. The chief was assisted by a chief of a group of extended families and five councilors: a record keeper, a police councilor, a welfare agent, an information councilor, and a treasurer. These members were selected by the council of notables and the positions were mostly ceremonial and honorary. The council of notables, composed of learned village elders, included such ranks as ong cuu, or a mandarin of the royal court, and the dai hao muc, the great village notable. Primary administrative functions were carried out by the village chief and the heads of the hamlets or xom.

The xom was the smallest administrative subdivision of the village. It was a territorial grouping with a chief, usually an elder, and his assistant whose main function was to disseminate information throughout the xom. Instructions, orders, and information were relayed from the province and district officials through the village chief to the xom chief and his messenger. Each xom had its own shrine or pagoda where the founders of the xom or village were venerated. In addition to the
two annual xom-wide ceremonies, rituals were also held at the shrines by the various clans of the xom.

In 1946, under the Viet Minh, the villagers were integrated into the Seventh National Zone (Khu Bay), but their boundaries remained the same. Each village was administered by a committee composed of a president, vice president, and secretary, all of whom were popularly elected by male and female villagers, 18 years or older, holding identity cards.

B. VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

The present organization of Cam An Village is a result of the amalgamation of the four former villages and the proclamation of Law 57-A which prescribes the official structure of village administration throughout Vietnam. Although the internal organization of the four thons is somewhat different and their histories vary, they do form, as the village of Cam An, a natural geographic and economic unit.

The settlements on the mainland are contiguous and set apart from the adjacent rice-producing village of Cam Chau by the Thu Bon River. Fishing and allied crafts are the main occupations, and there is little financial or economic disparity among the thons. The fishing cycle and the religious practices of the fishermen create a temporal harmony within the village which differentiates it from the nearby farming villages or market centers. Thus, although a “Cam An feeling” or village identity does not exist amongst the people, a basis for concensus and cooperation is present.

At right are the names of the hamlets and the population of each according to sets. ¹

After the enactment of Law 57-A, the elected councilmen were replaced by officials, appointed by the district chief, who are directly responsible for village administration. The village council consists of a village chief, a police councilor, finance officer, administrative councilor,

¹We were not satisfied with our attempt to estimate annual income per family in Cam An. However, some informants seemed more articulate than others on the subject and following is a tentative estimation based upon information supplied by our best sources.

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<table>
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<tr>
<td>1st to 5th lunar month</td>
<td>8,000$</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th to 9th lunar month</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th to 12th lunar month*</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,000$</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost such as nets and other equipment</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average cash income per family</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,000$$</strong></td>
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*Income from labor in other fishing areas such as Phan Ri, Phan Rang, Nha Trang, or Binh Thuan.

**Informants said that this figure might be a little high for the poorest families, but added that there is little difference between the poor and the well-to-do villagers.
and a civil status councilor, who is also responsible for information and youth. The village chief receives an allowance of 1,700$ per month, the others 1,500$. In addition, the village employs the services of a health commissioner (400$ per month) and a messenger (600$) who do not enjoy councilor status.

In principle, an advisory council exists, whose major function is to solve new problems which arise in the village as a result of policies and programs initiated from higher echelons of administration. For example, if a community development program were started in the village by order of the district or province chief, this council would meet to discuss the problem and help disseminate information throughout the village. By provincial order, the council consists of: (1) civil representatives, such as members of the National Revolutionary Movement, hamlet officials, and interfamily group chiefs; (2) administrative representatives, including members of the village council, and (3) a military representative still to be selected. Apparently, the advisory council was created in order to stimulate greater popular participation in local affairs. However, it has never met and exists in name only.

To check on the handling of financial affairs by the village council, a budget control committee, composed of representatives of notables, youth, and the National Revolutionary Movement, meets occasionally to audit the books on income and expenditures. In contrast to the advisory council, no members of the village council sit on the budget committee.

A number of new, semiofficial organizations have recently been introduced into Cam An: the National Revolutionary Movement; the Republican Youth; a Farmers' Association; and a mutual assistance association. None of these organizations is very active. For example, when first asked about the Farmer's Association, the village chief stated it did not exist. Later, he received correspondence from the district
relative to the association and admitted that, in fact, the village had been instructed some time ago to organize such a group.

Heading each of the four hamlets (thon) of Cam An is a man appointed by the district chief upon recommendation of the village chief. The major function of a thon chief is the dissemination of information from the village office to the fishermen of the hamlet. He is responsible for the official administration of the thon, the organization of meetings of various kinds, security in the hamlet, and the appointment of the heads of interfamily groups (lien gia). Each chief receives an allowance of from 600$ to 800$ per month from the village budget, depending on the size of the hamlet.

In contrast to the traditional Vietnamese pattern, the thon chiefs of Cam An are not respected elders or notables, but articulate young fishermen. Experience and family status are not necessary prerequisites in their selection since their major duties consist in carrying out predetermined administrative orders. Where matters of judgment are concerned, such as in the selection of the interfamily heads, the young thon chiefs often seek the advice of elders, notables, or heads of the fishermen’s guilds (can).

It was reported that the thon chief calls a meeting every Saturday at 7 p.m. in order to issue information, news, and propaganda. These meetings are attended by at least one member of each family in the thon. However, informants indicated that the timing of the meetings was irregular, and sometimes they were not held at all. On other occasions the thon chief might hold meetings to discuss local problems that arise.

The hamlets are subdivided into lien gia or interfamily groups. In Cam An, as in other villages in Quang Nam, the size of the lien gia varies from 12 to 40 households. During the Viet Minh period the interfamily groups were composed of only five households, but since 1958 the lien gia composition has been altered to coincide with the former xom organization. Thus, the xom, or subhamlet, with its shrine and related religious activities is identical with the lien gia, and consequently, each lien gia now has an informally recognized group of elders and ceremonial leaders besides the appointed lien gia chief, deputy chief, information officer, and security agent.

Some interesting implications arose with the superimposing of the lien gia on an already existing socio-religious infrastructure. In some of the southern regions of Vietnam, including Saigon, the lien gia has yet to become a meaningful local organization. Although the primary
functions of the *lien gia* are to disseminate news and information and provide security; these activities are often carried out through informal channels. The organization of the *lien gia* in these areas is considered artificial and sometimes illogically imposed with regard to natural social groupings. In Cam An this is not the case, since the *lien gia* conforms to an already functioning social unit.

The terms *lien gia* and *xom* are both used, but in different contexts, when dealing with issues and problems of an official nature, such as the organization of work groups for community development projects or the reception of information and propaganda from the village office, the group is referred to as the *lien gia* and the activities are organized through *lien gia* officials. However, when concerned with the mundane problems of everyday life, such as minor disputes or financial or personal advice, the group is called the *xom*, and the *xom* chief, *xom* elders or the head of the *thon* fishermen's organization function as unofficial advisors. On occasion, however, the separateness of functions is blurred, and it was noted, for example, that sometimes the village chief issues memos to a "*xom* representative" rather than to the chief of the *lien gia* as would be expected.

The fishermen of Cam An conceive of the *xom* as their basic territorial (as opposed to kinship) organization, and *xom* identification is strong. It is within this unit that most daily, face-to-face relations occur.

Each *xom* has a name and a given number of households. For example: An Ban, has 6 *xom*, the largest consisting of 130 households and each of the others of from 30 to 50 families. Each *xom* is a tightly agglomerated group of houses adjacent to another *xom*, all within a few minutes walking distance from each other. The close physical proximity of these units within the hamlet contrasts with the relatively great social distance. For example: People would often remark, "I don't know how they do it over in that *xom*, but here in An Hoi (a *xom* name) we do it this way." Solidarity is further reinforced by the *xom* religious rituals which still are celebrated during the first and eighth lunar months.

The importance of the *xom* varies from one hamlet to another. In An Ban, Tan Thanh, and the island hamlet of Tan Hiep, which have had relatively stable populations for the past century, the *xom* maintains its social and religious significance. In Phuoc Trach, however, which was recently settled, the *xom* has no historical depth and is much less important than the Fishermen's Association as the center of social, economic, and religious activity.
C. LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY AGENCIES

The police councilor on the village council is responsible for law enforcement and security in the village. He holds all police powers and judicial authority. He has the right to make an arrest, keep a minor offender in custody for two hours, and impose fines not exceeding 30$ (or one day's work on behalf of the community in case of insolvency). He administers justice in minor civil disputes.

He serves all court warrants and subpoenas, as well as government orders regarding the draft or the yearly training period which ex-servicemen must undergo. In these cases, the police councilor merely makes copies of the paper in question, sends the council's only messenger out to summon the party concerned to the communal house, and, when the person arrives, has him sign the notification. He issues authorizations for villagers to travel outside the province (suspected subversives are barred from that privilege) and rice trading licenses when rice is rationed. He makes monthly reports to the district chief on the number of villagers who have joined the Viet Cong since the Geneva Agreement. (The figure is 55 and has remained unchanged since 1955). He is responsible for the surveillance of the cau luu or "offenders under investigation." These people, 51 in all, are suspected of being Viet Cong sympathizers, either because some relatives have joined the Viet Cong or because they were denounced as suspects by other Cam An inhabitants during public meetings in 1955.

The police councilor is assisted by the four hamlet self-defense chiefs. Each chief has under his command 6 platoons or 18 squads of 12 men each. Every able-bodied male between the ages of 18 and 25 is a member of the self-defense group. At the time of the research, 864 men were active in it.

In each hamlet the night watch is rotated among the six platoons. They man the three designated watch posts and, twice during the night, patrol within the hamlet boundaries. The police chief held one training course on and off for four weeks which consisted of close order drill, ambush techniques, patrol and search, watch and guard, and deployment and disposition in case of emergency. Each man has the following standard armament:

1. One wooden stick, lm. 70cm. long.
2. One 5-meter rope.
3. One kerosene torch.
4. One tocsin, a piece of hollow bamboo used for beating out messages.
5. One bag containing 25 pebbles or brick splinters used as handthrown projectiles.
The basic functions of the People's Self Defense Group are to insure security and maintain peace and order in the four hamlets. Questioned as to their effectiveness in case of Viet Cong activity, the police chief said that elsewhere, in Quang Nam Province, such units have been known to have kept armed Viet Cong agents at bay. Having no other weapons, they surrounded the Viet Cong and threw rocks at them.

The police chief claimed that since he took office in July 1960, he had had no trouble with the Viet Cong, gambling, land disputes, prostitution, or fighting. However, he did become involved in two cases, one suicide and one theft, descriptions of which are repeated here because of their cultural interest.

The suicide occurred about two months prior to our interview. One night, at about 11:30 p.m., the police councilor was notified that a woman from the fisherman's hamlet had drowned herself in the river. Around midnight, he arrived on the scene. The victim's body already had been recovered and brought to her house. After ascertaining that the woman was dead, the police chief made a certified statement of the case and then proceeded to question witnesses. He finished his report at 2 a.m. and sent it at once to the district chief with a duplicate copy to the gendarmery outpost at Dien Ban.

At 9 a.m. the next morning, one gendarme came to Cam An to make inquiries. His findings appeared to confirm the preliminary report made by the police councilor. The victim, a newly married girl, had jumped into the water to drown herself. Alerted neighbors were unable to rescue her because of darkness. It was rumored that the girl had been unhappy since her marriage and that she had suffered from mistreatment by her mother-in-law. With the gendarme's agreement, the village council issued a burial permit and the gendarme left.

However, the victim's family refused to bury her, complaining that justice had not been done. When at the end of two more days the body was still in the house, the police councilor had no choice but to notify the gendarmery again. This time the gendarmes came back with an ambulance and a man in a white smock who villagers thought to be a medical doctor. This man said that since the victim's parents questioned her death, he was obliged to perform an autopsy right in their home. The parents were disturbed by this information so they withdrew their complaints and buried their daughter's body that day. Sometime later, the victim's husband and parents-in-law were reportedly summoned to the Ho\ An tribunal by an examining judge but were allowed to go free after giving testimony. This was the extent of the police councilor's knowledge of the case.
The other case dealt with a theft of jewelry just before Tet (Vietnamese New Year). A villager found one day that a pair of earrings he kept in a locked suitcase had disappeared. He suspected a neighbor woman of having stolen them but did not file a complaint. He waited until one day when the suspected woman started on a trip to Hoi An. He intercepted her at the bus station, searched her and found the earrings. The accompanying struggle attracted a large crowd, and both the accused and accuser were arrested. The woman denied stealing the earrings, claiming she had bought them in Hoi An. The complainant could not prove ownership of the jewelry. The police councilor simply took statements from the two and prepared a report in triplicate: one for the Quang Nam court, one for the district chief's office and one for the gendarmery. The parties involved were, at the same time, placed at the disposal of the court. The police councilor did not follow up on the case and therefore did not know its final disposition.

D. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

This section is comprised of a brief biographic sketch of the village councilors; a description of administrative activities observed during the period of investigation, and problems which confront the villagers and the village council.

I. Biographies

a. THE VILLAGE CHIEF.

The 56-year-old village chief, a former elementary school teacher in Cam An, spent four years in jail during the Viet Minh period. The reason he gave for his confinement was his ability to speak French. He was appointed village chief in 1957 and attempted to resign in 1960. Instead of accepting the resignation the former district chief assigned him the additional responsibility of controlling boat traffic and fishing activities in the Cua Dai estuary for security purposes.

The village chief stated he will attempt to resign again after the new district chief becomes better acquainted with district problems. He is eager to retire because of his age and ill health. Village officials had not received their allowances for five months preceding the field study, but the chief claimed he had been working in his job to help his country rather than gain material advantages. Thus, the lack of remuneration for his efforts was not advanced as a reason for his desire to resign.
b. THE POLICE CHIEF.

The village councilor in charge of police and security is a 31-year-old fisherman with a three-year elementary school education. From 1951 to 1953, he served in the Vietnamese army where he received the Cross of Valor. After his return to Cam An he served as the head of a lien gia and as chief of the village's self-defense corps. In 1960, he was appointed village police chief. Like the village chief, he has been supported by his family recently because of lack of funds for monthly allowances.

c. THE FINANCE COUNCILOR.

Several weeks prior to the field study a new finance councilor was appointed by the district chief. The former councilor was reportedly relieved of his duties because of his involvement in misappropriating funds. After the district chief ordered his removal, the village council and elders met to choose his successor. They named the head of the village National Revolutionary Movement, but when the district chief found this individual had been with the Viet Minh, he disapproved the appointment and selected a villager who had no experience, desire, or qualification for the position. The council members and some of the villagers had misgivings about the final appointment but the district chief claimed that loyalty was the major consideration when making such appointments.

The district chief, a Catholic, felt that since the new finance councilor was a Catholic, he could be trusted. A number of Catholics in the village expressed concern over the nonacceptance of the new finance councilor because it might be related to the religious issue. The village council members continued to call on the services and advice of the ex-finance officer; the new councilor remained reticent and relatively voiceless in village affairs.

d. THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCILOR.

Before being appointed to this post, the administrative councilor had worked in the village as the police chief (1955) and secretary to the village council (1956). He acquired his present status in 1958. He is 41 years old and has a 3-year elementary school education. Besides keeping records and vital statistics, the administrative councilor is charged with the training and propaganda functions of the National Revolutionary Movement.
2. Activities

The purpose of the following description is to indicate the types of work performed and the range of problems encountered by the village chief and his staff. It will be noted that few decisions are made which are vital to the village as a whole. Rather, the primary functions of the village chief, at least during the period of observation, tended to be routine fulfillment of directives from the district and province, maintenance of records and land registers, security, and the control of the movement of boats and villagers.

During the week of observation, four declarations of loss of identity cards were made, accompanied by requests for new ones. Usually the village council made the applicants wait several days before their cases were reviewed. This deliberate delay was imposed by the village chief to point up the seriousness of losing these important papers. New cards finally were issued, certified by the village chief. No charge or fine was levied.

Another frequent request submitted to the council was for permission to leave the village for such purposes as joining a fishing group, buying salt from another village, and traveling to Hoi An and other distant places for shopping and business. Indications were that this security measure was applied more vigorously during the time of the study because of the forthcoming presidential election; the district chief wanted to discourage travel so the villagers would be at home to fulfill their duties as voters.

The period of study was a hectic week for the village council because it was charged with the completion of the village voting list. At least sixty claims of errors and omissions were submitted to the council. The district chief, who did not want to take the time to set up a special election committee, was nevertheless concerned with accuracy and had issued instructions on how to rectify errors rapidly.

A number of fishermen visited the village office each day to check the names in the fishermen's register, to have their log books inspected, or to register the names of crew members.

The village chief and the police councilor were also requested to issue written authorization to hold the Spring Celebration (Te Xuan), the van's annual whale ceremony with classical theatrical performances, and a xoan ceremony in honor of Princess Ngu Hanh which included a performance by than artists. In the cases of the ceremonies, the village chief was concerned with security and the maintenance of order. He
instructed the van leader to talk with a thon chief about taking security measures for the whale ceremony. At the insistence of the van leader, the village chief finally issued written instructions to the chief of Phuoc Trach, where the ceremony was to be held. When the xom representative approached the village chief concerning the xom ceremony, he was instructed to request security measures from his thon chief before permission was granted.

Following is a list of other functions carried out by the village chief during the week:

Issue of authorization, requested by a man from the Protestant church, to show a film to villagers.

Distribution of draft orders to young villagers through the hamlet chiefs.

Conferring with a representative of the provincial agrarian service to ascertain the location of private lands, and a representative of the cadastral service to check on some properties in the village.

Certification of records for per diem submitted by cadastral agents.

Consideration of a case related to Cam An public land use by people of a neighboring village for planting pine trees. The village chief referred this affair to a special commission at the province level. A similar case occurred in another village which resulted in a fight between village notables, some of whom received jail sentences from the court.

Compilation of a list of all village and district information agents in compliance with instructions from the General Directorate of Information in Saigon.

Selection of a village councilor to attend a training course on election procedures.

Maintenance of the sea control register.

Publication of the private land register and maps, and receipt of ownership claims from the Private Land Survey Commission which was composed of 5 or 6 village notables assigned to help the cadastral service survey lands and draw maps.

Meetings at the village level to discuss:

(1) Training material
(2) Military reserves
(3) Compilation of a list of first-aid agents and midwives in the village to attend an in-service training course.

(4) Dissemination of information on election procedures through theatrical performances.

Meeting at provincial headquarters to study election procedures.

Below is a list of the main records and files kept by the administrative councilor:

1. Incoming mail journal.
2. Outgoing mail journal.
3. Current affairs file
4. Completed work file
5. Secret correspondence.
6. Correspondence with higher authorities
7. Documents pertaining to economic activities
8. Documents pertaining to the election
9. Miscellaneous documents
10. Declarations of identity card losses
11. Journal of correspondence going out of the province
12. Record of immigrants coming from other villages
13. Record of emigrants
14. Correspondence with hamlets
15. Lists of voters
16. Lists of fishermen
17. Record of meetings (of the Advisory Council, etc.)

3. Problems

a. THE VILLAGE BUDGET.

Most of the funds needed to defray village expenses are collected locally. Surcharges on rice fields, land taxes (licensing, revenues from public lands, and "contributions by village residents" or head taxes\(^2\) constitute the major village resources (see Appendix IV). In Cam An, however, officials have had difficulty collecting these revenues, thus creating a deficit in income which has forced the curtailment of allowances to

\(^2\)"Head taxes" are taxes for which an equal rate applies to all village residents.
The financial problem of Cam An rests on the inability of the village council to collect contributions from villagers or, conversely, the inability of fishermen to pay the head taxes. The "voluntary" yearly contributions were set at 40$ per adult in 1960 and raised to 60$ in 1961. The head tax was increased to offset the decrease in revenues from outside subventions.

The village chief argued that the average fisherman had so little money that he was unable to pay taxes; therefore, the chief attempted to collect only from the wealthier boat owners, a practice which may not incense the people but which could not be expected to acquire the funds necessary for the management of village affairs.

Tax collection or "voluntary contributions" from villagers in Vietnam has long been a problem. In recent years taxes have been levied, but since villagers do not traditionally pay them, they have been largely ignored. In traditional Vietnam, the wealthy carried the financial burden, and generally, they also formed the council of notables which governed village affairs. The notables received no allowance, since they usually held their positions because of their independent means. The responsibility of government was not that of the governed, but of those who governed. Cam An illustrates the problem of creating a peasantry responsible for its own administration; the village council is reluctant to insist on tax payment for fear of arousing negative sentiments, and the villagers feel no particular concern for problems outside those directly affecting themselves.

The government of the Republic of Vietnam is now attempting to assure the loyalty of the people, especially the villager. Collecting taxes from peasants and the methods used are issues that the Viet Cong stresses in its propaganda tracts. Apparently, intensive attempts at tax collection in rural areas at this time, especially with an uneducated
and unreceptive peasantry, would be ill-conceived. In market towns, provincial centers, and semiurban communities the problem is not so acute because a major portion of local government funds accrue from sources other than the head tax. It might be advisable to locate other sources of revenue for the more remote and isolated villages, i.e., the majority of Vietnamese communities. In Cam An, for example, the village chief indicated that possibly the government would allocate part of the estimated $435,000 per year revenue it receives from the swallow nest industry on the Cham Islands, one of the four hamlets of the village. He also believed that subsidies from the province or from wealthier towns and villages might be utilized to support village needs.

Ultimately the villagers must be educated to assume the responsibilities of financial contribution. However, given the severe security situation, it may be unwise at this time to press the issue. It is not that the villagers are disloyal or do not support the present regime, but tradition and present circumstances dictate against the initiation of "voluntary contributions" or taxation from a subsistence level populace that remains unaware of contemporary political problems and fiscal considerations.

b. THE CAM AN DAM.

The major community development project undertaken by the government in Cam An—a dam built in 1959 across the river-inlet or estuary which divides Cam An from the three adjacent rice-producing villages (see map 2)—is a continuing source of irritation to the villagers. For people in An Ban and Tan Thanh, the estuary, once used to dock boats, has become virtually useless; fishing has been affected and even coconut production has declined because of the dam. Furthermore, the amount of time Cam An people had to spend working on construction of the dam, without pay, still rankles them.

Before construction began, representatives from the four villages bordering the estuary were summoned to the district office where provincial authorities outlined the project. The Cam An people did not oppose the dam at the time because, they said, they could not foresee its negative effects. Representatives from the other villages believed the dam would help deter the flow of salt water into upriver areas, thus providing more fresh water for irrigation.

The first phase of the construction was financed by provincial funds, but ultimately laborers from seven villages had to be recruited to work without pay in order to complete the project. In the first stage,
which lasted four months, the work was done by laborers hired at 30-40$ per cubic meter of mounded earth. After that, unpaid labor was used and Cam An Village contributed more than 20,000 man days to the over-all 60,000 required to finish the dam. Although people throughout the village complained about working on the dam, claiming they either lost money from being unable to fish or had to send their wives or old people to work, the major objections were raised by the residents of An Ban and Tan Thanh. Boat owners and builders now have to lift their boats over the dam in order to get them from the estuary into the sea. This process requires the assistance of many men since there are no mechanical lifts. Thus, the flow of traffic on the estuary has become negligible and boats must be berthed in the inlet far from the hamlets. This is apparently the major aggravation caused by the dam.

In addition, however, fishing in the area cut off by the structure has declined because salt-water fish no longer inhabit these waters. Thus, the area of operations for one form of offshore fishing (push-lift net fishing, see Chapter 2) has been decreased. Villagers claim that many people depended upon this type of fishing during the offshore season and their livelihood is being threatened.

Coconut production has also declined since the dam was built. The coconut trees which line the banks of the inlet thrive on a mixture of salt and fresh water. Since the dam separates the fresh from the salt, the trees are gradually dying.

One wealthy, longtime resident of An Ban who is both a boat builder and fisherman summarized the sentiments of most of the villagers. He immediately turned our interview on kinship to the problem of the dam: "Why don’t you (the Americans) do something about getting rid of that dam? It has caused all the villagers great anxiety. We don’t know why they built it in such a place but we have heard that it was ordered by the Americans—maybe for military purposes. You should tell them that it is hurting us and that they should remove it and build a movable bridge so that boats and water can flow freely in the estuary.”

The village chief claims he has complained about the dam to higher authorities and even requested the intervention of a National Assemblyman because no one in the village wants the dam. “However,” he continued, “we have been cautious not to voice our dissatisfaction too strongly, since rumors have been circulated that the dam was built for some military purpose.”

We learned from interviews at provincial headquarters that the dam has military significance. The only road from Hoi An to the sea
crosses a narrow bridge which could easily be destroyed by an invading force. To avert this possibility, an alternate route to the sea was constructed over the much less vulnerable dam. District and provincial authorities also claim that although the fishermen of Cam An have been “inconvenienced,” wet-rice agriculture in the other three villages has improved markedly because of irrigation made possible by the dam.

It is unfortunate that accurate information has not been disseminated to the people of Cam An on the dam issue, and possibly some compensation given to those who suffered economically as a result of its construction. Although the dam might be beneficial to the upriver villagers and also a military necessity, serious aggravation was created in Cam An by the “community development” project nobody wanted.
From 85 to 90 percent of the households of Cam An are engaged in fishing, the remainder in related enterprises such as boatbuilding, net-making and sailmaking, and the operation of small supply shops and grocery stores. Villagers almost never seek employment outside, even in the nearby towns of Hoi An and Da Nang, because, according to informants, employment opportunities usually exist in fishing, the trade they know best. Even when fishing is poor, or the weather bad, people are reluctant to change occupations because of their traditional attachment to the sea as the source of their livelihood. Many fishermen live on houseboats and their wives give birth to children and rear them on the boats. Youngsters who live on the land begin to join in the fishing at 10 or 11 years of age. Fishing is central to existence in Cam An and is considered a way of life rather than an occupation or an economic enterprise.

Occasionally elderly men or women retire from fishing to open small stores selling cigarettes, Coca Cola, beer, and other items which may net them 5$ or 6$ per day. But generally even those who are too old to fish spend their time repairing nets and boats, drying fish, hanging the nets, and in other activities related to fishing. Old women and children of both sexes also sweep and collect pine needles which are used for fuel, and on the island hamlet of Tan Hiep some households
are engaged in lumbering and small-scale wet-rice agriculture. However, these activities only supplement fishing.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a description of the classification of fishermen, types of fishing and fishing boats, credit, marketing, and the fishermen's association, the van.

A. CLASSIFICATION OF FISHERMEN
The two most important factors related to occupational activity and social status in Cam An are the ownership of a boat and fishing equipment, and the acquisition of fishing skills. In principle, taxes are levied on the basis of boat ownership and size, as are contributions to the van and to religious festivals. Large boatowners have more influence in van and hamlet affairs than do small boatowners or crewmen. In Cam An there is little social mobility, and the differences between socio-economic status groups are small. The purchase of a boat would, of course, raise the status of an individual, but since boats are expensive this is not the usual route to higher position in the society. Rather, a crew member seeks to acquire special skills in fishing in the hope of becoming an assistant skipper on a large deep-sea fishing boat. Such a position raises his social as well as his economic status. In rare instances his increased income might allow the purchase of a boat and further social mobility.

Fishermen in Cam An can be divided roughly into three broad categories: (1) expert fishermen, (2) crew members, and (3) ordinary fishermen. The first group is subdivided into lat chanh, fishermen who own boats, and lat phu, those who do not. The lat chanh, assisted by a lat phu, directs fishing operations aided by less experienced crew members called ban (friends). The third category, ordinary fishermen, make a living by offshore fishing with their own equipment. This is not an inflexible stratification because experienced crew members may become lat phu, and ordinary fishermen are often recruited as crew members for deep-sea operations.

B. FISHING METHODS
There are two major types of fishing in Cam An waters determined by the season: deep-sea and offshore.

Deep-sea net fishing starts on the first day of the second lunar month and continues until the end of the fifth lunar month. During this season
the seas are usually calm and larger boats may be out for as long as 15 days, depending on the catch. One informant said that the boats go beyond sight of land, probably more than 60 kilometers from Cam An. If the catch is good, the boat returns early and goes out again.

A deep-sea fishing boat is equipped with three sails and several sets of nets. It has a skipper, his assistant and a crew of four to six members. The *lat chanh* provides food and other necessary materials such as salt, which is used in place of refrigeration. It is estimated that about one ton of salt is used for each long trip. The *lat chanh* recruits crew members from among the villagers, usually selecting those who have worked with him before and who have experience and proven skill in deep-sea fishing.

The major fish caught in deep-sea operations is the *ca chuon*, or flying fish, but there are innumerable other species in Cam An waters such as cod (*ca thu*), tiger shark (*ca map*), mackerel tuna (*ca ngu*), blue-fin tuna (*ca chong*), sardine (*ca be*), and dolphin (*ca dua*). This is just a partial list; one informant said that two days would not be sufficient time to list the varieties of fish that are caught around Cam An.

After fishing grounds have been temporarily exhausted or a boat has been loaded with fish, which are immediately packed in salt, the fishermen return to Cua Dai, a landing at the mouth of the Thu Bon River where the catch is sold to a middleman (*rot*). It is to the advantage of the *rot* if he can prolong the bargaining because the fishermen are eager to sell their catch and return to the sea. Prices for the major catch are relatively high, varying from a few thousand to 100,000$. This is much more than offshore fishermen can earn with their daily landings.

The cost of food, salt, and other materials necessary for the fishing operation, originally supplied by the *lat chanh*, are deducted from the amount of the total sales. The remainder is divided in two, the *lat chanh* receiving one half and crew members the other half. In principle, the assistant skipper shares in the crew's half, but he usually receives extra money from the *lat chanh*.

2. Offshore Fishing.

After June when the rains begin and the seas are rough, the Cam An people depend on fish caught near the shore of the village. Fishing opera-

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2 The English terms were found in E. Kuronuma, *A Check List of Fishes of Vietnam*, (Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, United States Operations to Vietnam, January 1961).
tions of this type include long-line fishing, push-lift net fishing, *nghe gia* (offshore net), *luoi quet* (sweeping net), *luoi rung* (vibrating), *manh ngang* (lateral), and *manh com* (small-hole net). The long-line operation is carried out by some fishermen the year around. It consists of a main line carrying a number of branch lines at regular intervals, each with a baited hook. Recently nylon line has been introduced to Cam An to replace silk and hemp, but since nylon line costs about 1,000$ per kilogram, most of the long-line fishermen have not yet been able to afford it. Two-ton wooden boats with sail and oars and a four- to six-man crew are required for long-line fishing. The catch varies with the weather, and often the cash returns do not even cover the cost of the bait (shrimp). Villagers estimate a long-line crew averages about 50$ per day.

The *nghe gia* (offshore net) season begins in the fifth lunar month and lasts until the end of the year. This is a daily operation going on from 4 a.m. until 7 p.m. All sizes of boats are used and the catch includes a wide variety of fish such as flounder (*ca danh*) and pony fish (*ca liet*).

*Luoi quet*, the sweeping net method, requires a large number of small five-oar boats operated by 30 or 40 crewmen. Nets are “swept” through the waters near the beach to trap the many types of small offshore fish. *Luoi quet* operations occupy the months of November and December of the lunar calendar.

The most fascinating method of fishing employed in Cam An is the push-lift net (*ro*) type. Five or six boats, equipped with nets supported by a frame and fixed to a lever, line up along side each other with nets lowered in the water. The men of the family operate the lever while the women man small “chaser” boats. The “chaser” boats move into formation about 20 meters in front of the “net” boats. At a given signal the women, standing up, row toward the “net” boats and stamp their wooden clogs on the floor boards of the “chasers.” The loud staccato noise produced is supposed to chase the fish toward the nets. When the “chasers” approach the “net” boats, the men jump on the levers, raising the nets. Although this is a well-coordinated, organized venture, it is not very productive, the average return for a day’s work being about 40$ per boat. Push-lift net fishing takes place in the inland waters of the Thu Bon River estuary and has been hampered by the recent dam construction. Not only are the catches smaller, but the area of operation has been diminished.

A number of other less important types of offshore fishing methods are utilized in Cam An, but these are generally variations of those described above and depend upon the size of the net meshing. For ex-
ample, nets of a very fine mesh, (manh com) are used to catch the tiny ca com.*

3. Fishing Boats.
Fishing boats used in Cam An are all of wood and powered either by sail or oar. The best boats are made of sao a hard wood which is water resistant and known for its durability. Boatbuilders, of whom there are 11 in Cam An, estimate it takes about 100 days of skilled labor to build a large 3 sail boat. A 3-sail boat usually cost from 60,000$ to 70,000$ but these were selling for as little as 45,000$ at the time of this research because of a decrease in the price of timber. A new boat needs no major repairs for the first four years; after that annual repairs are required. A boat can be used for about 15 years.

Only the 3-sail boats are used for deep-sea fishing; the offshore boats have 1 or 2 sails and sometimes merely oars.

Of the 369 boats registered in Cam An, only 52 are of the deep-sea type.

FIGURE 2
TYPES AND NUMBER OF BOATS BY HAMLET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hamlet</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Deep Sea Boats</th>
<th>Offshore Boats</th>
<th>Misc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Long-Line Fishing</td>
<td>Fishing Net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Bang</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Thanh</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuoc Trach</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Hiep</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. SYSTEM OF CREDIT AND PROBLEMS OF MARKETING

One of the major problems in developing nations whose economies are based on primary industries such as agriculture and fishing is that of a system of credit for investment in those industries. In a subsistence economy based on agriculture, for example, the proceeds from the previous year's crop are spent before the next planting season. The farmer is hard pressed for seed and the means to hire labor to work the fields for the next crop. Furthermore, funds are not available for innovations such as fertilizer, irrigation, weed killers, or insecticides, all necessary for modernization and economic development. The only means of overcoming this cyclical obstacle to livelihood, as well as development,

*Com means rice, an indication of the minute size of the fish.
*Information supplied by village chief and village budget.
is some form of credit by which a farmer can borrow on the following year’s crops. Credit is available in most of these societies but the system is usually so usurious that the farmer continually goes further into debt. The same is true of fishermen in a developing country and Cam An is a case in point.

In Cam An only 4 or 5 boatowners are solvent; the remainder, as well as ordinary fishermen, are in debt. The creditors in the village are the storekeepers who act as permanent and ready suppliers of all the fishermen’s needs: rice, salt, ropes, hooks, lines, oil, floats, and wine. The amount of indebtedness varies among classes of fishermen. A \textit{lai chanh} may owe as much as 30,000$, which can include money borrowed to pay a portion of the cost of constructing his boat or credit on provisions for a deep-sea fishing excursion. Crew members accept loans of rice, dried fish, or oil which they leave with their families before embarking on a fishing trip.

The storekeepers, of course, collect interest on their loans. This is done in two ways: (1) a 10 percent rate is charged for short, 1- to 5-month loans, and (2) the price charged for items sold on credit is higher than that charged in other areas or if bought with cash. For example: 100 kilograms of rice in Hoi An may cost only 600$, but on credit in Cam An it may be 650$ or more.

The exact time for repayment of loans cannot be set because of the varied nature of the fishing operations, but generally a fisherman is expected to repay his debts whenever he is able. The respect of this practice establishes his credit rating and allows him to contract loans in the future. Although the amount each family owes may vary from a few piasters to 30,000$, debt is a universal phenomenon in Cam An.

The fishermen of Cam An are well aware of a possible solution to their problem—easy credit through a fishery cooperative. A cooperative was formed in July 1959, but, fishermen complain, they have received no benefits. Each share in the cooperative was to cost 100$, and each member could acquire up to 5 shares. Some fishermen were reluctant to join but about 224 bought shares. Most of them have not yet received a receipt of payment, much less loans. Thus, the cooperative in Cam-An is not yet operative as a credit institution and its inefficient management has led to a deterioration of trust in the handling of village affairs by "outsiders" including government officials.

The present head of the cooperative is a Hoi An businessman who was appointed by the district chief. According to informants, he does not visit the village and has little concern for, or awareness of, the prob-
lems encountered by fishermen. They believe he has swindled them of their hard-earned cash; they feel they have no recourse for the injustice. The fishermen must continue to borrow from the storekeepers and remain in debt.

The failure of the fishing cooperative is disappointing to many villagers, not only because of the organization’s inability to make low interest loans available, but also because it has not functioned as a marketing institution. The cooperative was originally conceived as a multiservice organization with the purpose of improving the living conditions of fishermen through credit and marketing. Present marketing conditions, while advantageous to the middleman, impede the development of efficient fishing practices, especially deep-sea operations. This problem is best summarized by a sub-pan chief who is a deep-sea fisherman.

If the cooperative were well organized it would help us very much. It usually takes us from 2 to 4 days to market our catch. If the cooperative were ready to buy our catch, it would pay us to sell to them at a lower price than we now sell to the middlemen. We would be able to dispose of our catch in one day, or a half a day, and return to the fishing grounds. Now the marketing process is so cumbersome it hurts our fishing operation, because it prohibits us from exploiting the good fishing opportunities.

The cooperative idea throughout Vietnam, as well as in other parts of the world, is not easy to sell. It assumes knowledge on the part of the peasant that he will receive a return on his original investment. It is difficult to entice a subsistence farmer or fisherman to invest in an unestablished, unseen, and unproven organization. He cannot see the advantages of such an investment in contrast, let’s say, to a kilogram of rice or a fishing net.

Furthermore, there is a general fear among the peasantry of “government,” usually defined as any organization or concept larger than a hamlet or neighborhood grouping. “I would not dare to borrow money on next season’s fish (or rice). If I could not pay back because of a poor catch (or yield), I would certainly go to jail.” This was a common response to questions on credit institutions on the island of Tan Hiep.

In general, however, the fishermen of Cam An clearly see the need for an efficient, multi-purpose cooperative; they have invested in one and seek its benefits. Unfortunately, the operation of such an organization requires skilled administrators, trust, and imagination. But, as one villager said, “the man in charge of the cooperative is in Hoi An and knows nothing about fishing. We should have a cooperative geared to our own problems, organized by our own people. But most of the people in Cam An are not capable of successfully running the kind of cooperative we need.”


D. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN TAN HIEP

The economy of the island hamlet of Tan Hiep differs from the mainland hamlets in that fishing is not the major source of income. Lumbering and agriculture are at least, if not more, important. Cash is scarce, and generally, people eat what they grow in the fields or catch from the sea. The four small, sundry shops sell only candy, candles, rice wine, and cakes. There are two barber shops and no fish supply stores. Thirty students attend a new primary school recently constructed from American-aid funds. The hamlet headquarters is located near the school, at the small-boat landing. In the valley between two high slopes is a small clearing for paddy fields.

Nearly one-half of the 82 households own small strips of paddy field, the rest of the people work for their neighbors as farm laborers. The largest landholding in Tan Hiep is 3,600 square meters (0.36 hectares) and the average is one-tenth of this, or 360 square meters. Seedlings for the first rice crop are prepared in the 9th lunar month, transplanted during the 11th month, and harvested in the 3rd month, of the following year. The fields are then plowed, and transplanting for the second crop is completed in the fifth lunar month and the rice is harvested in the eighth month. Because of the scarcity of water, only one-half of the land is cultivated for the second crop.

Agricultural laborers are paid 15 liters of paddy per day for plowing, transplanting, and harvesting. Meals are also supplied by landowners except during harvest season. It is estimated that a farm laborer only can work up to 15 days per year. Agriculture is preferred over fishing and lumbering in Tan Hiep because of the certainty of the yield. Fishing has not developed as an occupation on the island and that which is done is of the seasonal offshore variety. Occasionally, middlemen visit the island to buy fish but the amount sold is negligible. Some timber cut from the forested mountain sides is sold and lumbering activities consume about six months of the year. Most households in Tan Hiep engage in all three areas of work—lumbering, agriculture, and fishing.

The islanders rarely visit the mainland, although marriages are arranged between people of Tan Hiep and those of the three mainland hamlets. When weather permits, hamlet officials journey to Cam An to gather information, news, and instructions.

The chief of Tan Hiep said the hamlet's two main problems are security and monkeys. Thus far no Viet Cong has been seen approaching the island, but a constant alert is maintained and the beach must be guarded at night. There are no weapons on the island. Monkeys outnum-
ber humans on Tan Hiep, and the villagers are seeking means to eradicate the animals, because of the damage they do to rice and sweet potato crops. So far, the efforts have been unsuccessful.

E. VAN ORGANIZATION

The fishermen's guild in Cam An is one of the most important social and economic groupings in the village. It is a professional organization which until 1945 had a charter detailing its functions and activities. These included the definition of relationships between boatowner and crewmen, mutual assistance among fishermen, and the settlement of disputes within the van. The charter, which was approved by the province chief, was destroyed during the war and no attempt has been made since then to rewrite it or to gain official recognition of the guild. The functions of the van remain the same today but it is no longer a quasi-governmental organization.

Van members cooperate in times of danger or distress, such as when shipwrecks or other accidents occur at sea; they loan supplies or money to each other in cases of disaster or loss; members are aided in recovery of wreckage and repair of equipment, and they participate together in religious festivals and related entertainments.

The officials of the van are popularly elected by the residents of the village. Candidates for the office of chief are nominated by village elders, boatowners, and village officials, past and present. The chief is elected for an indefinite term, the present one having held his position for eight years. He is assisted by a deputy van chief who he selects and thon van chiefs who are elected by van members in each of the four hamlets. Elections are held every three years for the thon van chiefs. Although the van chief and his deputy are elected at large from the village, the primary functions of the van are maintained at the thon level.

When the present hamlets were villages, the van chief was an official advisor to the village chief and village council. He was consulted on all decisions and apparently held as much authority as the village chief since he represented the fishermen, the major segment of the population. At present, while holding no official administrative position, the van chief and the thon van chiefs are consulted by the village council and thon chiefs. Van officials continue to play a major role in settling disputes and quarrels among fishermen, maintaining equal distribution of the catch, and other occupation-related activities. They also aid the thon chiefs in executing instructions and disseminating news and information. Thus, the van chiefs act as unofficial assistants.
within the *thon* and, according to village officials, are most instrumental in the maintenance of village harmony. For example: It was estimated that only about 30 percent of the occupation-related disputes within the village are called to the attention of the village council, the majority being successfully settled by *van* officials.

The *van* chief receives no salary but is exempt from taxes, guard duty, and community labor. His services are required by the village when occasional visits are made to Tan Hiep by government officials. He musters boats and crews, sees to the decoration of boats for the occasion, and arranges all matters pertaining to transportation. In addition to other duties, *van* chiefs are ceremonial leaders and play a leading role in certain occupational rites and festivals. (See the section on the whale ceremony in Chapter 4.)

The three mainland hamlet *van* are subdivided into a number of smaller units depending on the type of fishing activity and the kind of boat operated. The sub-*van* do not appear to be stratified. For example, the present *van* chief of Tan Thanh is a member of a sub-*van* of small boats. There are 4 sub-*van* in An Ban, 2 in Tan Thanh, and 7 in Phuoc Trach. Following is a list of the sub-*van* in Phuoc Trach, the characteristics of which are similar to those in the other two *thon*:

- **Van da**: includes fishermen in the *thon* who work the threesail boats or those who engage in deep-sea fishing: 33 boats.
- **Van Luoi Hai**: consists of those who operate small three-ton boats: 30 boats.
- **Van Cau**: includes those operating small boats (one ton with hooked nets: 50 boats
- **Van re tro**: involves fishermen who use the sweeping net method.
- **Van luoi cuoc**: consists of fishermen employing the digging technique which necessitates the cooperation of 30 or 40 people per boat.
- **Van man ca com**: includes those who fish for very small fish in three-ton boats.
- **Van da rut**: comprises those who operate one-to-five-ton boats, usually four fishermen to a boat.

The sub-*van* has no chiefs nor any social or economic importance per se, although fishermen of the sub-*van* may, and often do, cooperate
with each other in numerous ways. The sub-van is simply a convenient administrative and functional subdivision of the van. Occupational disputes are more likely to occur among fishermen engaged in like operations and van officials find that quarrels usually occur within a given sub-van rather than between sub-vans. This breakdown aids in categorizing and solving such problems and also facilitates mobilization for rescue and relief work and the collection of contributions for relief and fees for religious ceremonies, all of which are dependent upon boat size and type of fishing operation.

Unfortunately, limited time in the field precluded the gathering of more intensive information on van organization and functions. Until recently, when the present village of Cam An was created, each hamlet or former village had its own van organization which differed in various particulars from the others. These differences have persisted, and our field workers continually received conflicting information which could ultimately be traced to then variations. Therefore, the major portion of our time in the field devoted to van research was utilized in tracing inconsistencies in data. For these reasons, we are not able at this time to detail some of the more important social and economic functions of the van, such as the relationship between the van and cooperation in fishing, boat repairing, net repairing, labor recruitment, marketing, and interpersonal relations in general. However, we believe we have established that the van is a type of indigenous cooperative organized by the fishermen for their own well-being. Cooperative purchase of nets, thread, hooks, and bait and cooperative selling of the catch are all partial functions of the van. It was suggested by one villager, in fact, that the reason for the failure of the fishermen's cooperative was possibly a result of its functions overlapping those of the van. It might be noted in this connection that the van, unlike the co-op, has important ceremonial functions which are central to the religious life of the community.

We also have abundant "scraps" of data, which we were unable to follow up, that might be of sociological significance. We were told, for example, that the fishermen themselves might change from one van to another, but that the fisherman's boat must remain in the van of original "registration." The meaning, or symbolic meaning, of this and other such pieces of information remain obscure for the present.

In spite of these deficiencies in data, several observations relative to administration and social organization in Cam An emerge from the available information. Two indigenous, voluntary, nonofficial, nongovernmental institutions which appear to function in the organization and
administration of the village have been described: the xom and the van, both operating within the context of the local unit, the thon. Thus, although administrative and organization functions have been shifted officially to the larger unit, the village, primary activities in these areas remain thon-centered and informal.

The appointed thon chief is advised by, and seeks consultation with, the chiefs of xom and van who assist in relaying instructions, news, and propaganda; settle disputes and act as consultants on affairs both personal and occupational; organize religious ceremonies as well as economic, mutual aid, and security activities. In short, the xom and the van are the units of organization around which the people of the village order their lives and participation in the society.

These observations may seem matter of fact but they have broad ramifications which should be considered in a developing society concerned with more efficient administration and faced with the threat of subversion. For example:

1. They indicate that the community is a tightly knit social unit whose organization and administration is based on local, informal, primary, face-to-face relationships. This is an important consideration for an understanding of the problem of subversion in central Vietnam. Unlike the south where homesteads are widely scattered, the people of the central hamlets are aware not only of the movement of outsiders in the village, but of the most minute details of the lives of their friends, neighbors, and relatives. It is unlikely that Viet Cong cadres and agents could come into these hamlets or live there without a widespread knowledge of their presence.

2. Appointed government officials at the local level are not overly involved in administration. The village council members in Cam An are relatively underworked. The village office has few visitors, the village council few problems with residents. The office is quiet except for routine matters of budget, taxation, minor record keeping, and, at the time of our visit, the presidential elections. Primary problems of administration in Cam An are handled through unofficial channels in the thon. Information passes from the district office through the village office to the grassroots administrators. The real village leaders are not those in the village office who merely transmit orders and information from above, but are instead the informal xom and van chiefs in the hamlets.

*In the next chapter (Kinship, Marriage and the Family), we shall see the third important non-official sociological unit which governs the life of the people of Cam An.*
3. If these observations concerning village administration can be generalized to include a large percentage of Vietnamese villages, then some thought should be given to the advisability of concentrating heavily on technical training, both pre-service and in-service, of village level officials. Decisions of a technical nature as well as the responsibility for carrying out development programs are centered at the district and provincial levels of administration. They are relayed through the village council to the informal *thon* leaders for action.

In the light of this study, training at the village level, if it is to be considered at all, should emphasize the necessity of utilizing already existing "leaders" and organizations for the successful implementation of programs.
Kinship, Marriage, and the Family

Whereas the Cam An villager, in his everyday economic, religious, and management activities, participates through such groups as the *van, lien gia*, or *xom*, it is his wide circle of relatives and clan members, with whom he interacts, that influence the more personal aspects of his life and the circumstances surrounding the life crises such as birth, marriage, death and natural disaster. Marriage choice, ascribed social status, occupation, inheritance, residence, and the afterlife are all related to the system of kinship. As in other parts of Vietnam, this system is undergoing change mainly due to such external influences as war, political turmoil, and modernization. In the pre-French and French eras, the village was more or less a self-contained unit with few outside influences. The majority of the villagers were illiterate; there were few contacts with provincial or national authorities.

Since 1945, however, there has been a conscious attempt, first by the Viet Minh and then by the Republic of Vietnam, to stimulate changes in these rather isolated villages. Probably the major attention has been focused on evoking political awareness and a feeling of national identity,
but, consequently, certain other ideas have filtered down to the peasant.
Literacy has spread, schools have been built, some modern health facilities have been introduced, army recruitment and the civil guard have drawn people out of the villages, and there is more interaction between villages as a result of improved boats and fishing techniques. These and other factors have had an effect on the traditional systems of kinship and marriage.

The changes that have taken place in these areas in Cam An, however, appear to be changes only in emphasis or in the degree of adherence to certain accepted principles. The forms of a (assumed) prototype still exist but the meanings, understandings, and related behavior are not nearly universally accepted phenomena. The remainder of this chapter is an outline of the system of kinship and marriage in Cam An with emphasis on its changing character.

A. THE CLAN

A clan consists of people within or without the village who possess the same surname. Members of a clan claim common descent from an unknown ancestor and therefore consider themselves consanguinely related. For this reason, ideally, marriage is forbidden between members of the same clan. There are a number of Clan shrines in Cam An and some houses contain altars where the clan founder is venerated at an annual ceremony. There is no clan chief and no hierarchy of families or lineages within the clan.

Within the main clans are subclans. For example: Tran is a main clan with three subclans: a. Tran-quang, b. Tran-tai, c. Tran-van.

There is another main Tran clan completely different from the one above, also having three subclans: a. Tran-dinh, b. Tran-hiu, c. Tran-duc.

The members of the subclans recognize a common clan ancestor and marriage between subclans is forbidden. Marriage, of course, is permitted between the two different “Tran” clans.

Women do not change their names at marriage so they remain in the clan of their birth throughout their lives. However, since descent is traced through the male, children become members of the father’s clans.

The primary function of the clan is the regulation of marriage; it is considered incestuous to marry a member of one’s own clan. How-
ever, an indication of the degree of awareness of clan membership or clan "identity" is reflected in the fact that, according to informants, as many as ten percent of the marriages in Cam An may be between members of the same clan. Two reasons were given to explain this: a girl may become pregnant by a clan brother, thus forcing marriage, or the partners to a marriage may not know that they are members of the same clan. The latter usually occurs, of course, as a result of a "love" marriage, and this is the reason why many elders in the community prefer arranged marriages. Formerly the partners to an incestuous marriage would be severely punished, but now it is overlooked.

In the case of marriage between members of the same clan, rumors and an awkward situation are avoided by temporarily changing the name of one of the partners on the marriage announcements and on the paper lanterns which are carried in front of the wedding procession. For example, if Tran Van Lam marries a girl called Tran Thi Thuyet, she may change her name to Nguyen Thi Tuyet. The relaxation of punishment and the easy means of circumscribing the incest rules may indicate a change from our (assumed) prototype of strict clan exogamy, but then possibly there have always been devious means of breaching the taboo.

B. LINEAGE

Ideally, a clan is composed of a number of patrilineages but, in fact, true lineages do not exist. Although there is a heavy patrilineal orientation, relations are recognized on both the paternal and maternal sides. Marriage is forbidden between relatives on both sides and both participate in celebrating the life crises and cooperating on various economic ventures. The patrilineal orientation in Cam An is only a matter of emphasis. For example: Relatives on the paternal side are mourned for a longer period after death; more relatives from the paternal side are present at birth and marriage celebrations. The kinship terminology, too, reflects the patrilineal emphasis. The term ngoai (outsider), for example, appears as a suffix on a number of maternal referential terms (ong ngoai—maternal grandfather; ba ngoai—maternal grandmother), while paternal grandparents are called ong and ba noi or Mr. and Mrs. "Insider." This may or may not reflect an earlier lineage prototype.

At present, however, a Cam An fisherman lives in a relatively small hamlet surrounded by numerous "relatives." Kinship bounds are close and the relatives undoubtedly give the individual a sense of warmth and security. We were surprised to hear the average villager list not
only the names and relationships of distant relatives and their spouses, but also their occupations and the location of their living quarters. While the recognition of such a wide range of relatives upon whom the individual can rely in times of stress must have certain positive psychological ramifications, it also presents problems in a small and isolated community. Many informants expressed the fear of a son or daughter unwittingly marrying or falling in love with a relative. There is no doubt that the large number of “relatives” seriously limits the range of choice in marriage.

The functions of the kin group have been gradually declining through the years. According to informants, many of these functions have been taken over by neighbors and the vn. For example: It was reported that years ago only relatives were invited to marriage ceremonies and relatives carried the coffin to the burial ground. Neighbors now attend these ceremonies and may perform or participate in them as they do in house and boat repair. They may also help in times of stress. In a small community where all of the people are engaged in a single occupation, where interdependency and mutual aid and trust are a necessity for existence, the importance of the kin group gives way to the primacy of the local group. Thus, the social fabric of Cam An is a composite of both familial and neighborhood relationships. The individual’s social world consists of a number of “insiders,” or relatives, and an even greater number of friendly “outsiders.”

C. MARRIAGE PATTERNS

Marriage in Cam An is contracted in a manner similar to that in other parts of Vietnam—a mixture of arrangement and free choice. Contrary to our expectations, we did not find a sharp division between the old and the young as to which type of marriage contraction was preferable. Some among both the older and younger generation informants considered arranged marriages preferable; others leaned toward the free choice type.

Most agreed, however, that a combination of the two types is the form most commonly practiced. In all cases, they said, the parents are consulted for approval. A typical case was cited: If a boy sees a girl whom he thinks he would like to marry, he requests his parents to begin negotiations for her. The parents ask a go-between to approach the girl and her parents. If the latter agree, the boy’s family brings alcoholic beverages and betel to the girl’s house for the le hoi or engagement ceremony. The boy must then perform groom service at the house.
of the bride-to-be for about two years. This might consist of house, boat or net repairing as well as fishing and related enterprises. When the service requirement is fulfilled, the marriage ceremony takes place and the bride moves to the house of her husband. Patrilocality is the ideal, but, in fact, residence is dependent upon a number of factors. If the bride is an only child, for example, the couple may live with her parents. In some cases, an eldest son remains with his parents, but in others, elder sons will build new houses and the youngest son will stay in the family home. There are no clear-cut patterns but patrilocality is preferred in principle.

A widely expressed attitude relative to partner selection was that elders did not want to impose their preferences upon their children. One reason for this is that parents do not want to be blamed for a mismatch that might lead to quarreling and divorce. Thus, it is better for the children to choose their own mates, providing no relationship exists.

A number of people felt the most important variable in marriage is age. "If the ages are not compatible," stated an old woman, "then the marriage cannot be expected to last." Another woman described the ideal daughter-in-law as "neither beautiful nor efficient, for I am not concerned with these qualities. To me, age is the most important thing in the choice of a daughter-in-law. If the ages of the boy and girl are right, the couple will be happy. I have four children, two boys and two girls, and all are happily married. I attribute this success to the careful selection of ages."

There is a high incidence of village endogamy in Cam An. While the majority of marriages are between people who reside in Cam An, it must be remembered that the present village is an amalgamation of four hamlets. In effect then, marriage between people of An Ban and Tan Thanh is considered by the people to be exogamous. From numerous interviews we arrived at the following estimates for hamlet or local endogamy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hamlet</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Ban</td>
<td>60-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Thanh</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuoc Trach</td>
<td>50-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Hiep</td>
<td>30-40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The higher frequency of marriage within the hamlet in An Ban and Tan Thanh was to be expected since they are older settlements than Phuoc Trach. Residents of the island hamlet of Tan Hiep, with its small population, have a tradition of arranging marriages with people from the mainland hamlets. A number of marriage exchanges have taken place.
between Cam An and the neighboring agricultural village of Cam Hai. With places more distant, only three exchanges have been recorded: one each in Hoi An and Tam Ky in Quang Nam Province and one in Nha Trang in Khanh Hoa Province.

Several reasons may account for the relatively high degree of hamlet exogamy. As mentioned earlier, marriage between relatives and people of the same clan is avoided. Age compatibility as determined by the local calendar reader is another limitation imposed on the small populations of the hamlets. Social status is also a factor governing the choice of mate. Generally, offspring of people of the same occupation tend to marry. In Cam An, of course, since most people are fishermen this fact may appear irrelevant, but social distinctions, determined by size of boat, type of house, and respect in the community, are maintained.

Divorce is rare but not unheard of in Cam An. Informants related that sterility and concubinage are the major causes of marital friction. If, for example, a couple is married for 2 or 3 years without the wife bearing a child, the husband can return her to her parents. The husband then sends a notice to the village council explaining the separation. In cases where the wife has contributed materially to the household prosperity, she is entitled to half the property. If the divorce is not due to sterility and there are children, the property is divided into three shares. The house is an exception to the sharing principle and remains with the husband since it is a shrine or center for ancestor veneration as well as a dwelling. Although concubinage is not common in Cam An, it has occurred frequently enough to be listed by informants as a major problem. One source indicated that separation usually results from a desire to avoid friction when the husband wants a concubine. In other cases, wives are willing to allow the husbands the prerogative of a second wife, and separation or divorce is unnecessary. Ordinarily, a concubine maintains her own household and does not live with the first wife.

As in many other societies, concubinage is a practice of the wealthy, the poor being unable to support more than one woman or family at a time. According to female informants, concubinage causes disputes and disrupts village harmony. Often the wife goes to the home of a concubine and insults her. Neighbors, elders, and the xom or van chiefs interfere at this point to attempt a reconciliation between the two women. Male informants defended the concubinage system, stating, "if there is no polygamy how can the society solve the problem of widows and surplus women in the village? Besides, many government officials have many wives—why should they forbid us?"