harmful to live in the shade of trees—contrasts with the greenery of Vietnamese villages. Most Cham men dress like the Vietnamese. Women wear a knee-length, tight sleeved, loose-fitting tunic over a longer petticoat. They often wrap their heads in silk scarves.

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

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

OTHER MINORITIES

Other ethnic minorities in South Vietnam in the mid-1960's were the Eurasians and various foreign communities, including the French and other Europeans, Americans, Indians and Pakistanis.

In mid-1965 the French numbered about 17,000, including many French nationals of Vietnamese and Vietnamese-European ancestry. Among this group were some French businessmen who had left the area in 1954 and later returned, along with commercial representatives from Japan, Germany and the United States.

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

With France gone, the Republic of Vietnam turned for support to the United States. Various agencies of the United States Government and private contracting firms were represented in the country, mainly in Saigon. Their number had increased to about 9,000 by early 1962, as United States economic and military aid was expanded to meet the challenge of a mounting Communist guerrilla offensive from North Vietnam. No information on the numbers of civilian personnel in
the country in early 1966 was available, but the combined strength of United States military forces reportedly was 200,000.

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

Although less widely used than before, French still has considerable importance as a foreign language. The government provides French translation of many of its official publications, and French newspapers circulate in Saigon and other cities. French is taught in Vietnamese secondary schools starting with the seventh grade and remains the language of instruction at all levels in private French schools (see ch. 9, Education).

English is the most important second language after French. Some government publications are accompanied by English as well as French translations, and many young people study English in the secondary schools, where it has been taught since 1954; in universities; or in the English-language school conducted by the Vietnamese-American Association (see ch. 16, Public Information). French cultural influence remains strong, however, and it is unlikely that English will rival French as the most widely known European language in the country in the foreseeable future.

Knowledge of other foreign languages is limited. Before 1954 a few specially trained functionaries knew Russian. The number of persons who could speak and read that language in early 1966 was unknown.
CHAPTER 6
SOCIAL STRUCTURE

For centuries a relatively static and conservative society, Vietnam during the past 100 years has experienced the successive impacts of colonialism and nationalism and is now undergoing a severe period of Communist insurgency. During the French period, when Tonkin (North Vietnam) and Annam (Central Vietnam) were French protectorates and Cochin China (South Vietnam) was a colony of France, the urban elements of the society began to be oriented toward modernization. This meant, in essence, French education, technological development and an expansion of private enterprise in many fields. The traditional elite was replaced by a new upper class based on wealth and French education and strong in the traditions of French liberalism and individualism. Rural society, however, was largely unaffected, and rural social structure remained for the most part unchanged.

After the collapse of the colonial regime the struggle for national status divided Vietnam into two separate political entities—South Vietnam and North Vietnam. At the time of the separation the two societies still had much in common. While the North was more industrialized than the South, both regions were basically agrarian in character and had known a similar experience under French rule. Since then, however, each society has been led by people committed to different political, economic and social philosophies who are moving social change along divergent lines.

In South Vietnam the structure of society remained for a while much the same as it had been under the French except that the ruling elite was no longer an alien one. Three classes could still be distinguished: a small upper class, made up of those in the upper ranks of government service, persons in the professions, owners of large estates and businesses, and religious leaders; an equally small and largely urban middle class, consisting mainly of self-employed and salaried persons with some education; and a lower class, of vast size in comparison with the other two groups, made up of the remainder of the population. It consisted mainly of farmers and fishermen concentrated in a rural environment, wage workers—city and country, shopkeepers and individuals in personal service occupations.

In the early 1960's the impact of the American military presence and of the expanded Communist guerrilla activity was making itself
felt at critical points in the traditional social system. Physical mobility of the population was at unprecedented levels, causing the weakening of emotional ties to distant kin and to ancestral landholdings. Refugee families from North Vietnam had been resettled in rural and urban communities in the mid-1950's; village families fleeing from counterinsurgency operational areas were moving into Saigon and coastal towns or into temporary reception centers.

In these circumstances, most people lived a spartan existence, but a few found themselves prosperous as never before. In a society where inherited social standing, landownership or tenure in a government position with a fixed salary had once been the identifying attributes of upper-class life, acquired wealth and demonstrated political abilities were becoming means of access to membership in the national elite. With this modification, the composition of the upper class remained unchanged.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before the French

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

The royal family itself was a restricted group, being limited to the emperor's household and lineage. Families related by blood or marriage to the royal family had no formal prerogatives because of this fact, and the further they were removed genealogically from the emperor's line of descent, the more tenuous became their claim even to royal blood. Thus, although thousands of persons claiming royal blood surrounded the court and although for reasons of descent they might consider themselves socially superior to commoners, in fact their real weight in the society depended more on other attributes—mainly wealth in land or status in the governmental bureaucracy.
Apart from the royal family, the true social and political elite of Vietnam was formed by a corps of highly select classical scholars. Following the Chinese model, candidates were recruited solely on the basis of competitive examinations which were open to all but whose standards were rigorously controlled. Once a person passed the examination, he became an accredited scholar and was then eligible for appointment as an official in the imperial service. All important posts, whether civil or military, were filled by classical scholars.

The examinations for entry into the mandarinate dealt in substance only with classical literature and philosophy, and the mandarin newly appointed to an official post had little or no training in the profession of administration. Since, however, the administrative system itself was not highly technical but, rather, political, a mandarin could readily learn the details as he gained experience. His authority in office rested on two factors—his status as a scholar and his relationship to the emperor.

According to the occupational ranking of the society, the intellectual stood highest on the scale, followed in order by the farmer, the artisan and the merchant. The authority of learning was unquestioned, so much so that the most successful emperors rested their qualifications to rule on their intellectual achievements rather than military victories or the circumstances of their birth. Also, the mandarins in the imperial service were not simply functionaries in a bureaucratic hierarchy; they were the personal appointees and representatives of the emperor. Wherever they went, they were the delegates of imperial power and shared the aura of divinity which surrounded the emperor himself.

In theory the mandarinate was not a closed social group. People of common as well as royal blood, from poor as well as rich families, were permitted to apply for the examinations. Once a man had achieved the status of mandarin, he could not automatically pass it on to his son; the son of a mandarin could become a mandarin himself only by passing the same examination in his turn. In practice, however, the mandarinate became almost a self-perpetuating caste of professional governors, largely because the son of a mandarin was best able to obtain the training necessary to pass the examinations. Education, the key to such achievement, tended to be a monopoly of the mandarins themselves. In this self-perpetuating process mandarin family married mandarin family, and through a common interest in the prestige and wealth derived from imperial service, the mandarinate emerged as the most cohesive as well as the most powerful social group in Vietnam.

While social eminence and political power were thus highly concentrated in the hands of the mandarinate, economic power based on land was more widely diffused. The demise of the hereditary feudal
nobility had been accompanied by the breaking up of their vast holdings and the redistribution of the smaller parcels to other groups in the society. Families of royal blood who were in favor with the court received shares, as did many families of the mandarinate, but much of the land went to families outside the bounds of royalty or government. The wealthier of these commoner families formed a kind of landed gentry who lived in rural towns and villages and wielded political power in their own communities.

Where large landholdings were common, many landowners acted as landlords and rented their land out to tenant farmers. Where landholdings tended to be on a smaller scale, the landlord was much less in evidence than the small peasant proprietor. In any case, the larger holdings were large only when measured against the average holdings of these peasants who, with the tenant farmers, made up the vast majority of the population.

French Period

The arrival of the French in Cochin China, Annam and Tonkin changed the political and economic structures of those areas and led consequently to changes in the social structure. Political subjugation, the introduction of French education, the beginnings of modern industrialization in Tonkin, the stimulation of urbanization and the growth, mainly in Annam and Cochin China, of commercial agriculture all made their impact felt on critical parts of the social system.

The French Rulers

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

With the establishment of this new foreign ruling class, the power of the royal family began to decline. The emperor remained on the throne, but, at the royal court in Hue, French administrators were assigned to each ministry. The emperor's dominion over Cochin China and, in practice, over Tonkin was lost; he became in effect an
appointed and, usually obedient, servant of the French. If the emperor rebelled, he was replaced by another member of the royal family. The size of the powers and the functions of the mandarinate were pared down considerably. Qualifying examinations for entrance to the mandarinate were held for the last time in Annam in 1922.

The New Intellectual Elite

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

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

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

New Economic Groups

The French period also saw the emergence of a new group of wealthy Vietnamese landowners who possessed riches far in excess of that which the well-to-do segment of the older society had enjoyed. This group came into existence as a result of French development of vast new tracts of land in Cochin China. A few of these large holdings were retained by French companies or citizens, but most came into the hands of Vietnamese from Annam and Tonkin; in the 1950's, holdings of over 100 hectares (approximately 247 acres) were in the hands of about 2,000 Vietnamese landlords and 430 French citizens. Cochin China had become one of the areas with highest concentration of large landholdings in the whole of Asia.
The new group of large, absentee landowners were not only wealthier than the local landlords and peasants of Annam and Tonkin, but also more urban. They lived mainly in Hanoi and Hue, in distinct contrast to their less rich counterparts who tended to stay on their lands in the rural areas. In the city they took on a modern Western orientation, which further separated them from rural society. A few of them invested in light industry and thereby became the first modern Vietnamese industrialists. A still smaller number invested some of their income in medium-sized trading activities.

Other kinds of new economic groups appeared in the urban areas. The French undertakings in both the governmental and private sectors created a demand for secretaries, clerks, cashiers, interpreters and translators, minor officials and supervisors of laborers. Vietnamese in these occupations tended to form a modern white-collar group, based on French or French-influenced education and training and salaries which placed them well above the economic level of most manual workers.

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

Large-scale French and Vietnamese development of such crops as rubber, rice, coffee and tea, mainly in Cochin China gave rise to a group of agricultural and plantation wage workers. The labor supply for the rice and other plantations of the south had to be brought in from the crowded north, and between 1919 and 1934, 104,000 Vietnamese laborers were brought to Saigon from the north.

The Chinese

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

Such a rapid growth in the Chinese population occurred as a result of the development of agriculture and industry under the French that by 1931 there were 217,000 Chinese in the country, of whom 171,000 were in Cochin China, 35,000 in Tonkin and 11,000 in Annam. They were active in almost every branch of the economy: trade, light industry, crafts and finance. Practically every village in Cochin China came to have its Chinese shopkeeper.

Deeply involved in the rice trade, the Chinese entered the rice-milling industry and established a monopoly in that field. The first modern rice-husking factory in Vietnam was built in 1878 by Chinese businessmen, and by World War I there were 11 modern rice mills in Cochin China, all concentrated in the Chinese city of Cho Lon and owned by Chinese.

The Chinese also were involved in sugar refining, manufacturing, coconut and peanut oil production, and the lumber and shipbuilding industries. Many Chinese began their careers in Vietnam as laborers on the French rubber plantations of Cochin China and eventually started their own tea and pepper plantations which supplied most of the needs of the local market. In addition, some Chinese started rice plantations, and many Chinese gardeners in the suburbs of Saigon became suppliers of the fresh vegetables consumed in that city. Many Chinese restaurants and hotels also sprang up in the urban areas.

**SOCIETY IN THE MID-1960'S**

The society of the mid-1960's differed from that which existed during the French period in the absence of a foreign ruling elite and in the decline of the Vietnamese nobility. The French governors had departed, and the subsequent changeover from a monarchy to a republic had left the king, the royalty and the nobility as obsolete institutions. The society, however, continued to be based upon the primarily agricultural economy which developed during the French period, and it remained characterized by division into similar classes.

The urban upper class was differentiated from the remainder of the population by its wealth, its advanced and, for the most part, French education, and the concentration of its male members in high-ranking positions in the military service and in the government. Also in the cities were an emergent middle class, still relatively small in
size, and a somewhat larger urban lower class, made up largely of unskilled wage workers. In the villages there was a wide range in wealth and status, from very wealthy landowners to landless tenant farmers and part-time wage laborers.

The Urban Upper Class

The urban upper class consists of the principal government officials, including Cabinet members and other top administrators and their aids, high-ranking military officers, leading Catholic and Buddhist religious figures, nationally renowned scholars, professional persons and members of families engaged in banking and finance. Its members, concentrated in and near Saigon and Hue, constitute probably no more than 2 percent of the total population. Many of these families belong to, or have ties with, the group of large landholders which evolved in Cochin China toward the end of the French period. The majority, however, trace their origin to Tonkin and consider themselves, particularly those from Hanoi, to be culturally superior to other Vietnamese. Upper-class urban society freely admits foreign diplomats to its company, but excludes other non-Vietnamese.

Most urban upper-class South Vietnamese retain a strong personal interest in France and French culture. Among this group there are many individuals who have been at least partially educated in France and who have sons or daughters residing in that country. A significant number hold dual citizenship, the proportion, as to be expected, being higher among persons born in the former colony of Cochin China than in the former protectorates of Annam or Tonkin. Wealthier families have generally adopted a sophisticated mode of life copied from former French colonial officials and businessmen. They own late-model French or American cars which are driven by chauffeurs, and they tend to be concentrated in the French quarter of the city; they live in spacious, French style villas. Modern appliances, such as refrigerators and radios, are commonplace in their homes, as are Western foods and beverages. The men have adopted Western clothes, usually wearing white sharkskin suits for official functions. The women generally retain the national dress, although in Saigon some wear Parisian fashions with appropriate Western accessories and hair styles.

Education is of great importance to this group. The leading intellectuals are principally the products of French schools and universities, and the most acceptable higher education is one acquired in France. Virtually all of the men and many of the women speak French, frequently with greater ease and fluency than they speak Vietnamese. A rapidly increasing number, too, speak English as well. Private education is the accepted pattern, with boys expected
to pursue higher education and take a degree. Medicine, in particular, and law have been the preferred fields of study in the past, but there is increasing interest in other fields. Girls want at least the equivalent of a bachelor's degree.

The Urban Middle Class

The small, almost exclusively urban middle class includes civil servants and lower-ranking officers in the armed forces, commercial employees, schoolteachers, shopowners and managers, small merchants and farm and factory managers. While most persons in this group are not employers of labor, neither do they themselves work with their hands, an activity which they consider degrading.

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

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

Emotionally, middle-class individuals of the older generation customarily remain tied to the village of their forebears, to which, when possible, they return each year for Tet, the Vietnamese New Year.

The Urban Lower Class

The urban lower class is made up mainly of unskilled, largely uneducated, wageworkers or petty tradesmen, including taxi drivers, peddlers, fortunetellers, stevedores and domestic servants. Their mode of living is Vietnamese rather than European. The men have adopted Western-style dress for work, but favor traditional Vietnamese trousers and wooden clogs for home-wear. Unskilled laborers and lower-class women wear the conical straw hat and cotton trousers of their rural counterparts.
The members of the lowest level of urban society live in crude dwellings of straw or on boats. Most of the dwellings have neither electricity nor plumbing; their roofs and walls are of thatch, their floors of dirt. Such dwellings are built on land belonging to the government or to absentee landowners. With the exception of the domestic servants, who may partake to a limited extent of the diet of their employers, the diet of the lower-class Vietnamese is strictly the traditional one, based mainly on rice and fish sauce. For most, the means of transportation are buses and, occasionally, bicycles or motor- or bicycle-driven rickshaws.

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

Village Society

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

In the past many persons in this group were the most politically active in the village. Members of the village council were drawn from its ranks as were the chief officials of the Cult committees (see ch. 11, Religion). By the mid-1960's, however, the interest of qualified villagers in seeking such positions had greatly declined.

These families differ from their urban counterparts mainly in their patterns of living and their outlook. Men of this class wear Western-style clothes when serving as members of the village council; they don white shirts, light trousers and, perhaps, shoes while on routine duty and wear suits and ties when receiving a government official from outside the village. At other times, however, they much prefer to wear Vietnamese dress—loose-fitting trousers, long-sleeved collarless shirts of white cotton or silk, and wooden clogs. Many older men of these families have not taken to Western-style haircuts and continue to wear their hair long and tied in a bun at the back.

Wealthy villagers live in solidly built houses of wood-tile or masonry-tile. Although most well-to-do homes have some Western furnishings, traditional furniture—including expensive, highly polished hardwood slabs which serve as beds—is predominant.
The most important room in the house is that containing the altar of the ancestors; anniversaries of their death are observed with elaborate ritual and feasting. Weddings and funerals are also elaborate affairs; the more prosperous families hire a professional funeral service to provide trappings, coffin bearers and musicians. Long before the death of an elderly member of a prosperous family, tombs are constructed and coffins purchased and placed on display in the main room of the house. Status demands that their family burial grounds have tombs of concrete or cement. The rich also support financially the rituals associated with the village cults, like the Cult of the Guardian Spirit, and they are the major contributors to the construction of village pagodas (see ch. 11, Religion).

Of all the villagers, the well-to-do are the most mobile. A few rely on motorscooters, motorbicycles and motorcycles, but most depend on bicycles.

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

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

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

The lowest level of village society consists of a vast number of small peasant proprietors and tenant farmers. Forced to spend all of their time earning a living, they generally participate little in village affairs
though it is possible for some to achieve the status of hamlet chief or receive one of the honorific titles in the lower echelons of the Cult committee. Because they do not cultivate enough land to support their families, most of them must work as part-time laborers, and their wives and children do much of the fieldwork. Their children frequently go to school long enough to learn the rudiments of reading and writing and then have to leave to help support the family. This group also includes a wide range of supplemental service occupations: artisans, practitioners of oriental medicine, small tradesmen and others.
By late 1965 the Vietnamese family had experienced more than two decades of severe stress and hardship as a result of the Japanese occupation, the Indochina War and its aftermath, and the expanding military operations of the 1960’s. After partition of the country in 1954, more than 900,000 refugees fled into South Vietnam from Communist-ruled North Vietnam. This number was more than equaled during 1964 and 1965 by South Vietnamese peasants fleeing from Viet Cong strongholds or from areas subjected to bombings by Vietnamese or United States aircraft in their anti-Communist operations. As a result, the population includes millions who have been uprooted from places where they had family ties dating back hundreds, in some cases, thousands of years. In the process individual members sometimes had been separated and resettled at places so far apart that they could not convene for the rites and celebrations which traditionally reinforced family solidarity. The network of family ties had been further disrupted by deaths and separation arising directly out of military action and by the fact that in some instances political loyalties set one kinsman against another.

Despite these occurrences much of the traditional family system persists. To varying degrees in different sectors of the country and among different social classes, the lineage—a group of people tracing descent from a common ancestor—still represents the chief source of social identity for the individual. Nearly all South Vietnamese still feel that the family has first claim on their loyalties and that the interests of each individual are subordinate to those of his common descent group.

Basically similar principles appear in the traditional family system throughout the country, developed as the consequence of a common cultural heritage which evolved centuries ago in the Red River Delta region (see ch. 3, Historical Setting). Extensive differences in details of actual practice, however, distinguish the indigenous family of southern South Vietnam (formerly known as Cochin China) from that found in the coastal villages of the Central Lowlands (formerly part of Annam).
In the traditional social order the individual was less an independent being than a member of a corporate family group which included not only living members but, in a spiritual sense, a long line of ancestors as well. Emphasis was on group rather than on individual interests. Family functions extended into many areas of behavior that in more complex societies are regulated chiefly by other institutions—economic, educational and religious.

Throughout his life the individual was caught up with the activities of a multitude of relatives. Members of the same household lived together, worked together and, on frequent occasions, met together with a wider circle of kinsmen for marriages, funerals, lunar New Year celebrations and rituals marking the anniversaries of an ancestor's death. A man looked first to his kinsman for help and counsel in times of personal crisis and to the interests of these same kinsmen in making decisions for himself or members of his household. Special reverence accorded to ancestral spirits derived from the notion that, after death, the spirits of the departed retained their influence in the world of the living. Honoring one's forebears and ensuring one's own immortality by maintaining the lineage were all-important.

In the mid-1960's individual Vietnamese families approximated this centuries-old pattern to varying degrees. The truest image, perhaps, could be found among families living in the villages of the Coastal Lowlands region, since this was an area that had once been a part of Annam, where the Vietnamese cultural heritage was homogeneous and deeply rooted. The most significant departure from the pattern, on the other hand, was doubtless to be found in Saigon, a cosmopolitan city, where the intermingling of peoples with differing ideas and values had been greatest.

The Patrilineage

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

Clans and lineages are by definition exclusive in the sense that a man or a woman can belong only to the father's clan and lineage, not to the mother's. It is customary for husband and wife to come from different lineages, but ordinarily no strong sense of divided allegiance develops within the family. The married woman honors
her husband's ancestors, and after her death it is in his family rather than her own that her soul is venerated. It is the husband's clan and lineage which tend to establish the family's social identity and standing, and his rights and obligations tend to determine the family's fortunes.

The patrilineal common descent group (toc) consists of all the descendants in the male line of a common male ancestor. South Vietnamese of the Central Lowlands and refugees from North Vietnam reckon descent from the fifth, or infrequently the seventh, ascending generation. On the other hand, South Vietnamese of the Mekong Delta region, where the patrilineage is less strong, ordinarily count only through the third ascending generation. Each lineage is divided into a number of branches or segments which are ranked in accordance with the senior line of descent. Thus, a lineage typically is composed of persons related in the direct line of descent from eldest son to eldest son, and several collateral branches composed of persons related through younger sons. Within each generation, and within each family, individuals are ranked by age. Traditionally, either the eldest male of the senior branch, or the eldest male in the patrilineage, acts as the truong toc, or lineage head. In the southern part of the country, however, a family council composed of all adult members, male and female, may elect as truong toc the man whom it considers most competent.

The term ho is applied to the kin group consisting of relatives, living or dead, who descended from the same ancestor. Persons in the same kin group bear the same lineage name. There are only a limited number of lineage names in use, perhaps no more than a few hundred throughout the entire country. One of the most common is Nguyen. Thus, many different kin groups have the same lineage or family name, but many individuals bearing that name are not of the same ho. Marriage to someone of the same surname, while no longer considered incestuous, is still something to be avoided.

The duties of the truong toc revolve mainly around continuation of the Cult of the Ancestors and include carrying out the main Cult rituals, keeping up the family tombs and maintaining the genealogy book (gia pha). He must also assume responsibility for managing income from the land legally dedicated to the support of the Cult of the Ancestors, where one exists. Besides this, he serves the living; he is generally looked to as counselor and arbiter in family affairs, particularly those involving marriage, divorce, adoption and guardianship. The truong toc is normally succeeded by his eldest son, though, if he has no son, leadership of the clan can pass to a collateral branch.
The traditional and still widely preferred family type is the extended family, three generations in depth, consisting of a senior couple, a married son with his wife and children, and the senior couple’s unmarried children, all living under the same roof. Sometimes two married brothers live with their parents, but this often leads to such tension that it is generally held preferable for a second married son to move into separate quarters. In the southern part of the country it is often the youngest son (rather than the eldest), or even a married daughter, who lives with the senior couple. All members of the household live under the nominal authority of the oldest male, and all contribute to the income of the family. While this extended type of family is most characteristic of rural areas, where it operates as a unit of production, a substantial number of households in Saigon and smaller urban areas shelter extended family groups. Among the educated, urbanized group, however, the nuclear family, consisting of parents and their children, is more common than the extended family.

Sometimes a household will include, besides the so-called wife of the first rank, a second or third wife as well as her children. More often, however, additional wives are established by their husbands in separate households or may continue to live as they had before the marriage, in a house of their own or with their parents. Polygamy, widespread in Tonkin and Annam and fairly common in Cochin China during the French colonial period, has been legally outlawed in South Vietnam since 1959. Marriages contracted before this date, however, retain legal recognition, and wives and children enjoy the same rights as the first family. Moreover, the effects of the law are seen mainly in Saigon and other urban centers; in rural areas customary practices are continued.

In Annam, during the late colonial period, residence after marriage was almost invariably patrilocal (see Glossary), with the bride moving to join her husband’s community. Only rarely did matrilocal (see Glossary) residence occur and then only for some compelling reason, if, for example, the bride’s parents, without a son of their own, had adopted the groom as their heir. In Cochin China dispersal of family groups was more commonplace; nevertheless those who left the village generally tended to move only within an area which permitted their relatively easy return for Cult celebrations. In the modern period this situation still pertained to some degree, but in some areas deteriorating security conditions had uprooted and separated many families.
The Cult of the Ancestors

Central to the entire Vietnamese family system is the Cult of the Ancestors, the observance of which is a major preoccupation in life. The individual marries to have children and has children in order to assure his own immortality. Members of the common descent group, who remain together and venerate their forebears with strict adherence to prescribed ritual, rest serene in the belief that the souls of their ancestors in the other world are receiving proper spiritual nourishment and that after death they in turn will not lack such nourishment. To allow one's ancestors to have to beg nourishment from souls properly cared for by their descendants is not only shameful but dangerous, for, unless venerated in the expected manner, the soul becomes restless and is likely to exert an unfavorable influence on the world of the living.

Important elements of the Cult are an ancestral home, a piece of land legally designated for the support of the ancestors (huong hoa) and a senior male in the direct line of descent to assume the obligation for celebrations. Ownership of a piece of land which can be dedicated to the support of the Cult is, however, only a dream for most farmers who are landless, and rites of veneration are necessarily modest.

Where land has been set aside as huong hoa it is regarded as the joint property belonging to all members of the lineage, but it is held in usufruct by the truong toc, who is responsible for maintaining the rituals associated with the Cult. If the income exceeds the amount required for honoring the ancestors, the truong toc may keep it for himself, but is obliged at death to pass it on to the designated heir. If he fails to fulfill his duties, he can be removed by vote of a family council. An obligation ends when the property is materially destroyed, when the land is expropriated or when no male descendant exists. Two other types of Cultual estates are less important; land dedicated to the support of celebrations commemorating the death of a single person, known as ky-dien; and a foundation created for the benefit of either a family, a village or a pagoda, known as a han-dien. Rights and duties of the beneficiary are determined in the deed.

The anniversary of an ancestor's death is celebrated each year, the degree of importance attached to the observance depending on the rank of the deceased in the family. A representative of each family in the lineage is expected to be present. This includes, at a minimum, the male head of each household and sometimes, but not necessarily, his wife and their children. Presence at the celebration is demanded even when it requires travel from a distant place. The day before the anniversary a short speech is delivered before the principal altar to the god of the house, who is told to inform the ancestor of the rites to be performed the following day in his honor. On the anniversary
date religious rites are performed before the altar, with sacrificial offerings made both to the god of the house and to the ancestor. The lavishness of the offering varies with family income but at a minimum includes an offering of betel nuts and leaves, alcohol, tea and incense. Substantial sacrifices include glutinous rice (used only for ceremonial occasions), roast pork or chicken and fresh fruits—all of which are placed on the small altar to honor the god of the house and on the principal altar to honor the ancestor of the highest rank.

The Marriage Contract

Marriage is viewed primarily as a social contract rather than a personal relationship, a reflection of the pervasiveness of family connections and obligations in the social order and the stress laid on the continuation of the lineage. The essential elements of the marriage contract are the intervention of an intermediary and the matching of horoscopes, the agreement of the parties and the presence of witnesses at the formal proposal and acceptance. Arrangements are concluded through a ritual exchange of visits which allow the parties to assess one another before a final commitment is made. Once the engagement is complete, the bride-price is agreed upon, and the prospective groom is expected to perform actual or token service to his future parents-in-law as a demonstration of good character.

In the selection of a wife, beauty may be an important consideration for the son, but his parents will place much more emphasis on the girl's character, her ability to perform household tasks and the social reputation and medical history of her family. Ideally, she should be docile, respectful, sincere; generous, polite and self-effacing. She should be a good housekeeper, skilled in the kitchen, and enjoy obvious good health. For a girl's family also, character and family background are important considerations in accepting or selecting a son-in-law. A family would prefer to find a rich husband for a daughter, but a man with only daughters may select a poor boy of good character who is willing to forsake his father's family and assume the responsibility for maintaining the Cult of the Ancestors of his father-in-law. In many areas a match in which the girl is 2 years older than the boy, or the boy 1 year older than the girl, is regarded as the most auspicious from the horoscopic point of view.

The actual age at which marriage occurs usually reflects the prosperity of the parents. In a Mekong Delta village, for example, children of relatively prosperous families tend to marry young—in middle or late adolescence, but postponement of marriage for economic reasons well beyond these ages is commonplace. In the Central Lowlands, on the other hand, some families have arranged the marriage of sons as young as 6 years of age to an adolescent girl in order to gain an additional worker in the fields.
The principal piece of legislation regulating marriage is the Decree Law of July 1964 on Marriage, Descent and Community Property, which supersedes the Code of the Family of January 1959. Like the 1959 Code, it is designed to equalize the mutual rights and obligations of the spouses, in contradistinction to previous law in which the legal status of women in marriage was subordinate to that of men.

Catholic influence was strongly evident in the Code of the Family of January 1959. Polygamy and concubinage were outlawed; separation was made extremely difficult; and divorce was made impossible except in instances of presidential intervention. Equal responsibility was placed on both spouses for the fulfillment of marriage obligations and the rearing of children. Husbands had the right to choose the family place of residence, and, in lieu of special covenants, a system of community property was established under which all property and revenues of husband and wife belonged to them jointly and were to be so administered. At the same time the law tended to reinforce the rule of parents, grandparents and the head of the lineage as formal validators of marriage, divorce or adoption and to support the tradition of the Cult of the Ancestors. The consent of parents or grandparents was required in the marriage or the adoption of a minor, and they or, in default of them, the head of the lineage had the right to oppose the marriage of a descendant or ward.

The Decree Law of July 1964 is similar in spirit and letter to the previous family law except that the sanctity of marriage is less assiduously cherished. Divorce or separation, for example, are permitted after 2 years of marriage on grounds of adultery, cruelty, abandonment or a criminal act on the part of the spouse. Concubinage, which was specifically prohibited under the 1959 law, is not mentioned, and adultery is no longer punishable by fines or imprisonment.

The law requires civil marriage for all. This entails the public posting of banns for 10 days before the performance of the ceremony, which takes place in the office of the civil registrar and is celebrated by him in the presence of two witnesses. Following the rites, the marriage is recorded in the civil register. Apparently, civil marriages are usual among the educated, urban group, but are rare among the rural peasantry. On the other hand, great significance is attached by villagers to the religious ritual, which ordinarily takes place before the ancestral altar in the residence of the bride and is celebrated by an elderly male relative or friend of the bride’s family.

Customary Ceremonies

Betrothal and marriage formalities, other than among Catholic families, follow a basically similar pattern throughout the country, deriving from the shared cultural heritage developed centuries ago in the Confucian centers of Hanoi and Hue. In general, however, the
people of the Central Lowlands and refugees from North Vietnam pay stricter attention to the minute details of the prescribed ritual than do those of the Mekong Delta region, where cultural influences are mixed.

The procedure begins with the selection of a possible bride, chosen by the young man's parents or, as is increasingly the case, by the young man himself. The girl under consideration may be someone from the same village whom they have known since her childhood. On the other hand, she may be a stranger, seen only once or twice, at a meeting arranged by a professional intermediary. In the latter circumstance it is important that the meeting be set on the pretext of some other business, so as to avoid hurting the pride of the girl should she be deemed unsuitable.

The young man's choice made, the intermediary visits the girl's family to broach the subject of marriage and to compare the horoscopes of the two persons to determine the suitability of the match. If the girl or her family disapproves, negotiations are broken off abruptly with some excuse made so as not to offend the young man's family.

If the contact made through the intermediary looks promising, the young man and his parents make a ritual visit to the girl's residence. The visit, known as the cai mat (lit., "show the face"), is arranged for a day considered auspicious by the astrologer. The young man and his parents arrive, carrying gifts of rice alcohol, fruit and flowers, and, after greetings exchanged outside the house, are invited indoors and given refreshments before the ancestral altar. The visitors take the opportunity to observe the girl's home, her family and the girl herself, whom the parents may never have seen. If they are pleased, they will invite the girl's parents to their home. Once this visit has been made and the outlook still seems favorable, the two families fix a date, with reference to the horoscope, on which the engagement will be announced.

The traditional betrothal ceremony is not so much concerned with making news of the engagement known to, and distributing gifts among, the living members of each lineage as with informing the ancestors of the event. In the first phase, the groom's parents solemnly present themselves before the family altar and make a ritual address telling of the coming event and asking the ancestors for their protection. This done, they and the groom depart for the bride's house laden with gifts, including a roast pig; glutinous rice, alcohol, betel, tea and small cakes. The bride's father greets them and ushers them into the house before the ancestral altar, on which he immediately places the offerings they have brought. All participants in turn make their obeisances before the altar. Afterwards, a feast is served, and the bride distributes small gift boxes containing cakes, tea and betel leaves. To each is attached a small card announcing the engagement.
Where as the traditional betrothal gift may be any piece of jewelry or valuable article, in the southern part of the country it has become customary for the groom to give the bride a pair of gold earrings as a symbol of their troth. These are presented at an engagement party, which, unlike the strictly family gathering common in the Central Lowlands, is a festive occasion in which a wide circle of friends as well as relatives are invited. Sometime after the engagement celebration arrangements for the dowry are completed.

The wedding is usually performed a few months later, on a date determined by an astrologer. In a traditional ceremony on the appointed day a formal procession moves from the groom’s house to that of the bride. Places in the procession are assigned according to protocol, with the lead taken by two elder male members of the lineage, one of whom bears a container of incense, the other a box of betel. The remaining members assume their positions in proper order, and the cortege proceeds to the home of the young girl, where the elders set their burdens on the ancestral altar. Tea is provided to the assembled company, and the ritual of informing the ancestors is begun. The father of the bride, or an elder male relative, addresses the ancestors, burning some incense on the altar and informing them that the young man has come to claim his bride. The fiance then bows low before the altar three times, as does his bride after him. Next, the couple kneels before the bride’s parents and in turn before all her elder relatives. Gift-giving and feasting by the guests follow the rites.

Afterwards, the entire party moves in procession to the house of the groom where, after tea has been passed, his father performs a ritual before the main altar informing the ancestors of what has taken place. The newly married couple then make their obeisances before the altar and in turn before the groom’s parents, his grandparents and all his elder kinsmen. Meanwhile, an intermediary, standing before a smaller altar outside the house, performs the ritual of informing the god of love. Like the larger altar, the smaller one is set with offerings of chicken, glutinous rice, alcohol, betel and tea. After the ceremonies, a lavish feast, representing a great financial outlay for the groom’s family, is provided for the assembled group.

Consummation of the wedding may not occur for several nights, owing partly to the reluctance the bride will often show. After intercourse has taken place, it is customary in some rural areas for the bride to return to her family, there to wait until her husband calls for her. When he comes, he carries a roast pig. If the pig is whole, all is well, and she returns to her new house with her husband; if, however, one of the pig’s ears has been cut off, it means that the bride has been found not to be a virgin, hence is not acceptable as a wife.
In her new home the bride must please not only her husband but also his family, and girls tend to enter marriage with an often-justified fear of the mother-in-law. They have been told repeatedly that the shortcomings and ineptitudes which a mother overlooks or forgives will not be tolerated by a mother-in-law. The husband’s sisters quite often make life unbearable for the newcomer, and, if she fails to please them, the mother-in-law is likely to take the side of her daughters. Even if a girl dislikes her mother-in-law, she may find herself competing with another daughter-in-law for her favor, but she probably cannot complain or appeal to her father-in-law, for he usually adopts a passive attitude, considering such matters his wife’s business. The bride who has difficulty may go home and complain to her own parents, but they are likely to tell her that this is a phase through which a woman must pass before she becomes full mistress of her own household. Her husband may be distressed by her trouble, but she generally cannot count upon him to do anything about it, for he himself has no right to question his mother’s actions.

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

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

Status of Men and Women

Great respect is given to men, especially to older men, and particularly to the head of the lineage, who traditionally made all the important decisions for every member of the family. In the modern period family decisions, such as the choice of occupation or marital partner, are generally made by the head of the individual household, with the concurrence of the wife and perhaps the grandparents.
Where decisions are made in this manner, unquestioned obedience on the part of the younger generation is demanded and received.

Throughout her marriage a woman is expected to be dutiful and respectful toward both her husband and his parents. In some areas when a young bride is brought home by her new husband, the mother-in-law places a brazier containing burning coals at the threshold, the bride being expected to step over, rather than walk around it, as a demonstration of her submissiveness. The wife is expected to become an integral part of her husband’s family, to care for him and their children and to perform all household duties.

Nonetheless, a wife retains her own identity as an individual, and, with the passage of time, her role in family affairs increases. Many Vietnamese wives are in fact extremely powerful and exercise a strong formative influence on their husband’s opinions and actions. Women also play an important role in the nation’s economy and are particularly prominent in retail trade of all kinds. The village woman assumes a great deal of responsibility for cultivation of the family paddy fields, sometimes working harder than the men. The educated urban wife is accepted as an intellectual equal by her husband, entering into literary discussions with him and listening as he recites poetry; a few own agricultural estates, factories and other businesses. Both she and her village counterpart typically manage the family income. Ideally, relations between marriage partners are characterized by un-failing politeness and courtesy. A good husband and wife, the Vietnamese say, always treat each other as guests.

Mothers take pains to protect the reputation of daughters of marriageable age. Female premarital chastity is expected, and a girl of blemished reputation brings disgrace upon the entire family. Married women, too, are supposed to conduct themselves modestly, spending their time with their husbands and children and scrupulously avoiding any appearance of extramarital flirtations.

People nominally subscribe to the ideal of premarital and marital chastity for males as well as females, but many men in fact take wide license in this sphere. The Decree Law of July 1964, like the Family Law of January 1959 which it superseded, forbids concubinage and polygamy, both of which before the mid-century were widely practiced. Even now in rural areas people are inclined to shrug off the law as something meant only for the people in Saigon.

Children

Normal interest in having children is strongly reinforced by Confucian tradition, which makes it imperative to produce a male heir who will continue the family line. The husband and wife with numerous offspring are envied. Children are needed as family workers, but, more importantly, if there are sons among them it is more or less
assured that the lineage will be perpetuated and the Cult of the Ancestors maintained. Conversely, parents without a male heir are generally regarded as most unfortunate. The preference for sons over daughters, however, is somewhat less pronounced in the Mekong Delta area than in the Central Lowlands, where the patrilineage has retained more of its traditional character. Barren wives, who formerly could be divorced or supplanted by another wife because of their failure to produce, seek to overcome their condition by performing ceremonial ablutions at home followed by prayers, offered prostrate before the altar, at the pagoda. Adoption of a male heir by couples with no son of their own is common, the preferred candidate being a son of the husband’s younger brother.

A wide range of taboos used to be observed by expectant parents to ensure successful delivery, to protect the unborn infant from malicious influences and to avoid bringing misfortune to others. Husband and wife were expected to refrain from sexual relations from the sixth, or sometimes an earlier, month of pregnancy. The wife herself remained at home as much as possible, stayed away from shrines and other sacred places where she might inadvertently arouse the wrath of resident spirits, and observed certain food taboos. Several months before the birth, a special bed was prepared for her and set up in a relatively private part of the house, which was designated by an astrologer as the place where she would be best protected from draughts of wind which might carry evil spirits. An altar was erected to the honor of the dozen goddesses who allegedly preside at birth, attending midwife seeing to it that incense burned there constantly. Following the birth the midwife placed a brazier containing a smoldering wood fire under the bed in the belief that this would replace the mother’s body heat lost at birth. Although some of these customs have been gradually disappearing, prenatal and natal practices, like other aspects of South Vietnamese life, continue to reflect a preoccupation with solicitation of good spirits and the avoidance of evil ones.

Following the birth of a child, which is a happy event calling for celebration, the baby’s relatives gather for several ceremonies. Of these, the so-called fete of the first-month birthday and the first-year birthday are the most important. On each occasion offerings are made to the ancestors, and feasting takes place. At the first birthday celebration it is customary for the guests to bring money, confectionery or other gifts for the child. Another feature of this occasion is the placing of a child on a mat, where he is surrounded by an array of useful and symbolic articles, including a paint brush, flowers, household utensils and paper. The first object he touches is believed to suggest his future occupational choice.

Naming of the child is done in accordance with certain customs. A Vietnamese name ordinarily has three parts, the lineage name (ho),
the middle name and the personal name, given, in the Chinese manner, in that order. Occasionally, in the Central Lowlands area the middle name is omitted. In all, there are no more than 200 or 300 ho designations in use, most of them the names of royal dynasties or feudal lords who once ruled over the country. Examples of this type include Dinh, Le, Tran and, the most common ho of all, Nguyen (see ch. 3, Historical Setting). Useful middle names are “Van” for males, “Thi” for females.

The significance of a given name varies; it may represent the child’s rank among his siblings as does Nguyen Van Ba (Ba—third born) or suggest a desirable attribute as does Nguyen Van Manh (Manh—the brave). Sometimes the three parts of the name collectively express a single idea, as does Nguyen Hao Dan (Nguyen—who loves letters and culture; Hao—who loves Dang, the hillock where Confucius taught), which indicates that its bearer is a man of intellect and sophistication. In frequent instances when a first-born son has died, the second is given an undesirable name as a protective device to ward off malevolent spirits.

When the child reaches 3 or 4 years of age, he enters a new phase. From this age boys and girls are raised differently, and a small boy is limited more and more to the company of his own sex. Boys soon conclude that they are superior to girls; an impression which the family confirms rather than dispels; when children are introduced to guests, for example, the boys are brought out first.

Early childhood is a relatively free and unrestrained period of life, during which time the child enjoys considerable attention and affection. Rural children are allowed the run of their village, eating more or less when they like. Toilet training is casual. Nevertheless, the parents, fearful that the child might be harmed or carried off by a wicked spirit, take pains to warn him to avoid the road and certain sacred or taboo spots. He is usually given a talisman, such as a bracelet or earring, to wear. This is thought to be effective in keeping evil forces away.

As children grow older, however, they find increasing demands on their time and less and less opportunity for play. Many attend school for a few years, and both boys and girls, as soon as they are physically able, are expected to help in the cultivation of rice, which furnishes so large a part of the family food supply.

Mutually supporting forces are brought to bear in training the child. The main responsibility rests with the parents, but uncles and aunts, as well as older brothers and sisters, also command respect. When the child goes to school, teachers play a part in teaching him proper attitudes and behavior, and parents and teachers uphold each other’s views. Training indoctrinates the child in his duty toward his parents, among which filial piety traditionally is of overriding im-
portance. It also involves, at least for girls of educated families, instruction in manners—how to sit properly, how to respond to an introduction.

Regardless of their social origins, all children are expected to be polite to their parents and older persons and solicitous of their welfare, to show them respect through proper manner and forms of address, and to carry out prescribed tradition with respect to funeral practices and the observation of mourning. After the death of their parents it is incumbent upon surviving children, and their children in turn, to honor their memory through the maintenance of the Cult.

Children’s Day, an occasion for lavishing attention on the young, is enjoyed by everyone. Coming in the middle of autumn, it is celebrated with a colorful lantern parade. Cakes, fruits of the season and other gifts are given to the youngsters, who visit from house to house.

The Catholic Family

Information on Catholic family life, especially among urban populations, is fragmentary. Data collected in one Mekong Delta village, however, provides tentative evidence that Catholic and Buddhist families share many similarities in behavior. Every Catholic household, for instance, has its counterpart of the ancestral altar, set with the usual candles, incense burners and flowers, but displaying Christian sacred and ritualistic articles rather than family photographs. Parents and children assemble before the altar each evening for recitation of the rosary.

In the village studied, marriages among Catholic families were ordinarily arranged, with the formalities of the official request for a marriage and the engagement performed in accordance with traditional Vietnamese customs. A bride-price is paid to relatives of the bride. Reading of the banns takes place 3 weeks before the wedding, which is performed in the church. It is followed by a feast at the groom’s house, during which the couple pray before the family shrine and kowtow before their kin.

Extensive differences in the details of funeral practices distinguish the behavior of Catholic villagers from that of other residents of the community. When a Catholic dies, the man who is considered to be head of the Catholic community in the area informs the priest, who is called in to administer last rites. The body may be taken to the church for the funeral ceremony, but most families are unable to afford this expense and have the rites conducted by the priest in their own homes before the family altar. Burial takes place in consecrated ground just outside the village.
THE FAMILY UNDER WARTIME CONDITIONS

Events of the past two decades have brought grievous personal losses and led to tragic internal rifts within many Vietnamese families. During and after the Indochina War over 900,000 refugees from North Vietnam, mainly Catholics, fled to the South, and an unknown number moved to the North. Prisoners were exchanged, and in the South, an attempt was made to settle the refugee families on a permanent basis without separating kin. Separations were often necessary, however, either for economic reasons or because older persons could not stand the hardships of life in the new villages being established by refugee groups.

The expanding military operations of the 1960's found thousands of officers and soldiers in the South Vietnamese army who had a father, brother, sister or son fighting with the Viet Cong or holding a post in the North Vietnamese administration. In extreme cases divergent political loyalties split the members of a single household, giving rise to a situation where a family may have one son in the South Vietnamese army, another in the Viet Cong.

Throughout the country, and especially in those areas where guerrilla activities are most constant, the fighting is a family affair. Few young Vietnamese children have had the opportunity to know the simple pleasures of childhood. From a young age many have been forced to come face to face with the enemy and with death, learning to walk quietly, to remain silent with strangers and to accept bombings, assassinations, tortures and kidnapings as a familiar part of life. Women and children are sometime victims of guerrilla terrorist operations and, in some instances, follow the fighting men close to the actual scene of operations. Some women actually join the fighting.

The years of military operations and refugee movements have tended in many parts of the country to break up the extended family units and to reinforce the bonds uniting the nuclear family. The major preoccupation of the ordinary farmer is to earn a livelihood and to protect his immediate family, holding his household together at any cost.

THE NON-VIETNAMESE FAMILY

The Chinese family, in its broad outlines, is much like that of the Vietnamese family, whose formation it greatly influences. It is comparatively more strongly organized, however, and it has not been as immediately affected by the strain of prevailing conditions as the Vietnamese family. Traditionally considered to be the keystone of society, the family is strongly patrilineal, with descent and inheritance coming through the male line. The father is the center of authority, and, after marriage, sons—at least the eldest—establish residence in their father’s household. Marriages traditionally are arranged by the parents with the aid of intermediaries who determine the suitability of
the partners to one another and arrange the details of the contract. The wife is in a subordinate position and is expected to devote herself to household affairs and care of the children. Related families are linked together in lineages, whose sense of group solidarity is reinforced through ancestor veneration. Ancestral shrines and tablets are found in every typical home.

The traditional pattern has undergone varying degrees of modification within individual families. Mixed Chinese-Vietnamese marriages tend to be more lax in observance of traditional patterns. Vietnamese wives of ethnic Chinese often take an important part in a family-owned enterprise, upholding the Vietnamese woman's reputation as a shrewd, practical business partner.

Family systems of other minority groups differ, sometimes sharply, from that of the dominant Vietnamese population (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages). Among the Rhade, for example, the most important of the montagnard peoples, the organization of kin groups and the character of marriage varies considerably from Vietnamese tradition. The principal differences are that descent is matrilineal; matrilineal long-house groups provide the basis for social organization; marriage within the lineage, even within certain groupings of lineages, is forbidden; inheritance is through women, and after marriage the couple live with the wife's parents. Other points of difference include the fact that initiation of marriage proposals are by the girl's family; a dowry is paid by them to the groom; marriages are traditionally regarded as indissoluble; and only one marriage is contracted at a time. Great formality is observed by sons-in-law toward their wives' mothers.
CHAPTER 8
LIVING CONDITIONS

Early in the 1960's living conditions were better than in many other parts of Southeast Asia. Although the Viet Cong (see Glossary) had been operating in the country since 1954, in most places food and shelter could be obtained without difficulty. The government was playing a key role in welfare activities, assisted by important supplementary and advisory functions of the United States Operations Mission (USOM). International voluntary agencies and philanthropic organizations were also extending considerable material aid, and some had dispatched volunteer workers experienced in agriculture, public health and education.

With such assistance, progress was being made in the building of schools and health stations, in modernizing teaching equipment and in improving agricultural production. In some areas villagers had benefited by improved living conditions offered to them in the so-called strategic hamlets (renamed "new-life" hamlets in 1964) and by community self-help projects conducted by voluntary agency workers in remote regions including those inhabited by montagnards.

By 1965 living conditions had deteriorated as a result of intensified military operations by the Communist guerrillas and counteraction by the South Vietnamese and United States forces. The scope of the welfare projects being carried on by the government with the assistance of USOM and other agencies had also been greatly restricted. The major adverse factor was the lack of physical security in some parts of the country, especially in the rural areas. More than 1 million persons had been uprooted by Viet Cong terrorism, and military activities. Some families had returned to their native villages after a respite in the fighting only to have to take flight again when the village once more became a combat area. The massive influx of refugees into the cities had aggravated crowded housing conditions and imposed additional burdens on already overtaxed public utilities. Saigon, where the annual rate of population growth exceeded 4 percent before the arrival of the refugees, was particularly affected; its tenements were overcrowded and its slums proliferated.

Because of Viet Cong guerrilla action, some supply routes were blocked or destroyed, hampering distribution and creating temporary shortages in rice and other essential commodities in the areas north
of Saigon, including Phu Bon and Kontum Provinces, and in the
cities of Ban Me Thuot and Da Lat. In several provinces the lack of
building materials delayed badly needed reconstruction jobs. Middle-
and low-income groups were gravely affected by the mounting in-
flation which had not yet been brought under control. Rising prices
and the lack of consumer goods created dissatisfaction and unrest
among the population in some areas.

In early 1966 the principal welfare efforts of the government, USOM
and the international voluntary agencies were aimed at the resettle-
ment and rehabilitation of refugees. Some 700,000 refugees were ac-
commodated in large camps, located mostly near the major coastal
cities, and were provided with the necessities of life. Because of logis-
tical and transportation difficulties, however, many refugees lacked
adequate supplies of food, medicine and clothing. The severe short-
age of refugee administrators and welfare workers, moreover, has
severely impeded the progress in the permanent resettlement and re-
habilitation of displaced persons.

A large proportion of the population was debilitated by chronic ail-
ments, and in 1965 the life expectancy of an individual was only 35
years. The major diseases—notably intestinal infections, tuber-
culosis, malaria and bubonic plague—are caused mainly by the lack of
sanitation facilities and ignorance of health practices. Although sig-
nificant improvements had been made in the field of preventive medi-
cine, especially in antimalarial spraying and vaccination for smallpox,
wartime conditions prevented the systematic followup of these
measures.

With only a few hundred trained physicians in the country, the
majority of people were treated by practitioners of Oriental medicine.
Western medicines have gained much popularity mainly because of
the observable efficacy of antibiotics. The widespread use of these
drugs without proper medical supervision has, however, favored the
development of drug-resistant strains of bacteria which have caused
problems in the treatment of some diseases, including dysentery and
bubonic plague.

The severe shortage of medical personnel and facilities has been
aggravated by the increased demand for such services as a result of
military operations. Since the early 1960's, United States and other
Free World physicians and nurses have been working as volunteers in
the country to alleviate this shortage and to improve local medical
training.

The Viet Cong has seriously restricted practically all programs
and efforts designed to improve health conditions. Rural well-
digging teams have been attacked and their equipment destroyed,
so that in many areas their work could proceed only on a limited
scope. The work of malaria-eradication teams has encountered popu-
lar resistance in many areas where Viet Cong propagandists have told the population that their dwellings were sprayed with American-made poison gas. Similar propaganda has hampered inoculation campaigns. Many rural health stations have been destroyed and their staffs killed, kidnapped or threatened.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Diet

One of the most varied diets in the world is provided by the country’s tropical climate, luxuriant vegetation, expansive areas of rich alluvial soil, a long seacoast and many inland waterways abounding in fish.

The principal food is rice supplemented by fish and vegetables. Fish and occasional meals of poultry and pork are the chief source of animal protein. The average daily per capita calorie intake of 2,490 in 1964 compared favorably with that of other countries of Southeast Asia. Despite these natural advantages, nutritional deficiency diseases caused by dietary imbalance occur in several areas. Beriberi is not infrequent among the urban poor since they consume mainly polished rice. Kwashiorkor, a fatty degeneration of liver tissue, caused mainly by an excessive intake of carbohydrates and insufficient protein, is often found among the rural and urban poor. The lack of vitamins A and B is reflected by the prevalence, in some areas, of keratomalacia, an eye disease characterized by an ulceration of the cornea, and stomatitis, an inflammation of oral tissue.

To some extent, the traditional Vietnamese cuisine reflects Chinese influence in the choice of foods and methods of preparation. Considerable ceremonial importance is attached to the preparation of rice. A woman’s domestic proficiency is believed to be reflected in her ability to prepare it properly and in adequate quantities. Soup is an important part of every meal. It is also consumed as a snack at any time of the day or night. A staple condiment is nuoc mam, a pungent sauce made of fish preserved in brine. It is inexpensive and provides a good source of protein.

City dwellers of all classes eat three meals daily—in the early morning, at noon and at sundown. The noon meal is generally the most substantial one and is followed by a siesta. The diet of the wealthier urban dweller tends to be more varied than that of those who are less well off; some have developed a taste for French cooking, although most continue to prefer indigenous dishes. Ice cream and soft drinks between meals have attained a certain popularity, but they are luxuries which the average person can rarely afford.

In rural areas the number of meals varies, depending on the availability of food and the work season. A common pattern during the period of intense agricultural activity is a heavy meal at breakfast,
which is generally taken at dawn; lunch at 10 a.m.; and dinner at 5 p.m. The meals may include rice, a fish and vegetable soup, fried shrimp, fish stewed in sauce, scented leaves or bean sprouts. Another variation may be rice, fish and pork cooked in nuoc mam, salted fish, shredded banana stalk blended with cucumber and scented leaves, and red pepper. The food is eaten from individual bowls with chopsticks—never with the fingers. The family sits in a circle on floormats or on a large camp bed, and a bowl with chopsticks is set before each family member. All dishes are served at the same time, and the meat is cut up in advance. On hot days the family gathers for meals in the beaten earth yard in front of the house.

In the cities the family usually gathers around a table. Urban workers, construction laborers or taxi drivers generally go to a corner restaurant at lunch time. For relatively little money they can get a simple but tasty meal consisting of a liberal serving of rice, an omelet with nuoc mam, fried shrimp and preserved cucumber. The meal, usually taken squatting on the ground, is followed by hot tea brewed in a large earthen vessel over a wood fire and is accompanied by cigarettes or by a water pipe. Between meals a worker may purchase a bowl of soup from a vendor. For the morning and late evening the choice is generally rice soup with hog intestines, liver and stomach or a clear meat broth with rice. The urban workers’ home diet consists of rice with salted fish or fish cooked in nuoc mam, bindweed (a species of morning-glory), shrimp, soya cheese and very small amounts of meat, usually fat pork.

Wine and liquor are occasionally consumed by the upper class. Rice alcohol, on the other hand, is often served at meals and feasts, particularly in the countryside. It is made of fermented glutinous rice and is sometimes flavored with lotus or chrysanthemum flowers. Although home-distilling of rice liquor is illegal, most villagers patronize a distiller who caters to their needs. The visits of friends are often accompanied by drinking rice liquor served with snacks.

Sanitation

Polluted water supplies in Saigon as well as in the smaller cities and rural areas create ideal breeding grounds for enteric and other waterborne diseases. Not even the largest cities have drinking water which is considered safe at the source, since these supplies are being contaminated through infiltration of ground water into leaking or porous pipelines.

In Saigon water is chronically scarce. During the dry season the city water is usually shut off between midnight and 6 a.m. The water supply, provided by 39 wells in 1963, was not only unsafe but insufficient, permitting a daily consumption of less than about 5.5 gallons per person. Excessive amounts of iron in the water further deteri-
orate its quality. In some areas of the city, sand and activated charcoal filters have been added to the system, but these are frequently out of order or must be bypassed to expedite operation.

In the early 1960's the Metropolitan Water Bureau began a major expansion and improvement of the water supply system. The new supply will be drawn from a dam and a filtration plant located at the confluence of the Song Dong Nai and the Saigon River, about 18 miles north of Saigon. A network of new pipes, water mains and piping stations will transmit the water to Saigon, at the capacity rate of about 55 gallons per person per day. Financed by a $17.5 million development loan from the United States Agency for International Development (AID), the project is scheduled for completion in 1966. Other cities benefited from the AID-sponsored "65 Cities Water Program." In 1963 and 1964, 52 water supply facilities were completed in 28 cities with a total population of 820,000.

A well-digging program in the rural areas has also been organized by USOM. In 1964 a total of 745 wells were dug in various villages and hamlets and several storage cisterns were built, the latter mainly in the Mekong Delta area. Tank trucks were dispatched to some areas to provide emergency water supplies to refugees. Viet Cong terrorism has severely handicapped the program, however. Supplies cannot be easily delivered over routes threatened by the Viet Cong, and in many instances operators have been attacked. Some supply trucks have been confiscated, completed cisterns blown up and other equipment destroyed by the Communist guerrillas.

Sewage- and waste-disposal methods are rudimentary. Sewer lines and flush toilets are found only in some of the cities. Even there, a large majority of the population is without plumbing facilities, and untreated sewage is discharged into the various canals and rivers without any purification. The few septic tanks are at the homes of the wealthy. During high tide the openings of the sewage networks become flooded, and large areas become inundated with sewage. In the poor sections of town and in the proliferating slum settlements open ditches are used as communal toilets, representing a grave and continuous health hazard. The entire situation has been aggravated by the massive influx of refugees.

Garbage-collection systems exist in Saigon and other major urban centers. Garbage and waste are put out for collection in uncovered containers and are transported in open vehicles, attracting rats and flies. There is little supervision or control of sanitary practices in markets, slaughterhouses and restaurants. Standards of cleanliness in such places are highest in Saigon and other main centers and lowest in the small towns. In the rural areas dishes and eating utensils are generally cleaned with sand and stagnant water.
Efforts to improve rural sanitation have included the construction of simple pit privies and the distribution of concrete slabs for such privies to thousands of villagers. Rural health education is needed as much as material assistance, however. The old ways of doing things have the sanction of generations of practice, and, lacking an understanding of the elementary principles of hygiene, people see no reason to change. Night soil is not generally used for fertilizer, although this practice may have been introduced in some areas by refugees from the North.

Diseases

Malaria, tuberculosis, intestinal diseases and parasitic infections are endemic and represent leading causes of illness and death. Bubonic plague has become a serious threat since 1963. Many victims of the various endemic diseases are young people and infants. In 1963 the national average for infant mortality was estimated at 36.2 per 1,000 live births, but it is probable that this figure is underestimated since statistics from rural areas are at best sporadic. In Saigon, where health statistics are maintained with greater regularity and accuracy, the infant mortality rate for 1963 was 33 per 1,000 live births. Complications following childbirth are very common, and about 8 percent of the infants born in hospitals do not survive.

Malaria has long been a serious disease problem, particularly in the Mekong Delta area and in the Central Highlands. In the colonial period and during the early years of independence it was a leading cause of illness and death. The environs of An Khe and Pleiku in the Central Highlands, and the provinces of Long An, Hau Nghia, Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Phuoc Long and Lam Dong have the highest malaria incidence rates. The disease occurs throughout the year but shows a major peak in January, February and March, except in the Delta area, where no variation occurs. An intensive malaria-eradication program was begun in 1958. Large areas were sprayed, and by the early 1960's the malaria incidence around Saigon and in the Mekong Delta dropped to a low level. In the Central Highlands, however, where large areas had not been reached by mobile spraying teams, the incidence remained high.

Since 1961 the Viet Cong has conducted a campaign to undermine the malaria eradication program by means of propaganda and terrorist tactics. Its agent spread the rumor among villagers that poisoning resulted from the use of DDT. They also captured, intimidated and killed technicians and other persons assigned to carry out the program. As a result, villagers became increasingly reluctant to cooperate in eradication procedures. The malaria-infested Central Highlands have become a particularly high-risk area for spraying teams. Convinced by Viet Cong propaganda that DDT spreads death, the montagnards have killed or abducted many health workers.
Intensified military operations since 1964 have further reduced the effectiveness of malaria eradication work, since spraying teams have been unable to reach many places. Moreover, the appearance of a drug-resistant malarial parasite (*Plasmodium falciparum*) has become a matter of growing concern. In 1964 and 1965 a significant number of drug-resistant cases were noted, particularly in the Bien Hoa area northeast of Saigon and the Plei Me area in the Central Highlands. Civilians and United States military troops who have routinely taken antimalarial drugs, notably chloroquine and primaquine, were among those affected. Spraying and malaria surveillance activities have been initiated by United States Army medical units in these areas as well as in the environs of Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Chu Lai and Phu Bai, all in the northern section of the Central Highlands.

Tuberculosis, like malaria, is frequent and is a leading cause of illness and death. Pulmonary tuberculosis is the most common type. While more cases have been reported in the cities than in the rural areas, medical authorities point out that this may be due to the better facilities available in the cities for detection and diagnosis rather than to a higher incidence rate. According to a report of the World Health Organization (WHO), 60 percent of the population of Saigon was infected in 1968. The WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have initiated a program of drug therapy and preventive vaccination by means of BCG (the bacillus of Calmette and Guérin), notably in Saigon, to help reduce the incidence of this disease.

Enteric diseases, including amoebic and bacillary dysentery, intestinal parasites (hookworm, tapeworm and roundworm) and typhoid fever are endemic throughout the country. Diarrheas and fevers caused by intestinal parasites are the chief causes of mortality among young children. Adults who have been cured are almost certain to be reinfected because of poor sanitary practices. Food poisoning and infectious hepatitis are common because of inadequate food refrigeration. Since antibiotics have become widely available, self-medication for these conditions is commonly practiced in many areas. This has favored the development of drug-resistant bacteria, and many antibiotics are no longer effective for enteric diseases.

Cholera occurred in epidemic proportions in the spring of 1964. More than 15,000 cases with 700 deaths were reported between January and May of that year. Successful control of the outbreak and a relatively low death toll was largely the result of massive United States aid. More than $1.8 million worth of intravenous fluids were provided and administered by Vietnamese and United States medical personnel and USOM technicians. At the same time, immunization
campaigns were organized in various provinces. This effort was seri­ously hampered in several areas as a result of Viet Cong propaganda. In a Mekong Delta hamlet, for example, people refused to take the injections since the Viet Cong told them that “the needle would kill.” After witnessing the inoculation of their hamlet chief they finally agreed to be immunized but refused booster injections some weeks later since the Viet Cong had convinced them in the meantime that the injections cause “slow agonizing death that might not come for 3 years.”

The incidence of bubonic plague has increased significantly since 1962. Accurate statistics are lacking, but cases reported in 1965 exceeded 3,000 (as compared to 32 in 1962). Many more went unreported. In the cool, damp provinces of the Central Highlands, notably in Kontum, Pleiku, Darlac, Tuyen Duc and Quang Duc, the disease has been endemic. In 1965 outbreaks were also noted in Tay Minh, Long An, Gia Dinh, Bien Hoa, Phuoc Tuy, Long Khanh, Binh Thuan, Khanh Hoa, Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai and in Saigon. In addition to the climatic and topographic factors, inadequate sanitation, including the absence of garbage disposal, has given rise to a massive rat and flea population which favors the spread of the disease. Many of the epidemics occurred when grain invaded by disease-carry­ing rats was shipped from Saigon and other coastal cities to non­infected areas. Such limited measures as were in effect to reduce the number of rodents and insects had to be suspended when many areas became inaccessible as a result of wartime conditions. Preventive measures were also hampered by a general shortage of insecticides and by the lack of a sufficient number of public health technicians. Vaccines and drugs, however, are dispensed in some of the outlying areas and in Saigon.

Trachoma is widespread, particularly in the northern part of the country. Most of the cases are of a mild, chronic nature, although an estimated 30 percent of those afflicted suffer partial loss of vision. In 1962, USOM began the training of trachoma-prevention teams.

Leprosy is greatly feared, and it is thought that the approximately 15,000 lepers registered in 1962 represent only a minor portion of the total number of persons afflicted with the disease. Tetanus and rabies occur frequently in both adults and children. As yet, no mass vaccination programs have been initiated for either disease. Small­pox occurs in epidemic form about every 3 to 4 years, although the general incidence has been reduced as a result of vaccinations. Small­pox control has become part of the national health program, and the vaccines dispensed are manufactured locally in the laboratories of the Institute Pasteur in Saigon, Nha Trang and Da Lat. Measles, whooping cough, mumps and other communicable children’s diseases are prevalent and, most of the time, are unrecognized and unreported.
Respiratory diseases—of which the most common are pneumonia, bronchitis and influenza—and venereal diseases are common throughout the country. Skin diseases, including various types of ulcers, fungus infections and scabies, are common and constitute an outstanding medical problem, especially among refugees.

Medical Services and Facilities

The first Western-type medical services in Indochina were introduced by European and American missionaries before 1800. These efforts were later supported and augmented by the French colonial authorities. The French organized a public health service; constructed and maintained a network of hospitals, clinics and sanatoriums; and established a school of medicine at the University of Hanoi. Western-trained Vietnamese doctors became predominant in the colonial health service, since French physicians were generally reluctant to serve in Indochina.

After independence a Department of Public Health was organized which coordinated the functions of a number of administrative sections in charge of various aspects of public health. In 1965 the Department of Health was under the minister of social and cultural affairs. Headed by a secretary of health, it included a Directorate General of Health and Hospitals, which supervised the Service of Health, the Service of Preventive Medicine, the Service of Environmental Sanitation, and the Service of Procurement and Supply of Pharmaceutical Products. Special departments were in charge of rural health and of the malaria eradication program.

Each province had a provincial medical officer, responsible for all government health facilities and programs in his province. Below him were the district health officers, in charge of dispensaries and infirmaries. At the lowest level were the village health workers, responsible for the village health stations. In theory, each province provided a hospital and public health services; each district had its infirmaries and dispensaries, and each village a health station. In many cases, however, facilities as well as personnel existed only on paper. Many dispensaries and health stations were still in the planning stage or were destroyed as a result of military activities. Moreover, there was a severe shortage of properly trained specialists to fill public health posts on the operating level.

Physicians and Paramedical Personnel

The country has one of the most severe doctor shortages in Southeast Asia. Of approximately 800 practicing physicians, some 500 serve in the army, and another 150 are in private practice in Saigon. Thus about 150 doctors, or 1 for about every 100,000 persons, are available for the rest of the country. Military operations have made the
need for doctors even more acute. Seventy-five percent of the persons reporting for medical treatment in 1965 were civilian war casualties. Most of the high-ranking physicians, notably chiefs of hospitals or medical school department heads, are French trained. A few practicing physicians have had several years of residency in the United States. Because of the general lack of modern equipment, trained physicians must rely mainly on clinical diagnosis without supportive laboratory findings.

United States and other foreign physicians and surgeons have been serving in many areas of the country since 1963 to help alleviate the shortage of medical personnel. Several United States surgical teams, consisting of 2 or 3 surgeons and supporting paramedical staff, were working in some of the provincial hospitals, notably in Can Tho in the Mekong Delta, and in Da Nang and Nha Trang in the Central Lowlands. Medical surgical teams have also been dispatched by a number of countries, such as Australia, Italy, Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, and France. In 1965, 19 such teams with 50 physicians and 150 medical assistants were operating in field hospitals throughout the country.

Also in 1965, the American Medical Association, through Project Vietnam and the AID-assisted People-to-People Health Foundation of Health Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE), began the recruitment of volunteer doctors in the United States for a 3-month to 1-year period of service in Vietnam. Under the program it is planned to have 20 United States doctors in the country at all times for a period of 3 years. Some of them are to be assigned to provincial hospitals which have been equipped with AID assistance. The Medical International Cooperation Organization (MEDICO) has also supplied medical specialists, including plastic surgeons, to help care for civilian and military casualties.

Medical training is offered in a 7-year course at the Medical School of the University of Saigon. The bulk of the training consists of lectures with only a little clinical and laboratory work because of the lack of facilities and equipment. Promising medical students may apply for military sponsorship which offers additional training at the Military Medical School and provides a regular army commission upon the successful completion of studies.

An expansion of the University of Saigon Medical School's laboratory and building facilities, underwritten by a $4.5 million AID grant, was completed in 1965. The project also called for an updating of the curriculum and teaching practices with the help of American medical educators. Evening classes on special subjects for Vietnamese physicians and fifth- or sixth-year medical students were also offered by American physicians. Some of these courses enabled students to pass examinations which qualified them for residency in the United
States. The school enrolls each year approximately 300 medical students, of whom only about 50 eventually graduate, a number far below the needs of the country.

A Faculty of Medicine was added to the University of Hue in 1961. It functions as an extension of the University of Freiburg, West Germany, but additional sponsors include Canada, New Zealand and other member countries of the Colombo Plan.

Special programs initiated by MEDICO were offered by American physicians at the Saigon and Hue medical schools and at various civilian and military hospitals. In early 1966 these programs provided training in orthopedics, gynecology, plastic surgery, general surgery and anesthesiology.

To support governmental efforts to fight epidemics, the United States Army Medical Research Team has sponsored a short-term program in virology and entomology to train Vietnamese scientists at the laboratories of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in Bangkok. A school for medical technologists, the first of its kind in the country, was opened in Saigon in 1963.

The Pasteur Institute, with branches as Saigon, Da Lat and Nha Trang, has facilities for research in microbiology and related fields and produces vaccines and serums. Other facilities at Saigon include the Malaria Eradication Center, sponsored by USOM and WHO, the National Cancer Institute and the Microbiological Institute.

Nurses are trained in two schools of nursing operating in conjunction with the medical schools of the Universities of Saigon and Hue, respectively. The schools offer a 3-year program taught by nursing instructors, 80 percent of whom received training in the United States. Graduates are assigned to provincial hospitals where they, in turn, instruct assistant nurses in a 1-year program. American nursing advisers, under contract with USOM, are assigned to some of the provincial hospitals to upgrade the training of nurses and midwives. Many of the nursing school graduates are men; in 1965 women were in the majority for the first time.

The number of nurses and midwives, 3,100 and 1,213, respectively, in 1965, was far below the needs of the country. Volunteer nurses from the United States, recruited by AID, were expected to arrive in 1966 to help fill the urgent demands.

Because of the shortage of doctors, nurses and midwives handle 90 percent of the births, even in hospitals affiliated with the two medical schools.

Other paramedical personnel, including village health workers, sanitary agents and persons staffing district dispensaries, numbered approximately 5,000 in 1965. These specialists are trained at provincial hospitals in giving first aid and dispensing simple medicines. Their short-term courses are sometimes limited to 2 weeks.
Other Practitioners

In contrast to the small number of Western-trained doctors, there are about 4,600 practitioners of Chinese traditional medicine (*ong lang*), 600 of whom live in Saigon. A majority of the people are treated by these so-called Chinese doctors, who may be of either Vietnamese or Chinese origin. Because they represent deep-rooted cultural values and social traditions, Chinese practitioners have retained great prestige which accounts for their relatively peaceful coexistence with Vietnamese practitioners of Western medicine, despite fundamental differences in basic concepts and methodology. The progress and growing prestige of Western medicine in the country, however, has prompted them to form professional organizations.

Facilities

Civilian and military hospitals in 1965 totaled 120, with 34,000 beds. Of these, 101, with an estimated 28,000 beds, served the needs of the civilian population. Most of the hospitals are public and provide free care to patients. In Saigon-Cholon there were 11 public hospitals with 4,917 beds, 4 private hospitals with 809 beds, and a number of small private clinics. One of the government facilities was a 250-bed children's hospital, including an outpatient center. In each of the provinces there was at least 1 hospital. Facilities for the care of the mentally ill are provided at the Cho Quan Hospital in Saigon, Hue Central Hospital in Thua Tien Province, and the Nguyen Van Hoai Hospital in Bien Hoa Province. These facilities, however, accommodate only a few of the 400,000 persons known to be mentally ill in 1965.

With only about 1½ beds per 1,000 population, hospital facilities, especially those in the provinces, are severely overloaded. Most provincial hospitals were built in the late 1800's and are in very bad state of repair, often handicapped by shortages of water and electricity.

Projects to improve existing hospital facilities and to establish new ones have been launched by AID, by various American nongovernment organizations and by the Military Public Health Assistance Project (MILPHAP) of the United States Army in Vietnam. Surgical units have been built and equipped by AID in 28 of the provincial hospitals. The Quang Ngai provincial hospital, headed by two MEDICO physicians, has been enlarged to a 250-bed unit, and its facilities have been modernized with MEDICO support. Project HOPE sent a hospital ship and established an orthopedic clinic near Saigon; CONCERN, another medical project similar to HOPE, has staffed and equipped a small hospital near Da Lat. The MILPHAP plans to set up or expand existing hospitals in all of the country's 43 provinces by July 1967.

In addition, there are about 255 district dispensaries and some 4,000 village and hamlet health stations. The dispensaries consist of an
infirmary and maternity unit, provide basic diagnosis and treatment and refer the more complex cases to provincial hospitals. Village health stations give first aid, dispense basic medications and, where possible, offer advice on hygiene and sanitation. The present number of district dispensaries and village health stations is inadequate, particularly in view of the increasing demand for health services, as a result of wartime conditions. Governmental efforts to increase the number of these facilities are supported by AID funds and personnel.

Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) teams of the United States Army Medical Service operate in rural areas to help improve local sanitation and render basic health services. Concentrating in areas with heavy civilian casualty rates or in those stricken by epidemics, MEDCAP teams are popular with the villagers. Their short stay in each area, however, limits health services to quick, on-the-spot treatments.

**Popular Beliefs and Practices**

Traditional medical practices and beliefs are widespread. Chinese or Oriental medicine is practiced not only among the unlettered villagers but also among educated urban families. Students of Chinese medicine in Vietnam have pointed out that some of its aspects and therapeutic practices have been adjusted in the course of centuries to suit the native physical constitutions. To cure disease, Chinese practitioners employ a considerable pharmacopeia of herbs, some of which have proven therapeutic values. In addition, a number of manipulative techniques are used, such as cupping, cauterizing and acupuncture.

Popular beliefs attributing the cause of disease to the entry of evil spirits into the body are common, particularly among the montagnards. Some believe that when a spirit has entered the body it can be induced to depart by sorcerers or village priests employing formulas and traditional rites. Others hope to keep the spirit away by wearing charms or offering sacrifices and petitions. Firecrackers are used to frighten timid spirits, imitation paper money to bribe greedy ones and politeness to mollify those who are angry. According to another set of beliefs, attributed to Cambodian and Cham influences, illness can be caused by a sorcerer who possesses something belonging to the victim—a picture, a piece of clothing, a lock of hair or even his name. The sorcerer need not be a highly skilled craftsman, since nearly anyone in the community is considered capable of inflicting injury or even death in this manner.

Popular beliefs have not interfered with the general acceptance of modern medical treatment. Such acceptance is based mostly on the effective performances of Western drugs, notably the antibiotics, and on striking surgical results. On the other hand, efforts to gain popular acceptance of such aspects of Western medicine as sanitation, personal hygiene and disease prevention have met with little success. Re-
liance on Western medicine is greatest in the cities, but rural people are tending more and more to take advantage of such modern medical help as is available to them. In doing so they are apt to view it as an additional curative aid rather than a substitute for the traditional remedies. In the villages many persons trained in Western medical techniques are also versed in Oriental practices.

On the other hand, traditional beliefs, mostly those deriving from Chinese medicine, have significantly shaped the less enthusiastic attitudes toward Western medicine. For example, it is often believed that Western medicine is unsuitable for the Vietnamese constitution since Western drugs are "hot" and have a dehydrating effect on the humor and on the blood. Many also feel that Western medical therapy and techniques are effective in acute illnesses and surgical emergencies but fail to restore vigor. The belief that good medicine has restorative as well as curative powers has led many persons to take antibiotic and sulpha drugs on a long-term basis. This practice has often caused serious toxic reactions and, in some cases, death. Many people tend to be critical of the Western doctor although his efforts are generally appreciated. Failure of the Western-trained practitioner are promptly blamed on the general unsuitability of Western medicine for the Vietnamese, while the unsuccessful ministrations of the ong long are accepted fatalistically.

Popular beliefs often interfere with diagnostic and preventive procedures. A person who is afraid that he will become ill if someone—possibly a sorcerer—acquires something belonging to him is likely to refuse to allow a blood sample to be taken. Also, the traditional contempt and stigma attached to venereal diseases often prevents examination and treatment of those afflicted.

**STANDARDS OF LIVING**

In the villages family members contribute to total household earnings by working in the rice paddies, fashioning handicraft articles at home or performing outside labor for cash. In areas where only a single crop of rice is grown, for example, many men take outside jobs in construction work during the off season. Rural income is low by United States standards, but the differential is narrow between the great majority of rural families and the few who are relatively well to do. The housing, diet and other material comforts of the rural upper class is often only slightly superior to those of the average farmer. Some differences reflecting social or economic stratification are apparent in clothing. Rural schoolteachers or civic officials usually wear Western-style shoes, trousers and shirts.

Because the rural economy is only partly modernized, cash income is not the only measure of rural living standards. The majority of village families raise all or most of their own food and build their
own houses from locally available and inexpensive materials. In the Mekong Delta, where about two-thirds of the population lives, the land is productive and responds quickly to cultivation. In other areas the increasing use of fertilizers and other aids for the increase and improvement of crops help to raise the farmer's cash profits and living standards. On the other hand, they have been hard hit by taxes collected, in cash or kind, by Viet Cong guerrillas. Moreover, military operations and Viet Cong terrorism have caused many families to abandon their villages, losing whatever small possessions they had.

In the Central Highlands, among the montagnards, the living standard tends to be much lower. Meager corn and rice crops are supplemented by hunting and fishing. In some areas ironwork, pottery and forest products are offered in barter to obtain salt, jars, medicines and other basic necessities. Since 1962 the government has initiated various programs to improve the economic and social level of the montagnards, but extremely precarious security conditions in the area have blocked much of the progress.

Families in the middle- and lower-income brackets experienced increasing difficulties during the early 1960's. In 1965 the government struggled to prevent runaway inflation. In spite of government control on wages and prices, however, the cost of living steadily mounted. In Saigon, the price of rice rose 68 percent between January and November 1965; pork was up 75 percent, shrimp, 50, nuoc mam, 30; and charcoal, about 55 percent. In some branches of industry wages rose along with the prices—in the construction industry, for example, as much as 120 percent. In other sectors of the economy, however, and in the Civil Service wages have remained static in the presence of soaring living costs. Adding to the difficulties of everyday life were the periodic shortages of basic consumer goods, resulting from the activities of Viet Cong terrorists who disrupted transportation on some roads and confiscated shipments.

Hoarding and black-marketing have become widespread, further raising the prices of essential items, including milk, rice and construction materials. The presence of the Americans has often brought at least temporary prosperity to the small lower-middle-class entrepreneur. Vendors and owners of small foodshops and bars near American military installations have done a thriving business, and many persons have been hired in service occupations by American employers.

Western movies and modern theater performances have become typical aspects of urban life. They are popular mainly with middle- or lower-middle-class youngsters and young adults who have also enthusiastically embraced soccer, tennis and other Western sports.

Games of chance are popular among all classes. The prospect of winning a million piasters on a 10-piaster lottery ticket appears equally
attractive to the wealthy businessman's wife and to pedicab drivers. More than 3 million tickets are sold every week. The profits are used by the Directorate of Reconstruction for housing and other welfare projects and for public works. The tickets are usually sold in market areas by peddlers, most of whom are women. In obtaining the lottery tickets, the peddlers have to pay various intermediaries and are therefore forced to charge more than the official price. In some provinces, notably in Gia Dinh, measures have been initiated to check profiteering in the sale of lottery tickets.

Public utilities are insufficient everywhere to meet the needs of the population. In Saigon the rapid increase in the number of residents since the late 1950's quadrupled the load on public utilities, particularly water and electricity. In 1964 and 1965 the increased demands on electrical supply facilities necessitated the cutting off of electrical current for several hours each day. Most provincial towns have some electricity, but the major portion of rural areas is without current. The progress of United States-assisted electrification projects has been slow because of deteriorated security in the countryside.

The living conditions of more than a million refugees are substandard compared to those in their native villages. Seeking the safety of the cities, the refugees have been accommodated in camps equipped with the most rudimentary types of shelter. In the fall of 1965, there was a total of some 200 camps, housing approximately 680,000 to 700,000 refugees, mostly near the major cities along the coast northeast of Saigon. In camps which are considered well-equipped, people live in long, cement-floored, aluminum-roofed sheds, partitioned by heavy straw matting into 8-by-10-feet living areas. There is no electricity, and charcoal hearths are used for cooking. Still greater hardships awaited those who were barred by local authorities from entering the cities because of the lack of facilities to accommodate them. The difficulties in providing food and basic sanitary facilities have been overpowering in many cases, in spite of major efforts by the Vietnamese Government, USOM and international voluntary agencies. Although no major epidemics were noted in 1964 and 1965, exhaustion, various forms of physical deprivations and poor sanitation kept the incidence of disease high in refugee camps.

Housing

The wealthy residents of Saigon live in spacious villas solidly built of stone or brick and equipped with running water, electricity and sanitary facilities. Housing of this caliber commands a high monthly rent, in some instances 25,000 piasters (for the value of piaster, see Glossary), plus about 10 percent for utilities.

Middle- and lower-middle-class families live in multiunit structures. The individual units have one or two stories and often combine shops
and living quarters. In the one-story structures the living room is in
the back, and the front space is occupied by the shop. The two-story
units have one or two living rooms upstairs and a smaller one on the
ground floor behind the shop area. Also on the ground floor is another
smaller room which may have kitchen furnishings, a small toilet and,
sometimes, a shower. Some middle-class tenants may also have a
small refrigerator, a sewing machine and some upholstered seats.
Many tenants rely on kerosene and gasoline lamps for lighting and
on charcoal braziers for heating. Water is drawn from nearby rivers
or canals or from street-corner hydrants.

In 1963, 90 percent of the inhabitants of Saigon lived in small
houses, of masonry, frame or thatch construction. The typical dwell­
ing is a wooden structure of two rooms with a tin roof and walls made
of straw or board. Often the lodgings form long, extremely narrow
streets along a canal or river. These are broken up by an occasional
small open space, resembling a square, where peddlers, fortunetellers
and itinerant food vendors conduct their business. The wares of the
food vendors are much in demand, since most lodgings have no cooking
stoves. Water is obtained from communal faucets, each of which
serves about 100 to 200 families. Public toilets are built over open
ditches or canals, the surfaces of which are covered with litter and
sewage.

Along the crowded riverbanks and canal banks, many low-income
families live in boathouses, which are made of temporary building
materials and lack any kind of facilities. The river or canal serves as
a universal source of water except for drinking.

Rent on working-class housing is not high by local standards, even
in Saigon. The major burden on the family is “key money,” a sum
equivalent to about one-third of the value of the house which is de­
manded of a new tenant at the time he moves in. It is, in effect, a
deposit which is returned in part or in its entirety when the renter
leaves.

With the exception of the few solidly built masonry or frame houses
of the well to do, village dwellings resemble those of the urban
working-class. They are small, dirt-floored thatch structures. Furn­
ishings consist for the most part of a simple ancestral altar—the
focal point of the main room—a few tables, chairs and hardwood
planks which serve as beds.

Although the Vietnamese are frugal, a comparatively rich array of
furniture and household goods may be displayed in the houses of the
most prosperous villagers. These may include heavy pieces of hard­
wood furniture intricately carved and inlaid with mother-of-pearl,
solid brass candelabra, bowls and similar items representing an ac­
cumulation of many years. There may also be more recent acquisi­
tions, such as radios, French china and pressure lamps. Perhaps the
most striking symbol of prosperity in the villages is a motor scooter.
Furnishings of urban homes of the middle- and upper-middle class show a marked Western influence. The traditional heavy wooden armchairs have been replaced by comfortable upholstered seats. The old furnishings which have been retained are used mostly for decorative purposes.

Clothing

Simple, light clothing is generally worn in the hot climate. The basic outer garments of traditional dress for both men and women are loose-fitting trousers and a long-sleeved collarless shirt. Those worn by peasants are usually made of cotton fabric, which was overpriced and in short supply in many areas in 1965. For ceremonial occasions the women wear long tunics of black or white cotton. Wooden clogs are worn with traditional attire, although many peasants go barefoot a good deal of the time as a matter of preference or economy. While purchases of wearing apparel are kept to a minimum in most households, even poor families try to buy at least one new set of clothing for each person at least once a year—usually at the time of the New Year's celebration (Tet).

Much about a person's social and financial position is revealed by the manner of dress. In the cities men wear Western business suits; those in the middle- and lower-income brackets, Western-style slacks, shorts and open-necked shirts. The traditional black silk tunic is worn only rarely, mostly on ceremonial occasions. Middle-class women wear the Vietnamese tight fitting tunic (cai ao) with full trousers, and sandal-like shoes with high heels. The conical hat is still worn by many women, even by those who wear Western clothing. In the villages prosperous men appear in public in slacks and shirts, but usually wear Vietnamese garments at home. The latter are made of silk or satin; if they are of cotton, the color is white—never the black garb of poor peasants.

WELFARE EFFORTS

During the French rule social assistance by the government began to assume importance, along with family and village charity, as means by which welfare was provided. The colonial administration extended education, inaugurated vaccination programs and built hospitals, clinics and medical research institutions. Its activities were supported by contributions from French-Vietnamese Catholic sources. These efforts were mainly confined to the cities, however, and accordingly benefited only a small fraction of the population.

After 1954 the Government of the Republic of Vietnam took over the administration of welfare institutions, which had been established in the South by the colonial administration. It continued their operation and, with material aid and technical assistance from the United
States, pressed vigorously to improve living conditions, particularly in the rural areas. As in the past, nongovernmental organizations, including various international relief groups, private American philanthropic agencies, religious orders and lay groups, also engaged in various charitable activities. Other forms of social assistance were left to the village and family.

In 1966 the administration of welfare programs at the national level was the responsibility of the secretary of social welfare under the Ministry of Social and Cultural Affairs. On the local level such programs were administered by district chiefs and province chiefs. Social security benefits, including sickness and maternity, work injury and family allowances, are applicable only to wage earners and are handled by the secretary of labor under the minister of social and cultural affairs (see ch. 21, Labor).

Rural Welfare

Since independence, official policy has stressed the provision of economic and physical security and the extension of social services in the villages. A land-reform program was initiated, and agricultural credit was extended. A major road- and canal-building program was launched with the assistance of USOM to link isolated villages with provincial centers. A program to establish district dispensaries and village health stations and to purify rural water supplies was launched. Army units of the United States and South Vietnam have contributed to these and other public projects in rural areas by providing assistance in roadbuilding, well-digging, construction of irrigation ditches and assisting in the evacuation of refugees from combat areas.

To promote rural welfare and security, the Strategic Hamlet Program was launched in 1962. Renamed the New Life Hamlet Program in 1964, it called for the establishment of small, fortified rural settlements for local defense against Communist guerrillas. Schoolrooms, communication posts and health stations were built in the hamlets. The residents received fertilizers, insecticides and various other forms of assistance to improve crops and livestock.

Because of heavy stress on military aspects and the forced relocation of many farmers in the process of setting up hamlets, the program had suffered some setbacks by 1968. A new policy was launched in 1964; placing primary emphasis on social and economic welfare, it has gained growing support among farmers and brought tangible improvements of living standards in many hamlets. Part of the new policy was a “hamlet self-help program” calling for the building of marketplaces, access roads, fishing ponds, wells, small bridges, the digging of wells and the planting of fruit trees. Material for these projects, including cement, tools, grains and cash, were provided by USOM.
By 1965 the government had achieved limited success in easing certain longstanding problems of the villagers. Progress, however, was seriously jeopardized by Viet Cong activity and by the countrywide destruction in the wake of intensified military activities. Hamlets were burned down or fell into Communist hands. In extensive areas villages were still without schools and medical facilities and lacked means of communication with provincial centers through which they could summon help in case of guerrilla attacks.

Women and Youth

Women have a more prominent place in public life in South Vietnam than their counterparts in many other Asian countries. They have been active in welfare, education, journalism, the professions and government. Some of them even took part in anti-Viet Cong military actions, following their husbands into combat areas.

Official efforts since 1963 have stressed the enlistment of assistance by youth organizations in public and welfare projects. The Voluntary Youth Association, largest of the groups, and the Boy Scout Association have been active in rural development work and cultural projects. In December 1965 the National Youth Commission was established under the secretary for youth, under the minister of war and reconstruction. The Commission's objective is to train youth cadres which will assist the government in maintaining public order and enforcing public morality.

A number of welfare efforts are concerned with young children. In the large cities dispensaries, nurseries and kindergartens are maintained for the children of working-class families. Plans were underway in 1966 to build an additional 20 kindergartens and 15 orphanages. A private charity group, Association of Friends of Go Vap Orphans, also maintains a number of orphanages and kindergartens for children of all religions. A Welcome Center for Children Victims of the Viet Cong is operated by the Goodwill Women's Association in Saigon for children injured in combat areas and those who have been orphaned as a result of wartime conditions. In November 1965 the government granted 300,000 piasters to the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam in Khanh Hoa Province to build an orphanage and 500,000 piasters to the Binh Dinh chapter of the same organization for similar purposes. At the same time, 110,000 piasters have been granted to the Buddhist Social Service to organize outdoor activities and a handicraft program for youths.

UNICEF sends wheat and milk shipments to national disaster areas or to areas where food is short as a result of military operations and also helps maintain maternity and child health centers. Other foreign voluntary agencies active in child welfare are Coordinated