

The Binh Xuyen

PART TWO. OTHER MINORITY GROUPS

CHAPTER 19. THE BINH XUYEN

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Named for the town south of Cholon where the movement originated, the Binh Xuyen operated clandestinely as a band of river pirates in an area bounded on the west by the Soi Rap River, on the east by the Baria-Long Thanh highway, and on the north by the Phuoc Thanh, Phuoc An, Long Thanh highway until August 1945, when the group came into public view.¹ After World War II, the Binh Xuyen began organizing on a territorial basis, finally attaining a position of considerable political and military importance.* Frequently mislabeled a "sect," the Binh Xuyen actually lacked the religious base implicit in the title of sect and fundamental to organizations like the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao.† Additionally, the Binh Xuyen, unlike the sects, sought no popular support, but derived its funds from banditry and vice racketeering.²

Under the leadership of Le Van Vien (alias Bay Vien), the Binh Xuyen, numbering between 1,000 and 3,000, cooperated initially with the Viet Minh against the French during the Indochina War (1946-1954); but in 1948 they rallied to the side of the French and fought effectively against the Communists.³

Le Van Vien eventually became director of the "Grand Monde," one of Asia's largest gambling establishments, and was rewarded for his cooperation with the French by receiving a commission as a brigadier general in the auxiliary forces of the Vietnamese National Army. In 1953, the Binh Xuyen, backed by Emperor Bao Dai, reached the zenith of its power when it received nine seats in the National Congress called by the Emperor. By this time the Binh Xuyen had also gained control of the Saigon city civil administration and police force.⁴ By 1954, they operated lucrative gambling and prostitution establishments in Saigon and controlled the

* The Binh Xuyen controlled areas of Vietnam as semiautonomous fiefs. They collected taxes from the local population and ran local administration systems.

† The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects are examined in separate chapters in this volume.

opium trade, much of the fish and charcoal commerce, and several hotels and rubber plantations.

In the army crisis of September 1954, the Binh Xuyen aligned itself with Premier Ngo Dinh Diem against the Chief of Staff Gen. **Nguyen Van Hinh**, who was suspected of plotting against Diem and was backed by the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao.⁵ A few days later, the Binh Xuyen switched its allegiance to Hinh and in March 1955 joined the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao in forming a United Front of National Forces, a loose coalition. The Front sent a mission to Bao Dai, requesting the resignation of Diem, and issued an ultimatum to Diem, giving him 5 days to form a government of national union.⁶ Diem's refusal to acquiesce to the demands of the Front resulted in a Binh Xuyen attack on the presidential palace on March 29, 1955.⁷ The French intervened in the conflict and temporarily halted the fighting,⁸ but renewed hostilities broke out a short time later when the National Army initiated military action against the Binh Xuyen. By May 1955, Government troops had pushed the Binh Xuyen from the Saigon-Cholon area into the swamps of Bien Hoa and Phuoc Tuy Provinces. Le Van Vien fled to Paris and the power of the Binh Xuyen had been smashed.⁹

According to one source, members of the Binh Xuyen who had escaped Diem's campaign and had been driven underground were included in the National Liberation Front at its foundation in 1960.⁹ Subsequent reports seem to confirm that small Binh Xuyen groups are cooperating with the Viet Cong.¹⁰

⁵ The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, sensing a change in the political atmosphere, defected to Diem's side just prior to the conflict.

SECTION II

EARLY HISTORY AND STATUS DURING THE INDOCHINA WAR

For centuries it was customary for the Binh Xuyen, who inhabited a desolate, unproductive region south of Cholon, to raid their richer neighbors after harvesttime and steal enough to sustain themselves until the next harvest. The Binh Xuyen were simply river pirates or bandits who operated on a small scale from swamp hideouts.¹ When they moved into urban areas they were chiefly concerned with organizing vice rackets and exacting protection money from wealthy Chinese. However, the breakdown in public security following the Japanese occupation (1940-1945) and the release of prisoners from the Cochin-Chinese prisons afforded them an opportunity to extend their activities.² In August and September of 1945, the Binh Xuyen first attracted public attention when their representatives participated in ceremonial marches, bearing an enormous green banner on which was inscribed "Binh Xuyen Bandits."³

In 1945, the Binh Xuyen leaders,* imbued with the extreme patriotism which swept Vietnam after World War II, joined the Viet Minh. One of the Binh Xuyen leaders, Le Van Vien (Bay Vien), was made director of municipal affairs and, in this capacity, raised a considerable sum of money for the military activities of the Viet Minh's Nam Bo (Provisional Executive Committee for South Vietnam). Impressed by this demonstration of efficiency, Tran Van Giau, the Viet Minh military commander, presented Vien with a list of persons to assassinate. Vien, shocked by the lengths to which the Communists were willing to go to consolidate their position, refused to carry out the assassinations.⁴ The Binh Xuyen leaders managed to retain a degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the Nam Bo⁵ and, when the Committee was forced to leave Saigon-Cholon, the Binh Xuyen retreated to their former operational zone. At this time Vien refused to allow his 1,300 armed men to be incorporated into the Viet Minh forces.⁶

Annoyed by the separatist tendencies of the Binh Xuyen, the Viet Minh, under the new commander Nguyen Binh, sought to elim-

* The most renowned of these were: Duong Van Duong (killed in February 1946), Le Van Vien, Duong Van Ha, Muoi Tri, and Tu Ty.

inate, by means of "suicide squads," members of the group who eluded their control.⁷ The conflict between the Viet Minh and Binh Xuyen reached a climax in April 1946 at the time of the creation of the "United National Front," an anti-Communist and anti-French coalition which the Binh Xuyen joined. Nguyen Binh was intent on dissolving this group and reducing the power of Le Van Vien, while the latter remained on his guard against the Viet Minh as well as the French Expeditionary Corps.⁸

Lured by a promise of promotion within the Viet Minh, Le Van Vien, after much hesitation, accepted an invitation from the Nam Bo to go to the Plaine des Joncs for official acceptance of his new position. On May 20, 1946 Vien left Rung Sat (an area west of Baria under Binh Xuyen control), for the Plaine des Joncs. Still suspicious of Viet Minh motives, Vien took with him an escort of 200 loyal armed men.⁹ Received with great fanfare and demonstrations of friendship, Vien accepted the position of "Khu Truong Khu 7" (Commander of Viet Minh Military Zone 7—east of Saigon) in the presence of Communist officials from Viet Minh Zones 8 and 9 who had convened for the occasion. All went well until Vien learned that some of his troops east of the Soi Rap River had been disarmed on Nguyen Binh's orders. The latter reassured Vien of his intentions, while making certain that Vien would be detained and his escort eliminated.

Vien escaped from the Viet Minh and on June 10 reached Bien Hoa, where he discovered that his fief was occupied by Viet Minh forces and he could not return. Without delay, Vien sent two envoys to the French with a letter containing two requests: permission to pass through the French-held area to reach the banks of the Soi Rap, and French Army assistance in clearing the Viet Minh out of his domain. In return, he agreed to accept the French conditions to "rally"—e.g., surrender at a price. The first request was granted and the second was to be discussed on Vien's arrival on the scene for the proposed negotiations.¹⁰ After several conferences, Vien agreed to rally to the side of the Bao Dai Government and to recognize the French Union.¹¹ On June 17, Vien proclaimed himself violently anti-Communist, and a few days later regained control of Cholon as well as his fief. The French had given official recognition to the Binh Xuyen and granted it independent control of the region.¹² A few days later, Tran Van Huu (President under Bao Dai), named Vien Colonel of the Guard of Vietnam, and the Binh Xuyen received the official name of "Binh Xuyen National Armed Forces." The group was marked henceforth by its *esprit de corps*, demonstrated by its own music and flag (a yellow star on a green ground, bordered in red).¹³ Vien began to enter politics and was soon well known around Saigon.

His troops were situated along the roads leading from the capital, where they collected "road safety taxes" on cars and buses and from farmers bringing produce to market.¹⁴

In 1949, Le Van Vien headed a consortium which bought control of two of Asia's largest gambling and prostitution concessions—the "Grand Monde" in Cholon and the "Cloche d'Or" in Saigon—and Vien assumed the position of director of the establishments.¹⁵

Vien became fanatically anti-Communist in his activities. In 1950, when Viet Minh bombs rocked Saigon nightly, Cholon, policed by the Binh Xuyen (who were paid by the wealthy Chinese), remained quiet. In an effort to stabilize Saigon, the French granted permission to the Binh Xuyen to police the capital; the Binh Xuyen cleared the terrorists out of Saigon.¹⁶ In return, Vien was promoted in 1952 to the rank of Brigadier General in the auxiliary forces of the Vietnamese National Army.¹⁷ In February 1953, Binh Xuyen military activities received an additional boost when Vien was authorized to form a battalion of troops to police the Long Thanh highway from Saigon to the coast.¹⁸ In addition, the Binh Xuyen were allowed to occupy three posts on the Saigon River to ensure the safe flow of traffic along this important artery.¹⁹

On July 3, 1953, the French made a "solemn declaration" of their willingness to complete the independence of Vietnam by transferring hitherto under French control. In return, the declaration invited the Vietnamese Government (under Bao Dai) to settle its claims in the economic, financial, judicial, military, and political spheres. The Vietnamese nationalists, dissatisfied with Bao Dai's conduct of affairs, realized that the negotiations would be completed without regard for their wishes. Although divided by personal rivalries, they sought a means of demonstrating the importance of their claims. Ngo Dinh Nhu seized this opportunity to form an unofficial front of national union to support his brother Ngo Dinh Diem as candidate for the premiership and to demonstrate the desire of the Vietnamese to have a voice in the direction of national affairs. The leaders of the religious sects and the Binh Xuyen gave their support to the plan, and Le Van Vien was persuaded to offer his headquarters as the site for the congress. On September 5, a national congress in support of "national union and peace" met in semiclandestine fashion. When the discussions turned to violent indictments of the French authorities and Bao Dai, Le Van Vien ordered his troops to clear the hall. The religious sect leaders attempted to quell the ensuing scandal by assuring Bao Dai of their loyalty.

To erase the impression of popular discontent created by the September congress and to ensure his claim to represent the Vietnamese nationalists in negotiations with the French Government,

Bao Dai summoned an official National Congress on October 1, 1953. The Binh Xuyen reached the peak of its career at this time: nine seats, more than those reserved for the Buddhists or the ethnic minorities, were allocated to members of the Binh Xuyen. The delegates were instructed to make known to Bao Dai the desires of the Vietnamese people concerning future relations with France "within the framework of the French Union" and to appoint members to assist him in the negotiations. Instead, the National Congress unanimously approved a motion (which was later amended) in support of total independence for Vietnam.²⁰

The following April, a member of the Binh Xuyen (Lai Huu Sang) was appointed director-general of the Saigon-Cholon police and security services—presumably the price for Binh Xuyen allegiance to the Government. The group, then in charge of public security, was officially obligated to control activities on which its own power was founded.²¹

Thus by the end of the Indochina War, the Binh Xuyen, which had gained a following estimated between 5,000 and 8,000, maintained semiautonomous fiefs to the south and southeast of Cholon, controlled the Saigon-Cholon police, ran lucrative gambling and prostitution establishments, and controlled the opium trade, much of the fish and charcoal commerce, and several hotels and plantations.

SECTION III

STATUS DURING THE DIEM REGIME

Among the most pressing problems facing Ngo Dinh Diem when he was called to office by Bao Dai in June 1954 was the existence of the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen, who held sway over vast quasi-autonomous territories. Charged with the task of unifying southern Vietnam, Diem realized he had to break the power of the sects and the Binh Xuyen, whose interests conflicted with his own. He had two alternatives: he could either eliminate these groups or integrate them into the body politic. In either case, he needed a strong, loyal army.

The Army Chief of Staff at the time was Gen. Nguyen Van Hinh, a French citizen, whom Diem suspected of conspiring against him. On September 11, 1954, Diem demanded Hinh's resignation, initiating a 7-week army crisis. Hinh refused to accede to Diem's order and barricaded himself in his headquarters. Fear of a coup d'etat or an attempt on his life forced Diem to withdraw to his palace. Ironically, Diem's guards were under the control of the Binh Xuyen, of whom he strongly disapproved because of their affiliation with gambling and prostitution. The Binh Xuyen, however, were willing to defend Diem, at least temporarily, for two reasons: loyalty to Bao Dai, and therefore to Diem, his appointee; and rivalry with the National Army.*¹

During the crisis, Diem's administrative power was reduced to impotence when Hinh demonstrated the strength of his position by ordering troops to patrol the capital. It was evident in the beginning that Hinh could execute a coup d'etat with considerable ease, but he showed reluctance to do so and instead sought to temporize.² Less than a week later, the Binh Xuyen switched allegiance and joined the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao in support of Hinh. In a manifesto dated September 16, the sects and the Binh Xuyen officially dissociated themselves from Diem and declared the need for a democratic government, liberation of the country from foreign domination and enactment of measures to eliminate poverty and illiteracy. In order to appease Hinh, Diem appointed Gen. Nguyen Van Xuan

* General Hinh's father, Nguyen Van Tam, had organized the Security Service and controlled the police. When the Binh Xuyen gained control of the police, many security investigators joined the Vietnamese National Army.

to the Ministry of National Defense. Pleased with the appointment, Hinh agreed not to take action and asked Bao Dai to arbitrate the disagreement between the sects, the Binh Xuyen, and Diem.²

Hinh was, however, warned that a military coup d'état would result in the halting of foreign economic and military aid. Bao Dai, hoping to end the crisis, sent for Lê Van Vien and ordered him to form a coalition government with the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao leaders. The sect leaders, however, made demands unacceptable to Lê Van Vien, who accused them of selling their services to Prime Minister Diem.

The accusation was well founded, for on September 24 Diem persuaded the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao to accept four seats each in his new Cabinet.*¹ Cao Dai and Hoa Hao unwillingness to concede leadership in the coalition government to Vien, and the refusal of the latter to finance Cao Dai and Hoa Hao activities after their loss of French subsidies, caused the leaders of the religious sects to defect, at least nominally, to Diem.² The Binh Xuyen, however, since they still controlled the National Police, refused to enter the new Government.³ The army crisis ended when Hinh was finally dismissed, and a temporary calm reigned over the country.

Diem dealt another blow to the power of the Binh Xuyen when, in his campaign against vice and corruption, he refused to renew the licenses of the "Grand Monde" and "Cloche d'Or" when they expired on January 15, 1955. The equivalent of over \$200 million had changed hands in these establishments over the preceding 8 years. Vien, who personally had received about \$14,000 a day in "taxes" from the "Grand Monde" alone, was charged, as head of the police, with the task of closing these gambling and prostitution centers. Vien apparently accepted the decision, regretting only that the Government was willing to lose such an important source of revenue.⁴

Meanwhile the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen maintained an uneasy truce, broken by frequent clashes when one group trespassed on another's domain. Fearing that sectarian differences would result in the weakening of their resistance against Diem's demands, Bao Dai urged the sects and the Binh Xuyen to unify. On March 5, 1955, the three groups, totaling 25,000 men, formed the United Front of National Forces, an anti-Government coalition to promote the formation of a democratic government.⁵ The Front requested Bao Dai to dismiss Diem and to turn over the reins of power to them; on March 21, they issued an ultimatum giving Diem 5 days to form a "strong, honest, democratic government of national union." Diem refused and took the precautionary measure of ordering three battalions of militia troops to Saigon, and Bao Dai

* Nine of Diem's ministers had resigned on September 20, further weakening his position.

reaffirmed his support of Diem. At the expiration of the ultimatum, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao representatives resigned from the Cabinet.⁹

In retaliation for Diem's refusal to comply with the ultimatum, the Hoa Hao held up food supplies for Saigon-Cholon, and the Binh Xuyen established themselves in the police and security headquarters and in other buildings in the twin cities. Diem ordered paratroops to occupy the police and security headquarters. They ousted the Binh Xuyen from the police headquarters without difficulty, but could not force the commandos from the Security Service building. On March 28, Diem ordered Col. Cao Van Tri, the paratroop commander, to attack the building. The French intervened in the attack, causing the postponement of hostilities until the night of March 29-30. Unable to bury their differences, the religious sects soon accused the Binh Xuyen of forcing them into open conflict with Diem. Sensing an impending showdown, the Cao Dai and most of the Hoa Hao backed out of the conflict on March 29, leaving only the Binh Xuyen to confront the National Army. On the night of March 29-30, fighting broke out between the Binh Xuyen and the Army. The French soon arranged a cease-fire, to Diem's annoyance. The Prime Minister accused the French of secretly supporting the religious sects and the Binh Xuyen; rumor was rife that the French had given the Binh Xuyen tactical advice during the affray.¹⁰

By April 1955, Diem was prepared for a showdown with the Binh Xuyen and the remaining dissident Hoa Hao. Meanwhile, the Binh Xuyen commando units under Vien, who now proclaimed himself "Commander in Chief of the Opposition,"* still held the Security Service building in Saigon and interrupted the routine examination of passports at the airfield and port. The Ministry of Finance (adjacent to the Security Service headquarters), the police headquarters, and the port office were under National Army occupation.¹¹ At first Diem tried to break the Binh Xuyen power by means of verbal persuasion. On April 3, he made a radio appeal to the members of the Binh Xuyen, encouraging them to desert the armed organization and promising them amnesty. The Binh Xuyen lifted their 3-day food blockade, but they refused to relinquish the Security Service building.¹² When no Binh Xuyen soldiers deserted to the Government, stronger measures were enacted. Plainclothes operatives of the Binh Xuyen were to be searched for illegal arms caches, and a psychological operations program, a "murmuring" campaign, was to be initiated against the Binh Xuyen militia. Binh Xuyen soldiers were to receive 5,000 piasters (\$142) if they surrendered to the Government with their

* The *New York Times* (April 1, 1955) reported that Vien had 8,000-10,000 men under arms.

arms. Meanwhile, a 6-day truce had been arranged with the Binh Xuyen so that no known Binh Xuyen strongholds would be attacked. The French promised to induce the organization to hand over the Security building to the Government by peaceful means.¹³ When none of these measures proved effective, Diem dismissed the Binh Xuyen director-general of the Security Service, Lai Huu Sang, and ordered members of the Service to report to the new director within 48 hours or face court-martial. Furthermore, by the end of this same period, Binh Xuyen troops would no longer be permitted free circulation in Saigon-Cholon.

The truce ended April 28 and fighting between the Binh Xuyen and the National Army broke out once more. The French Commander urged Diem to call for a cease-fire, but the Prime Minister, who believed that the power of the Binh Xuyen would have been smashed in March had fighting been allowed to continue, refused. In order to ensure the defeat of the Binh Xuyen this time, Diem ordered 4 battalions of paratroops and an armored car squadron into the battle, keeping in reserve 14 battalions plus an unknown number of reinforcements from central Vietnam. The Binh Xuyen, estimated to number 2,000, were entrenched in various buildings throughout Saigon-Cholon. Anticipating French intervention, Le Van Vien refused to call on his 4,000 reserves and failed to organize an effective resistance. Accordingly, the high school, the cinema, and the printing works—the last three centers of Binh Xuyen resistance—fell to the paratroops early on April 29. By midnight the Binh Xuyen resistance had collapsed, paratroops occupied Vien's headquarters, and the Binh Xuyen, including Vien, had fled. The eviction of the Binh Xuyen from Cholon was attributed to their neglect of military training, incompetent officers, outdated arms, and the willingness of the National Army to defend Diem.¹⁴

Fearing that the Binh Xuyen might reorganize, the Government sought to expel Vien and his remaining battalions from the swamp hideouts in the Rung Sat area south of Saigon-Cholon, where they had retreated after their eviction from the twin cities. In May, Government troops blocked the approaches to the Rung Sat area, and awaited the desertion of soldiers capable of providing information on the military strength and location of the Binh Xuyen. By September 1955, the remaining Binh Xuyen troops were cleared out of the Rung Sat area. Le Van Vien escaped to France with French assistance.¹⁵

Government troops were now free to continue their offensive against the remaining dissident Hoa Hao and Cao Dai groups. By October 1955, the power of the sects and the Binh Xuyen had collapsed.

SECTION IV

STATUS SINCE THE DIEM REGIME

Since Diem's defeat of the Binh Xuyen in 1955, little information has appeared concerning the group's activities. Former Binh Xuyen members were included in the Committee for Liberty and Progress, the "Caravelle" group, which issued a manifesto to Diem on April 26, 1960, requesting a liberalization of the regime.¹

A week after the overthrow of Diem in 1964, Gen. Nguyen Khanh released seven leading members of the Binh Xuyen and Cao Dai who had been imprisoned by Diem.

The Binh Xuyen may never regain the power they once had. Remnants of the group, however, are known to remain hostile to the Government. Most accounts of Binh Xuyen activity refer to incidents of individual rather than organized banditry.² According to one source, members of the religious sects and the Binh Xuyen who escaped Diem's persecution and were operating underground were included in the formation of the National Liberation Front in 1960.³ At present an undertermined number of Binh Xuyen are known to be cooperating with the Viet Cong.⁴

FOOTNOTES

I. INTRODUCTION

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2. George L. Harris, et al., *U.S. Army Area Handbook for Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: Special Operations Research Office, 1962), p. 326.
3. Ellen Joy Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 285 and *The Struggle for Indochina Continues: Geneva to Bandung* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 24.
4. Bernard B. Fall, "The Political-Religious Sects of Viet-Nam," *Pacific Affairs*, XXVIII, 3 (September 1955), p. 250.
5. Roy Jumper, "Sects and Communism in South Vietnam," *Orbis*, III, 1 (Spring 1959), p. 87.
6. Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
7. Joseph Buttinger, "Are We Saving South Viet-Nam?," *The New Leader* XXXVIII, Supplement, 26 (June 27, 1955), pp. 1-15.
8. Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 253; Harris, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 327.
9. Wilfred G. Burchett, *The Furtive War: The United States in Vietnam and Laos* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 95.
10. Harris, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 327.

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9. Schmid, *op. cit.*, p. 26; Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
10. Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
11. Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 122; Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 192; Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-30.
12. Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 122; Schmid, *op. cit.*, p. 26; Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 250.
13. Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 122; Schmid, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
14. Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

15. Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 250; Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 379.
16. Schmid, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
17. Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 250; Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
18. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 277; Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
19. Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
20. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-78.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 307.

III. STATUS DURING THE DIEM REGIME

1. Brian Crozier, "The Diem Regime in Southern Vietnam," *Far Eastern Survey*, XXIV, 4 (April 1955), p. 51.
2. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 349; Crozier, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
3. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 349.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
6. Tillman Durdin, "Sects to Get Posts in Saigon Cabinet," *The New York Times*, September 24, 1954, p. 6, col. 3.
7. Crozier, *op. cit.*, p. 52; Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 379.
8. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 384; "Private Armies Unite in Vietnam," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1955, p. 1.
9. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 384.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 385.
11. Tillman Durdin, "Sect's Army Joins Vietnam Premier," *The New York Times*, April 1, 1955, p. 1; Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p. 387.
12. Robert Alden, "French Mediate in Vietnam Crisis," *The New York Times*, April 4, 1955; p. 3, col. 1.
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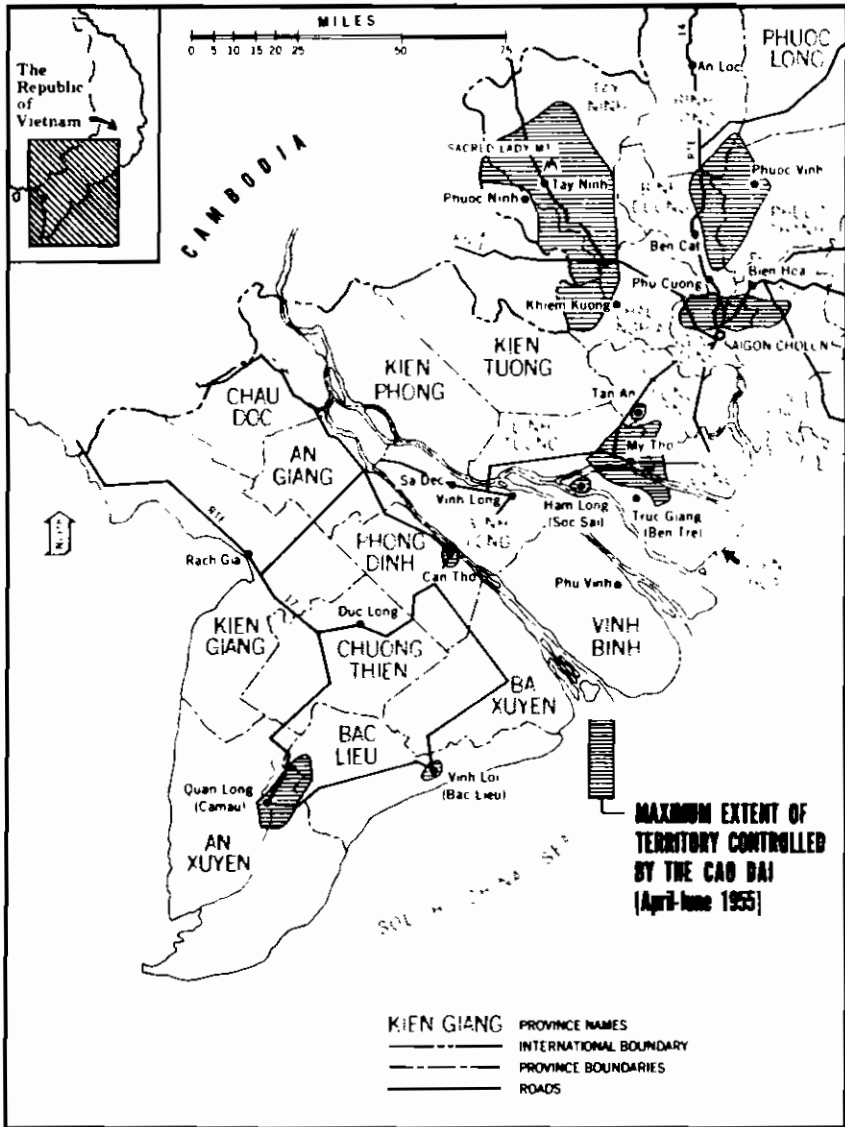
IV. STATUS SINCE THE DIEM REGIME

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The Cao Dai

CHAPTER 20. THE CAO DAI

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The Cao Dai,* a militant politico-religious sect founded in 1926, expounds a syncretic religious doctrine which venerates Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tze (founder of Taoism), and Christ and is based on spiritualism and faith in one God.

Originally a purely religious organization, in the face of strong Vietnamese nationalism the Cao Dai soon acquired a political orientation and a following of over 2 million. At the beginning of World War II the sect became overtly anti-French, predicting the return of Prince Cuong De† from Japan and the termination of French rule. The French retaliated in 1940 by exiling Pham Cong Tac, the highest Cao Dai official.

The Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao‡ religious sects developed into armed politico-religious groups during the chaos following World War II. The Cao Dai secured vast areas of land and developed quasi-religious fiefs, reminiscent of those of the European Middle Ages, that provided centers of relative calm and stability in the strife-ridden countryside. Although heavily taxed by the Cao Dai leaders under this feudal arrangement, the Vietnamese peasants within these domains were at least assured of physical survival as well as the spiritual guidance of the Cao Dai religious doctrine.

Early in the Indochina War (1946–1954) the Cao Dai were militarily neutral, but when it became obvious that the Viet Minh were attempting to liquidate the religious sects, the Cao Dai began to support the French and signed a military convention of cooperation with the French High Command on January 8, 1947. The Cao Dai were to eliminate the Viet Minh in their zones of influence in exchange for French arms and funds to pay the organized Cao Dai armed forces. Most Cao Dai supported the French, with the ex-

* Pronounced COW DIE.

Note to the reader: the following discussion of the Cao Dai concerns the activities of the main —Tem Ky—sect; a separate section at the end of this study is devoted to the splinter sects.

† A direct descendant of Gia Long, pretender to the throne of Annam, and capable, according to some, of saving Vietnam.

‡ In this study, the Hoa Hao sect will not be discussed except as it relates to the Cao Dai. A separate study in this series is devoted to the Hoa Hao.

ception of a small dissident group under Trinh Minh The, a fanatical nationalist who, in 1951, organized guerrilla activities against the French as well as against the Viet Minh.

Politically united (at least nominally) with the French, the Cao Dai sought to strengthen their position by making future nationalist regimes dependent on their support. At first advocating an autonomous Cochinchina Republic, the Cao Dai finally pledged to support a unified Vietnam and, on May 6, 1950, officially gave their support to Tran Van Huu, the second Premier under Emperor Bao Dai. As a nominal sign of good will, the Cao Dai allowed some of their armed forces to be integrated into the Vietnamese National Army.

The Cao Dai, however, still aspired to become the supreme power in Vietnam. In 1951, they requested the French to arm and train three full Cao Dai divisions (45,000 men); in addition, they demanded three cabinet seats in the Government. With the refusal of both demands, the Cao Dai refused to fight the Viet Minh. Benefiting from this respite, the Viet Minh attacked the Cao Dai stronghold at Tay Ninh, causing the French and Vietnamese Governments to comply, at least in part, with the Cao Dai requests for assistance.

In 1953 the Cao Dai movement followed a strictly nationalist course. On April 9, 1954, the Cao Dai Pope or Ho Phap stated that he was now "supporting without reservations" Bao Dai in the latter's "struggle for total independence for Vietnam" and "for the liberation of the Vietnamese people from the Communist yoke . . ." ¹ These promises to support the Saigon regime were tested on April 12, 1954, when the Vietnamese Government decided to integrate the armed forces of the sect into the National Army. The Cao Dai commander in chief attacked the decision, causing the postponement of the decree for more than a year.

Just prior to the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, Cao Dai policy changed; anti-Communist pronouncements became fewer and milder. The Cao Dai Ho Phap, attempting to act as conciliator, appealed to both Ho Chi Minh and Bao Dai for moderation. But with the signing of the Geneva Agreement in 1954 and the beginning of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, Cao Dai fortunes began to decline.

The most urgent problem facing Diem was the presence in Vietnam of the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the Binh Xuyen.* Diem was determined either to destroy the sects or to integrate them into the political fabric of Vietnam. Torn by factionalism and internal dissension, the sects were unable to organize in their own defense.

* Often included in discussions of the sects, the Binh Xuyen was actually a legalized group of former river pirates with no particular religious orientation. A separate study in this Ethnographic Study Series is devoted to the Binh Xuyen; this group will therefore be discussed here only where it relates to the Cao Dai.

In March 1955, the sects attempted to form a coalition, the United Front of National Forces, to force Diem to step down and to gain for themselves a greater voice in the National Government. The Front soon collapsed, however, when influential members of the sects defected to Diem. Before the sects could reunite, Diem resorted to military measures and ordered the Vietnamese Army to occupy the Cao Dai Holy See at Tay Ninh in January 1956. The Ho Phap fled to Cambodia, where he later died. From January 1956 to November 1963, the Cao Dai were politically and militarily impotent. However, Diem permitted Cao Daim to exist as a religion.

With the overthrow of Diem in November 1963 and the relaxation of his suppressive measures, the Cao Dai emerged once more and requested a voice in the Government. Since the coup, the successive governments of the Republic of Vietnam have generally attempted to conciliate the Cao Dai.

The Cao Dai wield considerable power in the Republic of Vietnam, especially in the Mekong Delta. Estimates of their following range from 1.5 million to well over 2 million.² The largest single group is situated in Tay Ninh, the center of the Cao Dai faith. Other influential groups inhabit the provinces of Ba Xuyen, Long An, Dinh Tuong, Kien Hoa, Phong Dinh, Vinh Long, Hau Nghia, Bien Hoa, Vinh Binh, and, in lesser numbers, all other delta provinces.

As one author has indicated, the Cao Dai—and the Hoa Hao—are unique among nationalist groups in having roots among the peasantry.³ Having risen from humble origins by their own efforts, the capable and astute sect leaders understand the peasants of their villages and are thus able to compete with the Communists for control over them.⁴ In addition, their former alliance with the Viet Minh gave the Cao Dai an understanding of Communist tactics: they can evaluate Communist actions and act accordingly. It must be added, however, that the sects are important targets for Communist infiltration.⁵

SECTION II

EARLY HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

Cao Daism or, more formally, Dai Dao Tam Ky Pho Do, the "Third Amnesty of God," is one of the four principal Vietnamese religions, which include Buddhism, Catholicism, and Hoa Hao. According to Cao Dai doctrine, God has already proclaimed two "Amnesties": the first in the West through Moses and Jesus, and the second in the Orient through Buddha and Lao Tze (the founder of Taoism). Whereas these previous Amnesties have assumed human form, the third has been adapted to the higher evolution of the human spirit, revealing itself through spiritualistic seances. Based on spiritualism, Cao Daism is a synthesis of Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and spirit worship. Cao Daism is considered the logical sequel to these religions, which were established in different parts of the world and, owing to lack of communication, failed to converge. The primary aim of Cao Daism is to unite all these religions. The objectives of Cao Daism are best expressed by an authority on the faith:

Cao Daism is destined to the whole Universe, because the message which it carries already is contained in every religion. The multiplicity of religions is not an obstacle to harmony if there is a subtle but nonetheless real bond which serves as point of contact. This subtle but real bond, Cao Daism, brings . . . to every unprejudiced person, in all sincerity, in all fraternity, in its message: Life, Love, Truth.¹

The spirit of Cao Dai first revealed itself in 1919 to Ngo Van Chieu, the administrator for the colonial government of Cochin China of Phu Quoc Island, off the coast of Cambodia. A devotee of spiritualism and a Taoist, Chieu organized seances from time to time, with the aid of young mediums, to receive instruction on his spiritual evolution. Chieu made contact with a spirit who identified himself as Cao Dai. While others at the seance were baffled by this spirit, who had never before appeared in any religious texts, Chieu recognized Cao Dai as a surname for the Supreme Being. To worship Cao Dai in a tangible form, Chieu was instructed to represent the spirit symbolically with an eye emitting brilliant rays of light.

Later, when transferred to Saigon, Chieu continued to communicate with Cao Dai in seances held with a group of civil servants.

During a seance on December 25, 1925, Cao Dai reportedly manifested himself to Chieu and his group and announced his intention "to teach the Truth to the people of Viet Nam."² At that time, seances were the fashion in Saigon; several groups of civil servants were participating in "tableturning" spiritualistic sessions similar in principle to the use of ouija boards. Eventually these groups also made contact with the spirit, who advised them to use the "beaked basket"* to facilitate their correspondence with the occult world and to consult Chieu for information about the device. In this way, word of Chieu's contact with the Supreme Being spread rapidly, and he came to be regarded as the head of the Cao Dai movement.

During a later seance, the spirit directed a wealthy businessman, Le Van Trung, to join Chieu in leading the Cao Dai movement. A reputed degenerate, spendthrift, and impenitent materialist, Trung resolved from that day on to lead an exemplary life worthy of his new position.⁴ Sustained by his new faith, Trung abstained from opium, alcohol, meat, and fish; he became a strict vegetarian and a complete ascetic. This miraculous conversion attracted many adherents. Choosing to remain apart from a movement engaged in widespread proselytism, Chieu relinquished his leadership to Trung in April 1926.⁵

On October 7, 1926, 28 Cao Dai leaders and 247 adherents filed an official resolution requesting Government recognition of Cao Daism as a formal religion.

Although official recognition was not granted immediately, centers to spread the religion were established and cadres of leaders formed.⁶ In the following 2 months, the movement attracted over 20,000 adherents. This success was attributed to two factors: first, the spiritualistic nature of the religion held great appeal to the Vietnamese peasants who had a proclivity for the supernatural; and second, the form of the new cult was not contrary to the principal religions already practiced in the country.⁷

A solemn ceremony celebrating the founding of the Cao Dai faith took place November 18-20, 1926, apparently following the granting of official recognition. The celebration at Go Ken (Tay Ninh Province) was attended by thousands of adherents and curiosity seekers. During the ceremony the Cao Dai religious codes were established and promulgated.⁸

In March 1927, the Holy See or Holy Seat of the faith was established in the village of Long Thanh (near the town of Tay Ninh in Tay Ninh Province), and construction of a vast cathedral was begun at the foot of the sacred Ba Den (Black Lady) Mountain.

* Known in English as the planchette, or in French as the *corbeille-à-bec*. It is a bamboo basket with a wooden pointer which, under the influence of the spirits, picks out letters to communicate the wishes of the spirits.⁸

Completed May 22, 1937," the structure combines the architecture of a Catholic cathedral and a Buddhist temple. Above the doorway appears statuary showing Lao Tze carrying Jesus Christ on his shoulders; in turn, Christ supports Confucius and Buddha, symbolizing the eclectic nature of the Cao Dai faith. The "saintly" hierarchy or spiritual "fathers" of Cao Daism are depicted inside the cathedral: the three great saints, Confucius, Buddha, and Lao Tze; Christ, ranked below these since he appeared at a later date;¹⁰ the high category of saints, including Quang Am (the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy), the Chinese warrior Quang Cong, and Moses; the general rank of saints, including all those of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism; and finally Sun Yat Sen, Joan of Arc, Victor Hugo, St. Bernard, St. John the Baptist, and the French admiral Duclos.¹¹

Four traditionally sacred animals—the dragon, unicorn, tortoise, and phoenix—also appear in the cathedral statuary while numerous pink dragons are entwined around the pillars beneath the "eye of Cao Dai."¹²

This iconographic admixture is ordered architecturally according to particular metaphysical laws. The cathedral is divided into three distinct parts or Dai, symbolizing the notion of the Trinity and representing the Body, the Soul, and the Spirit. The "Dai of the Nine Spires of Evolution," used for public services and ceremonies, corresponds to the nine degrees of the hierarchy, at whose summit reigns the Saint and the Very High Emperor of the Palace of Jade, represented by the Divine Eye. The second Dai, the "Dai of the Divine Alliance, consecrated to the spirit," is the part of the cathedral used by the high priests of the religion for communing with the spirits through the mediums who use the beaked basket.¹³ The use of the third Dai, the "Dai of the Eight Cycles of Genesis," was not clear from the information available at this writing.

By 1930 the Tam Ky Pho Do (as the Tay Ninh branch of the Cao Dai sect was officially known) was a strong religious organization patterned after the Roman Catholic hierarchy, including a pope, cardinals, bishops, and monks. In addition, a hierarchy of female ecclesiastical dignitaries emerged.¹⁴

The feudal nature of the sect was emphasized at this time by the establishment of a temporal administrative division within the religious hierarchy. The central organization of the Cao Dai includes three main administrative branches charged with executing quasi-governmental functions. The first, the Cuu Trung Dai, has executive powers and directs the temporal administration and armed forces of the sect. The Cuu Trung Dai functions with the aid of nine ministries (*vien*): interior (*lai*), rites (*le*), security (*hoa*), finance (*ho*), supply (*luong*), education (*hoc*), agriculture

(*nong*), public works (*cong*), and health (*y*). The Giao Tong or Pope controls this organization. Not a living person, the Giao Tong is the sanctified spirit of the Vietnamese philosopher-saint, Ly Thai Bach. Even Le Van Trung (the first great Cao Dai leader) served in the capacity of Quyen Giao Tong or Interim Pope.

The second branch is the Hiep Thien Dai, or Legislative Body, which controls the Cao Dai religious affairs. The highest ranking "living" member of the sect or Ho Phap (Superior)—usually referred to as the living Pope or simply Pope—heads this organization and controls the manipulations of the beaked basket. With two assistants, he presides over a council of 12 members called the Thap-Hni Thoi-quan, which governs a hierarchy of prelates and lower clergy. In the mid-1950's the principal instrument of the Ho Phap's power was a secret society—Pham Mon—of several thousand adherents tied by a fanatical oath of blood. The Pham Mon may still exist, but recent information concerning it was not available at this time. When Pham Cong Tac was the Ho Phap, that office became influential enough to seriously threaten Trung's authority.

The third branch, the Co Quan Phuoc Thien or Charity Corps, is a welfare agency responsible for administering to the poor and invalid among the Cao Dai. This branch was originally established to assure, by eliciting donations, the financial support of the sect. This branch may still function in this capacity.

Beneath these three principal branches are a number of smaller organizational subdivisions, such as the High Assembly, the Grand Council, the Grand Assembly, the Tribunal of Three Religions, and the Tribunal of the Adept. Like that of a modern state, the administrative structure of the sect extends down to the smallest Cao Dai hamlet through provincial units entrusted with both spiritual and temporal powers. The deliberate complexity of the Cao Dai organizational structure is, according to one source, a means of capturing the imagination of the faithful, thus permitting Cao Dai control of much territory.¹⁵

In November 1934, Le Van Trung died; an election of the Council of the Faithful and of the Sacerdotal Council named his successor, Pham Cong Tac, the highest ranking living member of the Cao Dai.* Complaints of fraud came from 11 rival religious sects who had split off from the Tam Ky sect as a result of internal dissension.†¹⁶ Tac extended the influence of the Tam Ky sect both economically and socially, and steered the Cao Dai away from its primarily religious character into clearly politico-nationalistic channels.¹⁷

* Since the death of Trung, no one has been chosen to fill the position of "Interim Pope." The highest office held by a living person has been that of Ho Phap.

† See "Splinter Sects," p. 851.

Because the French Administration offered no means through which popular discontent could be converted into constructive political activity, nationalist groups critical of French rule began to operate clandestinely for a free Vietnam.¹⁸ By 1934 the Cao Dai had entered into secret relations with the Japanese; they favored the return of Prince Cuong De (a direct descendant of Gia Long, pretender to the throne of Annam) from Japan, and expected Japanese aid for the liberation of Vietnam.¹⁹ Numbering over 300,000 in 1934, the Cao Dai controlled 128 chapels and were particularly strong in My Tho, Cholon, Gia Dinh, and Ben Tre.²⁰

SECTION III

STATUS DURING WORLD WAR II

With the beginning of the war in Europe, the Cao Dai stepped up its anti-French propaganda, under the guise of aggressive nationalism. The manipulation of the beaked basket and the diffusion of messages among the faithful were instrumental to this policy. The Armistice of June 1940, marking the fall of France to Germany, provided the Cao Dai with the necessary excuse to strengthen their position; but their activity provoked the French authorities into taking strong measures to prevent the formation of a state within a state.

In August 1940, the French governor of Cochin China sought to close the cathedral at Tay Ninh, most of the chapels throughout the countryside, and all the houses of charity (*phuc thien*) that had been converted to political organizations. Despite French reprisals, Pham Cong Tac continued to deliver "divine" messages to sustain Cao Dai nationalist agitation. Consequently, on August 21, 1941, Tac and his principal collaborators were exiled to Madagascar, where they were to remain until the end of the war. The deportation of their leader, together with the occupation of Tay Ninh by French troops on September 27, 1941, caused the Cao Dai to seek Japanese support.¹

In 1943 the directing committee of the Cao Dai, protected by the Kempeitai (Japanese secret police), was reorganized under the auspices of Tran Quang Vinh, who prepared the faithful for direct action against the French. Whereas formerly Cao Dai anti-French activity had been restricted to propaganda activities, Vinh succeeded in forming clandestine paramilitary groups estimated to number 3,000 men. These Cao Dai forces, armed by the Japanese, fought the French throughout World War II and participated in the Japanese take over in Indochina in March 1945.² By 1945, the leaders of the Cao Dai were openly supporting the Japanese regime and assisting them in policing the countryside.³

On August 14, 1945, after the capitulation of the Japanese, the Cao Dai joined with other nationalist groups (the Vietnamese Independence Party, the Group of Intellectuals, the Civil Servants' Union, the Trotskyite group, the Advance Guard of Youth, and the Ho: Hao) to form the United National Front to take over adminis-

trative functions from the Japanese. Plagued with factionalism and irresolution, the Front proved incapable of assuming effective control.

Meanwhile, through the Advance Guard of Youth, infiltrated by Communist elements, the Viet Minh representative Tran Van Giau attempted to seize control of the Front. Failing to achieve this through intimidation, Giau resorted to bluff and persuasion: the Viet Minh launched an intensive propaganda campaign, posing as a strong resistance movement with widespread support. Maintaining this posture, Giau met with the United National Front to urge them to accept Viet Minh leadership in their fight for unity and independence. The Front accepted Giau's offer of leadership; to celebrate the new alliance, it sponsored an independence demonstration in the form of a march in which almost all organized groups in Cochin China participated.* On the same day, the Viet Minh established the Nam Bo, or Provisional Executive Committee for South Vietnam, which was composed of nine members, six of whom were Communists.⁴

Serious divisions soon developed in the nationalist movement. Internal rivalries, as well as open warfare over the issue of cooperation with the occupying forces, resulted in failure to present a unified front to the British when they reached Saigon in September 1945. Profiting from the split in the ranks of the revolutionaries, the French, with British support, reoccupied Saigon; certain Cochin Chinese provinces, however, were left open to Cao Dai and Hoa Hao seizure.⁵

Meanwhile, the already uneasy alliance between the Cao Dai and Viet Minh was strained to the breaking point. Giau's attempt to seize control of the Cao Dai militia aroused Tran Quang Vinh's suspicions. To safeguard the autonomy of the sect, Vinh, as coordinator of the Cao Dai's activities, refused to turn his forces over to Giau. For this opposition, the Viet Minh detained Vinh and initiated military action against the Cao Dai.⁶ In Vinh's absence the sect's militia was organized by Nguyen Van Thanh, Nguyen Thanh Phuong, and Duong Van Dang. Deprived of Vinh's guidance and encouraged by decreasing Viet Minh demands for control over the Cao Dai militia, these three leaders decided to join—on an equal basis—the Viet Minh in their fight against the French. Thus, until June 1946, Cao Dai troops fought with the Viet Minh against the French Expeditionary Corps.⁷

In November 1945, Cao Dai followers in Tay Ninh surrendered to a French armed column which had marched on the city. After his escape from the Viet Minh, Tran Quang Vinh realized the futility of collaboration with the Viet Minh; acting as the command-

* The Trotskyites, distrusting Giau's intentions, were the only group that refused to participate.

er of the Cao Dai militia, Vinh negotiated a truce with French authorities in June 1946. Phuong brought his Cao Dai militia, about 1,000 strong, to Tay Ninh to be reviewed by Vinh and a representative of the French command. Although Thanh and Dang, the other two military leaders, refused to participate in this ceremony and sought refuge on Ba Den Mountain, the French permitted Pham Cong Tac to return from exile. At a convention in August, Tac made political peace with the French, proclaiming the need for the presence of the French in Indochina and expressing confidence in their ability to reestablish order and public security.⁹

SECTION IV

STATUS DURING THE INDOCHINA WAR

Despite their pledge to support the French, the Cao Dai, under the skilled political maneuvering of Tac, remained neutral when fighting broke out between the French and the Viet Minh in early December 1946. But when the Communists attacked Tay Ninh² in January 1947 the Cao Dai sought French protection.

The Ho Phap ratified Tran Quang Vinh's initial accord with the French, in which the sect received authorization to maintain a limited militia force of 1,470 partisans, including 12 voluntary brigades of 60 men each and garrison troops in 16 defense posts throughout Tay Ninh Province.¹ The Holy See soon circumvented these restrictions by creating new formations, such as the "Papal Guard," a "Battalion of Honor," a "Shock Battalion," and numerous unofficial units for the defense of scattered Cao Dai communities.

In return for French military aid, the Cao Dai agreed to cooperate in pacifying the Vietnamese countryside. Most of the Cao Dai troops of the Tam Ky sect honored this pledge, with the exception of Trinh Minh The,[†] the fanatical nationalist who, in 1951, organized his own guerrilla forces as "loyal opposition" to the Ho Phap. For a year the Cao Dai inflicted heavy losses on the Viet Minh, suffering almost a thousand casualties in the process.²

In March 1949, after 2 years of negotiations, the French finally granted Vietnam self-government within the French Union. The Cao Dai pledged allegiance to a unified Vietnam and promised to support Emperor Bao Dai. The integration of a Cao Dai battalion into the Vietnamese National Army symbolized the alleged good will of the sect. Meanwhile, despite an earlier truce, the Cao Dai resumed their private war with the Hoa Hao,[‡] considerably weakening the nationalist movement.³

Methodically pursuing his aim to assure the Cao Dai a dominant

* Realizing the power potential of the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao sects, the Viet Minh sought at this time to eliminate them by force. The Hoa Hao, likewise threatened by the Viet Minh, also reacted by joining the French.

† From his hideout near Tay Ninh, The established a clandestine broadcasting station, "Voice of National Vietnam," which, under the name Quan-Doi Quoc Gia Lien-Minh ("Inter-Allied National Forces") attacked the Bao Dai regime as well as the Viet Minh and the French.

‡ This was essentially a feudal conflict; much of the distrust between the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao stemmed from mutual fears of encroachment upon their quasi-religious feudal fiefs.

place in all aspects of Vietnamese life, the Ho Phap asked the French to arm and train three full Cao Dai divisions (45,000 men), and to grant the Cao Dai three cabinet seats. Upon refusal of these demands the Cao Dai general Nguyen Van Thanh issued a secret order to cease all offensive action—except legitimate self-defense—against the Viet Minh. Benefiting from Cao Dai passivity, the Viet Minh attacked Tay Ninh, inflicting serious losses. Thanh reversed his policy and ordered retaliatory raids on Communist strongholds. The French and Vietnamese Governments, owing to the worsening situation, were forced to give in, at least in part, to Cao Dai demands: they armed additional Cao Dai troops and granted high cabinet posts to some of the sect's dignitaries.¹

This system of alternating support and opposition as a means of extracting favors was indicative of the opportunism characteristic of French-Cao Dai relations. Menaced by nationalism on the one hand and communism on the other, the French tolerated the religious sects not only because they were anti-Communist, and therefore capable of splitting the nationalist movement, but also because they controlled vast territories, which released French troops for combat in areas not under Cao Dai or Hoa Hao hegemony. In the absence of normal governmental authorities, and in exchange for their support of Emperor Bao Dai, the sects were free to carve out larger and larger zones of influence.² Together, the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen held sway over most of Cochinchina in virtually feudal fashion. The Cao Dai had their own militia—15,000 to 20,000 men—and system of tax collection.³

The sects were not totally unsupervised, however. A French staff section, the Inspectorat Général des Forces Supplétives, coordinated the military activities of the sects. French liaison officers and training staffs were garrisoned with all major Cao Dai and Hoa Hao units. Throughout the war, French and Vietnamese officers taught promising Cao Dai cadres the rudiments of modern warfare in a 5-month course offered in the sect's own officers' training school. Yet the actual military value of the Cao Dai in the counter-insurgency effort is debatable. The military units, primarily concerned with enlarging Cao Dai holdings, were considered too valuable to lose in military operations. For this reason the Cao Dai were reluctant to risk an all-out fight with the Viet Minh and seldom deployed their troops except in their own areas.⁴

In 1953 Pham Cong Tac, sensing changes in the political climate of the country, again guided the Cao Dai movement in the direction of Vietnamese nationalism. During August 1953, the Cao Dai leaders seemed prepared to assume the leadership of the country when Premier Nguyen Van Tam's government appeared to be weakening. The "apostolic" representative of the Ho Phap in

France even suggested that "... Tay Ninh would offer a solid base for conversations in view of the fact that millions of signatures could back up the signature of the 'Pope' Pham Cong Tac" in final independence agreements between Vietnam and France.⁸ In September and October the Ho Phap's political activities further increased, while Bao Dai's efforts to gather a majority of all nationalist groups to negotiate a "final" Vietnamese independence treaty with France continued. In a Saigon press conference, the Ho Phap called for national unity by praising both Bao Dai and Ho Chi Minh and advocating both independence and a close association with France.⁹

At the Nationalist Congress of October 1953, called by Bao Dai to demand full independence, the Cao Dai assumed considerable importance: the Ho Phap, as one of the organizers, read a statement to the press, giving the political aim of the Congress; out of 203 seats allotted for groups at the Congress, members of the Cao Dai held 17, the largest number reserved for any of the sects. When Bao Dai failed to gain full nationalist support in the Congress, he invited individual nationalist leaders to see him; among these were Cao Dai General Phuong and the Ho Phap. On April 9, 1954, the Ho Phap declared that he was giving unquestioned support to Bao Dai in his "struggle for total independence for Viet Nam" and "for the liberation of the Vietnamese people from the Communist yoke. . . ." ¹⁰ Three days later the value of these promises was measured when the Saigon Government decided to integrate the armed forces of the sects into the Vietnamese National Army. The commander in chief of the Cao Dai army, Nguyen Thanh Phuong, reacted by circulating a letter to his subordinates denouncing the decision. As a result, the integration decree was not enforced for more than a year.¹¹

Because of the deteriorating military situation at Dien Bien Phu, the Ho Phap, sensing a possible Viet Minh victory, once more altered the course of the Cao Dai movement, playing down all anti-Communist propaganda and appealing to both sides for moderation. In an open letter to Ho Chi Minh, the Ho Phap, who had taken upon himself the role of conciliator, stated: "You and His Majesty, Bao Dai, have succeeded in liberating the country. The Vietnamese people are grateful to both of you. However, there remains a problem to be settled: reconciliation between the Nationalists and the Communists." ¹² Indeed, the Ho Phap deserved his role as conciliator, for the sects, numbering over 2 million followers (the Cao Dai being the largest), were a force not to be disregarded.¹³ Now at their peak of glory, the sects represented the only political groups with substantial followings.

However, with the signing of the Geneva Agreement and the sub-

sequent loss of French financial support, political influence of the Cao Dai began to wane. The appointment of Ngo Dinh Diem as Premier of the Republic of Vietnam heralded the end, at least temporarily, of Cao Dai influence in Vietnamese politics.

SECTION V

STATUS DURING THE DIEM REGIME

Among the serious issues confronting Diem at the outset of his regime was the problem of the sects—the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the Binh Xuyen—who were seeking to preserve their semi-autonomous status against the pressures of the Central Government and of each other. Realizing that the authority of the sects would diminish his own, Diem decided to take actions which would either integrate the sects into the Vietnamese political fabric or result in their destruction. Diem's plans consisted of "integrating the self-commanded sectarian armies into the National Army, eliminating the autonomous administrations in the sectarian regions, and rallying the dissident sect leaders."¹

To implement his plans, Diem needed a strong National Army.* At the time, the commander of the National Army was Chief of Staff Gen. Nguyen Van Hinh, whose loyalty as a nationalist leader was suspect because he was a French citizen. Believing that Hinh was plotting against him, Diem ordered the general's resignation on September 11, 1954, touching off a 7-week army crisis. Hinh refused to step down; instead he took refuge in his headquarters, barricaded with tanks. Diem, fearing a coup d'etat, retreated to his palace, where he was guarded by armed police under Binh Xuyen control. Five days later Binh Xuyen Gen. Le Van Vien transferred his allegiance to Hinh, joining the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, who feared that a "strong unified army linked with Diem would make their position untenable."² When nine of his ministers resigned, Diem persuaded four Cao Dai and four Hoa Hao to accept seats in a new cabinet including, among others, Nguyen Thanh Phuong, commander of the Cao Dai armed forces. With this cabinet, Diem hoped to broaden his base of political support and strengthen his hand in dealing with General Hinh. When Hinh still refused to resign, Emperor Bao Dai prompted by Diem, relieved Hinh of his office on November 29, 1954. Diem had succeeded in his first step to win control of the National Army, but the loyalty of the sects was not yet assured. Indeed, more problems concerning the status of the sects were soon to follow.

* From its creation in 1948 until the end of the Indochina War, the National Army, whose high officers were mainly French, had been subordinate to the French Union High Command.

Throughout the Indochina War, the French had armed and subsidized the sectarian armies as auxiliary forces against the Viet Minh.¹ By January 1, 1955, the French had withdrawn their support of the sects.¹ The sects were now threatened with the loss of their quasi-feudal autonomy and privileges, and with incorporation of their troops into the National Army. Only one course of action lay open to them—the promotion of a government more sympathetic to their problems.⁵

A complicating factor, however, was the existence of dissidents from the main bodies of the sectarian armies, such as Cao Dai Gen. Trinh Minh The and Col. Ba Cut, the rebel Hoa Hao. Although formally united with the National Army in 1952, The had remained, for all practical purposes, independent. In 1955, following the example of Hoa Hao dissidents, The pledged to cooperate with Diem. On February 13, 1955, newly promoted to the rank of General in the Vietnamese Army, The entered Saigon at the head of his 5,000 black-garbed troops.⁶

Meanwhile the southwestern Vietnamese countryside had drifted into a state of anarchy. The withdrawal of the Viet Minh from such areas as the Plaine des Jones and the Transbassac had left these territories without any administrative authority or organization. Seeking to expand their domains, Hoa Hao and Cao Dai armed bands fought for control of the land. Intending to return to Saigon as Premier, Bao Dai watched these events from France and feared that sectarian rivalries would prevent the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao from resisting Diem's demands for their surrender.⁷ In February 1955, Bao Dai sent his cousin, Prince Vinh Canh, to Saigon to urge the sects to unify.

On Canh's advice, the sects and the Binh Xuyen signed a non-aggression pact and on March 5, 1955, they formed a United Front of National Forces designed to "protect the country and serve the people." As president of this loose coalition, Pham Cong Tac demanded a strong democratic government composed of honest men and extensive power for the sects. The coalition leadership sent emissaries to France to ask Bao Dai to dismiss Diem as Prime Minister and to return to Vietnam himself. Bao Dai, however, reaffirmed his official support of Diem and congratulated the sect on their unification.⁸ Before receiving Bao Dai's answer, the sect leaders (the Ho Phap and General Phuong for the Cao Dai, Tran Van Soai and Ba Cut for the Hoa Hao, Le Van Vien for the Binh Xuyen, and Trinh Minh The * on behalf of his dissident Cao Dai) sent an ultimatum to Diem on March 21, 1955, allowing him 5 days to form a government of national union.⁹

* The changed his position from cooperation with Diem to support of the Front and (after a sizeable bribe) back to Diem.

Diem refused to yield to the ultimatum, but invited the sect leaders to discuss their grievances with him. When the ultimatum expired, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao cabinet members resigned from Diem's government. A second proposal was made on the 26th of March, this time for the transfer of executive power from Diem to a five-man council, in which Diem was to be merely a member.¹⁰ Despite his rejection of the plan, Diem was saved from immediate hostilities by the factionalism among members of the United Front.¹¹ Sensing a change in the political atmosphere, the Cao Dai, followed by smaller Hoa Hao sects, retired from the impending conflict on March 29, leaving only the Binh Xuyen and some Hoa Hao to confront the National Army. Fighting between these two groups broke out the night of March 29-30 and resulted in numerous casualties. The following day, Cao Dai Gen. Nguyen Thanh Phuong, with his 20,000 troops, defected to the Prime Minister, after reportedly receiving a bribe from Diem of \$3.6 million plus monthly payments for his troops.¹² Significantly, the Cao Dai Ho Phap did not join Phuong in transferring his loyalty to Diem. By April 2, it was evident that the Ho Phap wanted to remain a member of the opposition front; the principal effect of the army transfer was to obligate the Government to pay the troops.¹³ The outbreak of fighting between the Binh Xuyen and the National Army prompted Bao Dai, with French approval, to summon the "principal representatives of Vietnamese opinions" to France and to nominate Gen. Nguyen Van Vi as commander in chief of the Vietnamese National Armed Forces, a position hitherto occupied by Diem.

To create the appearance of popular support for himself, Diem arranged a meeting—allegedly to constitute a general assembly of the "democratic revolutionary forces of the nation"—and a Revolutionary Committee was elected. The Committee, which included the expensively bought Phuong and The, persuaded the assembly to repudiate Bao Dai, to dismiss his Government, and to form a national government under Diem, who would then obtain the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps and organize elections to a national assembly. The Revolutionary Committee, specifically Phuong and The, arrested the generals Nguyen Van Vi and Le Van Ty and forced them publicly to repudiate Bao Dai and to support the committee. Vi later confirmed that this announcement had been made under duress and that he could count on the support of 90 percent of the army. On the same day, Ty defected to Diem.

With Vi's power shattered, the National Army initiated military action against the Binh Xuyen and Hoa Hao. Cao Dai autonomy was suppressed without bloodshed by General Phuong, who, on October 5-6, disarmed 300 troops belonging to the "Papal Guard" and deposed the Ho Phap. The following February (1956), when

Government troops were preparing to occupy the Holy See, Pham Cong Tac* fled to Phnom Penh.¹⁴ Thus, by the end of 1955, Diem had succeeded in breaking the political and military power of the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen. Nevertheless, the religious fervor of the Cao Dai was not dampened, for Diem allowed the faithful to continue practicing Cao Daism.

By 1960, Diem had bolstered Vietnam's economy considerably, but his regime had become increasingly authoritarian and repressive. Until the abortive coup d'etat in November 1960, a number of demands had been made for the liberalization of the regime. Among these was a manifesto in the form of a petition issued by the non-Communist Committee for Liberty and Progress (Khoi Tu-Do Tien-Bo).¹⁵ This bloc, also known as the Caravelle Group, comprised 18 politicians and professional men formerly identified with the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, the Greater Vietnam (Dai-Viet) Party, the Vietnamese People's Party, and dissident Catholic groups.¹⁶ The manifesto signed by Dr. Phan Huy Quat (a Dai-Viet leader), "condemned the undemocratic elections of 1959, the continuing arrests and the suppression of the freedom of the press and of public opinion," and demanded reform of the administration.¹⁷ Diem replied with vague promises of liberalization. In July, the Committee issued two further petitions and vainly demanded official recognition as a political party. With only a few exceptions, the members of the Committee did not participate in the abortive coup of November 1960.¹⁸

Although an ex-Cao Dai, Gen. Nguyen Thanh Phuong, appeared on Slate 2 as the vice-presidential candidate in the 1961 presidential elections,¹⁹ and press accounts in 1962 occasionally referred to the surrender or capture of Cao Dai members operating with Communist guerrillas.²⁰ By and large, between 1955 and 1963, Cao Dai political and military activity was reduced to a minimum. However, with the overthrow of Diem in November 1963, and the relaxation of suppressive measures,† the Cao Dai once more began to demand a voice in the Government.

* Tac died in Cambodia in 1959.

† Under Diem, on May 24, 1962, a "Law for Protection of Morality" had been passed which outlawed "spiritism and occultism"; this was interpreted as a direct stab at the highly spiritualist and occultist Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects.²¹

SECTION VI

STATUS SINCE THE DIEM REGIME

A press account of January 23, 1964, indicates that the Cao Dai armed forces supported the military junta, led by Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh, which deposed President Diem. Several senior officers, according to the report, urged their Cao Dai followers to unite in fighting the Communist guerrillas.¹

When Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh overthrew Minh in a bloodless coup a week later, several members of the Cao Dai sect became ministers in the new cabinet. As Premier, Khanh also released several influential members of the Cao Dai who had been imprisoned during the Diem regime.² The new Premier showed a further desire to conciliate the Cao Dai by visiting Tay Ninh, accompanied by Gen. Paul D. Harkins and Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, the top United States officials in the Republic of Vietnam. On this occasion, Khanh addressed a crowd of about a thousand, including Cao Dai civil servants and students, and denounced the Communists and colonialists. In addition, Khanh named former Brig. Gen. Le Van Tat of the Cao Dai forces as chief of Tay Ninh Province, gave the Cao Dai church the use of the Long Hao market at a nominal rental fee, and gave Le Van Tat \$3,000 as a gift to the people of two districts who had been victims of Communist terrorism. Khanh also granted the Cao Dai followers permanent ownership of all their landholdings.³

Premier Phan Huy Quat, who assumed power in February 1965, also favored a policy of conciliation with the sects. Under Quat, a 20-member civilian legislative body, called the National Legislative Council, was appointed and included two Cao Dai members. In addition, a member of the Cao Dai sect was named to Quat's 20-member Cabinet.⁴

On March 17, dissident members of the Cao Dai called a press conference to promote the establishment of an organization for peaceful co-existence with the Communists, and the organization of a United Nations police force to control the Communist guerrillas in the country. Saigon police, posing as cameramen to gain entrance to the press conference, broke up the meeting.⁵ The following day the Minister of State announced in the Vietnamese press that the aforementioned group had not been acting on behalf of the Cao Dai

sect and that their opinion did not reflect its true views. Within a few months, however, the Cao Dai (and Hoa Hao) were charging Quat with persecution and neutralist proclivities.

Since the overthrow of Diem, the Cao Dai have once more emerged as a political force, but the sect still appears to be debilitated by factionalism and lack of unity of purpose.

SECTION VII

CAO DAISM AS A RELIGION*

Origins of Cao Dai Doctrine

Cao Dai is the symbolic name for the Supreme Being who has revealed himself in the Orient for the third time. According to Cao Dai precepts, God has adapted his teaching to the refined nature of the human spirit by choosing mediums as vehicles of expression, rather than by granting to any mortal the privilege of founding Cao Daism. God has chosen this form of communication because all religions submitted to the authority of a human founder have not been universal; the prophets always show themselves intolerant of the truths already proclaimed by other religions.

According to Cao Dai, all parts of the world have been explored: humanity now aspires to be a real peace; but due to the multiplicity of religions, men do not always live in harmony with one another. For this reason, the Supreme Being chose to unite all religions in one.

In a spiritual message of January 13, 1927, Ly Thai Bach, one of God's ministers and an early Cao Dai leader, issued the following message:

. . . . Unite, love one another, mutually help each other; it is divine law. In this moment when everyone is condemned to purgatory, if one thinks only of one's personal interests, if one seeks to sow misery and suffering everywhere, one risks being enticed into this infernal torrent. . . .

Fundamental Principles of Cao Daism

Cao Dai doctrine seeks to reconcile all religious convictions as well as to adapt to all degrees of spiritual evolution:

1. Morally, Cao Dai doctrine reminds man of his duties toward himself, his family, society, humanity, and the universal family.
2. Philosophically, it preaches contempt of honors, riches, and luxury, or the release from servitude to materialism in the quest for tranquility of spirit.
3. Culturally, it advocates adoration of God and veneration of the higher spirits who constitute the august hierarchy of the occult. Although the Vietnamese national cult of the ances-

* All the material in this section is directly translated from Gabriel Gobron, *Histoire et philosophie du Cao daïsme* (Paris: Dervy, 1949), pp. 38-47.

tors is permitted, carnal offerings as well as use of votive papers are condemned.

4. Spiritually, it confirms the existence of a soul whose successive reincarnations, as well as the posthumous consequences of its human actions, are regulated by the Law of Karma.

There are three types of Cao Dai adherents and three types of rules governing their behavior:

1. The religious practitioners, the high dignitaries, are compelled to lead a life of privation, if not of asceticism: sexual relations are prohibited; alcohol, meat, and fish are taboo, a strict vegetarianism being recommended. These believers have the authority to communicate with God and the higher spirits, but must do so only on exceptional occasions.
2. Mediums, auxiliaries to the dignitaries, are not monks or nuns themselves, but are obliged to observe certain material privations. They are forbidden to practice spiritism except in the presence of dignitaries, after the latter have recited certain prayers.
3. Of the ordinary followers, the mass of believers, little is required except that they follow the duties and moral teachings laid down by the Cao Dai executive body and that they prostrate themselves regularly every day before the Cao Dai altar, whether in a temple or at home. On the altar must be a drawing of an eye encircled by clouds, ritual candlesticks, and offerings of fruit, flowers, tea, and incense.

The Cult of Cao Daism

The Cao Dai cult demands only that its followers address daily prayers to the Supreme Being at 6 a.m., noon, 6 p.m., and midnight. Neither confessions nor communications is required—spiritual evocations, being of a delicate and dangerous nature, are reserved for the priestly hierarchy. Cao Dai rituals commence with the offering of incense (*niem huong*): then follow the prayers (*khai kinh*), the canticle to the glory of God (recited in unison), and three more canticles in honor of the three saints—Confucius, Lao Tze, and Buddha. From time to time, the priests exhort the faithful to practice a virtuous existence, as conceived by Confucius, and to venerate the spirits who have benefited mankind at various times—Christ, Buddha, Confucius, and ancient Chinese deities. On holidays, including Christmas and the traditional Buddhist fetes, more elaborate ceremonies take place.

Cao Daism preaches universal love, which is manifested in human fraternity, kindness to animals (our less evolved brothers), kindness toward plants (which provide us with shade and medicines), and service to one's brother. The Cao Daist must be ready to assist, through words and action, anyone in need of help; by helping

others, he will assure his own salvation, and by leading an exemplary life, he will win souls to the glory of God.

Cao Daism provides Five Interdicts to be observed by its followers:

1. Do not kill living beings—because of the life, the center of consciousness, which resides within them.
2. Do not be covetous—in order to avoid falling into materialism through the need for possessions and domination.
3. Do not eat meat or drink alcohol.
4. Do not be tempted by the sensual.
5. Do not lie—verbal sins are as punishable as accomplished crimes.

SECTION VIII

SPLINTER SECTS*

The period of Cao Dai expansion was also a period of dissension. Differences arose over questions of power and the Ho Phap's right to form an army. As individual leaders acquired a following, they began to split off from the main Tam Ky Pho Do sect located in Tay Ninh; 11 splinter sects emerged, of which 8 survived.

Chieu Minh Danh

The first Cao Dai leader to form a new sect was the founder of Cao Dajism, Ngo Van Chieu, who established the Chieu Minh Danh sect at Can Tho in 1928. In mid-1965, this group was led by Vo Van Ngan.

Minh Chon Ly

The Minh Chon Ly sect was founded in 1931, when a member of the Tam Ky hierarchy, Nguyen Hao Ca, was directed by the spirits to leave Tay Ninh and to organize his own sect at Rach Gia. Upon reaching Rach Gia, Ca received another spiritual message directing him to My Tho, where he established the Holy See for his sect. Between 1932 and 1938, the sect expanded rapidly, differing in doctrine from the other Cao Dai sects. At first the Minh Chon Ly pantheon of deities included Tam Tran, the Three Deities, Quang Cong, and Ly Thai Bach or the Supreme Spirit; however, it was eventually enlarged to include Thich Ca (a reincarnation of Buddha), Christ, Lao Tze, Confucius, and Ngoc Hoang Thuong De (the Emperor of Jade). Dissatisfied with the original symbol of Cao Dai—the eye emitting nine rays of light—Ca adopted a new symbol, the "Eye in the Heart," an eye set in a red heart from which rays of light emanate. According to Ca, the eye merely records, but the heart has full realization or true knowledge.

The Minh Chon Ly sect has its own taboos; for example, they do not tolerate the Thien cult, the cult of Ong Tao, or beliefs in the *ma*, *qui*, and *than* spirits. Of all the traditional Vietnamese cults, only the cult of the ancestors is permitted. Minh Chon Ly members do not assist at the rituals held at their village *dinh* (Vietnamese communal temple of the guardian spirit). Unlike the other Cao Dai

* I formation in this section is derived from Gerald Cannon Hickey, *Village in Vietnam* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 66-73, 290-94.

sects, the Minh Chon Ly are allowed to eat food derived from living creatures.

The Minh Chon Ly hierarchy comprises two main branches: the Committee of Three Great Heads—the ruling body—headed by the founder in the position of Central Head (Thai Dan Su); and the Committee of Nine, including a secretariat (Tu Buu or Four Treasures) and the Five Elements (Ngu Hanh) in charge of the five administrative regions in Vietnam. A female hierarchy is primarily responsible for proselytizing among women and attending to their religious instruction. Members of the female hierarchy, like the male priests, live at the Holy See, but worship at special altars.

Minh Chon Ly members perform four daily rituals in their homes, at 5:30 and 11:30 a.m., 5:30 p.m., and midnight. Three daily prayer periods—9:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. are also required. Adherents do not make daily offerings of food on their altars, in the belief that the Supreme Being does not demand it.

Bach Y Lien Doan and Minh Chon Dao

Two small, little known sects appeared during the early 1930's. The Bach Y Lien Doan established its Holy See in Tay Ninh Province some time in the early 1930's—the exact date is uncertain. In 1931, the Minh Chon Dao was founded, and the Holy See established in Bac Lieu.

Chon Ly Tam Nguyen

Nguyen Van Kien and a group of followers broke away from the Minh Chon Ly in 1933 and organized the Chon Ly Tam Nguyen sect, the smallest of the Cao Dai sects, in Tan An. The members of this sect consider their group to be the most profoundly religious and the purest of the Cao Dai sects. No symbol adorns their temple, since each participant has the Supreme Spirit within himself; in addition, they ignore the traditional Cao Dai food taboos and reject all Vietnamese cults.

Tien Thien

Organized in 1931 by Nguyen Huu Chin and 12 followers, the Tien Thien sect has a doctrine and structure resembling those of the Tam Ky and Ban Chin Dao sects. By 1939, the Tien Thien sect claimed it had 72 temples,* but it still needed a Holy See. In 1940 the French outlawed all splinter sects, reducing them to clandestine activity. In 1954, Nguyen Buu Tai reorganized the sect hierarchy, establishing a Holy See at Soc Sai, 18 kilometers from Ben Tre. The Tien Thien sect is now strongest in Kien Hoa Province.

Each member of the Tien Thien sect must make a retreat of 100 days; messages directing a member to make the retreat at a certain

* One temple is known to exist in Ap Dinh.

time must be obeyed, all other responsibilities being secondary. In small villages, those on retreat go to the temple; the men reside on one side the women—responsible for preparing the meals—on the other. Four times a day, 4 a.m., 4 p.m., 6 p.m. and midnight, 90-minute periods of meditation take place; meditation is considered most meaningful when the participant manages to achieve a state of complete trance. Yoga exercises are practiced daily, and public confession is held each morning at 7 o'clock. Seances are held intermittently, with only one scheduled on the 15th day of the second lunar month. The members use a stylized version of the beaked basket at this time; the true basket is reserved for the Tam Ky sect.

Ban Chin Dao or Chin Dao Ban

The Ban Chin Dao sect was organized in 1934 by Nguyen Ngoc Tuong, who, after replacing Le Van Trung as Ho Phap of the Cao Dai for a few years, left Tay Ninh to settle in Ben Tre. Based on the same doctrine and organization as that of the Tam Ky sect, the Ban Chin Dao had acquired sufficient following by 1940 to warrant establishing a Holy See.

Ban Chin Dao rituals, in general, resemble the Vietnamese rituals observed in the rural villages.

Summary

In general, Cao Daists consider themselves simply as Cao Daists rather than as members of any particular sect. Members may attend services at other temples in other villages without conflict, with the exception of the Minh Chon Ly, whose doctrine represents a radical departure from the movement. These splinter sects, in general, maintain close contact with the Tam Ky sect; a member of the Tam Ky sect is, in fact, responsible for disseminating news to the other groups.

The splinter sects, on the whole, maintain cordial relations. The Ban Chin Dao and Tien Thien are on particularly good terms. Since their doctrines are almost identical, the members of each sect are permitted to openly attend rituals at the temple of the other. On the other hand, several incidents have occurred between leaders of the Minh Chon Ly and the Tien Thien, indicating the uneasy relationship between these two sects.

The French authorities favored the Tam Ky sect, but persecuted several of the splinter sects for their association with nationalist movements. Since 1954 the splinter sects, forced to operate clandestinely during the French regime, have begun to reappear and reconstruct their temples, many of which had been demolished by the French. In 1955 after they allied themselves with the Hoa Hao

and Binh Xuyen, the influence of the Tam Ky sect began to decline. Information on the current status of the splinter sects is unavailable in the open literature at this writing.

FOOTNOTES

I. INTRODUCTION

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3. Ellen Joy Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina Continues: Geneva to Bandung* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 24.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Roy Jumper, "Sects and Communism in South Vietnam," *Orbis*, III, 1 (Spring 1959), p. 90.

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3. Col. Frank O. Blake, Interview, September 1965. [Former Foreign Broadcast Information Service Chief, Saigon.]
4. Gerald Cannon Hickey, *Village in Vietnam* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 290-91.
5. Gabriel Gobron, *Histoire et philosophie du Cao daisme* (Paris: Dervy, 1949), p. 22.
6. Hickey, *op. cit.*, pp. 290-91.
7. Gobron, *op. cit.*, p. 26; Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
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15. Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
16. Fall, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-39; Harris, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 134.
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18. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, op. cit.*, p. 79.

19. Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958), p. 437.
20. Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

III. STATUS DURING WORLD WAR II

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2. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 52; Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
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7. Savani, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.
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IV. STATUS DURING THE INDOCHINA WAR

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2. Savani, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
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3. *Ibid.*, p. 241; "Khanh Seeks to Rally Sect," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1964, p. 3, col. 3.
4. Jack Langguth, "Saigon Installs Cabinet Designed To End Disunity," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1965, p. 1, col. 8.
5. Jack Langguth, "Saigon Breaks Up Meeting on Peace," *The New York Times*, March 18, 1965, p. 5, col. 3.

VII. CAO DAISM AS A RELIGION

Footnote in text.

VIII. SPLINTER SECTS

Footnote in text.

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