petuate their privileged status. As a consequence, Vietnam lacked a dynamic national culture and could not keep up with the changing world.

Although having a democratic foundation, the system of mandarinal examinations was very selective. The limited number of graduates was arbitrarily determined by the emperor. The many who failed to pass the examinations were likely to become frustrated and discontent; they might seek escape from reality by drinking, gambling, or indulging in other vices. In brief, it can be said that the system did as much harm as good to the Vietnamese society.

The mandarinate, recruited from the masses, did not actually represent the interests of the people, as they formed a distinct hierarchy of officials. Time and again, many a mandarin failed to live up to the Confucian ideals and precepts. Virginia Thompson says of the Vietnamese mandarinate in the following terms:

Confucianist idealism is partly responsible for the defects by which time has altered the mandarinate. The self-effacing philosopher-official, devoting himself to study and to the welfare of his people, proved to be too austere an ideal. Gifts were acceptable and in time obligatory from litigants, or any person desiring favours. If, like the Emperor, the mandarin was “father and mother” of his people, he proved to be an expensive parent. Confucius’ underpaid priestly mandarinate, consecrated to the community and serving as an example of a life above material things, suffered lapses in practical living. But the force of Confucian idealism was so great that the mandarins did not amass vast fortunes nor live in luxury.60

Furthermore, Confucian-dominated education was characterized by the lack of physical exercises and of training in hygiene, which took a rather heavy toll in health and life. Family solidarity, based on the doctrine of filial piety, tended to hamper individual initiative. Respect for parental and governmental authority was often inspired more by fear than by affection, since it was too minutely regulated and sanctioned by law and custom.

Finally, the political and cultural unity of Vietnam tended to breed self-satisfaction and stagnation for lack of vital stimuli from variety. It not only constituted a strong barrier to progress but failed to contain the onslaught of French colonialism in the nineteenth century.

60 Ibid., p. 239.
CHAPTER VI

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN FRENCH-CONTROLLED VIETNAM

The French Administration

Thomas E. Ennis summarizes the administrative technique of colonial powers as follows:

The administrative technique applicable to races and civilizations conquered by more aggressive nations centers about two main policies—"direct" and "indirect" rule. "Direct" rule makes a clean sweep of all native traditions and brings into full existence a group of social half-breeds who have lost the feeling of kinship to their old past yet are not completely at home in their new present. "Indirect" rule, on the other hand, attempts to retain as much as possible of native institutions and aims to introduce foreign ideas without too great a change in the local milieu.

So far as the French administration of Vietnam was concerned, "direct" rule was predominant although sporadic attempts at "indirect" rule were made. At the beginning, military governors ruled the country with the help of inexperienced French and Vietnamese staffs. That was partly due to the non-cooperation of most mandarins, who deliberately destroyed their records and took flight. French administrators did not have any understanding of the Vietnamese culture, whereas native officials were recruited from among those who could somewhat handle the French language as well as prove loyal to the French cause. A militia system was organized, which later became one of the most important guardians of French domination in Vietnam.

Used as they have always been to a highly centralized government, the French did not set up an independent administration for Vietnam, nor did they teach self-government to the Vietnamese. On the contrary, they tried to administer the country from Paris and dictate policy after policy to their colonial administrators, most of whom were appointed because of their political connections.

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62 Ennis, op. cit., p. 52.
rather than of their administrative experiences. A few enlightened governors could not counteract the assimilative tendencies of Paris, nor could they assert themselves successfully against the powerful group of permanent French officials in Vietnam. In the words of Virginia Thompson, the French administration of Indo-China—that is, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—was characterized by "the struggle of the colony's executive for independence from Paris, and for control over his own subordinates."

The rapid growth of the French personnel created resentment among the Vietnamese, who saw hosts of French functionaries occupying almost all responsible positions and draining the very limited budget of the country. With the exception of a few French scholars, who were anxious to learn about the people and the land, most French officials remained aloof from the population and relied mainly upon native interpreters in their daily work. Their "ignorance and apathy" tended to prevent the application of any administrative reform requiring some extra efforts on their part. Furthermore, they fought for the annexation of Vietnam to France, as they had no ready-made methods for a protectorate and "were not adapted for the evolution of such methods in their own brains."

Their tenure of office being relatively permanent, they could more than often nullify those reforms that ran counter to their preconceived ideas or personal interests. It can be said that they formed the most influential and tradition-bound French group in Vietnam.

The unnecessary multiplication of French functionaries also led to the elaborate expansion and subdivision of the provincial administration. In this respect, Stephen H. Roberts says:

There were 290 civil officials in 1900 where there had been fifty mandarins before annexation, and, in proportion to the population, Cochin-China [South Vietnam] had ten times as many officials as Java. Yet even these had to be aided by native auxiliaries.

In 1887, the Indo-Chinese Union was first organized with the creation of a Gouvernement General. South Vietnam (Cochin-China) continued to be a French colony placed under a governor, whereas Central Vietnam (Annam) and North Vietnam (Tonkin)

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63 Thompson, op. cit., pp. 79-80.
64 Ennis, op. cit., p. 61.
66 Ibid., p. 456.
were two protectorates, each with its Resident Superieur. Along the frontier of North Vietnam, four military zones were set up. The three cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Tourane were ceded to France and placed under French mayors. It appears that the French adopted the well-known divide-and-rule policy in Vietnam, despite the cultural unity of the country.

A general budget for the whole Indo-Chinese Union was created in 1898, giving the French administrators and colonials a certain amount of autonomy from Paris. Indirect taxes, forming about seventy per cent of the new budget, bore heavily on the people. At the same time, administrative centralization was strengthened by the creation of a network of general services, patterned after the French ones.68

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, a few attempts were made to give more powers to local authorities. Provincial councils and consultative bodies were set up, but they had only an advisory role and their Vietnamese members were limited to a small group of merchants, land-owners, and notables. After World War One, more and more administrative posts were opened to the Vietnamese, who were admitted to cadres latéraux—bureaux approximately similar to the French ones. This policy, however, created nothing but a duplication of office and enlarged an already elaborate bureaucracy. The educated Vietnamese remained dissatisfied because of the "discrepancy between their salaries and those of their French colleagues."69 Another source of discontent stemmed from the fact that the highest positions were mostly reserved to the French. In 1929, the Grand Conseil des Interets Economiques et Financiers de l'Indochine was created, comprising twenty-eight French colonials and twenty-three delegates from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. As indicated by its name, this assembly dealt only with economic and financial matters. Its appointed members tended to adhere to government projects with

67 The Indo-Chinese Union also included the protectorates of Cambodin and Laos.

68 For details concerning the general and local services in French Indochina, see Ennis, op. cit., pp. 72-77. J. de Galembert, Les Administrations et les Services Publics Indochinois, Imprimerie Le-van-Tan, Hanoi, 1931, pp. 1 ff.
practically no opposition. Its recommendations were not binding in most cases, for its function was mainly advisory.

In the final analysis, it was the governor-general who had almost absolute powers in the Indo-Chinese Union. He had the right to suspend or dissolve advisory local councils. By a decree of October 1911, his government was made custodian of the powers of the French Republic in the Indo-Chinese Union. His rule was only limited by occasional laws and decrees from Paris, and periodically checked by a group of inspectors of colonies. Up to 1945, local administration in South Vietnam was headed by a governor, whereas North Vietnam and Central Vietnam were under the Residents Superieurs. All these three administrative heads were responsible to the governor-general. In turn, they exercised control over the Civil Service administrators who were in charge of the provinces. In South Vietnam, these chiefs of province or Residents were almost exclusively French and ruled without the intermediary of Vietnamese administrators. In North Vietnam and Central Vietnam, they were expected, in principle, to administer in cooperation with the native authorities. In reality, they supervised the local mandarins, who were more or less subservient to them. The governor-general was assisted by the Secretaire General de l'Indochine and the general services. The chief residents and provincial heads had a host of functionaries and local services at their disposal. Commenting on the French administration in the Indochinese Union, Charles A. Micaud says:

Such a system may have given the French a sense of security. The price to be paid for this overprudent paternalism was the discontent of a native intelligentsia that was ready to seize the first opportunity to reject the French rule. A vigilant police could stop attempts at rebellion, but the imprisonment of thousands of political offenders could only feed the movement of liberation.\textsuperscript{70}

\textbf{The Vietnamese Administration}\textsuperscript{71}

As mentioned earlier, South Vietnam was organized into a French colony in which the emperor's sovereignty was abolished. This was also true in the three French concessions of Hanoi,

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 228.

Tourane, and Haiphong. In principle, the emperor reigned over Central Vietnam and North Vietnam. Foreign affairs, however, were controlled by the French, who agreed to represent the "empire of Vietnam" internationally and to defend its territorial integrity. Within the country, the imperial power was gradually curtailed. In North Vietnam, a viceroy or kinh-luoc was created in 1886 to represent the emperor. Eleven years later, the office of this top-ranking mandarin was suppressed and its function turned over to the Resident Superieur. In Central Vietnam, French functionaries were attached to the various ministries at the Court of Hue. The council of state Co-Mat was transformed into a council of ministers presided over by the Resident Superieur of Central Vietnam. In 1898, the French got complete financial control over the Vietnamese government, when the Court of Hue agreed to be deprived of its fiscal rights in return for an annual fixed sum.

In 1933, a series of reforms was effected by the French-educated emperor Bao-Dai. The functions of Prime Minister and President of the Co-Mat were suppressed. Five ministries replaced the traditional government—namely, the ministries of Interior, National Education, Finance and Social Work, Justice, Public Works, and Arts and Rites. Ministers were appointed for a period of three years, and formed the council of Co-Mat when they met under the presidency of the emperor. When presided over by the Resident Superieur of Central Vietnam, the above council took the name of council of ministers, which might function as a reforms committee. French delegates to the Court of Hue were appointed by the French administration and accredited by the emperor.

The above changes could hardly be called reforms. They did not improve the administrative machinery in Vietnam, nor did they loosen the French grip on the Vietnamese government. Indeed, all important decisions made by the Court of Hue had to be visaed by the Resident Superieur of Central Vietnam. Royal ordinances were prepared by the council of Co-Mat and submitted to the council of ministers for approval. Any administrative act of some significance had to be sanctioned by the French authorities.

The emperor's sacrosanct character was not left unimpaired. In principle, the Vietnamese sovereign ascended to the throne in accordance with traditional rules. In practice, he had to get the consent of the French authorities. From the end of the nineteenth century to 1917, three sovereigns were dethroned and exiled for
political reasons, and manageable substitutes were put on the throne. Indeed, the Son of Heaven tended to become the foster son of French administrators.

The mandarinate was retained in Central Vietnam and North Vietnam, in spite of many an attempt on the part of the mandarin-scholar party to overthrow the French domination. The "fathers and mothers" of the people were found indispensable for smoothing the administrative machinery, since they had a moral prestige over the masses that no French administrator could ever acquire. The mandarinate, however, was made as harmless as possible, particularly after the abolition of all triennial examinations, which occurred in 1919. From that time on, the French got practically complete control of the recruitment of mandarins. In the words of Andree Viollis, those who showed "the most of apparent devotion to their bosses and a particularly supple backbone"72 were usually chosen. Unrestrained by Confucian idealism, these officials tended to be more venal than their predecessors, whose abuses of power had been curbed either by their moral convictions or by their fear of being disgraced. Speaking of the mandarinate under the French domination, Andree Viollis says:

Almost all these mandarins, whose monthly salary amounts to one hundred or more piastres, lead a very luxurious life, maintain wives and concubines, send their numerous children to France, buy or receive concessions of thousands of hectares, dwell in palaces full of servants and a host of "clients," own groups of houses and shops in the cities, which they rent. Their superiors ignore the source of this luxe and, when a scandal bursts out, claim that there is lack of evidence. In extreme cases, they are satisfied with transferring the mandarin "who has eaten too much" to another post. Provided that he is active and zealous in pursuing patriots and so-called communists, this official is absolved in advance.73

Life in French-controlled Vietnam

Before the arrival of the French, Vietnamese culture was practically untouched by Western influences. A small number of Dutch and Portuguese merchants living in a few ports, and scattered groups of Catholic missionaries and converts did not exercise any significant influence upon the people as a whole.

Under the impact of French civilization, many customs and

73 Ibid.
institutions of Vietnam underwent more or less drastic changes. Within the family, paternal authority decreased markedly, particularly in the cities where French influences were most decisive. Marriages were still arranged by the elders, but more and more young people took the initiative in selecting their mates. New laws permitted children to bring suit against their parents, and thus dealt a deadly blow to the Confucian precept of filial piety. The large family system was in the process of breaking up, as individualism steadily crept into it.

The separation of the social life of the sexes became less strict. In urban areas, men and women could mingle relatively freely. Coeducation was adopted in higher education. The Western dance was enjoyed by some advanced groups—mainly by French-educated people. Women began to claim a share in occupations and diversions formerly reserved to men, although it was still held that their ideal place was the house and kitchen. Some attempts were made to start a feminist movement, particularly in such big cities as Hanoi and Saigon.

The spread of Western ideals and institutions, however, was not universal. Many rural areas were only slightly affected by French influences. Most villages still maintained their large family system as well as their old customs and practices. Moreover, they remained self-sufficient economically as their main activity centered about rice culture. As regards the Vietnamese village, Charles A. Micaud says:

> The basic unit of society in Tongking [North Vietnam] and Annam [Central Vietnam] is still the village, an autonomous community bound together by strong religious and social obligations. Villages are economic units as well; they often have their cooperative system of irrigation, their communal granaries, even their communally owned land, which may comprise as much as 26 per cent of the cultivated land in Annam [Central Vietnam] and 20 per cent in Tongking [North Vietnam].

Indeed, rice has been the predominant culture in Vietnam since time immemorial. To this day, it has been the staple food of the people as well as the most important item for exportation. The village, however, lost much of its autonomy under the French domination. No longer did the elders settle local disputes, as they were deprived of their legal prerogatives. Judiciary matters were handled by the *tri-phu* or *tri-huyen*, whose decisions might be yet

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74 Micaud, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
reversed by the provincial mandarin or the Resident. The Council of Notables continued to assume the responsibility of collecting taxes, but lost their right to assess them. Further governmental encroachments on communal affairs were made when customs agents were permitted to search houses for contraband and the control of the corvées passed into the hands of the state. These and other inroads tended to undermine the village's autonomy and to hasten its disintegration. In this connection, Virginia Thompson comments:

Since independence was the breath of life to the commune, increasing interference by the central power precipitated its dissolution. This was true in varying degrees throughout the different Annamite [Vietnamese] countries, but most completely so in Cochinchina [South Vietnam]. One of its most striking evidences was the growth of pauperism and vagrancy. Though the state and mission have gradually stepped in to replace communal charity, the substitution was, especially in the early stages, very incomplete. Public security became endangered by the growth of crime. It became evident to even the most rampant assimilationists that the disintegration of the commune involved the loss of a very useful and inexpensive instrument of local government. It had certain obvious flaws, but perhaps something could be salvaged from the wreck.75

While the vitality of the village was being sapped, marked changes were in process in the urban centers, where many Western customs and practices were introduced. Hand-shaking gradually replaced the old low bow. Western dress spread among the upper and middle classes. Women and particularly schoolgirls took to wearing high-heeled shoes and to bobbing their hair, although they retained their national costumes. Athletics became relatively popular, but not so universal as in Europe or in the United States. Such games as soccer football, basketball, volleyball, and tennis attracted a good number of young men, particularly in the schools. As regards recreation, motion pictures and Western music gained much popularity. The Western style of theatrical performance, however, did not succeed in supplanting the traditional theater, which was still greatly enjoyed by the masses. The radio was only slowly spread because radio-sets and electricity were quite expensive. Finally, the introduction of many mechanical devices—such as, the automobile, the bicycle, the electric light, and modern water systems—also tended to remodel the routine of Vietnamese life.

In brief, Vietnam was on its way toward westernization, in spite

75 Thompson, op. cit., p. 237.
of the slow tempo of its changes. To be sure, its predominantly rural population resisted the introduction of new customs and practices, but the gradual improvement of the means of communication as well as the mere presence of the French constituted important factors in awakening the whole nation, which came to realize that there existed more than one way of life in the world.

It is not easy at all to appraise the effects of the French domination upon Vietnam. From the material standpoint, there was marked progress. Indeed, better roads and bridges were built, railroads and airplanes introduced, and hospitals and schools erected. Rubber plantations grew rapidly in South Vietnam, whereas coal-mining was very intensive in North Vietnam. A few processing industries—rice mills, rice distilleries, sugar refineries, cement factories, and the like—developed in a number of urban centers. Before World War Two, Vietnam annually exported about 2,000,000 tons of rice, 1,500,000 tons of coal, 546,000 tons of corn, and 78,000 tons of rubber.\textsuperscript{76}

Furthermore, it was through France that Western civilization was introduced to Vietnam, which to some extent enjoyed peace and security. In one of his studies of the Indochinese Union, Pierre Gourou says:

\begin{quote}
... the French administration, of whose weaknesses we are well aware, has nonetheless known how to preserve, and give security to, all the Indo-Chinese peoples; it cannot be said, without injustice, that any of these peoples is today diminished in vitality, or in its potentialities of growth: they have remained themselves while making incontestable progress. We do not say that because of this France deserves any gratitude, but the fact should be recognized.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

To be sure, the French succeeded in quelling all the Vietnamese uprisings and in keeping the country officially out of the two World Wars. To those foreign visitors who stayed in a few big cities, where the material achievements of the French were obvious, Vietnam looked quite prosperous and peaceful.

Yet, poverty and misery lay beneath a skin-deep prosperity. The Vietnamese peasant had an "extremely low living standard,"\textsuperscript{78} whether he owned his acre of land or labored as a tenant farmer.

\textsuperscript{76} Data taken from Micaud, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{78} Micaud, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 217.
His diet consisted mainly of rice and one or two vegetables, for meat and fish were two luxuries that he could seldom afford. A few cotton clothes, a big cone-shaped hat, and a straw raincoat constituted his whole wardrobe. He and his large family lived in a thatched house, which could be easily blown away by a typhoon. Heavy taxes added to his misery and forced him to borrow money at usurious rates as well as to cultivate a poor but negotiable crop with primitive methods. The problem of overpopulation remained unsolved, as the masses' beliefs and Catholicism were against birth control. The overcrowded deltas and coastal regions could barely feed and shelter an extremely dense population, which was unwilling to migrate to the malaria-infected hinterland.

The development of industry could probably have raised the living standard of the people, but it was unfortunately hindered by the industrialists in France, whose interests clashed with those of the Vietnamese. In fact, all France wanted from Vietnam was a market for its manufactured products and a supply of raw materials. High tariffs were set up to prevent foreign competition, and only a few processing industries were allowed to develop. Before World War Two, there were some 17,000 workers79 in the rubber plantations in South Vietnam and about 50,000 coal-miners80 in North Vietnam. Dissatisfied with their low wages and bad living conditions, these ill-treated workers constituted a temperamental labor force, eager to listen to both nationalist and communist propaganda.

The introduction of new laws, customs, and ideals was not always beneficial, as it inevitably disrupted the old social order and created a certain amount of maladjustment. In the opinion of Thomas Ennis, these changes "would not have been serious if Indochinese society had developed along the primitive line which marks the culture of the Africans and the Australian bushmen."81 But Vietnamese culture was far from being primitive. Life was regulated by Confucian precepts and deep-rooted traditions to such an extent that changes wrought by the impact of an alien civilization often resulted in clashes between the older generation and the younger one. These cultural alterations also produced a class of "déracinés,"82 who did not feel at home in either society.

79 Ibid., p. 221.
80 Ibid., p. 223.
81 Ennis, op. cit., p. 54.
82 Ibid., p. 173.
To be sure, some Vietnamese institutions—such as, the absolute monarchy, the mandarinate, and the scholar-dominated social order—belonged to the past and had to be abolished so as to enable the country to keep pace with the rapidly changing world of today. But, to be progressive, the people should be helped to help themselves, and to adopt new customs and practices of their own free will. Unfortunately, this did not seem to be the opinion of the French colonialists, who considered Vietnamese civilization as "a relic of past barbarism." Reforms were imposed on Vietnam without any respect for the people's traditions and beliefs. It must be remembered, however, that the French retained the imperial structure and the mandarinal system, which proved to be useful to their own purposes.

This arbitrary policy, although temporarily satisfying the French interests, constituted one of the main factors that were to lead the French toward disaster in both 1945 and 1954. Its abuses exasperated the Vietnamese people, who tended to become receptive to any anti-French propaganda. Strikes and revolts were "severely suppressed by French troops as Communist coups," but the desire for freedom grew stronger and stronger every day.

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83 Roberts, op. cit., p. 436.
84 Infra., Chapter X.
85 Nicaud, op. cit., p. 230.
CHAPTER VII

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN FRENCH-CONTROLLED VIETNAM

Historical Background and Evolution of State Schools

In the beginning, the French opened a few schools in South Vietnam for the practical purpose of training interpreters and collaborators. Emphasis was put on French and, to a lesser extent, on Vietnamese, whose alphabet had been romanized by a group of Catholic missionaries in the seventeenth century. Each province organized its own schools according to its needs and financial conditions. Soldiers and petty officers were the first teachers, then missionaries and their former pupils took over. Traditional schools survived for a while, in spite of the flight of non-cooperation of many teachers-mandarins. They were finally closed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the mandarinate was abolished in South Vietnam. By the end of 1869, there were 126 French-Vietnamese primary schools with a total enrollment of about 4,700 pupils.86 A high school was set up in Saigon in 1870; ten years later, a special academy was created at My-Tho for the teaching of French. All of them had curricula patterned after the French ones as well as French teachers equipped with no knowledge of the Vietnamese culture. According to Thomas Ennis, "interpreters were used in the classroom, where students sat who knew no French and teachers taught who knew no Annamite [Vietnamese]."87

In Central Vietnam and North Vietnam, traditional schools prevailed until the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, the impact of French civilization upon these two protectorates was not so abrupt as upon the colony of South Vietnam. The result was that traditional education, which was held in high esteem by the people, temporarily curbed the setting up of French-Vietnamese schools. Furthermore, the system of triennial examinations was maintained until 1915 in North Vietnam and until 1919 in Central Vietnam. Prospective mandarine had to study the Chinese characters and classics, thus keeping the old schools functioning for a while.

86 Figures taken from Thompson, op. cit., p. 285.
87 Ennis, op. cit., p. 170.
The Vietnamese people, however, were gradually won over to Western education, particularly after the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905, which awakened them to the superior quality of modern science. The Direction de l'Instruction Publique was then created, unifying the whole educational system in the Indochinese Union. Natural and physical sciences were added to the curriculum of the French-Vietnamese schools. In 1906, educational committees were set up for Vietnam as well as for Laos and Camabodia. Textbooks in Vietnamese were prepared, and teachers’ salaries increased. In the words of Virginia Thompson, the Vietnamese “were breaking loose from their old moorings and losing their attachment for a Chinese culture which gave them no solution for the world they lived in, but rather turned its back on all disquieting change.”

It was not until World War One that decisive changes were made. More secondary schools were opened to the Vietnamese in the urban centers. In 1917, a series of decrees elaborately regulated the French-Vietnamese system of education, whose structure was to remain almost intact until World War Two. As will be discussed in a later section, programs of study and methods of instruction were prepared by the French administration and handed down to local schools, which had no part in the selection of curricula and textbooks. Furthermore, traditional education faded away after the suppression of all triennial examinations, and became the monopoly of a few French and Vietnamese scholars.

In the twenties, communal schools were revived through the cooperation of villages and provincial authorities. Governmental subsidies were granted to any commune which agreed to share the expense of teachers and buildings. In the same decade, the education of women showed steady progress, although deep-rooted traditions did not favor much, if any, formal education for women. As could be expected, girls’ schools were first opened in the colony of South Vietnam. Their programs of study were similar to those of boys’ schools, except for a few elementary courses in home economics. In 1919, a Normal School for girls was set up in Saigon, under the supervision of a specially trained staff. It was only in the late twenties that similar institutions were available to the women of North Vietnam and Central Vietnam.

In the field of higher education, progress was slow and often

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88 Thompson, op. cit., p. 290.
interrupted by the vacillating policy of the French administration. 
In 1902, a School of Medicine was created in Hanoi. Its graduates 
were not entitled to the rank of doctor, but were called *medecine auxiliaries* or *medecine indochinois*. Two years later, the much-needed sections of midwifery and veterinary science were added to the new school.

After the Russo-Japanese war, a number of Vietnamese youths went abroad to study. Japan particularly attracted them, since she had just risen as a great Western-style power. In an effort to stop this exodus of students who might get revolutionary ideas and thus endanger the French position in Vietnam, the French administration created the Indochinese University at Hanoi in 1907. The following year was marked by many nationalistic agitations, which resulted in the shutting down of this embryonic institution of higher learning. Only the School of Medicine was retained, and in 1914 a section of pharmacy was added to it.
It was not until 1919 that the Indochinese University was fully restored. It comprised the six Schools of Medicine and Pharmacy, of Law and Administration, of Pedagogy, of Agriculture and Forestry, of Public Works, and of Veterinary Science. In the twenties, the Schools of Commerce and of Fine Arts were organized on the college level. It must be noted, however, that, in spite of its pretentious name, the Indochinese University was not the equivalent of the French universities, which did not recognize the diplomas it granted.

The economic depression of the thirties led to the closing up of many sections of the Indochinese University. Only the Schools of Fine Arts, of Medicine and Pharmacy, and of Law and Administration were retained. In the meantime, the standards of this institution of higher learning were raised, as medical degrees and law diplomas were made equivalent to those granted by French universities.80

Organization of State Schools

Up to World War Two, the educational system in Vietnam followed in its broad lines the plan promulgated in 1917 by Governor-general Albert Sarraut. It was characterized by uniform class schedules and curricula, rigid cycles of studies, and rigorous eliminatory examinations as well.

Primary schools.—As shown in Table I, the French administration set up three primary cycles of studies, each of which terminated in a final or leaving examination enabling the successful candidate to receive a diploma and to move on to the next stage of education.

First of all, it must be noted that there was no public nursery school for the Vietnamese children, whose pre-primary education was in the hands of their families. Moral precepts and rudiments of the three R’s were often taught at home, which helped many a child to adjust himself rather smoothly to the school curriculum.

Since 1927, elementary education was compulsory in South Vietnam, where state schools were established in most villages. These elementary schools, usually made of bricks, had one or several classrooms, depending on the size of the student body. In North Vietnam and Central Vietnam, where elementary education

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80 Material for this section had been obtained from the references in the Bibliography, particularly the following: Alberti, op. cit., pp. 696-714, Ennis, op. cit., pp. 162-176; Thompson, op. cit., pp. 284-300.
was not compulsory for lack of teachers and money, many villages opened their own schools with the help of the provincial authorities. According to this co-operative plan, the villagers hired a teacher and furnished a schoolhouse, which was often nothing but a room in a pagoda or a corner in the communal house. Any village having such a school was exempt from school taxes. Furthermore, it usually received governmental subsidies in proportion to its financial conditions.

**TABLE 1**

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN FRENCH-CONTROLLED VIETNAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle of Studies</th>
<th>Length of Cycle (Years)</th>
<th>Approximate Age Range (Years)</th>
<th>Subjects Taught</th>
<th>Degree Conferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary ........ 3</td>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>Vietnamese, French, Arithmetic, Moral Precepts, History and Geography of the Indochinese Union, Hygiene, Routines of Manual Skill, Basic Elements of Science</td>
<td>Certificate of Elementary Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary ............ 3</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>Vietnamese, French, Arithmetic, Elements of Geometry and of Physical &amp; Natural Sciences, History &amp; Geography of France, Hygiene, Manual Skills, Chinese Characters, Moral Precepts</td>
<td>Certificate of Primary Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-Primary .. 4</td>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>Vietnamese, French, History &amp; Geography of the Indochinese Union, History &amp; Geography of France, Physical &amp; Natural Sciences, Hygiene, Mathematics, Manual Skills, Moral Precepts, Chinese Characters</td>
<td>Diploma of Higher-Primary Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Compulsory in South Vietnam, but optional in North Vietnam and Central Vietnam.

In some rural areas, where the population was scattered, inter-communal schools were established through the joint efforts of two or more villages. This type of school had the same legal status as the communal school, and prevailed in Central Vietnam, which was the least populated part of Vietnam.
In the elementary schools, emphasis was placed on the three R's, taught in the Vietnamese language, whereas the teaching of other subjects was rudimentary. In 1938, there were about 406,669 children—among whom 55,917 were girls—who enrolled in the elementary schools of the Indochinese Union. Almost half of the pupils dropped out of school after the first year, because their poor families could not afford to keep them in school. This drop-out trend was most marked in the rural areas, where children usually began to help their parents at the age of six or seven.

Primary schools were established in all urban centers as well as in some large phus and huyens. They comprised both the elementary and the primary courses. There was no separate institution offering primary education alone. The primary stage of studies continued the elementary courses, but French replaced Vietnamese as the language medium. The teaching of Chinese characters was compulsory, which was an attempt to restore some of the moral precepts that had helped stabilize the Vietnamese society. Indeed, Confucian morality could be derived from the learning of Chinese characters and books. In 1937, there were approximately 55,025 children enrolled in the primary classes throughout the Indochinese Union. It is significant to note that among these pupils only 1,397 were girls.

After completing three years of studies, the primary-school pupils had to pass a series of written and oral examinations before they could qualify for the Certificate of Primary Studies. In 1937, out of 18,288 candidates only 7,822 were successful. These survivors had to compete for admittance to the higher-primary schools, which were established in large urban centers. Competition was rigorous, for there were not enough places for all those who qualified and wished to further their education.

Unlike the elementary and primary cycles of studies, higher-primary education was not tuition-free. There were, however, a number of state scholarships granted to outstanding but poor

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90 All the statistical data contained in this section have been obtained from G. A. Bernard, "L'Oeuvre Scolaire Francaise en Indochine," L'Indochine Francaise, A Collection of Notices to the Tenth Conference of the Far Eastern Association of Tropical Medicine, Hanoi, November 24-30, 1938, Prepared by a Group of French Professors and Administrators Appointed by the Government-General of Indochina (Hanoi, Imprimerie G. Taupin et Cie., 1938), pp. 241-253.
students. Higher-primary training was four years in length. The curriculum was patterned after that offered in the first four years of classical secondary training in France, but emphasis was put upon Vietnamese literature and civilization. Examinations were difficult, and the work required during the year was so heavy as to impair the health of quite a number of students. In 1937, there were about 2,660 youths who completed the four years of higher-primary training. Out of this group only 646 passed the examinations for the Diploma of Higher-Primary Studies.

*Lyceées.*—Classical secondary education was imparted in the three *lycées* set up in the cities of Hanoi, Saigon, and Hué. As could be expected, it was highly selective and limited in its purposes. Indeed, the *lycées* aimed mainly at training those who were destined for governmental positions or for college studies. When this purpose was combined with the necessity of paying for the instruction and the lack of adequate school facilities, the student body could but be exclusive. In 1937, there were approximately 338 boys and 27 girls receiving secondary training in the whole Indo-Chinese Union. The majority of these students were Vietnamese, while the remainder consisted of Cambodians and Laotians.

The *lycée* included both the higher-primary and secondary cycles of studies. Originally, secondary training was two years in length, terminating in a diploma called “local baccalaureate.” In 1927, it was lengthened to three years. In its broad lines, the curriculum of the secondary cycle was as follows:

1. French language, literature, and civilization,
2. Elements of philosophy (psychology, logic, and morals),
3. History and geography,
4. Mathematics,
5. Physics and chemistry,
6. Laboratory works,
7. Natural sciences,
8. Chinese characters,

It was not until 1930 that the “local baccalaureate” was officially made the equivalent of the French diploma known as the “Metropolitan baccalaureate.” This step unreservedly opened the door of French higher education to the Vietnamese. Indeed, up to that time, the “local baccalaureate” had not been fully recognized in
France, where the Vietnamese students had been required to take additional courses before qualifying for college studies. Until recently, secondary training in Vietnam was but a copy of the French system. Majors, offered in the final year of study, were restricted to mathematics and philosophy—subjects which were regarded as the best channels through which mental discipline could be exercised.

*The Indochinese University.*—This institution of higher learning was but a small-sized French university, in which French was the vehicle language and most professors came from France. For matriculation, the “local baccalaureate” or the “Metropolitan baccalaureate” was necessary. Foreign students were required to possess academic credentials equivalent to these two degrees.

Since 1933, the School of Medicine and Pharmacy was made the equivalent of medical colleges in France. It was organized into four sections: Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, and Midwifery. As shown in Table 2, the length of training differed from one section to another. Upon conclusion of studies, state diplomas were awarded. In 1938, there were 201 students enrolled in this medical school. Most of them were Vietnamese, while the rest included a small number of French, Chinese, Cambodian, and Laotian youths.

The School of Medicine and Pharmacy had its own library containing special collections of books dealing with tropical pathology and anthropology. Connected with it were two laboratories, one Institute of Anatomy, and one Institute of Cancer. A medical review was published by the teaching staff, which also exchanged findings with the main medical organizations in France and other countries.

The standards of the Law School were raised in 1931, when its graduates began to be admitted to the Bar. Admission requirements were similar to those of the School of Medicine and Pharmacy.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Studies</th>
<th>Length of Training (Years)</th>
<th>Diploma Conferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>7&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>State doctorate in medicine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>State diploma of pharmacist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>State diploma of surgeon-dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwifery</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>State diploma of midwife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Including one year of training in physics, chemistry, and biology.

<sup>b</sup> Including one year of apprenticeship at a pharmacist's.
Courses of study covered a wide range of subjects taught in French law colleges. Upon conclusion of three years of training, the licence en droit was awarded. This degree was necessary for candidacy to the doctorate in law, which required two more years of studies. The Law School also offered a one-year course dealing with the various laws of the Indochinese Union. Only those having the licence en droit were qualified to enroll in this course. Law studies were popular in Vietnam, since they opened the doors of the mandarinate to many an ambitious youth. Moreover, a few responsible positions in the French administration of Vietnam were available to graduates from the Law School. In 1938 there were 377 law students at the Indochinese University.

Mention should be made of the School of Fine Arts, which was set up in 1924 for the purpose of effecting a renaissance of Vietnamese art. This school was divided into two sections: (1) section of painting, sculpture, and decorative art, and (2) section of architecture. In 1933, an elementary course in decorative drawing
was added with a view to spreading the elements of perspective among the native artisans. Technical workshops were also organized to help improve the quality of such art products as laces, rugs, and lacquers. The age-old disdain of manual labor, however, did not orient the Vietnamese toward art studies, as the artist had a relatively low socio-economic status in Vietnam. On the average, the School of Fine Arts had an annual enrollment of about eighty students.

Vocational schools.— Apart from the above-mentioned schools, in which emphasis was placed mainly on classical subjects, there existed a number of vocational institutions set up for the purpose of offering training in the fields of commerce, industry, and the applied arts. This type of instruction was sponsored by the various chambers of commerce and the big industrial enterprises, whose expanding activities were in need of technicians and skilled workers. Technical training was given in four practical schools, each of which had three basic sections: (1) iron, (2) wood, and (3) electricity. Special sections were set up according to local needs. Thus, the school of applied arts at Hanoi offered courses in car-driving and lace-making. The school of applied industry at Haiphong gave training in industrial skills. Saigon had a school to train mechanicians, whereas Hué was endowed with a practical school of commerce and industry. Other vocational institutions included a few schools of arts, trade schools, and handicraft workshops, most of which were established in the region where the particular trade was found.

Those schools were controlled and financed by the state. They also received subsidies from private enterprises. As a rule, students or apprentices were recruited through competitive examinations from among those who had completed primary school. Courses of study extended from two to four years, depending on the particular trade. Vocational and technical education, however, was not very popular in Vietnam because of the reluctance of the people to select careers partly dependent upon manual labor.

Teachers and teacher training.— At the beginning of the twentieth century, the teaching staff in French-Vietnamese schools was mostly French, particularly in North Vietnam and Central Vietnam, where traditional education lingered.

It was not until the twenties that the training of Vietnamese teachers was well underway. In each of the cities of Saigon, Hanoi,
and Hue, there were two normal schools for men and women. The Certificate of Primary Studies was necessary for enrollment in these schools. The program was four years in length, the subject matter covering the same academic material as that taught in higher-primary schools. In addition, there were courses dealing with principles and methods of teaching, which constituted the core of professional training. In his senior year, each student was required to take up practice teaching in local primary schools under the supervision of experienced teachers. Graduates from the above normal schools received the Diploma of Higher-Primary Studies and the Brevet of Pedagogic Aptitude, which entitled them to teaching positions in state schools on the elementary or primary level. In the thirties, all teacher-training institutions were gradually closed. As a result, the education of elementary- and primary-school
teachers was done in *cours normaux* annexed to higher-primary schools and consisted of one year of psychological and pedagogical studies. The Diploma of Higher-Primary Studies was necessary for enrollment in these courses.

Mention should be made of the assistant teachers or *tro-giao*, who were recruited from among those having the Certificate of Primary Studies. These *tro-giao* taught the first grade in the elementary school or all the three grades in the communal school. To win the Certificate of Pedagogic Aptitude and thus become recognized teachers, they were required to attend a one-year professional course offered in the above-mentioned normal schools. In 1938, there were approximately 4,700 assistant teachers and 2,000 primary-school teachers in the Indochinese Union.

Training for posts as teachers in higher-primary schools took place in the School of Pedagogy at the Indochinese University. Most of the students received state scholarships and in return were required to serve for ten years after graduation; in case of withdrawal they were obliged to reimburse the government. The Diploma of Higher-Primary Studies was necessary for entrance to the School of Pedagogy. The program was three years in length, with a common core of psychological and pedagogical studies and two academic sections: letters (French language and literature, Vietnamese language and literature, history, and geography) and science (mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural science, and agronomy). The last year of study was devoted mostly to professional training and practice teaching. It is to be noted that a small number of higher-primary-school teachers were graduates of French normal schools and colleges.

There were no training institutions for secondary-school teachers in Vietnam. Aspirants for these posts had to go to France, where they studied in the higher normal schools or in the universities. So far as the Indochinese University was concerned, its teaching staff was composed mostly of French professors and instructors, with a host of native research assistants and laboratory superintendents.

Teachers and professors were and still are civil employees. As such, their professional status is guaranteed and protected by elaborate tenure and salary regulations. They enjoy pensions, leaves, sick benefits, and other emoluments in accordance with the particular category in which their training and length of service
place them. Salary schedules are uniform throughout the Indochinese Union and apply indiscriminately to both men and women. Married teachers, however, receive additional compensation called "family indemnities."

Administration and supervision of state schools.—The central authority of education in the Indochinese Union was the Direction de l'Instruction Publique, one of the general services depending directly upon the Government-General of Indochina. Located at Hanoi, this service consisted of three administrative bureaus and one pedagogical bureau comprising a large staff of civil employees known as Inspectors.

It was the responsibility of the head of the Direction de l'Instruction Publique to control all forms of instruction and to take general measures for the purpose of improving education in the Indochinese Union. In performing his duties, he was assisted by a Chief-Inspector, who acted as his technical adviser. His authority was delegated to Local Services of Instruction, whose directors actually controlled all the schools within their jurisdiction. Such services were organized in each of the five parts of the Indochinese Union. Here, mention should be made of the Vietnamese Ministry of National Education, under whose supervision was placed the elementary and primary education of the Vietnamese population in the protectorates of North Vietnam and Central Vietnam.

All the above-mentioned offices combined their efforts to plan programs of study, to prepare textbooks, and to issue pedagogical publications in which the teacher found model lessons containing texts for reading and memorizing, vocabulary and speaking exercises, problems, drawing designs, and the like. All this material, being carefully selected and regulated by experienced pedagogues, served as a framework in which teaching activities were displayed.

The responsibility of the inspectoral staff was to supervise all phases and levels of education in the Indochinese Union. There were the general supervisors who periodically visited the schools for which they were responsible, with a view to keeping the Direction de l'Instruction Publique informed about the educational activities and needs of their districts. In addition, individual teachers were inspected almost every year by delegates from the Local Services of Public Instruction. Each Inspector was required to condense his general observations and recommendations in a booklet, which was then transmitted to all the members of the
teaching profession. From time to time, conferences were held among Inspectors and teachers concerning various pedagogical matters. Here, it should be mentioned that most members of the inspectoral staff were French. In North Vietnam and Central Vietnam, however, a corps of Vietnamese Inspectors was created in 1933 to supervise the elementary and primary education of the native population.

At the head of each elementary or primary school was a headmaster, usually recruited from among the native teachers. Higher-primary schools and lycees were administered mostly by French principals. So far as the Indochinese University was concerned, its deans were supervised by the Director of Public Instruction, to whom they were responsible administratively and pedagogically as well.

In summary, it can be said that the Indochinese Union in general and Vietnam in particular had a neat system of state schools patterned after the French ones. The Vietnamese youth could also attend various private schools that were opened in many cities and towns. All such institutions were placed under government supervision, which was usually confined to sanitary conditions and diploma requirements for teachers. Furthermore, there existed a few French higher-primary schools and lycees, set up primarily for the French youth in the Indochinese Union. A limited number of Vietnamese students, who had adequate knowledge of French and education to pass strict entrance examinations, received instruction in these institutions. Other educative agencies, some of which were imported from Europe, will be discussed in the next chapter. 

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CHAPTER VIII

OTHER EDUCATIVE AGENCIES IN FRENCH-CONTROLLED VIETNAM

Traditional Educative Agencies

Under the French rule, the innovations in economics, politics, and religion could not fail to be accompanied by changes in the traditional educative agencies of Vietnam. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, these changes did not occur simultaneously throughout the length and breadth of the Vietnamese nation, nor did they affect every area in equal degree. They were more marked in the cities, where most of the innovations were found. Rural areas were the least affected, and in many places life seemed to be unchanged. Practically everywhere, however, the impact of French civilization was felt, as new social and educational institutions were established alongside of traditional ones. In this connection, Ellen J. Hammer says:

... They [The French] opened the country to the West. To people bogged down in their own past they brought a new science and technology, new patterns of living and thinking. An alien rule and an alien civilization were intruded into the closed and backward-looking society of Vietnam. The effect, of course, was highly disruptive. The Vietnamese felt the shock of it in every part of their life—socially, economically, culturally, and politically.92

From the educational standpoint, the creation of French-Vietnamese schools and the abolition of triennial examinations led to a gradual decline of Confucianism, and broke down the traditional framework within which most people in Vietnam had regulated their lives. The study of the Chinese classics, which had been widespread in the country, became the private enterprise of a small number of French and Vietnamese scholars. The traditional schools were shut down one by one until all of them were gone in the twenties. This meant the end of one of the important agencies for propagating Confucian precepts.

The family, however, has been able to maintain many of its traditions up to the present time.93 It still is an essential institution

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92 Hammer, op. cit., p. 65.
for education and social control, although it has come into contact with an alien culture that has disrupted the old Vietnamese legal and social structure. It is within the patriarchal family of Vietnam that Confucian precepts as well as local mores and practices have been transmitted from generation to generation. It is also within its walls that girls receive training in house-hold skills from their mothers. In the rural areas, where the masses of peasants are generally tradition-bound, most of the economic, social, and religious factors remain which have strengthened family ties. Even in the cities the innovations introduced by the French have not yet prevailed, and there are conservatives who cling to the traditional culture.

In spite of its strong traditions, the Vietnamese family has been affected by Western ideas and practices. The age-old subordination of the individual to the group has been challenged by the individualism of the West, as the grafting of a money economy upon the traditional subsistence economy has tended to modify the way of life of the people. Indeed, in the urbanized areas the economic ties which once held the family together are often being dissolved. Many young married couples have chosen to found their own homes, instead of living with the husband's parents and relatives. Furthermore, among the Vietnamese Christians, the abolition of ancestor worship has resulted in a sharp decline of the religious functions of the family.

Other traditional educative agencies—such as, the play groups of children, the youth organizations, and the artisans' guilds—have been maintained. Like the family, they have been altered by the adoption of Western customs and ideals as well as supplemented by new educative agencies.

**New Educative Agencies**

The culture of the West was first introduced to Vietnam by the Christian missionaries, who began to come there in the second half of the sixteenth century. Time and again, these missionaries were driven out of the country, and the native Christians were persecuted for a variety of reasons. In this connection, Virginia Thompson comments:

> The Annamite [Vietnamese] emperors were no religious fanatics, but they were wise enough to recognize in the missionary a precursor of European political penetration. Commerce and missions with both the French and the Portuguese went hand in hand, in spite of Papal
Bulls forbidding missionaries to indulge in trade. One English captain reported that a French missionary was in charge of his country's trading post in Annam [Vietnam], and each nationality thoughtfully denounced to the native authorities the infractions of its European rivals. The native government, therefore, was well aware of the dual role of merchants and missions, and they carefully searched all commercial ships entering Annamite [Vietnamese] ports for the missionaries who were usually hidden on board.94

Not only was the missionary "a precursor of European political penetration," but he also constituted a threat to the traditional culture of Vietnam, in which religion and social structure were closely intertwined. For the Vietnamese emperors, Catholicism was an element of trouble and disorganization, which threatened to undermine their quasi-sacred character and absolute power. The new religion was also much resented by the Confucian-educated mandarine, since it tended to dislocate the traditional order of society in which they occupied a highly privileged position. It was not surprising that both the monarchy and the mandarinate were openly hostile to Catholicism as well as to any customs and ideals imported from Europe.

In spite of their vicissitudes, the missionaries succeeded in implanting Catholicism in Vietnam. Their influence and power increased tremendously after the country had been conquered by the French. Indeed, since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they have been given the right to acquire land, build churches, and open schools and hospitals. Their material possessions have enabled them to help both the native Catholics and the French administration of Vietnam. In this respect, Virginia Thompson says:

... Christian villages are markedly more prosperous than their pagan neighbours. The Mission is responsible for the first social service in the colony, just as it was the founder of the first schools and printing press. It has fought higher native taxes. Missionaries were the intrepid pioneers in fever-ridden districts: they taught scientific agriculture to primitive mountaineers, and improved native arts and crafts. They helped the administration by building roads in inaccessible regions, by sending Christian villages to colonize the new provinces of Cochin-China [South Vietnam], and by getting Christian coolies to labour on public works.95

In the educational field, the missionaries have opened numerous seminaries for the training of a Vietnamese clergy. They have also

94 Thompson, op. cit., p. 22.
95 Ibid., p. 274.