order of a doctrine which founded its morality on the will of God rather than on a concept of duty to family and state. Missionary activity was forbidden, but only at intervals was the ban enforced. Christianity spread among the poor, and Jesuit scholars trained in the sciences were welcomed at the northern and southern courts where they were able to make their influence felt among the privileged and educated.

The rule of the Tay Son brothers was brief, and with their fall the West, through the agency of the French, assumed a new and larger role in the affairs of the country. Early in the Tay Son rebellion, Nguyen Anh, the last descendant of the southern Nguyen lords, escaped annihilation with the aid of a French missionary, Pigneau de Behaine, Bishop of Adran. In 1787 the Bishop, who had hopes of placing a Christian prince on the throne of Annam, arranged an alliance in which France promised military aid in return for extensive commercial concessions and the grant of the port of Da Nang and the islands of Con Son (Isles de Puolo Condore).

When disagreement in France blocked the promised assistance, Pigneau privately organized a small force of Frenchmen to help Nguyen Anh. The bloody struggle which followed ended with the defeat of the last Tay Son king in 1802 and the installation of Nguyen Anh as the Emperor Gia Long—Gia Long being the contraction of Gia Dinh (then Saigon) and Thanh Long (Hanoi). With the founding of the Nguyen dynasty at Hue, the reunified country was renamed Vietnam (the Viet of the South). In 1803 the emperor’s authority was formally recognized by the Chinese Ch’ing dynasty, to which he agreed to pay tribute biannually. The Nguyen dynasty lasted until the abdication of Bao Dai at the end of World War II.

Gia Long, who regarded Christianity as potentially subversive, never accepted the faith as Bishop Pigneau had hoped, but, out of gratitude to him, he did not persecute Christians as his successors did. In general, he followed a policy of aloofness from the West, which succeeded primarily because, at the time, the Napoleonic wars were occupying all of France’s attention.

Minh Mang, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc, Gia Long’s immediate successors, were unfriendly to Europeans and suspicious of the motives of both the traders and the missionaries. Cruel and indiscriminate repressions and persecutions were launched against both the missionaries and the sizable convert communities.

Under this dynasty, more than two centuries of struggle between Vietnam and Siam (Thailand) for control of Cambodia reached a critical stage, and in the process the two competing powers earned the intense enmity of the Cambodians. Whenever opportunity presented itself, Vietnam proceeded to impose its own culture and institutions on the Cambodians, and after 1884 Cambodia was virtually subjected
to direct Vietnamese rule. Shortly thereafter the Cambodians, encouraged by Siam, rebelled against the Vietnamese, and the ensuing inconclusive military conflict between Siam and Vietnam ended in 1845, when the two powers agreed to set up joint control over Cambodia. This dual vassalage was terminated in 1863 with the establishment of a French protectorate over the area.

The cultural outburst during this dynasty was one of the most brilliant in Vietnamese history. The *chu nom* was extended to many categories of literature. The national masterpiece, *Kim Van Kieu*, an epic poem, appeared in *chu nom*. After that the indigenous script became more and more widely used, to the exclusion of Chinese. Hue emerged as the center of literary and artistic activities. In addition to the architecture and sculpture, the bronzes and enamel work were also outstanding. Behind this rich facade, however, the economy was stagnant, and intellectual life received little fresh impetus from outside sources. At a time when the West was developing at an astounding pace, Vietnam was rehashing and reenacting philosophies and policies that had changed little over the centuries. The arrival of the new techniques and ideas from the West jolted Vietnam into a reevaluation of its traditions.

**THE FRENCH CONQUEST (1858-83)**

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century pressure was mounting in influential French quarters for positive action to establish a position for France in Vietnam of the kind other European powers enjoyed, or were acquiring, elsewhere in Asia. The missionaries had been roused to an angry militance by the imprisonment or execution of some of their number and by the periodic persecution of Vietnamese Christians. The imperial ban had not halted missionary activity in the country, but it was clear that the authorities would never cease to obstruct Christianity unless forced to do so. Considerations of French national prestige and military advantage were also present, as was the desire for a share of the economic benefits to be had from an aggressive policy in Asia.

In September 1857 all these factors led to France's decision to take Tourane (Da Nang). The city was captured in 1858, and the French thereafter turned their attention to the south. Inflicting heavy losses on the Vietnamese, they took Saigon by July 1861. In June 1862 the Vietnamese court at Hue ceded Saigon and the adjacent area to France and agreed to pay a war indemnity. They also promised not to cede territory to any other power without French permission. The western part of the southern delta, which was virtually cut off from the rest of Vietnam, was annexed by France in 1867, thus completing the territorial formation of what later became the French colony of Cochin China.
The French next turned their attention to the Red River, having found the Mekong unsuitable as a trade route to China because of its rapids. A treaty was signed in 1874 which opened the Red River to French traders, but Chinese pirates largely nullified the value of the concession. In 1883 an expeditionary force brought northern Vietnam under French control, and the signing of a Treaty of Protectorate on August 25, 1883, formally ended Vietnam's independence.

CONSOLIDATION OF COLONIAL RULE (1883–1900)

The treaty of 1883 and one of June 1884 established French protectorates over northern Vietnam (Tonkin) and central Vietnam (Annam). All of southern Vietnam (Cochin China) had been in French hands since the conquest in 1867 and now, with the abrogation of what was left of the country's independence, the name "Vietnam" itself was officially eliminated. In Annam, the emperor and his officials were left in charge of internal affairs, except for customs and public works, but they functioned under the eye of the French, who had the right to station troops in the area. The protectorate over Tonkin made few concessions to the appearance of autonomy, and French resident officers in the larger towns directly controlled the administration.

These developments did not go unchallenged. The Chinese denied the validity of treaties made with the Vietnamese without their approval. The French defeated a Chinese force sent in to win control of a part of Tonkin. China in 1885 formally recognized the French Protectorate over Tonkin and Annam. The Vietnamese were more difficult to cope with. Beginning in 1885, under the 12-year-old Emperor Ham Nghi, a general uprising broke out against the French. It failed and Ham Nghi was exiled in 1888. Active armed resistance, led by such men as De Tham and Phan Dinh Phung, continued into the early twentieth century but failed largely because the movements were localized and made no systematic attempts to arouse popular nationalist sentiments.

The final phase of French consolidation was marked by the formation of an Indochinese Union in 1887. Consisting of Tonkin, Annam, Cochin China and Cambodia (a French protectorate since 1863), the Union was administered under a French governor general who was responsible directly to the Ministry of Colonies in Paris. In 1893, Laos, following annexation by France, was also added to the Union (see fig. 8).

The basic political structure of French Indochina was completed by 1900. Each of Vietnam's three regions was treated differently, although basic policy decisions for all usually originated in Paris. Cochin China was administered directly by a French-staffed civil service under a governor and a colonial council. It also sent a representative to the Chamber of Deputies in Paris. The colonial council, a
Figure 8. French Acquisitions in Indochina in the Nineteenth Century.
legislative body, consisted of both French and Vietnamese members. In the administrative apparatus, only subordinate positions were open for Vietnamese. In the protectorate of Tonkin, the mandarinate was retained for administrative purposes, but important executive powers were vested in a French senior resident at Hanoi. In Annam, where the emperor was still nominally in power and the mandarinate continued to function, French rule was only a little less direct.

On the whole, French rule was much more liberal in Cochin China than in Annam or Tonkin. Cochin China was administered under the French judicial system, whereas in Tonkin and Annam the traditional judicial system, marked by extreme severity, was retained and applied by using the mandarinate as a front.

THE IMPACT OF FRENCH RULE

French influence permeated nearly all walks of Vietnamese society. With the aid of modern science and technology, the French undertook to develop a society which would be patterned after their own but, at the same time, uncritically submissive to colonial rule. In the process, stabilizing forces of the traditional order were disrupted, and workable alternatives were lacking. The resulting social tensions and stresses paved the way for the political awakening of the people.

Meanwhile, French nationals took over all important governmental administrative and managerial positions. The traditional mandarinate declined sharply in social prestige and political influence. As a direct consequence, aspiring Vietnamese turned to Western-type rather than to Chinese-type schooling, traditionally the most important means for the attainment of power and wealth. This shift exposed educated Vietnamese to liberal and radical political ideals of the West, stimulating them to question the capability of their Confucian-oriented social order to withstand new challenges from the West. Direct contact with French culture, especially during World War I when about 100,000 Vietnamese served on the European front, further accelerated the introduction of new ideas. At the same time many educated people began to demand the right to self-determination.

French influence, especially pronounced in urban areas, also left a discernible imprint on the rural society. The traditional village institution was gradually affected by stimulating forces emanating from the highly centralized administrative system, the improved network of communications and transportation, and the penetration of cash economy. The village notables could no longer command the authority they once had, and, as a result, social cohesion weakened. The French policy of establishing large landed estates, especially in Cochin China, tended to strip villages of communal land, which had been the major source of social insurance to the needy peasants. Much of the communal land fell into the hands of speculators and absentee
landowners. As a result, the rural society became increasingly sub­
jected to disruptive forces beyond its control. A growing tax burden,
combined with rapid increases in the number of landless peasants and
in total population, brought about progressive impoverishment in
rural areas. Surplus rural manpower was absorbed partially by
industries in the north and by rubber plantations in the south, but in
the absence of protective labor legislation the plight of urban workers
proved to be equally distressing.

In the economic sphere the colonial policy was geared mainly to
benefit metropolitan France. Indochina was transformed not only
into a source of raw materials but also into an exclusive market for
tariff-protected French goods. To facilitate French domination,
canals, drainage systems, railroads, harbors and highways were ex­
tensively constructed. Large tracts of virgin land in the Mekong
Delta were opened for rice cultivation, thereby making Indochina
an important rice exporter. Most of the new land fell into French
hands or into the hands of Vietnamese landlords who collaborated with
the French. These landlords derived substantial portions of their
wealth from high rents and from practices of usury.

Although much French profit went out of the country, some re­
mained for investment in light industries and rubber plantations,
from which the Vietnamese were virtually excluded. By 1938 nearly
95 percent of all foreign investments were in French hands. As a
result, Vietnamese capital continued to be invested in land. On the
whole, industry became the exclusive domain of the French investors,
whereas the control of agriculture was shared by French and Vietnam­
es elements. The two sectors were linked by Chinese middlemen,
dominating rice trade and retail business in both urban and rural
areas.

The impact of French rule was most pronounced in Cochin China,
which was directly ruled by French officials and dominated by French
business. Western influences, however, also penetrated some indus­
trial cities of Tonkin. Annam was least affected, as the area afforded
little opportunity to French entrepreneurs, compared with the rubber
plantations in the south and the industrial potential of the north.
Furthermore, the presence of the Vietnamese court at Hue with its
ceremonial rites kept alive the traditional structure.

THE RISE OF NATIONALISM

Early in the twentieth century nationalist movements began to
develop, initially among urban intellectuals. Japan's victory over
Russia in 1905 gave impetus to nationalist sentiment by demonstrating
that an Asian nation with sufficient technical knowledge and equip­
ment could prevail over a Western power. Despite the watchfulness
of the French authorities, numerous anti-French secret societies sprang
up, but most of them were loosely organized and had no well-defined political objectives. Nascent nationalism drew its inspiration mainly from outside sources—Europe, China and Japan.

A distinguished scholar, Phan Boi Chau, is popularly regarded as the founder of nationalist movements. Vietnamese independence, he thought, could best be achieved by enlisting the support of, or emulating Japan, and in 1906 he went to Japan to promote his cause. Through his writings and the leadership of a group of Vietnamese intellectuals who shared his exile, he gained a wide following. His activities were a source of embarrassment to the Japanese Government, and he was expelled in 1910, but he continued his work from exile in China, where he succeeded in uniting most of the nationalist groups outside of Vietnam in the Association for the Restoration of Vietnam (Viet Nam Quang Phuc Hoi). He organized a government-in-exile under Prince Cuong De, a direct descendant of Gia Long and claimant to the throne of Annam. Despite intensive clandestine propaganda efforts, his movement—whose objective was to oust the French and restore monarchical rule in traditional form and to promulgate a constitution on the Japanese model—failed to enlist mass support.

While Phan Boi Chau led a nationalist movement from outside the country, others worked in Vietnam for similar goals. Phan Chau Trinh, another scholar, led a group of nationalists who sought French rather than Japanese assistance. Believing that the French could be persuaded to prepare the Vietnamese for eventual independence, he presented a memorandum along these lines to the French governor general in 1906. His proposals were ignored, however, and when he continued to agitate for reforms and formed various study groups, he was imprisoned by the French authorities.

From the group of scholar-officials also came the leaders of an uprising in 1916 to which young Emperor Duy Tan lent his support. Several hundreds of the participants were executed or deported, and Duy Tan himself was sent into exile. After this disaster, resistance by the scholars subsided, but it did not disappear.

By the early 1920's a new socioeconomic group had emerged which had been made wealthy by the acquisition of newly developed lands through cooperation with the French. Many of these persons, especially in Cochin China, sought the privileges of French citizenship for themselves and frequently sent their children to France to be educated. Some of them, however, still cherished nationalist sentiments and advocated Franco-Vietnamese collaboration and gradual reform. In 1923 two such leaders, Bui Quang Chieu and Nguyen Phan Long, founded the Constitutionalist Party in Saigon. This was the first Vietnamese political organization to be sanctioned by the French authorities, but lukewarm French response and lack of mass support only brought disillusionment to its leaders.
A number of nationalist groups found inspiration in the Chinese nationalist movement. Of these, the best known and most important was the Vietnam Nationalist Party (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang—VNQDD). It was established first in 1925 in Canton, then the center of the revolutionary ferment in China, in opposition to the Association of Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth (Viet-Nam Thanh-Nieu Cach-Mang Dong-chi Hoi), precursor of the Indochinese Communist Party. Two years later the VNQDD was also established secretly in Hanoi by Nguyen Thai Hoc, a schoolteacher. Impressed by the Chinese efforts to modernize their country and simultaneously to repel foreign encroachments, Nguyen Thai Hoc's supporters adopted the organization, methods and programs of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), but failed to create an effective organization within the country. Their greater shortcoming was the lack of an imaginative social program. An uprising staged in 1930 at Yen Bay, northwest of Hanoi, was severely repressed by the French. The VNQDD was nearly destroyed, and many of its surviving members fled to Yunnan in southwest China. They returned to Vietnam after World War II to confront both the French and the Communists.

After the Yen Bay insurrection, the leadership of the clandestine nationalist movement in Vietnam was taken over by the opportunist Indochinese Communist Party (Dong Duong Cong San Dang), which chose not to participate in that uprising. Formed in Hong Kong in 1930, it united several existing independent Communist groups under the leadership of Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot), later known as Ho Chi Minh.

UNFULFILLED REFORMS

The thoroughness with which the Yen Bay uprising was repressed for a time rendered the more militant nationalists inactive. Some Vietnamese did, however, attempt to advance the cause of national liberation through reforms from above. They looked to the young Emperor Bao Dai as their best hope. Bao Dai had ascended the throne in 1925 at the age of 12 on the death of his father, Emperor Khai Dinh, but did not return to Vietnam until 1932 after he had completed his education in France.

Bao Dai was greeted with enthusiasm by the Vietnamese, who expected that he would be able to persuade the French to install a more liberal regime. He attempted to reign as a constitutional monarch, according to the terms of the treaty of 1884 establishing the protectorate, and he strove to modernize the ancient imperial administration at Hue.

Among his young collaborators was Ngo Dinh Diem, governor of the Phan Thiet area in Binh Thuan Province, who was given the portfolio of minister of the interior and appointed head of the secre-
tariat of a Vietnamese-French commission which was charged with the responsibility of implementing Bao Dai's reform proposals. When it became obvious that the French had no intention of granting real power to the Vietnamese administration and would make no concessions toward unification of the country, the youthful emperor appeared to lose interest, and Ngo Dinh Diem resigned his official position.

For a brief time in 1936, during the period of the Popular Front government in France, the Vietnamese had hopes that autonomy might be granted. The French Socialists, however, made no important concessions, and the colonial administration continued as before.

THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION (1940–45)

After the fall of France in June 1940, the Vichy government acceded to Japanese demands, which ultimately led to the establishment of Japanese controls over all of the French Indochina peninsula. In August 1940 the Vichy authorities agreed to accept Japan's "pre-eminent" position in the Far East and to grant the Japanese certain transit facilities in Tonkin in return for Japanese recognition of its sovereignty over Indochina. Under this accord the French colonial administrative structure was kept intact, and the French community maintained its privileged position with little change to indicate to the population the eclipse of French power in Indochina. This arrangement gave the Japanese the benefit of the services of the French officials and freed Japanese personnel for duties elsewhere. There were clashes between Japanese and French forces along the northern border of Tonkin, and Japanese aircraft bombed the port of Haiphong. But after the Vichy government had agreed, in September, to the stationing of Japanese troops in areas on the northern side of the Red River, the French troops did not offer further military opposition and continued their traditional garrison duties.

An economic agreement was signed in May 1941 which reserved all of the important exports of Indochina for Japan; these included rice, manganese, tungsten, antimony, tin and chrome. A shortage of Japanese shipping, however, contributed to a sharp decline in exports, which in turn drastically curtailed imports, and shortages developed in many items which the Vietnamese had been accustomed to import from Europe.

The Japanese position was further consolidated in July 1941 when the two governments signed a military agreement providing for the "common defense of French Indochina," under which Japan was permitted to station troops in southern Indochina. The agreement also enabled Japan to control virtually all airfields in the south and important port facilities and railroads elsewhere. Immediately after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the French made another agreement
reaffirming the existing Franco-Japanese cooperation, and this uneasy relationship continued until the Japanese coup d'etat in March 1945.

The Japanese occupation and French reaction to it had the effect of further stimulating nationalist sentiments. Fearing that Japan would capitalize on the strong anti-French feelings of the people, the French administration undertook to liberalize certain of its repressive policies. It improved technical and vocational education programs, opened new schools, and launched a youth movement, presumably in hopes of winning the support of youth groups. It also opened additional civil service posts for the Vietnamese. The French apparently intended, however, to reinforce the colonial order through these token concessions, while they continued to impose restrictions on nationalist activities.

COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), a Communist since 1920 and founder of the united Indochinese Communist Party in 1930, was still in the forefront of the Vietnamese Communist movement 10 years later. Allied with and deftly exploiting the non-Communist nationalist groups, Nguyen Ai Quoc eventually emerged as the dominant political figure of the country.

To broaden the social and political bases of its activities, the Communist Party, in May 1941, adopted a policy of collaboration with all non-Communist nationalists. This decision led to the formation of a united front organization, the Vietnam Independence League (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh), better known as the Viet Minh.

One of the first actions of the Viet Minh was to form guerrilla bands, under the direction of Vo Nguyen Giap, to operate in Vietnamese territory against the Japanese and the French. He also began implanting agents and setting up intelligence networks in Tonkin. Meanwhile, comparable efforts by the non-Communist groups, beset by factional wranglings, were virtually nonexistent. Although Nguyen Ai Quoc was jailed for his Communist activity by the Chinese authorities in 1942, the Viet Minh continued its vigorous efforts to win popular support.

During the same period, the Chinese, who urgently needed intelligence on Japanese activities in Tonkin, attempted to make use of the non-Communist Vietnamese exiles for this purpose. At Chinese urging, a new organization, called the Revolutionary League of Vietnam (Vietnam Cach Minh Dong Minh Hoi), usually abbreviated to Dong Minh Hoi, was formed in October 1942 and given financial support by the Chinese Kuomintang. Although all the major nationalist groups—including the Vietnamese Nationalist Party and the Viet Minh—were represented in it, the new organization, without active Viet Minh cooperation, remained ineffective. It was against this background that in 1943 the Chinese released Nguyen Ai Quoc in
exchange for his offer to help them. Thereupon he took the name of Ho Chi Minh (He Who Enlightens), presumably to conceal his Communist affiliation from the Vietnamese people (see ch. 14, Political Dynamics).

Ho Chi Minh was expected to work through the Dong Minh Hoi, but, in fact, he worked only through the Viet Minh and used the funds which the Dong Minh Hoi received from the Chinese Nationalist Government to strengthen his Communist organization. His organization produced some intelligence of use to the Allies, and Vo Nguyen Giap's guerrilla bands engaged in minor forays against the Japanese. In return, Ho Chi Minh received an undetermined amount of small arms, munitions and communication equipment from the United States for counteraction against the Japanese. This aid later formed the basis for his claim that the Viet Minh enjoyed Allied support.

Working in nationalist disguise, Ho Chi Minh effectively strengthened the organization of Communist cells throughout Vietnam. In the subsequent struggle for leadership in the nationalist movement as the war ended, the superior organization of the Communists enabled him to gain control of the Viet Minh and to claim all the credit for nationalist activities during the war. Capitalizing on the anticolonialist propaganda organized by Moscow, Vietnamese Communists claimed to be fighting only against economic misery and for national liberation. They were not recognized by Vietnamese as representing an alien force except by those with superior education and keen political insight (see ch. 14, Political Dynamics).

**NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE REGAINED**

In September 1944 the Tokyo government, alarmed over growing indications of anti-Japanese activities, decided to displace the French and grant independence to the Vietnamese. Initially, this plan was to be executed on April 25, 1945, but the reoccupation of the Philippine Islands by the United States forces in October and the growing awareness that Japan was losing the war advanced the date of the Japanese coup d'etat to March 9, 1945.

At the instigation of the Japanese, Emperor Bao Dai proclaimed the independence of Vietnam under Japanese “protection.” He formed a new government at Hue, proclaimed a political amnesty, and attempted to create a Vietnamese administration to replace the French administration which had been ousted. An effective government could not be established, however, because of administrative difficulties arising from the sudden French ouster, the breakdown of communications owing to Allied bombing, crop failures and famine in Tonkin and Annam, and the imposition of direct Japanese military rule over Cochin China.
Meanwhile, at Hanoi, the Viet Minh went into action, refusing to support the Bao Dai regime. Ho Chi Minh began to refer to the Viet Minh guerrilla units as the “National Liberation Army” and announced the formation of a Committee for the Liberation of the Vietnamese People, with himself as president. By late August 1945 the Viet Minh partisans and agents gained administrative control over the Tonkin area by a show of force.

In Cochinchina, where Communist activity had been negligible because of strict French control measures, nationalist groups of various political leanings formed a United National Front and took over administrative functions from the Japanese. It was, however, politically ineffective because of factional differences. The Viet Minh exploited this situation by launching a skillful propaganda campaign which portrayed the Viet Minh as a strong nationalist movement enjoying the support of the Allies. In ignorance of the organization’s actual character, the United National Front agreed to accept Viet Minh leadership.

While these events were taking place, Bao Dai, apparently convinced that a united and independent nation offered the only possibility of preventing the return of French control, decided to abdicate. Recognizing only the nationalist character of the Viet Minh movement and assuming that it had Allied support, he abdicated in its favor on August 25, 1945, and handed over his imperial seal and other symbols of office to Ho Chi Minh. To the overwhelming majority of the people this clearly meant that Ho Chi Minh was endowed with legitimacy and that they would be expected to follow the Viet Minh leadership.

On September 2, Ho Chi Minh formally proclaimed the independence of Vietnam and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. To facilitate the negotiations directed toward gaining international recognition of its legitimacy, Communist domination of the new government was carefully concealed and emphasis placed on the “democratic,” Vietnamese character of the regime. Bao Dai was made high counselor to the new government.

**THE RETURN OF FRANCE**

At the Potsdam Conference of July 1945, the Allies agreed that the British were to accept the surrender of the Japanese south of the sixteenth parallel, and the Chinese would perform a similar duty north of it. After World War II the Vietnamese expected the Allies to support their claims to independence. Nationalist China opposed the return of France to Indochina, apparently to reassert its traditional influence over Tonkin, and, in principle, the United States favored the formation of a provisional international trusteeship.
The first British troops arrived in Saigon on September 12, 1945, and although the Potsdam agreements made no explicit reference to French sovereignty over Indochina, by virtue of shrewd diplomacy in Allied councils, France was able to land its troops about 10 days later. Almost immediately Vietnamese of virtually all political persuasions rose up in defense of their newly won freedom. The British assisted the French and also ordered Japanese troops to help put down the resistance. By the end of November all strategic points within Cochin China had been taken. Even then resistance in the South did not cease; guerrilla forces were organized and continued to clash with French units.

In the meantime, the Chinese forces occupying the North during the fall of 1945 found that the Viet Minh regime was willing to cooperate with them and with non-Communist nationalist groups in the expectation of support for its nationalist aspirations. The Viet Minh ostensibly dissolved the Indochinese Communist Party in November 1945, held elections in January 1946 for a National Assembly (in which a number of seats were reserved for the Chinese-sponsored VNQDD and Dong Minh Hoi leaders) and formed a nationalist coalition government headed by Ho Chi Minh. But in February 1946, a Franco-Chinese agreement was concluded whereby China agreed to the return of the French to Indochina in exchange for various concessions, including France's surrender of its extraterritorial rights in China.

Faced with the loss of Chinese support, the Viet Minh was forced to reconsider its policy toward the French. Furthermore, with the French desire to return peacefully to the northern area without arousing intense feelings against themselves, an agreement between France and Ho Chi Minh was signed in March 1946, by which the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was recognized as a "free state" within the Indochinese Federation (yet to be created) and the French Union. The new state, which was not precisely defined in the agreement and interpreted by the Vietnamese as consisting of Tonkin, Annam and Cochin China, was to have its own national assembly, manage its own finances, and maintain its own army. (In Vietnamese these three areas are referred to as the three ky [region]: Bac-bo, Trung-bo and Nam-bo, northern, central and southern, respectively.) The French, however, did not appear to imply any recognition of a single government over the three regions. Details of the new state's relationship to France were to be decided by a future agreement.

As a result of this agreement, French forces were permitted to land in the North. Bao Dai, who had been acting as high counselor to Ho Chi Minh, was sent on a "goodwill" mission to China where he remained in exile, thus eliminating the possibility that he might provide a rallying point for groups not thoroughly aligned with the Viet Minh.
Differences between the French and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam immediately developed over the question of defining the "free state." A delegation of the Vietnamese representatives, headed by Ho Chi Minh, traveled to Paris to settle differences. The Paris conference was broken up in early June 1946 when a Republic of Cochin China was established in the South under the support of separatist French elements. In September 1946, however, Ho Chi Minh signed a modus vivendi on behalf of his government—an agreement which he reportedly described as "better than nothing." The agreement was designed to facilitate the resumption of French economic and cultural activities in return for French promises to introduce a more liberal regime.

The modus vivendi did not include recognition of Vietnamese unity or independence and was opposed by many within Ho Chi Minh's regime. French actions to enforce customs controls in October aroused further hostility. In November shooting broke out in Haiphong, and the subsequent French bombardment of the city reportedly killed more than 6,000 Vietnamese. The French demands which followed were so completely unacceptable to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that it decided to risk a long war of liberation rather than to accept. On December 19, 1946, it launched the first attack on the French in what was to be known as the Indochina War. In this act of resistance against French troops, the Republic had the active or passive support of a majority of Vietnamese.

**THE INDOCHINA WAR (1946-54)**

The war touched off by the Viet Minh attack lasted for 8 years and caused unending misery to the Vietnamese. It was financially and militarily disastrous to the French and resulted in more than 35,000 of them killed and 48,000 wounded. The United States gave the state of Vietnam military and economic aid, reportedly totaling over $2 billion. Military aid was granted indirectly through France from December 1950 until late in 1954. Economic aid was sent directly to Vietnam, beginning in September 1951 (see ch. 23, Foreign Economic Relations; ch. 27, The Armed Forces). Large sums were also spent by Communist China and the Soviet-bloc countries on assistance to Ho Chi Minh's regime. The war, which started out as an anti-French struggle, became enmeshed with the worldwide conflict between East and West. During this period the Vietnamese people also witnessed the emergence of two governments, both competing for popular support.

In the early months of 1947, the French military forces reestablished their control over the principal towns in Tonkin and Annam and cleared the road between Haiphong and Hanoi. This forced the Viet Minh to resort to the guerrilla tactics which became the chief characteristic of the war. Ho Chi Minh's armed forces made
use of the jungle to neutralize French mechanized mobility and power. By selecting their objectives and retiring when they met superior strength, they presented a problem with which the French could not cope. After 3 years of fighting, the Viet Minh controlled large areas throughout the country. The French had firm control only in the large cities.

Early in the struggle the French sought to encourage the Vietnamese anti-Communist nationalists to take a stand against the Viet Minh and to cooperate with France, but the effort failed as the nationalists claimed the French would not clarify their policy with respect to future Vietnamese unity and independence. In 1946 some of the anti-Communist nationalists in Nanking, China, formed a Front of National Union of Vietnam and appealed to Bao Dai to return from exile in Hong Kong and head a national government. The French, seeing another opportunity to make the nationalists an effective counterforce against Ho Chi Minh, offered Vietnam "liberty within the French Union." Bao Dai, apparently fearful of becoming a pawn of the French, cautiously agreed only to represent Vietnam in negotiations. Violent Viet Minh reaction to these maneuvers included the assassination of prominent nationalist leaders.

Negotiations with France continued for 2 years, but by June 1949 France finally approved of limited independence for "the State of Vietnam" within the French Union. Bao Dai assumed the role of chief of state, but the principal nationalists (including Ngo Dinh Diem) failed to unite behind him, since they claimed that the French did not offer real independence. Although the new government was permitted internal autonomy and an army of its own, strong safeguards to protect French nationals and economic interests were maintained, and the foreign policy of the new state was coordinated with that of France.

In the meantime, Ho Chi Minh rid his coalition government of the moderates and nationalists whom he had accepted earlier and showed himself to be completely Communist. In March 1951 the Indochinese Communist Party (dissolved in 1945) was revived as the Workers Party (Dang Lao Dong). Propaganda emanating from the government, however, continued to be solely nationalistic in tone.

After the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists by the Communists in China in late 1949, Communist China became the first state to recognize the North Vietnamese regime as the legitimate government of all Vietnam. Soviet-bloc countries quickly followed suit. In early 1950, after North Vietnam began to receive assistance from Communist China, offensive action was initiated against the French Union forces composed of French as well as Vietnamese soldiers. In 1951 the advance of the Communist forces was temporarily halted with the aid of American equipment, but in 1952 the Communists started a new
offensive in several areas. Vigorous counterattacks brought no decisive results, and a military stalemate followed; where tanks could go, the French Union forces held, but in the mountains and in the mud of the rice paddies Ho Chi Minh consolidated his control.

In February 1950, Great Britain and the United States recognized the State of Vietnam headed by the ex-emperor Bao Dai as the legitimate government. When France concluded agreements with Laos and Cambodia similar to that with Vietnam, the three countries became the Associate States of Indochina and where accorded diplomatic recognition by more than 30 other nations. In May 1950 the United States announced a decision to give aid to Bao Dai through France, and a United States Economic Mission arrived in Saigon. In September 1951 a United States-Vietnamese agreement for direct economic assistance was also signed.

In its efforts to win popular support, the Bao Dai regime was unsuccessful. Confronted with a choice between French colonialism and the Communist-led nationalist movement, many Vietnamese, attracted by its appeal for independence and unity, tended to side with the Viet Minh organization.

**THE GENEVA CONFERENCE**

While the military battle was raging, steps were being taken to bring a negotiated end to the Indochina War. France was admittedly unable to continue the war, and Ho Chi Minh, under apparent Sino-Soviet pressure, had let it be known that he was ready to discuss peace. In February 1954 the Big Four (France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States) powers at Berlin agreed that a conference should be held to seek a solution for the Indochina War and Korea.

On April 28, 1954, 2 days after the opening of the conference at Geneva, a Franco-Vietnamese declaration, proclaiming Vietnam to be unequivocally sovereign and independent, was made public. It was only after May 8, however, that the conference began focusing its attention primarily on Indochina. The immediate cause was the decisive French defeat at Dien Bien Phu at the hands of the Viet Minh forces on May 7 and the resultant popular pressure in France for a rapid conclusion of the war. The Indochinese phase of the conference was attended, under the cochairmanship of Great Britain and the Soviet Union, by the representatives of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Communist China, the State of Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Final negotiations for armistice were conducted directly between the French High Command and Ho Chi Minh’s People’s Army High Command. A truce agreement covering the territory of both North
and South Vietnam was signed on July 20 between the two High Commands. Separate truce agreements were also concluded for Cambodia and Laos, respectively.

The agreement for Vietnam fixed a provisional military Demarcation Line roughly along the seventeenth parallel and provided for the total evacuation of Vietnam north of the Demarcation Line by the military forces of the French and the State of Vietnam, as well as for the evacuation of the South by the Viet Minh forces. It also provided for a period of 300 days during which freedom of movement was to be allowed for all persons wishing to move from one sector to the other. Under the agreement, the introduction into Vietnam of any troop reinforcements and additional military personnel was prohibited except for rotation purposes; imports of new weapons were similarly limited to replacement levels. It also imposed restrictions on the establishment of foreign military bases, and on the participation of both North and South Vietnam in any military alliance. Finally, the agreement provided for the formation of an International Control Commission, with representatives from India, Canada and Poland, to supervise the implementation of the truce arrangements. In addition to the agreement, a Final Declaration, dated July 21, of the Geneva Conference provided for the holding of general elections throughout North and South Vietnam in July 1956 under the supervision of the International Control Commission with preliminary discussions to begin in July 1955.

The armistice agreement was reached over the objections of the State of Vietnam, which did not sign it. It vainly protested the manner in which the truce was arranged, as well as its terms, particularly those relating to the partitioning of the country. It demanded that the whole country be placed under the control of the United Nations until conditions warranted the holding of free general elections. It also objected to the Final Declaration, protesting that the French High Command arrogated to itself, without prior consultation with the State of Vietnam, the right to fix the date for elections.

The United States did not concur with the terms of the truce agreement or with the Final Declaration. In a unilateral statement issued on July 21, however, the United States representative declared that his country would refrain from the threat of or use of force to disturb the provisions of the agreement and of the Final Declaration and that it would view any renewal of aggression in violation of the agreement with grave concern as a threat to international peace and security. With regard to the provisions relating to the elections, the United States expressed its continuing determination to seek unification through free and fair elections, to be conducted under the supervision of the United Nations. It further reiterated its traditional position that all peoples are entitled to determine their own future and that it
would not join in any arrangement which would hinder the realization of such a principle.

France then proceeded to complete the transfer of the remnants of its administrative and military control to the State of Vietnam with its capital at Saigon. The government of Ho Chi Minh, seated at Hanoi, moved steadily to achieve its program of communizing north of the seventeenth parallel. Despite the cease-fire agreement, a well-organized Viet Minh underground network was deliberately left behind in the South, especially in the jungle regions in the southern Mekong Delta and along the Cambodian and Laos border regions where French Union forces had not been able to establish effective control. This underground network formed the nucleus of subsequent Communist insurgency directed against the Saigon regime.

**REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**

Shortly before the ending of the Geneva Conference, Bao Dai, as chief of state, called on Ngo Dinh Diem to form a new government. Under the premiership of Ngo Dinh Diem the new government was formed on July 7, 1954, but almost immediately it was confronted with the overwhelming problem of bringing order and stability to a country near social and economic collapse. Loyalties were confused, and the future was uncertain. Even in parts of Saigon the authority of the government was not recognized.

The first tasks of the new regime were to devise a workable political structure, revive the national economy, and resettle some 900,000 refugees from the Communist North. Moreover, the authorities were confronted with a series of conspiracies. The government itself was overtly challenged by such armed politicoreligious dissidents as the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao sects, and a group of racketeer-gangsters called the Binh Xuyen (see ch. 26, Public Order and Safety).

By early October 1955, Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem effectively extended his authority in South Vietnam by defeating or adroitly outmaneuvering the armed units of the dissident sects and by crushing the Binh Xuyen bosses who had controlled 5,000 troops and much of the Saigon police. Meanwhile, the prime minister took steps to improve the efficiency and reliability of the government’s armed forces, aided in part by economic and military assistance from the United States which began channeling its military aid directly to the Vietnamese Government beginning in January 1955 (see ch. 26, Public Order and Safety; ch. 27, The Armed Forces).

Feeling politically secure, Prime Minister Diem called a national referendum on October 23, 1955, to decide whether the country should become a republic under his own leadership as chief of state and president or whether Bao Dai should continue as chief of state. The Prime Minister reportedly won 96 percent of the votes, and on October
he proclaimed South Vietnam to be the Republic of Vietnam and became its first president. A constitution (written at his direction), bearing American and French precedents, was adopted in July 1956 and promulgated on October 26, 1956 (see ch. 13, The Governmental System).

No sooner had Ngo Dinh Diem consolidated his power than he had to cope with the Communist subversion and terrorist activities directed by the Hanoi regime, which had taken control of northern Vietnam in October 1954. Beginning in mid-1957 and especially since 1959, the Communist insurgency resulted in the serious curtailment of government programs for economic development, land reform, and other social welfare activities. The insurgent elements, popularly called the Viet Cong (abbreviation of Viet Nam Cong San—Vietnamese, Communists), have been operating under the direction and control of a self-styled National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam. It was created in December 1960 by the Hanoi regime, as the political arm of its subversive efforts in the South, so as to conceal its Communist identification and to give the impression that the insurgency was a genuinely popular nationalist movement.

Beginning in mid-1963 the government’s difficulties were compounded by the outbreak of widespread civil disturbances, which were precipitated evidently by the defiant reactions of the Buddhist groups to what they regarded as the government’s anti-Buddhist discrimination. Diem and his family were Catholics. Other contributing factors were popular discontent arising from worsening living conditions, common suspicion of corruption among those in ruling positions, and frequent charges of dictatorial one-family rule brought against President Ngo Dinh Diem and his powerful brother, Nhu, political adviser. Another source of intense dissatisfaction with the government, especially on the part of urban intellectuals, was the government’s systematic suppression of even the most moderate political opposition (see ch. 14, Political Dynamics).

The government’s failure to cope with the mounting Buddhist crisis eventually culminated in the sudden overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem’s regime on November 1, 1963, through a military coup d’etat executed by a group of key generals headed by Major General Duong Van Minh. The military promptly acted to grant religious freedom and proceeded to adopt a new constitution.

Nevertheless, the government continued to experience difficulties in almost all of its activities. These difficulties arose mainly from efforts to defeat the Communist insurgency as well as from apparent political disagreement among those in power and among contending political aspirants. By mid-1965 this political confusion had led to no less than seven abrupt changes in governmental leadership at the highest level (see ch. 14, Political Dynamics).
CHAPTER 4
POPULATION

The population in mid-1965 was estimated to be approximately 16.1 million. Of these persons, 10.6 million lived in the Region of South Vietnam, more than 5 million in the Region of Central Vietnam Lowlands and more than 600,000 in the Region of Central Vietnam Highlands (see ch. 2, Physical Environment). If the current annual growth rate, estimated to be up to 2 percent, continues, the population may double in less than 50 years. The population is relatively young, with a probable preponderance of females, as a result of their greater longevity and the loss of males during the Indochina War (1946–54) followed by antiguerrilla operations.

There are no data available reflecting distribution according to age and sex. Lacking official census results, demographic statistics have been computed from projections of a sampling of the population in 1960 and subsequent incomplete surveys by the Vietnamese National Institute of Statistics. Population losses and movements as a result of wartime conditions further inhibited the compilation of accurate government statistics. All figures, therefore, must be regarded as estimates lacking official verification.

Since the partition of 1954, South Vietnam controls approximately 66,000 of Vietnam’s 127,000 square miles. Considering its size, the country as a whole is not densely populated—about 243 persons per square mile—but because of the uneven distribution of the inhabitants, local concentrations create a problem in some areas. Densities vary from more than 2,000 persons per square mile in portions of the Mekong Delta and in parts of the coastal strip of the Central Lowlands to only 13 persons per square mile on some of the plateaus of the Central Highlands.

The massive influx of refugees, concentrating into areas already overcrowded, has contributed to an imbalance in population distribution. Almost 1 million refugees arrived from North Vietnam soon after the end of the Indochina War in 1954, and since 1960 at least another million have fled from areas controlled by the Viet Cong or from areas exposed to antiguerrilla ground and air military operations. Thus, approximately one-eighth of the country’s total population is composed of recently displaced persons.
The majority of the population is rural, although the number of city inhabitants has risen since the Indochina War. Most persons who have moved to the cities have been in search of physical safety rather than economic opportunities or diversion.

Involuntary mobility as a result of wartime conditions has imposed serious hardships on a basically sedentary society. Because of the observance of the Cult of the Ancestors, the Vietnamese are bound to their birthplaces, and to leave the family tombs and ancestral villages remains for most of them an extremely serious step. This has been an important reason for the limited success of government resettlement schemes designed to promote land cultivation and to relieve crowding in some areas. It also had a restrictive influence on the program of building fortified (strategic) hamlets which called for a regrouping of villagers in some areas (see ch. 8, Living Conditions; ch. 19, Agriculture).

Somewhat over 40 percent of the population is economically active—not including women and children working as unpaid helpers in agriculture and family-owned craftshops. Farmers and fishermen account for nearly 90 percent of the labor force. Industrial workers are employed mostly in Saigon and vicinity. Current information on the numbers of artisans and craftsmen following traditional trades is lacking. There is a shortage of skilled workers. Managerial expertise is also rare, although there is a fairly large government bureaucracy.

There have been no official attempts to change the predominantly agricultural character of the labor force. The creation of a reservoir of industrial manpower is dependent on a large-scale expansion of industry which is unlikely to occur under the unsettled conditions of the mid-1960's.

**SIZE AND COMPOSITION**

The mid-1965 population figure of 16.1 million was projected from a South Vietnamese government survey for 1960. The annual growth rate of between 2 percent is about the same as in the other countries of Southeast Asia. Incomplete surveys conducted in 1963-64 indicated that birth and death rates declined between 1961 and 1963 (both rates were higher among men than among women).

According to the most recent estimates, there were about 7.1 million males of a total population of 15.2 million in 1963. With respect to age, the population was basically a young one, with a large active force available for work and for the armed forces.
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Distribution and Density

Because of striking contrasts between the physical features of the various regions, the population is unevenly distributed. Nearly 50 percent of the rural population lives in the Mekong Delta area in the southern part of the country, where tropical climate, abundant rainfall and fertile soil result in conditions eminently suitable for rice cultivation. The coastal strips and the small river basins of the Central Lowlands, where the main occupations are farming and fishing, are also thickly settled. The Central Highlands, an area of about 18,000 square miles, has a total population of approximately 600,000, although the area could support many more. Settlement there is deterred, however, by the inhospitable mountains of the Chaine Annamitique and the fever-infested jungles and forests which cover most of the area. French efforts in the past and projects by postindependence governments to resettle some of the lowland population into this area have met only with limited success (see ch. 2, Physical Environment).

In the Mekong Delta Region the density varies between 750 and 2,000 persons per square mile in the area between the main channel of the Mekong River and Saigon, but in its southernmost portions it is sparsely settled.

Some areas of the Central Lowlands are comparable in density to that of the most populated parts of the delta areas: nearly 3 million people live on the fertile coastal strip between Mui Dieu and Vung Da Nang, an area of 12,350 square miles. On the other hand, the barren strip which extends along the coast for 100 miles northward from the Mekong Delta has the lowest population density of any lowland area.

Although only 10 percent of the population lives in the cities, not all of the remaining 90 percent may be regarded as having rural characteristics. Scattered throughout the 43 provinces are many small urban centers, including the provincial capitals, many of which had been classified as municipalities before the administrative reform of 1957 (see ch. 13, The Governmental System). Of the five major cities, Saigon, the capital, with almost 1.5 million inhabitants, accounts for 85 percent of the total urban population. Da Nang is the next most populous with 143,910 inhabitants, followed by Hue with 105,000, Da Lat with 56,760, and Vung Tau with 38,337.

Ethnic and Religious Characteristics

More than 80 percent of the people are ethnically Vietnamese. They perpetuate the dominant cultural tradition and exert a paramount influence on the national life. The numerically dominant Vietnamese,
who have lived in the country since the beginnings of recorded history, are culturally and ethnically closed related to the Chinese. Nearly all Vietnamese have settled in the lowlands of the Mekong Delta, and in the river valleys and coastal portions of the Central Lowlands. They are mostly rice farmers, sedentary and soil-bound, and the rhythm of their life is regulated mainly by the rice calendar.

The Chinese represent the largest minority, estimated by various observers to number between 800,000 and 1.2 million in 1965. Two-thirds of these live in Cho Lon, the "Chinatown" of Saigon. Other sizable Chinese colonies are in the cities of Rach Gia, Soc Trang and Bac Lieu, all in the Mekong Delta. Engaged in the rice trade, milling, real estate, banking and various other forms of trade and commerce, the Chinese play an important role in the Vietnamese economy.

Since 1956 the government has passed various laws, designed to assimilate the Chinese and to break their hold on certain economic fields. Because of official efforts to assimilate the Chinese, Vietnamese statistics regarding the size of the Chinese community tend to be low. In 1964, for example, there were only 561,000 Chinese, including "Vietnamese of Chinese ancestry," according to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The pace of the government-directed assimilation, however, has been a slow one, and, in general, the Chinese minority has retained its cultural distinctness and its traditional economic role (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages; ch. 22, Domestic Trade).

The second largest minority group, the montagnards (mountain people), live in the highlands of the Chaîne Annamitique, spread over a territory about half the size of the country. They comprise more than 80 tribes, representing numerous social types, dialects and cultural patterns. Because of the relative inaccessibility of their settlements, their numbers have been difficult to determine, but many sources estimate that there are about 700,000 montagnards. Some estimates, however, far exceed this number. The size of individual tribes varies from under 1,000 to over 300,000.

Several montagnard groups inhabit the western fringes of the Chaîne Annamitique and extend into neighboring Laos and Cambodia. Others, including the Bahnar and Sedang, are restricted to Kontum Province. The Jarai are located somewhat further south in Pleiku Province. The Rhade and the Mnong live in the Darlac plateau region, still further south. Slash-and-burn farmers, hunters and gatherers, many montagnard groups live in virtual isolation in the deep rain forests. The Bahnar and Sedang, on the other hand, have considerable contact with their neighbors and with the people of the lowlands. Since the intensification of Viet Cong efforts to infiltrate the rural population, the government has shown marked concern with the improvement of the montagnards' economy and living standards (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages; ch. 8, Living Conditions).
The Khmers (Cambodians), the third largest minority, number approximately 400,000. Concentrated in the southwestern portion of the country, they are nearly all farmers. Their language, customs and level of development differ little from those of the Vietnamese, and they are gradually becoming integrated with the host population.

Remnants of the formerly large population of Cham origin, numbering from 20,000 to 35,000, inhabit a small area near Phan Rang, a coastal town in the southern part of the Central Lowlands. Other minority groups include several thousand each of Indians and Pakistanis. There are also smaller numbers of Malays and Arabs who are mostly engaged in trade and moneylending in Saigon and its vicinity.

Reliable figures regarding the number of followers of religious denominations are not available. A majority, or approximately 80 to 85 percent of the population, is Buddhist. This includes persons who associate Buddhism with national independence and are, therefore, nominal adherents of that faith without practicing its tenets. Two major politicoreligious sects are the Buddhist-oriented Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, a group representing a complex mixture of tenets drawn from Buddhist, Confucianist, Taoist, Christian and other sources, numbering approximately 2 million, are concentrated mainly in the area extending northwest of Saigon to the Cambodian border, particularly in the province of Tay Ninh. Hoa Hao adherents, numbering about 1.5 million, are clustered in An Giang, Vinh Long and Phong Dinh Provinces, in the southwestern portion of the Mekong Delta. There are also several thousand Moslems, Hindus and members of other religious majorities. Most of the montagnards follow various local animist beliefs, although Catholic and Protestant missionaries have been active among them and have converted several thousand to Christianity (see ch. 11, Religion).

Approximately 10 percent of the population is Catholic, but many are only nominal followers of Catholicism. Catholics accounted for more than half of the nearly 1 million refugees who came south from Communist-ruled Vietnam after 1954. They are also numerous among the new wave of refugees who fled from territories dominated by the Viet Cong following the increase in military activities in 1964-65.

There are some 200,000 Protestants, according to missionary sources, not including converted montagnards. Of the Protestants, 50,000 have been baptized; the rest are nominal adherents of that faith.

Mobility

After the partition of the country along the seventeenth parallel in 1954, over 900,000 refugees poured into South Vietnam from the Communist-ruled North. They and an estimated additional 120,000 military dependents were removed with the aid of French and United States shipping. The arrival of all these destitute people in an area
devastated by war caused great administrative, economic and social difficulties.

The refugees were first sheltered in camps on the coast and thereafter gradually shifted to areas where they could become self-supporting. Since most of the refugees were Roman Catholics migrating in village units under the leadership of their local priests, resettlement in many instances was facilitated. For these and other refugees some 319 villages were set up which absorbed some 500,000 of their numbers. Most of the villages were for farmers, but 26 were for fishermen. The rest of the refugees moved to established towns and villages, or to the crowded Saigon-Cholon area, causing a sharp rise in the population of the capital. The single most important resettlement scheme was the Cai San project near Rach Gia on the Gulf of Siam where 100,000 refugees and 20,000 local inhabitants were placed on 270,000 acres of reclaimed land. In all, about 400,000 refugees were settled in the Mekong Delta area, 53,000 in the Central Lowlands and 64,000 in the Central Highlands.

To relieve crowded conditions in the coastal deltas of the Central Lowlands, the government, in 1956-57, launched a large-scale resettlement project to develop 3.7 million acres of uncultivated land in the highland plateaus along the Laotian and Cambodian borders. Under this project, some 100,000 farmers from the delta areas were moved to the plateaus to clear and farm the reclaimed forest land. At the same time, 25,000 montagnards were transferred from their villages to settlement centers to pursue sedentary agriculture instead of their customary slash-and-burn method. In the course of this project, over 210,000 persons were resettled in 147 centers carved from 220,000 acres of mountain wilderness.

The project, however, was only partially successful. A sizable number of the lowlanders, accustomed to rice farming and unwilling to adopt new agricultural methods required by the strange environment, returned to their former "homes." Such moves were also motivated by the lowlanders' fear of the mountains, which they believe to be inhabited by evil spirits and infested with fevers. Meanwhile, some shifting of the population also occurred in the southern part of the Mekong Delta as several thousand of families were settled on reclaimed land (see ch. 19, Agriculture).

Since 1964 some 700,000 or more refugees have fled Viet Cong strongholds and areas subjected to bombings by the South Vietnamese and United States air forces. Indications are that at the end of 1965 the number of refugees had reached approximately 1.5 million. In many cases, the Viet Cong reportedly have driven the refugees into government-controlled areas to aggravate problems of local administration and civilian morale. The situation is of increasing concern to governmental authorities, particularly those responsible for public
welfare and internal security (see ch. 8, Living Conditions; ch. 26, Public Order and Safety).

Nearly half of the refugees who have arrived since 1964 are concentrated in the coastal cities of three provinces in the Central Lowlands: Quang Nam, Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh. In Quang Nam Province, the Da Nang municipal administration, in mid-1965, refused admission of some 60–70,000 refugees from neighboring provinces because food and shelter were lacking. In Quang Ngai, the provincial administration was unable to prevent the influx of about 80,000 refugees into the port city of Quang Ngai, despite the absence of accommodation facilities. Similarly, some 100,000 refugees pressed for admission to the city of Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh Province, but only 30,000 could be admitted.

Estimates in 1965 put the number of uncared for refugees between 100,000 and 376,000. Those who are temporarily resettled live in government refugee camps, nearly all of which are substandard as a result of overcrowding. Such camps are usually set up around district towns and provincial capitals, or at coastal points extending southward from the northernmost province of Quang Tri to as far as Nha Thrang in Khanh Hoa Province.

LABOR FORCE

Distribution

The labor force, estimated at 6.5 million persons in 1964, comprised 41 percent of the total population. The actual percentage, however, was probably higher, since unpaid family workers in agriculture and certain other occupations were almost certainly not included in this calculation. Of the total labor force, 84.2 percent were employed in agriculture, 3.7 percent in commerce, 3 percent in fishing, 2 percent in manufacturing and crafts, and the rest in transportation, services and construction.

A few details are available concerning the structure of the economically active people of Saigon in 1962. For example, from a total of 806,000 persons who were 14 years of age and older, 401,700 or 49.8 percent were employed. This represented 28.1 percent of Saigon’s total population of 1.4 million in 1962. Men comprised the majority, or 70.6 percent of the city’s working-aged population. Most of the workers (men and women) were between 20 and 39 years old. Their mean age was 36 years for men and 33 for women. The largest occupational category was that of artisans, craftsmen and industrial workers, accounting for over 33 percent. Salespeople accounted for over 26 percent of the working population. Women predominated in the sales field, which engaged 41 out of every 100 working women. It is likely that the number of economically active women increased
between 1962 and 1965 because of the losses and casualties among the male population resulting from intensified military action against the Viet Cong.

Rural Labor

The great majority of the rural labor force—some 4,171,500 in 1961—work on small plots in the Mekong Delta and the smaller deltas farther north. The principal crop is irrigated rice, and every able-bodied member of the family contributes to the intensive hand labor involved. Some of the larger plantations which adopted modern farming methods have been receiving government subsidies, but by 1965 there had been no large-scale government efforts to introduce more efficient forms of farming on smaller holdings.

The majority of hired agricultural laborers work on rubber, coffee and tea plantations in the Central Highlands. In 1961 these plantations employed some 61,000 workers, of which 41,045 worked on rubber plantations. In view of the intensified military activities against the Viet Cong in 1964-65, the number of plantation workers has probably decreased.

Fishing is the prominent occupation along the long coast of the South China Sea and the Gulf of Siam. In 1961 about 191,000 persons were engaged in commercial fishing.

Industrial and Commercial Workers

According to 1961 estimates, the latest available, only 329,000 of 5.6 million employable workers were engaged in industry and commerce. Almost two-thirds, or 206,000, of these represented commercial workers, the rest were employed in the processing industries. Not included in these estimates is an unknown but probably large number of craftsmen and artisans, both urban and rural. Further information concerning the distribution of the industrial population is lacking.

Almost all factories of any size are in the Saigon area. In 1962 most of the city's 131,580 industrial workers and artisans worked in small to medium-sized enterprises. The manufacturing and the textile plants were the largest industrial employers, with 62,220 and 12,540 workers, respectively. By mid-1965 the growing textile industry employed about 80,000 persons throughout the entire country.

The nascent An Hoa-Nong Son industrial project (in Quang Nam Province) employed 850 workers in 1964. Eighty percent of the workers came from local villages and were also farmers. In 1965, however, practically all operations were at a halt because of military activities and floods (see ch. 20, Industry).
Government Workers

Although only 124,000 employees represent the government bureaucracy itself, the government is the largest employer with an approximate total of 486,000 persons on its payroll, not including employees of government-owned economic enterprises. Of these, about 210,000 are members of the armed forces, with another 72,000 in the paramilitary Regional Force and 80,000 in the local Popular Force units (see ch. 13, The Governmental System; ch. 28, The Armed Forces).

The majority of persons working in government offices are men, although in 1960 about 13,000 women also worked in government agencies. The number of women government workers has probably increased, since many are replacing the growing number of men who have been drafted.

In 1964 the Department of Education had a staff of 29,326, mostly schoolteachers. The Department of Public Works and the Department of National Defense employed 25,065 and 16,421, respectively. Employees of the Department of Rural Development number 6,799; those of the Department of Economy, 439; and those of the Department of Labor, 349. The Department of Interior, with some 31,640 employees (mostly security agents and policemen), had by far the largest staff of all government agencies in that same year. This last figure probably has more than doubled since the ascent of the Ky government in June 1965.
CHAPTER 5
ETHNIC GROUPS AND LANGUAGES

At least 85 percent of the 16.1 million people are ethnically Vietnamese. As a group, they exert a paramount influence on the national life through their control of political and economic affairs and their role as the perpetuators of the dominant cultural tradition. There is no ethnic boundary corresponding to the political division between North and South Vietnam. Ethnically the Vietnamese are one people, and a great many South Vietnamese have parents, sisters and brothers or more distant kinsmen in the North.

Among the remainder of the population the largest minorities are the Chinese and the various highland groups collectively known as montagnards. In addition, there are smaller numbers of Khmers and Chams, both of whom figure prominently in the population of neighboring Cambodia, as well as Indians, Pakistanis, Eurasians, French and other Europeans, and Americans.

A preponderance of the population is distributed over the fertile delta of the Mekong and along the narrow coastline to the north, adjoining the South China Sea. The inhabitants of the lowlands include nearly all of the Vietnamese proper and all non-Vietnamese except the montagnards, who live in the highlands out of direct contact with the bulk of the population and in partial isolation from each other. Most of the montagnards have little sense of identification with either South Vietnam or with their distant ethnic relatives in North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Vietnamese is the language of daily communication and the mother tongue of the ethnic majority. It is also spoken with varying degrees of fluency by many Chinese, and an increasing number of members of other non-Vietnamese minorities.

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

There are some 20 fairly distinct montagnard languages, little known among the Vietnamese population. Conversely, the spread of Vietnamese among montagnards has been hindered by physical isolation and cultural conservatism. Knowledge of the language is limited largely to the few who have left their native communities to work as plantation laborers or as traders in the lowlands. Many adult males, however, speak the language of at least one neighboring tribe.

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

THE VIETNAMESE

The People

Like their forebears in Vietnam for well over 1,000 years, the more than 13 million ethnic Vietnamese in the country in the mid-1960's are predominantly villagers, skilled in the cultivation of rice and fishing. A minority live in urban centers, such as Saigon and Hue, where they are engaged in a variety of occupations and hold positions at all levels on the socioeconomic scale. The educated elite—composed of high government officials, military officers, professionals and wealthy landowners—consists almost exclusively of ethnic Vietnamese.

The majority of ethnic Vietnamese consider themselves Buddhists, but their religious beliefs and practices include Taoist and Confucian elements as well as remnants of an earlier belief in spirits and magic. A sizable and influential minority is Roman Catholic (see ch. 11, Religion).

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

The commonest Vietnamese physical type is characterized by straight black hair, round head, broad face, high cheekbones, dark eyes with the Mongolian single fold of the eyelid, and brown skin which
varies in shade from light to medium. The average height is small—61 or 62 inches for males—and the average weight is about 120 pounds.

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

The Language

Vietnamese is one of the many languages, dialects and subdialects spoken in the Indochinese peninsula. The relationships between these languages are not clear cut, and no single system of classification has been universally accepted.

The three major dialects of Vietnamese—northern, central and southern—differ from each other in vocabulary, pronunciation and tonal pattern. The dialects are mutually intelligible only within limits, the greatest divergences being found among villagers. Most persons say that they experience initial difficulty in understanding a dialect other than their own.

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

Vietnamese was spoken before the Christian era by the Viets of the Red River Delta area. During more than 1,000 years of Chinese rule (111 B.C. to A.D. 938) its vocabulary was greatly enriched by the addition of many literary, philosophical and other terms, but it remained the medium of popular speech and was carried southward into the Mekong Delta area by the Viet conquerors in the seventeenth century (see ch. 3, Historical Setting).

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

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

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

The Vietnamese learned writing from the Chinese some 2,000 years ago. The first scholars studied and wrote in Chinese. Later they devised a system of writing their own language which employed certain Chinese ideographs to represent Vietnamese sounds, while other ideographs continued to represent complete words, as in Chinese. The Chinese character for “man,” for example, was absorbed unchanged into Vietnamese as the Vietnamese word for “man” and so continued to be employed as an ideograph. Other Chinese characters, however, were divested of meaning and assigned a sound value as symbols in a phonetic script. This combined ideograph and phonetic system was known as chu nom.

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

Quoc ngu uses various diacritical marks placed over or under letters to indicate particular vowel and consonant sounds and syllabic tone or pitch. Since most single syllables function as meaningful words, and many of these monosyllabic words were phonetically identical except for tone, the diacritical marks are an essential part of the written forms.

THE MONTAGNARDS

The term montagnard, which came into common usage under the French, refers to the long-settled inhabitants of South Vietnam’s mountain region—an aggregate estimated to be more than 700,000.
persons representing 40 or so distinct ethnic communities. These highland groups are also known, in allusion to their alleged backwardness, by the common Vietnamese term “Moi,” meaning “savage,” and the equally pejorative Laotian and Cambodian names, respectively, Kha and Phong or Phnong. An effort to play down ethnic differences between the highland and lowland populations is reflected in the official use, beginning in early 1966, of the expression “Người Thượng,” meaning literally “upland people.”

The montagnards are distributed at varying altitudes throughout the Chaîne Annamitique, the mountain barrier which dominates South Vietnam from the Mekong Delta northward to the Demarcation Line. They are distributed over an area stretching inland from Huế on the north nearly to Biên Hoa on the south and from the lower spurs of the mountains on the east across the border into Cambodia and Laos on the west. The terrain is extremely rough, the land generally unproductive and much of it is covered with jungle growth, rain forest and savannahs (see ch. 2, Physical Environment). Lacquer, cinnamon and other forest products, ivory and rhinoceros horn are the chief resources of the region, which, throughout the country’s history, has been a buffer zone in the struggles among Thai, Lao, Vietnamese and Western colonial powers. It has also furnished a rich hunting ground for slavers and a productive field for Christian missionary efforts.

Archaeological and documentary evidence regarding the early history of the montagnards is extremely scanty, but it is thought that their remotest ancestors included a dark-skinned and long-headed people who came into the area in ancient times. More certainly among their forebears was a later-arriving population which, in its short stature, light skin and wavy black hair, resembled a common modern Indonesian type. Successive invasions of Mongoloid peoples from China drove these earlier settlers into the highlands and pressed some of them southward down the central mountain chain. The physical mingling that took place during this process did not overwhelm the early montagnards, but it injected a strong Mongoloid increment in their physical makeup, just as it left a heritage of their traits in the lowland population.

The varying origins of the early montagnard arrivals are reflected in the extraordinary confusion of languages now encountered in the mountain region. These languages have not been completely studied. Not only are there more than a dozen languages and numerous dialects in use, but their distribution is not precisely known. They can, however, be rather loosely grouped into two major divisions: the large and complex Mon-Khmer family, distributed over most of the mountain region, and the smaller Malayo-Polynesian family, confined to southern parts of the mountain region. More than 15 distinct lan-
guages of Mon-Khmer origin, the best-known including Bahnar, Sedang, M'ng and Stieng, are spoken by some half a million persons. An additional 300,000 persons speak one or another of a number of Malayo-Polynesian languages, of which the most important are Rhade and Jarai.

Despite the complexity of languages, neighboring peoples are, in general, sufficiently familiar with one another's languages to communicate with relative ease. The sounds of basic words often are much alike, and, where verbal understanding fails, conventional sign language may be employed. Among the major groups, a number of persons speak either French or English with some fluency.

The distinction between one montagnard group and another is usually made on the basis of linguistic criteria. This system of classification, however, has certain limitations. First, although scholars have agreed on a broad framework of language families and language groups within those families, they have failed to reach a consensus regarding the classification of particular subgroups within that outline. There has been some controversy, for example, as to whether the Rengao constitute a group separate from either the Sedang or the Bahnar. Moreover, contrary to what might be expected, highlanders who speak the same language do not invariably share common thought and behavior patterns; for instance, sometimes there are differences in the economic practices and cultural observances between one Rhade, Sedang, or Bahnar village and another. A system of classification based on linguistic criteria alone fails to take account of these distinctions.

Social divisions throughout the mountain region are primarily local. Politically and economically the village is the unit of overriding importance, and identification between members of the same ethnic group living at a distance from one another is usually negligible. For the majority of South Vietnamese montagnards, knowledge of outsiders other than close neighbors has been extremely limited. Each village is a largely self-contained economic unit and handles its internal political affairs through the mechanism of an elected council of elders and headman. In the absence of hereditary chieftains whose political authority is acknowledged by the entire ethnic community and which derives from a kinship system, South Vietnam's montagnards cannot accurately be referred to as "tribes," although this is often done.

While the montagnards have not traditionally shown any degree of self-conscious unity, certain characteristic ways of thought and behavior have set them apart from the rest of the population. The typical montagnard, as seen by the lowlander, is a non-Vietnamese-speaking animist, dark skinned and clad in a loincloth, who lives in an isolated settlement deep in the mountains. He grows wet and dry rice and other crops by rudimentary techniques and occasionally stalks
boar, wild goat or other prey with a crossbow. His life is governed by a myriad of taboos and rituals having to do with malevolent spirits, whom he greatly fears, and whose placation through sacrificial offerings is a major preoccupation. This image of the montagnard predominates in the lowlands, despite the fact that a few highlanders have acquired an education or a degree of technical competence; can speak French, English or Vietnamese; have been at least superficially converted to Christianity; and are serving in the South Vietnamese Army or special forces units.

Customs governing marriage and family life among the montagnards vary from group to group. Some communities are patrilineal, reckoning descent from the male line; others are matrilineal, reckoning descent from the female line; still others have a bilateral kinship system. In the bilateral society of the Bahnar, for example, the typical unmarried male lives in the communal or bachelor house, centrally situated among the so-called long houses which shelter the rest of the village population. Marriage arrangements may be initiated by the family of either the potential bride or groom. After marriage and before the birth of the first child, the groom spends a brief period of residence with his wife's parents and an equal period with his own before establishing an independent household. Later he may take an additional wife, who is established under the same roof. Personal possessions are inherited through the male line. Among the matrilineally organized Rhade, by contrast, women are the household heads, and family property is in the hands of the women. A certain judicial authority rests with the senior women, who hold title to the clan land by right of inheritance.

The religious beliefs and practices of the montagnards represent an admixture of magic, mythology and superstition. Their traditions are rich in legends, many of which have to do with the first appearance of human life on earth. Most montagnard groups worship an entire pantheon of spirits, of which some are good but most are evil. The evil spirits must be propitiated on numerous occasions—the building of a house, the birth of a child, the presence of an epidemic—with the celebration characteristically entailing the sacrifice of a buffalo and the drinking of rice wine.

Social and Political Integration

Before the coming of the French the montagnards lived largely in isolation from the lowland peoples. Contacts between the two groups were infrequent and peripheral, montagnard exposure to the dominant culture deriving almost solely from the commercial or political ambitions of lowland peoples. During the fifteenth century, for example, the Chams and the Khmers carried on a flourishing trade with each other across a route which passed over the Darlac Plateau. Later the
imperial Vietnamese Government established a number of military installations in the montagnard areas bordering the lowlands. These bases served as trading outposts and offered protection against montagnard marauders for the local population, but had a negligible effect on the integration of montagnards into the national life.

With the expansion of French control in Southeast Asia during the late nineteenth century, contacts between the montagnards and the remainder of the population steadily increased. The French, interested in the highlands for plantation agriculture, gave the montagnard regions special status. They called these areas the Southern Montagnard Country (Pays Montagnard du Sud—PMS) and administered them separately from the rest of Vietnam. This status was retained under Emperor Bao Dai when Vietnam was granted semi-independence in 1949.

In some instances, the newly developing relationships were harmonious and, to varying degrees, mutually beneficial. The French and Vietnamese gained access to a largely unexploited territory, while the less isolated montagnard groups, on their part, were exposed to the goods and techniques of culturally more advanced societies. French administrators and Christian missionaries established schools, hospitals and leprosariums for montagnard use.

Often, however, the new contacts proved disruptive, giving rise to conflict between the montagnard communities and the outsiders, who were looked on as unwelcome interlopers. Montagnards asserted that Vietnamese merchants mulcted them, Vietnamese and French officials abused them, and most importantly, speculators of both nationalities were intent on usurping their traditional landholdings. A montagnard revolt against the French, lasting from 1931 to 1933, was followed by another in 1936, which continued until 1938. Eventually, the French were able to obtain what amounted to permanent rights to the use of some montagnard lands, particularly those of the Rhade and Jarai. These tracts have since been developed into large rubber, coffee and tea plantations.

After 1954 the Vietnamese Government incorporated the highland regions into the centralized governmental structure of the country, bringing the montagnards under direct Vietnamese administration. The aim of this policy was to integrate the montagnards socially, economically and politically into the framework of Vietnamese national life—an objective which was made urgent by the campaign of terrorism directed against them by Communist guerrillas. The government approached the problem by moving Vietnamese into the highlands from the overpopulated coast and by settling the seminomadic montagnards in the vicinity of the new communities where they would be exposed to Vietnamese influences and protected from guerrilla activity.
The resettlement program met with early resistance from the montagnards, who were reluctant to discard their traditional ways for life in the regroupment centers and also saw the influx of Vietnamese settlers as a threat to their ancestral lands. Moreover, the program was not always tactfully carried out, with the result that in some instances fear and antagonism were built up among the highlanders—a vulnerability which the Communists did not fail to exploit (see ch. 16, Public Information).

In late 1961 steps were taken to remedy the situation. Civil administrators were instructed to deal sympathetically with the montagnards, and the army's psychological warfare section was directed to promote friendly relations between them and the army personnel. Subsequently, the Civilian Irregular Defense Group, a paramilitary organization designed to win the loyalty of the montagnards and train them for combat against the Viet Cong, was incorporated into the armed forces (see ch. 27, The Armed Forces).

Latent opposition to Vietnamese dominance was suggested in mid-1964 by the formation of the Unified Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races (Front Unifié pour la Libération des Races Opprimées—FULRO). Purporting to represent the Cham, Rhade, Jarai, Raglai, Bahnar, Sedang, Hre, Mnong, Stieng and other montagnard peoples, the stated purpose of the new organization was to obtain montagnard independence from the Vietnamese authorities. Later in the same year several hundred Rhade seized the radio station at Ban Me Thuot, capital of Darlac Province, demanding the establishment of an autonomous tribal state. United States Army officers headed off the revolt and arranged for the presentation of montagnard grievances to the authorities in Saigon. Among demands were title to their lands and the authority to settle internal disputes among themselves and in accordance with their own customary law.

Prime Minister Nguyen Khanh responded by promising greater recognition of montagnard status, social welfare benefits and inclusion of montagnard officers in the armed forces. Legislation covering many of these points was subsequently enacted, but had not yet been put into effect by September 1965, when new revolt threatened and had to be put down.

The montagnard population can be roughly sorted into two groups—those found in the northern half of the country's mountainous spine and those found principally in the southern part. The northern highland peoples all speak Mon-Khmer languages. The southern highland peoples include groups of Malayo-Polynesian as well as Mon-Khmer linguistic stock. Some of these groups extend across the border into eastern Laos and Cambodia, and some are related to groups in North Vietnam.
The Northern Mountain Region

The largest and, consequently, most important groups in the northern mountain region include the Katu, Sedang, Hre and Bahnar peoples. The Katu language belongs to the Katuic subgroup of the Mon-Khmer family; the languages of the others belong to the Bahnaric subgroup of the same family.

The Katu

Like the majority of South Vietnamese montagnards, the Katu (Kato, Ka-Tu) are a dark-skinned, muscular, seminomadic people, whose traditional relations with their neighbors have alternated between the formation of blood-oath alliances and the conduct of intermittent warfare in quest of food and slaves. The northernmost of the country's principal montagnard peoples, the Katu occupy an area extending from some 15 miles west of the coastal cities of Hoi An and Da Nang to the border of southern Laos. This sector is a particularly rugged area, thickly forested, with rocky slopes and precipitous peaks. As is the case with many highland peoples, little of their daily living habits is known; much of the available information comes from reports of missionaries or French military officers and is limited in scope. The Katu are said to number between 20,000 and 30,000.

Katu settlements are generally small and situated on high slopes because of the oppressive humidity at lower elevations. The few roads leading to them become impassable during the heavy rains. Houses, generally made of bamboo and wood and roofed with thatch, are usually arranged in a circle facing the bachelors' house, which is the focal point of village life. A residence for unmarried men and a gathering place for all, the bachelors' house is the site of all communal rituals, feasts and meetings.

In appearance, the Katu resemble other South Vietnamese montagnards in that they are generally of short or medium height and muscular. The men, most of whom are well built, range from 64 to 66 inches in height. Many Katu ornament the face, chest, arms, wrists and thighs with colorful tattoos.

The characteristic Katu weapon is a crossbow, made locally and used along with traps, in hunting. After a successful hunt the kill is salted and preserved in bamboo tubes, to be used as a supplement to the standard dietary fare. Rice, manioc and maize are the dietary staples along with wild fruits and roots gathered in the forest.

The Katu are patrilineal, and marriage follows the mutual consent of the parties and their parents to the arrangement and to the bride price. The extended family, consisting of a man and his wife, his male descendants and their wives and children, unmarried daughters and aged parents, is the typical household unit. A Katu may take more than one wife, but rarely does.
In general, Katu relations with their neighbors have been poor; reportedly, the Katu are still wont to kidnap intended victims for sacrificial offerings from nearby villages. Their principal contacts with lowlanders have occurred during occasional visits of Katu to market towns on the coast. Political loyalties formerly extended no higher than the village level. In the mid-1960's, however, it was reported that the Viet Cong had extensive control of the Katu, as they had over groups in the same general area. Some Katu had been sent to North Vietnam for military training.

The Sedang

The Sedang, also known as the Händea (sometimes written Harndeang) or Xo-dang, are estimated to number between 60,000 to 80,000. They speak Sedang, a language which includes several dialects, but any Sedang can understand any other. No written form of the language has as yet been developed. The coming of the French and their establishment of special schools in Sedang territory resulted in the acquisition of French-speaking skills by some Sedang before 1954; since then, others have learned Vietnamese as a result of contact with government officials or dealing in lowland markets. Most Sedang, however, know only their own tongue.

The date of arrival of Sedang groups in the area northwest of Kontum, which they presently occupy, is unknown. Even in the modern period, they have been little studied, having had little to do with either the Vietnamese or the French until a few decades ago. Reportedly, there has been considerable contact between them and their Bahnar neighbors, not all of it friendly. They have intermittently engaged in feuding and in raiding contiguous territory and have jealously guarded their independence. Initial French efforts to gain a foothold in Sedang territory met with violent resistance. Since then movement through the area has been facilitated by the construction of Route 14, which is the principal north-south road in the Central Highlands region.

The Sedang are slash-and-burn cultivators of dry rice, but unlike some other montagnard groups, they also cultivate paddy in the bottomland where this is possible. Every member of the group has claim to some portion of the dry-rice harvest, which is cultivated collectively. The labor of a single family, however, goes into the farming of wet-rice paddy and kitchen gardens; hence, only its members share in the harvest. Fishing and hunting provide supplementary items for the diet.

Of special interest in respect to the Sedang economy are the iron deposits abounding in the area. Between rice-growing seasons many Sedang men engage in iron mining as a subsidiary occupation. The ore is extracted, molded and forged into various tools, such as hatchets, pickaxes, machetes and knives, for commercial sale.
Each long house, sheltering a number of nuclear families, has a ritual chieftain. She is responsible for cooking the rice, which, when grown according to traditional methods, is regarded as sacred. Rice may be cooked only in the half of the household in which she lives and must be carried to occupants of the other half from her hearth.

The Hre

The Hre are considered by some scholars as an independent group and by others as a subgroup of the Sedang, near whom they live. They occupy a sector of the northern mountain region, inland from the coastal city of Quang Ngai. Estimates of their number are at wide variation, reflecting lack of agreement among scholars as to whom should be included. The estimates range from 27,000 to more than 100,000, depending on what system of classification is used.

In recent years the government has forcibly resettled many of the Hre in lowland areas so as to cut off food supplies to the Viet Cong. The action aroused Hre resentment, apparently not so much because the people regretted having to leave their fields and villages as because the administration subsequently proved unable to provide protection against Viet Cong incursions in the newly settled area.

The Bahnar

The Bahnar live in the rugged mountains of southeastern Kontum, northern Pleiku and western Binh Dinh Provinces, south of the Hre area. Estimates of their number range from 70,000 to 200,000.

They may be divided, mainly on linguistic grounds, into seven major subgroups. The Alakong, Tolo and Bonom are settled mainly around An Khe; the Golar and To Sung are near Pleiku; and the Jo Long and Kontum, around Kontum. There are also some smaller subgroups—the Krem and the Kon Ko De near An Khe and the Ho Drong some 20 miles southeast of Kontum. On the fringes of Bahnar territory live the Rengao and the Krem, whom some scholars regard as Bahnar, others as closely related peoples.

These groups speak their own Bahnaran languages, which belong to the Mon-Khmer family. Bahnar, the principal Bahnaran language, was given a written form by Catholic missionaries during the French colonial period. The writing system employs romanized Vietnamese characters. Quite a few Bahnar elders understand French and speak it with a fair degree of fluency, but with a strong accent. Some speak English, too, serving as interpreters for United States Special Forces units.

Lean and well-muscled, the Bahnar have bronzed skin and short or medium-length dark hair. High cheekbones and broad noses are characteristic of many individuals. Average heights reported in one village ranged from 54 to 60 inches for men, 47 to 50 inches for women. Filing of teeth is commonplace, and many male adults bear
the scars of self-inflicted wounds on the chest or thigh. Men wear a loincloth, sometimes adding a shirt, coat or shawl; women wear a knee-length skirt or sarong. Both sexes sometimes ornament themselves with a profusion of silver, copper or glass beads.

Neighboring Bahnar villages are generally grouped together in an administrative unit known as a toiring, the residents of which share hunting, fishing and cultivation rights within the toiring area. The Bahnar are dry-rice farmers but supplement their diet with cultivation of such secondary crops as millet, maize, pumpkins, eggplant and manioc. They also raise some buffalo, goats, pigs and chickens. The villagers exercise joint ownership over the domestic animals, which are offered as sacrifices when houses are built, crops are planted and birth, illness and death occur.

The usual settlement consists of a number of family dwellings, a communal house for bachelors, granaries and shelters for pigs and chickens. A tall gate with a thatched roof stands at the entranceway to the village; its barbed-wire doors are closed at night. Family dwellings, averaging 30 feet long, are roofed with thatch and set on pilings raising them some 6 feet off the ground as a protection against wild animals. The interior is reached by a ladder from the outside.

Living conditions are rigorous. Food is scarce and infant mortality high. Smallpox, sleeping sickness and other epidemic diseases strike the village from time to time, and, on occasion, a man or woman is attacked and fatally injured by a wild animal. Such disasters are generally regarded as the work of malevolent “spirits of the dead,” who are greatly feared. Relief from fear and deprivation is generally found in drinking bouts, during which unrefined rice wine is drunk through bamboo tubes.

Social organization is based on the village. Each village elects a group of elders, who in turn select the headman, or kra. A political superstructure was imposed by the French so that now the kra usually acts as a liaison with the central government. Because of their location, Bahnar villages are especially susceptible to attack from the Viet Cong, and some have gone over to the Viet Cong side. In 1963, in a move intended to cut off Viet Cong food sources, a number of Bahnar villagers were resettled near Pleiku, where the people have since cleared land, dug wells and constructed housing.

Relations with neighboring peoples vary in character from hostile to friendly. In the past, Bahnar marauding bands made frequent incursions into contiguous areas to secure food and other goods; on the other hand some Bahnar men have contracted marriage with Jarai and Chan peoples, which have created kin ties among these groups. Also the Bahnar were one of the montagnard groups noted for their
friendly and cooperative manner toward Christian missionaries and French administrators during the French colonial period.

The Southern Mountain Region

The southern mountain region includes montagnard groups of both the major linguistic stocks. Among the principal groups are the Stieng, Mnong, Kil, Sre and Ma, whose languages are of Mon-Khmer origin, and the Jarai, Rhade, Raglai and Bih groups, whose languages belong to the Malayo-Polynesian family. A number of the latter groups have been strongly influenced by the ancient Cham civilization.

The Stieng

The Stieng, sometimes known as the Budnip, are one of the smallest ethnic groups in the southern mountain region. Numbering about 20,000, they occupy Quang Duc, Phuoc Long and Binh Long Provinces on South Vietnam’s western border. Stieng are also found in Cambodia, where their numbers are even greater.

Most of the group speak Stieng as their only language, although a few Stieng speak French as a result of having worked on foreign-owned rubber plantations, and some can speak Vietnamese. Stieng itself is one of the Stiengan languages of the Bahnaric subgroup of the Mon-Khmer family. It is thus linguistically related most closely to the languages of the Mnong, Kil, Sre and Ma, who inhabit other sectors of the southern mountain region.

The territory on which the Stieng are settled is less remote from lowland areas of habitation than that of many montagnard groups. Traversing it are National Route 13, running north and south near the Cambodian frontier, and Route 14, running southwest to northeast in the east across the mountains. Dense jungle and flat grasslands characterize much of the area. Because Viet Cong infiltrators cross over Stieng territory, many Stieng villages, for security reasons, have been forcibly resettled in the lowlands. This action aroused appreciable resentment among the Stieng, who apparently, like many other montagnard groups, are largely indifferent to the outcome of the current guerrilla action and want only to be left alone.

The Stieng, who have a patrilineal kinship system, handle their own affairs at the village level, each local community recognizing the authority of its own headman and council of elders.

The Kil, Sre and Ma

On a linguistic basis the Kil, Sre and Ma may be grouped, together with a number of smaller ethnic communities found in the same general area, under the collective label Koho. Their language and its various dialects are part of the Stiengan subgrouping of Mon-Khmer stock. The groups show less cultural than linguistic homogeneity,
however, and differences in economic practices and social behavior among them are of interest.

The Sre, for example, unlike most other Mon-Khmer groups, apparently have a matrilineal kinship system. Women, whose prerogative it is to choose the marital partner, hold title to all family property. Numbering an estimated 30,000 in 1959, the Sre live in the vicinity of Djiring, some 30 miles southwest of Da Lat. In contrast to the slash-and-burn cultivation of dry rice practiced by most montagnards, the Sre are wet-rice cultivators who grow rice in paddy fields in the valley bottoms, using a buffalo and plow.

The Ma (Cau Ma), numbering about 30,000 and located about 60 miles west of Da Lat on the banks of the upper Song Dong Nai, practice both wet- and dry-rice cultivation. They also hunt game, which abounds in the valley. The fact that some Ma occupy dispersed farmsteads, rather than live in more compact settlement, distinguishes them from other groups. Their sociopolitical organization features an elite of prosperous families, from whom the village chiefs are drawn. Feuding and raiding were characteristics of Ma life in earlier centuries, with prisoners of war adopted as slaves in the family of the captors. Some Ma still hold slaves.

The Kil (Chil, Cil, Mnong Kil), estimated as numbering about 10,000, occupy a tract northeast of Da Lat, where they engage in slash-and-burn cultivation.

The Mnong

The Mnong are a seminomadic people, who inhabit the mountains, densely forested area between Ban Me Thuot and Da Lat. They include various subgroups which have little or nothing to do with each other but speak dialects of the same Mon-Khmer language. Among these subgroups, for instance, are the Mnong Bunor in the western part of the Mnong area, who have close contact with the Stieng; the Mnong Rlam, who occupy a swampy sector to the east; and also to the east, the Mnong Gar, who live to the south of Lac Thien basin. Until recently the Mnong engaged much of the time in feuding and raiding, and they still maintain a reputation for unfriendliness to outsiders.

Mnong villages vary in plan with each group. Long houses, providing shelter for several related or friendly nuclear families, may be ranged in a triangle, along a central path or at random. The houses themselves vary in construction, as to the type of roof, placement of the door and use of pilings.

The Mnong peoples collectively number about 40,000. They are seminomadic agriculturalists, who practice dry-rice cultivation in the uplands or, as in the case of the Mnong Rlam, utilize streambeds and lakeshores for irrigated rice growth. Their principal contacts with outsiders occur through commercial exchanges. Their religious life
is largely concerned with the control exerted over their destiny by a pantheon of spirits; they attribute all untoward happenings to the work of spirits or sorcerers, called caak. Religious life finds its ultimate expression, as among other montagnards, in the ritual sacrifice of the buffalo.

 Mnong Gar villages are established and abandoned at frequent intervals, the people never remaining in one place for long. Upland rice is cultivated in fields chosen by divination. The areas are cleared, cultivated and used for 1 year only. Settlements are sometimes deserted; too, after having been nearly wiped out by an epidemic or when it is thought the spirits have decreed a change.

 Different clans are represented in each village. Clan membership gives the individual his place in the group as a whole, but the nuclear family is the basic economic, ceremonial and property-holding unit in the village. Descent is matrilineal, and newlywed couples generally live with the wife's family.

The Jarai

 Much of the southern mountain region is occupied by hill peoples of Malayo-Polynesian linguistic stock. Little is known of their ancient history; but their speech and behavior reveals that they have been strongly influenced by the once-powerful kingdom of Champa, to which they lived in close proximity. Among the Chamized hill peoples, the largest and most important are the Jarai and the Rhade, whose languages and cultures are closely related.

 About 200,000 Jarai (Djarai) live for the most part in the Darlac plateau in the southern part of the Central Highlands. Their subdivisions remain uncertain, although A-rap (Arap), Hdrung (Hodrung) and Hbau (Habau) are those most frequently reported. Mixed groups of Haroi and M'dhur have developed as a result of contact between Jarai and Rhade. The Haroi show a high degree of assimilation to Jarai culture; the M'dhur largely resemble the Rhade.

 Physically, the Jarai are said to be well built, taller in some instances than other montagnards, light brown to almost black in skin color, with broad noses. Those on the northern fringe of Jarai territory are becoming assimilated to the Bahnar in culture, but, in general, the Jarai maintain traditional patterns of social and political organization. The Jarai have a matrilineal kinship system; after marriage the husband goes to live at the house of his wife. There is generally one extended family to a long house, consisting of related women, their husbands, children and unmarried male kin. Children take the mother's family name, and women own the house, gongs, jars, animals and other valuables representing the family wealth. After the death of the mother the daughters inherit the family goods. Land, too, is reportedly owned by individual families, rather than collectively, by the group, as is true among other montagnards.
Although in the past certain sorcerers have at times gained control over a number of neighboring villages, there is at present no political organization higher than that of the group of elders and the village headman. The Jarai have had, until recently, only limited contacts with the Vietnamese, and few speak the language. Many, Jarai, however, speak French.

The Rhade

To the south of the Jarai are the Rhade, whose numerical strength, relative sophistication and strategic location across a Viet Cong supply line gives them first-rank importance among montagnard peoples. The Rhade are centered around Ban Me Thuot, capital of Darlac Province. They are, however, dispersed over a wide area, including the neighboring provinces of Quang Duc, Khanh Hoa and Phu Yen, as well as portions of eastern Cambodia. Estimates of their strength range from 100,000 to 150,000.

Rhade participation in public affairs have been more extensive than that of other montagnard groups. The community includes a number of individuals who have acquired education and administrative or technical competence, and it has provided leadership and initiative in the montagnard autonomy movement. Y. Bham, a Rhade, is a former government official and currently president of the Unified Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races (Front Unifié pour la Libération des Races Opprimées—FULRO), the independence movement of certain montagnard groups (see ch. 14, Political Dynamics; ch. 27, Subversive Potential).

Internally, the Rhade are divided into numerous subgroups, including the Kpa, M'dur, A'dham, K'tul, Epan, Blo, K'ah, K'drao and H'wing. Within each of these subgroups the population is organized into matrilineal lineages. These consist of individuals descended through the female line from a common ancestress three of four generations removed. Groups of lineages form clans related through still more remote female ancestors. Marriage between members of the same clan is forbidden. This negative regulation of marriage is a primary function of the clans. Clan members also gather on ceremonial occasions and may assist one another in housebuilding and other large undertakings. Each clan has a name and its own taboos associated with hunting or eating certain animals.

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

This representative is always the eldest woman of the senior line, who is designated po lan (proprietor) of the land, to which she holds title. The po lan has no right to sell the land unless the notables
representing the entire group give their consent. The matrilineal system notwithstanding, men have an important sociopolitical role. A man, usually the husband of one of the elder women, is household head of each long house.

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

The typical Rhade settlement consists of small clusters of long houses, built on pilings and generally located near a good water source. Some villages have as many as 70 long houses. The orientation of the houses is almost invariably north-south, but may vary depending on the terrain in some areas. Each house shelters a senior woman, her husband, her daughters and their husbands and the grandchildren together with unmarried sons. The interior is divided into small compartments, each sheltering one nuclear family.

The Raglai

The Raglai (Orang Glai) are a smaller group than the Rhade, but, like them, are of Malayo-Polynesian stock and have a matrilineal kinship system. They are said to number about 40,000. Divided into three subgroups, the Aftlai, the Tring and the Lre, they are found principally in two areas, one lying inland from the coastal city of Nha Trang, the other between Da Lat and the coastal city of Phan Rang. The population in the latter sector has reportedly been heavily influenced by the Cham.

Raglai settlement patterns are distinct from those of most other montagnards in that individual families generally occupy single homesteads rather than group together in a compact settlement. Houses are usually separated from one another by 500 to 700 yards. Married couples live in the community in which the wife's kinsmen are found, and women have title to all family property.

The Bih

Some scholars identify the Bih as a separate and distinct people, others classify them on a linguistic basis as a Rhade subgroup. Numbering well under 40,000, they are settled in the vicinity of the lower Krong Kno River, not far from Ban Me Thout. They have long been influenced by the neighboring Mnongs, a larger and more powerful people of Mon-Khmer stock.
In addition to the long-settled groups already mentioned, there are a number of montagnard people who are recent refugees from North Vietnam. Among the principal of these are the Mnong, with a total population of over 180,000, of whom an estimated 10,000 now live in South Vietnam. In the South they have settled mainly around Ban Me Thout and Pleiku. Information on Mnong patterns of living is scanty, but they apparently follow generally the same customs and practices as other montagnard groups in the area. They are patrilineal, and only men can own property.

Another people, the Nung, who are concentrated in the highlands of North Vietnam near the Chinese border, have moved into the South in considerable numbers. Usually considered a Tai subgroup, the Nung have a patrilineal kinship system. Children bear the father’s name, and the father has title to all family property. The Nung have made an important name for themselves as professional soldiers. President Ngo Dinh Diem employed Nung elements in the Vietnamese army to help overcome the dissident Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sect in March and April 1955 (see ch. 11, Religion). In the mid-1960's, Nung troops were aiding United States forces in South Vietnam in their operations against the Viet Cong.

THE CHINESE

The People

The Chinese, who are South Vietnam’s largest minority, began to arrive in Indochina in the third century B.C. or earlier. They came as conquerors, but during the thousand years (second century B.C. to the tenth century A.D.) that the local population was ruled directly by China, Chinese culture traits were peacefully diffused through the society by education and intermarriage. The Viets became to an evident degree culturally Chinese; they were not, however, completely absorbed by the alien tradition. Many Chinese, moreover, became increasingly Vietnamese in outlook and behavior. Chinese appeared in the Cochin China area for the first time in the late seventeenth century. Full-scale immigration began, however, only in the nineteenth century (see ch. 3, Historical Setting).

In Vietnam overseas Chinese were organized into a number of associations, membership in which was based on place of origin in China. The principal function of these associations, called congregations by the French or bang by the Vietnamese, was to facilitate the assimilation of the migrant into local Chinese society, principally by providing economic assistance. Originally, seven congregations existed, but in 1885 these were merged into five groups, including the Cantonese group (the largest), the Fukienese group, the Hainanese group, the Teochiu group and the Hakka group.
Political difficulties in China and economic opportunities in the well-established Chinese communities of Vietnam increased migration in modern times. More than 400,000 are estimated to have immigrated from China after the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. In the mid-1960's the number of Chinese in South Vietnam was generally accepted as about 1 million. The figures are uncertain, however.

A further difficulty is the uncertainty surrounding the ethnic identity of second-generation or part Chinese, one of whose parents is Vietnamese. In an unknown number of instances such persons are educated as Vietnamese, marry ethnic Vietnamese, bear Vietnamese names and live entirely outside the Chinese community. More importantly, the matter of determining the precise number of Chinese is affected by legal considerations. Under the French the Chinese were permitted to retain Chinese citizenship and to appeal to China for protection of their special rights—a privilege which was complicated by Communist conquest of mainland China and the removal to Taiwan of the Chinese Nationalist Government. In September 1956, however, under the late President Ngo Dinh Diem, South Vietnam enacted a decree making all Chinese born in the country Vietnamese citizens if at least one parent was also born in Vietnam. Defined on a legal basis, the size of the Chinese community thus would be substantially smaller than the generally accepted figure of 1 million.

The partitioning of Vietnam had found the Chinese minority concentrated almost entirely in the urban centers of South Vietnam, mainly in Cho Lon. Their commercial importance, which had long been out of proportion to their numbers, had grown during the colonial period to a near monopoly of all but the largest business enterprises, which were in the hands of the French. Until 1956 they controlled 90 percent of the retail trade and played a leading role in rice brokerage, lumbering and the transport of goods between inland points and the seaports. They also shared with the Indians and Pakistanis, and with some of the wealthier Vietnamese, a prominent position in money-lending in the cities as well as the rural areas.

At the same time the nationality regulation was imposed, however, a decree was enacted which forbade any foreigner to engage in any one of 11 occupations, all of which were mainly pursued by Chinese. The impact of the occupational restriction was initially softened by the fact that Chinese who were married to Vietnamese women were permitted to continue to operate their businesses in their wives' names. However, a number of Chinese left the country rather than accept Vietnamese citizenship. The congregations, which by August 1948 had been officially renamed the Chinese Regional Administrative Groups, and through which the Chinese enjoyed extensive powers of self-government, were abolished in 1960. The Chinese schools were also brought
under government control and required to teach the Vietnamese language.

Within several years all but a few thousand individuals had complied with the citizenship formalities. Some outside observers felt that, in nominally accepting citizenship, the Chinese community had probably gained more than it had lost; it was able to continue its important role in the economic life of the country and still had ample opportunity to perpetuate its cultural identity.

In the mid-1960's, Chinese Regional Administrative Groups, which on paper no longer existed, were, in practice, actually operative. They continued to perform important integrating functions in commerce and trade and in the maintenance of Chinese cultural traditions. Chinese once again engaged in almost all businesses and occupations as well, although they were found in only token numbers in the armed services and the government.

In respect to the rice trade, almost exclusively dominated by the Chinese, some dealings with the Viet Cong occurred in Communist-controlled areas, but there was no formal evidence of any Chinese connivance with the Viet Cong. Nevertheless, some Vietnamese may hold Chinese merchants responsible for rising rice prices, thereby widening the gap between the two ethnic communities.

The Language

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

In the modern period, Chinese—mainly in its south Chinese variants—has been important chiefly as the spoken language of the largest ethnic minority. The Chinese have their own schools and social and fraternal organizations. They also have their own newspapers (see ch. 16, Public Information).

Immigration after World War II was thought to have considerably enlarged the size of the Chinese community, sizable segments of which had come originally from Kwangtung, Fukien and other provinces in South China. Information concerning the composition of the Chinese population in 1966, in terms of local origins, is lacking.

KHMERS AND CHAMS

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

**The Khmers**

The extension of Vietnamese control over the Mekong Delta area in the eighteenth century brought a sizable Khmer population under Vietnamese rule. Since then, some have been assimilated, but the majority remain distinctively Khmer in language and culture.

Estimated to number between 350,000 and 400,000, the Khmers are concentrated northwest of Saigon around Tay Ninh, southwest of Saigon around Phu Vinh (formerly Tra Vinh) and in An Xuyen Province. During the Indochina War and since, an unknown number have abandoned their lands and fled to Cambodia to escape the fighting and terrorism in South Vietnam.

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

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

**The Chams**

The Chams, estimated in 1955 at about 35,000, are scattered in villages in the less desirable places on the central lowland coast near Phan Rang and Hoa Da and around Tay Ninh and Chau Phu northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border. Some are also found across the border in Cambodia. They have little knowledge of the former greatness of their civilization, of which all that remains are the ruined towers of their once-prosperous coastal cities. The typical Cham village is a collection of straw huts on low pilings surrounded by a palisade. The treeless village enclosure—it is thought to be