CÂM AN: A FISHING VILLAGE
IN CENTRAL VIET NAM

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY ADVISORY GROUP
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADMINISTRATION
THE REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM
SAIGON

In coopération with

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NGUYỄN DUY XUÂN
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Report No 6
Local Administration Series

March, 1962
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Off-shore fishing boat with big woven rush sail. In a good wind, these boats can travel from 10 to 15 knots.

Nets are spread over bamboo poles to dry at the end of each day's fishing.

Small craft in "drydock" for repairs.

Village carpenter carries his workshop on his shoulder. He builds small houses, small boats and furniture.
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PREFACE

This study is the result of the second cooperative village research effort by staff members of the National Institute of Administration and the Michigan State University Advisory Group in Viet Nam. The first such study, published in two parts, was carried out in the Mekong Delta region of southern Viet Nam. 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 overall 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 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 "holistic" approach to provincial administration also operated in the reverse direction and permitted us to better understand district and provincial matters because of information gathered in the village. The chief of Điện Bàn district, for instance, called a meeting of elders from the villages of the district to discuss problems of local government; information was gathered in Cảm 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 Viet Nam.

Another, an 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.

Prior to the actual field trip to Cam An, Quang Nam province, members of the NIA-MSU 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 overall 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 Thuân. 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 judgement are the responsibility of the author. We are grateful to Myrna Pike for her editorial assistance, and, of course to the people of Căm An village who so generously contributed their time and hospitality.
A number of studies have recently appeared on village life in farming districts in the southern part of the Republic of Viet Nam. However, there have been few works which have been concerned with the social, economic, and administrative activities of villages in central Viet Nam, 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.

The southern delta provinces of Viet Nam 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. 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 non-contiguous 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 (long), hamlet (thon), and sub-hamlet (xóm), 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 upon 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 Việt Cộng; 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 Căm An village which we hope will illustrate or highlight some of the general observations above.
A. The Setting

Cẩm An is one of 30 villages in Điền Bàn District. Located 4.5 kilometers from the provincial capital of Hội An (Fallen), its 6,166 inhabitants live in three agglomerated settlements on a 12 square kilometer narrow, sandy peninsula at the mouth of the Thu Bồn River. Another 325 persons live on the Chăm 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 (dùng lều) 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 lending 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 Cẩm An. The island hamlet of Tân Hiệp is located on the largest of the three Chăm 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 1 1/2 hours; by sailboat it takes more than three 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 Căm 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 Căm An is composed of four hamlets which were, until 1956, four administratively separate units (làng or village). The largest of these units, or villages, are now the hamlets (Thôn) of An Bàn (I) and Tân Thanh (II). Phước Trạch (III), now the most populous hamlet, had only 10 households in 1953. In that year, the French built a garrison there and people migrated to Phước Trạch to gain protection and to exploit the rich fishing grounds. The island hamlet of Tân Hiệp (IV) 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 (lã Trưởng), who apparently was the only
Boat from Tan Hiep island approaches the mainland village.
village official responsible to district and provincial mandarins. The chief was assisted by a trùm trường (chief of a group of extended families) and five councillors: a record keeper (huòng bấy), a police councillor (huòng kiểm), a welfare agent (huòng muc), an information councillor (huòng đich), and a treasurer (huòng bốn). These members were selected by the council of notables (hội dòng hab muc) and the positions were mostly ceremonial and honorary. The council of notables, composed of learned village elders, included such ranks as ông cụ, or a mandarin of the royal court, and the dai hab muc, the great village notable. Primary administrative functions were carried out by the village chief and the heads of the hamlets or xóm.

The xóm was the smallest administrative sub-division 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 xóm. Instructions, orders, and information were relayed from the province and district officials through the village chief to the xóm chief and his messenger. Each xóm had its own shrine or pagoda where the founders of the xóm or village were venerated. In addition to the two annual xóm-wide ceremonies, rituals also were held at the shrines by the various clans of the xóm.

In 1946, under the Viet Minh, the villages were integrated into the Seventh National Zone (Khu Bảy), 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 Căm 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 Viet Nam. Although the internal organization of the four thôn is somewhat different and their histories vary, they do form, as the village of Căm An, a natural geographic and economic unit.

The settlements on the mainland are contiguous and set apart from the adjacent rice-producing village of Căm Châu by the Thủ Bôn River. Fishing and allied crafts are the main occupation and there is little financial or economic disparity among the thôn. 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 "Căm An feeling" or village identity does not exist amongst the people, a basis for consensus and cooperation is present.

Below are the names of the hamlets and the population of each according to sex:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hamlet (phường)</th>
<th>Male Voters</th>
<th>Female Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District of Điện Bàn (quận)</td>
<td>1,511</td>
<td>1,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Căm An (xa)</td>
<td>6,491</td>
<td>1,511</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 (đại diện), a police councillor, finance officer, administrative councillor, and a civil status councillor, who is also responsible for information and youth. The village chief receives an allowance of VN$ 1,700 per month, the others VN$ 1,500. In addition, the village employs the services of a health commissioner (VN$ 400 per month) and a messenger (VN$ 600) who do not enjoy councillor status.

In principle, an advisory council (dân-quận chính) 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 to be 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 inter-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thành phố:</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An-Bến</td>
<td>Tế-Thanh</td>
<td>Phước-Trạch</td>
<td>Tế-Hiệp (Cử lao Chăm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1,822</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>2,954</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male voters</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female voters</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
family group chiefs (liên gia trưởng); (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 yet met, and it exists in name only.

To check on the handling of financial affairs by the village council, a budget control committee (Ban Kiểm Tra Ngân Sách), 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, semi-official organizations have recently been introduced into Cam An: the National Revolutionary Movement; the Republican Youth; a farmers' association (Hợp Hội Nông Dân); and a mutual assistance association (Hội Hợp Trợ). 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 (thôn) of Cam An is a man appointed by the district chief upon recommendation of the village chief. The major function of a thôn 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 thôn, the
Each chief receives an allowance of from VN$ 600 to VN$ 800 per month from the village budget, depending upon the size of the hamlet.

In contrast to the traditional Vietnamese pattern, the thôn 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 judgement are concerned, such as in the selection of the inter-family heads, the young thôn chiefs often seek the advice of elders, notables, or heads of the fishermen's guilds (van).

It was reported that the thôn 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 thôn. However, informants indicated that the timing of the meetings was irregular and sometimes they were not held at all. On other occasions the thôn chief might hold meetings to discuss local problems that arise.

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

Some interesting implications arose with the superimposing of the
liên gia upon an already existing socio-religious infrastructure. In
some of the southern regions of Viet Nam, including Saigon, the liên
gia has yet to become a meaningful local organization. Although the
primary functions of the liên gia are to disseminate news and inform­
mation and provide security, these activities are often carried out
through informal channels. The organization of the liên 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 liên gia conforms to an already functioning social unit.

The terms liên gia and xóm are both used, but in different con­
texts. When dealing with issues and problems of an official nature,
such as the organization of work groups for community development
projects or the receiving of information and propaganda from the vil­
lage office, the group is referred to as the liên gia and the act­
vities are organized through liên 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 by the
xóm name and the xóm chief, xóm elders, or the head of the thôn fish­
ermen's organization (van) function as unofficial advisors. On oc­
casion, however, the separateness of functions is blurred and, it was
noted, for example, that sometimes the village chief issues memos to
a đại diện xóm or "xóm representative" rather than to the chief of the
The fishermen of Cẩm An conceive of the xóm as their basic territorial (as opposed to kinship) organization, and xóm identification is strong. It is within this unit that most daily face-to-face relations occur.

Each xóm has a name and a given number of households. For example, Thôn I; or An Bàn, has six xóm, the largest consisting of 130 households and each of the others of from 30 to 50 families. Each xóm is a tightly agglomerated group of houses adjacent to another xóm, 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 xóm, but here in An Hoi (a xóm name) we do it this way." Solidarity is further reinforced by the xóm religious rituals which still are celebrated during the first and eighth lunar months.

The importance of the xóm varies from one hamlet to another. In An Bàn (Thôn I), Tân Thành (Thôn II), and the island hamlet of Tân Hiệp (Thôn IV), which have had relatively stable populations for the past century, the xóm maintains its social and religious significance. In Phú Quốc, however, which is recently settled, the xóm 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 councillor 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 VN$ 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 councillor merely makes copies of the paper in question, sends the council's only messenger out to summon the concerned party 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 sân luku 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 councillor is assisted by the four hamlet self-defense chiefs. Each chief has under his command six platoons or 18 squads of 12 men each. Every able-bodied male between the ages of 18 and 25...
Residents of Cam An register to vote. Village chief is behind desk at left.

Member of the village self-defense force. His equipment includes a hollow bamboo pole called a "toesin" on which he beats out messages with a stick. On his back, he carries a long pole wound with rags at one end and used as a torch. His only weapons are pebbles carried in a sack at his right side.

Village whale shrine in Cam An. Each hamlet also has its own shrine and tomb where the whale is worshiped as the God of Protection.

The 12 village elders of Cam An.
is a member of the self-defense group (Nhân Dân Tu Và Đoàn). 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 hand-thrown 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 councillor 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 gendarmerie outpost at Diên Bàn.

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 councillor. 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 councillor had no choice but to notify the gendarmerie 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 Hoi An tribunal by an examining judge but were allowed to go
The other case dealt with a theft of jewelry just before Tet. 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 the suspected woman started out on a trip to Hội 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 Hội An. The complainant could not prove ownership of the jewelry. The police councillor 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 gendarmerie. The parties involved were, at the same time, placed at the disposal of the court. The police councillor 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 councillors; a description of administrative activities observed during the period of investigation, and problems which confront the villagers and the village council.

1. Biographies

a. The Village Chief. The 56-year-old village chief, a former elementary school teacher in Cẩm An, spent four years in jail during
the Việt Minh period. The reason he gave for his confinement was his ability to speak French. He was appointed village chief in 1957, and he 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 Gia Dai estuary for security purposes.

The village chief stated that 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 councillor in charge of police and security is a 31-year old fisherman with an elementary school education (three years). From 1951 to 1953, he served in the Vietnamese army where he received the Cross of Valor. After his return to Càm An he served as the head of a liần gia and as chief of the village self-defense corps (Dân Vệ). 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 Councillor. Several weeks prior to the field study a new finance councillor was appointed by the district chief. The former councillor 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 a successor to the post. They named the head of the village National Revolutionary Movement, but when the district chief found that 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.

d. The Administrative Councillor. Before being appointed to this post, the administrative councillor 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 three-year elementary school education. Besides keeping records and vital statistics, the administrative councillor 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 is for permission to leave the village for such purposes as joining a fishing group, buying salt from another village, and traveling to Hội 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 that 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 voters 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 rapidly rectify errors.

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

The village chief and the police councilor were also requested to issue written authorizations to hold the Spring Celebration (Tết Xuân), the van's annual whale ceremony with classical theatrical performances, and a xóm ceremony in honor of Princess Ngu Hạnh which included a performance by thôn 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 thôn 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 Thôn III, where the ceremony was to be held. When the Đại diện xóm representative approached the village chief concerning the xóm ceremony, he was instructed to request security measures from his thôn 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 Cấm An public land used 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 councillor 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 five or six village notables assigned to help the cadastral service survey lands and draw maps.
- Meetings at the village level to discuss:
  1. Training material (tài liệu hoc tọp)
  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 councillor:

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 locally collected. Surcharges on ricefields, land taxes, licensing, revenues from public lands, and "contributions by village residents" or head taxes* constitute the major village resources (see Appendix IV). In Cẩm An, however, officials have had difficulty

* "Head taxes" are taxes for which an equal rate applies to all village residents.
in collecting these revenues thus creating a deficit in income which has forced the curtailment of allowances to members of the village council. In 1960, for example, receipts and expenditures were to have totaled VN$ 277,783, but only reached VN$ 161,000 of which VN$ 70,000 were subventions from the province and two other villages. The remainder of the income was expected to come from the local residents. In fact, these funds were not collected. In 1961, the subventions from the province and other villages were not forthcoming and the village chief estimated fairly early in the year that the total income for F.Y. 1961 would only amount to VN$ 55,000, roughly the amount collected from surcharges on public properties and land taxes. Therefore, estimated receipts would total less than one-fifth of the projected village expenditures.

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 VN$ 40 per adult in 1960 and raised to VN$ 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 more wealthy 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 Viet Nam 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 Viet Nam, 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. Cẩm 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 Viet Nam is now attempting to assure the loyalty of the people, especially the villager. Collecting taxes from peasants and the methods involved are issues that the Viet Cong stress in their 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 semi-urban 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 Cẩm An, for example, the village chief indicated that possibly the government would allocate part of the estimated VN$ 435,000 per year revenue it receives from the swallow nest industry on the Chăm island, one of the
four hamlets of the village. He also believed that subsidies from the province or from more wealthy 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 Căm An Dam. The major community development project undertaken by the government in Căm An -- a dam built in 1959 across the river-inlet or estuary which divides Căm An from the three adjacent rice-producing villages (see map 2) -- is a continuing source of irritation to the villagers. For people in Thôn I and II, 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 Căm 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 Căm 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 VN$ 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 overall 60,000 required to finish the dam. Although people throughout the village complained about having to work on the dam, either claiming they lost money from being unable to fish or that they had to send their wives or old people to work, the major objections were raised by the residents of Thôns I and II. 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 II) has been decreased. Villagers claim that many people depended upon this type of fishing during the offshore season and that 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.

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.
CHAPTER II

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY: FISHING AND THE VAN

From 85 to 90 percent of the households of Cfern An are engaged in fishing, the remainder in related enterprises such as boat building, net and sail making, and the operation of small supply shops and grocery stores. Villagers almost never seek employment outside, even in the nearby towns of Hội An and Đà Nẵng, 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 Cfern 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 to 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 Tên-Hiêp (IV) some households are engaged in lumbering and small scale woodworking. 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 fisherman’s association, the van.

A. Classification of Fishermen

The two most important factors related to occupational activity and social status in Căm 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 (fishermen’s association) and to religious festivals. Large boat owners have more influence in van and hamlet affairs than do small boat owners or crewmen. In Căm An there is little social mobility and the differences between socio-economic status groups is 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 Căm 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 lê mặt, fishermen who own boats, and lê phụ, those who do not. The lê mặt, assisted by a lê phụ, directs fishing operations aided by less experienced "crew members" called bpn (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 lêî 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.

1. Deep Sea Fishing: Deep sea net fishing (nghé khôi) 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 then goes out again.

A deep-sea fishing boat is equipped with three sails and several sets of nets. It has a skipper (lêî chánh), his assistant (lêî phu) and a crew of four to six members (bạn). The lêî chánh 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 lêî chánh 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 type of fish caught in deep sea operations is the cá chín, or flying fish, but there are innumerable other species in Cam An waters such as cod (cá thu), tiger shark (cá mập), mackerel tune.
(cá ngừ), blue fin tuna (cá chòng), sardine (cá bè), and dolphin (cá diệc). 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 Căm An.

After fishing grounds have been temporarily exhausted or after a boat is loaded with fish, which are immediately packed in salt, the fishermen return to Cửa Bông, a landing at the mouth of the Thu Bồn river where the catch is sold to a middleman (roi). It is to the advantage of the roi if he can prolong the bargaining because the fishermen are eager to sell their catch and return to the sea. Prices for cá chuẩn, the major catch, are relatively high, varying from a few thousand to VN$ 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 lạy bánh, are deducted from the amount of the total sales. The remainder is divided in two, the lạy bánh receiving one half and crew members the other half. In principle, the assistant skipper (lạy phụ) shares in the crew's half, but he usually receives extra money from the lạy bánh.

2. Offshore Fishing. After June when the rains begin and the seas are rough, the Cam An people depend upon fish caught near the shore of the village. Fishing operations of this type include long line fishing, push-lift net fishing, nghề gia (offshore net), lô đi quật (sweeping net), lô đi rung (vibrating), mánh ngang (lateral), and mánh com (small-hole net). The long line operation is carried out by some
Boats gather in off-shore sweeping net operation. A weighted net is used to literally sweep fish into another net which is hauled up with the catch.
fishermen the year round. 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 VN$ 1000 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 that a long line crew averages about VN$ 50 per day.

The nghê 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 for gia and the catch includes a wide variety of fish such as of dánh (flounder) and of điếp (pony fish).

Lồít quệt, 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 off-shore fish. Lồít quệt 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 (rọ) 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