

An Introduction to

Indochinese

History, Culture, Language and Life—
for Persons Involved with the

Indochinese Refugee Education and Resettlement Project
in the State of Michigan

Edited by

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Ann Arbor

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FOREWORD

James R. Chamberlain

After I had been associated with the Indochinese Resettlement Office but a short time, it became apparent that we in this country had yet to avail ourselves of a great resource: a host of scholars and researchers who have devoted their careers to the study of Southeast Asia. I felt strongly that a meeting of minds between pundit and practitioner would greatly enhance the resettlement effort and perhaps permit us to handle those seemingly insurmountable problems with a new-found grace, dignity and understanding.

With this prospect in mind I was especially happy when the idea came to fruition in the first Indochinese Resettlement Education Conference held in Ann Arbor in late November of 1978, sponsored jointly by the Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies and the Michigan Department of Social Services. The conference marked the beginning of a state-wide English as a Second Language program for Indochinese refugees through Michigan community colleges. The papers included here are from that conference.

The long experience with Southeast Asia represented by the authors is unique and we are indebted to them for providing us with this portion of their wisdom.

Ann Arbor, Michigan
June, 1979

THE FIRST INDOCHINESE RESETTLEMENT

EDUCATION CONFERENCE: OPENING REMARKS

Joyce Savale

As program coordinator for Indochinese resettlement in Michigan, I offer a warm welcome to all of you who are participating in this first Indochinese Education Conference. Because there is a wide variance among you in "level of awareness" of the Resettlement Program, I would like to offer to you a brief examination of the program, its origins, and its goals and objectives, which I think will give added understanding about why we are meeting here today.

The Resettlement Office has been in existence since November, 1975. It was formed in response to a request made of the Governor by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Governor in turn asked the Director of the Department of Social Services to establish the office. Its purpose is to help in the resettlement of former citizens of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia who have fled their homelands and have relocated within the State of Michigan. Some 3000 refugees eventually have come to be residents of Michigan, brought here by a variety of sponsoring agencies and individuals. Some of the refugees you will be seeing in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes will have been in the state since late 1975; others may have arrived from a camp in Malaysia or Thailand within the last few weeks or months; and yet others may have recently relocated from another state, still searching for a place that feels like home.

I think it is important that I discuss with you the significance of the fact that your students will be refugees as opposed to non-English speaking immigrants to this country. The nature of the state of being a refugee is very significant in terms of the set of life experiences and expectations that have led to this point. The most important thing to recognize is that coming to live in this country was not part of the life plan of any of these individuals.

-They are people who felt forced to flee during a time of great upheaval and chaos.

- They had the desire to escape from a situation which was out of control.
- They had no knowledge of exactly where they were going or for how long.
- They had no preparation time, either psychologically or realistically.

Many were swept up in the panic that prevailed during the last days of April, 1975. In truth, some of these people never made what could be called a conscious decision to leave their country of birth forever.

As a result of these circumstances they can be viewed as victims of a chaotic situation, finding themselves in danger, feeling they had little control over what was happening to their lives, seeing their possessions vanish in a moment, leaving close family members and friends of a lifetime behind, seeing their lives swept away in a wave of upheaval to become strangers in a strange land.

Faced with the loss of loved ones and all that was familiar, and without adequate planning or preparation for adjustment, many refugees, I think you can see, may understandably not have sufficient motivation to make the difficult adjustments required of them. Their lives may be permanently affected by the events through which they have lived.

The Resettlement Office has a multi-lingual staff of field workers who are themselves refugees. Our goal is to offer support and to assist wherever possible in the integration and assimilation of the Indochinese into the fabric of our society and culture. This means a complex and unique variety of tasks, but foremost among them is assisting with problems relating to access to housing, medical care, language training, and employment--and not always in the same order.

If you can imagine yourselves set down in the heart of Southeast Asia, lacking all of the necessities for survival, and without even the requisite skill or ability in verbal communication, you begin to appreciate the magnitude of the problem.

Learning English as a second language may not be held as an absolute value by many of the refugees you will see in your classes. You will have students in your classes who are already overwhelmed by the circumstances of their lives. They are dealing with a new country, a new culture, a new system of values and

beliefs: a totally strange frame of reference. Yet, they recognize that without language they are condemned to remain outside of the culture. They are working, they have families, they may have responsibilities for other families as well as their own. But if you offer them a vibrant and technically solid ESL program, they will attend it, and the word will spread via the grapevine that your program is worth fighting the Michigan snow and the fatigue of the day to attend.

Our target group for this program is the family that requires public assistance to survive. Many heads of household with large families are working long, hard hours, but cannot earn enough at their jobs to survive. They depend upon supplemental welfare payments to manage each month. Our goal is to bolster their verbal and communicative skills so that they can have a chance to upgrade their employment and lessen the degree of discomfort they feel in this society.

Under present legislation, the federal funding for the resettlement program will end September 30, 1979. It is anticipated that new legislation will be enacted to deal with the thousands of additional refugees that our government is already committed to resettling within the United States, those who are now waiting in camps and on boats throughout Southeast Asia. However, it is also anticipated that such legislation no longer will be intended to serve those refugees who have been in the country for three years. Therefore, this may be our last, best chance to work with those who may be excluded from future program efforts, our one opportunity to give them the single most important tool they can possess: the ability to speak for themselves in the language of the world in which they now live.

The Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Michigan, has prepared an informative and extremely useful program for you. We are very fortunate to have a wealth of professionals in our very own backyard who are expert in the history and culture of the Indochinese. It is a privilege to be a part of what I feel is an important first step in our program this year.

Ann Arbor, Michigan
November, 1978

INTRODUCTION

John K. Whitmore

The refugees from the countries of Indochina who have settled in Michigan and throughout our country have two aspects of their lives that we must remember. The first is what they inherited from their parents—the Southeast Asian landscape and their ideas of how life should be lived. The second is the twentieth century with the political, social, and cultural struggles that have continued to the present day.

Our volume is meant to supply a sense of the background that the refugees bring with them to our shores. The ever-changing traditions of these varied peoples have received rude shocks, particularly in recent years. Many of the refugees have come out of situations very different from those in which the ideals of their societies are rooted. The extremes of violence across the landscape, the mass movements of populations, the great explosion of urban dwellers, the desperate struggle for survival in rootless times, all have shaken the relationships of present and past.

Nevertheless, ideals of past life remain and are being utilized to adjust to life in our country. The struggle to determine what of the past life is of value and what may be abandoned continues. Though it is taking place in a different country and a different culture, in many respects this reformation of cultural and social values is still a part of previous dilemmas. The twentieth century has seen, particularly in Vietnam, the need to mesh indigenous patterns with the modern world. Indeed, the story of the modern history of the region has been cultural and social choice as well as political struggle. The problem of how to handle "the modern" is thus a dilemma brought to this country and intensified here.

The papers below illustrate much of this, particularly those in Section III on life styles. The ways in which Vietnamese, Lao and Hmong believe they should live have suffered greatly from the dislocations of the past two decades, and the authors of these papers reflect much of the bitterness engendered by recent (and continuing) struggles. Yet the values of social relations and

family remain, as do the language and literature which embody these values. Section II provides good descriptions of Vietnamese and Lao works which carry the values from past to present (and presumably on into the future). The background, physical and historical, against which these developments took place is presented in Section I. Environment and cultural influence come together to show the heritage of these peoples. Even though they now find themselves amidst different hills and rivers and even though a different history sits upon the land, few among them will abandon completely the place from which he or she came.

The authors of these papers are a mixture of scholars, mainly from the University of Michigan, and individuals, particularly Southeast Asians, who witnessed in one fashion or another the recent history of Indochina. This combination of scholarly research and personal involvement greatly strengthens the perspective offered by the volume as a whole.

I wish to thank all the writers for their contributions and the effort they have made to bring this information to those concerned with refugees. Joyce Savale and James R. Chamberlain deserve special commendation for their efforts on behalf of the refugees and for bringing the conference about. L. A. Peter Gosling, as Director of the Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, and aided by Roberta Yule Owen, greatly facilitated the program, as Marie Martin greatly facilitated the production of the volume itself.

Ann Arbor, Michigan
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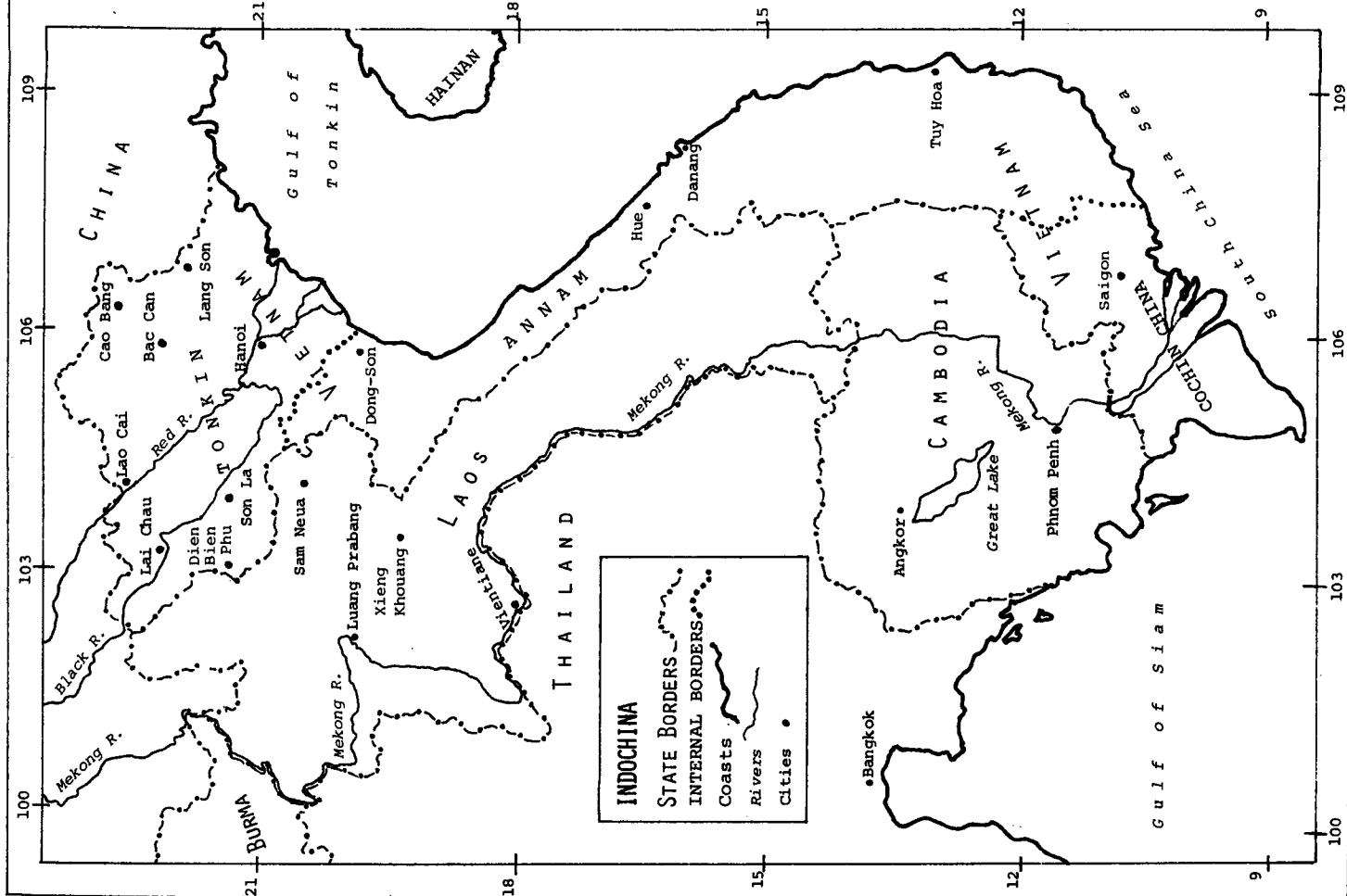
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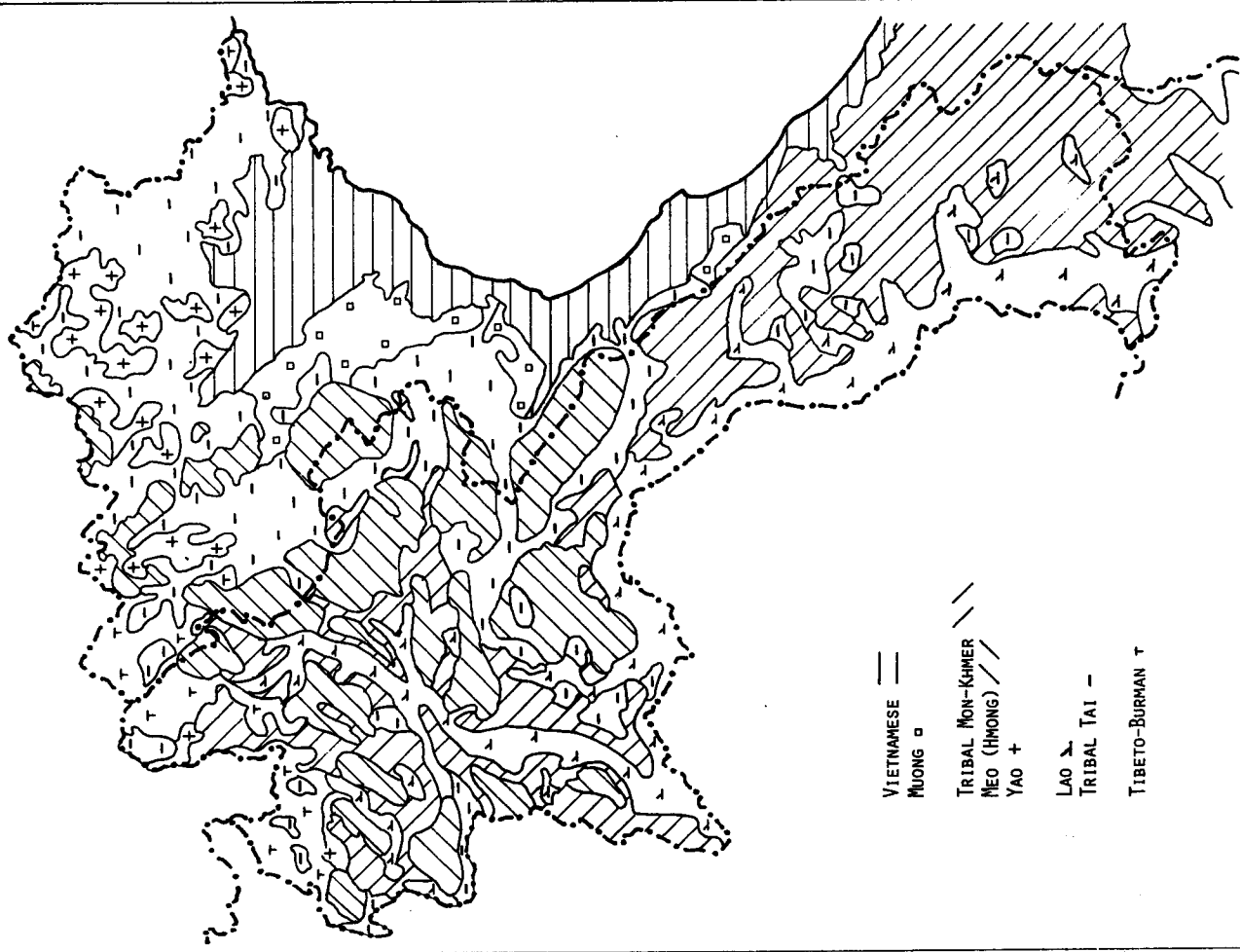
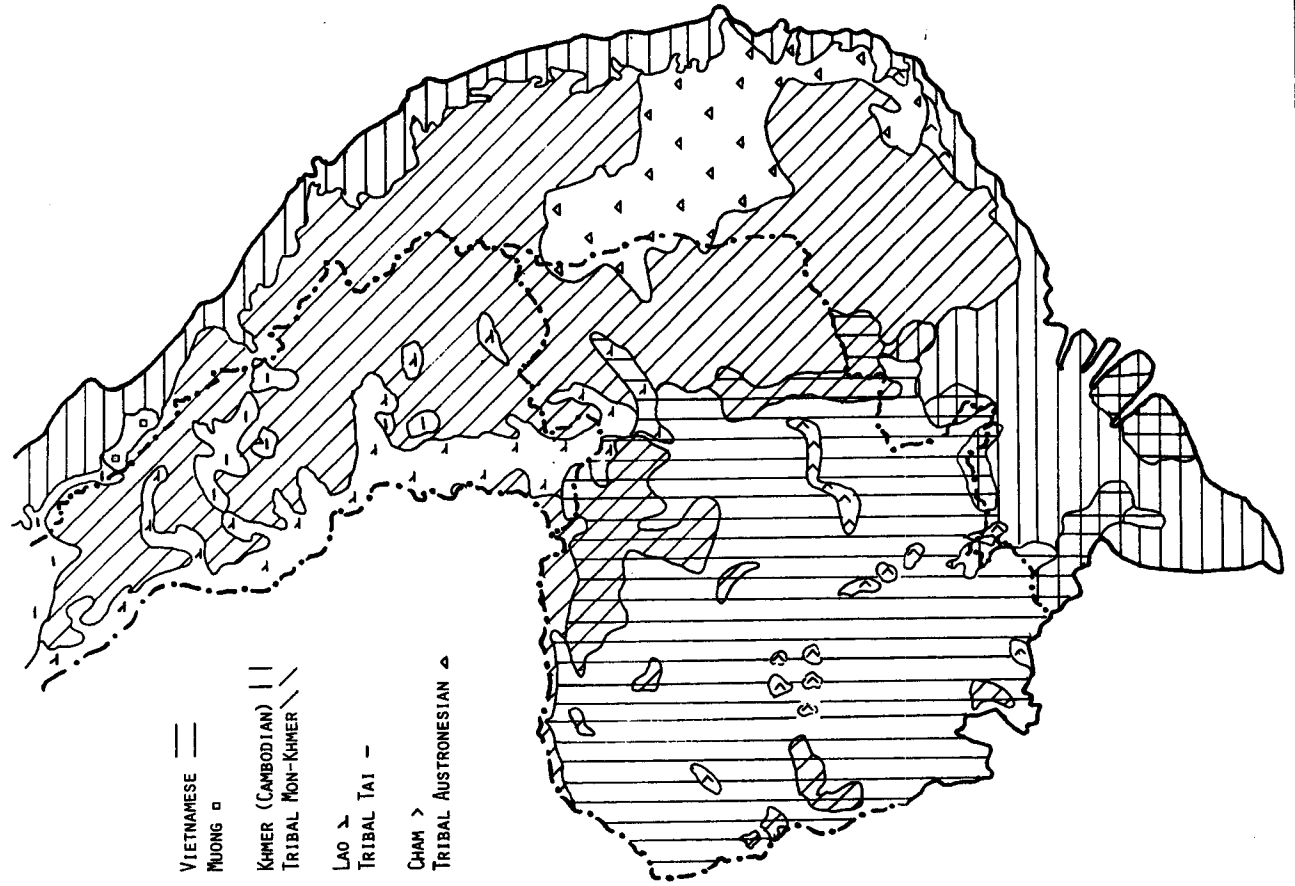
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LANGUAGES OF SOUTHERN INDOCHINA



LANGUAGES OF NORTHERN INDOCHINA

I. Southeast Asia, Background for Indochina

HIGHLANDS, LOWLANDS, AND COASTS

L. A. P. Gosling

The Indochinese nations have sometimes been compared to two rice baskets, full of rice, balanced on each end of a carrying pole. At one end, the delta of the Red River of northern Vietnam (sometimes called the region of Tonkin) is the rice basket of the north. At the other is the delta of the mighty Mekong River, southern Vietnam (sometimes called the region of Cochin China), the main part of the rice basket of the south. This southern rice basket is far larger, including as it does the central plains of the Mekong River, which make up the heart of Cambodia. The carrying pole consists of the mountains and uplands which connect and almost surround these two productive areas; to the east is the mountainous upland of Vietnam, once called the Annamite Chain, now the Truong Son or Long Mountains, and to the west lies the mountainous and landlocked nation of Laos, located more than 500 miles from the sea along the inland reaches of the Mekong River.

Together the two "rice baskets" make up more than 80% of all the lowlands in the Indochinese nations; the other twenty percent is scattered on the east in narrow coastal plains connecting northern and southern Vietnam, mainly in the region often referred to as Annam, and on the west in Laos along the Mekong River valley. But when looking at the map of Indochina, or flying over this territory, one's eyes do not linger long on these level lowlands; they move towards the uplands which dominate the landscape. Almost 85% of all the surface area of Indochina is in highlands and mountains, which may reach heights of over 8000 feet; most of the upland consists of rugged ranges and plateaus, between 2,500 and 4,000 feet in elevation.

At one time all of Southeast Asia was covered with several types of evergreen tropical forest. The entire region lies within the humid tropics, and with the exception of some highland areas, there is no part of Southeast Asia which has killing frosts. Rainfall figures range from over 100 inches in locations exposed to moist seawinds to about 60 inches in places located far inland, but few places receive less than 60 inches (approximately twice the rainfall of the state of Michigan).

This combination of year round growing season and high rainfall contributes to the growth of dense tropical forest over almost all the Southeast Asian lands, both lowland and upland. Even after thousands of years of human settlement and development, two-thirds of the land area is still in forest.

Most of the population in Southeast Asia has been involved in destroying the forest, either through permanently clearing it or temporarily burning it so that crops can be grown. But before examining what kinds of systems man has for using the land cleared from the forest, it is worth noting that the forest itself is an important resource. Traditional use of the forest involves cutting timber for local use, gathering wild fruits, leaves, bark, sap and rosin, and other forest products as well as hunting and trapping game. The forest also provides vital fuel, wood and charcoal. In this way the forest makes a significant contribution to the diet and economy of peasants who live close enough to tap its riches. In addition, the forest is important for the urban areas, supplying them with fuelwood, charcoal, and timber. Such products may also be exported.

A wide range of problems limit forest use. The mixed nature of the tropical forest, in which there may be hundreds of different species of trees in any single acre, make it expensive to locate and cut any given species of tree. But more important is the rate at which the forest is being cleared for new permanent agricultural settlement, or is burned to create temporary fields for farmers in the hills. More recently, the war in Indochina resulted in the damage of forest areas through the use of defoliants; and bombing and shelling filled some trees with bits of shrapnel which reduce their value for saw timber. Most of the population of the Southeast Asian nations consider the forest to be an inexhaustable resource, but in fact it is being rapidly damaged and destroyed.

Over much of the Southeast Asian lowlands which consist of river deltas and valleys and narrow coastal strips, it is almost impossible to find any natural forest. In Indochina, man has transformed these more fertile lands into some of the most productive, most intensively used farmland in Southeast Asia. In the highlands man has also destroyed the forest, but temporarily rather than permanently in order to insert upland fields among the wooded slopes. These patterns of lowland and upland use and settlement provide a major division which is reflected in the society, economy and political history of the Southeast Asian peoples.

Most of the good lowland agricultural areas have long been occupied and have become the focal points of the major

ethno-linguistic groups of Southeast Asia; thus the Burmans occupy the plains of the Irrawaddy River, the Thai the plains of the Chao Phya, the Lao the valley of the middle Mekong River, the Cambodians the valley and lake basin of the lower Mekong, and the Vietnamese the deltas of the Mekong and Red rivers and the coastal plains. The poorer uplands have often been settled by "minority" ethno-linguistic groups, such as the Hmong and Black Tai, who have either been cut off from the richer lowlands by the major groups or migrated in after the lowlands were already occupied. Therefore, the division between upland and lowland, between forest agriculture and wet rice agriculture, is often reflected in a division between the majority ethnic group and numerous minority groups. There may be substantial historical and cultural unity among the major lowland group, but often a bewildering variety among the tribal upland groups. Relations between lowland and upland have not always been friendly, and even now Southeast Asian governments, dominated by the lowland populations, seldom give sufficient attention to the minority groups in the swidden uplands.

When one thinks of the rural landscape of Southeast Asia, a picture of compact villages surrounded by small, diked and flooded rice fields comes to mind. Most lowlands are intensively developed and densely populated, although this varies from place to place. In northern Vietnam (Tonkin) and central Vietnam (Annam), these lands have been farmed for many hundreds of years. Elaborate irrigation systems provide water to carefully engineered rice fields, and compact villages house the dense rural population which exceeds 1,800 per square mile. In contrast, the more recently developed areas of the Mekong Delta in southern Vietnam and the rice lands of Cambodia have larger farms and their rural populations are less dense, around 600 per square mile. In southern Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos there are still small areas of lowland which can be developed, although not sufficient to accommodate current rates of population increase.

Rice farmers in Southeast Asia have, in the past, borrowed elements from both China and India, while developing tools, techniques, and rice varieties of their own which are quite distinctively indigenous. Rice is the preferred crop for several reasons. It produces more food per acre than any other crop which can be grown, particularly under the humid tropical conditions of the region. The rice grain is enclosed within a hard hull which effectively seals out moisture and permits unhulled rice to be stored for many years without rotting or deteriorating: this allows the farmer to store his surplus from good years in order to offset years when crops are destroyed by drought or flood. Rice has also been adapted to grow in a wide

range of environments, from deeply flooded areas where the water seasonally overflows its banks by as much as 15 feet to dry upland slopes. Moreover, rice is a nutritious food when the bran layer is not removed: modern milling methods often polish away this nutritious bran, but the home milling methods used in villages leave the bran intact. For these and other reasons rice dominates lowland food crop agriculture and is also the major crop of upland cultivators, where dry rice varieties are grown.

The highest levels of rice production can be achieved where the farmer has access to irrigation water. Irrigation provides the best conditions for the semi-aquatic rice plant to grow. Irrigation water also transports new soil to the field, brings nutrients for the rice plant, and provides a medium for the growth of algae which supply further plant nutrients. Few weeds can grow in flooded fields to compete with the rice plants. For these and other reasons, rice which is grown in small plots and then transplanted into irrigated fields not only produces higher yields, but more dependable yields as well, with less variation from year to year. This is of vital importance to the farmer who must have predictable minimum production each year to provide the family food supply. Moreover, irrigated fields maintain their productivity without the use of expensive fertilizer; there are many fields which have been continuously cultivated for hundreds of years without any decrease in rice yields.

The establishment, maintenance and operation of an irrigation system requires substantial amounts of labor, not only to run the irrigation system, but to level and dike the land in order to control the flow of irrigation water. Within and among Southeast Asian villages, cooperation is vital to operate the irrigation system, and the investment of labor and distribution of the water must be shared. Moreover, within a tract of irrigated land it is not possible for any individual to deviate from village decisions regarding what crops to plant and when they are to be planted; one cannot decide to grow a dry crop like peanuts in a landscape in which irrigation water has to pass across the land so that others can grow rice. Hence irrigation, along with other factors, enforces a certain level of unity and cooperation on the agricultural patterns of these wet rice growing communities.

Although irrigated rice may be the major crop, it is only one unit in a complex agricultural economy characteristic of most Southeast Asian villages. In addition to the rice, the farmer tends gardens and orchards which provide a wide range of supplementary foods and items for sale. Many villages will have dozens and even hundreds of different types of annual and perennial

vegetable and fruit crops. There are also a wide range of commercial crops which are grown for domestic and export markets and which include sugar, corn, cotton, copra (dried coconut meat), coffee, tobacco, tapioca and many others. Rubber, introduced at the close of the 19th century, is the most important single commercial crop and is increasingly produced by small scale, peasant producers. One of the trends in the 'modernization' of rural Southeast Asia has been to break down the subsistence or self-sufficient nature of rural areas and make them increasingly dependent on the domestic urban and world markets.

In addition to this wide range of crops, the Southeast Asian farmer also produces livestock. Although the main use of large animals is to provide power for preparing cropland, surplus animals fill the meat needs of the village and town. Farm families also engage in a wide range of craft industries and provide seasonal labor for the roads, irrigation canals, and other public works. Increasing numbers of rural people, surplus to the labor needs of the farm, or forced out by poverty and landlessness, have migrated to the cities seeking employment; the funds these urban migrants send back to the rural villages have often been important supplements to rural incomes.

The lowland Southeast Asian rice farmer occupies the best land, most of it well watered level lowland which, when irrigated, provides sustained production of rice and a range of other crops. He operates an impressively complex but stable agricultural system, and often is a part of an equally complex but generally stable village society. Population increase, a wide range of colonial measures, and recent government policies have increased the pressure on rural resources and created a wide variety of problems in the rural economy. In a single generation the Indochinese farmer has been subject to a wide range of different government policies to deal with those problems; the transition from colonialism to independence, war, revolution, and current socialist policies have brought a wide range of changes. But even now, the basic pattern of the wet rice landscape remains intact, the essential stability remains.

If the lowland farmer, occupying the best land, faces problems in his life, reflect on those faced by the farmer who carves a living out of the forest. Upland farming is the second most important resource use and settlement pattern, with problems quite different from the larger, and more important and more populous lowland areas.

The upland farmer of Southeast Asia occupies slope areas, with occasional pieces of stream valley or level plateau. The soils in most of these areas are too poor for sustained

agriculture, and because most of the land is sloping or rolling it is not possible to use irrigation without the construction of very expensive terraced fields. In response to this different and difficult environment, the upland farmer has evolved a completely different system of land use. This involves the burning of the forest both to clear the land for crops and to use the ashes of the burned trees as fertilizer to enrich the poor soils. This system of agriculture, sometimes called "slash and burn," is now commonly referred to as "swidden" agriculture.

Upland fields with their poor soils can seldom be cultivated for more than one year before requiring a rest period. The abandoned fields are reclaimed by the forest and then burned again some 15 to 20 years later when the grown forest can provide sufficient ash fertilizer for the crop. This fifteen to twenty year period of fallow between crops means that any single farm requires a large area of forest, with most of it in some stage of fallow forest growth rather than in field agriculture. Because of this and the general poverty of the soil, population densities in upland areas are low and villages are small and scattered. The isolated upland communities are distant from the urban centers and the fertile lowlands, difficult of access and poorly served by government agencies.

Besides isolation and separation from government services, the upland farmer faces other problems. He lives in a delicate balance with nature. In contrast with the irrigated lowland farmer who can compensate for variations in rainfall from year to year, the upland farmer has no irrigation and his prosperity varies with the rainfall. In addition, if he burns the forest before it has a chance to regrow fully, decreased ash will reduce the yield of his crop. Too frequent cultivation interferes with the regrowth of the forest and may hasten the impoverishment of the poor soils, leading to erosion, invasion by tropical grasses, and the destruction of the swidden farm. Population pressure in this limited and fragile resource base increases the probability of ecological damage and economic disaster. These problems, combined with government neglect, make the upland areas among the poorest in Southeast Asia.

Land, with its forests and fields, is not the only resource available to man. The waters of the rivers, lakes and surrounding seas of Southeast Asia provide an important source of food and way of life. Statistics are not available on the fish catch from rivers, irrigation ditches, and the flooded rice fields, but case studies show this to be the most important source of animal protein available to the rural population. In many lowland farm villages, fishing is a continuing operation for all members of the family, each day's catch contributing to the

family food supply. In addition to these part-time subsistence fishermen, there are full time inland fishermen, who catch vast amounts of fish from rivers and lakes for sale in the urban markets. The largest inland fishery in Southeast Asia, producing vast tonnages of fish each year, is found around the margins of the Great Lake of Cambodia. The Great Lake, fed by the waters of the Mekong River, is surrounded by fishermen who make an important contribution to the Cambodian diet and economy.

Coastal fishermen, harvesting the adjacent areas of the South China Sea, are scattered in fishing villages along the coast, in the major and minor port towns and on the offshore islands. They normally fish by day along inshore waters, within thirty miles of land, but some go far out to sea for long periods. The fish supply in these tropical waters is not rich, and fishing requires much labor with relatively low return. Modernization of the fishing industry has increased productivity and provides more fish for the urban markets, but the life of the fisherman has not improved substantially. Fishing villages up inlets in the coastal mangrove swamps or on offshore islands often are as isolated from the major cities and densely populated farmlands as are the more remote upland villages, while even fishing villages close to agricultural areas have little interaction with adjacent farming communities: fishermen are often a people apart, focused on the sea and occupied with the difficulties of extracting a living from this unpredictable environment. Development has generally by-passed small fishing villages in favor of the larger ports, where fish can be landed directly for the urban market.

These resources, the forest, the rich rice lowlands, the swidden uplands, the rivers and the surrounding seas, directly sustain at a subsistence level 80% of the population in Vietnam, 90% of the population in Laos, and possibly much more in current "deurbanized" Cambodia. At the same time, they provide the raw materials for domestic development and foreign trade. In most nations the visible "culture" is mainly urban, and both domestic policy and foreign knowledge are often concentrated on the small urban sector of the population. This is less true of the Indo-Chinese nations. Recent and current development programs in these countries have been more concerned with the large, less visible rural population, recognizing that the welfare of the nation ultimately depends on how the farmer, forester, and fisherman use the resources of the "landscape" of which they are a part. On the other hand, as political and economic problems have increased in recent years, refugees from all sectors of the population, including Hmong swidden cultivators, Vietnamese fishermen, and the urban elite in general, have left their varied environments and come to our shores.

"ROOTS": PREHISTORY AND ENVIRONMENT

Karl L. Hutterer

Ever since Arthur Haley published his best seller, the term "roots" has become common coin, perhaps too common. Yet, there is some basic meaning to this phrase. Individuals and peoples are rooted in the past and if we are to understand a person or a people we have to know the origins and history of their cultural and social development. It is important, then, in the framework of this conference, that we take a look into the history and prehistory of Southeast Asia to see whether it might help us in unraveling some of the mysteries of this part of the world which is so little understood by us.

The term "Southeast Asia" is of relatively recent vintage. Up until the Second World War, one used to speak about Indo-China, Further India, the East Indies, and so forth. This lack in our geographical terminology was symptomatic of the fact that, in our eyes and our minds, Southeast Asia did not have an individuality of its own. It was considered an appendix of either China or India, and it was generally believed that the major cultural elements of Southeast Asia were borrowed from one of these great civilizations to its north and west. During the past fifteen years, archaeologists have begun to dispute the view that Southeast Asia was culturally backward and have instead put forth a claim that this region of the world was precocious in its cultural development, having given rise to elements of civilization even earlier than other parts of the world. While not everybody is ready to accept these claims, continued archaeological research is adding some support to them. Yet, many problems are still unsolved.

One of the fundamental difficulties seems to be an apparent contradiction running through the cultural mosaic of Southeast Asia. On the one hand we find in Southeast Asia cultural elements which look primitive and even primeval and appear to be ancient survivals. On the other hand, there are elements of cultural and social organization which clearly originated in the region of Southeast Asia, but which are highly sophisticated and progressive. This seeming contradiction is only symptomatic of many such apparent contradictions which permeate the cultural

and social picture of Southeast Asia. Some of these contradictions may be found in the very environment in which the Southeast Asians live.

Southeast Asia is located in the tropical belt of the world. Prehistorically, most of the region was covered by a variety of tropical forests. Tropical forests, especially rain forests of equatorial areas, are extremely impressive environments: they are among the lushest regions in the world, producing the greatest amounts of organic matter of all known terrestrial areas. They stand out through the extreme diversity of life forms and the incredible number of species of plants and animals that occur within them. These environments are also unique in the complex interactions among their different species of plants and animals. However, in spite of the lushness and diversity of their tropical lands, these environments are surprisingly poor in resources for human populations. Amazingly little of the green mass of tropical forest is of direct utility to humans, and few if any of the plant and animal resources occur in large quantities. Moreover, tropical environments, because of their ecological complexity, are extremely vulnerable. This means that the human transformation of the natural landscape is achieved at much greater risk and cost than in many other parts of the world. It is therefore a great irony that the myth of the indolent Southeast Asians should have formed. For those who have been there and have had the privilege to observe Southeast Asian farmers and peasants, it is clear that they work as hard, if not harder, than the farmers and peasants of any other part of the world.

After this brief introduction, let me now turn to a short and rather simplified consideration of the prehistory of Southeast Asia. Archaeological research in this area began more than 100 years ago. In spite of this great length of time, very little is understood about the cultural and social history of this part of the world. All we can do at this time is to single out what seem to be some major strands of development, some major traditions which have developed over a very long period of time, generally interacting and intermingling, though at times developing independently from one another.

I. The Hunting Tradition

Southeast Asia represents one of the oldest settled landscapes on the earth. From what we know today it seems that human ancestors arrived in the region as early as 2 million years ago. The oldest finds we can be sure of are all from the island of Java in Indonesia and consist of just a handful of fossil bones of a creature variously called Pithecanthropus or Paranthropus palaeojavanicus.

This creature was probably the forefather of another human ancestor found in Java popularly known as Java Man and referred to by scientists as Homo erectus. Homo erectus probably lived over much of Southeast Asia around 700,000 years ago. Unfortunately, relatively little is known about the culture of these early hominids. Stone tools have been found in river gravels on Java and in some other countries of Southeast Asia, but it has been difficult to relate these artifacts to the fossil bones found in different localities. One thing, however, seems quite certain: these human ancestors in Southeast Asia were hunters and collectors making a living in the tropical environment of the region.

More substantial archaeological finds date from a much later period of time, namely about 40,000 years ago, and come from two major caves in the island region of Southeast Asia, namely Niah cave in Sarawak on the island of Borneo and Tabon cave on the island of Palawan in the Philippines. From this time period on, we know of an increasing number of sites throughout the Southeast Asian region containing archaeological traces of the presence of prehistoric hunters and food collectors. In fact some of these sites date as late as just a few hundred years ago, and a continuous thread of development and continuity appears to lead to groups of hunters and gatherers still present in a few areas of Southeast Asia today. This is not to say, however, that presently living hunting and gathering peoples of Southeast Asia represent unchanged survivals of palaeolithic societies; rather they are the end products of a long and continuous history and development.

There are a number of similarities among the palaeolithic sites of Southeast Asia and even with the sites of later hunters and gatherers. One of these similarities is the evidence for the exploitation of a broad spectrum of plants and animals. In other words, both ancient and more recent hunters and food collectors of the tropical forest took advantage of virtually anything that was edible within their environment. This is entirely consistent with the nature of tropical environments as explained above. Since virtually none of the animal and plant species of the tropical forest occur in large quantities by themselves, human populations have to adapt to the great diversity of this environment and have to be able to collect and hunt a large range of food resources. The exploitation of such a diverse range of edibles necessitates of course an equally diverse and adaptable technology. And here is another one of the similarities between archaeological sites occupied by ancient and more recent hunters and food collectors. Surprisingly, the stone tools excavated from most of these sites are extremely crude and simple, so simple in fact that most non-archaeologists would hardly recognize them as artifacts. Since this tradition of

extremely simple stone technology lasts for several hundred thousand years, up until the near present, it has become the basis for some of the claims that Southeast Asia was culturally backward. However, this claim is based on a misunderstanding of Southeast Asian technologies and their archaeological expression.

As indicated above, hunters and food collectors of the tropical forests need a large variety of implements, weapons, and containers in the pursuit of their life. Manufacturing and maintaining such a diverse technology is quite expensive in terms of the human energy and labor invested. It is important, therefore, that this energy investment be kept to a reasonable level. This is done by using the variety of ubiquitously available raw materials, particularly raw materials that occur in the forests such as tropical hardwoods and bamboos. These raw materials are then used for manufacturing bows and arrows and blowguns, baskets, spears, traps, nets, and so forth. Virtually none of this technology made of organic raw materials survives in archaeological sites. What does survive are the tools of manufacture used in making the extractive tools and implements. These tools of manufacture are the stone tools excavated in the hunting and gathering sites. There is no particular need for elaboration of these stone tools. There is no other demand on them than that they fulfill some very simple functions of cutting and scraping, which they do.

Thus, if we look at the larger picture, the simple and crude stone implements of Southeast Asian sites of hunters and gatherers are not at all indicative of a primitive and backward existence; they rather are indicative of a very sophisticated adjustment, a very fine attunement to the needs and necessities of surviving in their particular environment.

Very little is known at this time about the social organization of prehistoric hunters and gatherers in Southeast Asia. All we can say is that they evidently lived in very small groups and were highly mobile. One of the more interesting points is that, unlike other parts of the world, the hunting adaptation was not replaced in Southeast Asia even though other kinds of economies developed over a long period of time. Southeast Asia is one of the few regions of the world where hunting and gathering populations are found even today. For many years it was thought that this continuing survival of hunters and gatherers was the result of their being isolated in inhospitable territories. However, we have learned that this is not so. Hunters and gatherers have been in contact with agricultural populations for several thousand years. In fact, it appears that today the hunting and gathering adaptation represents something

of a specialization for the exploitation of the tropical forest which benefits both the hunters and the agricultural peoples in the lowlands. The hunters collect forest products which agricultural populations need but have no access to anymore because they have cleared the forest in order to establish their fields. Thus, the continuity of the hunting pattern in Southeast Asia is an expression of the extreme complexity of Southeast Asian life rather than an indication of cultural backwardness.

II. The Agricultural Tradition

One of the great surprises and controversies of recent archaeological work in Southeast Asia has been the claim of extremely early agricultural innovations in the region. These claims are connected with archaeological excavations in Spirit Cave of the far northwestern corner of Thailand. There carbonized remains of a variety of plants have been found such as beans, peas, squash, pepper, water chestnuts, and so forth, dating back as far as 11,000 years. The excavator and some others felt that there was a good possibility that at least some of these plants were not just collected from the wild but were actually cultivated. The claim of plant cultivation and food production at such an early date has remained controversial, and much more archaeological work needs to be done.

Yet, there are a number of theoretical reasons to support the idea that some form of environmental management and food production may have occurred in Southeast Asia at an extremely early period of time. Such early agricultural manipulations would not have been in the form of systematic agriculture involving the cultivation of large fields and a sedentary form of life. They probably took place among the overgrown areas on the fringes of upland settlements. A number of major agricultural crops of the world seem to originate from Southeast Asia although we are not yet able to reconstruct the exact history of their cultivation and agricultural utilization. Among them are some root crops such as yams and taro, some fruits, particularly the banana, and some of the most important cereals in the world economy today, such as rice. The oldest secure evidence for agriculture in Southeast Asia comes from several sites on the Korat Plateau in northeastern Thailand near present day Laos. There we know of villages that grew rice 6,000 years ago. Research on these archaeological sites is still in progress, but we may say this much: agriculture, particularly the cultivation of rice, had become an important element in the sustenance of the population. The agricultural mode of subsistence was furthermore intimately connected with other social transformations. We are now dealing with larger populations which lived sedentary lives in villages rather than in temporary camps. The village

communities were organized differently than the wandering bands of hunters, and they evolved new forms of intellectual life.

It is unlikely that the sites in northeast Thailand are either unique or represent in fact the earliest beginning of systematic agriculture in Southeast Asia. However, our archaeological knowledge of the region is still too incomplete to allow us to draw a more substantive history of the region's agricultural traditions. Of the two different kinds of agricultural systems in existence in Southeast Asia, one involves the repeated clearing of new land and the abandonment of old fields, and the other the continued cultivation of permanent fields. It is probable that these two kinds of agricultural systems have separate, though somewhat interrelated, histories. Their archaeological background, at this time, is not yet clear.

III. Technological Traditions

Southeast Asia seems to have played a prominent role in the history of technology. Two important technological innovations stand out in Southeast Asian archaeology. One of them is the very early appearance of pottery. At Spirit Cave, the site mentioned earlier, pieces of cord-marked pottery were found at a level dating to about 11,000 years ago. This date is the second oldest in the world for pottery. Since then, earthenware pottery and other ceramics have been an important element in the material culture of the region up to, and including, today. Pottery is used in a variety of everyday tasks, such as cooking and storing grain and water as well as in the large variety of ritual contexts.

Perhaps even more spectacular than the discoveries of early pottery in Southeast Asia is the early appearance of metals in that part of the world. At the sites of Non Nok Tha and Ban Chiang in northeastern Thailand, bronze has been found in levels dating as early as 4,500 to 5,000 years ago. Again, many important problems are left to be answered in future archaeological research. However, the mere appearance of metal technology has some very profound implications for reconstructing the social organization of that time. To manufacture bronze requires a society that can afford the immense amount of physical energy necessary for that task as well as a society which has the wide flung trade networks that make it possible to bring together the copper and tin ores and the fuels involved in smelting and casting. Furthermore, the society must be able to maintain a group of specialists handling the bronze technology, since this technology is too complex to be left within the hands of individual households. Altogether we must be dealing with rather complex and internally differentiated societies that had a rather

sophisticated form of political leadership, societies which were anything but primitive and barbaric. One of the most highly evolved instances of such a society is known from the 2,000 year-old site of Dong-son in north-central Vietnam. An elaborate array of material culture is there evidently connected with an intricate pattern of social stratification. Some beautiful bronze artifacts influenced by Dong-son are found as far away as eastern Indonesia.

IV. State Formation in Southeast Asia

Very little indeed is known about when, where, and how the earliest states came to be formed in Southeast Asia. For many years it was assumed that state formation took place very late in time, no earlier than about 500 A.D., and occurred under the influence of China and India. There has been some controversy over the nature of this influence as some scholars postulated outright colonization or military occupation, while others argued that foreign influences penetrated Southeast Asia through the agency of Indian and Chinese traders who came to the region in search of exotic trade products. During the last 30 years or so, the latter theory has gained widest currency. Nevertheless, while it is undeniable that cultural and social elements originating from China and India are conspicuous in the cultures of Southeast Asia, and while it is clear that most of these elements came into the region during the first millennium of this era, it is doubtful whether Chinese and Indian influences themselves were causally involved in creating Southeast Asian states. In fact, it is possible to reverse the proposition. There are both theoretical and empirical archaeological grounds for believing that states developed in Southeast Asia in pre-Christian times and as a result of indigenous social and cultural processes. If this is correct, then the Chinese and Indian elements in Southeast Asia are not so much a cause of local state formation as a consequence of it. This means that as states formed in Southeast Asia they became more expansive socially and economically and on their own behalf started to interact with the states and civilizations to their north and west.

In the context of this paper it is possible to sketch only the barest outlines of the prehistory of Southeast Asia. This is particularly the case since so little is known about the subject and so many of the important questions are still subject to vehement controversy. However, two points are becoming increasingly clear as archaeological research goes on. One is that our belief of Southeast Asia being a culturally backward region of the world is a result of our own lack of knowledge of this area. The other is an increased realization and awareness of the extreme richness and complexity of the cultural history

of this region. It is one of the peculiarities of ethnocentrism to be aware of the cultural wealth and diversity of one's own society and to attempt to lump much of the rest of the world under just one hat. If we are ever to understand Southeast Asia and Southeast Asians, one of the most important things to realize will be the extreme complexity and cultural richness of this part of the world.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PATTERNS

John K. Whitmore

Southeast Asia (and within it Indochina) is known as a crossroads of international cultural influence and a location of great diversity. A glance at any ethnic, linguistic, or religious map shows us that here are many peoples who live differently from one another. Within Southeast Asia we find the major belief systems of the world—Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Roman Catholicism. Indochina has segments of all of these. Southeast Asia is also known as "an anthropologist's paradise" for the great numbers and complexity of the different cultures, highland, lowland, and coastal, existing there. Again Indochina fully shares this deserved reputation.

I have known social scientists almost literally to throw up their hands in despair over this diversity and complexity. Yet, as an historian, I have confidence in the historical method to explain this pattern as a centuries old development, and I will try to do so here.

If we put aside the emphasis on diversity so natural on first impression, we may gain a sense of the distinctiveness of Southeast Asia as a whole. To obtain this sense, let us compare the region in broad terms with those great civilizations that flank it, the Indian to the west and the Chinese to the north. A specific case in point is the fact that Southeast Asians tend to build their houses on stilts in the air while Indians and Chinese always build their homes flat on the ground. We have yet to explain this fully, but it reflects the strong regional sense one gets about Southeast Asia.

From such common elements we may draw a loosely sketched picture of Southeast Asian existence. In social terms, a strong contrast exists between this region and those of India and China. Both of the latter have patrilineal (father-son) families that provide structure for the society itself. In China, the son automatically belongs to his father's clan and the daughter marries into another. In India, both son and daughter belong to the caste and marry within it; the son inherits his

father's occupation. In Southeast Asia, on the other hand, family relationships are bilateral; the children relate as easily to the mother's side as to the father's, and the pool of kin is larger and more ambiguous (you associate with those you like, as here). Family relationships are less confining and no structured body like the clan or caste automatically exists. An exception to this pattern is the number of hill tribes in the northern mainland which have only in the past few centuries moved south from China, the Hmong being a very good example.

One result of the general Southeast Asian social pattern is that the woman has a much higher role in this type of society than she does in patrilineal societies, and thus, throughout Southeast Asia, women have generally tended to play more significant roles than in either China or India. Another result is that, to achieve a task requiring more than a few individuals, cooperation and the willingness to join is necessary; individuals band together through reciprocity rather than through required social behavior.

In the spiritual realm, there are a number of elements which appear throughout Southeast Asia. The resulting pattern is what is usually called "animism." Spirits abound in the Southeast Asian world, spirits of animals in the jungles, spirits of nature in the waters and forests, and most particularly spirits of the dead. The latter would be ancestral and well cared for, or lost, hungry, and dangerous. All these spirits offer potential good and bad and must be appeased. The ancestral and guardian spirits are the most important, and the maintenance of fertility in the land and people is one of their main functions.

Such a general pattern, with great diversity in its local expression, would seem to have existed 2000 years ago. Southeast Asian cultures had been undergoing dynamic changes in the last centuries B.C., just as the great Indian and Chinese empires were forming. From 500 B.C. to 500 A.D., the indigenous societies took advantage of expanding international trade and their resulting exposure to foreign political and religious ideas. With the foreign contacts came a gradual growth of political structures justified by the external ideologies. What occurred was neither external conquest and imposition of foreign ideas nor blind and imitative borrowing from great outsiders; the Southeast Asians observed, understood, and selected according to their own needs and desires. Through the first millennium A.D., the selection involved political ideology that would bind the many disparate local units and their spirits into a larger whole; such a selection was less involved with intellectual and philosophical concepts per se.

The result was the number of great classical states which reached their peaks in the period 800-1200: Angkor in Cambodia, Pagan in Burma, Champa and Dai Viet in present-day Vietnam, and central Java. These states have generally been referred to as either "Indianized" or "Sinified," indicating the belief that they owed their very nature to the great Indian and Chinese civilizations. Such a belief also gives the appearance of a fundamental division in Southeast Asia between an "Indian" zone and a "Chinese" one. The truth that exists in this postulation is rather superficial. We must instead look at the "Southeast Asian-ness" of the classical development and see a great similarity among the resulting states.

These states were aristocratic, strongly oriented toward the great Capital, and very eclectic in their beliefs. Local and central beliefs were bound together politically, but otherwise felt no need for cultural conformity. The outer localities maintained their own beliefs while recognizing the political superiority of the central ideology. As an early Cambodian inscription noted, "Near to the Capital one's head bows; far from it one's heart bows." Local beliefs continued, and in the center Southeast Asian aristocrats with foreign titles picked and chose among the foreign beliefs to form their own idiosyncratic systems. The Siva-Buddha cult of Java and the Deva-raja (so-called God-king) cult of Cambodia both represent the typical amalgamation of indigenous and varied foreign beliefs, and the great monuments, such as Burubudur in Java and Angkor Wat in Cambodia, are physical manifestations of this. These monuments are among the greatest religious buildings ever created in the world.

The classical states of Southeast Asia depended on this ideological amalgamation to integrate the varied localities. From the integration came the manpower and revenue needed to support the states. Nevertheless, the localities were very loosely controlled. Part of the major historical developments of these centuries was the movement of Tai-speaking peoples into the Mekong river valley and over into the lowlands of the Menam river system. Forming small communities interspersed among the existing inhabitants, these Tai peoples moved within the purview of the great Angkorian empire centered in Cambodia. They first appear to us as slaves captured in war and donated to a Cham temple on the southern coast of what is now Vietnam and as a local military unit on the walls of Angkor Wat. Out of these scattered communities would grow the present states of Laos and Thailand.

By the 13th and 14th centuries, changes had begun to occur

in the classical systems. The old central ideologies were losing their hold over the localities, revenue and manpower came to be controlled locally, and the political structure crumbled. Out of the plethora of beliefs existing in the complex classical states arose new belief systems that would lead to the religious configurations of the modern age.

These new systems of belief had all existed previously in lesser fashion in Southeast Asia, but now, with the weakening of the classical ideologies and reinforcement via international trade routes, they began to flourish. Theravada Buddhism with its doctrine of individual responsibility and merit came from Ceylon to Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Islam preached law and direct responsibility to God, coming out of the Middle East and India to the island world and to the Chams in southern Indochina. Confucianism and its social ethics were adopted by the Vietnamese from China. Later, in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish stopped the spread of Islam in the central and northern Philippines, and European priests brought Roman Catholicism to these islands and to Vietnam.

What all these religions share in common as opposed to the classical Hindu/Buddhist ideologies is a moral concern, a firm belief in what was right and what was wrong. The classical beliefs had demanded political subservience, not religious conformity, and had left the localities to their own mores. With the adoption of the new religions, the king in each country had an inherent concern to protect the religion and to ensure that his people followed the precepts of the religion. He was now "Defender of the Faith," to borrow a Western phrase. No longer were local customs outside his reach.

From the 14th century on, these ideologies gradually permeated the countryside of the region. What had been loose conglomerates of local custom, however disguised in Hindu/Buddhist form, over the centuries became local centers of the official religion. As the king became more concerned with the behavior of his subjects and as the Capital set the style for the countryside, the new religion of the country began to play a larger role among the people. A very important element in this advance, particularly in Theravada Buddhist countries like Cambodia and Laos, was the establishment of local temples and the donation of support to them. The government and wealthy families turned over land, manpower, and wealth in general to these religious centers. A strong interrelationship sprang up between the religious centers and the Capital. The king gained legitimacy by supporting the temples. Well supported temples meant a flourishing religion and a statement of the king's good rule. Major temples became intellectual centers and contributed to the glory of the realm.

The process of advance of each of these religions was necessarily uneven. Central political and economic areas became more imbued with the particular religion than outer areas, and the coasts and lowlands accepted it before the highlands. The sword might be brought into play to force acceptance in some areas, but in most cases the glory of the word spread of its own accord.

Nevertheless, folk traditions continued. The local spirit cults have remained an important element in the cultures of Southeast Asian countries. The universal religion and the spirits have almost always adjusted to fit the other's demands. The spirits are very much involved in mundane day-to-day life, health and illness, success and failure, good fortune and bad. The universal religion is involved much more in the ideal of how one should live one's life and in the circumstances of death. With royal support, the universal religion also tended in places to emphasize the elements of the spirit cults acceptable to its beliefs and to drive underground elements not acceptable.

Over these centuries from 1300 to 1900, the relatively similar heterogeneity across Southeast Asia of the Hindu/Buddhist classical age gave way to the religious divisions we are now used to. Instead of the cultural relativity where a locality's beliefs were its own business, we see the spread of thought that required others to think it as well. In the 15th century, Vietnam officially adopted Chinese Confucianism as the state ideology and used a bureaucratic form of government to enforce its choice. For the next 400 years, this ideology dominated elite thought in a way that seems to have forced a gap between the elite ideal and the popular style of life where Mahayana Buddhism and its salvationist tendencies survived. Confucian precepts did become important among the populace, but not to the degree that people today believe. At the same time, the Buddhist states of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos were establishing governments that maintained the indigenous patterns as well as inaugurated the new morality. A blend of Buddhism and the spirit cults was achieved in the villages. Islam seems not to have gone so far in central enforcement of the moral pattern as Theravada Buddhism and Confucianism and has existed mainly in the coastal and island world. In Indochina, Islam was significant only in terms of the Malay trading contacts across the Gulf of Siam and among the Chams. Many of the Chams, those near and in Cambodia, adopted Islam after the collapse of their state before the advancing Vietnamese from the 15th century on. Those Chams along the southern coast of Vietnam remained nominally Hindu. The Chams became a rather inconspicuous minority, those in Cambodia prospering until the 1970s. Following the conquest of the Philippines, Catholicism spread throughout the islands as the

different orders of the Church established themselves in different territories. Catholicism also took its place in the Vietnamese cultural context as Portuguese, Italian, and French priests worked in the villages, but such priests were unable to make any great impression on the Theravada Buddhists of Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand.

Out of these centuries, up into the 19th, emerged what is generally seen as the traditional in Southeast Asia. These systems, Theravada Buddhist, Confucian, and Islamic, confronted the Westerners and their power as colonialism swept across the region. In the early years of the 19th century, Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam maintained strong monarchies integrated with the particular ideology of each. In weaker territories like Cambodia and the Lao states, ideology linked the throne and the country at large in more of a religious than a political way. Here the religious institutions dotting the countryside had more local orientation and control than in the powerful states where religious hierarchies led to the Capitals.

The impact of the outside world brought varied responses from the Southeast Asian countries. Monarchs moved to strengthen their control progressively (in our terms) via Western innovations and by consolidating ideological control. In Thailand, both monarchy and elite came to grips with Western science, technology, and beliefs, and both sought to maintain the Thai Buddhist way of life. This was done successfully. Laos and Cambodia came under French control, though the colonialists tended to leave the two countries alone. The French strengthened the Cambodian and Lao monarchies, symbolically if not politically, and Buddhism continued to be a major element in the lives of the lowland people. Vietnam saw a different situation. Confucianism had been linked more to the throne and the political elite than to the lives of the people. When the French seized the country and turned the Vietnamese ruler into a puppet, both institution and ideology went into decline. Catholicism flourished, especially in the cities, where immigrant Chinese (and Indian) communities also grew. The peasants remained in their indigenous myths and cults, while the spectrum of Vietnamese intellectuals and politicians began to offer a plethora of answers to the modern dilemma of their country.

Indochina, entering the 20th century, was fragmented and localized. According to the French, it was really five "pays" or countries: Cambodia, Laos, Cochin China (Saigon and the southern section of Vietnam), Annam (Hue and the central portion), and Tonkin (Hanoi and the northern area). The colonialists attempted to keep these different sections separate and isolated, discouraging communication among them.

According to the French ideal, only the very small group of indigenous French-educated elite would communicate and form a whole that would dominate native life. The result would be "a France of the East," in the colons' eyes. For Cambodia and Laos this policy had less impact. They were fairly self-contained units in any case. A problem for them was the number of Vietnamese administrators sent out by the French, who generally preferred not to serve in such out of the way places.

For Vietnam, the impact of the division was quite different. Communication among the three sections of the country being difficult, regional stereotypes ran rife. Local regions were left to themselves, and cultural proliferation in the villages continued. A variety of forms of indigenous, Chinese, and Western beliefs, Taoism, Mahayana Buddhism, Confucianism, and Catholicism, thrived. This was particularly the case in Cochin China, the far south, where the French impact was greatest and where Theravada Buddhism also existed. One result in the south was the formation of distinctive religious sects, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao being the best known. Both were essentially messianic Buddhist cults. The Cao Dai were centered west of Saigon with a Catholic-style cathedral and an international group of saints including Confucius, Christ, and Victor Hugo. Their style was very elaborate. The Hoa Hao, southwest of Saigon, chose a simple and uncomplicated ritual and style. The sects flourished and carved out well-controlled territories for themselves. They dealt with the governments in Saigon, whether French or Vietnamese, as independent fief holders from the 1940s on. At the same time, in the cities of Hue, Danang, and Saigon, a revival of Buddhism occurred that had a great impact on urban youth and students and played a role in the politics of the 1960 and 1970s. Northern Catholics, who moved south in the hundreds of thousands after the division of the country in 1954, congregated in Saigon and in less populated areas on the fringes of the lowlands. Thus, a great fragmentation, cultural as well as political, occurred in Vietnam during the colonial period. Nevertheless, the strong core of indigenous belief remained, however denied by the French, and set Vietnamese identity apart from other cultural groups.

In sum, the lowland Cambodians and Laos are Theravada Buddhist and the lowland Vietnamese are generally Mahayana Buddhist with a significant number of Catholics. Merged with the beliefs in the universal religions are the varied local beliefs, what we would call superstitions. Away from the lowlands exist the upland peoples. Quite diverse in their language and cultural patterns, these groups have interacted for centuries with the lowlanders politically, economically, and culturally in a somewhat distant manner. An interdependence

existed between highlands and lowlands, but little love was lost between them. The French stepped into the situation and kept the montagnards (as they called the highlanders) separate from the lowlanders. Later the Americans would occupy the same role as protectors of the mountain tribes; they tended to identify with the directness and simplicity of the mountain peoples as opposed to what they saw as the deviousness and quarrelsomeness of the lowlanders. But where the French merely kept the highlanders sealed off from the lowlands, American Protestant missionaries brought their evangelical message to segments of the tribes.

Indochina is thus in many ways a typical segment of Southeast Asia, representing the diversity and the "crossroads" character of the region as a whole. Merged with the indigenous social structure and cultural patterns are the major universal religions of the world: Hinduism from India, Theravada Buddhism from Ceylon, Islam from the Middle East and India, Mahayana Buddhism and Confucianism from China, Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) from Europe and America. When we include local beliefs, the interaction of the lowland cultures (particularly in southern Vietnam), and the variety of upland cultures, the cultural complexity of the recent situation should put us on our guard against stereotyping Southeast Asian individuals.

THE WESTERN IMPACT

Norman G. Owen

Although Europeans first visited Southeast Asia many centuries ago—Marco Polo even passed through on his way back from China—it is misleading to assume, as many scholars have, that an "Age of Vasco da Gama" began in Asia when the Portuguese first sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and into the Indian Ocean. By 1511 the Portuguese had conquered the Malay entrepot at Malaka (Malacca) and established a Western political presence in the region which would be continuous for over 400 years. Nevertheless, for the first 300 of those years, the Westerners were not the dominant force in most of Southeast Asia. We tend to think of them as important because they wrote exciting accounts of their "glorious" adventures. Many Southeast Asians also accept this view, but turn it on its head, arguing that the white men successfully subjugated and exploited all Southeast Asians from their first appearance on the scene.

The fact is that until the 19th century the various Westerners in Southeast Asia—Dutch, French, Spanish, English, and even a few Americans—were not the paramount power throughout the region. They won battles, but they also lost them. They claimed to "rule" states, but often their rule extended only a cannon-shot from the fortified warehouse that served as their base. They were engaged mostly in the same commerce that attracted Asian traders—pepper and spices, Asian textiles, and other exotic commodities of low bulk and high prices. Since many of them brought no Western goods that Asians were interested in buying, they were forced to seek within Asia trade profits that could be eventually converted into the nutmegs and silk they hoped to take back to Europe. In the framework of an autonomous Southeast Asian history, the Westerners are a significant new factor in the period 1500-1800, but by no means the most important one. At the end of those three hundred years, they effectively controlled only three major areas—the Spice Islands, most of the island of Java, and the northern two thirds of the Philippines. Beyond that, they held only isolated outposts, capable of influencing but not controlling nearby native ruled states.

The balance shifted drastically during the 19th century, thanks primarily to the scientific and industrial revolutions in Europe, along with such related organizational innovations as the rise of the modern army and bureaucracy. These changes soon gave the Westerners an unprecedented military advantage against Asians, which they utilized over the space of a hundred years to seize political control of almost the entire region. Some indigenous states, such as Vietnam, Burma, Aceh, Bali, and Sulu, were directly conquered; others, such as Cambodia and the smaller principalities of Laos and the Malaysian and Indonesian world, were intimidated into the surrender of their sovereignty. Local resistance was often brave and lasted in some districts for many years, but essentially the political-military history of the period 1815-1915 is an unbroken series of defeats at the hands of the West. Only Thailand survived as an independent state, and it did so at the cost of accepting significant limitations on its own sovereignty. Colonialism dominated the map of Southeast Asia until after World War II.

A second, less immediately visible, result of the recent technological superiority of the West was a new type of economic relationship which was to transform Southeast Asian society at least as radically as did colonialism. This relationship was made possible by enormous improvements in oceanic transportation—costs for most voyages fell 90% during the 19th century, thanks to such innovations as the clipper ship, the steamship, and the Suez canal. Thus such bulk goods as sugar, teak, rubber, rice, and Manila hemp could be profitably shipped long distances, and these export industries soon grew up throughout Southeast Asia. Modern mining and oil-drilling technology were also brought to the region during the colonial period, creating even more export industries.

Meanwhile, the industrial revolution in the West led to a flood of factory-made goods throughout the Third World—primarily machine-woven textiles, but also nails, scissors, sewing machines, canned goods, bicycles, watches, matches, cigarettes, kerosene lamps, soap, etc. Since colonial governments had as their chief aim the benefit of the home country, not the colony, they refused to provide any tariff protection for existing or infant industries in Southeast Asia. Instead, they assisted in the destruction of local handicrafts and the reduction of the colony to suppliers of agricultural commodities and other primary products, assuming that it was perfectly reasonable for the "natives" to remain importers of manufactured goods permanently. The demand for Western imports was further enhanced, especially in the 20th century, by modern marketing techniques which promoted Coca-Cola, Hollywood movies, blue jeans, and such luxury goods as Cadillacs and Scotch to

the indigenous elites.

The growth of agricultural and mining export industries may well have benefited many Southeast Asians during the late 19th century, a time when primary products were generally rising in price. But in the early 20th century, international price trends turned decisively against the tropical world, and a given amount of rice, rubber, or sugar would buy fewer and fewer textiles, nails, or matches. (This was due in large part to Western-induced competition within the Third World, so that Philippine and Javanese sugar had to compete with Cuban, Manila hemp had to compete with Mexican sisal, and the rubber industries of Malaya, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam had to compete not only with each other but with new Firestone plantations in Liberia.) Furthermore, as the Southeast Asian economy came increasingly to depend on Western markets, it suffered from the extraordinary instability of those markets, so that the Great Depression actually caused greater damage to Indonesian rubber plantations than to Wall Street. (Almost a century earlier such American crises as the depression of the 1840s and the Civil War were reflected in revenues, wages and prices in the remote Bikol region of Southeastern Luzon, in the Philippines.) And to the extent that Southeast Asian states often had only three or four principal export commodities, a disastrous drop in the price of one or two of them could almost cut national income in half overnight, while the colonial government, losing revenues as a result of such a slump, might be forced to try to raise taxes at the same time!

The conclusion that many Southeast Asians drew from all this—long before some Western economists did—was that permanent dependence on the export of primary products to foreign markets is not the path to long-term growth and prosperity. Although there were good years as well as bad, and although a few Southeast Asians became quite wealthy through their ability to attach themselves to Western firms or take advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities, by and large the average Southeast Asian was no better off in 1950 than his ancestors had been in 1800. A century and a half of exposure to the international market system had made the foreigners rich—overseas investment was an important factor in the rapid and sustained growth of the American, British, French, and Dutch economies during this period—but had left the average Southeast Asian still a peasant, stuck in the mud.

Besides colonial political control and international commercial penetration, the Southeast Asians further suffered from direct foreign ownership of critical segments of their economy. Using capital derived from industrialization and trade,

business skills and institutions developed in the West (incorporation, modern communications, accounting, and management techniques), and special privileges granted them by the colonial governments, Westerners, along with the industrialized Japanese, came to own most of the banks, insurance companies, shipping firms, public utilities, processing plants (sugar refineries, rice mills), and import-substitution factories (shoes, cigarettes, breweries) as well as such primary producers as rubber plantations, tin mines, oil wells, and timber concessions. Leaving subsistence agriculture and fishing to the Southeast Asians, Westerners came to control the commanding heights of the economy.

Meanwhile, the colonialists had also encouraged the immigration of other Asians—mostly Chinese and Indians, escaping from hard times in their home countries—in order to drive down the price of local labor and to supply certain technical and marketing skills. In time, many of these immigrants came to occupy critical intermediate positions in the economy, as artisans, shopkeepers, professionals, and moneylenders, thereby coming into competition with an emerging Southeast Asian urban middle class. Thus, to the tension between colonizers and colonized was added an element of inter-ethnic friction which has often diverted Southeast Asians from more fundamental problems.

Finally, besides colonial rule, commercialization of production, and alien economic competition, the threat of cultural disintegration has hung over Southeast Asia during the past century. Even while the French were mopping up military resistance in 19th century Vietnam, there were some Vietnamese nationalists whose greatest fear was not the loss of political sovereignty as such, but *mat nuoc*—"loss of country"—which implied the abandonment of traditional culture and values, of that which made Vietnam Vietnamese. Throughout Southeast Asia, as elsewhere in the world, such fears have been widely generated by aggressive Westernization on many different levels. Colonialists built schools which preached Western subjects (including British, French, Dutch, and American history, in their respective colonies) in Western languages, so that those few Vietnamese who had any opportunity for colonial education were taught about "our ancestors the Gauls"! Indigenous beliefs, based on Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, or local traditions, were usually ignored or maligned. Indigenous literature and philosophy were dismissed as crude and uncivilized. In the world of entertainment, traditional arts such as music, dance, and the shadow play faced competition from gangster movies and rock and roll. Costumes and customs, radio advertising and technical engineering manuals, missionaries and bureaucrats, tourists and visiting development experts, schoolbooks and billboards, have

all represented in one way or another the cultural invasion of Southeast Asia by the West—part of what some critics have called, not the colonization, but the "Coca-Colanization of the world."

Although no part of Southeast Asia was totally immune from this cultural impact, it was felt most strongly in the cities, therefore exacerbating the usual tensions between urban and rural life. The majority of Southeast Asians still live on farms or in villages, but urbanization has been very rapid in the 20th century as peasants, whether pushed out by rural poverty or pulled in by the bright lights, have flocked to such cities as Saigon, Phnom Penh, Djakarta, Manila, and Bangkok. This urbanization was greatly accelerated by the war in Indochina where violence in the countryside created literally millions of refugees in and on the fringes of the major cities.

In some Southeast Asian villages a visitor might still imagine that he had stepped back a century or more in time—although closer examination might reveal transistor radios and gasoline-powered water pumps. But in any of the major cities of Southeast Asia no such illusion is possible. Wherever you look, there are bicycles, billboards, and tin cans; in some districts there will be Hondas and TV antennas as well. Nowhere was this more evident than in South Vietnam during the late 1960s and early 1970s, as American money and goods poured in, some directly to the Vietnamese, some indirectly through the American military and civilian presence. Between the PX and the open market, Saigon became one of the great retail centers in the world for luxury consumer goods, from Scotch to stereo systems. Any Vietnamese who could somehow get into the process, whether through direct employment by Americans or through providing them with goods and services, could potentially enjoy a higher standard of living than anyone would have dreamed before the war. At the same time, this huge influx of money created a devastating inflation in the cities which could ruin any Vietnamese limited to living on a local salary. With apartment rents geared to the level of American salaries (often augmented by overseas allowances), how could a Vietnamese official, officer, or school-teacher making less than \$100 a month afford to live? Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the contradictions have not been so great and the shock not so rapid, but they are still there, generated by the growth of cities, the rise of multinational corporations, the influx of American (and Japanese) merchandise and merchandizing, and the visible presence of wealthy foreigners, whether soldiers on R and R in Bangkok, oil company executives in Djakarta, AID officials in Manila, or tourists in Singapore.

It is understandable, therefore, that a major theme of Southeast Asian life in the 20th century has been the struggle

for greater freedom from Western dominance. This does not always imply a rejection of the West, but it does imply the freedom to choose whether and what to accept from it. The first and simplest goal was political independence, which was obtained by most of the nations in the region between 1946 and 1963. The struggle for independence was long and hard, sometimes even violent, but the Southeast Asians eventually won, freeing themselves from direct colonial rule. It has been all the more frustrating for them, then, when political independence did not solve the problems of economic and cultural autonomy with which they were also concerned.

These are, of course, complex questions with no easy answers. Even in the United States we have not quite decided how to limit our dependence on imported foreign oil, how to prevent great corporations from dominating our lives, how to deal with alien migrant workers, or how to keep advertising from warping our children's minds. But there is also for many Southeast Asians a fundamental ambivalence about certain side effects of Western dominance. Few Southeast Asians have any desire to return to colonial rule or to feel once again that they are second-class citizens in their own country. On the other hand, no Southeast Asian wants to turn the clock back two hundred years to the days of the absolute monarchy, either. In economic terms, there are very few Southeast Asians who would reject all the potential benefits of international trade and revert entirely to national autarchy, consuming only what they themselves had produced. Furthermore, most Southeast Asians want to obtain some of the benefits of modern technology, from oil-drilling to medicine. Many of them also have come to appreciate—quite genuinely—one or another manifestation of Western culture, from the political thought of Rousseau or Thomas Jefferson to Kojak and the Beatles. Yet in spite of this there are none who are willing to reject their own roots entirely and accept the colonial assessment that their own culture was completely worthless.

Among Indochinese refugees in the United States are people of all classes and backgrounds, from rural Laotian peasants to urban Vietnamese intellectuals. Any attempt to generalize about them is doomed to be somewhat oversimplified. But it is reasonable to observe that each refugee is the product not only of a specific traditional society and culture but also of a historical experience of foreign pressure on that society and culture. These then are people who in one way or another have had to struggle with the problem of foreign (specifically Western) influence all their lives, resisting it where they can, accepting those parts of it that seem good. And therefore beyond the problems that all immigrants face, these refugees also have to continue working out for themselves complex questions of

identity and loyalty: what traditional values to retain and re-assert, which Western customs and ideas to adopt, and how to combine the two in a way that makes sense to them. We as Americans cannot presume to answer these questions for them. We can only try to respect their dilemma, realizing that ours is not only the country which welcomes them now, but also a country which may seem to many to stand for the varieties of foreign domination against which they have struggled for so long.

II. Indochina, Diversity of Cultures



LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN INDOCHINA

William J. Gedney

It is often said by linguists that mainland Southeast Asia, of which Indochina forms a large part, is the linguistically most diverse region in the world (except perhaps for North America in the days of the American Indians before the Europeans came). This diversity is shown by the large number of languages and dialects and the complexity of their geographical distribution. A linguistic map of Southeast Asia shows a crazy-quilt arrangement, with a great many small linguistic islands, some round and some elongated or of other shapes, intermingled and intertwined. Sometimes the same language is represented by a great many discontinuous dots and speckles and patches. All this is very different from a linguistic map of, for example, Europe where large unbroken areas represent German and French and so on with their various dialects.

In trying to make sense of this linguistic hodge-podge, we are helped most by the concept of the language family. In linguistics the term language family is used for a group of languages and dialects which can all be shown to be different or divergent continuations of an earlier, perhaps prehistoric, single language. A common figure of speech for this is a single parent language and many daughter languages, but this figure is somewhat misleading in that it conceals the obvious fact that in the history of languages there is from one generation to another no sharp break, but constant and continuous transmission. Languages all over the world are always changing. (It is important to keep in mind that by the term language we always mean speech; the apparent exceptions to the statement that languages are always changing, such as Latin, are easily explained; the Latin that we study is an artificially frozen and preserved sample of the language of the ancient Romans, whose actual speech continued through the centuries to change, as all languages do, and resulted today in the form of spoken French, Spanish, Italian, and so on.) And when the single "parent" language of a language family gets broken up in the course of time because the speakers move apart in different directions, the different "daughter" languages will undergo continued and varied changes, and the longer the period of separation the more

marked the differences will be. In cases where the period of dispersal and differentiation has been very long, even thousands of years, as in the case of the Indo-European language family to which English belongs, the modern members of the family will be very different from one another; only scholars can demonstrate that English, for example, is genetically related in this way to Welsh and Russian and Persian and Bengali.

Most of the languages of Indochina belong to one or the other of two large language families, the Tai family and the Austroasiatic family.

Of the three national languages of Indochina, Lao, Cambodian, and Vietnamese, Lao belongs to the Tai family, and Cambodian to the Austroasiatic family. The genetic affiliation of Vietnamese has in the past been a matter of disagreement among scholars; at one time some thought that Vietnamese belonged to the Tai family, but it is now generally believed that it belongs to the Austroasiatic family.

Languages and dialects of the Tai family are spoken across a large area of mainland Southeast Asia, including Vietnam and the island of Hainan in the east, Laos and Thailand, the Shan States of Burma, and parts of Assam in northeastern India on the west, and also areas of southern China in the three provinces of Kwangsi, Kweichow, and Yunnan. The best known is the Standard Thai or Siamese language of Thailand. (The language of Thailand is spelled Thai, with an h, in English and other European languages because in that language the name is pronounced with an aspirated t initial. In most other parts of the Tai-speaking domain the name is pronounced Tai, with an unaspirated initial t, and so most scholars use the spelling Tai for the family as a whole.) Although now rather widely dispersed geographically, the various languages and dialects belonging to the Tai family are not greatly different, and it is believed that the period of unity, the time when they were a single language in one place, cannot be more than a couple of thousand years ago.

So far as Indochina is concerned, languages and dialects of the Tai family are found in the northernmost part of Vietnam, all the way across from east to west, and in Laos.

In Vietnam we find Tho and Nung spoken in the extreme northeastern part of the country. According to their own traditions, speakers of Nung came into Vietnam from China not many centuries ago. The Tai dialects of the Chinese province of Kwangsi, immediately adjacent across the border, are not greatly different from the Nung dialects of northeastern Vietnam.

Nung has been much studied. The French missionary scholar Savina produced a fine dictionary of Nung in the 1920s. More recently American missionary linguists have studied Nung, and the Vietnamese have within the past few years produced a first-class dictionary and grammar of this language. There is no traditional writing system for Nung, and all these scholars have therefore had to devise their own systems for writing the language in Roman letters.

Speakers of Tho say that the three towns which are centers of Tho speech are Cao Bang, Lang Son, and Bac Can. Dictionaries and grammatical studies of Tho have been produced by earlier French scholars and more recently by American missionary linguists. Like Nung, Tho has no traditional writing system, and students of Tho have had to work out systems for recording Tho in Roman letters.

Across the middle part of northern Vietnam dialects of the Tai family are spoken which are usually designated not by any special name but by the place where they are spoken. The speakers themselves say that they speak Tai. In one area near Lao Cai there are a few small linguistic islands that speak a variety of Nung which is markedly different from the language of the main Nung area to the east. I have called this Western Nung.

In the extreme northwestern part of Vietnam are found White Tai, farthest north with its main center at Lai Chau, Black Tai farther south with its main center at Son La, and Red Tai still farther south. Another well-known Black Tai speaking town is Dien Bien Phu, the site of the famous battle between the French and the revolutionaries in 1954. Black Tai speaking areas also extend into Laos. The same is true of Red Tai; indeed, many people in the Lao province of Sam Neua say that the language they speak is Red Tai.

The White Tai are so called because the women traditionally wear white blouses, and the Black Tai because the women traditionally wear black blouses. There are also differences in the traditional modes of wearing the hair among the women. The Red Tai are not sure why they are called Red. Some Red Tai speakers say they have been told that in former times the men wore red sashes. It seems more likely that the Red Tai language gets its name from the Red River.

Speakers of White, Black, and Red Tai like to emphasize their differences. Actually careful study of their languages shows that the linguistic differences are not great, and speakers of each of these three languages have no difficulty in communicating with members of the other groups.

White, Black, and Red Tai have traditional alphabetic writing systems, and older families have preserved written historical records, but it appears that literacy in former times was restricted to a small aristocracy. Modern scholars who have produced dictionaries and other studies of these languages have, as in other cases mentioned earlier, devised systems for transcribing these languages in Romanization.

American missionary linguists produced primers in a number of these major Tai languages of North Vietnam, using a system of Romanization based upon the Vietnamese writing system. More recently under the communist regime a good deal of material of this sort has been produced; French scholars who have been permitted to visit Hanoi and to travel about the country have been able to pick up little books of this sort. There appears to be a wholesome attitude of encouraging literacy in these local languages, perhaps partly for the sake of the immediate and obvious benefits and perhaps partly also as a step toward furthering education in the national Vietnamese language.

Moving on to Laos, the main Tai language in that country is, of course, Lao, which comprises a number of geographical dialects. Among these, the dialects of Luang Phra Bang, the old royal capital city, and Vientiane, the administrative capital, have a certain degree of prestige over the other regional dialects. Fine dictionaries of Lao have been produced in earlier times by French scholars, and more recently by Americans. There is also a fine Lao-to-Lao dictionary published by the Lao Ministry of Education. There is a long and very fine Lao Literary history. This has scarcely been studied in any serious way, and much work waits to be done on Lao literature, which is known to include fine works in poetry, historical chronicles, religious texts, and other genres.

The Tai languages of northern Vietnam of which we spoke earlier are minority languages, each spoken by a relatively small number of people in a restricted area. The situation with Lao is, of course, different, since Lao is a national language and therefore has for a long time enjoyed considerable prestige. One consequence of this is that no one has even attempted to replace the traditional Lao alphabetic system of writing with a Romanized script, except when scholars have transcribed the sounds of the language in Roman letters to assist foreigners in learning to pronounce Lao, or in order to describe the differences in sound systems among Lao dialects.

Dialects of Lao are spoken also across the Mekong River boundary throughout the northeastern part of Thailand.

Leaving the Tai language family now and turning to the Austroasiatic family, the Austroasiatic languages spoken in Indochina belong to the branch of Austroasiatic called Mon-Khm. The name Mon-Khmer is made up of the names of the two most important languages of this group, Mon spoken mainly in Burma far to the west, and Khmer or Cambodian (Khmer is the Cambodian word for Cambodian). Besides this Mon-Khmer group in Southeast Asia, the Austroasiatic family includes a number of other geographically rather remote groups, such as Khasi and the Mux languages in India.

Except for a few small islands of minority languages, Cambodian is spoken throughout all of Cambodia, in various regional dialects, and also in small areas of adjacent parts of southern Vietnam and northeastern Thailand. Khmer or Cambodian has a long and impressive history, because it was the language of the people of the magnificent Old Khmer empire which produced the great temples and cities whose ruins are famous throughout the world for their architecture and sculpture, centered around the old city of Angkor. Ironically, until very recent times when education became more widespread, the common folk of Cambodia had lost their memory of their great past and did not know that their own ancestors were the builders of these great monuments. But the Cambodian historical record is an unbroken one, and historical chronicles give a continuous record through the centuries.

The great Old Khmer empire with its center at Angkor flourished about a thousand years ago and was at the time the most powerful nation on the Southeast Asian mainland. Since the level of civilization and culture is shown by the spectacular ruins to have been very high, it is puzzling that we do not have records of a correspondingly well developed literary culture in the Old Cambodian language. Apparently what happened was that the vicissitudes of war in subsequent centuries led to the loss of whatever had been written down in former times. There is a respectable body of Cambodian literature, including some excellent poetry, though all that is extant dates from fairly recent times.

But apparently Cambodian culture, including literary materials, passed into the lowland areas which are now part of Thailand and Laos and once belonged to the Cambodian domain. A great deal of older literary material in Thai and Lao, as well as thousands of loanwords in the languages of these countries apparently came from Cambodian, so that the literary tradition of the Old Cambodian empire, virtually lost in Cambodia, is at least partially preserved in these other countries.

Cambodian language and literature have been much studied by French scholars. Nowadays there are also a few British and American experts on Cambodian.

Throughout all three countries of Indochina, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, there are many small linguistic islands where other languages of the Mon-Khmer group are spoken. These are of little political or social importance in the countries where they are found, and are indeed scarcely known to exist by most people, but linguistic scholars and also missionaries have found them of interest and have done a good deal of fine work analyzing and recording them.

Turning now to Vietnamese, this language, in spite of its importance in numbers of speakers, in national prestige, and in historical records, has been for a long time something of a puzzle so far as its genetic affiliations are concerned. Superficially it shows strong resemblances to the Tai languages, and scholars have been able to put together long lists of Vietnamese words which resemble Tai words of similar or the same meaning. But in more recent times convincing evidence has been adduced to show that Vietnamese is basically a language of the Austroasiatic family, which perhaps as a result of contacts in early times took on some of the characteristics of the Tai and other languages of the area.

There is a small group of minority languages in Vietnam known as Muong or Viet-Muong which are clearly quite closely related to Vietnamese and are of great value to scholars in reconstructing the earlier history and prehistory of Vietnamese.

Besides the Tai and Austroasiatic families, which include, as we have seen, the major national languages of Indochina and a number of minority languages, other language families are represented. One of these is the great Austronesian family, which comprises the languages of Indonesia and Malaysia, the Philippines, the islands of the Pacific, and the Malagasy language of Madagascar. This language family is represented in Indochina mainly by Cham, a language of the Vietnam-Cambodia border area and the southern coast of Vietnam which at one time was the speech of an important kingdom but now is reduced to the status of a local minority language of little prestige.

Another family is the Miao-Yao group, represented by a great many varieties of hill-tribe speech in the northernmost parts of Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, and also in the adjacent mountainous areas of southern China. Both of the major languages of this group, Miao and Yao, have been studied rather thoroughly by western and Chinese scholars. Speakers of Miao call themselves

Hmong, and resent the term Miao; there is therefore a tendency nowadays among westerners to use the name Hmong instead of Miao, out of respect for this preference.

Besides the language families which we have discussed, which one might say are indigenous, or if not then so long established in the area as to seem indigenous, there are of course in Indochina large numbers of speakers of imported languages such as Chinese. Of course French, and to a lesser extent English, have had some currency as second languages in all parts of the region.

Before leaving the subject of language families, we should emphasize that when scholars talk of these families and of genetic relationships among languages, nothing is to be inferred about biological relationships. We can readily see from our American experience that speakers of a language may have had grandparents or more remote ancestors who spoke an entirely different language. It appears likely that in such a linguistically complex area as Indochina there has been in the past a great deal of language switching resulting from political circumstances or population movements.

Among the language families we have discussed, the Mon-Khmer group belonging to the Austroasiatic family is believed to have been in place in Southeast Asia before the others. The Tai languages apparently intruded into the area some time during the first millennium of the common era. Cham, the language of the Austronesian family mentioned earlier, may have come to the Indochinese mainland about the same time or perhaps somewhat earlier. The Miao-Yao family is probably the most recent arrival among the groups we have mentioned. This sequence of events would at least partially explain why the many minority languages of the Mon-Khmer group now found scattered in various parts of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, are where they are; that is, they may be isolated remnants of a very old Mon-Khmer language area which has been invaded and broken up by the other languages which came upon the scene at later times.

Genetic relationship as members of one language family or another is by no means the only way in which languages can be mutually related. Another important kind of relationship is the result of contact.

Great cultural languages of other parts of Asia have at various times in the past entered the Indochinese scene and left their mark on the local languages. For much of Southeast Asia this kind of influence has been exercised by two classical languages of India. One of these is Sanskrit, the ancient classical language of India and the language of the sacred

texts of Hinduism. The other is Pali, a later classical language of India in which the sacred texts of Theravada Buddhism were composed. The area of mainland Southeast Asia which came under Indic influence, via the medium of these two Indian languages, consists of Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. This Indic influence resulted in the conversion of these areas first to Hinduism in very early times, and later to Theravada Buddhism. Indic influence also affected other aspects of culture, such as political structure, literary forms and themes, plastic arts such as sculpture and architecture, and indeed all the things that make up what we call higher civilization.

An extremely important gift included in this Indian influence was the art of writing in alphabetical systems, with a different symbol for each consonant and vowel sound. The writing systems used throughout Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, and also in the White, Black, and Red Tai speaking areas of Vietnam, are all of Indic origin. Southeast Asians from these areas often say, mistakenly, that their languages are derived from the Indian languages Pali and Sanskrit. This is not correct, as our discussion of the linguistic relationships and language families of the area has shown. But it is true that the alphabets used in all these areas are of Indian origin.

And along with everything else, there has been a tremendous influx into the languages of Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia of Sanskrit and Pali words, especially terms for elements of what might be called higher culture--religion, government, technical lore of all kinds. (White Tai, Black Tai, and Red Tai got only their writing systems from India; speakers of these languages were not converted to Indian religions and did not acquire loanwords from Indic languages.) These Indic loanwords in languages of Southeast Asia have occupied much the same sort of place as the Latin and Greek element in English and other Western European languages. And in modern times this Sanskrit and Pali part of the vocabulary in Thai, Lao, and Cambodian has in another way paralleled the Latin and Greek element in the English vocabulary; when the need has arisen to coin new terms for new things, for new governmental terms such as prime minister or parliament, for new technical items such as radio or television or the like, or for scientific terminology in chemistry or physics or botany or physiology or whatever, old Pali and Sanskrit elements, originally foreign but familiar through centuries of use locally, have been recombined to make the needed terms, in the same way that in English we have recombined familiar Latin and Greek elements to give us telegraph, telescope, television, and the like.

In the Vietnamese area the great outside influence has

been from China. Until the 20th century, the system of writing Vietnamese was Chinese characters. Catholic missionaries from western Europe also devised a system of Romanization for Vietnamese which, although awkward because it involves a great number of diacritical marks to indicate tones and certain vowel distinctions, has been established in this century and successfully used by recent generations of speakers of Vietnamese.

Finally a few remarks as to what the languages of Indochina are like. So far as their sound systems are concerned, the languages of these three countries fall into two large groups, tonal languages and nontonal languages. The Tai languages are all tonal, as are the Miao-Yao languages, and also Vietnamese. This means that each syllable has, besides its vowels and consonants, a characteristic tone. Thus a sequence like bin or lem means one thing if it is pronounced with mid level pitch, but something entirely different if it is pronounced with a rising or falling pitch. Each language or dialect has its unique tone system, with from four to as many as seven or even more different tones capable of occurring on a syllable.

The Mon-Khmer languages, on the other hand, do not, except for Vietnamese, have tones at all. Some languages of this group, such as Cambodian, have in some dialects, although not in others, something which is somewhat similar to tone, and that is a distinction between two kinds of voice quality or register, as linguists call it. Thus a particular syllable, in such a dialect, may have either clear voice quality or a muffled, breathy voice quality.

Another feature of the sound systems that seems to be common to all languages of Indochina, and indeed all of mainland Southeast Asia, is that a large variety of consonant sounds can occur at the beginning of a syllable, but the number of consonants permitted to occur in the final position is always extremely limited. Moreover, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find in this region any language which permits more than a single consonant sound in final position. Obviously one of the chief problems encountered by Southeast Asians studying English is our final consonant groups or clusters, as in such words as fifths, asked, film, lapsed.

So far as grammar is concerned, no Indochinese language has inflexional endings like our plural endings on nouns or our past tense endings on verbs. Instead, such concepts as plurality or past tense are expressed by adding specific words. It would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that these languages are therefore somehow inferior to or more primitive than

European languages. Speakers of these languages have no difficulty in specifying what they mean as exactly as we are able to do in English, and students of these languages find that while they may lack some of the distinctions that our languages force us to make, on the other hand they have devices for expressing refinements that defy efforts to find an adequate English translation.

Speakers of Indochinese languages, whether one of the major national languages or one of the more obscure minority languages, are always found to have a great deal of pride in their language. Foreigners who undertake to study one of these languages are never asked why they do so. Rather, the attitude is that one would of course expect any intelligent person to want to master their language. Many younger people in the areas where minority languages are spoken are tending more and more to learn the majority languages or even foreign languages like English and French. Fortunately there usually seems to be a large enough group even of young people who maintain the traditional pride in their linguistic heritage to keep these languages from disappearing from the face of the earth.

LITERATURE AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE

Huyhnh Sanh Thong

The artistic use of words has been an essential element of Vietnamese culture. The Vietnamese tongue, with its tones, its insistence on harmony of sounds and grace of rhythms, its wealth of evocative echoes and images, lends itself to a clever, virtuoso performance. Even the most humdrum speaker of Vietnamese can draw upon thousands of proverbs and proverbial phrases that amount to mini-poems because they include such features as rhyme, euphony, cadence, and imagery. On a higher level, a speaker who wants to liven up his or her speech or illustrate a point of argument may recite couplets of folk verse composed in the popular meter known as "six-eight" (lục-bát). Before the impact of modernization began to cause the decay of rural life, improvising songs at singing contests and on other social or religious occasions was a talent for which peasants were appreciated by the community.

While Vietnamese society has placed a high value on verbal art since early times, it was to Chinese influence that Vietnam owed literature as a written exercise apart from oral performance. After a millennium of Chinese rule, Vietnam won back its effective autonomy in A.D. 938 but remained in China's political and cultural orbit for the next nine hundred years. As the best safeguard against reconquest by Chinese emperors and against attack by local dissidents, Vietnamese rulers eventually chose to adopt the Chinese system of government and social control. This called for the establishment of a civil service of bureaucrats and administrators recruited through literary examinations, as in China. The Chinese script and its corpus of classics became the meat and drink of anyone who aspired to pass the examinations and join the ruling elite. Since classical Chinese was raised to the status of an official language, it also became the medium of expression for people who wished to commit their thoughts and feelings to paper. Thus, literature as writing was born in Vietnam.

Works in prose and verse by Vietnamese men and women before the fifteenth century that can still be read were all written in classical Chinese, a foreign language. Nevertheless, such

writings must be treated as part and parcel of the national heritage since they reflect Vietnamese realities and bear witness to a crucial era in Vietnamese history when the country learned to stand on its own feet after ten centuries of Chinese domination. In a certain sense, it was even proper that members of the Vietnamese ruling class should write in Chinese because, more often than not, directly or obliquely, they aimed their writings at the Chinese themselves, those former masters who would remain hostile neighbors looking for the first chance to move south again in the name of some civilizing mission or manifest destiny. Vietnamese kings, generals, and diplomats often addressed poems to their Chinese counterparts, in which they nominally acknowledged Vietnam's status as a vassal paying tribute to the Middle Kingdom, but at the same time they affirmed Vietnam's right to a separate existence. The best known of such poems is this quatrain, which Marshal Ly Thuong Kiet read to his troops in 1076, exhorting them to resist invaders from Sung China:

The Southern emperor rules the Southern Land.

Our destiny is writ in Heaven's Book.

How dare you bandits trespass on our soil?

You shall meet your undoing at our hands.

The same theme of Vietnam's stubborn will to independence was to inspire Nguyen Trai to write a masterpiece of prose, the "Great Proclamation of Victory over the Wu" (*Binh Ngo dai cao*) in 1428 when the Ming forces had been driven out after a twenty-year occupation of the country.

Besides nationalism, early Vietnamese literature in Chinese was also marked by the preeminence of Buddhism in Vietnamese culture. Buddhist monks, who had taken a leading part in the struggle to expel the Chinese in the tenth century, came to play vital roles at court and in society at large. The poetry that such religious leaders and their disciples wrote was, in the main, faithful to Buddhist tenets—nevertheless, it betrayed a certain exuberance, an unmistakable zest for life, for involvement in mundane affairs, more in keeping with the lush tropical environment and the volatile ethos of Southeast Asia than with the monastic ideal of withdrawal and asceticism. After all, many of those Buddhist poets were no hermits but men of the world, contenders in the public arena. The political activism of the Buddhist clergy in modern Vietnam is a harking back to that epoch when its priests dominated the cultural and literary scene and could make or break a king.

If Vietnamese literati continued to write in classical Chinese well into the twentieth century, the rise of a national

literature in the vernacular had to wait until the creation of a native script, that is, a system of written symbols representing the sounds of the Vietnamese tongue. It is not known for certain when this invention took place, but it is probable that by the second half of the thirteenth century Vietnamese writers had begun to adopt it as a possible alternative to the more socially prestigious Chinese script. It was called "the Southern script" (*chu nom*)—one based on Chinese, but designed for the language of people who lived south of China. Though marred by shortcomings, it was a momentous invention. It freed Vietnamese writers from complete reliance on an alien medium and allowed them to speak in their natural voices at last.

The advent of the Southern script could be interpreted as a gesture of national self-assertion, a declaration of growing independence from the cultural hegemony of China. Along with that invention occurred various attempts to domesticate Chinese literary forms, to make them serve as vehicles for writers in the vernacular. The most successful of such efforts was the application of T'ang prosody in the "regulated poem" (*lu-shih*) to the composition of Vietnamese verse. Chief credit for it has traditionally gone to a scholar, Nguyen Thuyen, who flourished during the second half of the thirteenth century. It is fair to assume that he and his contemporaries wrote poems in Vietnamese according to rules transposed from T'ang metrics. Unfortunately, no such works are now extant: in the early part of the fifteenth century, they must have been destroyed along with other forms of indigenous culture by occupation troops from Ming China who were under orders from their emperor to reinstate the Chinese scheme of things.

The earliest body of literature in Vietnamese that has managed to survive foreign invasions, civil wars, and the ravages of time and climate is a group of 254 poems by Nguyen Trai (1380-1442). He was a major architect of the victorious campaign led by Le Loi against the Ming conquerors during the first two decades of the fifteenth century. Those pieces are either regulated poems of eight lines or their "cut-short" versions of four lines. If often lacking artistic polish, Nguyen Trai's poems in Vietnamese nonetheless offer precious clues to his life and times and also some hints about the direction that Vietnamese poetry was to take over the next five centuries. While they reveal his gradual disenchantment with politics, they also testify to the growing ascendance of Confucianism. Vietnamese rulers came to embrace Confucianism more and more as a matter of practical necessity while they tried to organize a stable, cohesive state, a task for which Buddhism, with its otherworldly doctrine, was ill equipped. With regard to the future development of Vietnamese poetry, Nguyen Trai's poems provide hopeful

portents through their openness to influences from the grass roots, to the lore and language of peasants, which were to instill the Vietnamese regulated poem with a renewed vitality and eventually beget masterpieces of the genre in the nineteenth century. In contrast, the regulated poem in China remained throughout an aristocratic medium which, by its overly fastidious choice of subject and diction, soon condemned itself to sterility and fossilization.

The heyday of the Vietnamese monarchy occurred under the prosperous and peaceful reign of King Le Thanh-tong who ruled a unified Vietnam from the site of modern Hanoi between 1460 and 1497. That period produced a collection of some 300 poems known as the "Hong-duc Anthology of Verse in the National Language" (Hong-duc quoc-am thi-tap). Written by the king himself and by his court ministers, these poems may partly suggest why and how Le Thanh-tong managed to make his reign the most successful one in the history of Vietnamese rulers. Many of the poems pay unabashed homage to the king himself and leave no doubt as to the exalted concept he had of his role as the absolute sovereign of his people, an idea he borrowed from China. Yet he was probably the first Vietnamese monarch to stimulate pride in the native heritage by writing poems in the vernacular about Vietnamese scenic beauties and heroes and by encouraging those around him to follow his example. These poems went even farther than Nguyen Trai's in trying to reach the illiterate masses in the countryside: they often treated the problem of government by means of metaphors or allegories described in terms of humble objects, little animals, or lowly folks. Together, they seem to project the image of a ruler in tune with both the "great tradition" from abroad and the "little tradition" at home, a monarch who could intellectually and emotionally bridge the gulf between the Confucian orthodoxy at court and the more restive popular culture in the Southeast Asian village.

After the golden age of King Le Thanh-tong, the Le dynasty collapsed in fact, if not in name. From the 1500s to the 1700s, Vietnam turned into the battleground of two competing clans, the Trinh and the Nguyen, who ruled their respective domains north and south of the Gianh River (which flowed through Quang-binh Province). The social and political turmoil of 16th-century Vietnam reverberated through the writings of Nguyen Binh Khiem (1491-1585) and his disciples, Nguyen Du and Phung Khac Khoan. Khiem, whose life almost spanned the century from end to end, emerged as the intellectual light and moral conscience of his times. Although often written in seclusion, away from the political and military battlefield, his poems bespoke a deep concern for a country torn by civil strife and the clash of unbridled ambitions. Under the veil of fiction or pseudo-

history, Nguyen Du also made sharp comments on the unhappy scene in his collection of stories, the "Vast Record of Strange Tales" (Truyen ky man luc). In his poems, Phung Khac Khoan deplored the topsy-turvy state of society but clung to the hope that, as a Confucian scholar, he would be called upon to help restore order to the world under some enlightened monarch.

If social and political unrest drove many scholars into early retirement and the life of hermits in their villages, that negative fact had a positive effect on the growth of poetry in the vernacular. Removed from the artificial, constrained atmosphere of Confucian conformity at court or in administrative centers and plunged back into the real world of peasants, those scholars rediscovered the riches of the folk heritage and started to use them in their poems in preference to what they had learned in books from China. The contact between literati and unlettered countryfolk gave the permanence of literature to two important forms of verse that had existed only in oral tradition: six-eight (luc-bat) verse and its variant, double-seven six-eight (song-that luc-bat) verse. Six-eight was the most flexible and useful form of verse a competent poet could exploit for any purpose: expository, descriptive, lyrical, satirical, and narrative: it was the ideal vehicle for a long story, and in fact, it was the one Nguyen Du would later use to write the greatest masterpiece in Vietnamese literature, the Tale of Kieu. On the other hand, double-seven six-eight verse, with its highly sophisticated scheme of rhymes, rhythms, and tonal patterns, was most conducive to depicting emotions and feelings and therefore gave birth to a masterpiece of Buddhist poetry, "Calling all Wandering Souls" by Nguyen Du, and to two lyrical gems, the "Song of a Soldier's Wife" by Phan Huy Ich and a "Plaint inside the Royal Harem" by Nguyen Gia Thieu.

The seventeenth century must have seen many scholars employ six-eight and double-seven six-eight for the first time, but only a few works have come down to us: longish pieces by Hoang Si Khai and Dao Duy Tu and, above all, the "Chronicles of Heaven's South" (Thien nam ngu luc), an anonymous folk history of Vietnam in 4,068 couplets of six-eight. It was probably written at the command of some Trinh lord to praise Trinh rule in the North and counterattack subversion. That it was composed in six-eight, the perfect folk meter, and was replete with folk sayings and folk tales implied that it was meant not for the educated elite but for the masses of peasants. Peasants were in an endemic state of rebellion against misgovernment, and rebel leaders would propagandize them with folk verse transmitted by word of mouth. Verse in folk meters was often banned as heterodoxy and incitement to sedition, and books containing such verse were seized and burned, which to some degree explains why

so few poems in the vernacular from that period are now extant. Fortunately, as official propaganda, the "Chronicles of Heaven's South" has survived to give us a treasure trove of the folklore prevalent in Vietnam towards the end of the seventeenth century. From the standpoint of literary history, the long poem also provides an evolutionary link between the early attempts at vernacular verse by poets like Nguyen Trai and Nguyen Binh Khiem and the achievements of later poets like Ho Xuan Huong and Nguyen Du.

At its most creative, poetry in the vernacular merged into a consistent whole disparate elements from two fundamentally antagonistic sources: the classical tradition of Chinese books and the folk heritage of peasants. The "Song of a Soldier's Wife" by Phan Huy Ich (1750-1822) is a good example. It is really an imaginative translation into Vietnamese of an "old-style" (ku-feng) poem in Chinese by the Vietnamese scholar Dang Tran Con (1710-1745). The latter borrowed most of his materials from Chinese Han and T'ang verse on the dual theme of war and separation. Yet, with its feverish piling of one detail, image, or allusion upon another, it was so akin to Vietnamese folk poetry that a superb vernacular poet like Phan Huy Ich could adapt it into idiomatic double-seven six-eight, often revealing no traces of its erudite sources.

The happiest marriage of foreign and native influences took place when, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Nguyen Du (1765-1820) borrowed the story line from an obscure Chinese novel in prose and turned it into a masterpiece of Vietnamese poetry: the Tale of Kieu (often known as the Kim-Van-Kieu), which Vietnamese from all walks of life look upon as their literary Bible. The story is about Kieu, a beautiful and talented girl, who met and fell in love with a young scholar, Kim Trong, and pledged her troth to him. But, needing money with which to bribe the authorities and save from prison her father who was wrongly accused of a crime, she sold herself as a concubine to a married man who turned out to be a pimp running a brothel with his wife. Thus, unwittingly, Kieu was drawn into prostitution, servitude, and other misadventures. After an ordeal of fifteen years, during which she was sustained by her Buddhist belief in karma, she was finally reunited with her family and with her former love. With its 1,627 couplets of six-eight, the Tale of Kieu belongs to an exceptionally important genre in Vietnamese literature: the tale in verse. But given its verbal magic and its emotional hold on the Vietnamese people, the poem is really one of a kind, in a class all by itself. On the one hand, it can pass for a compendium of Chinese learning with its many obscure allusions that will delight the most pedantic classicist. On the other hand, a person with little or no education can cite with

pleasure some line or couplet that fits a particular situation. In this respect, the poem is tantamount to a book of quotations: virtually every one of its 3,254 lines can be quoted to good effect and made to apply to some set of circumstances. Indeed, even a Westernized scholar or scientist may read some prophetic meaning into a line or couplet he or she chances upon, and is not above using the Tale of Kieu as a tool of divination.

What accounts for that spell which the Tale of Kieu casts over the average Vietnamese? Of course, there is the music and splendor of the verse, which exploits all the resources of the Vietnamese language. But over and above its strictly literary merits, the poem must also represent something at the very heart of the Vietnamese experience. The answer may lie in the uniquely tormented history of Vietnam, in which the individual, like Kieu herself, has all too often become the toy of historical necessity, has been compelled to do the bidding of some alien power, to serve a master other than the one to whom he or she should owe allegiance. Beyond its literal meaning, thoughtful people interpret Kieu's prostitution as the metaphor of the betrayal of principle under duress, the submission to force of circumstances, a compromise many Vietnamese have been guilty of in a country frequently dominated by foreign conquerors or divided by civil wars. More generally, Kieu stands for Vietnam itself, a country well endowed with natural and human resources, but too often doomed to see such resources gone to waste or destroyed. Yet, despite its grim details and sordid aspects, the story of Kieu conveys a message of hope for both the individual and the country: if, like Kieu, we accept and endure with fortitude whatever happens to us, someday we shall have paid off our karma of suffering and may attain personal and national salvation.

If Nguyen Du stood out on the literary landscape of his times, he just happened to be its brightest light, not the only one. Together, he and other poets made the nineteenth century the most brilliant period of Vietnamese literature at its most original. Such a development was a cultural paradox, going counter to what happened in the realm of government and politics: for the nineteenth century was also the zenith of neo-Confucianism in Vietnam. After fighting off and on for hundreds of years with the Trinh lords in the North, the Nguyen lords in the South defeated the Tay-son rebels who had briefly conquered and ruled the country. The victors unified Vietnam and established the Nguyen dynasty at its new capital of Hue in 1802. To consolidate their throne against any challenge from either princely rivals or peasant rebels, the Nguyen rulers thought it best to pattern their autocratic ideology and apparatus of repression after Chinese prototypes as faithfully as possible: an outsider who observes only such a slavish imitation of the Chinese model and

ignores all else may feel tempted to dismiss Vietnam as "a smaller dragon" or as "little China," to use two well-worn clichés. It is to the poets and their poems that one must turn if one is to discover the real Vietnam beneath its Chinese veneer. A particularly significant poet deserves a brief discussion here: Ho Xuan Huong, a remarkable lady who lived toward the end of the eighteenth century and during the first half of the nineteenth. On the surface, if we judge her poetry by her favorite verse forms, she must seem like a perfect Confucianist: she used nothing but the regulated poem or the cut-short quatrain, those highly aristocratic members of the Chinese family of verse. But if we look at her diction, we find the racy, colorful idiom of the native peasant, not the abstract, pallid cant of the Sinitized scholar. What is more, in her poems, she often dealt with a topic that was absolutely taboo as far as the Confucian elite was concerned: sex. And she treated sex not in any prurient spirit, but as a weapon against the Confucian doctrine of male supremacy. The fact that a woman could, with impunity, write such poems in Vietnam proved the basically Southeast Asian character of Vietnamese culture, all official pronouncements to the contrary notwithstanding. Unlike the Chinese woman, the Vietnamese woman has always, in popular practice, held a higher position in the family and in society than male chauvinism in official theory would have us believe.

Founded at the dawn of the nineteenth century, the Nguyen dynasty was not to last much beyond the century's mid-point, crumbling soon under assaults from the West, from France. Once again, it devolved on poets—Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Nguyen Khuyen, Tran Te Xuong, and others—to bear witness and register with their pens, in personal as well as social terms, those seismic tremors which colonialism wrought. One of the changes, which ushered in the era of the Latin alphabet marking the end of a millennium when the Chinese or "scholar's" script had held undisputed sway and making Confucian scholars obsolete, was reported with bitter irony by Tran Te Xuong (1870-1907) in this quatrain:

What earthly use are these Confucian graphs?

Masters and doctors lie curled up and wilt.

Why not take lessons and become a clerk?

At night champagne, at break of day cow's milk!

While French rule and modernization brought many cultural edifices down in shambles, what has remained standing, a monument to the traditional world, is the legacy of Vietnamese literature and, above all, of Vietnamese poetry.

Note

The two poems quoted in the article are from The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry, an anthology edited and translated by Huynh Sanh Thong and published by Yale University Press in 1979. The book features an introduction in which Vietnamese prosody and the evolution of Vietnamese poetry are discussed at length.

THE LITERATURE OF LAOS

James R. Chamberlain

Lao literature is one of the least explored written and oral literary traditions in the world today. Virtually nothing in the form of an overview has been attempted since the work of Louis Finot in 1917 entitled "Recherches sur la Littérature Laotienne." In recent years, leading up to the change of government in 1975, the "Laoization" movement and the movement to strengthen Lao national identity in the wake of a French-dominated intellectual tradition constituted a resurgence of effort to undertake critical studies of important literary works and to make available for study at least the major works of the classical Lao tradition. These efforts were undertaken by such notables as Prachit Soulisak, Director of the National Library and Museum, Khampheng Ketavong, former Chef-du-Cabinet of the Ministry of Education, and Mahasila Viravong, formerly of the Lao Royal Academy. The obscure literature of Laos is, I believe, one of the truly great traditions of the world, but one which tragically will in all probability never be well known.

There are over 60 different languages spoken within the boundaries of Laos, from five distinct linguistic families. At least three of these languages are spoken by refugees from Laos who are presently living in the United States: the Hmong language; the Black Tai language (now concentrated in the state of Iowa--and which is related to Lao); and Lao, the national language of Laos. Each of these languages has an extensive history and literature of its own, but in the present paper, I shall restrict my comments to the literature of the ethnic Lao.

The Lao language is most often classified as a member of the southwestern branch of the Tai language family--the same branch, I might add, as the Black Tai language mentioned above. Its other nearest relatives are found in northern Vietnam, southern China, Burma and Thailand.

There are two writing systems used for the Lao language in Laos. The first, called Tua akson tham, is restricted to the vats or Buddhist temples and is most frequently used in recording Buddhist texts. Although these latter are usually in the Pali

language, there are many important literary works written in the Lao language using the tham alphabets. The second, called simply tua aksou Lao, is the most extensive, being used for all official communication media and in the majority of Lao written literature. Both the tham and the Lao alphabets are descendants of the Indic Devanagari alphabet though the actual lines of relationship among the Devanagari-based alphabets in Southeast Asia are not clear at this time.

The geographical location of Laos, being landlocked and having boundaries with Cambodia on the south, Vietnam to the east, China on the north, and Thailand and Burma to the west, has left the country open to a great many influences. Most apparent of these is the Indic influence from the west, bringing with it Brahmanic and Buddhist literary and religious themes to overlay an older, indigenous animism. This animism resembles that of the Black Tai in northwestern Vietnam and is to be found in the Lan Xang chronicles and literary pieces of the northeastern provinces such as the work known as Thao Hung or Cheuang (to be discussed below).

In broad terms, there are two well-developed traditions of literature in Laos, oral and written. Within the classification of oral literature, we find such things as folk tales, proverbs, and children's stories on the one hand, and highly sophisticated "romans en vers" on the other. Those latter may go on for up to six hours, recited entirely from memory. A person who possesses this skill of recitation may hear a new story only once and be able to recite it from memory.

Another form of oral literature which is very popular is sung poetry, called lam or khap in Lao. The lam or khap occurs in myriad aspects. There are full-blown theatrical performances where performers in costume sing the parts and dance to musical instruments, a single performance of which may last all night. Some lam performances are interactions between only two persons, a man and a woman. Still other types are by single performers only.

In addition to this impressive array of the oral literary tradition, we find in Laos a seemingly inexhaustible reservoir of written literature. The early count from national collections done in 1917 lists no fewer than 1,163 extant manuscripts. And this count does not take into consideration thousands of other manuscripts in private homes and small temples scattered throughout the country, most of which have never been recorded.

A sizeable amount of Buddhist literature exists in the temples, usually Pali texts written in the tham characters.

Most of Lao literature is originally written on palm leaf manuscripts (latania leaf, Corypha umbraculifera). The words are etched or carved into the palm leaf and then rubbed with powdered charcoal to blacken the letters. It is important to note here that the physical manuscript itself is considered just as valuable as the textual content. Words are powerful in their written existence. Even in relatively recent times when invading armies entered a city, one of the first acts was to remove the manuscripts, the heart of the city's power as it were. A chief abbot from northern Thailand once ordered all manuscripts from the temples in his district to be piled in the temple grounds and burned, all the histories, the poetry, the Buddhist texts. The ashes were used to make protective amulets; the sacred power of the words was thus transformed and contained within the amulets.

Time and space do not permit an enumeration of even the basic outlines of themes and genres in the field of Lao literature. They are simply too numerous. A discussion of poetic forms would be equally impossible. So I would like at this time to describe those works considered by at least one Lao scholar, Mahasila Viravong, to be the three most important masterpieces of Lao literature: Vetsantrasadok, Sin Xay, and Thao Hung or Cheuang.

Many works of Lao literature center on the lives of Bodhisattvas, that is, previous lives of the Buddha, and the first of the works just mentioned, Vetsantrasadok, is the prime example. The story of the hero, Vetsandone, is the story of the life of the Buddha immediately preceding his rebirth as Gautama Buddha. As such it is an important work for religious reasons, as well as being entertaining. There is, in fact, a festival day called the boun mahasat especially for the purpose of reading or listening to the Mahasat or Vetsantra story.

Briefly, the story goes like this. There was a kingdom called Xetutra-nakhon with a king named Phagna Sisonxay and his queen Nang Phutsady. They had a son whose name was Vetsandone and a white elephant born on the same day.

Vetsandone was a very generous person and never failed to give alms. He had sworn that he would never refuse to give anything that was asked of him, even to the extreme of becoming someone's slave if necessary.

When he grew up he inherited the rule and wealth from his father and was called Phagna Vetsandone. He had a queen whose name was Nang Mathi and two children named Thao Saly (male) and Nang Kanha (female).

It happened that there was a city called Kalingkharaj which had experienced a drought for many years. Its people had tried every means to make it rain without success. Finally, the people demanded that the white elephant of Vetsandone be given to the city because wherever the white elephant lived there would be wealth and fertility. Vetsandone gave away his elephant, but his own people turned against him for doing so. They requested of his father, Phagna Sisonxay, that Vetsandone either be killed or run out of the country. Thus, he was forced to leave and his wife and children accompanied him.

Vetsandone and his wife went by horse and coach as far as the forest. There, someone asked for the horse and coach and they were given away. They then traveled on foot, each carrying one child until they came to Muang Chetaraj, a neighboring capital of Xetutra-nakhon. The people there asked Vetsandone to rule the city, but he would not agree for fear of going against his father's wishes. So he took his wife and children and became a hermit in the mountains called Phuvongkotkhiri. The ruler of Muang Chetaraj assigned the Brahman, Chetabut, to guard the entrance to the mountain and to protect Vetsandone. The prince lived there in the wilderness for seven months.

At that time there was a Brahman named Xutxaka in the city of Thonavittha near Kalingkharaj. This Brahman had collected alms amounting to 1000 tamlungs which he left with his close friend, but the friend spent it all. When he could not repay the money, he gave Xutxaka his daughter, Nang Amitta, in payment. She was a good wife and followed all the traditions in taking care of her husband. All the other husbands in the city pointed her out to their own wives as an example of what a good wife should be. This made all the wives angry and they went to Amitta and cursed her until she was deeply hurt. After this she would do no more work for her husband and insisted that he get servants to do the work, or she would leave. This caused Xutxaka to be afraid of losing his wife, so he went to ask for the children of Vetsandone, Saly and Kanha, to be his servants. When he met the guardians, Chetabut and Chutrasay, he lied and said he had only come to deliver an invitation. When he reached Phagna Vetsandone he begged for the children and, receiving them, fled. At that time Nang Mathi was not there. On her return she asked her husband what had become of her children but he would not tell her. She held her breath until she fainted and when she came to he told her.

At this time the god Indra, King of Heaven, perceived that if anyone should ask for Vetsandone's wife, he would undoubtedly give her away as well. So Indra disguised himself as a Brahman and asked for Nang Mathi. But he left her in the keeping of

Vetsandone to assure that no one else would take her away.

As for Xutxaka, he and the children became lost in the forest and finally ended up in Xetutra-nakhon, their grandfather's city. The grandfather recognized them and took care of Xutxaka by giving him a party where he ate so much his stomach burst. After that Sisonxay and his followers invited Vetsandone to return and administer the Kingdom as before.

There are two versions of the second work, Sin Xay, in Lao an older one written in them characters called lam sin say or sin saya sa: dok, and one written in an exquisite poetic form by the poet Pangkham, based, the author tells us, on the older version, but not following it very closely. This poetic version by Pangkham was unfortunately not finished. Sin Xay is also claimed to be the life of a Bodhisattva. The original Pali version has apparently never been found, but the story is known from Cambodia and Thailand as well. Sin Xay, the hero, is born with a bow and arrows in his hand, along with his brother Sang Thong, a golden snail. At the same time, another of his father's wives gives birth to an elephant with golden tusks. The story concerns the three brothers rescuing their father's younger sister from the ogre Nhak Koumphan who has stolen her away.

The third masterpiece of Lao literature, Thao Hung or Cheuang, differs from the previous works in several important ways. First of all, its material is non-Buddhist in nature, its characters being in fact of pre-Buddhist origin. There are no Buddhist precepts being taught or lessons being learned; only sacrifices to spirits and animistic festivals are described. Because of this, the manuscript could not be copied on bai lan or palm leaf, but had to be scratched on strips of green bamboo. Thao Hung or Cheuang could not be read on festival days with the exception of the boun bang fai or rocket festival, a festival of much drunkenness and ribaldry. The main character, Thao Hung was not a Bodhisattva.

A second way in which this epic poem differs from the other is that it is primarily historical in nature. It relates the battles of historical or prehistorical characters found elsewhere in historical texts. Furthermore, the conflicts and battles depicted are, on close analysis, apparently ethnic in origin among the incoming Tais, the indigenous Mon-Khmers, and the geographically adjacent Vietnamese.

This leads to a third point of difference. The hero, Thao Hung or Cheuang, appears to be not a Lao, but a Khom, Austroasiatic or Mon-Khmer. He is, in fact, none other than the culture hero of the Khmu and other Mon-Khmer speaking peoples of

Laos and Vietnam, whose legend among those groups is still very much alive today. It is believed that Cheuang will some day be reborn to rescue or perhaps avenge the Khom peoples, better known in Laos as the Kha, a word that means "slave." The huge megalithic jars on the "plaine des jarres" are called "Cheuang's wine jars" by the people of Xieng Khouang Province.

Thao Hung or Thao Cheuang was the second son of Khun Chone Tham, the Chao Muang (chief) of Muang Suan Tane, also known as Na Khong (according to Mahasila, this is the city called Phayao in northern Thailand today). He was the grandson of Khun Theung. Khun Chone Tham, the son of Khun Theung, was also the younger brother of Khun Seum, the chief of Ngoen Yang (the city today known as Chiang Saen in Thailand, according to Mahasila). (In the Chiang Saen Chronicle he is called Khun Sin, again according to Mahasila.) Thao Hung was born in the 5th month on the full moon on Tuesday in the year of the Tiger in the early morning (between 3 and 4:30 a.m.) while the moon was in the asterism or lunar mansion called Visakha. At the time of his birth the people called Kha Phang Dam came to offer a gift to the child of a sword and a pair of silver tambours. Soon after this he received a white elephant named Phankham which came from the cloudy forests of the Himalayas. Not too much later his father died.

When Thao Hung was grown, he fell in love with Nang Ngom, the daughter of Nang Meng, his mother's older sister, in Xieng Kheua.

As for Thao Seum, Thao Hung's paternal uncle in Ngoen Yang, he had two daughters named Nang Oua Khiam and Nang Am Kha or Am Khai. Thao Seum had made up his mind to give these two daughters to Thao Hung.

At this time Thao Eng Ka (a Keo, from Vietnam, probably Vietnamese) in Muang Kham Vang was the grandson of Thao Kwa. Thao Kwa was in Muang Pakan, or what is today called Xieng Khouang. Thao Eng Ka desired Nang Oua, the daughter of Thao Seum, to be his queen. So he sent Nai Seng to ask for her hand, but was twice rejected because Thao Seum hated Eng Ka and said he was of the Keo Moi race. When Thao Eng Ka and Thao Kwa heard this, they were angered and sent an army to attack Muang Ngoen Yang.

Thao Seum could not withstand the Keo attack alone, so he sent Ao Phuang to Thao Hung to ask for help. Thao Hung arranged an army from Suan Tane with the following important persons commanding: Ai Khwang, Eng Khone, Heng Phan, Han Phai, Khun Khane, Khone Xay, and Cha Sone. Then Thao Hung went to tell

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Nang Ngom, his lover, and she arranged an army with these commanders: Khun Keuan, Khun Pheng, Khun Nhia, Nhia Kham, Xay Lue, Eng Phai, Ai Phong, Khun Khone, and Thao Soi, along with twenty elephants. Thao Hung led all of them to the city of Ngoen Yang where he defeated the Keo army. Thao Kwa died on the field of battle. Khun Nhia captured Thao Eng Ka. Also dead on the battlefield were the following Keo: Keo Kam, Maen Hiaw, Keo Pheuak, Maen Piao, Maen Heuang, Maen Pha, and Pheuak Leuang. Those who fled without capture were: Kwan Kae, Maen Fong, Thao Pong, Hun Bang, Keo Thong, Maen Lai, and Xieng Hang. Thao Seum was elated at the victory and gave Thao Hung his two daughters in marriage.

After things were put into order, Thao Hung took the armies of Ngoen Yang, Suan Tan, and Xieng Kheua and followed the defeated Keo army towards Muang Pakan. He went from Ngoen Yang to Xieng Khwan, to Tha Yong, and to Phu Thum, the home of the Phang Dam. The distance from Phu Thum to Muang Pakan was only one day. Thao Hung took his army from Phu Thum and defeated the Keo at Xieng Ban. Nang Kwa, the queen of Thao Kwa, led the defending army herself and died in the battle.

Then there was a victory celebration, complete with rice wine from jars and sacrifices of elephant and buffalo to feed the people. This celebration lasted seven months.

After the celebration Thao Hung appointed Ai Khwang, leader of the most powerful army, to rule Muang Pakan and his mother to rule Muang Xieng Thong (Luang Prabang). Thao Hung brought his army back to Ngoen Yang and sent a messenger to ask for Nang Ngom to be his queen, in addition to the other two.

Sometime later when Thao Hung was out hunting, the two queens, Nang Oua and Nang Ngom, quarreled and Nang Ngom went back to Xieng Kheua. When he heard the news, Thao Hung followed her there after sending a messenger to bring his mother back from Xieng Thong to assist him in winning back Nang Ngom.

At this time, Hun Bang and the Keo army which had fled to Muang Kham Vang, attacked Muang Pakan. When Thao Hung heard this he brought an army to attack Hun Bang and chased him back to the protection of Tum Vang as before. A messenger was sent to negotiate for the person of Hun Bang to come out. Chao Fa Huan of Muang Tum Vang would not agree and Thao Hung attacked. Chao Fa Huan realized he could not hold off Thao Hung for long so he sent a messenger to Muang Then (heaven?) to enlist the aid of Than Lo (Khum Lo). Then Lo was in the city of Nakhon Kalong (according to Mahasila, the Province of Chiang Hung in Sipsongpanna, southern China). He arrived and beat the army of

Thao Hung back to Muang Pakan, where Thao Hung was killed.

The story does not end here. Thao Hung was reborn as a spirit, complete with his army of spirits. He took the army to Muang Then (heaven?). They traveled first to Muang Kha Khiao (Mahasila points out that, in Sin Xay, Muang Kha Khiao is said to be adjacent to the ladder to the sky). At Muang Kha Khiao, Eng Khone went to ask directions to Muang Fa (heaven) from the inhabitants who called themselves the Thai Eng. They went from Kha Khiao to the ladder Ling and from the ladder Ling to the Linkham River near Liane Phane. Thao Hung sent Khun Khone to demand the surrender of Liane Phane, but the chief, a Then, would not, so Thao Hung attacked and defeated Liane Phane. Khun Khone was then sent to speak with Phra In (Indra), King of Heaven, who was afraid of Thao Hung. Phra In gave Muang Suang to Thao Hung and ordered that all the Then would be under the power of Thao Hung. Thao Hung then took his army to Muang Kong Thun and Muang Kam Ma, before he reached Muang Suang where he began his rule.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the place of art and literature in Southeast Asia, and in Laos in particular. I once saw a documentary on Japan which showed young men in the Tokyo police academy being required to study the art of flower arranging. In Laos in the military officers' training school, the study of Lao literature has been a required subject. Furthermore, in Laos, the study of literature is not only reading, but also learning to write poetry. Why does a military officer have to learn to write poetry? In Laos the question would never be asked, the answer is too fundamental, for the value of art and literature to society is unquestioned.

I suggest that the situation regarding art and literature is very different in our own society, where our art is locked away in museums, our live music confined to concert halls, and our poetry relegated to books where it is read but seldom learned.

In Laos artistic endeavors flourish in their true cultural and perhaps even ecological role of correcting a too functional view of the world.

FRENCH INFLUENCE: THE VIETNAMESE EXPERIENCE

Luu Nguyen Dat

The French army surrendered in 1954 after the loss of Dien Bien-Phu to the Viet-Minh and its communist cadres. Seventy years earlier, the same Expeditionary army had occupied Vietnam and installed French domination over the three politically divided Vietnamese territories: Cochinchina or the "French colony" in southern Vietnam, Annam and Tonkin or the "French Protectorates" in central and northern Vietnam.

In 1887, the Vietnamese territories were grouped together with the Protectorate of Cambodia to set up the Government-General of French Indochina, known as "L'Union Indochinoise." Laos was included in this union in 1895.

French authority throughout Indochina was absolute: the Governor-General exerted all power on behalf of the French government and under the distant control of the French Minister of Colonies. A Central Indochinese Council was set up with exclusive authority in foreign affairs, finance, defense, customs, and public works.

In the protectorates, the "Residents Superieurs" tended to administer the territory directly, ignoring its native administrators; the traditional Vietnamese court and the mandarins were retained, but they did not enjoy any real power. The Vietnamese imperial government was thus virtually reduced to a puppet role. Its officials were used as intermediaries between the French administration and the Vietnamese population in order to advance French interests.

The function of the colony and the protectorates was to supply the mother country, "La Mere Patrie," La France, with raw materials and products which did not compete with her own. The economy of Vietnam came to depend completely on the interests of France. Quickly, the French colonialists came to control 80% of the rice fields and to own exclusively the rubber and tea plantations of Vietnam. The Vietnamese majority gained nothing from the growing prosperity of their country. Only ten percent of the Vietnamese population, those concentrated in the urban

areas or near the development of big agricultural and mining concessions, found a place in the new colonial and capitalistic system. Thus only a small minority of the Vietnamese were directly exposed to the influence of French civilization.

With French Governor-General Albert Sarraut (1911), the French authorities started to reform the old Chinese-style civil service examinations, making French learning rather than Confucian studies the requisite for success. New French schools were opened, such as the School of Medicine and Pharmacy, the Higher School of Pedagogy, the Special School of Agriculture and Sylviculture, and the Schools of Applied Sciences, of Commerce, and of Fine Arts.

At the elementary and secondary levels, "French Lycees" were opened to educate French children and those of the indigenous privileged class.

The influence of French on the Vietnamese language is apparent in different ways.

First of all, the Vietnamese began to use their "Quoc-ngu" or Romanized Vietnamese script. This system of transcription was invented in the 17th century by a group of Portuguese and French missionaries for the ease of Christian evangelization. The major contribution was that of the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes through his Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary.

At first, the Romanized script was used only by the missionaries to translate prayer books and catechisms. It gradually spread with the establishment of the colonial government and was officially adopted in 1918 as the national script or literally "Quoc-ngu."

The Quoc-ngu provides for the transcription of all original Vietnamese literature and values as well as facilitating the western impact on Vietnamese culture.

In touch with French thought and language through the channel of translation, Vietnamese literary works, formerly patterned after the old and sophisticated Chinese style, became more simple, clear, and realistic. Some loanwords from French denoted the emergence of a new way of life: mechanical (o-to, ga-ra, buyt, tac-xi...), modern consumption and recreation (ca-phe, xi-ga, bo, xi-ne, to-nit...), or science and technology (at-sit, ra-di-o...).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, newspapers and literary magazines like the Dong-Duong Tap-chi (Indochinese

Review) and the Nam-Phong Tap-chi (South Wind Review) intended to popularize a mixture of Eastern and French cultural values through the medium of Quoc-ngu.

From 1935 to 1945, many politico-cultural organs were established, such as the Ngay Nay (the Present Times), the Nam Cuong (Vietnam's Strength) and the partly political Self-Strengthening Literary Group (Tu Luc Van Doan), to emphasize the individual and political freedom patterned on the French social and ideological structure.

Most of the older literate Vietnamese speak French in addition to their native tongue. In fact thousands of the Vietnamese elite have a better mastery of literary French than the French themselves. Thousands more use French in business activities.

As far as Vietnamese arts are concerned, French influence has also been very important.

French impact on Vietnamese architecture is revealed by such structures in the Vauban style of fortification as the Imperial Citadel in Hue. French architecture and design increase on a large scale especially in the urban areas. Saigon was "Petit Paris."

French patterns began to influence Vietnamese painting and other pictorial arts from 1923 with the foundation of the French School of Fine Arts in Hanoi. A number of Vietnamese artists adopted French oil painting techniques, while others continued to practice the traditional technique of silk painting.

In the field of drama, the renovated theater—Hat cai luong—in south Vietnam reflected some patterns of French plays.

Enthusiasm for French music reached its climax between 1932 and 1945 with famous musical scores by Le Thuong, Tham Oanh, Duong Thieu Tuoc, Van Cao, and Pham Duy.

Under the French influence, the traditional social order of Vietnam slowly crumbled, especially in the urban areas.

Clothing has been modernized. Most men in town have adopted Western costume. Girls and women prefer having their hair cut and curled in French fashion.

As means of transportation, Vietnamese adopted the use of modern vehicles. Even women can be seen driving cars or riding bicycles and motorcycles.

Under the French-patterned social-economic system, there were evident tendencies toward emancipation of the individual from the restrictions of traditional institutions.

The middle class was formed, representing about ten percent of the population. It ranged from the few wealthy merchants to a larger group of shopkeepers, factory operators, smaller landholders, salaried employees, functionaries, educators, intellectuals, etc. This class constituted the active and influential minority which led the society through its evolution and revolts.

Ironically, the French administration and the expeditionary army were defeated by the same French-trained middle class, whose members shaped the Viet-Minh (Vietnamese Alliance). The communists who excluded their partners at the final step before the victory were only a partial national force against the French.

In conclusion, we recognize that the French have had a strong influence on the Vietnamese way of life. Nevertheless, this influence has been irregular, its importance varying from one aspect to another. Almost the entire rural population was kept remote from the French influence, and even in the urban area, the Vietnamese have usually taken from the French culture what they thought best suited their comfort, pleasure and taste.

On a larger scale, through and by the French influence, Vietnam has been chosen as an operational theater of international and experimental conflicts: modernization, technology, capitalism, communism, balance of power.

Peace and happiness have been absent for a long time from Vietnam.

III. Life Styles of Indochina

THE WAR AND VIETNAMESE SOCIETY

Thomas C. Fox

She was 70-years-old, without relatives, and the wrinkles on her pained and weathered face were deep. Her twisted spine caused her to walk with a stoop. She carried a twelve inch ruler in one hand, as a cane, for support. In her other hand, she held on to a rusted Sir Walter Raleigh tobacco can, using it to hold the rice grains she begged for daily to stay alive.

In central Vietnam in Phu Yen Province, the Ninh Tinh refugee camp was nothing more than a sandy beach. The old woman, Dang Thi Nhi, a beggar, was in the early months of 1972 for me the symbol of what the war was about.

Alone, she had been stripped of family support, of the village she had lived in all her life and of almost everything she had ever known or admired.

"I am very poor. So I beg," she said, squatting under the hot sun in the sand, resting for a few moments. She had been begging for most of the morning and had succeeded in gathering less than a handful of rice. She had more work to do before she would eat that night.

"Some families give me a few pinches of rice. Some give me one or two piasters (less than one cent). It is the first time I've ever had to beg."

She wiped tears from her infected eyes, crossing them with the back of her calloused hand--and said no more.

The elderly had been revered for generations in Vietnam. In them there was knowledge and wisdom. As their bodies weakened with age they would always be secure in the thoughts that their children and grandchildren would care for them. And they approached death with the comforting thoughts that they would be buried amidst the tombs of their brothers and sisters and parents. And they knew they would be joined to the past and to the future by the prayers of their offspring. Most Vietnamese were ancestor worshippers.

These ties had been the essence of traditional Vietnamese society and these ties--in so many different ways--were being ripped apart, often violently, by the unwanted war.

The ten most violent war years, 1965 to 1975, that period of heaviest American involvement, had an incalculably devastating impact on the social fabric of Vietnamese society, particularly in that area which, until the war's end, had been South Vietnam.

Numbers do not fully tell the story, but they can hint at the overall picture.

---Civilian war casualties in South Vietnam, killed or wounded, 1965-1973 1,435,000;
 ---Civilian war casualties in South Vietnam, 1973-1975 339,882;
 ---Refugees generated in South Vietnam, 1965-1973 10,270,000.

Among the Vietnamese disabled, it is reckoned that amputees number 83,000; paraplegics, 8,000; blind, 30,000; deaf, 10,000; and in other categories, 50,000.

In 1972 Dang Thi Nhi was one of Vietnam's faceless refugees, one of 2,500 who had been driven out of Hoa Da Village when, as so often was the case, American jet fighters and bombers unloaded their bombs during a battle with several dozen North Vietnamese soldiers. When the smoke lifted the next day, as streams of refugees were walking south along Highway 1 toward the provincial capital of Tuy Hoa, Vietnamese and American soldiers entered Hoa Da--and found no trace of their enemy.

They had managed to escape during the bombing, but little was left standing in Hoa Da.

The Hoa Da villagers eventually settled outside Tuy Hoa (for they were considered "security risks" and not allowed to live inside the town of 20,000). The South Vietnamese government, with American aid, erected tin shacks on the sandy beaches north of Tuy Hoa, and called the area the Ninh Tinh resettlement camp.

Although farmers, the new residents of Ninh Tinh found the onions and vegetables they planted in the sand did not grow. The temperatures were too hot and the beaches too salty.

At first families attempted to live and stay together in their new location, hoping to be given permission to return to their village. But Hoa Da remained insecure, meaning battles could erupt there any evening. So the refugees stayed at Ninh Tinh and slowly family ties--the core of their existence--became untied.

There were never many young men at Ninh Tinh. Months before they had joined the insurgent forces or had been drafted into the South Vietnamese army. Joining the insurgents allowed them to live in the area, which had its advantages. Being drafted into the South Vietnamese army most often meant moving to a distant part of the country; they tried to avoid that.

Without husbands or grown sons, the women of Ninh Tinh sought out ways to earn money to stay alive. The South Vietnamese government, when corruption did not interfere, provided small rice allocations for six months and then considered the refugees "resettled," cutting off aid.

The most fortunate women, so they felt at the time, were hired as laborers at an American Air Force base five miles to the south. They washed clothes, cleaned shoes and provided other menial services. If lucky, they were paid 50 cents a day. Slowly but clearly, the Americans living in Vietnam, as villages were destroyed and as rice harvesting fell off, became the central nationwide industry, the primary source of revenue. Vietnamese services gravitated toward American needs.

Some of those needs were physical. Outside the Air Force base of Dong Tac, rows of tin shacks, provided by American AID programs, popped up in 1967 and became populated by young Vietnamese prostitutes, many of them teenage girls from the Ninh Tinh refugee camp.

It was ironic and telling of life in Vietnam during the war years that teenage prostitutes could earn in several hours more than the rest of their families in the course of a month.

The new earnings meant, in a twisted way, new status, and eventually humiliated parents. As the young girls took on Western ways, family ties broke apart. Parents often rejected their daughters who, in turn, found American ways more exciting than the dreary life in the refugee camps.

The young Ninh Tinh girls ended up living on the outskirts of the airbase, listening to rock music during the day on stereos that had been purchased in the American commissary, wearing mini-skirts, make-up, and playing cards. Some became alcoholics. Others gambled daily with their earnings. Still others moved to Saigon to have surgery done to raise the bridges of their noses. The goal was to be pleasing to the Americans and, so thought the young Vietnamese women, American men liked women with sharp, western noses. The rejection of their culture and society was then complete.

In April, 1975, when the war ended and the Americans left Vietnam in a hasty evacuation, there remained roughly 100,000 prostitutes, many carrying difficult to cure venereal diseases. And one of the tasks of the new government was somehow to reintegrate these women into Vietnamese society.

Three years before the war ended, the last time I visited Ninh Tinh, the Hoa Da families had crumbled apart. Only fragments remained: the very old, the very weak, the blind. Those that had nowhere to go like the 70-year-old Dang Thi Nhi.

Once uprooted, villagers often drifted; family members went their own ways to stay alive. Some purposely chose death. On several occasions the older Vietnamese would leave Ninh Tinh to return to their native village, knowing their journey would take them through what the Americans had termed "free fire zones," areas in which any moving object, be it animal, child or old man, was considered the enemy and an open target.

Said one Ninh Tinh refugee, a thin man with a beard: "I will die here or die somewhere else. I hope and pray I can make it to my village and die near the tombs of my parents." He left Ninh Tinh and never returned.

Most of the 10 million Vietnamese refugees uprooted during the war years were rural farmers. The figure represents more than half the population of South Vietnam. The displacement caused the south's rural population to fall from 85 percent to less than 50 percent of the south's total population.

The outskirts of towns and cities throughout the south swelled. Saigon, for example, registered 500,000 in 1954; by 1974 it contained an estimated 3 million.

The war transformed what had been a rural rice producing traditional society into a largely urban, American dependent, consumer oriented one. The biggest loser was the Vietnamese family.

The war transformed Vietnam in other ways. In removing people from their land rice growing skills were lost. The young men, serving in the armies, matured never having learned these skills.

In 1975, when the fighting stopped and the Americans left, the American supported economy burst like a huge balloon pricked by a needle.

The most conservative estimates placed the unemployed in

the south at 3 million; the underemployed constituted another 3 million. Food became scarce; medicine too. American policy called for a boycott of all aid to Vietnam—including humanitarian aid.

Last year, the United Nations, after studying the needs of Vietnam, said it would require \$920 million in aid in 1979 just to feed itself.

Facing overcrowded cities and a depleted rural food producing base, the Hanoi government in the last three years has tried to encourage a move back into what it has called "New Economic Zones." These zones are to serve as the seeds of a new rural society.

But movement to the countryside has been slow and has reportedly met with some resistance. The task of returning is not easy and has been complicated by the enormous physical destruction done to the land.

The United States government dropped 25 million bombs over Vietnam during the war years—more than it dropped during World War II and the Korean war. Moreover, thousands of metal fragments riddle the earth as do countless unexploded mines and artillery shells. The task of plowing a rice field for the first time is often a dangerous one.

The American involvement—for whatever its intention—had the devastating effect of driving an already divided society further apart. A century of colonial rule by the French set the seeds of much of the division. The American involvement from the time of the division of Vietnam into North and South in 1954 to the war's end in 1975 caused greater internal separation.

Family division led to blood debts and more hatred and fear. It became American policy to play on these fears. The multi-million dollar budget of JUSPAC, the American propaganda machine in Vietnam, printed pictures of every act of terrorism, often dropping leaflets depicting the horrors from planes flying far overhead.

In part, these fears, the hatred, caused thousands to flee Vietnam during the evacuation in 1975; others fled the poverty and hunger in boats in the years that followed; still others fled the new political order.

Families remain separated: parents from children, husbands from wives. More than 175,000 Vietnamese, living in the United States, when possible, keep contacts with relatives only

through occasional letters. The pain lingers.

In addition, another estimated 175,000 to 200,000 Indochinese live marginally in make-shift refugee camps in Southeast Asia, the latest victims of the war and the latest examples of a tortured society that will for many more years bear the scars and burdens of a very ugly war.

THE FAMILY IN VIETNAM AND ITS SOCIAL LIFE

Mrs. Phung Thi Hanh

In this paper I will try to study the nature and role of the family in Vietnamese society. This study is done synchronically and diachronically and comes to the tentative conclusion that the family in Vietnam is an entity by itself, an irreducible value and the only way of life for the Vietnamese.

I. The synchronic approach or the traditional concept of the family

Vietnamese society rests entirely on the solid structure of the family which owes its cohesion to the religious nature of the relationship between the living and the dead.

Indeed, the Vietnamese family consists not only of the living—father as head of the family, grandparents, the mother and children, the sons and daughters-in-law—but also of all the spirits of the dead, as well as those not yet born.

Family life is very important to the individual in Vietnam. Many of the most important institutions in Vietnamese life have their focus in family actions. Vietnamese characteristically make a family affair of earning their livelihood, of conducting religious rites, of raising, training and often educating children, and of taking care of the sick and the aged. To the Vietnamese, the family is the strongest motivating force in his life, stronger than his religion and his country. Anything a man does, he does out of family consideration rather than for himself as an individual. Each person in the family, in fact, must come second to the family as a whole.

A. The Vietnamese family organization

To the Vietnamese, the family is an organization: men are born into it and woman marry into it. Several married couples are traditionally organized into the "hha" or household, and several households into the "ho" or lineage.

In the Vietnamese family organization, roles are more numerous and more sharply defined than in America: this fact is

made evident by the many words used for various family relationships. In addition to the usual ones like father and mother, brother and sister, the Vietnamese have words to show relative age and the father's side of the family as against the mother's side. The extreme importance of the family may also be seen in social life through the different social forms of address: "Ong" (Mr.), "Ba" (Mrs.) and "Co" (Miss); "Anh" (young man older than self), "Cau" or "Chu" (young man younger than self), "Chi" (young woman older than self). These are also terms to indicate blood relationships (Ong = Grandfather, Ba = Grandmother, Co = aunt, Anh = big brother, Chi = big sister, Cau, Chu = young brother). There is no other way to address people besides these terms.

The traditional household

Traditionally, the ideal Vietnamese household or "nha" consists of an older man and wife, their married sons and daughters-in-law, their unmarried children and the grand-children. Daughters leave their parental household on marriage to join the households of their husband's parents. The whole household forms a single economic unit--"one fire one lamp" as the Vietnamese put it.

The father

The husband and father is seen by all as the head of the family. He makes all important family decisions and his wife and children treat him with respect and deference. He also takes the leading part in the family rites of ancestor worship, but considering the management of the family finances beneath his dignity, he leaves that to his wife.

The mother

The role of the wife in the Vietnamese family reflects the theme of harmony. Vietnamese women have been traditionally accorded a very limited social life and low standing in society. They are taught to observe three basic practices called the "three obediences": Before marriage, they must obey their father ("tai gia tong"); when they get married they must obey their husbands ("xuat gia tong phu"); becoming a widow, they must obey their sons ("phu tu tong tu"). Women's beauty is usually praised more in terms of virtues than physical attributes. Traditionally, a good woman must have four feminine virtues: 1) She must be good at housework, needlework ("Cong"); 2) she must have a feminine appearance ("Dung"); 3) she must speak gently and be careful with her speech ("Ngon"); and 4) she must show good conduct and act in a virtuous way ("Hanh").

The sons

Not only are large families preferred, but it is hoped that as many children as possible will be boys. This preference is a natural consequence of the Vietnamese family system, under which a boy gives his parents life-long aid and comfort while a girl leaves at marriage to enter the family of her husband. Unmarried sons contribute their earning to the family treasury.

The child

Before they are three, most children learn the basic patterns of family life that will stay with them until they die. They learn that they are expected to behave respectfully, not only toward their parents, but toward all elders. Disobedience to parents is regarded as a serious violation of the moral code. Even at an early age, children are taught to be loyal to their families and assume responsibilities toward themselves, their relatives, parents and others.

Family ties

Within the Vietnamese household, the strongest ties are those linking parent with child. To be childless would be a major tragedy to a Vietnamese. His children not only keep the family name but also care for him in his old age and honor his memory after he is gone. Thus the child is very important to the parent and the child learns to consider his duty to his parents as the very foundation of moral conduct. Brothers and sisters also feel very close to each other. In contrast, husband and wife often feel less strong emotional ties toward each other.

B. Family activities

The Vietnamese family is a work group, where fathers and sons, mothers and daughters of the family work side by side to augment the family's wealth. Home is a place of worship where at the ancestral altar the Confucian rites link the living generations with the dead and impress upon all who witness them the importance, the sacredness of filial piety. The family is the basic political unit of the village and most important of all, perhaps, the family is the school where the child learns the Vietnamese way of life. The home is where the child learns the importance of Confucian precepts--of properly observing filial piety, of following the example of his superiors in conduct, and of placing family loyalty first. Just as the family acts as a team in producing wealth, so it works together in raising its children. The respect for elders enjoined by filial piety means that older brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts,

grandfathers and grandmothers all will be listened to with respect. And all will contribute their part in teaching children proper behavior and attitudes.

C. Filial piety

The Vietnamese for centuries have believed that a person's highest loyalty was to his parents. This loyalty came before the loyalty to the state, to the village or to any religious group. For example, the law expected an imperial official to leave his work and go home to care for ailing or feeble parents. He could not send a substitute no matter how important his duties were, but had to perform this act of filial piety in person.

This duty of "hieu" or filial piety is the basis of Vietnamese morality and ethics. Supported and reinforced by state officials, poets and philosophers and by local village public opinion alike, "hieu" has been the key value in Vietnamese society. This emphasis makes the Vietnamese family larger in time as well as in space.

Seen under this light—the traditional aspect—the family in Vietnamese society serves as a tie between the individual and the society for which it is also the backbone.

II. The diachronic approach or the evolution of the family in modern Vietnam

A. The Western impact

In the past century, Western influences have challenged the traditional concept of the family. Many factors—ideology, economics, war—have combined to make the older type of large household system less and less common. With the impact of Western ideals of individuality, the moral authority of the father over his married sons has been seriously shaken and the individual has more and more asserted his own right to the detriment of the family. Western patterns of industry and communication have made it easier for young men to leave their parents' households to earn a living in the cities or even overseas.

Under the impact of new Western ideas of individual rights, of equality and equality, women are rapidly claiming a new position in life. The three obediences still govern her life but in a less rigid way. Her voice is heard and her advice listened to. She still manages the family finances and her husband refers to her as the "minister of the interior."

Reflecting the influence of the French, Vietnamese law today requires signatures of both wife and husband before important property can be sold. More and more women took on jobs which had been exclusively men's, and their appearance in social life is more and more common. It is not uncommon to see a woman senator or lawyer anymore. Still under the influence of Western ideas, young people are choosing their own partners. Authors and poets such as the "Tu-Luc-Van-Doan" group chanted the need for love, the importance of love and the rights of the individual to live his/her own life. The reaction of the young is to flout the authority of the father, and, in many cases, the family system is changing to suit the needs of different times and new moralities.

The growth of the cities tended to attract more young men from the countryside who left their father's household if there were no family land to till or to inherit. Smaller housing units were built to suit the new Western pattern of architecture and thus make more difficult the traditional extended family life style. Young married couples tended to leave the household to live in a separate house and to form a nuclear family unit in the Western pattern.

The individual thus finds himself with more freedom, but less security—moral and financial—because he is now on his own, responsible for his own life and his own decisions.

B. The Communist impact

Realizing how important the family institution is to Vietnamese society, the Communists have tried to put heavy pressure on family life. One of their methods was to use children to spy on their elders, thus breaking up the family from the seams. Sons are to accuse their parents publicly for past mistakes. The traditional parental authority is thus reduced to the lowest echelon of value.

In 1954, with the Geneva Treaty, the Vietnamese family witnessed another shake up: those who chose to live with the Communists stayed in the North and those who chose freedom went to the South. Young men and women left their parents, the family structure became looser and looser, and disintegrated.

During the past decades, with the wars going on, the family in Vietnam found itself thrown more and more into confusion. Wars have devastated the countryside and brought more and more people to the cities where living spaces were narrow, thus reducing the family unit to a minimum nuclear unit. It has become almost impossible to live in the old family style.

Although old parents still live with the eldest son, it is extremely rare to find in the same household two or three married couples.

Since 1975, with the communist take-over of the whole country and the tragic evacuation of Vietnamese throughout the free world, the Vietnamese family has become increasingly broken and dispersed. Husbands and wives find themselves separated by international politics—between the communist and the free worlds. Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters live thousands and thousands of miles apart. For those family members who are lucky enough to get out of the country together, their situation is not less different. It is almost impossible for a Vietnamese extended family of 30 persons to be sponsored by the same person; hence, the family has to break down into small units and disperse throughout the States.

As we have seen, for the past century, the family in Vietnam has experienced different influences—the Western influences which brought in the ideas of individualism and democracy and the impact of the war which resulted in the dispersion of the extended family. These different events have contributed to the evolution of the Vietnamese family into a smaller unit. In this new form, the individual asserts more of his rights, but on the other hand, assumes more responsibility and receives less security from the extended family.

III. Conclusion

Throughout this study, we have seen the traditional family evolve toward a smaller, nuclear type of family, completely different from the older ideal. What of the traditional norms and traditional concept of the family as a "mutual support center?" Will these change as a result of new influences and the wars?

My answer is that the Vietnamese traditional family still survives and has in fact become stronger and tighter than ever before. Not tight in the sense that all members in the family should live together under the same roof; rather the family ties are stronger and serve as a central reason for survival.

Coping with the Western impact of individualism and democracy, the Vietnamese family has finally come up with a happy synthesis between the great extended family and the individual where each one needs the other for its own survival and each recognizes this fact. There is on the part of the parents more indulgence, more trust in their children's judgment; on the other hand, the young have more freedom and more

responsibility as a result of the breakup of the "nha." The family becomes flexible in its accommodation of individual differences. For example, while parents select spouses for children, they rarely fail to learn the children's wishes; or, if the children choose their spouses themselves, they make sure that their choices are not in conflict with the family norms.

Despite the communist impact, their pressure on the family and attempts to disrupt the family, their influence was merely on the surface. Deep family feelings and ties still unite people from the same extended family, but adopt a different ideology. A vivid example of this was the overflow of relatives from the North going to the South to visit their relatives as soon as the situation allowed them to do so. Brothers who left home as teenagers, now came back, grey haired, to embrace their old trembling parents they had not seen for 30 years. They rushed into the South to look for the sisters they left years before. Fathers who left an infant years ago hurried to meet with the young man they could not recognize but still felt love for. Relatives of all degrees of closeness feverishly renew the family ties which have been disrupted for twenty years. It seems as if the years of separation never existed, as if the communist doctrine has had little, if any, influence over the Vietnamese people.

For the Vietnamese living in the USA, many had to leave their families behind and now also try to regain the old pattern of family life. One witnesses a strange but not so unexpected phenomenon: people who never knew one another before, who are not related in any way, now gather in the same house to live a family life, with the same pattern as before. A young man who left his wife and children back home has met a family in the refugee camp and has come to live with this family ever since, adopting the couple as his own sister and brother-in-law, and the children as his own nephew and niece. Another young man whose parents were still in Saigon, also adopted this family as his own parents, contributing with his salary to the economy of the family. They all live in the same house, 14 in all, with all the typical traits of a Vietnamese extended family of parents, brothers, children, uncles living in the same household.

Another young man, whose family was also left back home, accepted work and paid for the tuition of his friend, newly met in a refugee camp, now his brother, so that this one can go back to school and thus secure later on a brighter future which they will share.

As seen above, the true Vietnamese family concept still survives through time and change. Its form might differ but

the essence, its role as insurance company, school, work place, still prevails. One may conclude that the family in Vietnam is an entity in and of itself, an indestructible value and the only way by which a Vietnamese can live.

ASPECTS OF LAO FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE

Bounlieng Phommasouvanh

Family

Structure of the Lao Family

The family is the strongest social unit in Laos. It is still very much intact while it is breaking down or being threatened in many other countries of the world. The word "family" has a broad meaning and covers ground beyond any western perception and comprehension. It may be described as an extended family system. That is, a Lao family is usually large, having an average size of six to eight members. It often consists of two family units, one being the in-laws and the other the immediate family.

We should point out that while Lao parents take pride in having a son in the family and spend an enormous amount of money in building a future for him, they still favor the youngest daughter in choosing which child of the family they prefer to live with as Lao parents continue to share the house with their children even after marriage. The youngest daughter, or daughters for that matter, would receive a larger share of the family properties than the sons do. The sons, relatively more aggressive, usually build their fortunes elsewhere.

The groom is expected to move in with his in-laws on the wedding day and will continue to stay there until another daughter of the family gets married as the house would then be too crowded. Sometimes, the bride moves in with her in-laws. This occurs only when the groom's family has no daughter. However, if this is to take place, the intention must be made clear when the groom formally proposes to the girl.

But the Lao family is not confined only to one household, since by definition it includes blood relatives, as well as relatives by marriage. We have one of the most extensive kinship systems in the world. The Lao word "phinong" for relatives has a strong connotation suggesting family ties. And the obligations one has toward them are rather awesome as we will see below.

Roles of the Man and Woman

The man is the head of the family. He makes all critical decisions and oversees the general welfare of the family. The role is not very well defined when the father-in-law shares the household with the son-in-law. Who is in charge, the father-in-law or the son-in-law? One would assume that the father-in-law is in charge, but this is not always the case. If he is retired and does not carry the bulk of the family responsibility, the son-in-law assumes the leadership role which then becomes quite sensitive. Occasionally, some kind of consensus is followed. At any rate, the father-in-law is still the most respected and influential person in the family. He still maintains the symbolic head status and is consulted before any decision is reached.

The male members of the family do the heavy work such as tilling the soil, building homes and gathering food. The men enjoy a great deal of privilege and power. The women have to attend to their men and shape their interests and liking after them. The men spend a lot of time with friends and neighbors to maintain their manly image. They may even stop by their friend's house for a drink or chat on the way from work. When there is a social gathering, the men occupy the living room while the women do all the dirty work in the kitchen. This is indeed the man's world.

The role of women is largely confined to the home. They do the cooking, household chores and some light labor on the farms. Women also have to show respect to men by bending or lowering themselves when they walk past the men in their sitting positions. They should not physically place themselves higher than them.

However, women play a significant role in controlling money. Men usually give the money to women to keep. This is logical, if one understands the nature of Laotian men. Functioning as public relations people, the men socialize heavily, give lavish treats to friends, and hence become big spenders. One can then understand and appreciate the woman's role in handling money. However, men still decide on how money should be spent. In other words, the women control the purse strings and the men handle the budgeting. One cannot really underestimate the power of women. They often succeed in maneuvering their men into doing more favors for their relatives and manage to keep closer ties with their own families than the husbands do with theirs.

Family Obligations

The Laotians maintain strong ties with their relatives and

have an extensive kinship system. The word relative or "phinong" in the Lao context is both broad and indefinite. It includes distant blood relatives of many generations and relatives by marriage. So close and significant is kinship that the terms used to identify the various members are enormously large in number. And first cousins are also called brothers and sisters in the Lao kinship system. Tied in with the extensive but strong bond one has with relatives are obligations that he has to fulfill.

Parents are responsible for raising, guiding, and educating as well as teaching some basic trades to their children. The responsibilities often continue after the latter's marriage. Parents spend a lot of time teaching moral values and disciplining their children. Most basic skills in weaving baskets, fishing nets and making farming equipment, for instance, are acquired by learning from the father or the grandfather. Similarly, the mother teaches her daughters how to cook, sew and weave cloth in their early age. She prepares them to be good mothers and wives.

Many parents put big investments in their children. As most Laotians farm for a living they often look to education as a means for the children to climb up the social ladder. Thus, they spend every penny they have to put them through school. Education in Laos is free. But the sheer cost of basic school supplies and clothing and pocket money is beyond what many Lao farmers can afford. Besides, the cost for room and board and transportation has to be considered if the parents want to send their children to a secondary school as this type of school is limited and exists mainly in urban or major population centers.

The tendency for Lao families to invest heavily in their children might be better explained through their complex reciprocal services. The prestige for the family is equally significant. Success for one family member means success for the whole family. The potential services a successful family member can render are enormous. Even though sons move out after marriage, they still have obligations toward their parents. Parents remain under the care of their children in the same household into their old age. It is extremely rare for an aged couple to occupy a separate household since such is looked down upon in Lao society. It is viewed as a disgrace on the part of the children. And old people seem to have a role set out for them, that is to look after the young children and guard the house.

The word "phinong" (relative) is used in a very loose sense of the term, yet its connotation is most astonishing. As stated, "phinong" encompasses immediate as well as distant relatives by blood and by marriage. One is obliged to respond

to the needs and problems of his "phinong." The obligations take many forms. If one is successful in life, his "phinong" naturally increases in number, meaning more favors to do. The obligations range from giving advice concerning personal problems as well as professional matters to providing shelter or financial assistance. The family member that has made it is expected to become a source of inspiration and guidance to the rest of the family. More often than not the expectations are fulfilled.

A Laotian stretches himself quite a ways to satisfy the desires of his relatives. He is quite tolerant as he learns to attune himself to the needs of others at a very early age. Tolerance and modesty start at home and the extended family environment both nurtures and requires it. He learns to be considerate, share food and work, and avoid any act that will offend people, such as slamming the door or shouting. A Laotian is thus conscious and sensitive about little things such as these.

Rites in the Home

As family is a strong social unit, a lot of importance is attached to the home. We observe many activities in the Lao home. When a family moves into a new home, they hold a religious ceremony at which time friends and neighbors take part. During the Lao New Year (mid-April), every house is scrubbed and put in order and the yards cleaned. Most Laotians have a religious ceremony at home once a year and the purpose is to bless the family. These activities help illustrate the importance Laotians give to family.

Social Life

In Laos life revolves around religion and the growing season. Buddhism is the state religion followed by more than 90% of the people. Many social activities center around the temples and religious events. The Buddhist temple, called a "wat," used to be the main source of knowledge. A young man went to the "wat" to learn how to be a good man, that is, a good Buddhist and a good husband. It is believed that a young man should become a novice or monk once in his lifetime. But young people do not take religion very seriously. They largely learn the Buddhist ways by observing. They often look to religion as a source of social outlet. And religion provides ample opportunities toward that end. But, before going into detail and in order to put everything in the right context, it may be helpful to talk about the growing season.

There are two main seasons in Laos: the dry season and

the rainy season. The rainy season begins in May and ends in October. During the rainy season, most Lao people are occupied with farming, growing rice. By November most farmers are through with harvesting. The growing season keeps the Laotians very busy and restricts their social activities. Farming is a hard life. But many farmers combat it with a labor pool especially during the harvesting season. It should be pointed out also that labor pool or sharing the work is a very strong characteristic of the Laotians. The villagers provide free labor and services on many occasions, such as building a house or holding a funeral.

Soon after the rainy season comes to an end, many Laotians again become free of hard labor and put their minds to rest by slowing down and enjoying life. The dry season opens with the boat race at which time the whole village spends the day observing the event. Winning is important but the real object is to entertain and have fun. The men would go up and down the river on the racing boats and chant dirty jokes to the onlookers and young girls. No one feels offended or takes things seriously on this occasion. Everybody lets himself go.

Then follows "Bounkanthin," the religious festival that marks the end of the lunar year (March). Many well-to-do families painstakingly prepare elaborate offerings consisting of complete sets of household needs and utensils for a pre-selected "wat." Next come religious festivals of many forms, one of which is worth mentioning—"Bounpha vet." It is about 500 lives of Gautama the Buddha before his enlightenment. The stories are depicted in paintings on a long piece of cloth on display in the public hall at the "wat." The event lasts three days.

At these festivals many activities are organized such as dancing, gambling, boxing, movies or plays. Young girls would set up individual stands and sell snacks and drinks to the men. The men not only buy snacks and drinks at these stands but court the girls as well. There is everything for all to do and enjoy.

It should be pointed out also that the Laotians make enormous religious offerings to the point of being excessive. One has to understand their concept of the life cycle to understand it. We believe that life never ends and always exists. One can be reborn after death. And our stations in future lives are determined by the good deeds we perform now. Therefore, the Laotians are preoccupied with the thought of trying to improve future lives through generous offerings.

Certainly, one cannot leave out the Lao New Year when he i

talking about social activities. It takes place in April and it celebrates the birth of the Buddha. The ceremony lasts three days at which time both religious and social activities are organized. Every year, on this occasion, the whole village goes to the temples to clean, polish and perfume the statues of the Buddha. The New Year is the rare occasion that allows young men and women to play games that permit physical contact. That is really special for a society that looks down upon any sexual interaction.

Before the rainy season a rocket festival is celebrated in many towns and villages. This is one of the two occasions, the other being the boat race festival, that the Laotians put behind them their taboos and ethics. They dress in funny clothes and chant dirty jokes to the onlookers. The event is supposedly to appeal to the rain goddess or "spirits" to help with the coming rice crop.

Religious activities continue into the growing season. But, for most Laotians, the fun time has ended. Buddhist Lent begins in the ninth month and ends on the eleventh month of the lunar calendar. Offerings to the dead or ancestors take place during Lent. Friends and relatives exchange foodstuffs and young men go to the women's houses for trick or treat.

Buddhism has a strong hold in Laos. But the cult of the spirits or "phi" is deeply rooted in Lao culture. Many ceremonies are characterized by the cult of the "phi." Sometimes, it is difficult to draw a line between Buddhism and the "phi" in everyday life. We believe that man is composed of 32 souls and becomes ill if one of the souls wanders from the body or is lured away by some evil spirit. This belief gave rise to the "Baci" or "Soukhouan" ceremony designed to call back the missing soul. Today "Baci" is a popular ceremony held on farewell, welcome, and many other occasions.

In village life such ceremonies as "lieng phi" (feed the spirits), "sia Kho" (keep away mishaps) or "hop xoak" (receive fortune) are common. They are designed to atone to and be in peace with the spirits. The ceremony usually consists of the sacrifice of a pig or chicken. Man can be in harmony with the "phi" by observing the customs of the land and not disturbing the balance of nature.

To understand fully the social nature, one must be aware of some basic values that are prevalent in our daily life. These values may be briefly described through the concepts of "kengchai" and "piap." "Kengchai" means showing respect to others while keeping a low profile for oneself. This concept

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makes up the total personality of a Laotian. It helps explain his unassertive and unaggressive nature. A Laotian rarely places himself above others and therefore does not believe that the first person pronoun "I" is number one as an individual. Lao society is an uncompetitive society at its best.

Further, the Laotians are very conscious about their social status. They must carry themselves properly in speaking and acting at all times. Where and how one physically places himself in relation to his equals, superiors or subordinates is significant. Equally significant is the form of speech used. One has to use different and proper forms of speech in addressing people of different background or status. A hypothetical situation may help to illustrate this concept.

At a social gathering where people meet each other for the first time, a Laotian would be very cautious about every move he is making. He is in a difficult situation, not knowing how to address people or how to behave properly as he lacks the background knowledge of his company. First, he has to explore cautiously and learn the status of the others and at the same time avoid any direct speech or first person pronoun by engaging in a very superficial type of conversation. Once the exploratory phase is accomplished, everybody is drawn to his own place, assumes his proper role and the conversation can then flow smoothly.

This subtlety is evident in the everyday life of a Laotian. A smile on one's face, a nod of the head, "yes" or "no," does not tell the true feeling of a Laotian. He carries himself the way he is expected to, not the way he wants to. He also uses this type of behavior to avoid confrontation and to fend off foreign influence. The Laotians used this technique effectively against the French missionaries who tried to convert them to Christianity. They never gave an outright "no" to the missionaries when asked to attend mass or preaching sessions. But they never showed up and always had excuses for not attending.

A further key to the understanding of social behavior is "piap." "piap" encompasses pride, honor, self-esteem, integrity, shame, disgrace, and "losing face." It is often equated with one's soul and familial pride and integrity. It is an influential factor in behavior control.

"Piap" is built into one's family. The better background one comes from the greater the "piap" is. Thus he has higher expectations to fulfill. His performance is expected to match his "piap." And he should not lower himself in any kind of

dealing, for his "piap" will suffer. Further, "piap" is an integral part of one's being. In this regard he is responsible to himself. He must try to maintain his integrity and self-esteem. That is "piap."

A Laotian would try everything within his power to gain "piap" (honor and pride) and to avoid losing "piap" (shame and disgrace). One surest way for him to avoid losing "piap" is by following the norms or status quo, and to meet the expectations that are built into him and his family. "Piap" is very important to a Laotian because the whole family and his own well-being are affected by its consequences. Besides, a Laotian never wants to lose "piap" since it brings disgrace to him and to his family. The loss of "piap" is a serious blow to one's well-being and that of his family in Lao society.

Throughout this paper, the traditional values and life styles are presented. Many changes have taken place in the cities that came into contact with western ideas. But the country remains basically agricultural and the traditional ways of life still prevail. Laos has long traditions and a rich heritage. It used to be known as the land of smiles and peace-loving people, a land where life sets its own pace as does time. This paper describes what used to be before the communist take-over. One can only hope that the values that are so meaningful to the Laotians will be preserved under the present regime.

THE HMONG OF LAOS

Vang Tou-fu

In the recent past, due to the lack of bilingual personnel and the fact that government organizations and private resettlement agencies helping individual refugees are extremely overworked, the public has come to know little about the Hmong. In order to be of help to their sponsors and to those who are trying to develop programs to help them achieve economic self-sufficiency, and because they are immigrating in ever greater numbers, we must now answer the questions:

-Who are the Hmong?

-What is it about their social organization and culture that makes them special?

The Hmong, called "Miao" by the Chinese and "Meo" by the Westerners, were a people indigenous to China who spread southward during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They are said to have entered the hills of Indochina early in the 19th century. They have relatives ranging across the mountains of Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. But all the Hmong call themselves "Hmong" which means "free man."

The Hmong as a race are mentioned intermittently throughout Chinese history as far back as 3,000 years ago. The French Hmong historian, Mr. Savina, wrote in his Histoire des Meos,

From time immemorial there has existed in China a race of men whose origin we do not know—living continuously on the heights away from all other Asiatics, these men speak a particular language unknown by all those who surround them, and wear a special dress which is seen nowhere else.

Almost all the Hmong in the U.S. came from Laos, with the exception of a few who fled from North Vietnam after Dien Bien Phu fell to the Communists. Thus, these Hmong may also be called Lao-Hmong.

The Lao-Hmong are highlanders of Laos who prefer to live

high in the mountains where the climate is cool and malaria is rare. The height at which they live usually ranges from 3000 to 6000 feet above sea level. For centuries, their way of life has been centered on working in the fields, tilling the land, in order to grow such crops as rice, cabbage, beans, squash, cucumbers, and corn. Thus, farming is the ideal occupation, with both men and women sharing the work. They practice the slash-and-burn type of agriculture where fields are cleared to grow crops for a few years. When the land becomes infertile, new fields will be looked for, sometimes necessitating the move of the entire village. The Hmong are also celebrated livestock breeders, particularly gifted in raising bulls for fighting and horses for riding and are known for their growing of opium for cash.

When not engaged in farming, the men derive additional income through hunting, for which they are well known, and trading, while the women are noted for their sewing and embroidery. The Hmong are an industrious, independent, and peaceful people. They disdained being soldiers and thought soldiery was fit only for idle, run-away young men.

The Hmong are said to belong to the Sino-Tibetan language family. Culturally and linguistically, they are close to the Chinese. The Hmong language is monosyllabic and has seven tones. The coordination of mouth, lips, teeth, throat, etc., is just as complicated as in English, if not more so. In learning English then, the Hmong do not have as much difficulty in pronunciation as other Indochinese refugee groups. But like them, the Hmong also face the same problems with tenses and with the plural in trying to master English. They cannot understand why there needs to be a change of the verb when time has already been emphasized with such words as "yesterday" or "tomorrow." Irregular verbs are of course even more awkward for them. The same is true with the plural forms; the number has already emphasized the amount and so why should there be a need for the plural marker "s"? The Hmong written language has only recently been developed through missionary efforts. The more popular characters among the refugees are romanized, whereas the Pathet-Lao have also developed a Hmong system of writing in Lao characters, which is said to be quite effective too. The Christian and Missionary Alliance has developed still another version of Lao characters, but it is less popular.

By tradition, the Hmong usually have big families, averaging between five and six people. In a world where people have not learned to trust police, banks, or insurance, the happiness, prosperity and security of the individuals are centered in the family. Thus, the larger the family, the better and more

secure it is. Besides this, the Hmong also follow the patrilineal family clan system where the males carry the family's clan name and are dominant. The ideal role of the wife is devotion and respect for the husband. Insuring family line succession seems to be more important to the Hmong than other refugee groups. A family with three daughters will not be satisfied unless they can produce one or two sons. Of course, these values conflict with attitudes toward birth control in this country.

Most Hmong practiced animism or ancestor worship. However, half of the Hmong refugees in the U.S. have been converted to Christianity through the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination.

In summarizing the Hmong character traits, then, the German anthropologist, Professor H. A. Bernatzik, described them as "healthy, honest, sincere, cheerful and conscientious," and as having a "deep love for freedom." William Garrett, a journalist, stated that the Hmong "prize hard work and ambition," and Professor G. L. Barney said of the Hmong that they are "inquisitive and adaptive."

Unfortunately, however, the Hmong could not lead their peaceful life in the mountains when modernization approached and the war in Indochina intensified. Due to their ability and courage as jungle fighters along with their strategic location, in 1960 they were singled out from among the many other major ethnic groups in the country to collaborate with the U.S. Indochina war policy. Initially, they supported the then rightist general Phoumi Nosavanh and subsequently the neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma when Premier Khrushchev and President Kennedy reached a provisional agreement that Laos should remain neutral.

In due time, almost the whole tribe was involved in the war in Laos, providing a major force blocking the most sensitive northeast region, and as a result putting up the most ferocious defence of our country. Besides defending the country, Hmong missions included collecting intelligence on North Vietnamese movements to the South and rescuing American personnel, particularly downed pilots.

As the war dragged on, the Hmong were constantly on the defensive as they were greatly outnumbered by the enemy composed mainly of North Vietnamese elite units. Consequently, the Hmong took the greater risks and suffered the largest number of casualties during the war serving the interest of the free world. The Washington Post reported shortly after Indochina fell in 1975

that during the 15 years of war the Hmong suffered 30,000 casualties out of a population of approximately 300,000—an equivalent of 20 million Americans being killed. The long Indochina conflict, then, literally decimated the Hmong people and disrupted the entire Hmong family structure. Almost all Hmong families lost at least one or two members. In many cases, only the women and children survived.

Today, even after three years of communist power in Laos, the Lao-Hmong still earn the implacable enmity of the Communist Vietnamese and Pathet-Lao and are suffering the most from their reprisals. Even before Laos fell to the communists, the official organ of the Pathet-Lao headquarters, Khao-xane Pathet-Lao (KLP), published an article on May 9, 1975, stating that "The Meo must be exterminated down to the root of the tribe." Three weeks later, on May 29, the massacre of Hmong began at Hin Heup where 160 died and many were wounded. The genocide against the Hmong has since intensified. Since 1976, there has been a large operation against the Hmong, the heaviest attack being from September 1977 to April 1978 with the so-called "Operation Sam-Kiang" (Sam = 3; Kiang = complete destruction). This operation consisted of burning all houses, produce, and material goods, with the massacre of men, women and children. Four regiments of North Vietnamese troops were mobilized, the 116th, 117th, 118th, and 119th, with many Pathet-Lao battalions supported by heavy artillery, primarily 130mm, and airplanes. But the most murderous weapons are napalm and bombs of Russian make.

As a result of that operation, thousands of Hmong died from poisonous gas, hunger and by ambush. Today, Hmong refugees keep streaming out of Laos toward Thailand, but only the young are able to make it. The women, children and old folks just perish. Their bodies are left untended.

Approximately 70,000 of the Lao-Hmong who could not get out of the country are retreating into the jungle in order to avoid complete extermination by the Pathet-Lao and Communist Vietnamese. Yet, the prestigious French newspaper, *Le Monde*, reported in its January 10, 1978, issue that since 1975 over 10% of this group have been killed.

Why does there exist such bitter animosity from Hanoi and the northeast Laotian province of Samneua against the Lao-Hmong? Ironically, the Vietnamese are seeking the friendship of Thailand and the U.S., who were their two main antagonists during the war. For sure, many North Vietnamese troops have died on the Plain of Jars and around our Second Military Region headquarters, Long Cheng, and the North Vietnamese want revenge against the Lao-Hmong. Yet the remaining Lao-Hmong are weak and easy prey,

being mostly civilians, women and children. The bulk of our force has already crossed into Thailand and seeks access to the U.S. It is bitterly ironic that the Lao-Hmong who have only defended their right to life, a life rooted in liberty, equality and mutual help, are victims of such vicious efforts to exterminate their people. The Hmong have also always been loyal and productive citizens of any country where they settled. This is testified to by Prince Souvanna Phouma's acknowledgment of the Lao-Hmong's sacrifice for the country and in support of the government. He said of the Lao-Hmong wartime leader, General Vang Pao, right after the latter left the country in 1975, that:

He did everything within his power to maintain my government. I really like that man.

Can't anything be done to ameliorate the suffering of the Lao-Hmong—particularly those who are still being hunted in Laos?

The Hmong hope that the U.S., along with other nations that are defenders of human rights, will intervene everywhere that liberty and the lives of innocents are in danger, so that the minorities who do not have a voice can have their own place in our human society.

It should be pointed out here, too, that the Lao-Hmong have experienced greater cultural changes in the last 30 years than in the previous century. First, there was the return of the French during World War II causing a small percentage of the Hmong to be mobilized as militia to help drive the Japanese out. After that, a few Hmong started to move down to the lowlands to obtain education at their own pace. The Hmong began to enter schools, the trades, and the lower levels of civil service.

The greatest change was, as said before, from 1960-75, when the sudden modernization was thrust upon them due to the war. As a result of improved air and ground transportation and the necessity of both official and unofficial communication, intercultural contacts boomed. Thanks to the Laotian government policy of promoting national integration of ethnic minorities through education, the Hmong attended provincial schools in increasing numbers, with a small percentage progressing to post-secondary education in Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

The Indochina war also changed the Hmong economy. There was an increase in labor wages. Small business and the trades flourished. The shrinking availability of land and the need to relocate constantly made opium a difficult cash crop, if it did not completely stop it. Circumstances were such that being a soldier seemed to be the most available occupation. The black

clothing was discarded, western dress and military uniforms were worn by most of the men. At the same time, many of the women changed their dress to lowland skirts. Thus, a new culture centering around military life developed, and participation in the pluralistic Lao society slowly flourished.

As a result of the fall of Indochina, thousands of Hmong fled Laos. They have been dispersed all over the world with over 8000 in the U.S., 4000 in France, 550 in French Guyana, a few hundred in Canada and Australia, and over 50,000 in Thailand.

As happened to other Indochinese refugee groups, at first the resettlement program in the U.S. tended to scatter the Hmong throughout the country. Individuals and families who knew little of the language faced the severe problem of adjusting to the new country. The trauma of leaving their native land, being separated from their relatives, and being a refugee in several foreign countries, has had many manifestations which often lead to serious illness. The stress to which they have been subjected most acutely in the recent past has given rise to loss of sleep and appetite, depression and homesickness; somatic complaints and alienation seem to be widespread. Thus, realizing that they could better survive as a group, the Hmong have gone back to relying on the extended family structure for psychological and material support. They have concentrated in certain areas—a pattern that is common among all Indochinese refugee groups. Thus, many of our people have moved to urban centers—such as Santa Ana, California; St. Paul, Minnesota; Providence, Rhode Island; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois—as well as other places where there are greater opportunities for education, employment, housing and public assistance. They are not only trying to live next door to other Hmong people, but with parents, sons, their children and close relatives. The strong Hmong tradition of self-reliance and independence can only thrive when a number of families have the opportunity to cooperate.

On the whole, considering their education and background, and the absence of special resettlement programs for the Hmong (such as there are for other Indochinese refugee groups), I think that the Hmong are successfully being resettled in this country after a few years of struggle. The immediate goal of self-sufficiency has substantially been accomplished. The majority are holding manual jobs and are doing well, though many still have not mastered the language. Nevertheless, we must also be concerned about long term resettlement. In order for the Hmong to participate positively and meaningfully in the cultural and social life of the American pluralistic society, it is necessary for the Hmong to be given well organized English

instruction and vocational training. If such skills are not taught the Hmong will be hopelessly and needlessly trapped inside a sub-culture for several generations.

Because the Lao-Hmong are Asians, they also share many cultural characteristics of Asian people that conflict with the cultural values of Americans. First, there is the emphasis on respect for the elders. In Asian cultures, the young are to obey and show respect unquestioningly to elders and persons in authority, who in return are to teach, protect, and take responsibility for the young. There is no fear of growing old. Age is approached with dignity, pride, and respect. Thus, Asians gain more respect, power, and control with age, while in America power and respect diminish with age.

Second, an important virtue is putting the family, group, or clan before one's self-interest. Thus, self-negation, self-sacrifice, and modesty are within the Asian child. The pursuit of individual goals is frowned upon as being selfish, an aspersion not only upon the individual, but also upon his family.

Third, Asians face adverse conditions with patience, silent suffering, and perseverance. The importance of these characteristics is related to the long history of the struggle against harsh nature, feudal systems, and the oppression of the masses in many Asian countries. Patience, courage, maturity are required in order to achieve harmony with nature. The Asian avoids conflict, whereas in the American culture, man aggressively tries to master nature.

Fourth, the Asian scrupulously avoids "shame." Putting up a good front, or face-saving, is carefully practiced as the loss of face is a serious blow not only to one's self but to the entire family.

But the Hmong are also different from other Asians including their Laotian compatriots, the Cambodians, and the Vietnamese. They have their own unique cultural characteristics. Hmong culture is uniquely structured in corporate kinship groups. Professor Barney describes the Hmong social structure this way:

The patrilineal clan system of the Hmong dominates their social organization, serving as a primary focus for their culture as a whole by tying together social, political, economic, and religious aspects of behavior.

One finds the "Xeem"—or clan—within the tribe. There are over 20 clan names, but only 14 to 15 are commonly used.

These are: Xiong, Yang, Vang, Lee (Ly), Moua, Lo, Hang, Thao, Kue, Heu (Her), Chang, Vue, Cheng, Kha, Kong, and Pha. The clan is important in marriage, as customarily it is forbidden for one to marry within his own clan. Everyone who belongs to the same clan is treated as a brother or sister.

When talking about clans, it is important to mention Hmong names. The personal name is given to the child; the honorable name is given when the person is married and established; the family name is used by the Hmong refugees to conform with American regulations. An example is:

<u>Personal Name</u> (as child)	<u>Hmong</u> Npis	<u>English</u> Bee
<u>Honorable Name</u> (when established)	Nyiaj Npis	Nhia Bee
<u>Family Name</u> (to conform)	Nyiaj Npis Lis	Lee, Nhia Bee (last name first)

Women are free to carry their own last names, which is causing some confusion in administration, such as schools, hospitals, with immigration, and welfare. For example, the woman below could be married to the man listed above.

<u>Personal Name</u>	<u>Hmong</u> Vab	<u>English</u> Va
<u>Family Name</u>	Vab Yaj	Yang, Va (last name first)

Also below the "Xeem" is the "Ces Neeg," the lineage or branch of people who share the same distant paternal ancestor. This is important in seeking help in times of hardship or in tracing one's roots.

The "Pab Neeg," the extended family which is the most important unit in the Hmong social structure, is next. It usually includes all the people who share the immediate paternal grandparents along with all the in-laws that follow them. Thus, the extended family may encompass anywhere from two to ten households or more.

In the extended family, the roles of mutual help are clearly defined. There is also an obligation to support that is more weighty. Americans recognize a similar set of relations, but they tend to think of such individuals as being distantly related and feel no obligation to provide help. The extended family tries to be self-sufficient in terms of providing its own leader,

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religious figure, musician, blacksmith, marriage negotiator, midwife, etc. Thus, for the individual, there are real economic, social, political, and emotional benefits in joining the extended family, and there are constraints placed on the individual who does not conform.

Finally, there is the household; the next lower level in social structure is the nuclear family. It serves to train children, with everyone in the household taking part in the informal education and training of the young.

The leader represents all families. His opinion is consulted and he has great influence, but he is not a dictator. He responds to the wishes of the community.

The major point to remember is that a Hmong person is never an individual. He is always part of a family. His roles throughout life have to do with what is expected of him. Thus when he makes an important decision he will have to take his family into consideration. So when an opportunity is available try to present it in a certain way. Always remember that in most cases the Lao-Hmong are going to recognize responsibility to a larger group.

To conclude, I would like to relate a song of being a refugee, composed by a Hmong in the U.S. in the Hmong language. Although the translation is rough, it expresses the feelings of the Hmong who have lost a great deal of what has profound meaning for them—the emotional interdependence of the Hmong in their families and the land that sustained them.

Lao-Hmong Oral Poem of Being a Refugee in the U.S.

by
Thaj Yeeb

I.

Recently, as a young one,
I sought refuge in this part of the world,
But will greatly miss that distant land
For countless days and for as long as I shall live.

II.

Recently, as a young one,
I sought refuge in this part of the world,
Without mother or father,
Without younger or older brothers.

It weighs upon my mind and heart,
 Making me restive and suddenly I have to walk,
 To hum my complaint that I'm without mother or father,
 Without younger or older brothers.
 If only I could fade to nothingness,
 Or change into a June beetle or cicada,
 And sit upon the highest vine or tree and sing incessantly.

III.

Recently, as a young one,
 I sought refuge in this part of the world,
 Without mother or father,
 Without younger or older brothers.
 If only I could lose myself, or die and be reborn
 As a pair of falcons or a pair of swallows,
 Strong wind currents would speed my safe return and my homeward
 flight.

IV.

My mother and father are likely humming their own unhappiness:
 Why did our offspring flee?
 Why did he go to the other side of the world?
 Why is he keeping silent? Why has he forgotten his parents?
 And I can imagine what difficulty my parents are having
 Surviving in the jungle through all the seasons and for the rest
 of their lives.
 Shaking like rustling skins of garlic, like the rustling of dry
 leaves.
 Perhaps the day will come while I am yet young,
 When I can return and suddenly appear to my parents,
 To my younger and older brothers.
 Would we again be complete: Would all of us still be there?

V.

Regretfully I must conclude by saying
 That as a young one separated from my parents,
 I must live like the rest of you,
 And make a new life in order to endure.

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John K. Musgrave and John K. Whitmore

The bibliography below is a very selective guide to material in English arranged in five sections: General Southeast Asia (with emphasis on the mainland), Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand—the countries from which most of the new immigrants have come. Within each section, the first entries are bibliographic; then follow books of general interest, concluding with items of specific interest. Some of the bibliographies are very extensive. An effort has been made to lead to material concerning the Meo (Hmong, Miao), a significant people among the new immigrants; these entries are scattered among the various country sections. The focus has been, on the whole, on publications issued since 1945.

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FILMS OF INTEREST CONCERNING INDOCHINESE LIFE

Compiled by John K. Whitmore

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NATURAL RESOURCES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1968, 15 min.* Discussion of the primary resources of the region.

MEKONG, A RIVER OF ASIA, 1967, 25 min.* A look at the river and the lifestyles along its banks—Lao, Thai, Khmer, Vietnamese.

RICE FARMERS IN THAILAND, 1969, 19 min.* A close examination of agricultural tasks.

BOY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1967, 17 min.* An uncomplicated look at lowland rural life.

NICK, 1961, 29 min.* A tale of a Cambodian boy and his elephant, nicely done.

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IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG, 1968, 101 min., black and white (Cornell University, Ithaca). Using old newsreel footage, shows

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INSIDE NORTH VIETNAM, 1967, 85 min. Anti-war, but good views of rural Vietnamese farming technology.

SAD SONG OF YELLOW SKIN, 1970, 60 min.* Mainly life in Saigon, with Vietnamese, Americans, and the degradation therein; a stong film.

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