bringing heavy rain, strike somewhere in the area on the average of 10 times a year and do great damage.

The annual rainfall is heavy in all regions and torrential in many (see figs. 5 and 6). It is heaviest at Hue which has an annual average of 128 inches. The low of 28 inches at Mui Dinh results from the presence of a barrier of hills in the area. At Saigon, rainfall averages 80 inches; at Hanoi, 70 inches.

The winter monsoon reaches the Red River Delta area in mid-September, the northern part of the Central Lowlands by early October and the Mekong Delta area by November. Here, however, it skirts the receding coastline and brings little rain inland. The winter monsoon continues to blow until April, producing gradually decreasing rainfall in all areas and almost none in the Mekong Delta area. Precipitation increases during April and May, the transitional months between the winter and summer monsoons. By June the summer monsoon has arrived. Coming from the south and southwest, it brings, with important local variations, heavy rains to most parts of the country.

The dry season in the Mekong Delta region lasts from December through March. It is much less marked in the Red River Delta area, where a constant drizzle (the crachin) occurs during most of the winter months—especially during February, March and April—and allows a second rice crop to grow (see ch. 25, Agricultural Potential). During the crachin, visibility is poor in the Red River Delta area; in southern Vietnam there is almost no fog at any time.

Except in a few mountainous areas, high temperatures prevail throughout the year. The humidity is generally high and debilitating. The average annual temperature at Hanoi is 74° F., as compared to 81.5° F. at Saigon. The temperature range, however, is much more pronounced in the North than it is in the South. At Hanoi, where the coldest recorded temperature was 43° F., the lowest mean monthly temperature is 63° F. in January and the highest is 84.5° F. in June. At Saigon, where the coldest recorded temperature was 57° F., the lowest mean monthly temperature is 78.8° F. in December and the highest is 85° F. in April.

SOILS

Soils range from the rich rice-growing alluvium in the delta and river areas, through the red soils of the highland plateaus, which will support dry crops, to uncultivable sand and rock formations. By far the most important are the delta soils.

In order to retain the great fertility necessary for a heavy rice yield, the alluvium must be renewed periodically. Because of the large amount of sediment carried by the Red River, its
Figure 5. Annual Rainfall in North Vietnam.
Figure 6. Annual Rainfall in South Vietnam.
delta soils are essentially very fertile, but the gradual diking off of the river against destructive floods and for irrigation purposes has reduced the annual deposit of enriching silt, and fertilizers are needed to maintain soil nutrients. The Mekong River carries little silt and only those soils nearest the mouths of the streams contain enough phosphorous and potash to support rice cultivation. It is only by the use of chemical fertilizers that parts of the Mekong Delta retains its productivity. Some soils in the upper delta region contain toxic quantities of alumina which must be leached out by the application of large quantities of water before they can be planted to rice. The area south of the Song Hau Giang has the best soil in the delta (see ch. 25, Agricultural Potential).

In the plateau areas a red laterite soil is found which varies greatly in fertility. Where heavy rains wash off the humus, the silica dissolves out more easily than do the alumina and iron oxides and the residue produces the red color. This process of laterization, beyond a certain point, renders the soil infertile. In some plateau areas where the humus content of the soil has built up under heavy vegetation, plantation crops are favored. An estimated 4,000 square miles of such usable red soil exists in this region; very little of it is cultivated.

VEGETATION

Approximately one-third of Vietnam is covered by forests. Evergreen rain forest predominates in upland areas where rainfall is 80 inches or more annually. The less dense deciduous monsoon forests are also extensive in the hills where precipitation is under 80 inches a year. The coastal fringe of the deltas supports large stands of mangrove. Pine forests, bamboo thickets and sand-dune growths make up the remainder of the wooded area (see fig. 7).

The nonforested parts of the country are under extensive cultivation except for the savanna areas. These grasslands were created for the most part from monsoon forests either as the result of cultivation or of fires. Other savannas have grown up where the soil was unfavorable to the growth of dense forests.

ANIMAL LIFE

The wild animals of Vietnam are generally of the same types found in Bengal and the Malay Peninsula. The southern part of Vietnam has long been considered one of the best hunting areas in the world. The larger species found there include elephants, tigers, leopards, wild oxen and buffalo. Elephants are also present in considerable numbers near Vinh on the Gulf of Tonkin.
Source: Adapted from Canada, Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, Indo-China, A Geographical Appreciation, p. 21.

Figure 7. Vegetation of Vietnam.
smaller game are boars, goats, deer and hares. Monkeys are found in all of the coastal areas. Wild fowl, both water and land birds, are plentiful in many parts of the country.

Crocodiles thrive in the Mekong Delta area and some deaths from these are recorded each year. Although there are snakes of many varieties in Vietnam, including large pythons, they are seldom seen, and only the cobra and certain sea-snakes are highly dangerous. Deaths from snake bites are rare.

PEOPLE

Demographic Data

Population figures in the past were gathered unsystematically by local officials and were seldom more than estimates. Current statistics for the Republic of Vietnam are based on official reports of the government, particularly on the estimates of the National Institute of Statistics; those for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on a census which purports to be an actual headcount made within a period of two weeks. Information in the United Nations Demographic Yearbook is based on what is admittedly very fragmentary information.

Total Populations

According to its government reports, the population of South Vietnam, as of October 30, 1959, was 13,882,573. The census taken in North Vietnam sets the population in that area at 15,916,955 as of March 1, 1960.

Rate of Increase

The National Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Vietnam estimates the net rate of population increase in South Vietnam at 1.5 percent per year. Another South Vietnamese source estimates it at 1.8 percent. The United Nations Demographic Yearbook estimates a 2 percent increase for all Vietnam, as compared with 1.75 for East Asia and 2 percent for Southeast Asia—all of which are admitted estimates.

The census carried out by the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam gives an estimate of the population of North Vietnam, as of the end of 1960, which is based on an increased rate of 3.65 percent. Such a rate, however, seems unrealistic since it presupposes, not only a very high fertility rate, but also much greater improvement in health conditions than seems likely to have taken place (see ch. 16, Health and Sanitation).

Since both the basic population figures and the rates of increase are known to be inexact, any estimate of the mid-1962 population of the country must also be approximate. Projecting from the
figures given for South and North Vietnam for 1959 and 1960, respectively, and taking an increase rate of 1.75 percent, the mid-1962 population of South Vietnam may be considered to be 14,650,000 and that for North Vietnam as 16,350,000, or 31,000,000 for the country as a whole.

Sex and Age Distribution

In South Vietnam, no accurate data are available as to distribution according to sex and age. It appears likely, however, that there is a preponderance of females over males as a result of their greater longevity and the probability that more males were lost during the long Indochina War. But whether females represent 51.7 percent of the population, as they are reported to do in North Vietnam, is conjectural. With respect to the age of the population, it is certainly a young one with a large active force available for work and for the armed forces. A United Nations group working in Saigon used the figure of 42 percent in estimating the active force; the world average is 40.9 percent.

In North Vietnam, according to the 1960 census, 51.7 percent of the population in the older age group is female, but in the group aged 15 years and under, males are in a slight majority. The proportion of the population which is of working age, including both males and females, is given as 45 percent, and 41 percent of the population is reported to be under 15 years of age.

Geographic Distribution

Vietnam has an average population density of 236 per square mile. But, although only about 10 percent of the people reside in urban areas, about 90 percent of them live on the 13 percent of the land which is best suited for rice cultivation—the two deltas and the small river basins in the Central Lowlands. Portions of these regions have populations of over 2,000 per square mile and compare in density to the most populous regions of the Yangtze Valley of China. Because of these heavy local concentrations density averages, even by province, are misleading.

The Vietnamese leaders in both the North and the South do not consider that the country has a problem of over population. Vietnam's population density is less than that of a number of other Asian countries; India, for example, has a density of 291 per square mile while that of Japan is 496. However, there are many more people per square mile in Vietnam than in neighboring Laos, Cambodia or Thailand.

South Vietnam

The area which constitutes the Republic of Vietnam has a population density of 210 persons per square mile. The population is
not, however, evenly distributed. It ranges from 2,000 persons per square mile in the Province (Tinh) of Quang Nam, which includes the important city of Da Nang, to 13 persons per square mile in Quang Duc Province in the plateau area of the Chaîne Annamitique. The Mekong Delta area, 26,200 square miles in extent, has a population density of 525 per square mile. The delta is very densely populated along the rivers and canals which criss-cross it, but in many areas where the soil is less easily usable, it is sparsely settled.

The portion of the Chaîne Annamitique lying within South Vietnam, an area of 18,000 square miles, has a population of only 584,000 people, most of them being from scattered mountain tribes who subsist on hunting, fishing and slash farming (see ch. 4, Ethnic Groups). The extensive forests and rich soils of the area could support a much larger population, but the high prevalence of malaria has curtailed settlement (see ch. 16, Health and Sanitation).

In the Central Lowlands there is great variation in population density. In some areas it is comparable to that of the most populated parts of the delta areas. In its most fertile portion, the 12,350 square-mile area which lies between Mui Dieu and Vung Da Nang, 2.8 million people are concentrated. On the other hand the infertile strip which extends along the coast for 100 miles north of the Mekong Delta has the lowest population density of any lowland area.

North Vietnam

In the Democratic Republic of Vietnam the population density is 262 per square mile. As in the South, there are great variations in the population densities of various portions of the area. The densest population—over 2,000 per square mile—is found in Hung Yen Province on the lower Red River. The least populated area is the Thai-Meo Autonomous Region in the extreme northwest which has only 44 persons per square mile.

The Red River Delta area, over 10,800 square miles in extent, has a population density of 950 per square mile. The Northern Highlands, with 31,700 square miles, has a population density of 65 per square mile. The portion of the Chaîne Annamitique which lies north of the 17th parallel is narrow, steep and very sparsely populated.

Settlement Patterns

Both South Vietnam and North Vietnam are subdivided into various units of territorial administration—provinces, districts, cantons, villages and hamlets in order of decreasing size. In South Vietnam, the cantons have lost most of their significance and are
rapidly disappearing. Hamlets in both North and South Vietnam may be individual entities, but they also may be administrative subdivisions of villages. Isolated houses have never been common, and the unsettled condition of the countryside in recent years has resulted in an even greater tendency toward concentration for mutual protection.

Although the administrative units are generally similar throughout Vietnam, the actual character of land occupation varies greatly from one area to another. In the Red River Delta area and in most of the coastal lowlands, settlements are built on any high ground available. They are protected from the rivers by levees, and the houses are all closely grouped together. In the hill country the settlements are also made up of closely grouped houses situated on cleared and higher ground for protection from man and beast. In the Mekong Delta area the pattern is entirely different. Here the settlements consist of long strings of houses built along the banks of the rivers and of the connecting irrigation canals. This occupation of the low ground is possible because the Mekong, unlike the Red River, is not subject to frequent flooding.

Movement

The Vietnamese are basically a sedentary people and do not readily migrate. Their ancestor cult tends to bind them to their birthplaces, and to leave the family land remains for most Vietnamese an extremely serious step. The mass migrations of the remote past resulted from warfare and political insecurity rather than from any positive desire to move. In modern times, French efforts to induce workers in the crowded lowlands to resettle in the sparsely populated highlands had little success. Since the end of the war, however, numerous families have voluntarily moved to areas when more or better land was available.

South Vietnam

That over 900,000 Vietnamese in the Communist-controlled North chose, after the division of the country in 1954, to go as refugees to the South is an indication of the strength of their feelings about conditions under the Communists. They and an estimated additional 120,000 military and dependents were moved with the aid of French and American shipping. The difficulties caused by the appearance of all these destitute people in an area devastated by war were great. The refugees were first sheltered in camps on the coast and thereafter gradually shifted to areas where they could be self-supporting. When this movement was completed, over 500,000 refugees had been settled in 319 villages. These were mostly for farmers, but 26 were for fishermen. The rest of the refugees were absorbed into the life of the cities and
towns and established villages. Since most of the refugees were Roman Catholics, who had migrated in village units, resettlement was facilitated. The single most important settlement project was the Cai San project near Rach Gia on the Gulf of Siam where 100,000 refugees and 20,000 former inhabitants were placed on 270,000 acres of reclaimed land. In all about 400,000 refugees were settled in the delta area, 53,000 in the Central Lowlands and 64,000 in the Central Highlands.

There has been no strong tendency toward urbanization. The recent rapid expansion of Saigon was chiefly due to the movement to urban areas for safety rather than for jobs. At present 85 percent of the industrial workers in Saigon are natives of that immediate area.

North Vietnam

The Democratic Republic of North Vietnam did not have a serious refugee problem, since only about 5,000 civilian refugees were moved from the South to the North in Polish shipping. Although there had been some agricultural collectivization by early 1962, it had not entailed any considerable movement of the population. The industrialization program, however, has brought a large influx of people from the country into the urban centers of Hanoi and Haiphong.

MAJOR CITIES

South Vietnam

Saigon

Saigon, located in the Mekong Delta area, is the largest city in the entire country. The capital of the Republic of Vietnam, it is a modern city with beautiful parks, fine boulevards and imposing public buildings. Developed by the French to provide adequate port facilities for the then rapidly increasing exports of rice from the Mekong Delta, by 1936 it was a modern city of 110,000. In 1962 it was estimated to have grown to 1,200,000 a figure which did not include the 700,000 inhabitants of the adjacent city of Cho Lon.

Saigon is the focus of all overseas trade for the entire South. The important rubber plantations are easily accessible from the city. All rice for export is collected there and constitutes 50 percent of the export tonnage. Saigon is the terminus of the Trans-Vietnam Railroad which has been completely renovated as far as Hue. There is a modern international airport with runways up to 8,000 feet long. Saigon is also the main industrial center of South Vietnam. Textile mills, sugar factories, paper mills, cement
plants and glass works are taking on increasing importance (see ch. 26, Industrial Potential).

Port facilities are ample for a trade which amounts to 1,300 overseas vessels a year and thousands of small river and coastal craft. The city is situated well inland, and seagoing ships must proceed 50 miles through an adequate but circuitous channel to reach the docks along the Song Sai Gon in the city proper. The channel varies from 29 to 39 feet in depth; the riverfront docks are designed to take ships with a draft of no more than 19 feet, although larger ships can be accommodated on favorable tides.

Hue

Hue, situated 50 miles south of the 17th parallel, is perhaps the most interesting and picturesque city in the country. The imperial capital for two centuries, it is noted for the royal palace and tombs and for the old citadel constructed by the French. It has become an administrative and agricultural center. It has no industrial plants although its population is 100,000. Its neighboring port of Lai An cannot accommodate ocean-going ships. The city is served by the coastal road and the Trans-Vietnam Railroad, and it also has a commercial airfield.

Da Nang (formerly Tourane)

Da Nang, a modern city of 100,000 is located about 100 miles south of the 17th parallel. Considered the best port in the entire Central Lowlands, it has a very beautiful harbor and adequate harbor facilities, although its deep anchorage is exposed to heavy winds from the northeast during the winter monsoon. The coastal road and railroad serve the city, and it has a commercial airfield and a seaplane anchorage.

Da Lat

Da Lat, a modern city with a population of 60,000, is situated in the Central Highlands, having been built by the French as a health resort. At an elevation of 4,700 feet, its average temperature is 14 degrees less than that of Nha Trang, only 40 miles distant on the coast. Temperate-zone vegetables, such as lettuce and onions, are grown there. It is served by a spur railway which joins the main north-south line at Phan Rang, and a hard-surfaced road connects it with Saigon. Da Lat also has a commercial airfield.

North Vietnam

Hanoi

Hanoi, the capital and most important city of North Vietnam, was the capital of the country from the tenth to the seventeenth
centuries. In 1900 the French made it the capital of Indochina and transformed it into a French city. Located on the Red River about 100 miles inland, it is the center of all transportation in the North. Rail lines connect it with the port of Haiphong and with KunMing and other rail points in southeastern China. The railroad to Saigon is interdicted. Hanoi is also a center of the river and canal traffic which carries most of the rice crop of the Red River Delta. An extensive system of motor roads also converges there. It has a modern commercial airport.

Hanoi has a population of 643,000 people and is situated in one of the most densely populated areas in the country. It is the most important industrial city in the North, and the authorities have been developing it further in this direction since the end of the Indochina War. Power plants, paper mills, sugar distilleries and match factories have all been constructed or enlarged, and a recently completed machine-tool plant is in production (see ch. 26, Industrial Potential).

Haiphong

Haiphong, the chief seaport for North Vietnam, is a relatively new city built by the French. It has imposing buildings and a number of factories, including an oil refinery. It is connected to Hanoi by a railroad and to other cities by an extensive road system. It also has a modern airport and a seaplane base.

Situated 10 miles inland on one of the lesser tributaries of the Red River, it is connected with the sea by a narrow channel which must be dredged constantly because of silting. The port can take ocean-going vessels of up to 10,000 tons. With the repair of the rail line to KunMing and the growth of industry in the Red River Delta, Haiphong has risen rapidly in importance and size—according to official reports, from less than 150,000 in 1951 to 370,000 in 1962.
CHAPTER 4
ETHNIC GROUPS

At least 85 percent of the people are ethnically Vietnamese. As a group, they exert a paramount influence on the national life through their control of political and economic affairs and their role as perpetuators of the dominant cultural tradition. Among the remainder of the population, the largest minorities are the Chinese, the great majority of whom live in the South, and the various indigenous highland groups collectively known as montagnards. In addition, there are smaller numbers of Khmers and Chams, both of whom figure prominently in the population of neighboring Cambodia, as well as Indians, Pakistani, Eurasians, French and other Europeans, and Americans—all heavily concentrated in the cities of the South.

Most of Vietnam's 30 million people inhabit less than one-fifth of the country's total area—the fertile deltas of the Red River and the Mekong and the narrow coastline between the Chaîne Annamitique and the South China Sea. The inhabitants of the lowlands include nearly all of the Vietnamese proper and all non-Vietnamese except the montagnards who live in the highlands out of direct contact with the bulk of the population and in partial isolation from each other. Most of the montagnards have little sense of identification with either Vietnam or with their distant ethnic relatives in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma or China.

The position of the montagnards and other minority groups in South and North differs in accordance with divergent policies on assimilation adopted by the two governments. Thus, the South has taken steps to integrate the Chinese, Khmers, Chams and tribal minorities into Vietnamese society, while the North has declared itself a multi-national state, designating the various montagnard groups as nations and granting them theoretical autonomy within circumscribed limits.

VIETNAMESE

Like their forebears in Vietnam for well over a thousand years, the more than 25 million ethnic Vietnamese in the country in the early 1960's are predominantly village-dwelling skilled rice cultivators or fishermen. A minority live in urban centers, such as Hanoi, Hue and Saigon, where they are engaged in a variety of occupations and occupy positions at all levels on the socioeconomic scale. The educated elite of both North and South—composed of high government officials, military officers, professionals and, in the South, wealthy landowners—consist almost exclusively of ethnic Vietnamese.
The majority of ethnic Vietnamese are nominal Buddhists, although their religious beliefs and practices include Taoist and Confucian elements as well as remnants of an earlier belief in spirits and magic. A sizable and influential minority is Roman Catholic (see ch. 11, Religion).

The Vietnamese proper, although they show certain regional and local differences in customs and speech and include both city dwellers and villagers, retain a strong sense of identity as a people. This rests on a common language and a shared heritage of historical culture rather than on a sense of physical or racial distinctiveness.

The commonest Vietnamese physical type is characterized by straight black hair, round head, broad face, high cheek bones, dark eyes with the Mongolian fold of the eyelid and brown skin which varies in shade from light to medium. Body hair tends to be sparse, and few men are able to grow beards until well after they reach maturity. The average status is small—61 or 62 inches for males—and weight is in the neighborhood of 120 pounds.

Southern Vietnamese claim that refugees from the North can be recognized by their more Mongoloid or Chinese features—lighter skin color, higher cheekbones, more protruding jaws and heavier build. However, most observers agree that such identification from physical characteristics alone cannot be made with any degree of accuracy.

Difference in behavior and the attitudes they generate between Vietnamese of the North and those of the South are of much greater significance than physical differences. Southerners think of Northerners as being more energetic and commercially aggressive than themselves, while Northerners regard Southerners as easygoing and luxury loving (see ch. 18, Attitudes and Reactions of the People).

**MONTAGNARDS**

The ethnic history of the *montagnards* is little more than speculative. Their earliest ancestors are thought to have included a dark-skinned and long-headed people who came into the area in remote times. More certainly among their forebears was a later-arriving population which, in its short stature, light skin and wavy black hair, resembled a common modern Indonesian type. A succession of invasions of Mongoloid peoples from China drove these earlier settlers into the highlands and pressed some of them southward down the central mountain chain. The physical mingling that took place during this process did not overwhelm the early *montagnards*, but it injected a strong Mongoloid increment into
their physical makeup, just as it left a heritage of their traits in the lowland population.

In recent history the *montagnards* have lived in relative isolation from the lowland peoples, whom they viewed with suspicion and distrust. They spoke their own languages and maintained their own cultural traditions. The French, interested in the highlands for plantation agriculture and wishing to preserve them from the Vietnamese, gave the *montagnard* regions special status and administered them separately from the rest of Vietnam. This status was retained under Emperor Bao Dai when Vietnam was granted semi-independence in 1949.

After 1954 the Government of South Vietnam incorporated the highland regions into the centralized governmental structure of the country, bringing the *montagnards* under direct Vietnamese administration. The aim of this policy was to integrate the *montagnards* socially, economically and politically into the framework of Vietnamese national life—an objective which was made urgent by the campaign of terrorism directed against them by Communist guerrillas from the North. The government approached the problem by moving Vietnamese into the highlands from the overpopulated coast and by settling the seminomadic *montagnards* in the vicinity of the new communities where they would be exposed to Vietnamese influences and protected from Communist guerrillas.

The resettlement program met with early resistance from the *montagnards* who were reluctant to discard their traditional ways for life in the regroupment centers and also saw the influx of Vietnamese settlers as a threat to their ancestral lands. In part as a result of indifference to *montagnard* wishes and sensibilities in the way the program was carried out, fear and antagonism were built up among the highlanders—a vulnerability which the Communist did not fail to exploit (see ch. 12, Public Information and Propaganda).

In late 1961 steps were taken to remedy the situation. Civil administrators were instructed to deal sympathetically with the *montagnards* and the Army's psychological warfare section was directed to promote friendly relations between them and its troops. Partly perhaps as a result of this policy, in mid-1962 sizable numbers of tribesmen—possibly more than 75,000—moved into lowland areas in the South on their own initiative in order to escape the Viet Cong.

In contrast to the tribal policy pursued in the South, the Communist regime has designated the areas inhabited by the tribal minorities as autonomous regions within the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, granting them limited powers of self-government. The new method of administration provided a form of autonomy
but retained firm control in Communist hands. It furnished a mechanism through which the regime sought to persuade the *montagnards* that it respected their cultural traditions and political rights and was anxious to promote their economic welfare. *Montagnard* languages are taught in the schools and are employed in the courts (see ch. 21, Public Order and Safety).

The autonomous regions are locally governed by a 24-member Administrative Committee and a People's Council, on which the various minorities in the same autonomous region are proportionately represented (see ch. 19, Constitution and Government). In mid-1962 two such autonomous regions had been established: the Thai-Meo Autonomous Region, located in the mountainous northwest and bordering on Communist China and Laos, and the Viet Bac Autonomous Region, located in the mountains north of Hanoi and bordering on Communist China. The Thai-Meo Region, contiguous to the Pathet Lao-occupied provinces of Laos, has been a base for Communist military operations in Laos.

**The South**

Estimates of the number of *montagnards* in the South range from 500,000 to 700,000. Although there are as many as 30 to 35 distinct ethno-linguistic groups inhabiting the high plateau, the Rhade, Jarai, Bahnar and Sedang are the principal groups in the area. The Southern *montagnards* speak mainly languages related to the Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian language families, and in physical appearance, more nearly resemble Indonesians than the Mongoloid Vietnamese.

The major economic activity of these *montagnards* is shifting agriculture. This method involves clearing the land by burning, cultivating it until it is exhausted—usually after three or four years—and then moving on to another burned-over clearing. Usually a group will cultivate the same set of three or four fields in a continuous cycle. Magical and religious factors enter into the selection of new plots to be cleared and cultivated (see ch. 25, Agricultural Potential).

**The Rhade**

The 130,000 Rhade tribesmen, concentrated mostly in Darlac Province, are organized into matrilineal lineages. These consist of individuals descended through the female line from a common ancestress three or four generations removed. Groups of lineages related through still more remote female ancestors form clans. Marriage between members of the same clan is forbidden. This negative regulation of marriage is a primary function of the clans. Clan members also gather on ceremonial occasions and may assist one another in house-building and other large undertakings. Each
clan has a name and its own taboos associated with hunting or eating certain animals.

Land is owned by the clans, each of which has one or more large ancestral tracts. A representative of the clan, whose duties are hereditary, administers each tract according to tradition and customary law.

The animistic religion of the Rhade centers on a belief in spirits or supernatural powers associated with forests, water, rice fields, tombs and other manmade and natural objects and living things. Their ceremonies and fertility rites include sacrifice of fowl, buffalo and oxen, which are offered to the spirits for protection, prosperity and health. The Rhade have recourse to sorcerers for the magical cure of illness, and omens based on dreams and taboos importantly influence conduct.

The Jarai

The Jarai, estimated as numbering about 60,000, live mainly in Pleiku Province. They speak a Malayo-Polynesian language, similar to that of the Rhade. Like the Rhade, too, they reckon descent through the female line. Their land-holding unit apparently is not the clan but the extended matrilineal family. There is generally one extended family, consisting of related females, their husbands, children and unmarried male kin, to a long house.

The Bahnar

Most of the Bahnar are found in the Pleiku area and in smaller numbers around Kontum. Their kinship system differs from that of the matrilineal Jarai and Rhade in that it gives equal weight to the maternal and paternal sides of the family in determining descent and inheritance. The land apparently is owned and farmed by individual families. Clans are absent, and above the level of the family, the village is the most important social unit.

Northern Groups

Besides the various southern montagnard tribes, there are also a few representatives of northern tribal groups, who fled South after the signing of the Geneva Agreements in 1954. They include about 60,000 Nung, an equal number of Black and White Thai and 40,000 Muong.

The North

Estimates of the number of montagnards in the North range from 600,000 to over 2 million. According to the 1960 census, there are 2.3 million tribesmen in North Vietnam. The highest estimate by an outside source indicates that the largest groups—the Thai, Muong, Man (Yao); and Meo (Miao)—numbered collectively 1,250,000 in 1955.
Although many of the northern *montagnards* sustain themselves in small villages by shifting agriculture and perhaps some herding and hunting, two of the largest groups, the Thai and the Muong, are skilled wet rice farmers. Villages are apt to be larger than those of the economically less advanced groups in the South. Traditional political organization reaches beyond the single village to groups of villages under paramount chiefs with feudal powers.

Historically, the *montagnards* of North Vietnam have been less isolated from Chinese, Vietnamese and Laoian influences than have those of South Vietnam. Their religious beliefs and practices, for example, still include the worship of local spirits, but Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist elements are also apparent (see ch. 11, Religion).

**The Thai**

The Thai, who in their various subdivisions may number about 700,000, are much the largest *montagnard* group. They are not to be confused with the Thai of Thailand, with whom they share a common language.

Among the larger Thai groups are the Tho, the Nung, the Black Thai and the White Thai. Smaller groups include the Nhang, Red Thai, Thai Neva and the Lu. Most Thai men wear clothing of Vietnamese cut; blue replaces the Vietnamese brown in some groups. Women more often wear the distinctive tribal costume from which the “White Thai” and the “Black Thai” take their names.

The French employed Tho, Nung and White and Black Thai as local militia for police and border guard duty. Later, the Tho were to become an important element in the North Vietnamese army, but the Communists have been less successful with the other Thai.

**The Muong**

Estimated in 1955 to number about 260,000 the Muong live in the hills to the south of the Red River northwest and southeast of Hao Binh. They are considered to have been more drawn into Vietnamese life than any other *montagnard* group. Many of the Muong took part in the Indochina War, and they are admired as a fighting people. The men wear a Vietnamese type of clothing of blue color. The women wear a long skirt and a bib-like cloth around the neck.

**The Man (Yao)**

The Man tribesmen, estimated in 1955 as numbering 100,000, are scattered through the higher mountains on both sides of the Red River. They are the representatives in Vietnam of an ethnic minority which in South China numbers several millions and is known as the Yao.
The Man occupy the mountain valleys and slopes at altitudes between 900 and 2,700 feet. Those who served in French military units won an excellent reputation for their hardiness, for the care they took of their weapons and for their loyalty. They are also known as good hunters and scouts. They are said to be prone to alcohol and opium addiction.

The Meo (Miao)

Scattered through the highest mountains in the northern part of the country are some 60,000 to 100,000 Meo who, like the Man, are related to a much larger group in China, the Miao. The most recent migration of Meo came into Indochina in the nineteenth century. Shifting cultivators, they live in small isolated villages near their fields of corn and buckwheat. They also raise hemp and opium for trade, but unlike the Man, they seem rarely to be addicted to either opium or alcohol. The men dress in Chinese style, but the women wear a distinctive costume consisting of white skirt and short jacket with tight-fitting sleeves and a large, elaborately embroidered collar.

The Meo are fiercely independent, but are reputedly hospitable and friendly to strangers. As mountain scouts, they are skillful and tireless.

The Thai, Muong, Man and Meo are but the largest of the ethnic and linguistic minorities found in the mountains of the North. There are also many other smaller groups, some of which have not as yet been classified.

Chinese

The Chinese, who are Vietnam's largest foreign minority, have been entering Vietnam for many centuries. Political difficulties in China and economic opportunities in the well-established Chinese communities of Vietnam increased migration in modern times. More than 400,000 are estimated to have immigrated from China in the war years following the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. By 1960 the number of Chinese in South Vietnam was believed to be about 1 million with perhaps 50,000 in North Vietnam. The figures are uncertain, however, and it is known that since World War II the volume of illegal Chinese immigration, consisting of both anti-Communist refugees and Communist infiltrators, has been large.

Another complication is the large number of Chinese women who have lost their Chinese identity through marriage to Vietnamese men. The offspring of such marriages usually speak both languages. The children of mixed marriages in which the father is Chinese ordinarily are raised and educated as Chinese.
The partitioning of Vietnam found the Chinese minority concentrated almost entirely in the urban centers of the South, mainly Cho Lon. Their commercial importance, which had long been out of proportion to their numbers, had grown during the colonial period to a near monopoly of all but the largest business enterprises, which were in the hands of the French. Until the nationality regulation of 1956, the Chinese controlled 90 percent of the retail trade and played a leading role in rice brokerage, lumbering and the transport of goods between inland points and the seaports. They also shared with the Indians and Pakistanis, and with some of the wealthier Vietnamese, a prominent position in money lending in the cities as well as the rural areas.

Under the French the Chinese were permitted to retain Chinese citizenship and to appeal to China for protection of their special rights—a privilege which was complicated by Communist conquest of mainland China and the removal to Taiwan of the Chinese Nationalist Government. In September 1956 South Vietnam granted Vietnamese nationality to all Chinese born in the country and forbade any foreigner to engage in certain professions or in industrial, commercial and agricultural enterprises. Since the Chinese formed the largest foreign colony in the country, they were most directly affected. The impact of the occupational restriction was initially softened by the fact that Chinese who were married to Vietnamese women were permitted to continue to operate their businesses in their wives' names. However, a number of Chinese left the country rather than accept Vietnamese citizenship. The so-called Regional Administrative Associations, through which the Chinese enjoyed extensive powers of self-government, were abolished in 1960. The Chinese schools were also brought under government control and required to teach the Vietnamese language. Even though reluctant, the Chinese were in no position to resist these measures, and resentment has taken the form of covert criticism, procrastination or, where possible, evasion of the law. By 1962, however, it was estimated that no more than about 2,000 Chinese living in South Vietnam had not become Vietnamese citizens.

Chinese resistance to assimilation offends nationalist feeling and, especially in view of the rise of an aggressive Communist regime in China, gives special urgency in the South to the question of the loyalty of the Chinese community.

KHМЕRS AND CHAMS

The indigenous minorities of the lowlands—the Khmers and Chams—have, like the montagnards, been in the country for centuries. Also like the montagnards, they tend to be regarded by
the Vietnamese as less advanced than themselves. The poverty-stricken villages of the Chams in particular invite this judgment, even though the Chams are the descendants of a people who developed a high civilization and ruled an empire which lasted for 1,500 years. The Khmers are of the same stock as the dominant population of Cambodia. More prosperous than the Chams, they are the rural representatives of another ancient culture.

The Khmers

The extension of Vietnamese control over the South in the eighteenth century brought a sizable Khmer population under Vietnamese rule. Since then, some have been assimilated but the majority remain distinctively Cambodian in language and culture. Estimated to number between 350,000 and 400,000, the Khmers are concentrated northwest of Saigon around Tay Ninh, southwest of Saigon around Phu Vinh (formerly Tra Vinh) and in An Xuyen Province. During the Indochina War and since, an unknown number have abandoned their lands and fled to Cambodia to escape the fighting and terrorism in South Vietnam.

The Khmers tend to be slightly taller than the Vietnamese and somewhat darker and to have less Mongoloid eyes and, not infrequently, wavy hair. The traditional dress of both sexes is a tight jacket buttoned down the front and a sort of skirt with the lower end brought forward between the legs and tucked in a belt at the waist. Their Hinayana Buddhism, which also prevails in Cambodia, contrasts with the Mahayana Buddhism of the majority of the Vietnamese.

The government requires the Khmers, like all minority groups, to accept Vietnamese citizenship or register as aliens, and apparently a considerable number retain their alien status. As a group the Khmers have remained relatively isolated from the Vietnamese majority. They have not been militant about the preservation of their cultural identity, however, and, unlike the Chinese, they have established neither schools nor newspapers of their own.

The Chams

The Chams, estimated in 1955 at about 35,000, are scattered in villages in the less desirable places on the central lowland coast near Phan Rang and Hoa Da and around Tay Ninh and Chau Phu northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border. Some are also found across the border in Cambodia. They have little knowledge of the former greatness of their civilization, of which all that remains are the ruined towers of their once prosperous coastal cities. The typical Cham village is a collection of straw huts on low pilings surrounded by a palisade. The treeless village enclos-
ure—it is thought to be harmful to live in the shade of trees—contrasts with the greenery of Vietnamese villages. Most Cham men dress like the Vietnamese. Women wear a knee-length, loose-fitting tunic with tight sleeves over a longer petticoat. They often wrap their heads in silk scarves.

Most of the Chams adhere to their ancient Brahmanist religion; the remainder are Moslems. Both groups have reinterpreted the orthodox precepts and practices of their faith and have added beliefs and rituals of their own. Cham priests and mullahs (Moslem religious leaders), who are usually illiterate, occupy an important place in the community (see ch. 11, Religion). Descent and inheritance are through the female line, and women play an important part in religious and secular affairs. Marriage to outsiders is strongly disapproved.

OTHER MINORITIES

Other ethnic minorities in Vietnam in mid-1962 were the Eurasions, numbering between 30,000 and 50,000, and various foreign communities, including the French and other Europeans, Americans, Indians and Pakistanis.

In mid-1962 the French numbered about 10,000, including many French nationals of Vietnamese and Vietnamese-European ancestry, and were overwhelmingly concentrated in the South. Among this group were some French businessmen who had left the area in 1954 and later returned, along with commercial representatives from Japan, Germany and the United States. In North Vietnam a few French teachers, missionaries, technicians and engineers managed to stay on, but after an initial effort to survive under the Communist regime, most French businessmen voluntarily left or were forced to do so.

The prestige of French culture continues to be high and many warm friendships exist between Vietnamese and Frenchmen. The Vietnamese, however, look back on the colonial period with nationalistic indignation, and they remember with bitterness the hardship and suffering so many of them endured during the Indochina War.

With France gone, the Republic of Vietnam has turned for support to the United States. In 1960 various agencies of the United States Government and private contracting firms had some 2,400 Americans and their dependents living in the South; 80 percent were in Saigon. Their number had increased to about 9,000 by early 1962, as United States economic and military aid was expanded to meet the challenge of a mounting Communist guerrilla offensive from the North.

In the North, technical assistance agreements with Communist
countries brought an influx of technicians from the Soviet Union, its European satellites and Communist China. Information on their number is lacking.

Most of the Eurasians in Vietnam have French fathers and Vietnamese mothers and speak French as their first language and Vietnamese as their second. Leaning to the Western side of their cultural inheritance, they have tended to seek European or Eurasian rather than Vietnamese marriage partners. The effort to identify themselves with the European community, however, has meant a certain amount of frustration for, while they have not generally been overtly rejected, neither have they been completely accepted. The implicit repudiation of their Asian antecedents by many Eurasians has, on the other hand, roused some Vietnamese hostility, which may be expected to disappear or continue depending on whether the Eurasians willingly merge with the Vietnamese majority or seek to retain a European identity.

The small number of Indians and Pakistanis are known mainly as shopkeepers and moneylenders in Saigon and, formerly at least, in Hanoi and Haiphong. The French citizenship acquired by many of them in the French colonies of India no longer gives them the privileges they once enjoyed.
Vietnamese is the medium of daily communication in both the North and the South, and it is the mother tongue of the more than 25 million Vietnamese who comprise at least 85 percent of the total population of the country. It is also spoken with varying degrees of fluency by members of the non-Vietnamese minorities in the lowlands; but it is understood and spoken by only a small percentage of the montagnards.

The non-Vietnamese minorities, of which the Chinese constitute the largest ethnically homogeneous group, use their own languages among themselves. The Chinese, numbering perhaps 1 million—all but about 50,000 of whom are concentrated in the South—speak mainly the Cantonese dialect, but those born in Vietnam are usually also fluent in Vietnamese, and most members of the first generation acquire a fair knowledge of it. On the other hand, not many of the 350,000 to 400,000 Khmer-speaking Cambodians or the smaller number of Chams, Indians, Pakistanis, French, Americans and other foreigners in the country speak the national language.

The montagnards of the highlands of the North and South comprise more than 20 linguistically distinct, indigenous peoples, such as the Rhade, Jarai, Bahnar and Sedang in the South; the Thai, Meo, Man and Muong in the North (see ch. 4, Ethnic Groups). The spread of Vietnamese among these peoples had been hindered by physical isolation and cultural conservatism. Knowledge of the language is limited largely to the few who have left their native communities to work as plantation laborers or as traders in the lowlands. Many adult males, however, speak the language of at least one neighboring tribe.

French, which was the official language throughout the colonial period, is by far the best-known foreign language. Knowledge of French is widespread in the cities where all persons who have completed secondary schooling read and speak it fluently and many less well-educated persons, including merchants, low-ranking civil servants and army veterans, have some familiarity with it. French is less well known in the rural areas, but a number of montagnards learned at least its rudiments either in schools set up by the colonial administration or during service with the French Army. In Saigon, English has become the second foreign language of the younger generation.

Literacy among the Vietnamese in the South ranged from 40 to 60 percent in 1960. Little information about literacy in the North was available, but presumably it was somewhat similar to
that in the South. Even less information was available on literacy rates among the minority groups; among the Chinese the proportion of literates was probably as high, or higher, as among the Vietnamese; among the *montagnards* it was considerably lower.

In the South the government is promoting the use of Vietnamese among the minorities. Chinese community schools are permitted to use Chinese as the language of instruction but must teach Vietnamese. Government publications and documents, many of which as recently as 1954 were published in French, are now printed exclusively in Vietnamese, although French or English translations are sometimes provided. Vietnamese writers have been encouraged to compose in the national language, and it is rapidly replacing French as the preferred literary language.

An important development in the Communist zone in the early 1960's was the simplification and improvement of the written form of various *montagnard* languages so that they could be employed in the educational system to teach illiterate adults to read and write. Thai and Meo were given official status.

**VIETNAMESE**

Vietnamese is one of many languages, dialects and subdialects spoken in the Indochinese peninsula. The relationships between these languages are not clearcut, and no single system of classification has been universally accepted. Linguists are agreed, however, that Vietnamese is one of a large group of tonal languages which includes Chinese, Tibetan, Burmese and Thai. Connections have also been established between Vietnamese and a nontonal group, Mon-Khmer, which includes Khmer (Cambodian) from which much of the vocabulary of Vietnamese is derived. Chinese has supplied the more sophisticated intellectual, scientific and administrative terms. In its spoken form, Vietnamese has three major dialects and numerous subdialects.

The three major dialects of Vietnamese—northern, central and southern—differ from each other in vocabulary, pronunciation and tonal pattern. Because of the historical association of the northern dialect with Hanoi, the cultural and educational center of Vietnam, and because of the recent political and social prominence of many refugees from the North, there is a tendency for speakers of the southern and central Vietnamese dialects, especially in the cities, to adopt northern speech usages. The dialects are mutually intelligible only within limits, the greatest divergencies being found among villagers. Most persons say that they experience initial difficulty in understanding a dialect other than the one they ordinarily use.

The structure of Vietnamese words is invariable. Verbs are
not conjugated; nouns, pronouns and adjectives are not declined; number and gender do not exist. Grammatical distinctions are made through changes in word order and the use of certain words which serve as grammatical indicators. The basic components of Vietnamese words are single syllables, each of which expresses a distinct idea. There are, however, many compound words, formed by joining a pair of monosyllables. Many of these are written as one word, as, for example, Saigon. The spoken language employs a system of tones in which distinctions in the meaning of particular words are made through the use of various levels of pitch.

Vietnamese was spoken before the Christian era by the Viets of the Red River Delta area. During more than 1,000 years of Chinese rule (111 B.C. to A.D. 938) its vocabulary was greatly enriched by the addition of many literary, philosophical and other terms, but it remained the medium of popular speech and was carried southward into the Mekong Delta area by the Viet conquerors in the seventeenth century (see ch. 2, Historical Setting).

Under French rule, the Vietnamese language was once again influenced by exposure to the speech of a conquering people. The widespread use of French by the educated classes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries caused minor changes in the grammatical structure of Vietnamese, adding some new technical, scientific and popular terms to its vocabulary. Most scientific and technical terms, however, have been borrowed from Chinese.

An important feature of Vietnamese is a system of personal pronouns and personal “classifiers” indicating status relationships. Age, education, personal achievement and official rank command respect, and this respect is displayed in speech as well as in conduct. Many subtleties and nuances in status and attitude are reflected in the choice of terms, and the use of the wrong form can cause offense.

Proper names are rarely used by Vietnamese in addressing one another, the traditional explanation being that to do so might call the attention of evil spirits to the person named. Fictive kin terms are commonly used, even with strangers. Thus, anh (elder brother) is used in addressing an older man. Ba (grandmother) is used in addressing or referring to an older woman who, in speaking to her grandchild, will so refer to herself. A young man is politely addressed or referred to as bac (father’s older brother), but the less esteemed Chinese and Indian is likely to be called chu (father’s younger brother). Birth order, however, usually determines the referential term, i.e., Chi hai, chi ba, chi bon (second girl, third girl, fourth girl).

The Vietnamese learned writing from the Chinese some 2,000
years ago. The first scholars studied and wrote in Chinese. Later they devised a system of writing their own language which employed certain Chinese ideographs to represent Vietnamese sounds, while other ideographs continued to represent complete words, as in Chinese.

The Chinese character for "man," for example, was read in Vietnamese as the Vietnamese word for "man" and so continued to be employed as an ideograph. Other Chinese characters, however, were divested of meaning and assigned a sound value as symbols in a phonetic script. This combined ideographic and phonetic system was known as chu nom.

Chu nom began to go into disuse in the late sixteenth century when Portuguese and French missionaries devised quoc ngu, a system of writing Vietnamese in Roman letters. With the compilation of a Portuguese-Vietnamese dictionary, Portuguese was for a time the only language for written communication with Europeans. By the nineteenth century quoc ngu had become the common method of writing. However, Chinese forms and ideographs continued in use for religious and ceremonial purposes.

Quoc ngu uses various diacritical marks placed over or under letters to indicate particular vowel and consonant sounds and syllabic tone or pitch. Since most single syllables function as meaningful words, and many of these monosyllabic words are phonetically identical except for tone, the diacritical marks are an essential part of the written forms. Certain modifications of the traditional quoc ngu alphabet have been introduced in the North with a view to making it easier to learn.

CHINESE

Until the French conquest in the late seventeenth century, Chinese was the language of administration and scholarship. Knowledge of the language was a mark of high social status and a prerequisite for government office or local recognition. As a literary language, however, its preeminence was challenged from the fourteenth century onwards by Vietnamese, which became the medium for a growing popular literature.

In the modern period, Chinese—mainly in its south Chinese variants—has been important chiefly as the spoken language of the largest ethnic minority. The Chinese have their own schools, and they continue to form social and fraternal organizations based on place of origin in China. They also have their own newspapers (see ch. 4, Ethnic Groups; ch. 12, Public Information and Propaganda).

Immigration after World War II was thought to have considerably enlarged the size of the Chinese community, sizable
segments of which had come originally from Kwangtun, Fukien and other provinces in South China. Information concerning the composition of the Chinese population in 1962, in terms of local origins, is lacking. However, rough estimates of the dialectical division of the Chinese community shortly after World War II indicated that 45 percent (450,000 persons) spoke Cantonese, 25 percent (225,000 persons) spoke Teochiu, 8 percent (75,000 persons) spoke Hakka, and the remainder spoke Hokkien or Hainanese.

**KHMER AND CHAMS**

Khmers (people of Cambodian descent) constitute an important linguistic minority only in the South where there are about 350,000 to 400,000 of them. They speak Khmer (also called Cambodian), the principal eastern language of the Mon-Khmer family, which is also represented in Burma and India. The language is written in a system of characters devised in southern India in the sixth century A.D. Attempts to introduce a romanized alphabet have never been successful. Two types of scripts are used—cuneiform, which employs wedge-shaped symbols, and cursive. The 85,000 Chams speak their own language, which is related to the Malayo-Polynesian group.

**HIGHLAND LANGUAGES**

The languages spoken in the mountainous areas have not been completely studied. Not only are there more than a dozen languages and numerous dialects and subdialects in use, but their distribution is not precisely known. They can, however, be rather loosely grouped into two major divisions—those spoken in the North which are generally assigned to the Thai or Tibeto-Burman families and those spoken in the South which are generally assigned to the Mon-Khmer or Malayo-Polynesian families. Thai or Thai dialects are spoken by at least 700,000 tribesmen in the North, including members of the Tho, Nung, and Black and White Thai groups. Other important languages among the northern *montagnards* are those spoken by the Meo (Miao) and Man (Yao), which some linguists assign to the Tibeto-Burman family and others classify as a distinct language family. The speech of the Bahnar and Sedang tribes exemplify southern *montagnard* languages akin to the Mon-Khmer language family. Rhade and Jarai are related to the Malayo-Polynesian group.

**OTHER**

French is the most commonly known foreign language. Nearly everyone who attended school before 1954 has some ability to
speak and write the language. During the colonial period, in all but a few schools, French was either the language of instruction or was taught as an optional course from the primary level on. Persons who completed a secondary or higher education speak the language fluently and have a sound mastery of its literature. Some French speakers acquired knowledge of the language in the Army, government service or business.

Although less widely used than before, French still has considerable importance as a foreign language. The government of the Republic of Vietnam provides French translation of many of its official publications, and French newspapers circulate in Saigon and other cities of the South. French is taught in Vietnamese secondary schools starting with the seventh grade and remains the language of instruction at all levels in private French schools.

English is the most important second language after French in the South. Some government publications are accompanied by English as well as French translations and many young people study English in the secondary schools where it has been taught since 1954, or in universities, or in the English language school conducted by the Vietnamese-American Association (see ch. 12, Public Information and Propaganda). French cultural influence remains strong, however, and it is unlikely that English will rival French as the most widely known European language in the country in the foreseeable future.

Knowledge of other foreign languages is limited. Before 1954 a few specially trained functionaries knew Russian. The number of persons who speak and read the language in mid-1962 is unknown, but thought to be increasing in the North where more than 6,000 students are studying the language on a part-time basis. The course is run by the Vietnamese-USSR Friendship Association, in coordination with the government and various trade union organizations.
CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

For centuries a relatively static and conservative society, Vietnam has during the past hundred years witnessed rapid social change under the successive impacts of colonialism and nationalism. As a colony of France, Vietnam was first transformed into a society oriented toward modernization, which meant in essence French education, technological development and an expansion of private enterprise in all fields. The traditional elite was replaced by a new upper class based on wealth and French education and strong in the traditions of French liberalism and individualism.

Following the collapse of the colonial regime, the struggle for national status, divided Vietnam into two separate societies, and at the time of separation, these two societies still had much in common. They shared the same history and culture and had known a similar experience under French rule. Both were basically agrarian in character. Since then, however, each society has been led by people committed to different economic and social philosophies who are moving social change along divergent lines. In South Vietnam society is much as it was under the French except that the monarchy has been abolished; wealth and education, each supporting the other, are still the main avenues of social mobility. In North Vietnam, on the other hand, the emergence of a socialist state dominated by a Communist party (the Lao Dong Party), has had a more revolutionary effect. It is the top officialdom of the Party which now forms North Vietnam's political, social and economic elite. As they are endeavoring to impose a socialist model on the weakened base of what had been a capitalistic society, they have made loyalty to the Party and to socialist goals the prime requisite for economic and social advancement.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before the French

At the time the French arrived, Vietnam was an agrarian society, stratified according to wealth in land, ruled by an emperor and his royal family, and governed by an intellectual elite organized in a civil bureaucracy. Except for the emperor and his royal family, there were no permanent hereditary statuses. An older feudal nobility, originally deriving its position from large land grants from the emperors and enjoying hereditary titles, powers and privileges, had already been abolished and replaced by an honorary nobility which received, for special services rendered to the court, only small, token grants of land. Their titles bore
no power or privilege and, moreover, in each generation were successively downgraded through five ranks until, in the sixth generation, they were lost entirely. Anyone, whether of royal or common extraction, could receive a title. Collectively this nobility had no special interests in common and did not form in any sense a class; their titles might give them prestige in their own communities but their status in the country at large depended on their wealth as landowners.

There was not a permanent aristocracy based on royal blood. The royal family itself was a restricted group, being limited to the emperor's household and lineage. Families related by blood or marriage to the royal family had no formal prerogatives because of this fact, and the further they were removed genealogically from the emperor's line of descent, the more tenuous became their claim even to royal blood. Thus while thousands of persons claiming royal blood surrounded the court and while they might consider themselves for reasons of descent socially superior to commoners, in fact their real weight in the society depended more on other attributes—mainly wealth in land or status in the governmental bureaucracy.

Apart from the royal family, the true social and political elite of Vietnam was formed by a corps of highly select classical scholars known collectively as the mandarinate. Following the Chinese model, the mandarinate was recruited solely on the basis of competitive examinations which were open to all but whose standards were rigorously controlled. Once a person passed the examination he became an accredited scholar, or mandarin, and was then eligible for appointment as an official in the imperial service. While not all mandarins became officials, all important official posts, whether civil or military, were filled by mandarins, so that while performing the function of a civil service, the mandarinate in effect controlled the entire structure of the governmental bureaucracy and the military establishment.

The examinations for entry into the mandarinate dealt in substance only with classical literature and philosophy, and the mandarin newly appointed to an official post had little or no training in the profession of administration. Since, however, the administrative system was itself not highly technical, but rather, political, a mandarin could readily learn the details as he gained experience. His authority in office rested on two factors—his status as a scholar and his relationship to the emperor. According to the occupational ranking of the society, the intellectual stood highest on the scale, followed in order by the farmer, the artisan and the merchant. The authority of learning was unquestioned, so much so that the most successful emperors rested their qualifi-
cations to rule on their intellectual achievements rather than military victories or the circumstances of their birth. Also, the mandarins in the imperial service were not simply functionaries in a bureaucratic hierarchy; they were the personal appointees and representatives of the emperor. Wherever they went, they were the delegates of imperial power and shared the aura of divinity which surrounded the emperor himself.

In theory the mandarinate was not a closed social group. People of common as well as royal blood, from poor as well as rich families, were permitted to apply for the examinations. Once a man had achieved the status of mandarin he could not automatically pass it on to his son; the son of a mandarin could become a mandarin himself only by passing the same examination in his turn. In practice, however, the mandarinate became almost a self-perpetuating caste of professional governors, largely because the son of a mandarin was best able to obtain the training necessary to pass the examinations. Education, the key to such achievement, was neither free nor compulsory and tended rather to be a monopoly of the mandarins themselves. In this self-perpetuating process, mandarin family married mandarin family, and through a common interest in the prestige and wealth derived from imperial service, the mandarinate emerged as the most cohesive as well as the most powerful social group in Vietnam.

While social eminence and political power were thus highly concentrated in the hands of the mandarinate, economic power based on land was more widely diffused. The demise of the hereditary feudal nobility had been accompanied by the breaking up of their vast holdings and the redistribution of the smaller parcels to other groups in the society. Families of royal blood who were in favor with the court received shares, as did many families of the mandarinate, but much of the land went to families outside the bounds of royalty or government. The wealthier of these commoner families formed a kind of landed gentry who lived in rural towns and villages and wielded political power in their own communities. Where large landholdings were common, many landowners acted as landlords and rented their land out to tenant farmers. Where landholdings tended to be on a smaller scale, the landlord was much less in evidence than the small peasant proprietor. In any case, the larger holdings were large only when measured against the average holdings of these peasants who, with the tenant farmers, made up the vast majority of the population.

French Period

The annexation of Cochinchina in 1864 and the subsequent pacification of Annam and Tonkin by France changed the politi-
cal and economic structures of those areas and led consequently to changes in the social structure. Political subjugation, the introduction of French education, the beginnings of modern industrialization, the stimulation of urbanization, and the growth of commercial agriculture affected the whole country.

The French Rulers

The most important social change was the introduction of a foreign governing class. There had been a few French missionaries in the area since the sixteenth century and the French had had a hand in establishing the Nguyen dynasty in the eighteenth century, but the 1860's brought the French in as governors. First reducing Cochinchina to the status of a colony, the French soon extended their power to Annam and Tonkin which were made protectorates. In 1887 these political units, together with Cambodia and later Laos, were formed into the Indochinese Federation. The colony of Cochinchina was administered by a governor assisted by French civil servants and a Western-educated Vietnamese bureaucracy. Vietnamese tribunals were replaced by French courts. In the protectorates of Tonkin and Annam the indigenous administration was largely retained, but over all was the French Resident-Superior in each protectorate plus a French Resident in each province. At the royal court in Hue, French administrators were assigned to each minister.

With the establishment of this new foreign ruling class, the power of the royal family and the mandarinate began to decline. The emperor remained on the throne but his dominion over Cochinchina and, in practice, over Tonkin was lost; he became in effect an appointed and usually obedient servant of the French. If the emperor rebelled, he was replaced by another member of the royal family. The mandarinate was also retained in the protectorates, but in Tonkin it was under the direct supervision of the French Resident-Superior and in Annam it was under the indirect control of the French. The size of the powers and the functions of the mandarinate were considerably pared down. When the triennial examinations in the Chinese classics were held in 1903, 10,000 persons sat for them; in 1913, only 1,330.

The New Intellectual Elite

In place of the old mandarinate, a new intellectual elite began to emerge. Emphasis was on achievement in science, history, geography, French and other modern subjects rather than in the Chinese classics. This transformation came about partly because of French desires and efforts but mainly, it seems, out of the efforts and desires of the Vietnamese people themselves. Impressed by the power of the French, by the defeat of Russia
by a modern Japan, and by what many Vietnamese saw in Europe during World War I, Vietnamese demands for modern and higher education increased over the years. By 1920, even in conservative Hue, wealthy families refused to marry their daughters to the sons of distinguished mandarin families unless the young men had acquired a modern, Western-type education.

The old Confucian village schools were revamped into schools imparting modern education and teaching Vietnamese and French rather than Chinese characters. Some of those who successfully acquired higher education at home or abroad entered government service as administrators, while many others were absorbed as doctors, engineers and teachers into the greatly expanded government role in the fields of health, public works and education. Still others took up professions outside of government, such as law, medicine, chemistry and journalism.

This new intellectual elite was composed mainly of Vietnamese from Tonkin and Annam rather than from Cochinchina, a fact which was to be of great significance in the subsequent history of the country. The regional bias in the new elite's composition came about principally because the only institution of Western higher education in Vietnam during the French period was in Hanoi.

New Economic Groups

The French period also saw the emergence of a new group of wealthy Vietnamese landowners who possessed riches far in excess of that which the well-to-do segment of the older society had enjoyed. This group came into existence as a result of French development of vast new tracts of land in Cochinchina. A few of these large holdings were retained by French companies or citizens, but most came into the hands of Vietnamese from Annam and Tonkin; in the 1950's, holdings of over 100 hectares (approximately 247 acres) were in the hands of about 2,033 Vietnamese landlords and 430 French citizens. Cochinchina had become one of the areas with highest concentration of large landholdings in the whole of Asia.

The new group of large, absentee landowners were not only wealthier than the local landlords and peasants of Annam and Hue in distinct contrast to their less rich counterparts who tended to stay on their lands in the rural areas. In the city they took on a modern Western orientation which further separated them from rural society. A few of them invested in light industry and thereby became the first modern Vietnamese industrialists. A still smaller number invested some of their income in medium-sized trading activities.
Other kinds of new economic groups appeared in the urban areas. The French undertakings in both the governmental and private sectors created a demand for secretaries, clerks, cashiers, interpreters and translators, minor officials and supervisors of laborers. Vietnamese in these occupations tended to form a modern “white collar” group, based on French or French-influenced education and training and salaries which placed them well above the economic level of most manual workers.

French investment in agriculture, mining, transportation and industry in Vietnam brought into being a modern Vietnamese working class. The nucleus of this class was formed during the period from 1890 to 1919 in the mines, weaving mills and cement factories in the north and in the match, tobacco, cement and other factories elsewhere in the country. As most of the natural resources, as well as a large supply of labor, were located in the north, it was there rather than in the south that modern industrial development was concentrated, and Hanoi and Haiphong became the leading industrial centers. During World War I almost 50,000 Vietnamese workers were recruited for work in factories in France. At first the workers were not conscious of differing from peasants and considered such work as temporary and to be abandoned as soon as possible for return to village life. But in the 1930's they became more conscious of themselves as a distinct group with problems and interests of their own.

Large-scale French development of such crops as rubber, rice and coffee gave rise to a group of modern agricultural and plantation wage workers. As the overcrowded and intensively farmed north provided little scope for agriculture on the commercial scale, the French turned their attention to the warmer and agriculturally underdeveloped south. In the eastern provinces vast tracts of land were reclaimed and made suitable for rice cultivation on a plantation scale. Coffee and tea plantations were begun in southern Annam and the plateaus, but the leading commercial crop was rubber. The labor supply for the rice and other plantations of the south had to be brought in from the crowded north, and between 1919 and 1934, 104,000 Vietnamese laborers were brought down from the north and disembarked at Saigon.

The Chinese

Besides altering the structure of Vietnamese society, the French takeover in Vietnam led to a tremendous expansion of the Chinese population in the country, especially in the South. When the French arrived they found the country's limited foreign trade already in the hands of the Chinese. The French lifting of the traditional ban on rice exports and the consequent upsurge in foreign trade brought new waves of Chinese merchants and
shopkeepers to Vietnam at the end of the nineteenth century, and the Chinese population reached an estimated 57,000 by 1889. Vietnam’s growing economy attracted more Chinese at the beginning of the twentieth century. The French, finding the Chinese more industrious and skilled than the Vietnamese, called on Chinese labor for the development of the road and railway system and for industrial expansion.

Such a rapid growth in the Chinese population occurred as a result of the development of agriculture and industry under the French that by 1931 there were 217,000 Chinese in the country, of which 171,000 were in Cochinchina, 35,000 in Tonkin and 11,000 in Annam. They were active in almost every branch of the economy: trade, light industry, crafts and finance. Practically every village in the South came to have its Chinese shopkeeper. Deeply involved in the rice trade, the Chinese entered the rice-milling industry and established a monopoly in that field. The first modern rice-husking factory in Vietnam was built in 1878 by Chinese businessmen, and by World War I there were 11 modern rice mills in the South, all concentrated in the Chinese city of Cho Lon and owned by Chinese. The Chinese also were involved in sugar refining, manufacturing, coconut and peanut oil production, and the lumber and shipbuilding industries. Many Chinese began their careers in Vietnam as laborers on the French rubber plantations of Cochinchina, and eventually started their own tea and pepper plantations which supplied most of the needs of the local market. In addition, some Chinese started rice plantations, and Chinese gardeners in the suburbs of Saigon became suppliers of much of the fresh vegetables consumed in that city. Many Chinese restaurants and hotels also sprang up in the urban areas.

**SOCIETY IN SOUTH VIETNAM**

In the Republic of Vietnam, society today is much the same as that which emerged during the French colonial period. The French governors have departed, and the subsequent changeover from a monarchy to a republic has made the king, the royalty and the nobility obsolete institutions. Apart from this no other revolutionary change has taken place in the composition of internal arrangement of the social structure in the South. The society continues to rest to some extent on commerce and light industry, but primarily upon the agricultural economy which developed during the French period.

**The Upper Class**

In the South the intellectual-professional group and the large landowning group constitute the upper class. While a segment of
the intellectual-professional group belongs to or derives from
the group of large landholders which evolved toward the end of
the French period, a more important segment traces its origin to
North and Central Vietnam rather than to the South. This latter
segment is politically dominant, holding most of the top positions
in government. President Ngo Dinh Diem, for example, comes
from Central Vietnam—a fact which causes some resentment
among the southern elements of the elite.

This national upper class has patterned itself very closely on
their former French governors. Both in outlook and in mode of
living, it is highly urbanized and Westernized in comparison with
the rest of the population. Almost all the men and many of the
women speak French, and a rapidly increasing number of both
sexes speak English as well. They drive late-model American
cars, or by second choice, high-powered European cars. Living
mainly in Saigon, they tend to concentrate in the French quarter
of the city and reside in French-style houses. Modern appliances
such as refrigerators and radios are commonplace in their homes,
as are Western foods and beverages. The men have adopted
Western clothes, while the women retain the national dress, al­
though in Saigon some of the young women have adopted Western
clothing, accessories and hair styles. The social and recreational
life of the upper class in Saigon revolves around the motion pic­
tures, lectures and musical recitals, night clubs and restaurants,
sports and frequent dinner and cocktail parties. Women are in­
creasingly accompanying their husbands to social engagements
outside the home. In Hue, however, social life is somewhat more
conservative.

As it is the mark of the elite, education is very important to
this class. Its members usually place their children in private or
parochial schools at home or abroad. The boys are definitely
expected to pursue higher education and take a degree. Law and
medicine have been the preferred fields of study in the past, but
there is increasing interest in other fields. Girls want at least
the equivalent of a bachelor's degree. Higher education is almost
always obtained abroad, and youths are sent to Europe or the
United States by their families or on government scholarships.

The Urban Middle Class

The Vietnamese middle class is not as close to the pattern of
living introduced by the old French ruling class as the Vietnamese
upper class, but not so far removed as the lower class. The men
wear Western clothes although ties and suit coats are reserved
for important occasions. Girls and younger women, while retain­
ing basic Vietnamese dress, are turning to short haircuts, nail
polish and Western accessories. Many stylish young office girls still retain the conical straw hat, but the trend is definitely toward its abandonment in imitation of the prevailing upper-class practice. The majority of the middle class live in the single-family wood or concrete dwelling units of Saigon, or in the suburbs. Most depend on their own bicycles or motor bicycles, or on public transportation. A few own motor-scooters and even fewer, French cars. Most of their dwellings have electricity, and many have prominently displayed radios and refrigerators. Some may employ one or two domestics, but in most families it is the women of the family who perform household tasks.

Members of the urban middle class have at least completed primary grades and may even have had some secondary schooling. Most of those who work outside the home speak French, and increasing numbers are acquiring a knowledge of English.

Middle-class Vietnamese consider manual labor déclassé and earn their living as white-collar workers in government and business. Most civil servants and lower ranking officers and non-commissioned officers in the armed forces are members of the middle class, as are most secretaries, stenographers and translators employed in commercial firms. Schoolteachers, photographers, shopowners and shop managers are also considered members of the middle class.

The Urban Lower Class

In its mode of living the Vietnamese urban lower class is far removed from the model introduced into the country by the French ruling class. The basic orientation is Vietnamese rather than European. Messengers, male servants and factory workers have adopted Western-style dress for work, but favor traditional Vietnamese pajamas and wooden clogs for home-wear. Unskilled laborers and lower-class women wear the conical straw hat and calico pajamas of their rural counterparts. They are usually barefooted, as are the peasantry.

The members of the lowest level of urban society live in barges or boats or in crude dwellings. Most of the dwellings have neither electricity nor plumbing; their roofs and walls are of thatch, their floors of dirt. Such dwellings are built on land belonging to the government or to absentee landowners who do not have the power either to collect the rent or to evict the tenants without causing major political repercussions. With the exception of the domestic servants who may partake to a limited extent of the diet of their employers, the diet of the lower-class Vietnamese is strictly the traditional one, based mainly on rice and fish sauce.
For most, the means of transportation are buses and, occasionally, bicycles or motor- or bicycle-driven rickshaws.

Many of the adult Vietnamese belonging to the urban lower class have achieved some literacy. Their children are exposed to primary education, but secondary education is rare, particularly for girls. Generally speaking, the children do not proceed far enough in school to acquire even elementary knowledge of French or English, and most adults of this class know only Vietnamese unless they have worked in close contact with Europeans as domestics.

Most of the children leave school young in order to augment the family income. Many join the labor force as unskilled workers in industry, the construction trades and commerce, as messengers in government and business, as drivers in motorized and unmotorized transportation, as domestic servants in the homes of the upper class, and as vendors and hawkers. Others become soldiers, sailors and policemen. Still others take up semiskilled and skilled occupations as plumbers, carpenters, painters, boatbuilders and mechanics. Jobs, however, are not always available, and some children join the unemployed.

Rural Society

The elite of village society are the wealthiest landowners, who derive their wealth primarily by leasing or subleasing the lands which they own or rent. If they work any land themselves, the labor is done by hired hands who plant, irrigate and harvest under their supervision. In the slack season they may engage in entrepreneurial activities, investing their surplus wealth in money-lending, rice merchandising, rice milling and similar ventures. Formerly, their wealth permitted them to have two or three wives and maintain several households.

The wealth and leisure of these villagers permit them to be the most active persons in the political and social life of the village. Members of the village council are drawn from these families as are high-ranking members of the cult committees (see ch. 11, Religion). They differ from their urban counterparts mainly in their patterns of living and their outlook. In general they are unwilling to spend money on secondary or higher education for their children and consider training in carpentry, for example, more practical than formal schooling beyond the primary level. Males of this class wear Western-style clothes when serving as members of the village council, and don white shirts, light trousers and perhaps shoes while on routine duty and suits and ties when receiving a government official from outside the village. At other times, however, they much prefer to wear Vietnamese garb—
loose-fitting trousers, long-sleeved collarless shirts of white cotton or silk, and wooden clogs. Many older men of these families have not taken to Western-style haircuts and continued to wear their hair long and tied in a bun at the back.

Wealthy villagers live in solidly built houses of wood-tile or masonry-tile. Although most well-to-do homes have some Western furnishings, traditional furniture—including expensive, highly polished hardwood slabs which serve as beds—is predominant.

The village elite is strongly oriented toward ritual, ceremony and tradition, particularly that of paying respect to the dead. The most important room in the house is that containing the altar of the ancestors; anniversaries of their death are observed with elaborate ritual and feasting. Weddings and funerals are also elaborate affairs; the more prosperous families hire a professional funeral service to provide trappings, coffin bearers and musicians. Long before the death of an elderly member of a prosperous family, tombs are constructed and coffins purchased and placed on display in the main room of the house. Status demands that their family burial grounds have tombs of concrete or cement. The rich also support financially the rituals associated with the village cults, like the cult of the Guardian Spirit, and they are the major contributors to the construction of village pagodas.

Of all the villagers, the well-to-do are the most mobile. With the necessary money and leisure at their disposal, they are able to travel to the towns and cities. A few rely on motor-scooters, motor bicycles and motorcycles, but most depend on bicycles.

The less prosperous families differ from the elite in being less of an entrepreneurial group. They own or rent enough land to maintain themselves on a level well above subsistence, but do not acquire a surplus large enough to invest in other economic endeavors. Also, while they may hire some laborers to help in planting or harvesting, they do most of the work in their own fields. A few supplement their income as artisans, but they never hire themselves out as laborers except under the direst of circumstances.

Because of the pressure of work in their own fields and their more modest economic circumstances, members of this group do not assume as many official and cult responsibilities as do the wealthy villagers. They participate in rituals and feasts on a moderate scale, and in the village organizations they hold positions which are honorific in character, demanding little time or outlay of money. As a result of their peripheral position in the official life of the village, they have no need for Western dress and content themselves with traditional, loose-fitting garb and wooden
clogs for special occasions. Only the young men are likely to have a pair of Western trousers and a shirt and perhaps a pair of shoes. But, when in the fields, old and young alike wear the traditional garb of the peasant: black cotton shorts and shirt and a conical hat.

Members of this group usually live in houses of wood-thatch or wood-tile construction. Like the rich villagers, they customarily have hardwood slabs for beds, but seldom Western furnishings. Radios are rarely found in their homes. Few own any motorized forms of transportation and must depend upon bicycles, which, together with lack of leisure and money, limit their physical mobility. Their attitude toward education is the same as that of the richer villagers.

The lowest level of village society consists of a vast number of small peasant proprietors and tenant farmers. Forced to spend all of their time scratching for a living, they generally participate little in village affairs, though it is possible for some to achieve the status of hamlet chief or receive one of the honorific titles in the lower echelons of the cult committee. Because they do not cultivate enough land to support their families, most of them must work as part-time laborers, and their wives and children do much of the field work. Their children frequently go to school long enough to learn the rudiments of reading and writing and then have to leave to help support the family. This group also includes a wide range of supplemental service occupations: barbers, tailors, musicians, shopkeepers and others.

SOCIETY IN NORTH VIETNAM

The Lao Dong Party, the Communist party of Vietnam, which claims to be the vanguard of the working class, has launched a revolutionary program designed to alter the structure of the society while moving it toward greater industrialization and state control of enterprise.

The most drastic change, however, occurred without direct intervention by the Party; aware of the necessary outcome of Communist control, a large segment of the urban upper class—which was based on wealth in industry; commerce and landholdings in the South—fled the country before the Party came to power. Those who remained in the country were not only cut off from the source of their wealth, but have been officially declassed by the government and in many cases forced by necessity to take up occupations associated with a lower economic and social status. Since most of the information about recent changes comes from North Vietnamese sources and is cast in terms of Communist ideology, little is known about the real structure of the society today. There is
enough to indicate that much of the regime's declared success is still a long way from realization. There are still groups and classes of people opposing the regime; although they have lost power politically and economically, they refuse to have their social status redefined and are in many ways resisting further efforts of the regime to absorb them into officially approved occupations, classes and groups.

The Upper Class

Most of the members of the upper layers of North Vietnamese urban society fled to the South before 1955. Those who elected to remain behind were for the most part intellectual and professional people whom the Communists were forced to tolerate because of their near monopoly of certain administrative and technical skills essential to the functioning of the society. Since 1957, many of these intellectuals have been dispersed from Hanoi to mines, factories and farms to join in productive work alongside the manual laborers and at the same time to train, under Party supervision, a new intelligentsia drawn from these laborers. The more recalcitrant intellectuals have remained in Hanoi, rebelled at Party control and refused to break their attachment to a way of life based on what the Party calls "capitalistic-type liberalism and individualism."

Lined against these remnants of the old upper class is the new upper class of North Vietnam, the higher levels of Party officialdom who constitute not only the political elite, but the tacitly accepted social elite as well. This is an intellectual and professional group derived from somewhat different origins than its counterpart in South Vietnam. Its members appear to come from that segment of the mandarinate which could not adjust to the French, and from the less well-to-do landowners. They have generally received less formal education, and they owe their standing more to demonstrations of practical ability and devotion to socialism than to formal educational achievement. Most of them were organizers of the Communist Party of Indochina in the 1930's and of the Viet Minh in the 1940's. They have been less exposed to contacts with the French and less oriented toward France than toward China, the Soviet Union and Japan, where some of them resided as students or political refugees. At the same time, their social origins and their participation in the nationalist movements outlawed by the French have brought them into very close touch with the rural population. Years of resistance carried on against the French in the rural areas have also exposed them to a great amount of hardship and at the same time given them a great deal of experience in political organization and guerrilla warfare. Even
though they constitute the social and political elite, they reportedly live austere lives.

The Urban Middle Class

This class, formerly based on service in the government bureaucracy and on small private enterprise, has not changed so much in composition as in the condition of employment. It is composed of the middle- and lower-echelon white collar workers in government, small commercial and industrial entrepreneurs, and technicians and skilled workers in industry and transportation. For those in government there has been little change in status or condition of employment since the French left. Those in nongovernmental occupations have been more directly affected, many having to shift from private enterprise to various kinds of state employment, and from one type of occupation to another. Entrepreneurs in small industry are being drawn into handicraft cooperatives or into joint state-private enterprises where they tend to lose their entrepreneurial role and become wage earners. Some of those formerly engaged in commerce are being drawn into supply and marketing cooperatives or into the new state trading enterprises, while others have been forced to leave commerce altogether and take up manual labor in industry and agriculture. Most technicians and skilled workers are now employed in state-owned or state-controlled enterprises.

The Urban Lower Class

The nucleus of this class has been the semiskilled wage workers in industry, mining and transportation. Great efforts are underway to make other elements of the urban lower class conform to the character of this nucleus. Self-employed artisans, vendors, hawkers, pedicab drivers and others who engage in petty commerce or services are being absorbed by state trading enterprises or cooperatives or forced into wage work in industry or transportation. Efforts are also directed to raising the level of living of this class through improved housing and working conditions, greater opportunities for education, more health facilities and fuller cultural and recreational programs.

Rural Classes

The rural society which confronted the Communist regime in the North differed considerably from its counterpart in the South. It was composed largely of small peasant proprietors whose landholdings ranged little in size. Accordingly, the slight economic and social differences among them were of degree rather than kind, so that rural society was a relatively poor peasant society,
without a landed gentry, without absentee landlords and with
direct connections only to the lower classes of urban society.

The land reform program therefore had little to reform. The
effort to classify peasants according to size of holdings and to
redistribute land among them involved such small parcels of land
and such fine gradations of social status that it became in effect
an exercise in socialist theory, so meaningless in terms of the
actual situation and so disruptive of rural life that it was strongly
resisted by the peasants and openly criticized by the intellectuals
(see ch. 25, Agricultural Potential).

In spite of this experience, the regime continues to insist that
the economic differences among the peasantry are large enough to
have social implications and to be significant in terms of socialist
ideology and loyalty to the regime. Among the better off peasants,
the regime has distinguished two groups, the “middle peasants,”
who lost most or were most threatened by land reform and collec-
tivization, and the “old lower middle peasants,” who benefited
somewhat by land reform. The former are considered to be gen-
erally unsympathetic to the regime and its farm policies, while
the latter are thought to give it some support.

Below these two groups are the “poor peasants,” the bulk of
the rural population, who benefited the most from land reform,
have the most to gain from cooperatives and collectivization and
in general have appeared to be the most loyal to the regime (see
ch. 20, Political Dynamics). Since in Communist ideology the
peasantry forms one of the key building blocks of the new society,
efforts are being made to increase the “poor peasants” standard
of living and their loyalty to the regime by increasing benefits and
educational opportunities, and by drawing the underemployed into
industry.
CHAPTER 7

FAMILY

Families and widely ramified webs of kinship ties have long played a predominant role in the social institutions of the Vietnamese. Confirmed in this role by the Confucian ethic, the family has tended to be a primary focus of much of Vietnamese economic and social life. In agriculture and the crafts, in various kinds of commercial enterprise, the family has characteristically been the unit of ownership, production and management. Until superseded by a modern system of public education, the family provided the child with a basic education, and among any other religious affiliations or practices the family ancestor cults had the strongest liens on resources and loyalties of the individual. Throughout his whole life, the individual looked first to his kinsmen for help and counsel in time of personal crisis and to the interests of these same kinsmen in making decisions and choosing courses of action. Most Vietnamese today still feel that the family has first claim on the loyalties of every respectable person and that the interests of the individual are subordinate to those of the family.

In recent years the importance and bond of the family have been lessened as colonialism, nationalism, Catholicism, liberalism and finally communism have either introduced ideas challenging the concept of a family-centered social order, or have set up new conditions chipping away at the structures built upon this concept. Today, the state in both North and South Vietnam, partly by immediate necessity and partly by ultimate design, is exercising increasing influence over the life of the individual and making new demands upon his loyalty and energies. By the same token, through increasing extension of civil legislation and government agencies the state is intruding more and more into the area of family functions and responsibilities, making itself the final authority in family affairs and a refuge in cases of family and personal distress.

Central to this process is a redefinition of the political status of the individual. In both North and South Vietnam, but particularly in the North, this new definition says that the individual is first a citizen and second a family member and that it is the state and not the family which has prior claim on his loyalties. Concurrently, new definitions of the legal status of men and women aim at giving women the same legal rights as men and equalizing their relationship in marriage. These goals are embodied in South Vietnam in the Code of the Family and in North Vietnam in the Marriage Law, both promulgated in 1959. Whether by the circumstances of changing times or by force of law, there has been
a noticeable decrease in the authority of the family over the individual and a growing equality of the sexes both in marriage and in public life.

THE STRUCTURE OF KIN GROUPS

The traditional Vietnamese kinship system emphasizes the paternal as against the maternal line of descent. Individuals are identified primarily by their connections through the father and the father's male bloodline, and kin groups larger than the family—clans and lineages—are formed by kinsmen who trace their relationship to each other in this manner. It is through these patrilineal descent groups that individuals inherit property as well as their primary obligations for maintaining the ancestor observances.

Clans and lineages are by definition exclusive in the sense that a man or a woman can belong only to the father's clan and lineage, not to the mother's. Since it is customary for husband and wife to come from different clans, there is in a sense a divided allegiance within the family. Custom, however, has dictated that the married woman must subordinate her interests to those of her husband and his family. Related to this practice are the traditional affirmations that women are in general subordinate to men and that a husband has the right to manage his wife's money, to take more than one wife and to repudiate a wife almost at will. This means, in reality, that it is the husband's clan and lineage which tend to establish the family's social identity and standing, and his rights and obligations which tend to determine the family's fortunes.

The Clan and Lineage

The clan (toc) consists of all persons, male or female, who claim a common ancestry through the male line back to the fifth ascending generation and forward to the third descending generation, a total span of nine generations. The clan is divided into a number of branches, or lineages, consisting of a principal lineage (chi) composed of persons related in the direct line of descent from eldest son to eldest son, and several collateral lineages (phai) composed of persons related through younger sons. Clan members are closely bound. The older men meet from time to time to discuss family affairs and the whole clan gathers to celebrate the memorials of its dead or to honor a member who has just died. The Tet, or lunar new year, also brings the clan together in celebration.

All members of the clan share a common name (ho). There are only about 30 clan names in use in Vietnam, many clans having the same name, so that all individuals bearing the same name do not
belong to the same clan; in fact, nearly half the Vietnamese popula-
tion bears the ho of Nguyen. When adopting a child, Vietnamese
prefer to take one who bears the same ho, and when marrying
they feel a little uncomfortable taking a spouse with the same ho.
Beyond that there is little feeling of kinship with other clans bear-
ing the same name.

The clan is headed by the senior male of the principal lineage,
and his home serves as the headquarters of the clan. Called the
truong toc, his duties revolve mainly around the cult of the ances-
tors and include maintaining the principal ancestral altar in his
home, carrying out the main cult rituals there, and keeping up the
family tombs and genealogical records of the clan. He also holds
title, as trustee, to the corporate property of the clan, called huong
hoa, which is intended primarily for the support of the ancestor
cult and is inalienable except by mutual consent of clan members.
In practice, not all of these responsibilities necessarily devolve
upon every truong toc. In clans which are poor or have no huong
hoa, the responsibility of the truong toc for the cult rituals may
be shared by other families in the clan, or a wealthy man may
assume the responsibility for the rituals even though he is not
truong toc. Beside being in charge of the cult of the ancestors,
the truong toc serves the living; he is generally looked to as coun-
cilor and arbiter in family affairs, particularly those involving
marriage, divorce, adoption and guardianship. The truong toc is
normally succeeded by his eldest son, though if he has no son,
leadership of the clan can pass to a collateral branch.

The Family

The traditional and still predominant family type is three gen-
erations in depth, consisting of a senior couple, a married son
with his wife and children, and the senior couple's unmarried
children, all living under the same roof. Sometimes two married
brothers live with their parents, but this often leads to such ten-
sion that it is generally held preferable for a second married son
to move into separate quarters. All members of such a family live
under the nominal authority of the male head of the household
and all contribute to the income of the family. While this extended
type of family is most characteristic of the rural areas, where the
family operates as a unit of production, a study of factory workers
in Saigon undertaken in the late 1950's reveals that 45 percent of
the married workers also lived under extended family households;
the rest lived in nuclear families, consisting solely of man, wife
and unmarried children. On the other hand, the nuclear family is
certainly more common than the extended family among middle-
and higher-income urban groups.
In rural areas not only are large families preferred, but it is hoped that as many children as possible will be boys, since a boy gives his parents lifelong aid and comfort, while a girl leaves at marriage to enter the family of her husband. Sons are also especially useful in family enterprises. Not only the farms of peasants but the workshops of artisans and the warehouses of merchants are often operated as family enterprises. Unmarried sons contribute their earnings to the family treasury, which the mother keeps, and the son who leaves home to seek work does not sever his ties with the household and its economy. Despite this preference for boys, a girl is a welcome child, particularly if a boy has already been born. Although a daughter may never contribute substantially to family finances, she might increase family stature by her marriage.

As formal head of the family, the husband and father ideally makes all important family decisions, takes the leading part in the family ancestor rites and controls the huong hoa or family property reserved for the ancestor cult. The wife manages the household, but is expected to accede formally to the authority of her husband. People speak of the "three obediences" to which every woman must submit: before marriage, she must obey her father; when married, she must obey her husband; when a widow, she must obey her eldest son. Few if any Vietnamese woman openly challenge this rule.

The inheritance of family property also favors males and is designed to satisfy first the demands of the ancestor cult of the husband's lineage and clan. When the head of the household dies, his wife, if surviving, acts as the custodian of the husband's property as long as she lives or until she divides it. In the past she was therefore expected not to marry again; today, however, most widows under 40 do remarry. As custodian, she has the duty of using part of the property to continue the cult of his ancestors, and should she mismanage her husband's estate, the lineage head (truong toc) can bring suit against her on behalf of the children. Often, a widow past 50 chooses to divide the property at once among the children, for though she will be left with nothing, she has the right to live in the ancestral home. The share of the property set aside for the support of the cult of the ancestors is given to the eldest, or sometimes to the ablest, most devoted or favorite son, who is named the cultural heir. The remaining property is divided among all the children, including this son, with the sons receiving equal shares larger than those of the daughters. If the eldest son has established his own household and there is a young, unmarried son at home, the latter often inherits the ancestral home and household effects, and he becomes responsible for the upkeep of the ancestral altar and cult.
In the case of poor families for which a deceased father has left no will, the children decide among themselves how the property is to be divided and all try to contribute to the maintenance of the cult of the ancestors.

**THE LIFE CYCLE**

*Childhood and Adolescence*

Early childhood is a relatively free and unrestrained period of life for the Vietnamese. When the child reaches 6 or 7 years of age, he enters a new phase. Much of the freedom to which the child grew accustomed during the early years is lost and he is limited more and more to the company of his own sex. Boys soon conclude that they are superior to girls, an impression which the family confirms rather than dispels: when children are introduced to guests, for example, the boys are brought out first.

Children who go to school generally enter at about the age of 5 or 6, and increasing demands upon the child’s time leave less and less opportunity for play. Girls learn that their destiny is to please a husband and his family and to manage a house. Boys work along with their fathers as farmers, craftsmen or tradesmen. Sometimes a father will place his sons as apprentices to others. But in any case, it is the father, not the sons, who will say how they spend their time and what occupations they should follow. Parents often rely on astrologers to divine what the future holds for their sons.

Mutually supporting forces are brought to bear in training the child. First, the parents demand that the child submit to their guidance without questioning, argument or hesitation. Back talk from a child is shocking to adults, and independence is discouraged. Children must ask permission of parents in what they do and keep them closely informed of their activities and whereabouts. The main responsibility for the child’s training and upbringing rests with the parents, but uncles and aunts as well as older brothers and sisters also command respect. When the child goes to school, teachers play a part in teaching him proper attitudes and behavior, and parents and teachers uphold each other’s views.

In return for the care and guidance that is received during childhood, a son is expected to repay his debt to his parents when they are old. This responsibility must not be shirked, and a man who did so would be an object of wonder and contempt in the community.

The family ancestors play an important role in the process of socialization which the child undergoes. In the traditionalist household, the child becomes very aware of these unseen senior kinsmen. He comes to feel their presence and learns that they are
deeply involved in his life. The child learns to fear, respect and admire them from parental accounts of their strength and virtue; they were thrifty, prudent, polite, peaceful, humble, conscientious, industrious, self-sacrificing, stoic, devoted and faithful to their own parents and ancestors, and the child is urged to follow their example.

Marriage

Marriage is considered to be more than a union of two individuals—it is a union of two families and a means of ensuring posterity. In the selection of a wife, beauty may be an important consideration for the son, but his parents will place much more emphasis on the girl's character, her ability to perform household tasks and the reputation of her family. Ideally, she should be docile, respectful, sincere, generous, polite and self-effacing. She should be skilled in the kitchen, a good housekeeper and adept at needlework. Rural families generally hope to find a girl of about 16, or at least younger than the son, but if a family is badly in need of a girl to do work around the house, it may—less often now than formerly—take a girl who is much older than the son. Frequent consultations with professional astrologers help the family make its choice and decide upon a girl who will adjust well in her new home.

For a girl's family also, character and family background are important considerations in accepting or selecting a son-in-law. A family would prefer to find a rich husband for a daughter, but a man with only daughters may select a poor boy of good character who is willing to forsake his father's family and assume the responsibility for maintaining the ancestral cult of his father-in-law. Such a son-in-law (lam-re) used to live with and work for his father-in-law during a probationary period before marriage. His lot was notoriously difficult, especially during the time he was on trial. Whatever he did was likely to be viewed critically by his prospective bride's family, who, if they could find no other fault, were likely to wonder aloud if his attitude was sincere or if he was only currying favor. Today, however, a short visit to his prospective bride's home seems to be all that is required.

When a young man's parents have learned of a girl who appears to fit their requirements, they approach her family through an intermediary. The intermediary makes an informal visit to the girl's family to broach the subject of marriage and to compare the horoscope of the son with that of the girl to determine the suitability of the match. If the girl or her family disapproves, negotiations are broken off abruptly on some pretext designed not to offend the boy's family.