If the contact made through the intermediary looks promising, the boy and his parents go to meet the girl's parents and discuss with them financial matters, such as the value of the gifts the girl would receive and the financial resources which would be available for the couple. On this occasion, the young man and his parents closely observe the girl's home, her family and the girl herself, whom they may never have seen. If they are pleased they will invite the girl's parents to visit their home.

Betrothal involves the delivery of a gift of gold earrings by the fiancé. His male kin accompany him on this mission to the girl's house where he kneels before the ancestral altar of her family and before her parents in symbolic acceptance of her family. After these preliminaries, agreement is reached on the dowry.

The wedding, which is usually fixed by reference to the horoscope and usually falls a couple of months after the betrothal, is a simple ritual amounting to little more than a presentation of the groom and the bride to the ancestors. The intermediary informs the ancestors of the marriage and the bride and groom kneel before the ancestral altar. Then, in order of precedence—beginning with the groom's elder male kin—the couple kneel before their assembled relatives. The bride's parents, however, are absent, for their presence at the ceremony is considered unlucky.

Gift-giving and feasting by the guests follow the ritual. After all the guests have departed the newly joined pair pass to the bridal chamber which, by tradition, the bride must enter first lest she step on her husband's shadow and cause him to come under her domination through their married life. Weddings often represent one of the largest financial outlays a family makes.

In her new home, the bride must please not only her husband but also his family, and girls tend to enter marriage with an often justified fear of the mother-in-law. They have been told repeatedly that the shortcomings and ineptitudes which a mother overlooks or forgives will not be tolerated by a mother-in-law. The husband's sisters quite often make life unbearable for the newcomer, and if she fails to please them, the mother-in-law is likely to take the side of her daughters. Even if a girl dislikes her mother-in-law, she may find herself competing for her favor with another daughter-in-law. But she probably cannot complain or appeal to her father-in-law, for he usually adopts a passive attitude, considering such matters his wife's business. The bride who has difficulty may go home and complain to her own parents, but they are likely to tell her that this is a phase through which a woman must pass before she becomes full mistress of her own household. Her husband may be distressed by her trouble, but she generally cannot
count upon him to do anything about it for he himself has no right to question his mother's actions.

The problem is apt to be most acute for the wife of the eldest son, for she is most likely to have to live in the household of her husband's parents and have the burden of the household management placed upon her by the mother-in-law. The girl who marries a younger brother usually lives in a separate household with her husband.

Old Age and Death

In the Vietnamese tradition, old age is a time to be passed in the bosom of one's family. There is no sending the old off to live by themselves. If they are invalid and need to be nursed and waited on, this is to be done at home. Much of the time of the elderly, whose family circumstances permit it, is spent in visiting or receiving friends. There are also ceremonies to attend and prepare for. Thought will also be given to the hiring of an expert geomancer, to choose the exact location of one's tomb, and to the purchase of one's coffin. When death comes, the traditional mourning rites are followed, their elaborateness depending upon the wealth and social position of the family of the deceased. It is usual for kinfolk, neighbors and friends to come, bringing offerings of money, food and perhaps rice alcohol to the bereaved household, and to kowtow in honor of the deceased.

TRENDS

In the traditional family system, a man could take more than one wife and recognize his children from all of his unions, although this was not generally a popular practice. Divorce was permitted but most of the prerogatives were with the man, since among marital duties, fidelity was demanded only of the woman. Roman Catholicism, the one Western faith having many adherents in Vietnam, strongly affected certain aspects of the family life of its followers. Ancestors could be revered, but not worshipped; plural marriage and divorce were forbidden, except in special circumstances; and various other moral prescriptions and prohibitions were introduced. Catholics and non-Catholics alike were exposed in French schools to ideas of individualism and equality of the sexes, which challenged the authority of the family over the individual and the superiority of men over women.

South Vietnam

Catholic influence is still evident in the Code of the Family, which became law in South Vietnam in January 1959. Designed explicitly to give women the same legal status in marriage as men,
the numerous articles of the Code have the effect of equalizing the mutual rights and obligations of the spouses. Polygamy and concubinage are outlawed, separation and divorce are made extremely difficult, and equal responsibility is placed on both spouses for the fulfillment of their marriage obligations and the support and education of the children.

Several articles of the Code affect the structure of the family; spouses have the right to choose their place of residence and, in lieu of special covenants a system of community property is established under which all property and revenues of husband and wife belong to them jointly and must be so administered. The long-range effects of these measures should be to increase the solidarity of husband and wife and to remove them from the kind of parental domination characteristic of the extended family type of household.

At the same time, the Code tends to reinforce the role of parents, grandparents and the *truong toc* as formal validators of a marriage, divorce or adoption, and to support the tradition of clan affiliation and the ancestor cults. The consent of parents, or grandparents, is required in the marriage or adoption of a minor, and they—or in default of them, the *truong toc*—have the right to oppose the marriage of a descendent or ward, to refer to the clan head disagreements as to the place of domicile of a newly married couple, and to solicit his council in exceptional divorce suits. An adopted person is entitled to act as cultural heir and to have custody of the clan property only if he bears the family name, which must have been conferred upon him by his adopting parent with the consent not only of this parent’s spouse but also of the *truong toc* representing the name in question.

**North Vietnam**

The full impact of Communist rule on the family in North Vietnam is difficult to judge, but it is clear that the Communists aim at remaking the pattern of intrafamily relations and of subordinating family loyalty to the regime and its instrumentalities. The methods include systematic propaganda against “feudal” and “bourgeois” concepts of the family, the alienation by the government and a host of special organizations of many of the economic, welfare and recreational functions which belonged to the traditional family, and the institution of legal measures designed to weaken the claims of the family as a unit on the individual. The younger generation, in particular, is taught in the schools and youth organizations of the primacy of its responsibilities to the “people.”

The 1960 Constitution contains the assertion that “the state
protects marriage and the family." Associated constitutional guarantees and the provisions of the earlier marriage law of 1959 affirm various principles pertaining to marriage and the rights women are familiar with in Western Societies. A number of guarantees parallel provisions of the Family Code of South Vietnam. Under Communist dispensation these protections of the rights and status of the individual within the family have the effect of weakening the familial institutions and strengthening the organizations into which the regime wishes to integrate the people.

The Constitution provides that women shall "enjoy equal rights with men in all aspects of life—political, economic, cultural, social and family." Women are assured equal pay with men for equal work, and employed women are to be given paid maternity leave. The Family Law, designed according to the authorities to eliminate "feudal and bourgeois concepts" of the family and to build a new system of marriage compatible with "socialist ideals," prohibits early and "forced marriage, concubinage, and mistreatment of women by husbands and in-laws." It also limits the expenditures that may be made for wedding celebrations. The regime has announced that its policy is to train and organize women to take their places as productive workers in "socialist construction." Child-care services and central kitchens are to free wives of the burden of household tasks so that they may participate in the cooperatives and state-operated industries.
CHAPTER 8
SOCIAL VALUES

For centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans, the formal values of Vietnamese society were based on the Confucian ethical code which defined the perfect society and the principles of personal conduct supporting it. The family was the basic institution and the relations between family members, as ideally conceived, were supposed to serve as a model for all other relations in the society. The interests of the worthy man were subordinate to those of his family. He was directed to seek self-perfection in carrying out his duties and obligations first within the family group, living and dead, and then in the wider community of village, province and nation. He was taught to value filial piety, loyalty, benevolence, justice and propriety as the cardinal virtues conducive to achieving harmony among men and between man and nature. These precepts were embodied in traditional Confucian learning which concentrated almost exclusively on the Chinese classics and personified in the scholar-philosopher the ideal man who honored his father and mother, revered his ancestors, lived in harmony with all men and sought only to attain self-perfection before he died.

At the time the French arrived, this ideal had come closer to practical realization in Vietnam than at any other time in the country’s history, for the nation was in fact then governed by an intellectual elite, the mandarinate (see ch. 6, Social Structure).

As a model for running a whole society, the Confucian code was both idealistic and static. Under the combined impact of French colonial rule and French culture, the Confucian-based social order and the system of values supporting it rapidly began to crumble. As the mandarinate, now subordinate to alien French governors, was reduced in power, so the prestige of the traditional Confucian scholar waned. Fervent Vietnamese patriots, convinced that the Vietnamese defeat lay in the classical Confucian scorn of technical and scientific knowledge, advocated the abandonment of traditional education for the teaching of sciences in the schools and urged the people to modernize their thinking and living. Concurrently, the French, through the medium of the schools, sought to inculcate French learning and culture. The final blow to Confucian education was the French “reform” of the civil service examinations just before World War I, which required European rather than Confucian learning. The Vietnamese responded by avidly turning to the French schools.

These changes impinged largely on the urban centers and in-
olved mainly the elite. Nonetheless, a decline in traditionalism spread to the villages. The mandarins, who provided the link between the villages and the central government, were the intellectual leadership of the traditional order as well as administrators and, as they became increasingly self-seeking, undermined the peasants' respect for the mandarinate and the precepts which it had formerly exemplified. The French further accelerated the process of decline by introducing external controls into village affairs which disrupted customary relationships, while increased taxation drove the peasant to orient himself to a cash economy.

Since World War II and the departure of the French, the traditions of individualism and liberalism, as imparted by French education, have continued to flourish among the educated classes of South Vietnam, while in North Vietnam they have been officially replaced by Communist ideology which demands subordination of the individual and of all institutions to the state. Despite this difference in outlook, the people of both North and South Vietnam share certain values which have survived a century of political and social revolution.

ETIQUETTE

The typical Vietnamese feels strongly that it is everyone's duty at all times to maintain an even temper and to be just and fair to all men. Accordingly, he places great emphasis on self-control, rarely shows his feelings and prefers to avoid expressions of disagreement which might irritate or offend. A loud voice, a public display of arrogance, anger or affection are considered coarse and unmannerly. The Vietnamese has been called a slave to etiquette.

ADAPTABILITY

Adjustment to principles to a given situation, rather than firm adherence to immutable principle, is admired. The Vietnamese have a proverb which points out that the supple-bending reed survives storms which break the strong but unyielding oak. The Republic has, in fact, replaced the dragon on the former coat of arms with a bundle of bamboo reeds which represents the endurance of the adaptable Vietnamese in the face of all vicissitudes.

In politics, as in other aspects of Vietnamese life, the ideal solution to conflicts is settlement by negotiation and adjustment. Until as late as autumn 1955, the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen sects were openly in arms against the Saigon government, and through clandestine radio stations bitterly denounced its leader, President Ngo Dinh Diem, as a rebel. They maintained allegiance to the former emperor, Bao Dai, against Ngo. But at the same time, negotiations continued with the Saigon government. The
Vietnamese feeling is that ideally none of the sects should be utterly crushed; rather, the best way would be to work out some kind of mutually satisfactory arrangement among them.

In Vietnam no position taken is irretrievable; no commitment is final. Because Vietnamese value adaptability so highly, leaders are expected to adjust to changing circumstances. In less than 2 years, Emperor Bao Dai supported first the French, then the Japanese, then the Viet Minh, then the Americans, then switched back to the French. Not even Communist propaganda made much of these changes. They made sense to the Vietnamese people, because at that time circumstances were changing quickly, and in their eyes a prudent man would change his loyalties quickly also. Bao Dai’s former viceroy in Tonkin is now a minister in the Ho Chi Minh government of the North, while several men who were once Communist officials now hold key positions in the South under President Ngo. On New Year’s Day of 1956—while important operations against Hoa Hao rebels were still in progress—General Tran Van Soai, a top Hoa Hao leader who had been denounced in the Nationalist press as a “traitor” and sentenced to death in absentia by a Vietnamese military court, was seen at the presidential residence in Saigon presenting his best wishes to President Ngo and has since made his peace with him.

FAMILY LOYALTY

The most important force for harmony in traditional Vietnamese society—and one which is still strong today—was family loyalty. Upon the kinship system rested the entire society, which fostered and cherished it. The basic social unit was the large household of an older man and wife, their married sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. While today this extended social unit is becoming less common, family ties still reach out as they have for thousands of years in Vietnam, even beyond the large family to a far wider group of relatives with the most tenuous bonds of kinship.

The crux of family loyalty is filial piety which commands children to honor their father and mother, to do everything to make them happy and to worship their memory. This commandment provides strength, stability and continuity to the large family group composed of all those descending from the same male ancestor. It is also a powerful guardian of morality because everyone is afraid to dishonor the memory of his ancestors by reprehensible behavior. The most important religious ceremonies in Vietnam continue to be the rites of the family ancestor cult, where filial piety—still the most respected value in Vietnamese life—is manifested by veneration for departed ancestors.
The pattern of respect a child has for his father—and, by analogy, that the father has for his elders and for those in authority over him—is deeply ingrained in every Vietnamese from earliest childhood. To most Vietnamese, filial piety is not an intellectual theory but a law of nature. To them, this attitude is inborn—a child naturally feels respect for his father.

Family loyalty inextricably binds the individual to hearth and home. Even today it takes command over ideology—including Communist ideology, although many efforts are being made by the Communists to break up family loyalties and substitute state allegiance. For most Vietnamese, not only emotional security but economic well-being depend upon the family. The individual Vietnamese will compromise most other obligations in the interest of family ties and family unity. Though honesty, for instance, is an admired virtue, it would be considered foolish and wrong to sacrifice one’s family interests for the sake of being fair to strangers.
CHAPTER 9

ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL EXPRESSION

A thousand years of Chinese rule, ending in the tenth century A.D., left a cultural tradition that the Vietnamese were eager to preserve. Despite the subsequent influence of the European culture of France and the latent effect of Western education on traditional values, Vietnamese art forms basically continue to reflect the Chinese heritage with a strong Confucian influence running through the whole fabric of artistic and intellectual life. But combined with this fundamental Confucianism, recognizable in the emphasis on hierarchy and duty, are elements of two other great Asian religions: the Buddhist belief in the spirit world, the reward of good and punishment of evil and the reincarnation of the soul and the Taoist tendency to conform to nature.

Underlying these influences are traces of even more ancient aspects of Vietnamese character: a strong love of independence and a note of realism—or even pessimism and cynicism—about life (see ch. 8, Social Values and Patterns of Living).

Vietnam under the emperors was acutely conscious of its cultural heritage. Writers and poets, particularly, were held in high regard. Nearly every village of any size had its own Temple of Literature dedicated to the cult of Confucius and maintained by the scholars (see ch. 10, Education; ch. 11, Religion). The center of this cult was the imperial court, which maintained a national Temple of Literature and there enshrined the names of leading scholars. The last three emperors of independent Vietnam—Minh Mang, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc, who reigned in the nineteenth century—were themselves outstanding scholars, and for many centuries the imperial government was the chief patron of literature, learning and art (see ch. 11, Religion).

Temples of Literature still exist in many villages as public monuments, but the national cult of Confucius no longer functions. The institutions the French introduced in its place helped, however, to salvage much of the old heritage. The most outstanding of these was the Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO) centered in Hanoi. This government-financed institution, through its French and Vietnamese scholars, for decades carried on research in east Asian antiquities and did excellent work in studying and preserving the relics and architectural monuments of Vietnam’s past. Largely through its work, knowledge of the ancient Kingdom of Champa (which was conquered and absorbed into Vietnam in the fifteenth century) was revived and critical study of Vietnamese history was stimulated. Many old Vietnamese manuscripts in Chinese characters were collected and
preserved in its libraries. After partition in 1954, under special arrangement with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the EFEO remained for a time in Hanoi under French direction, as did several other French schools. Conflict with the Communist regime forced the removal of EFEO headquarters to Paris; a branch office was established in Saigon.

LITERATURE

The first written Vietnamese literature, dating from the thousand-year period of Chinese rule (111 B.C. to A.D. 938), was composed in Chinese characters and based on Chinese literature. Subsequently, a new form of writing called chu nom was adopted. It continued to employ Chinese ideographs but made some of them stand for sounds rather than complete words so that certain Vietnamese words could be written phonetically. The script was well developed by the fourteenth century, and after the Chinese withdrawal, was proclaimed the basis of the new Vietnamese literature. Chinese continued, nonetheless, to be the language of scholars, and Vietnamese writers produced large quantities of literature in both languages. Literary production was stimulated by the adoption of the Chinese system of examinations for all officials, under which the candidate was required to have mastered the great bulk of Chinese and Vietnamese literature.

Vietnam lagged behind China in introducing the printing press for general use, one result being that early Vietnamese literature remained by-and-large in manuscript form and was thus subject to deterioration in a tropical climate and to damage by insects, humidity and fire. A new era began with the arrival of the Europeans. Their initiative in devising the quoc ngu, a Roman-letter script, and the more extensive use they made of the printing press stimulated the growth of popular literature and encouraged efforts to reduce illiteracy.

Poetry was among the most admired of the scholarly accomplishments, and the Vietnamese have retained a special gift for this medium. The high popularity of poetry at all levels is reflected in the frequent appearance of poems in practically all kinds of newspapers and magazines. Although the long narrative poem is common, most poetry is short and pithy, characterized by a special proficiency at expressing several different meanings in a short phrase of few syllables.

Modern Western influence on Vietnamese literature stems from the translation into Vietnamese of European works during the colonial period: These works—particularly the novel, which became a popular literary form—had great influence on Vietnamese writers. They also brought about an important change in Viet-
namese poetry, which retained its vitality and gained new breadth and a greater freedom from Chinese models and traditions.

The rising tide of nationalism was reflected in new forms of literature, ranging from propagandistic tracts to historical dramas and novels. Revolutionary themes became increasingly popular but were usually disguised by being placed in a historical framework. A number of novels written before the war by various members of the Tu Luc (self-strength) group, whose leader, Nguyen Tuong Tam, used the pen name Nhat Linh, are still widely read. Particularly popular among the many Vietnamese who flooded the market with historical dramas, especially after World War II, are Luu Quang Thuan and Hoang Cong Khanh. The best-known twentieth-century historian is Tran Trong Kim, who became Bao Dai's premier after the declaration of independence in March 1945.

**Literary Themes**

The most famous and influential of all Vietnamese literary masterpieces is the long (over 3,000 lines) narrative poem, *Kim Van Kieu*. Written by Nguyen Du (1765–1820), this story of unhappy love and undeviating loyalty shows a deep psychological insight as well as a beauty of imagery and style that have won it lasting popularity. There are few Vietnamese who cannot recite some verses from this great work.

Romantic sentimentality, a theme sometimes found in Vietnamese literature and lore, sounds wistful to American and European ears and reflects a contemplative mood somewhat at variance with Vietnamese everyday character. Although preoccupation with the supernatural world of spirits and genii, both good and evil, permeates the popular literature, much of Vietnamese literature is concerned with life here and now; genii may interrupt the action from time to time, however. Rarely do vague metaphysical or abstract ideas predominate. Even though the Vietnamese like to see good win over bad, they display in their folklore a high regard for craftiness, subtlety and successful lying—especially when these are used to combat the brute force they abhor. Accustomed to yielding to force, they nonetheless ridicule it, particularly when it is accompanied by what they regard as stupidity. Although one very often finds in Vietnamese literature a strong admiration for the scholar, there is also an occasional voice of resentment on behalf of the poor rice farmer who toils forever in the rice fields while the scholar sits and reads. Filial piety is another constantly recurring theme and, together with devotion between wife and husband, one of the most admired.
THE THEATER

Perhaps the most popular medium for expression of the traditional themes is the theater. The three main types of theatrical performance are the traditional Hat Boi or Sino-Vietnamese theater; the Cai Luong or reformed theater; and the Kich or modern theater. Best liked is the Hat Boi, which is a Vietnamese adaptation of Chinese theater. The Cai Luong, which also is popular, is usually a comedy of manners, but the dialogue is interspersed with songs accompanied by orchestras, as in European operetta. The tunes often are adapted from American movies. The Kich, modeled after the modern French comedy, appeals chiefly to the Westernized Vietnamese and is not greatly enjoyed by those unaccustomed to a play without singing or musical accompaniment.

MUSIC

Music is an important part of the theater, and many dramas are in effect operas, the orchestras and singers improvising more or less at will. To the Western ear the music at first seems harsh, discordant and monotonous and the singing grotesque. Few Westerners have learned to appreciate Chinese-style music, which is based on a five-tone rather than an eight-tone scale.

The principal musical instruments, borrowed for the most part from the Chinese, are: various types of string instruments (some similar to guitars and mandolins, but played with a bow); a wide variety of percussion instruments, including tambourines, castanets, drums, cymbals and gongs; and a smaller variety of wind instruments, limited largely to flutes and woodwinds. Western influence has led to the introduction of such instruments as the piano and violin, and Western music has been increasing in popularity in recent years. A notable example of the Western influence is seen in the works of Louise Thai Thi Lan, whose compositions include a symphony, *La Symphonie du Tet* (The Symphony of the New Year), as well as many sonatas and smaller music pieces, including many composed for children. Also indicative of the trend is the Saigon Symphony Orchestra, an organization which harmoniously blends some of the traditional string instruments with Western-style instruments.

Music teaching has become quite common in all major cities and is included in the high school curriculum. In recent years the Hawaiian guitar has become a fad, and guitars can be found even in modest homes. Pianos, however, are still a rarity and are seen only in the homes of the very wealthy.
Public Singing

Nearly all Vietnamese love to sing—an urge that normally expresses itself in their working chants, which seem to be a legacy from very remote antiquity. Workers carrying a load to market often sing rhythmically, and chants—coming alternately from the men and women—frequently are heard in the fields. The words are often meaningless, and the tune is usually sad and in a minor key.

In recent years, due to French and Catholic educational influences, group and choir singing have become widespread. The Communists, and also the Saigon authorities, have made mass singing one of their best psychological weapons. Troops sing on the march, and military bands are appreciated. A whole new generation of marching songs—sometimes based on French melodies, sometimes on Vietnamese themes, but always according to a generally Western rhythm—has been developed.

THE DANCE

Dancing, though not a traditionally popular recreation in Vietnam, is found in the Chinese-style theater where the acting often is practically a form of acrobatic dancing. Ritual dances are used in some religious ceremonies and once formed a part of the state ceremonials around the emperor.

European-style dancing, which brings male and female into close contact, profoundly shocks the Vietnamese as vulgar and overly sexual. Only the Westernized Vietnamese have overcome this repugnance for male-female contact—traditional in a land where a man and his wife are not even supposed to sit on the same mat in their own house.

THE ARTS

Painting

Of the two main schools of painting, one is influenced by the European Renaissance and modern French art and applies European techniques to traditional themes; the other gives an Oriental touch to paintings styled after the European masters. Chinese-style painting was divided originally into two classes. The higher was the art of the scholar whose great skill in calligraphy was often turned to painting impressionistic nature scenes. The lower was on the level of the craftsmen who produced the stereotyped ancestor paintings on silk, painstakingly fashioned delicate and elaborate inlay work and painted on screens, boxes, enamelware or lacquerware, often in slavish imitation of traditional patterns. These old art forms nearly became extinct after the French conquest, but managed to survive.
Painting on silk still retains its popularity, and the production of lacquerware murals is a flourishing business. Practically all well-to-do Vietnamese homes are adorned with scrolls inscribed with a Vietnamese motto or saying expressed in Chinese characters. Produced by Vietnamese craftsmen specializing in the art of lettering, these scrolls are valued both for their beauty of design and the poetic nature of the text.

Architecture

Vietnam's finest architecture is found in its temples, pagodas and tombs—sometimes in wood, sometimes in stone, but nearly always elaborately carved and painted. Some temples, rebuilt over and over in nearly identical form, represent very ancient styles. Thus the one-pillar Buddhist shrine in Hanoi looks much like the original eleventh-century structure.

Pillared porches, great peak gables, gracefully sweeping eaves and corners with dragon peaks are featured. Vertical lines are rarely accentuated, and Vietnamese architecture blends well with the natural surroundings, an impression fortified by careful landscaping.

Since French colonial architecture took little account of the native building style, the more modern sections of most Vietnamese cities look like small towns in southern France. More recently Saigon has begun to construct city blocks with buildings of six or seven stories, and it will eventually lose its distinctly French air.

Sculpture

Sculpture and the plastic arts until recently have had mainly a religious motif and have been highly stylized. Both wood and stone have been used in carving symbolic religious images, altars and furniture in the Chinese style; only occasionally does the ancient Indonesian or early Vietnamese influence show. As in architecture, style has changed little with time. Some modern artists still employ themes introduced by the Chinese over a thousand years ago. The temples and tombs abound with statues of rich imagery representing mythical or real animals, genii and the figures of both legendary and recorded history. Often these figures are richly encrusted with stone, ivory or metals or are colorfully painted.

Immediately after the arrival of the French, there was a rapid decline in the number and quality of sculptors and carvers, who had ranked only as craftsmen and depended chiefly upon the royal family and the mandarinate for patronage. To prevent the traditional skills from becoming extinct, the French established arts
and craft training centers and arranged for the sale of their products.

Other Arts and Crafts

Of the crafts, lacquerware probably has the highest standards. Vietnamese lacquerware, first developed in the fifteenth century and more modest in appearance than that of Japan or China, is usually inlaid with ivory, horn or mother-of-pearl. Carved lacquerware is rare and usually is in low relief. Originally used chiefly for decorating pagodas, it now is used on panels, screens, furniture, jewel boxes and similar articles. Ivory carving is a flourishing trade, based until recently on elephant tusks obtained from Central Vietnam. Carving of tortoise shells and buffalo bones are two other important crafts.

Vietnamese manual dexterity is fully displayed in the jewelry produced by their craftsmen. Silver, brass and copper are commonly used as settings for ivory, jade and gems. Needlework is also an important form of commercial art, as is the weaving of reeds and bamboo into mats, baskets and panels. Enamelled china and porcelain provide another minor art form. It is perhaps in the minor arts that true Vietnamese taste is best revealed; however, cheap Western machine-made products have had a deadening effect upon these once lively artistic traditions.

THE ARTIST IN VIETNAM

Writers and poets have always enjoyed high standing in Vietnamese society; painters and sculptors, looked on as craftsmen, have ranked lower. But most degrading, until recent times, was the role of actor or musician. Earning their livelihood by traveling through the countryside, these performers were seen as little better than vagrants in a conservative agrarian society in which the highest obligation of the individual was to cling to his family and local group. Recently, actors and musicians have gained some stature, and in the cities their popularity approaches that of their counterparts in the United States.

The stage, once restrictedly the province of men, now includes actresses. Although some of the heroines of earlier Vietnamese literature were accomplished musicians, only recently have girls been permitted to learn music. Several women concert artists and composers have won high praise in Vietnam and France.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

South Vietnam

Since independence, artistic and intellectual endeavor in South Vietnam has been largely initiated and financed by the govern-
ment and is subject to a large measure of official control. The atmosphere of crisis created by the Communist threat in the countryside and the preoccupation with political, economic and military problems has temporarily diminished interest in poetry, the novel and literary criticism while heightening that in textbooks and technical treatises. All books circulating in the country are subject to strict government censorship, and the importation of many foreign works—especially those dealing with the Vietnamese political situation—is forbidden.

Substantial United States assistance has been given to the government of South Vietnam in the fields of the graphic arts and crafts, music, motion pictures and the publication of textbooks. Among the more active Vietnamese government agencies in this sphere are the Department of National Education and the Department of Civic Action; the latter works through its Directorate General of Information.

The government of South Vietnam has established various centers for the arts and crafts, some of which are designed to spur the production of handicrafts for sale abroad. The government also sends abroad traveling art and handicraft exhibits. One of these toured the United States in 1958. The Department of National Education has established schools of music and fine arts in Saigon and Hue and sponsors such cultural activities as concerts by the Saigon Symphony Orchestra (see ch. 10, Education).

In the literary field, a number of promising novelists and short-story writers, including Binh Nguyen Loc, Doan Quoc Sy and Vo Phien, are active. A small group of writers, called Sang Tao (creation), is attempting a new literature patterned on similar movements in France since World War II. Their works appear in a magazine published by the group.

The literary monthly France-Asie has carried the work of a number of Vietnamese authors. Formerly published in Saigon and subsequently in Tokyo in a combined English-French edition, France-Asie has a large following in Vietnam, France and elsewhere. The magazine is owned by a French company and has both Frenchmen and Vietnamese on its editorial staff.

Recent Foreign Influences

Since 1954, American cultural influence in Vietnam has risen steadily. Aside from United States economic aid and military assistance, there has been an influx of American educators and an intensification of the activities of the United States Information Service (USIS), which in 1962 had offices in Saigon, Hue and Da Lat (see ch. 12, Public Information and Propaganda).

Although the use of English has increased since independence,
it is unlikely that French literature will soon lose its influence on educated Vietnamese thinking. The Vietnamese decisively rejected French political domination, but it was through French intellectual culture that they were introduced to the thought of the Western world. In French culture they found many characteristics of sharpness, elegance of style, wit and a common liking for casuistry and carefully built argumentation over fine points which paralleled features in their own tradition. Even though these common feelings and values have often made for angry confrontation between the Vietnamese and the French, they also constitute a lasting bond—as one Vietnamese leader put it, "We sometimes hate each other so deeply only because we understand each other so well."

North Vietnam

Literature and the arts in North Vietnam have been put to the service of the Communist regime. Writers and artists are encouraged, criticized or condemned according to whether and how well their work is judged to serve official policy, and the government subsidizes the mass production of novels and short stories containing officially approved themes. A number of the leading figures in the regime have literary reputations. Ho Chi Minh, for example, has been writing for publication for many years. His Nguc Trung Nhat Ky (Prison Diary), published in 1960, is a collection of about 100 poems in Chinese written in 1942-43 while he was being held by the Chinese Nationalist authorities and has been hailed as a major literary contribution throughout the Communist world. An 800-page volume of Ho's selected works also appeared in 1960. As President, he sometimes addresses his countrymen in verse, aware that poetry in the popular style with the use of familiar images constitutes an effective propaganda instrument in any attempt to influence the Vietnamese.

The memory of the war against the French is kept alive by the continuing publication of the memoirs of Communist militants who took part in the struggle. General Vo Nguyen Giap, Minister of National Defense and Chief of Staff of the North Vietnamese armed forces, has published, among other works, The People's War and People's Army and Dien Bien Phu. The latter is his account of the battle in which he commanded the Viet Minh forces.

The poet laureate of the regime is To Huu, whose real name is Nguyen Kim Thanh; born in 1920, he began his career as a Communist poet-agitator at the age of 17. His collected works include Viet-Bac, published in 1954, and Tu Ay (Since Then).

Official favor has also been won by such "reformed bourgeois poets" as Xuan Dieu, Huy Can and Che Lan Vien. A well-known
A satiric poet is Tu Mo (Ho Trong Hieu); formerly a writer of anti-French and anti-Bao Dai verse, he now directs his caustic pen at the “United States-Diem clique.”

A five-volume history of Vietnamese literature embodies the party line on this subject as laid down by Truong Chinh and To Huu and elaborated on by Dang Thai Mai and others. Tran Huy Lieu, who is in effect the regime’s official historian, has written a three-volume History of the Eighty-Year Struggle Against the French. Also well-known in this field is Tran Van Gian, author of The Vietnamese Working Class and editor of a seven-volume History of Vietnam for university use.

Publishing was greatly expanded—reportedly from 6 million volumes in 1955 to 24 million volumes in 1960—after the acquisition in 1954 of the extensive printing facilities of Hanoi and Haiphong. The Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow and a similar establishment in Peiping also contribute many periodicals in Vietnamese for distribution through the various outlets available to them in the country, among which presumably are the 34 major public libraries and more than 4,000 special libraries and public reading rooms which the authorities claim are in existence.

The propaganda value of children’s books has not been overlooked, and the Kim Dong publishing house has been established for the purpose. Its name perpetuates the memory of a young montagnard boy who died fighting the French.

Recognizing the strategic importance of the ethnic minorities of the highland regions—the montagnards—in the expansion and consolidation of their power, the Communists have not neglected these groups in their cultural programing. Novels and short stories by North Vietnamese writers often deal with their problems, and collections of montagnard folk songs and folk tales are published in Vietnamese translation. Truyen Tay Bac (Stories of the Northwest), by To Hoai, is a collection of stories about the montagnards in the struggle with France. Dat Nuoc Dung Len (The Homeland Rebels) is a fictionalized biography of a Bahnar guerrilla fighter by Nguyen Ngoc. An example of contemporary montagnard writings is The Song of the Viet-Bac People by the poet, Nong Quoc Chan (see ch. 4, Ethnic Groups).

Art and letters, like all fields of endeavor in North Vietnam, are highly regimented. There are writers’ associations; associations for “progressive journalists,” “artists”; “Associations for Peace”; and so on. The pervasive surveillance and control maintained through these organizational instrumentalities of the Lao Dong Party roused a storm of protest during the spring and autumn of 1956 when the regime briefly invited criticism from the people on
the equally brief Chinese Communist “Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom” policy of that period. The *Nhan Van-Giai Pham* affair—from the names of two sharply critical journals, *Nhan Van* (Humanities) and *Giai Pham* (Literary Masterpieces)—was met with strong disciplinary action against the participants and suppression of the offending publications (see ch. 23, Subversive Potentialities).

The Vietnamese fondness for drama is utilized particularly in the army as an aid to political indoctrination. Many mobile theatrical groups travel from unit to unit, concentrating on the regime’s main propaganda themes, such as condemnation of the United States and the “Diem Clique” in South Vietnam, denunciation of capitalism and promotion of current party policies and programs. *Hat cheo*, a kind of folk comedy combining music, drama and folk songs has been revived, and the immediacy of its appeal has been used to advantage in the villages.

**Recent Foreign Influences**

Many works by Russian, Chinese and American authors have been translated into Vietnamese. All the basic Marxist writings from those of the founder to Stalin and Mao Tse-tung have been put out in translation frequently in multiple editions. Stalin’s *Foundations of Leninism*, for example, has been reprinted at least seven times. In preparation in 1962 was a 40-volume edition of the works of Lenin. Other Russian authors translated and published include Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Chekhov and Gorki. Translations from Chinese range from the early colloquial classic, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, to the works of such modern Chinese writers as Lu Hsun, Kuo Mo-jo, Tsao Yu and Mao Tun. American writers considered worthy of translation include John Reed, Jack London, Walt Whitman and Mark Twain. Hemingway’s *Old Man and the Sea* has recently appeared in translation.
CHAPTER 10

EDUCATION

Both South and North Vietnam have worked vigorously since independence to expand their educational systems. In 1962 total enrollment in primary and secondary schools in the South more than trebled the 1954 figure, and enrollment in higher education was more than six times greater. According to Communist figures, even larger gains had been achieved in the North, but the precise extent of progress there could not be ascertained.

The aims of education in each area were closely linked with national goals. Systematic efforts were being made to raise literacy levels, to expand the ranks of skilled industrial workers and technical specialists, and to form a trained elite. In the South, a revised secondary-school curriculum gave new emphasis to courses designed to heighten civic responsibility and national consciousness. In the North, political indoctrination was emphasized throughout the entire system of instruction, and it reached a peak of intensity in the schools reserved for the children of Communist officials.

Although advances in education had been made, both North and South continued to be beset by many similar problems in respect to education. Of these, probably the most fundamental was the lack of qualified teaching personnel—a difficulty which had to be overcome if progress was to be continued without seriously undermining educational standards.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Confucian Scholarship

The educational system in Vietnam in the pre-French period bore the imprint of nearly 10 centuries (111 B.C. to A.D. 939) of Chinese rule and cultural influence. Confucianism, with its emphasis on learning and filial devotion, was a central force in a social order which gave highest place to the scholar. Education provided one of the few means by which a young man might move upwards in the social scale.

The aims of education were in keeping with the political and social structure of the society. The immediate purpose of formal training was to prepare young men for the examinations through which they might enter the mandarinate (see ch. 2, Historical Setting). The more esoteric purpose of education related to the cultivation of high moral character, especially an appreciation of the wisdom of the ancient sages of China and of Confucian principles.
With the exception of the Imperial College and a few other
government schools in Hue, education was neither financed nor
closely controlled by the government. Instruction was given in the
homes of scholars, in the pagodas, or in a community building
made available by the village council. Theoretically anyone might
attend and there was no age limit for schooling, but enrollment
was small and the sons of the mandarins had more opportunity to
acquire an education than had those of the uneducated. Among
the mass of the people there were few illiterates, but the number
of those who completed the entire course of study was small.

The program of study centered on the Confucian classics. Some
courses on Chinese history, Vietnamese history, ancient poetry
and military tactics were also taught. The language of instruc­
tion was Chinese.

Formal training culminated in a series of rigorous competitive
examinations. In the system which prevailed in the late eighteenth
and early nineteenth centuries, candidates for scholarly rank were
examined first in the provinces; then, if successful, in the capital
at Hue; and finally, at the highest level, in the Imperial Palace.
These examinations took place every 3 years. Successful candi­
dates, depending on which of the examinations they passed,
became low-, and middle- and high-ranking government officials.
Those who passed the court examination at the Imperial Palace
were called “Doctors of the First Class.” Theirs was considered
the supreme achievement, and it gave them and their families
special privileges and emoluments.

French Colonial Period

The introduction of Western learning and the abolition of the
mandarinate in the early and middle years of French colonial rule
(1868-1945) paved the way for the decline of Confucian education.
Having lost much of its value in a slowly modernizing society
administered by a Western power, traditional education faded out
in Cochinchina in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when
the mandarinate was completely abolished. The same process
occurred somewhat later in Tonkin and Annam. The last man­
darinate examinations were held in Tonkin in 1915 and in Annam
in 1918.

In the meantime formal French education had been developing
rapidly. Traditional schools were gradually replaced by new state
and missionary schools whose programs of study and methods of
instruction were similar to those prevailing in institutions in
France and which prepared Vietnamese youth to serve in the lower
ranks of the colonial administration. All classes were taught in
French.
In 1917 the French authorities organized a standard system of French education in Indochina, providing for a uniform syllabus for all schools and for highly selective examinations given at the end of each cycle of studies.

Elementary education, which covered a 7-year period for children aged 6 to 12, was subdivided into two 3-year cycles, the first leading to a certificate of elementary studies and the second to a certificate of primary studies. Secondary education was given in the lycées and collèges in the cities. This program included a 4-year higher primary cycle, leading to a diploma of higher primary studies, and a secondary cycle of 2 years (after 1927, 3 years) which ended in an examination for the baccalauréat.

Holders of the baccalauréat were eligible for admission to the University of Hanoi, which had been established by the French administration in 1917. By the late 1930's the University comprised schools of medicine and pharmacy, pedagogy, fine arts, agriculture and commerce. The teaching staff of the University was entirely French.

Although elementary education was theoretically compulsory in Cochinchina after 1927, a large majority of children received no schooling. In 1938, for example, in all Indochina there were only 406,669 pupils attending elementary schools, representing possibly less than one in five children in that age group. The number of students enrolled for secondary and university education was proportionately far smaller. The Roman Catholic Church, the Chinese community and the village councils—mainly in Annam—also played an important role in education during this period. In the late 1930's, out of a total private school enrollment of about 60,000 students, Roman Catholic mission schools accommodated about 36,000 pupils in 650 institutions.

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Administration

Government activities in the field of education in the Republic of Vietnam are the responsibility of the Department of National Education. The chief administrative official of the Department is the Secretary of State for National Education, a post held in mid-1962 by Nguyen Quang Trinh. His immediate deputies are a director of the cabinet and a secretary-general.

Internally, the Department of National Education is divided into a Directorate for Secondary-Elementary Education and Popular Education, a Directorate of the Cabinet and a General Secretariat. Control and administration of most matters pertaining to primary and secondary schools, teacher training and the literacy program is vested in the first of these agencies. The second, headed by the
director of the cabinet, deals with planning and legislation. The third, headed by the secretary-general, handles administrative matters. The universities, the Oceanographic Institute, the Institute of Archeology, the Archives, the National Library, cultural affairs and translation, editing and printing services are under the immediate control of the Secretary of State for National Education.

The line of authority in respect to administration of schools descends from the Directorate for Secondary-Elementary Education and Popular Education in Saigon through a provincial chief of service directly to school principals. The only matters on which local school principals report to local rather than national authorities are those having to do with finances and minor details of administration.

**Elementary and Secondary Schools**

Elementary education, intended for boys and girls aged 6 to 11, extends over a 5-year period beginning with grade 5 and ending with grade 1. After the fifth year, students take examination leading to the certificate of primary studies (*certificat d'études primaires*). Village schools generally provide only the first 3 years of the primary course. In certain rural areas where schools are lacking, special classes in reading, writing and other elementary subjects are held for children and youths aged 6 to 18 in community halls, pagodas or any other available space.

The curriculum of primary schools emphasizes Vietnamese language, national history, geography and civic action in the early grades. Moral education, general science, arithmetic and drawing are given in the upper grades. Teaching is largely by rote, and students are asked to memorize large portions of the subject matter in these fields. Each school period lasts 25 to 30 minutes. Classes normally meet for a total of 25 hours per week; on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays for a full day and on Wednesdays and Saturdays in the mornings only. The school year for elementary students lasts about 9 months and is divided into two semesters, with 3 months of summer vacation, and a holiday of 10 days at Tet (lunar new year).

In the early 1960's elementary education was provided in 4,266 public schools with 20,660 classrooms which accommodated 1,021,061 students. Over 18,000 teachers were employed in these institutions. In addition, there were 325 private primary schools with 105,752 students.

Enrollment increases have led to acute overcrowding in the schools, especially in Saigon and other cities. To provide for everyone, some schools have had to accommodate several shifts per day,
operating from 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Pupils are expected to provide their own textbooks and other supplies.

The creation of a Textbook Translation and Publication Service in the Department of National Education marked an important advance in primary education. This service supplies students with textbooks in Vietnamese and books and reviews translated from foreign languages, such as French, English and Chinese. In early 1961 the Service announced that it had printed almost 3 million textbooks by Vietnamese authors for use in the country's schools. These included works on the history and geography of Vietnam, mathematics, medicine and many other subjects.

As in France, secondary education continues over a 7-year period and consists of an initial 4-year cycle and a later 3-year cycle. The first cycle, from the seventh to the fourth class, includes work in Vietnamese history and geography, Chinese, English and French, civics, physics, chemistry and mathematics. It leads to the examination for the certificate of studies for the first cycle (brevet d'études du premier cycle).

Pupils who pass the examination given at the end of the first cycle with distinction can be admitted to the second cycle (from the third to first class) which ends in the examinations for the baccalauréat, first and second parts. Students concentrate in one of four chosen fields—modern languages, classical languages, mathematics or experimental sciences. The baccalauréat examination takes place twice a year, in May and July. Those who pass qualify for admission to institutions of higher education in Vietnam and abroad. But the examinations are difficult and highly selective. In 1960 only about one-third of the candidates passed the first part of the baccalauréat, and only slightly more than one-half passed the second part.

Like elementary education, secondary education was greatly expanded between 1954–55 and 1961–62. In that period the number of state secondary schools multiplied from 29 to 101, while attendance more than trebled. For example, the Lycée Gia Long, a state secondary school for girls in Saigon, accommodated 5,000 pupils in 92 classes in 1962 as against 1,200 in 22 classes in 1952.

Higher Education

Higher education is provided in three universities of which the largest and most important is the University of Saigon. Organized in 1955, the University includes on its staff many former members of the faculty of the University of Hanoi, most of whom had fled to the South after the signing of the Geneva Agreement in 1954. In 1962 enrollment at the University of Saigon was about 12,000, distributed among the Faculties of Law, Letters, Medicine (includ-
ing dentistry), Pharmacy, Education, Science and the Higher School of Architecture. Each faculty has its own administrative staff and library. Plans were underway in early 1962 to move the University from its site in the national capital to Thu Duc, about 8 miles outside the city, in order to build a new and enlarged campus. The new campus will provide housing, cafeterias and common rooms for 200 students and will include all faculties except the Faculty of Medicine, which was to remain in downtown Saigon. It will also include housing for faculty members.

Established in 1957, the University of Hue is far smaller than the University of Saigon, with a 1962 enrollment of about 200 students. The University has Faculties of Law, Letters, Science, Education and Medicine, as well as an Institute of Sinology (study of Chinese culture and language) and a Higher School of Fine Arts.

Both public universities are administered by a rector appointed by the President. The rector of the University of Saigon in mid-1962 was Nguyen Quang Trinh, who was also Secretary of State for National Education. His counterpart at the University of Hue was Cao Van Luan. Under the rectors are the deans of the faculties, who are also members of the teaching staff.

The University of Da Lat was established in 1957 by the Catholic Bishops of Vietnam at the instigation of the President’s brother, the Archbishop of Hue. Financed by the Catholic Church of Vietnam, it is composed of Faculties of Education, Letters and Science. In 1962 it had about 463 students.

Holders of the baccalauréat are admitted to most of the faculties of the universities without further examination. The Faculties of Education, however, select their students on the basis of an entrance examination. Students in education receive a government grant during the whole period of study, in return for which they are required to teach at the state secondary schools for 10 years following graduation or to reimburse the state for the cost of their education.

The duration of the course of study in institutions of higher learning vary according to the faculty. The course in the Faculties of Sciences and Letters at the University of Saigon, for example, covers 4 years. Examinations are given at the end of each year and certificates are awarded to those who pass. Successful completion of 4 years’ work earn the student a licence. The course in medicine covers 7 years’ work, architecture 6, dentistry and pharmacy 5, law and education 3.

As in the French universities, class attendance is not always required and the method of teaching consists mainly of lecturing. Research is not encouraged. Officially, classes are conducted in
Vietnamese rather than in French—a practice which was adopted in the Faculties of Law, Education and Letters in 1955 and in the Faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy and Science in 1961. Classes had not been taught in Vietnamese before that time because many members of the university faculties were foreigners and could not use the language, and also because Vietnamese scientific terminology was not adequately developed.

Since independence many South Vietnamese students have received higher academic education or technical training abroad through government or foreign scholarships provided by the United States, France and the countries participating in the Colombo Plan. Students may also seek higher education abroad at their own expense provided that the subjects to be pursued are not taught in South Vietnam and that the applicants are not of military age.

In 1959–60 nearly 2,500 South Vietnamese students were enrolled in educational institutions outside the country—in Western Europe, the United States and various parts of Southeast Asia. The largest number of students (2,059) in any single country were in France, the second largest number (102) in the United States. Recently the number of Vietnamese students, especially male students, going abroad has decreased sharply due to the state of emergency in the country.

**Technical, Vocational and Adult Education**

The technical and vocational education program in the South has undergone substantial expansion since independence. Vocational training at the primary level is provided in about 12 trade schools and 20 domestic science courses. Training at the secondary and advanced levels is offered in some 20 institutions of various types. These had a collective enrollment of about 5,000 students in the early 1960's.

Technical training at the beginning secondary level is given in apprenticeship centers, centers of applied arts and various technical schools. Admission to these institutions is by competitive examination, open to holders of a certificate of primary studies. The apprenticeship centers specialize in instruction in particular trades, such as carpentry, boilermaking and ironworking. The course lasts 4 years, leading to a vocational training certificate (certificat d'aptitude professionnelle). Schools of applied arts give training in furniture design, graphic arts, ceramics and other specialties and combine this with general academic work. These courses also cover 4 years and lead to a certificate of applied arts (certificat d'études d'arts appliqués). At the Collège Technique at Hue students pursue a 4-year program consisting of 2 years of
general academic work followed by 2 years of specialization in a technical field. Graduates receive the certificates of industrial training (*brevet d'enseignement industriel*).

Advanced secondary level vocational courses covering 3 years' work are open to holders of one of the above certificates. They are available in such schools as the junior technical schools in Saigon and Hue, the schools of fine arts in Giãh Dinh and Hue, the National Conservatory of Music, and schools of home economics in Saigon and Hue, and the School of Maritime Navigation at the National Technical Center at Phu Tho near Saigon. The mathematics course of the technical schools leads to the *baccalauréat technique* which is considered the equivalent of a general education *baccalauréat*.

Technical education beyond the secondary level is given at the National Technical Center at Phu Tho which was established by the government with assistance from the United States and France in 1957. The Center includes a Higher School of Radio and Electrical Engineering, a Higher School of Civil Engineering, a Higher School of Industrial Arts and the School of Maritime Navigation. All but the latter require a *baccalauréat* for admission. The period of training is 4 years.

Specialized vocational training is also given at two schools which are not a part of the system run by the Department of National Education. These are the National College of Agriculture at Bao Loc near Đà Lạt, maintained by the Department of Agriculture, and the National Institute of Administration, affiliated with the Presidency. A number of American teachers and technicians are attached as advisers to both these schools.

Foreign educators and advisers have also assisted importantly in the various adult education programs which were developed in the South in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The United States Operations Mission (USOM), for example, worked actively along with the South Vietnamese Government and private groups in the intensive literacy campaign launched in 1955. In that connection, an anti-illiteracy committee was established to supervise and direct adult education courses in every district, city, town and village in the country. The aim of this program is to teach reading, writing and arithmetic to all citizens 16 years of age or over, and to provide a brief introduction to health, history, geography, civics and music.

Adult education courses are held in the late morning or evening and usually last for 2 hours. Village halls, pagodas, churches, factories, various organizations' headquarters and school buildings are used for this purpose. School supplies are distributed free to the students. By 1958 enrollment in adult education had reached
over 1 million students, but by the early 1960’s, owing to the deterioration in security conditions, it had fallen to less than 30,000.

The Popular Cultural Association, a private organization, has played an important role in adult education. Established in 1954, the Association maintained popular polytechnic institutes in various cities. In addition to health and vocational education courses, these institutes offered classes in Chinese, Japanese, Italian, French, English and Spanish. More than 50,000 persons have attended the institutes.

Foreign language training for adults is also given by the Department of National Education through its English Laboratory and the Modern Languages School in Saigon and also by the Vietnamese-American Association. The English Laboratory accepts only civil servants who need to improve their language facility; the Modern Languages School, where French, English, Japanese, German and Spanish are taught, is open to the general public.

**Teachers and Teacher Training**

The training of an adequate number of teachers is a serious and continuing problem in the South. The country was hard pressed to replace the many French secondary school teachers and university professors who left the country after independence, and the rapid increase in school enrollments complicated the problem further.

The establishment of many new normal schools in Saigon and other large cities after 1959 did much to alleviate the problem, but in the early 1960’s the number of qualified teachers was still inadequate. Each year the Prefecture of Saigon alone needed about 200 additional elementary school teachers, but was able to recruit only about 20. Many positions were left vacant by persons called to military service; some were filled by substitute instructors, but the substitutes usually lacked professional training.

Teacher training for positions in the elementary schools is offered in normal schools at Saigon, Ban Me Thuot, Winh Long, Qui Nhon and a Fundamental Education Center at Khanh Hau, southwest of Saigon. These schools are open to graduates of the first cycle of secondary school and offer a full 3-year course or a concentrated 1-year program.

Secondary school teachers are trained at the universities in a program lasting 3 years. Nearly 300 persons were graduated from the Faculties of Education at the Universities of Saigon and Hue in 1961.

The scarcity of qualified teaching personnel for higher educational institutions is even more acute than the shortage of ele-
mentary and secondary school instructors. The country lacks facilities of its own for training persons to teach at the university level, and the number of South Vietnamese who have reached this level of training through study abroad is small. Thus many positions on the university faculties are held by foreign professors, mainly French, some of whom are not wholly successful owing to the language barrier.

Private Schools

In 1960–61 private education provided for 105,752 pupils in 327 elementary schools and 270,545 pupils in 243 secondary schools. Thus about 10 percent of all primary level pupils in the country and about 80 percent of secondary level pupils were attending private schools. Although privately run, these schools are subject to strict supervision by the Department of National Education and a few receive some financial help.

Of the various private schools organized by foreigners, the French schools are the most popular. Since the majority of the elite are graduates of French schools, a French education continues to be highly valued in Vietnam. The French schools have proportionally more qualified teachers, and a degree from a French school is generally regarded as preferable to an equivalent degree from a Vietnamese institution.

The most important French schools in Vietnam are the Jean Jacques Rousseau Lycée for boys and the Marie Curie Lycée for girls, both at Saigon. The Lycée Yersin at Da Lat and the Collèges of Da Nang and Nha Trang admit both boys and girls. Admission to these schools is made on the basis of entrance examinations. Other private schools that follow a French curriculum include a moderate number of institutions operated by religious orders and a few maintained by private Vietnamese individuals or groups.

At the French schools the majority of the teaching staff are French; Vietnamese teachers are employed only to teach Vietnamese. The curriculum is similar to that of schools in France, although Vietnamese students are required to study Vietnamese 4 hours per week.

Besides the French private schools, there are also a number of private schools operated by the Chinese community. In mid-1962 there were 16 Chinese secondary schools, 303 teachers and 5,635 students.

In addition to private schools, there are nearly 100 so-called semi-official schools which differ from both public and private institutions. The schools are supported completely by the state but are directed by a board of administration, usually chaired by the mayor of the locality or the provincial governor.
Education and the State

Since 1954 the government has instituted reforms aimed at meeting the nation's lack of trained administrators and technical specialists while enabling the mass of the people to attain at least a primary education. Under this program, French standards of instruction are to be maintained, but the orientation of course work is to become truly Vietnamese. New emphasis is being placed on the teaching of the Vietnamese language and literature in the secondary schools. Two hours a week are set aside for instruction in morals and civics. Teachers and university professors are required to attend political indoctrination courses in their spare time and are encouraged to inspire their pupils to respect traditional Vietnamese values and work for national unity.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Administration

The educational system is completely controlled by the government and the Workers' Party of Vietnam (Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam), the Communist party of Vietnam, usually called the Lao Dong Party. Responsibility for its operation and administration is centered in the Ministry of Education which, in mid-1962, was headed by Nguyen Van Huyen. The Ministry is in turn directed by the Council of Ministers and the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, which are composed exclusively of members of the Lao Dong Political Bureau (see ch. 19, Constitution and Government).

Elementary and Secondary Schools

The state-controlled school system includes public schools of various types ranging from informal primary-level classes held by local committees in the villages to large lycées in the major cities. Certain of these schools are open only to children of Communist officials of all categories.

A few private schools were permitted to exist alongside the public establishments as late as 1958-59 because the facilities of the public school system were inadequate, particularly at the secondary level. Information was lacking about whether they continued to operate after that time.

Pre-university education, a 10-year course begun by children at age 7, is divided into a primary stage of 4 years and two secondary stages of 3 years each. The bulk of enrollment is at the primary level. A Soviet journal reported that, in 1958-59, 964,855 pupils were enrolled in grades 1 through 4 in 5,125 schools, as against 116,922 pupils in grades 5 through 7 in 386 schools, and 15,140 in
grades 8 through 10 in 31 schools. In 1962 the government in Hanoi asserted that the primary- and secondary-school population had risen to 2.3 million pupils. This figure could not be verified, however, and on the basis of evidence from other sources, appeared to be greatly exaggerated.

Little information is available regarding the syllabus of elementary and secondary education other than that political indoctrination is stressed at all levels. Presumably beginning pupils are given rudimentary instruction in reading and writing. More advanced students concentrate on national literature, mathematics and foreign languages, with the addition of physics and chemistry in grades 8 through 10. The lack of books, maps, laboratories and other teaching aids undoubtedly impairs teaching standards, as do the size of classes, which sometimes run as high as 70 to 80 pupils under one instructor.

**Higher Education**

Higher education has apparently undergone rapid expansion since 1954. The government claims that in the early 1960's there were eight institutions of higher learning in the North, as against one during the French colonial period. These include the University of Hanoi (with Faculties of Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Literature and Languages, History, Geography and Natural Sciences), the School of Fine Arts, the Polytechnic School, the Superior Normal School, the Superior School of Agriculture and the Superior School of Economy and Finance. Attendance at higher educational institutions in 1962 is said to be 8,087 as compared with only 700 in 1939; teaching strength is reportedly 900 as compared with 79 in 1955. The size and speed of this increase suggests that it was achieved at considerable sacrifice of quality.

**Technical, Vocational and Adult Education**

Vocational and technical training, as well as specialized training in certain academic areas, have been given an important place in the educational system. Thousands of students are supposedly receiving specialized training in the fields of agriculture, communications, public health, fine arts, applied arts, music, languages, political economy and finance. The institutions in which such training is given are open to persons who have successfully completed 7 years of general schooling. They offer a 3-year course upon fulfillment of which students may be admitted to higher technical training schools. Certain of these secondary-level technical schools, together with advanced institutions and various government ministries, offer evening and correspondence classes for employed persons.
Since 1946 the regime has been working to raise the then low level of literacy, making use of both the school system and a corps of literate persons without formal training as spare-time instructors for adults. Special attention is being given to increasing literacy among the montagnards, and in some instances, writing systems have been developed for tribal languages where none had existed before (see ch. 5, Languages). In the early 1960's the government asserted that 90 percent of persons between the ages of 5 and 15 were literate.

**Teachers and Teacher Training**

Given the rapid expansion of school enrollment and the limited capacity of teacher-training schools, it is likely that the supply of qualified teachers is scarce. A number of French-trained instructors continued to be employed in the state school system during the late 1950's, but the rest of the primary and secondary teaching staff was composed of former Viet Minh fighters whose principal recommendation for the post had been their unqualified loyalty to the regime.

In the teacher-training system of the early 1960's, there is one higher level teacher-training school, the Pedagogical Institute, which accepts secondary school graduates for a 3-year course. It turns out fully qualified secondary school instructors. In addition, there are a number of other establishments where primary school teachers are trained. One type accepts young persons who have finished the fourth grade for a period of training lasting 3 years; the other accepts those who have completed the seventh grade for a 1-year course.

**Education and the State**

The regime makes full use of the school system in an effort to instill loyalty to the regime among all segments of the population. Through its tight control of the curriculum, it subjects the mass of students to continuous indoctrination in Marxist-Leninist ideology along with their regular schooling. This is accomplished by means of pictures, banners, Communist-prepared textbooks, patriotic songfests and political meetings which interrupt the regular classroom schedule at any time of day for periods up to 2 hours. Lao Dong cells are found in all schools.

Children of Communist officials and Communist youth are given separate schooling and even more intensive political instruction than ordinary children. They are trained in exclusive institutions where they have few contacts with other elements of the population and are under the direction of teachers who fought with the Viet Minh and are members of the Lao Dong Party. The Uni-
versity of Hanoi is the apex of this indoctrination system. Many youths are sent abroad for extended periods—to China, the Soviet Union or Communist-bloc countries of Europe—for secondary or higher education.
CHAPTER 11

RELIGION

Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, which anciently came into Vietnam from China, both influenced and were influenced by still older folk beliefs about spirits and supernatural powers still present in the religious expression of the people. Confucianism, as a formal doctrine, remained mainly the province of the educated scholar-bureaucracy, itself formed on the Chinese model. Taoism, relatively neglected by the educated, in time degenerated from its original philosophical sophistication into popular superstition and magic. Buddhism, with its advanced ethics, coherent explanation of human suffering and promise of individual salvation, gained adherents on all levels of society and became the dominant popular faith of the country.

Christianity was introduced by Catholic missionaries in the sixteenth century and was fostered under French rule. Today, about 10 percent of the people are Christians, mostly Roman Catholics, who constitute sizable minorities in both North and South.

The historical mingling of the several streams of Asian religious thought in Vietnam has produced not so much religious eclecticism as a tendency to employ various supernatural concepts and sanctions in different compartments of life. Confucianism was not without elements of supernatural belief, but its focus was on the ordering of human relations within the family and the nation, which was viewed as an enlarged family under a father-emperor. Confucian scholarship and public ritual were the province of the emperor and the scholar-officials, but Confucian precepts molded the values of the simplest villager, and every family head performed the rites honoring his ancestors. Within this Confucian social framework, the individual found no conflict in accepting the personal solace and hope proffered by Buddhism, while the uneducated and even in varying degrees the educated sought explanations and solutions to problems beyond their control in Taoist divination and magic and in good and bad spiritual entities and forces. Although Catholicism admits only those religious beliefs sanctioned by scripture and the teaching of the Church, it has in Vietnam accommodated itself to Confucian secular ethics, while remnants of heterodox belief persist among uneducated Vietnamese Catholics.

Under French rule Confucianism, which until then had been a central force in the society, declined in importance. In a slowly modernizing society, administered by a Western power, it encountered new ideas and forces with which it was less and less
able to compete. Long before the end of the colonial period it had lost its position as the dominant formal intellectual tradition. Its basic precepts, however, were deeply embedded in the morals and values of the people, especially the peasantry, and here its influence remained strong.

At the time of the division of Vietnam into North and South, in 1954, about 20 million Vietnamese were nominal Buddhists. Nearly 3 million belonged to the Cao Dai sect, which was a composite of Buddhist, Christian and animist elements, and the Hoa Hao sect, which was a variant of Hinayana Buddhism. Some 2 million were Catholics, and a very small number belonged to the Protestant denominations. The *montagnards*, who made up the bulk of the rest of the population, held a variety of local animist beliefs.

In the North the Communist regime is engaged in an effort to undermine Buddhism, Catholicism and animist beliefs. Formally claiming religious tolerance, it does not engage in overt persecution of the adherents of these faiths but rather weakens them by propagandizing their adherents, striking at their material support and educational apparatus, subverting some of their leaders, and imprisoning or exiling others on fabricated criminal charges. Having the only organized church in the area, the Catholic Church has been the one group in a position to offer effective resistance.

In the South the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom are maintained. In the first years of the Republic, the government, threatened by the armies of the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao politico-religious sects, took military action to end this armed challenge to its authority. The disarmed sects, however, continue undisturbed in their religious activities. Catholicism is the faith of the overwhelming majority of the approximately 1.5 million Christians in the country, among whom are President Ngo Dinh Diem and many ranking government officials. There seems to be no significant friction on the grounds of religious belief between the Christian minority and the rest of the population, which is nominally Buddhist.

**Buddhism**

The early concepts and doctrines of Buddhism were articulated in India in the sixth century B.C. by Gautama Buddha who taught the futility of all earthly endeavor and showed the way to achieving a state of nirvana, or union with the Mystical One that pervades the universe. According to Buddhist teaching every person must suffer the miseries of life through a series of incarnations, accumulating in successive lives sufficient merit by virtuous conduct to attain final sainthood and nirvana.
Buddhism over the centuries became one of the major religions of Asia. The two main branches of Buddhism are Mahayana, or the Greater Vehicle, and Hinayana, the Lesser Vehicle. Mahayana Buddhism, the form which prevailed in China, also predominates in Vietnam. The Hinayana Buddhism of neighboring Cambodia and Laos has some following in Vietnam and has influenced the modern Vietnamese politico-religious sects.

The doctrinal distinction between the two types of Buddhism rests on their respective views of Gautama Buddha. The Hinayanists regard him as the one Buddha and a great teacher, although not divine. The Mahayanists, on the other hand, teach that he was only one of many "Enlightened Ones," or Buddhas, who are deemed manifestations of the fundamental divine power of the universe. Theoretically any person may become a Buddha, but those who actually attain Buddhahood are rare. Saints who earnestly strive for such perfection are known as bodhisattvas. A pantheon of superhuman beings—Buddhas and bodhisattvas—are thus recognized and venerated in Mahayana temples.

Few Vietnamese are acquainted with or care about Buddhism's elaborate cosmology and the values it teaches. What appeals to them is Mahayana ritual and imagery, although even these play a limited role in Vietnamese religious life. The formalities of Mahayana Buddhism fit more easily into the patterns of Vietnamese folk religions than do those of Hinayana Buddhism; the Mahayana Buddhist saints and supernatural beings are treated in much the same way as are the spirits of indigenous folk religion.

The essentially autonomous Mahayana Buddhist temples are loosely affiliated in regional and national associations. The priests who maintain them, although they recite the appropriate litanies, are rarely learned in the sacred literature of Buddhism. On the occasion of a funeral or the celebration of a wedding, birth or anniversary, the Buddhist priest may be called in to offer prayers. His services may also be employed on special occasions as a spirit mediator. The Buddhist priest is also in demand to lead the community in solemn ceremonies of appeal to the Mahayana pantheon of spiritual beings on commemorative occasions and in times of trouble. The Chinese in Vietnam have their own Buddhist priests and Mahayana temples.

CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism originated in China in the teaching and writings of the followers of the moral philosopher, Confucius (551–479 B.C.). Confucian doctrine and the state and family rites which developed in connection with it had religious aspects, but their focus was on the secular ethics of individual conduct and social
relationships. Introduced into Vietnam during the thousand years of Chinese rule, Confucianism became, as in China, the official state cult and the dominant intellectual tradition of the Vieta­nese scholar-bureaucrats, or mandarins, who administered the country when it emerged from direct Chinese control.

Holding up the patriarchal family as the ideal human institution, the Confucianists framed their morality in terms of the duties and obligations of child to parent, wife to husband, younger brother to elder brother and of all to the father as the senior representative of the family group, the welfare and continuity of which was held to be more important than the interests of any individual member. The veneration of ancestors symbolized in the rites before the family ancestral altar affirmed the conception of the family as a supremely valued continuum of all its members—deceased, living and yet to be born. The Confucian scholars extended the familial model to comprehend the nation as a whole, with the emperor as father and the mandarins and the people as senior and junior members. The virtues which were held to be necessary for the harmonious functioning of this hierarchy were filial devotion, loyalty, benevolence, justice, propriety and respect for learning.

Mastery of the Confucian classics, demonstrated in a series of rigorous examinations, was the prerequisite to a place in the imperial bureaucracy. The rites performed by the emperor and his officials symbolically reinforced the Confucian teaching of a hierarchically arranged natural order, the harmony of which was to be maintained by the example of those above and the loyalty and obedience of those below.

The high ideals of Confucianism undoubtedly found expression in the conduct of many scholar-officials, and Confucian precepts strongly influenced the family life, personal relationships and attitudes of the illiterate mass of the people toward authority. Confucianism, however, had little to offer in the spiritual realm. Moreover, its rarefied ethical precepts often constituted little more than a verbal screen for behavior that departed widely from the formal ideal.

The advent of colonial rule in the nineteenth century destroyed the mandarinate by reducing the scholar-officials to the status of subordinate agents of the French administrators. Divested of its prestige as the ideology of a ruling elite, Confucianism also declined, a process hastened by the competition of new ideals and values from the West. The mandarinal examinations ceased to be held after 1918, and advanced Confucian studies thereafter were left to the interest of a dwindling number of individual scholars.

Despite the decline in its significance as a formal intellectual
tradition, Confucianism in the mid-twentieth century retains its importance as a traditional source of attitudes and values, at least among the peasantry. The Vietnamese villager still tends to feel that the family is more important than the individual, to venerate learning and to believe that man should live in harmony with his surroundings. The new, Western-trained official frequently lacks the moral authority of the Confucian mandarin among the people, for there is little correspondence between his values and those of the great majority of the peasantry, which is only beginning to be exposed to the intellectual influences of the modern world.

TAOISM

Like Buddhism and Confucianism, Taoism came to Vietnam from China centuries ago, where it began as a speculative philosophy centering on the notion of man's oneness with the universe. Its metaphysical preoccupation contrasted with the Confucian emphasis on the practical ordering of human relations.

Medieval Taoism developed a pantheon of gods and spirits under the influence of Mahayana Buddhism. Taoism in Vietnam today, however, has lost all touch with the thought of its Chinese founder and degenerated into a cult of magic practices. The Vietnamese consider the Taoist priests especially skilled diviners. The Taoist priesthood in Vietnam is a family calling handed down from father to son.

FOLK RELIGION

The disappearance of the state cult of Confucius and the eclipse of Confucianism as a formal intellectual tradition have not meant the end of the ancestral rites in the family, especially in the countryside and among the older people. The veneration of ancestors and the need to affirm symbolically the unity of the family finds expression even among Christians in a commemorative retention of some of the traditional observances. For the uneducated non-Christian, both Confucian concept and practice have fused with an unsystematic body of belief in spirits and magic.

The spirit world of Vietnamese folk religion is peopled with a great variety of supernatural beings, most of them maleficent, and with a host of wandering souls of criminals, spinsters and the victims of accidents. Certain rocks, trees, streams, ponds and other natural objects and some animals are also thought to have supernatural qualities. The dangerous entities are to be avoided, placated or otherwise circumvented, and the benevolent ones may be venerated or appealed to for help.

In most of the older villages a *dinh*, or shrine, houses the village
guardian spirit and usually the images of other deities as well. Guardian spirits preside over various occupations. Boatbuilders, for example, make offerings to their local guardian spirit in the ceremonials of “The Squaring of the Wood,” when the first blow of the adz is struck; “The Joining of the Mortises,” when the three pieces of the keel are joined; and “The Placing of the Beam,” when the supports for the main mast are put in place.

Diviners and other specialists in the occult are in popular demand. Diagnosing supernatural causes of illness, establishing lucky dates for personal undertakings of predicting the future, they employ methods ranging from spirit communication to palmistry and astrology. Practicing for small fees, they are most frequently resorted to by villagers and the urban poor, but some of them have an educated clientele.

CHRISTIANITY

Roman Catholic missionaries began to make converts among the Vietnamese at the outset of Western penetration into Vietnam in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the face of persecution by emperors and feared Western political and economic control and viewed Christianity as a threat to the established order. The imposition of French rule in the nineteenth century allowed the Church to extend its missionary efforts on a large scale. By the middle of the twentieth century, about 10 percent of the population was Roman Catholic, the highest proportion of Catholics in any Far Eastern country except the Philippines.

Although the French colonial regime did not officially concern itself with religious matters, the fact that France is overwhelmingly Catholic and its colonial officials were mostly Catholics gave the members of the Catholic hierarchy in Vietnam a special advantage. The Catholic clergy and laity in the South after 1954 enjoyed a similar advantage in that President Ngo Dinh Diem and many members of his administration were Catholics (see ch. 20, Political Dynamics).

There were about 1.5 million Catholics in the South in mid-1962 of whom about 600,000 had come as refugees from the North in 1954 after the signing of the Geneva Agreement dividing the country. They included both villagers and townspeople. The Catholic Church in Vietnam, as elsewhere, has shown a remarkable power of adaptation to local conditions. Although some churches are built in Western style, the architecture of most is Vietnamese Many pictures and images of Christ, the saints and the Virgin have Asian facial features.

The chief prelates of the Roman Catholic Church in the South in 1962 were the Archbishops of Saigon and of Hue. The Arch-
bishop of Hue was Monseigneur Ngo Dinh Thuc, brother of President Ngo Dinh Diem. The clergy numbered about 2,000. Four Vietnamese bishops, consecrated in 1961, served in provincial areas.

American Protestant missions have operated in Vietnam since World War I, but their activities have been mainly among the mountain tribes of the high plateaus of central Vietnam. Baptist and Seventh Day Adventist missions now exist in several cities, and some Vietnamese Protestant students are being sent to the United States for advanced theological training. Approximately 2,000 North Vietnamese Protestant refugees are grouped in three separate Protestant refugee villages in South Vietnam.

THE SECTS

The Cao Dai

Over 2 million Vietnamese belong to the politico-religious sect, the Dai Dao Tam Ky Pho Do, or Third Amnesty of God, which is popularly known as the Cao Dai. Cao Dai doctrine draws heavily on both Christianity and Buddhism. Its ritual shows the strong influence of Vietnamese folk religion, and it has adopted some organizational features from the Catholic Church. Its adherents are most numerous in the southwestern section of the Mekong Delta.

Nguyen Van Chieu, prophet and founder of the Cao Dai movement, first declared in 1919 that he was in communication with God, speaking to Him through an adolescent medium. Chieu believed Him to be the One True God, the Jehovah of the Jews and Christians, the Supreme Being of the Buddhists, the Brahma of the Hindus. Chieu later announced that God had granted mankind what he described as the Third Amnesty for sin. According to the Cao Dai founder, the First Amnesty was proclaimed to the West through Moses and Jesus; the Second Amnesty was proclaimed to the East through Buddha and Lao-tzu:

The Third Amnesty, unlike the first two, was not transmitted through an inspired prophet but was derived instead through spiritualistic seances. Chieu did not claim to be the final and greatest of the prophets; he asserted only that he was the first recipient of a new series of divine messages. Indeed, in 1926, when the Cao Dai sect first began to organize in earnest, Chieu stepped aside as leader in favor of a recent convert, Le Van Trung. Trung, a capable organizer, within a year increased the membership of the sect from a few hundred to over 20,000 including among the converts some high officials of the French colonial administration.

The center of the Cao Dai faith is in the city of Tay Ninh, north-
west of Saigon, seat of its cathedral and its administrative organization. The cathedral expresses in its structure and décor the background of the sect: its church towers are European in inspiration; the open sweep of its floor suggests a mosque; and its wall decorations of plaster cobras and dragons are reminiscent of a Buddhist pagoda. Statues of Confucius, Jesus, Buddha, Lao-tzu, Brahma, Siva and Vishnu are prominently displayed. According to Chieu:

*We don't believe that there is only one true and uniquely sanctifying belief. The Creator has scattered the seeds of truth over the centuries and over the continents of the earth. Jesus or Buddha or Lao-tzu, their message is at bottom only a form of the great divine truth. In their depths all religions come together.*

Dominating the great nave of the cathedral is a single staring eye—"the eye of God"—the supreme symbol of the religion. Four ceremonies are held daily in the cathedral—at six in the morning, at noon, at six in the evening and at midnight. During the midnight ceremony the spirits are questioned and God speaks to the believers through a medium.

The Cao Dai claims several spiritual "fathers" who are believed to give guidance to the sect through mediums. Three of these spiritual guides are Sun Yat-Sen, who overthrew the reign of the emperors in China and founded the Chinese Republic; Trang Trinh, a Vietnamese diviner, whose prophecies about the future are still highly regarded in Vietnam; and the French writer and poet, Victor Hugo.

The central organization of the Cao Dai consists of three main bureaus. The first, the Executive Corps Cuu Trung Dai, controls the temporal administration. The head of this bureau is held to be the Giao Tong, or "pope"—not a living person, but the sanctified spirit of the Vietnamese philosopher, Ly Thai Bach. The bureau in charge of religious affairs, the Legislative Body (Hiep Thien Dai), is headed by the highest-ranking living member of the sect, the Ho Phap, or Superior. The third bureau, the Charity Corps (Co-quan Phoc Thien), is a welfare agency charged with caring for the poor and invalid of the sect.

From the close of World War II until mid-1955 the Cao Dai played an important role in Vietnamese political affairs. It literally constituted a state within a state, administering and controlling a sizable area northwest of Saigon and maintaining its own army, which received support first from the Japanese and then from the French. In the spring and summer of 1955 the political power of the Cao Dai was broken (along with that of the Hoa Hao, a smaller politico-religious sect, and that of the Binh Xuyen, a political and racketeering organization) by the national government under the
leadership of President Ngo through a combination of negotiation and force. In February 1956 the Superior of the Cao Dai, Pham Cong Tac, fled to Cambodia and Vietnamese national troops took over Tay Ninh.

With the surrender of its armies and the death of Pham Cong Tac after his flight to Cambodia, the sect lost most of its temporal power, but none of its religious fervor. In South Vietnam the sect supports, at least outwardly, the national government of President Ngo. In Cambodia across the border, the sect has an unknown number of adherents in the Vietnamese minority and constitutes a dissident group which is inclined to cooperate with the Communist-sponsored National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. Members of the sect appear unable to agree on the appointment of a new Superior who can resolve their differences.

The Hoa Hao

The Hoa Hao sect, essentially a variant of Hinayana Buddhism, was founded in 1939 by Huynh Phu So. So impressed people with his sincerity and zeal, and stories spread of miraculous cures he performed with simple herbs and acupuncture—a Chinese medical technique for curing illness, by which the skin is pierced with needles.

Huynh Phu So set forth his religious ideas—first preached on village street corners and canal intersections—in his book Sam Gian (Oracles and Prayers). His basic theme stressed the importance of internal faith and the unimportance of external experience. "It is better," he wrote, "to pray with a pure heart before the family altar than to perform elaborate ceremonies in a pagoda, clad in the robes of an unworthy priest."

Huynh Phu So approved of prayers and offering only to Buddha, the ancestors and the national heroes. Every member of the sect was expected to pray four times a day. Although the ancestors were venerated, Huynh Phu So particularly disapproved of elaborate and expensive funerals.

In the chaos following the Japanese surrender, Huynh Phu So led his followers into politics, forming the Vietnam Social Democratic Party (usually called the Dan Xa). In April 1947 he was ambushed and killed by the Viet Minh and his remains were scattered. No leader of equal stature emerged in the sect after Huynh Phu So's death. Consequently the extensive area southwest of Saigon, where the Hoa Hao were concentrated, broke up into a number of so-called Hoa Hao "baronies" ruled like feudal states.

In the spring of 1955, the central government in Saigon asserted its control over the entire area, using military force. Several of the
Hoa Hao leaders were outlawed and the most powerful of them, Ba Cut, was arrested in April 1956, tried, and executed in July.

The Hoa Hao no longer has significant religious or political influence. Moreover, it has been unable to replace Huynh Phu So’s dynamic leadership. Should such leadership reappear, Hoa Hao adherents, recalling their former strength, might again become an important religious and political force.

RELIGION UNDER THE COMMUNIST RULE

The 1960 Constitution of the Communist regime asserts that citizens enjoy freedom of belief and “may practice or not practice a religion.” As early as 1955, a law was enacted which gave religious groups the right to hold property for religious observances, but not for income purposes. The law also permitted the Catholic authorities to maintain their relations with the Holy See.

These formal guarantees have been accompanied by a systematic effort by the regime to eradicate religious belief and organized worship. This campaign has met relatively weak resistance from Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religion, which lack any strong institutional framework. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, with its strong organization, trained priesthood, well-defined laity, and external support has had a capacity to resist.

The largest number of Vietnam’s Catholics originally lived in the Red River Delta. In the period immediately after World War II, the Catholic Church in Vietnam, identifying itself with the independence movement, supported the Viet Minh. From 1947 onward, however, as the Communist character of the Viet Minh leadership became obvious, relations between the Church and the Viet Minh rapidly deteriorated. The Church thereafter was confronted with the open hostility of the regime.

By 1954, when the country was partitioned, the majority of Catholics north of the 17th parallel were eager to escape Communist pressures. The Communist authorities, who had agreed at Geneva to a limited period of free movement between the North and South, made strenuous efforts to prevent the ensuing mass exodus to the South. In many cases entire villages, led by their priests, departed. The flight was political embarrassment to the Communists and deprived them of needed manpower and skills, but it left in the North a weakened Church which could more easily be brought under control.

The methods employed against the Church have generally involved subtle harassment and subversion rather than overt persecution. The laity, which did not exceed about 300,000 in 1962, has been subjected to various discriminatory measures. For example,
a special "talisman" tax has been demanded of persons wearing religious medals. Contributions for Masses have been taxed at a rate of 60 percent. As of 1962 only 3 of the 10 seminaries in the area were still functioning, and these had a total enrollment of less than 100 seminarians. Of 32 foreign Catholic missionaries in 1954, 6 remained, most of them having been expelled from the country. Catholic publishing had ceased.

Accompanying the systematic effort to starve the Church financially, cut it off from outside support and deny it the ability to maintain the ranks of its clergy through seminary training, there is a continuing campaign aimed at subverting both priests and laity. One of the instruments of the campaign is the Committee of Liaison of Patriotic Vietnamese Catholics and Lovers of Peace. The regime appears to have succeeded in placing a few Vietnamese priests and brothers in positions of leadership in this and similar organizations.
CHAPTER 12
PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA

Modern methods of public communication are only beginning to reach outside the cities and larger towns of South Vietnam. Newspapers, magazines and books circulate mainly among the urban minority whose members also make up the bulk of radio and motion picture audiences. An increasing number of radio receivers in the villages are bringing more country people within the orbit of the developing broadcasting system. The average peasant, however, continues to depend primarily on the announcements of local officials and on personal contacts for news of the world outside his community.

Information about news media in the North is fragmentary. Indications are that the audience of the press, books and films is, as in the South, chiefly urban, but that radio broadcasts are heard by a larger percentage of the people. Public loudspeakers carry the output of government transmitters to villages throughout the area.

In the South radio broadcasting is the only news media which is a government monopoly, but official controls working through a variety of devices narrowly restrict the latitude of the public expression of private opinion. In the North all news media are, like the schools, the mass organizations, writers' and artists' associations, and every other agency capable of influencing public opinion, directly or indirectly controlled by the ruling Lao Dong Party.

The Communists are sending subversive propaganda into South Vietnam directly from the North by radio and through the clandestine apparatus of the Viet Cong and the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, a Communist front organization in South Vietnam which is directed by the North Vietnamese regime. The basic propaganda line is aimed at identifying the Hanoi regime as the champion of Vietnamese independence and welfare and at condemning President Ngo and his government as willing agents of an imperialist United States.

BACKGROUND

Publication of the first Western-style newspapers in Vietnam dates from the 1880's; radio broadcasting began in the 1930's. During the colonial period, press, radio, periodicals, books and films all gained some importance as communications channels in the few large cities. Throughout most of the country, however, news continued to be spread almost entirely by word of mouth. Because travel was difficult and the interests of the mass of rural peasants were strongly local, news generally did not carry far, and
most villagers knew or cared little about events outside their own communities.

Characteristic of the period was the close supervision of the press exercised by the colonial authorities. Many of the early newspapers were founded by Vietnamese chafing at French controls. The violence of their criticism was soon met by strict censorship, and by 1954 when independence was achieved, government regulations and supervision of the press had long been a feature of national life. Vietnamese might object to it in the hands of the French, but it was a familiar pattern which their own leaders found natural to employ.

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Information Media

In mid-1962 most of the population continued to get the greater parts of its information on current events by word of mouth. The radio and press were reaching more people, however, and in urban areas they were significant factors in the formation of public opinion.

The Press

In 1960, 28 daily newspapers, with a total circulation of less than 300,000 were published in the South. They included 17 Vietnamese-language papers, 9 Chinese, 1 French and 1 English. All but one of these were published in Saigon. Sales in Saigon accounted for about 45 percent of their total circulation, a concentration which reflected both the distribution difficulties and the low level of literacy outside the capital and a few other cities. Only a half dozen papers had a circulation of more than 5,000, and most of the smaller ones were not distributed outside of Saigon.

The government owns the only domestic news agency, Vietnam Presse, which supplies much of the local and national news and most of the foreign news in the domestic press. Vietnam Presse has an exchange agreement with Agence France Presse and subscribes to the services of Reuters, the Associated Press and the United Press International. It also maintains its own correspondents abroad.

The most widely read newspaper in the South is Saigon Moi, which has 25,000 to 40,000 readers Monday through Friday and 120,000 on Saturdays, when the lottery returns are published. Although the newspaper supports government policy, its content is largely nonpolitical, focusing on general news and features with particular attention to welfare matters and affairs of interest to women.

Another important newspaper is Cach-Mang Quoc-Gia, the
official organ of the National Revolutionary Movement. First published in 1955, it is devoted largely to political matters and is popularly regarded as the "government paper." Its limited circulation (15,000 in 1960) is largely among National Revolutionary Movement members or agencies.

The leading Vietnamese-language newspapers are generally published in four pages of eight 24-inch columns. National and international news appears on the front page, provincial items on the last, and serialized novels and feature articles on the inside pages.

Chinese-language papers account for the bulk of the circulation of minority-language papers. Most of them consist chiefly of news, features and opinion on matters primarily or exclusively of interest to persons of Chinese origin. News dealing with Communist China and Taiwan is given extensive coverage, as are reports on political, business and social activities in Cho Lon, the principal Chinese community in the country.

The leading French-language paper is Le Journal d'Extrême Orient, formerly the semiofficial organ of the colonial administration. Taken over by a private publishing firm after 1954, the newspaper continues to reflect the French viewpoint in reporting international affairs. It circulates in Cambodia and Laos as well as in South Vietnam.

Periodicals

The combined circulation of the country's weekly newspapers and periodicals in 1960 was less than 400,000. Two-thirds of the readers were in the Saigon area. Many of the journals were published by scientific or professional groups and had extremely small circulations; but a few, such as Extrême Asie, were of more general interest and attracted a substantial number of readers.

Books and Pamphlets

Saigon is a publishing center for books and pamphlets, as well as for newspapers and periodicals. The government maintains a modern printing plant there, which was equipped with United States assistance. The plant produces mainly pamphlets, posters and other materials for the Directorate General of Information. In addition, there are a few private book publishing and printing firms, most of which lack modern printing and binding equipment.

Radio

In late 1961 the state-owned National Broadcasting System of Vietnam (Vo Tuyen Viet Nam—VTVN), also called Le Radio-diffusion National du Vietnam, consisted of a main station in Saigon and regional stations in Hue, Da Lat, Nha Trang and Khanh Hung. The Saigon station broadcasts on 4 medium-wave
and 7 short-wave bands, using transmitters ranging in power from 1 to 50 kilowatts.

Network facilities were considerably expanded during the first six months of 1962. Another transmitter, reportedly of 50 kilowatts, was constructed for the Saigon station, and new regional broadcasting stations were opened in the towns of Quang Ngai, Qui Nhon, Ban Me Thuot and the Province of Ba Xuyen. Completed in May 1962, the new transmitter at Saigon was expected greatly to improve reception in the jungle and mountainous regions of the South and to reach points as distant as Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines.

In the early 1962 it was estimated that there were about 320,000 privately owned radio receivers in use, mostly in Saigon and other cities. Two thousand radios, including 295 community sets with loudspeakers, were awaiting distribution, pending a check on the loyalty of the prospective recipients.

Films

The importance of motion pictures as an information channel is slight but increasing. Most of the films shown are of French or American origin; less than 10 percent are produced domestically. Of that small proportion, the majority are educational films made under government auspices. Government censorship, the high tax on admission and other restrictive measures limit the interest of private domestic companies in producing films.

In 1960 there were 177 motion picture theaters in the South, of which 61 were in Saigon. The seating capacity of these theaters was 83,000.

Word-of-Mouth Communication

The traditional reliance on oral transmission of information is reinforced by suspicion of the reliability of the tightly controlled radio and press, and people tend to give more credence to hearsay information than to information received through more formal channels. Rumors and reports originate in diverse settings ranging from the executive residence in Saigon to the market place, where they are picked up and passed on by members of the armed services, pedicab drivers, traveling food vendors and others whose activities bring them into contact with new listeners.

In the provinces the people look to village elders and officials, members of the military services and religious leaders for information. Country women who sell produce in the markets of towns near their villages are also important links in the chain of person-to-person communication. News and gossip are generated and passed on also at the dink, the village community center, where
people gather in the evening and carry home what they have heard to friends and neighbors.

**Government Control**

The South has no press law, as such. The legal basis for the government's control of newspapers and other publications lies in statutes pertaining to morality and public security. The ruling on public security, set forth in a presidential decree of February 1956, forbids the publication of statements which "could be exploited by subversive elements" or which might threaten security and order in some other way.

The most important of the government's regulatory measures are: the allocation of newsprint; the control of circulation and distribution through the state-supported Thong Nhut distribution agency, which has a monopoly in this field; the issuance of daily news bulletins from Vietnam Presse for the guidance of editors; and rigorous postpublication screening to detect any violations of regulations.

Other measures include the review activities of the Bureau of Motion Picture Censorship, an agency of the Directorate General of Information, and the prefiling scrutiny of stories by foreign correspondents.

**Domestic Propaganda Agencies**

Until mid-1961 responsibility for various governmental activities in the field of information was divided among five agencies; the Directorate of Radio Broadcasting; Vietnam Presse; the Youth Affairs Agency; the Special Commissariat for Civic Action; and the Directorate General of Information, which from 1955 to 1958 had been known as the Department for Information and Youth and, before that, as the Department of Information and Psychological Warfare.

The Directorate General of Information performed varied functions, including: issuing licenses for the publication of newspapers and magazines; screening the domestic press for objectionable political material; censoring books, films and foreign newspapers before releasing them for general circulation; and producing motion pictures, photographs, pamphlets, posters and other information materials for distribution in the provinces.

In mid-1961 the Directorate General of Information and the other four agencies were brought together as subordinate elements of the newly organized Department of Civic Action. Information about the distribution of duties among them is lacking.
Activities

In addition to its regulatory activities the government employs information media of its own, ranging from radio broadcasting to handbills, to explain its policies and enlist popular support for them. In mid-1960, for example, more than one-third of the weekly broadcast time of the state-owned radio was devoted to news analysis, political commentaries, economic summaries and profiles of leading personalities. The President has addressed the nation by radio on numerous occasions on such topics as national independence, personalism, economic progress and the need for austerity and sacrifice. He has also made many personal appearances at openings of new factories and agrovilles.

In the countryside the government relies heavily on informal channels to announce and explain new programs, interpret political developments and counter Communist propaganda. Much news in the village originates with the civil status councilor, an official who functions as part of the village council but is ultimately responsible to the Department of Civic Action in Saigon (see ch. 21, Public Order and Safety).

The principal responsibility of the civil status councilor, who frequently is a member of the Republic Youth Movement (Cong Hoa), is the "universalization" of information received from the central authorities (see ch. 20, Political Dynamics; ch. 21, Public Order and Safety). He may post the information on a bulletin board, write it on a blackboard inside the village hall or pass it along to the hamlet chiefs of five-family units, who relay it to the persons for whom they are responsible. The councilor also distributes posters, banners, leaflets and photographs.

The government also uses political and women's organizations to spread its message in rural areas and to organize rallies and parades in support of its policies and programs. One such group is the militant National Revolutionary Movement, with branches throughout the country, in which the President's brother, Ngo Dinh Can, is an influential figure. Another is the Vietnamese Women's Solidarity Movement, a nationwide organization of women, which operates social centers in many districts and maintains a corps of trained members who address women's groups and interview housewives (see ch. 17, Public Welfare).

The basic themes the government seeks to develop are those of nationalism, independence and unity, austerity and sacrifice, denunciation of communism and defense against Viet Cong terrorism. Posters and signs in towns and villages across the country present such slogans as "The campaign for the defense of the village will surely succeed;" "Only the government can achieve the national goals of liberty and independence;" and "To join the Farmers' Association is to raise the people's living standards."