

Unintended Yet Essential Political Ties: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in French
Indochina
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In June of 1943, Claudie Beaucarnot, a nineteen-year-old Franco-Vietnamese woman living in Tonkin (today's Northern Vietnam), traveled on a family vacation hundreds of miles to the city of Saigon through the countryside of French colonial Vietnam. She kept a diary of her trip in which she mentioned the most interesting sights, smells, and experiences she encountered while on the journey.¹ At one point, while driving through the city of Qui Nhon, she mentions noticing a steeple from what appeared to be a relatively newly built Protestant church.² This image from her diary begs the question of what Protestant group was involved in Indochina during the French Period, why they were there considering Catholic and Buddhist dominance, and what types of interaction they were having with the Vietnamese natives.

After performing some preliminary research on the topic, it became clear that the only Protestants allowed into Vietnam by the colonial French government were an American and Canadian missionary group known as the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). The Alliance was originally formed in 1897 under the direction of Dr. A. B. Simpson. The vast untapped resource of Indochina immediately became a primary target for the C&MA and it was able to purchase land in the port city of Tourane (Da Nang) in 1911 in order to begin proselytizing the Vietnamese.³ Records from both French officials and the C&MA missionaries themselves evidence the fact that “the Christian and Missionary Alliance is the only evangelical missionary agency” in the region of French

¹ Claudie Beaucarnot, Vacation 1943, 1943

² Ibid, 16,

Indochina.⁴⁴ Insofar as these missionaries were the only American citizens in Vietnam during the first decades of the twentieth century, it can be ascertained that their physical and philosophical intervention represented a significant portion of U.S. influence upon Indochinese society. In 1858, France instituted a colonial government in Indochina, which had been operational for over half a century by the time of the arrival of the C&MA; the Alliance was closely watched as they were strongly suspected of being the beginnings of an American colonization process. Whether or not the Alliance was actually vigorously involved with Vietnamese politics is up to debate; thus, this paper seeks to explore the connection between politics and religion within this missionary organization in Indochina. The question remains as to what the C&MA's role was in the developing nation-state of Vietnam and what political purposes, if any, the group played for the political interests of the U.S. in Asia during the execution of their religious endeavors.

In this study, I will focus on the influence of Protestantism within the framework of contemporary Vietnamese religious culture as well as the interaction of the C&MA with government officials. These governments include the local Vietnamese leaders, the colonial French, United States consuls, and the Japanese government during the 1940s occupation of Vietnam. The majority of the resources used in the writing of this article are first-hand accounts written by the missionaries themselves in order to inform their congregations at home of their trials and progress. These documents include the C&MA's annual reports and weekly magazine as well as personal letters and books written during or after each missionary's tour in Vietnam. Thus, my view in this matter is limited to a largely western perspective and further necessary work will follow as more sources

³ James C. Hefley, *By Life or by Death* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 17.

become accessible to me. Nonetheless, sufficient evidence was available to draw solid conclusions regarding the varied roles of the C&MA in French Indochina.

When Dr. Simpson first formed the Christian and Missionary Alliance through the merger of two separate North American evangelical missionary organizations in the late nineteenth century, he immediately set East Asia as a primary target of proselytization, and achieved notable success in the early years. He turned to French Indochina, which had been a European colony since the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1858, France began to attack the countries of Indochina heavily and unceasingly in order to establish an entrenched colonial government there.⁵ Vietnam was a land filled with Buddhists, Taoists, Confucians, as well as Catholics, so the C&MA viewed the population as ripe and ready for Protestant involvement. Indochina was a perfect goal for the group as its densely populated nations were seen as heathen; only a miniscule percentage of its population held the Christian religion.⁶ Reverend Robert A. Jaffray, chairman of the Alliance mission in South China, led the first missionary team into Vietnam in 1911 and purchased land in Tourane from which to base operations.⁷ Interaction with the native Vietnamese and the French colonials went smoothly in the early years for the C&MA and “by 1915 fresh recruits had established beachheads in Hoi An, 15 miles south of Da Nang, Haiphong, the principal northern seaport, and Hanoi.”⁸ The C&MA’s focused attention to Southeast Asia helped the group to spread its beliefs quickly and effectively. This, among other factors such as the Vietnamese respect for Americans their desire for spiritual syncretism enabled the Alliance to achieve its main objective of teaching its doctrines to the Vietnamese

⁴ Alfred C. Snead, *Missionary Atlas* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1936), 40.

⁵ David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971), 26

⁶ Robert L. Niklaus, *All for Jesus* (Camp Hill: Christian Publications, Inc., 1986), 109.

⁷ Alfred C. Snead, *Missionary Atlas* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1936), 42.

people. In order to accomplish this task, the Alliance's "preeminent method [was] evangelism –direct, aggressive, and widespread."⁹ Clearly, this type of dynamic involvement in society made the French colonial government keenly aware of the C&MA's movements throughout Vietnam, thereby increasing the political significance of the group. Furthermore, the active nature of the Alliance exposed quickly and severely to the forefront of Indochinese society the drastic differences between the practice of Protestantism and the Vietnamese contemporary religious culture.

Religion in Vietnam, as with many other aspects of its culture, is heavily founded in the notion of syncretism. Southeast Asian religious culture is composed of a plethora of diverse doctrines and dogmas, none of which are inherently co-exclusive. Thus, the Vietnamese people freely mingle the religious practices of Buddhism and Taoism with the common prescriptions of Confucianism and ancient ancestral worship.¹⁰ While this missionary comment from 1920 reflects not only a cultural bias but also a simplistic understanding of Vietnamese religion, it nonetheless demonstrates that the early C&MA workers did recognize this syncretism. It became difficult, therefore, to import a religion into this established system which required followers to abandon all previously held beliefs in exchange for new ones. Even those who believed in the doctrines of Catholicism were asked to change their beliefs for the purpose of converting to the Protestant Christian faith. The exclusive nature of Protestantism also served to augment the tendency of the religion to uproot basic tenets of Vietnamese tradition and society. Hence, the introduction of Christianity became even more burdensome as "the Annamites are satisfied with a

⁸ James C. Hefley, *By Life or by Death* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 18.

⁹ Burton L. Goddard, Ed., *The Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Missions* (Camden: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967), 134.

¹⁰ David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 89.

religion which they are used to and which confirms their sociopolitical order.”¹¹ This order had been fundamentally maintained by the organized stratification of society resulting from Confucius’ teachings on familial relationships. The structure found in Confucianism along with the morality of Taoism and Buddhism as well as the tradition of ancient ancestor worship combined to create this social framework. Confucianism, originally a quasi-religious code of ethics from China, was the spiritual philosophy that exercised the most significant influence over the Vietnamese people of the first half of the twentieth century.¹² Simultaneously, Vietnamese citizens adhered to the teachings of Buddhism which included a “liberation from all passions, in order to attain to a state of abstract contemplation.”¹³ Also teaching the renunciation of all things material in order to achieve a state of peace and perfect, the religion of Taoism often developed into a series of cults in Vietnam, each with its own distinct belief system. Throughout most of Indochina, these diverse religious teachings all lay upon a foundation of local household ancestor worship which has been a very important tenet of religious culture and society in Vietnam for centuries.¹⁴ In Vietnam during the French period, ancestral worship was almost universal. In a truly syncretic fashion, this ancestor worship has been thoroughly intertwined with the due respect that elders should be paid according to the writings of Confucius. Each religious group was represented in each village and it was accepted practice if not an expected practice to pay tribute to each. An article from October of 1918 explains that “each village ...has generally a small Buddhist temple, a pagoda, where the

Annam is the archaic term for the region of Central Vietnam used here to refer to the entire country of

¹¹ Vietnam. Virginia Thompson, *French Indo-China* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 470-71.

¹² Grace Hazenberg Cadman, *Pen Pictures of Annam and its People* (New York: The Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1920), 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 48

¹⁴ Alfred C. Snead, *Missionary Atlas* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1936), 40.

local saints are worshipped, other pagodas for the Taoist cult, a pagoda to the god of literature in honor of Confucius, while each house had its own altar for the worship of ancestors, for the god of the hearth and the god of the kitchen.”~ The syncretic nature of Vietnamese religion combined many different philosophies from all over the continent of Asia.

In addition to these traditionally Asian religions, early western proselytizers dating back to centuries before the French colonized Indochina had influenced a number of Vietnamese citizens. Through these early European contacts, much of Indochina was introduced to Roman Catholicism. Upon the arrival of the C&MA in the twentieth century, Catholicism had a strong hold in the countryside along with the eastern belief systems. Catholic missionaries had seen a strong positive response to their teachings throughout Indochina.¹⁵ There was nominally a significant Catholic constituency in Vietnam due to the church’s “method of ‘converting’ villages wholesale, the common people being obliged to follow their leaders.”¹⁶ Despite their similar beliefs and common cultures, the Roman Catholics and the C&MA shared mutual animosity as they each repudiated one another’s beliefs to the Vietnamese. In this way, the existence of Catholicism in Vietnam prior to the C&MA’s arrival served as another hindrance to the group rather than an aid. The Alliance missionaries generally agreed that work in Vietnam was particularly difficult because “long ago the Roman Catholics came there and in some way got possession of the rice fields for miles and miles surrounding the town. Since that time they have given a small field to any one who will follow their religion. Many have

¹⁵ Samuel M. Zwemer, “French Indo-China as a Mission Field” *Missionary Review of the World* 41 (1918): 752.

¹⁶ David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971), 25

taken the bait, until now perhaps half the population are [sic] Roman Catholic by name. They become bigoted and are taught to despise the Gospel as we present it.”¹⁷ Clearly, regardless of hopes for easy interaction with the natives without social or political conflict, the Christian and Missionary Alliance had entered into a field with a strong social order and deeply held conviction regarding matters of religion.

The C&MA, while in its constitutions and written declarations stated its desire to avoid any and all contact with the Vietnamese that was not strictly religiously oriented, was expected by the natives to bring along commercial and political ties to the United States upon its arrival. European colonial nations sought to utilize the commercial markets of Indochina while attempting to dominate the land politically and influence it culturally. Ergo, Vietnam made no clear distinction between foreign religious and secular endeavors. Because “commerce and missions with both the French and Portuguese went hand in hand, the native government, therefore, was well aware of the dual role of merchants and missions.”¹⁸ Furthermore, the expectation that missionaries would have direct ties to government agencies was justified during World War I and II as some missionary groups aided their governments in various ways across the globe. During the First World War, and especially during the Second, Western governments utilized their missionary citizenry for a wide variety of purposes including funding and intelligence. Many missionaries became upset at the way some groups “have allowed their resources and personnel to be made available to government and military agencies for the conduct of the war” because of the way that it reflected on nonpolitical missionary agencies.¹⁹ Because of this, the

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¹⁸ Virginia Thompson, *French Indo-China* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 22.

¹⁹ “Missions and Army Spy Service,” *The Christian Century* 42 (1925): 700.

C&MA was forced to be extra careful to avoid provoking added suspicion upon itself for political or military involvement. Attempting to forge a distinctly religious path in Vietnam, conscientious “Alliance missionaries ...carefully skirted political entanglements.”²⁰ This distinction was important not only for the purposes of furthering the C&MA’s cause, but also for maintaining a positive view of the United States among the native population. This sound image was vital to American interests in Indochina. By the end of the Second World War, the U.S. government began to be very critical of French administrative practices in Vietnam. By this point, anticipating further American involvement in Southeast Asia, either commercially or politically, the United States placed vast importance upon improving its image within the borders of French Indochina.²¹

Vietnamese natives were generally more receptive to American visitors than to those of French citizenship. Unlike the often-despised colonial French government, the U.S. Government had been admired by Vietnamese nationals and revolutionaries for its ability to maintain a stable society and economy.²² The Vietnamese frequently saw Americans as a practical people who work for a living. They are all common people. There American civilization is the civilization of the common people, without adornment but successful. Because of this, American society is more altruistic and equal, its civilization more materialist. ...The United States is a nation of commerce and industry.²³ While this may be an idealistic description of citizens of the United States, it demonstrates that reformers of the postwar generation who were ready to overthrow the French colonials viewed the Americans as a meritorious model for individualism and progressive

²⁰ James C. Hefley, *By Lp'i? or by Death* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 126

²¹ David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 365.

²² Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 28.

thought. Leading Vietnamese reformers including Ho Chi Minh idolized the American revolutionaries of the eighteenth century and used this type of radical political thought as the basis for their own revolutionary doctrines.²⁴ The C&MA enjoyed a higher level of trust among the Vietnamese since “America remained an important source of inspiration” for the nationalist Vietnamese.²⁵ This positive image of Americans in general augmented the C&MA’s efforts to acquire good relations with the natives in the early years of contact. However, by the period of World War II, one the United States government began to become directly involved politically with Indochina, skepticism of American flawlessness quickly heightened.

The periods of war in Vietnam drastically altered relations with the United States. In this tide of changing opinion and uncertainty, the C&MA was negatively affected by shifting attitudes towards westerners. Continuous warfare disrupted the atmosphere in Vietnam, devastated certain portions of the countryside, and substantially inhibited the movements of the Alliance missionaries. Many religious meetings, therefore, “were postponed and the work restricted by the long delay in granting authorization, partly due to the unsettled conditions in some sections of the country.”²⁶ The continual warring throughout Indochina had a significant effect upon all of its residents, from the French colonials to the common rice farmers, as it catalyzed a significant halt in economic activity within the region. In its annual report from 1931, the C&MA explained that “social unrest and consequent restrictions, business depression, financial stringency, shortage of workers, and many other hindrances have conspired together to put a damper on” the

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²⁵ Ibid., 36.

²⁶ The Thirty-Fourth Annual Report of The Christian and Missionary Alliance for the Year 1930, 40.

overall Vietnamese economy.²⁷ Thus, the social unrest in the interwar period stymied any chance at growth for the Indochinese economy. While many Vietnamese nationals expected the Alliance missionaries to carry in much needed economic support from the U.S. government, Vietnamese interests were never a significant consideration for the American government during the Roosevelt administration. As was the case with most of Southeast Asia, “Vietnam remained on the periphery of American foreign relations for much of the period between the two world wars. For diplomats and businesspeople, American political and economic interests in Vietnam were marginal.”²⁸ Commercial connections with the United States increased throughout the 1930s but never to a level that was able to help bring Vietnam out of its economic stagnation. The interwar period did see a rise in rubber exports to the U.S. but barring that, “the country was almost cut off, commercially, from the United States.”²⁹ Ergo, Vietnam was unable to recover from the economic downturn quickly which served only to stimulate further social unrest in Indochina.

The social turbulence merged with other factors including governmental suspicion and a frantic desire to maintain the *status quo* to limit the preaching ability of the C&MA in Vietnam. Early on in its service in Indochina, the C&MA experienced a series of hindrances, which slowed its growth at the start. By 1915, an edict had been written by the French government restricting missionary movement outside of the major cities in Indochina.³⁰ The uncertain conditions of the First World War “caused the French government to forbid missionary residence in any part of French Indo—China except

²⁷ The Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of The Christian and Missionary Alliance for the Year 1931, 26.

²⁸ Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 45.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 45

Tourane, Haiphong, and Hanoi, where the missionaries, though permitted to remain, were not allowed to engage in active work.”^{30,31} After a few years, however, behind the diplomacy of Robert Jaffray, the C&MA was able to restart the proselytization of Vietnam as the French government conceded to allow this activity. Yet this victory also was short-lived. The instability of the interwar period caused further constraints to be placed upon the Alliance. With political reform on the tongues of the Vietnamese intelligentsia and radical ideas being propagated throughout the land, the government was quick to suspect foreign influence. Therefore, the C&MA, as a distrusted American group, was kept from much interaction with the Vietnamese populous. This came to a head in 1928 when local government officials finally decided to outlaw the practice of Protestantism in Vietnam.³² An edict was issued on March 2 from the city of Nha Trang forbidding the C&MA from spreading its faith.³³ Thus the times of social unrest directly hindered the C&MA’s goals. Some areas considered of vital importance that the C&MA “sought to enter were blocked by unfriendly governments [and] hostile people.”³⁴ Nevertheless, the organization continued to operate and it consequently served to play a significant role for the United States in the development of Vietnam.

Despite the numerous restrictions placed upon the American missionaries, the attending congregation of the C&MA continued to grow during these times of trial. While much of the preaching was forced to be done through covert and clandestine means, the overall progress of the mission was uninterrupted. One missionary explained that “in spite

³⁰ Alfred C. Snead, *Missionary Atlas* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1936), 42.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

³² *Ibid.*,

³³ CE. Travis, “Hiding in Annam,” *The Alliance Weekly* 63 (1928): 858.

Ibid., 858.

³⁴ Burton L. Goddard, Ed., *The Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Missions* (Camden: Thomas Nelson &

of terrible persecution from native officials and] severe financial testing,” the C&MA achieved “steady growth in Annam.”³⁵ However, because of the turmoil, C&MA headquarters in the United States urged its missionaries to abandon their work and return home for their own safety.³⁶ While the majority retreated, a handful of C&MA representatives remained in Indochina during these rough times. This risky decision paid off for the C&MA as it continued to maintain a critical foothold in Vietnam. Preaching continued to go forward and in 1921 a religious revival broke out in Central Vietnam which furthered the Protestant faith in Indochina.^{37 38} More importantly on a global scale, however, was the fact that the United States continued to have some of its citizens living in Indochina. These Americans kept the U.S. government aware of events taking place in Southeast Asia by not allowing it to completely ignore the region in the construction of its foreign policy. Had all of the Americans left Vietnam in the interwar period, it is possible that the U.S. impetus to intervene in Vietnam in later decades may have been drastically diminished. The C&MA groundwork in Vietnam played an essential role for the United States in monitoring the events of this revolutionary period.

During World War II, the Japanese occupied Indochina for some years in order to exploit region’s wealth of natural resources. While nominally under French governance, the Japanese had almost unilateral power in Indochina at this time and had arrested the majority of western governors.³⁹ During these tense times, Japanese officials were even more suspicious of the C&MA than had been the French and Vietnamese

Sons, 1967). 133.

³⁵ Irving R. Stebbins, “A New Day in Annam,” *The Alliance Weekly* 68 (1933): 88.

³⁶ Interview. Rev. and Mrs. R. M. Jackson, “Occupation of Viet Nam by the Japanese. Experience of Missionaries,” 4.

³⁷ *The Thirty-Third Annual Report of The Christian and Missionary Alliance for the Year 1929*, 35.

³⁸ Irving R. Stebbins, “Pioneering in French Indo-China,” *The Alliance Weekly* 65 (1930): 313

governments combined in previous years. Concerned about a western attempt to spur insurrection, the Japanese ordered the imprisonment of all C&MA missionaries for the duration of the war.⁴⁰ By the 1940s, only a few C&MA members remained in Vietnam, according to Rev. R. M. Jackson the number remaining was seventeen, but all of those were interned until liberation at the war's end.⁴¹ The Japanese government suspected the American missionaries of being governmental agents sent to add chaos and disorder to the Indochinese predicament. Police officers often questioned C&MA missionaries as well as their native Vietnamese converts in order to ascertain their political connections.

Even before the war, members of the C&MA were looked upon with great suspicion. The Vietnamese and French governments looked intently at all C&MA activity and kept close tabs with whosoever the Alliance communicated. One missionary recounted that "we are being watched every day and our words and actions are reported to the officials."⁴² Before long, both the French and Vietnamese governments employed intelligence agents to monitor the missionary activity. Commoners were strategically hired by the administration to join the C&MA congregation and provide reports regarding private meetings and other interaction with the Vietnamese people.⁴³ This practice continued throughout the interwar period, by the end of the Second World War the government was convinced that American spies from the new Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.) were working through the C&MA. While substantial evidence has never confirmed this suspicion, the government continued to believe that all pastors belonged to

³⁹ A.C. Snead, "Alliance Missionaries in War Areas," *The Alliance Weekly* 77 (1942): 40.

⁴⁰ Alfred C. Snead, *Missionary Atlas* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1950), 47.

⁴¹ Interview. Rev. and Mrs. R. M. Jackson, "Occupation of Viet Nam by the Japanese. Experience of Missionaries." 1.

⁴² Mrs. Richmond Jackson, "Opposition in Indo China," *The Alliance Weekly* 63 (1928): 266.

⁴³ Mrs. Richmond Jackson, "Soul Saving in Thanh-Hoa, Annam, French Indo-China," *The Alliance Weekly*

American intelligence agencies.⁴⁴ Even without specific evidence as to any C&MA political activity, the anxiety of the global environment around the war period caused a suspicion of foreigners to become the social norm. This was especially the case as some evidence was corroborated that the U.S. did have intelligence officers in Vietnam.⁴⁵ By the end of World War II, the United States had created an intelligence service known as the O.S.S. which was most certainly involved in Indochina during and after the war. Interestingly, one O.S.S. officer, Sergeant George Wickes, used connections within the Roman Catholic Church to collect information on the Viet Minh.⁴⁶ To date, however, no evidence has appeared to directly link any intelligence agency to the C&MA.

Nevertheless, the abundance of suspicion and circumstantial evidence surrounding the C&MA during this time period made it easy for the government to suspect the group of clandestine activity. A major motivating factor for this mistrust was the fact that a majority of the C&MA missionaries, while of American or Canadian citizenship, had German surnames or German ancestry of some kind.⁴⁷ Because of the prewar tension between France and Germany, the French were very cautious of having any link to Germany in one of its colonies. France was having enough trouble with Germany on its homefront and the “sudden eruption of war with Germany and the rapid advance of her armies on the French soil dealt staggering blows to French prestige all over the world.”⁴⁸ Even more alarming for the French colonials was the discovery that German intelligence

65 (1930): 430.

⁴⁴ Tom White, *Between Two Tigers* (Bartlesville: Living Sacrifice Book Co., 1996), 177.

⁴⁵ R. Harris Smith, *OSS* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 341.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 341. Sergeant Wickes was a well-informed member of the O.S.S. who utilized his relationship with his cousin who was a nun outside the city of Saigon to gain intelligence for the United States.

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⁴⁸ Phu Hoang Le, Dissertation, “A Short History of the Evangelical Church of Viet Nam,” 115

agents had been working in other parts of East Asia to incite insurrections.⁴⁹ German spies even managed to infiltrate French Indochina through Eastern Siam. A revolution was stirred up allegedly by this group in Northern Vietnam during the interwar period. Because of the success of these German spy missions, the French government became very suspicious of the American missionaries with German backgrounds.⁵⁰ The French government remained on high alert as rumors of revolution and attacks against the French authorities alarmed the secret police who put the missionaries under constant surveillance. Widespread rumors had it that these missionaries were German spies who, the French seemed to suspect, exploited the unrest in the country if they did not actually incite it. Consequently, C&MA interaction with the Vietnamese people, whether commoners or government officials, was watched very closely by distrustful eyes.

The C&MA had frequent contact with the French and Vietnamese officials alike so the threat of propagating foreign radical ideas to government leaders remained a strong possibility in Indochina. Since their first arrival in 1911, one of the main activities for C&MA missionaries in Vietnam was holding meetings inside their homes where they would tell visitors about the religious beliefs and practices. These meetings were frequented by many young people, many of whom were students. When members of the government school came to visit, the C&MA had direct and private links to future public officials. The Alliance was also able to talk with current members of the government in these meetings as officials and armed forces officers would often attend with their families.⁵¹ These connections with low-level officials, while having the possibility of

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 115,

⁵¹ Mrs. Gordon H. Smith, *Gongs in the Night* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1944), 18.

creating important relationships, did not frighten the colonial government nearly as much as the C&MA meetings with such influential leaders as Emperor Bao-Dai and President Ngo Dinh Diem in the 1950s. Though more than likely merely meetings of hospitality, the French government was concerned that possible C&MA spies were infiltrating the native government in order to oppose the current administration. In 1933 Rev. Irving Stebbins of the C&MA met with Emperor Bao-Dai at his palace in Hue.⁵² He was received with kindness and was able to address the emperor in Vietnamese in order to thank him for not completely shutting down all missionary activities in Vietnam. Similarly, missionary Richard Pittam gained an audience with President Diem in the 1950s in South Vietnam who was also very willing to support the western missionary efforts throughout the country.⁵³ These meetings took place behind closed doors and no minutes were recorded. Thus, the only available records of these meetings come from writings by the missionaries themselves. These letters and publications are understandably very religious in nature and do not mention any talk of political discussions with the leaders. Therefore, even if C&MA missionaries were having clandestine political conversations with the Vietnamese government, there would be no available documents describing the meetings. However, there exists abundant documentation of secret meetings that took place between France and the Alliance. Even within the first decade of its presence in Vietnam, the C&MA had established relationships with many important French officials, including a number of French Residents-Superior. According to C&MA records, these meetings were “most cordial” and the French were outwardly supporting of all C&MA⁵³ efforts in

⁵² Irving Stebbins, “In the Palace of Bao-Dai, Emperor of Annam,” *The Alliance Weekly* 68 (1933): 472.

⁵³ James C. Hefley, *By Life or by Death* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 37.

Indochina.⁵⁴ Later, during the Japanese occupation, C&MA members would stay in contact with the French government by sending letters through secret service agents. Prominent missionary Rev. R. M. Jackson explained that “if I wanted to make a trip into the country, I would write a letter in French and give it to the French secret service and ask him permission to go to such and such a place or to several places.”⁵⁵ Through these methods, the Alliance remained in communication with both French and Vietnamese government officials, which served to advance its personal cause. Additionally, the C&MA’s involvement with the ruling governments in Indochina provided a foothold through which the United States could become more deeply involved in the development of Vietnam as a nation.

The U.S. government needed to receive word from the Alliance as to significant occurrences in Indochina in order to become more involved in Vietnamese affairs during the French period. Thus, in addition to the C&MA’s contact with French and Vietnamese officials, communication with the U.S. government remained vital to the American understanding of developments in French Indochina. The United States had to rely basically upon C&MA reports as it did not have a strong governmental representation in Southeast Asia. In fact, “until 1940 a single consul in Saigon represented American interests in the French colony.”⁵⁶ Although there were few officials in Indochina, the C&MA was still able to utilize the resources available to it through the U.S. government. The Alliance kept in contact with the United States through cables sent to the Department

⁵⁴ M. Alfred Martin. ‘A French Pastor’s Tour through Indo-China,: The Alliance Weekly 60 (1925): 734.

⁵⁵ Interview. Rev, and Mrs. R. M. Jackson, “Occupation of Viet Nam by the Japanese. Experience of Missionaries,” 2.

⁵⁶ Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 45

of State.⁵⁷ The majority of the communication regarded French colonial laws, which inhibited the work of the C&MA who, in turn, asked the assistance of the American government to help alleviate these issues. These laws included statutes that required the C&MA to pay extra taxes and obtain extended visas.⁵⁸ Through these cables, the United States was able to keep abreast of Indochinese affairs by peripherally examining the political policies implemented there. The Federal government also assisted the C&MA financially when possible in order to protect its citizens overseas. Furthermore, this gave the U.S. an opportunity to become involved more deeply in Vietnam and ensure that it would have a role in the development of the nation-state at the conclusion of the revolutionary period.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance was stationed in Vietnam early enough to witness the country's growth and metamorphosis after the First World War. Although the evangelical organization faced many challenges in spreading its beliefs, from cultural differences to outright governmental restrictions, the C&MA remained a strong presence in Indochina throughout the twentieth century. This presence was felt throughout the nation Protestant outstations began to emerge all over Indochina, as evidenced by Claudie Beaucarnot's mentioning of a steeple in her 1943 diary. Being the only group of Americans in Vietnam during that time period, the C&MA served as a vital connection between the United States and Indochina. While no evidence exists as to the C&MA performing any intelligence operations during or between the World Wars, the political relationships formed between the Alliance and governing officials enabled additional and direct U.S. intervention in the decades to follow.

⁵⁷ Letter, Wilbur J. Carr to AC. Snead. 28 June 1930.

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