

SECTION VI

RELIGION

Chinese religion—a syncretism of ancestor worship, animism, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and in some cases, Christianity and Islam—touches on virtually every aspect of Chinese life and culture. In fact, Chinese religion is a way of life: Confucianism praises filial piety, loyalty, righteousness, and good faith; Buddhism extols compassion, kindness to all creatures, and protestation against all evil actions; Taoism advocates patience, simplicity, contentment, and harmony.¹ Each religion is marked by certain common characteristics—eclecticism, tolerance, optimism, morality, ritualism, worldliness, superstition, and social and individual emphasis—which are best understood by a brief discussion of each religion.²

Ancestor Worship and Household Deities

Ancestor worship is perhaps the most widespread of the above-mentioned religions. The importance assumed by the cult of the dead is largely attributed to Confucianism. Many rituals associated with death, mourning, and burial were established by classics of the Confucianist school. According to Confucianism, for example, it is the filial duty of the eldest son to conduct the ancestral rites to perpetuate the memory of the deceased and to provide for the deceased after their death. Underlying this practice is the belief that the dead have the same needs as the living, which only the living can fulfill. The behavior of the descendants is believed to affect the welfare of the dead and, conversely, the dead may, through their conduct in the spiritual world, affect the future of the living.³

Ceremonies in honor of the ancestors are conducted for a variety of reasons; to help unite the family and the clan; to show sincere affection for the dead; fear; to win social approval; and to reap benefits from the deceased, who will intercede in favor of the living.⁴

Moreover, many practices are associated with the cult of the dead.* In the Chinese home, for example, may be an ancestor shelf—a small shelf attached to an inside wall (generally in a room which opens onto the street), on which are placed offerings of food

* For example, see "Death and Burial," p. 961.

and incense. Above the shelf may be a pennant of red paper about a foot long on which are inscribed black or gold characters giving the surname of the family, the number of generations it has existed, and the names of all the close relatives who have died.⁵

The ancestors are honored during the New Year and other major festivals, especially Ch'ing Ming (Spring Festival), on the anniversaries of their birth and death, and on the 1st and the 15th days of each lunar month.⁶

In addition to rites performed in honor of the ancestors, the Chinese family recognizes and pays homage to certain household deities. Among these are the God of the Earth, God of the House, God of the Kitchen, and God of the Sky—not to mention a host of other lesser spirits. Each deity is represented by a particular image. The God of the Earth is a rectangular piece of paper, about 8 by 3 inches, bearing the Chinese characters for the god; this paper is posted near the threshold on the outside of the street door or on the outer wall of the house.

The God of the House consists of a piece of red paper, about 10 by 12 inches, bearing the Chinese characters for "God of the House." It is pasted near the floor on an inner wall near the street door. A box effect is sometimes created by a frame fitted around the paper or a table placed above it. The offerings are placed on the bottom shelf or on the floor, and the receptacles for making the offerings are stored on the top of the frame or table.

The God of the Kitchen is represented by a rectangular piece of red paper inscribed with characters, in black, meaning "Sure Luck Kitchen Master." This image is attached to the wall of the kitchen above the stove. In the past this god was said to return to the spirit world before the New Year to report on the conduct of the family. As a parting gesture meant to assure a favorable report, the family smeared the god's lips with molasses or jam. This ritual may be dying out among the Chinese in Vietnam.

The God of the Sky consists of a rectangular piece of paper inscribed with the god's name. It is pasted on the rear outside wall of the house or on one wall of an open court.

In place of all these gods, a general god may be represented by a piece of red paper bearing the Chinese characters for god and some honorific phrases. This paper is attached to an inner wall of the house above head level, and offerings are periodically made to it.

Every Chinese home contains images of at least one of the previously mentioned gods. The number and variety are determined by each family. Dialect differences seem to account for some of the variation. Some families devote more attention to their shrines than do others; in fact, some Chinese neglect them entirely. In any case, the religious responsibility rests on the wife, who honors

the spirits by burning incense in the home and even outside on the sidewalk. On the 1st and the 15th days of the lunar month and during the principal Chinese festivals, before eating their first meal of the day, the family makes offerings to the spirits. The god papers are replaced with fresh ones at each New Year.⁷

These ancestral and household gods form part of a tremendous hierarchy of gods headed by the Supreme Ruler of Heaven, whom some say is entirely personal; and others, that he is impersonal. Included in this panoply of deities are Confucious and his followers, Lao-Tzu—alleged founder of Taoism—Buddha and, in some cases, Mohammed and Jesus Christ.⁸

Animism

Animism, interrelated with ancestor worship, survives in many forms: water, peach trees, and jade, for example, are considered to be imbued with supernatural powers. The strength of Chinese animistic belief is demonstrated by the importance placed on feng-shui,* a pseudoscientific study of the physical environment of a grave or house and the most beneficial conditions which can exist. It is associated with the magico-religious power of certain animistic spirits. Taoism also adopted many of the vague spirits identified with animism, concretized them and included them in the Taoist heaven.⁹

Taoism

Taoism (Tao means "the way"), originally both a philosophy (Tao-chia) and a religion (Tao-chiao), gradually became a handmaid to Buddhism. From the latter, Taoism acquired its priesthood, its canon, and its belief in the idea of transmigration and of karma (force determining destiny in one's next existence). Yet Taoism still exerts great influence over Chinese life and culture, particularly because of its acceptance of popular superstition. From the very beginning—approximately the first century, B.C.—Taoism was a "conglomeration of sorcery, arts of priest-magicians and the philosophy of the yin-yang school, e.g., all things are products of cosmic negative and positive forces."¹⁰

The Taoist pantheon contains a multiplicity of gods; there are deities for animate and inanimate objects, for stars, even for parts of the body.¹¹ Some contend that the highest of these is "The Jade Emperor" (Yu Huang), the supreme god of the whole universe. The Taoists have a trinity, "The Three Pure Ones" (San Ch'ing), although the individual members may vary—Lao Tzu, Yu Huang, and the mythical ruler P'an Ku† are one combination. The "Three Rulers" (San Kuan) is another trinity sometimes believed to com-

* See "Folk Beliefs" for a more detailed discussion, p. 964.

† *Ibid.*

prise Heaven, Earth, and Water and the three (perhaps legendary) rulers Yao, Shun, and Yu. Temples are frequently erected to gods who are actually personified ideas, mythical beings, and deified human beings.¹² There are three types of Taoist heavens—ten “Heavenly Grottoes,” thirty-six subsidiary “Heavenly Grottoes,” and seventy-two “Blessed Places”—ruled by immortals.

Among the primary objectives of Taoism are happiness, wealth, health, the bearing of children, and longevity. Those who truly wanted to follow the Tao, that is, to realize the Three Original Principles of Taoism—Essence, Vital Force, and Spirit,¹³ adhered to a regimen which included “meditation on Taoist truths, the cultivation of such Taoist attitudes as inaction and placidity . . . carefully regulated breathing, diet, discipline, moral living, and partaking of substances supposed to prolong life, such as seeds and resin of evergreens . . . products of such plants as the plum, and certain minerals and jewels—gold, jade, and the pearl.”¹⁴

Alchemy and astrology are integral parts of Taoism. The true Taoist seeks to achieve immortality by means of magical practices and drugs. Not only are these drugs believed capable of prolonging life for centuries, but they rejuvenate the body and enable the immortal to walk through fire unharmed, walk on water without sinking, rise into the air, control the spirits, and revive the dead.¹⁵

Superstitions are also an important part of Taoism, as is shown by the belief in geomancy (divination by means of figures or lines), fortune-telling, divination, and the use of charms and amulets.¹⁶ Traditionally, Chinese scholars and the more educated classes scorned Taoism as the “superstitious cult of the ‘stupid people.’”¹⁷ They also associated medicine with Taoism, and as a result neglected it. Science was considered the province of the “ignorant and lowly” and was therefore left to the Taoist priests.¹⁸

Taoist professionals are called *tao shih*. The *tao shih* are recluses seeking immortality by meditating and leading ascetic lives; celibates living in monasteries; or married people living at home but earning a livelihood by officiating at burials, writing charms, exorcising evil spirits, or communicating with the dead. A devotee of Taoism enters the professional ranks through an apprenticeship.¹⁹

In the past, Taoist belief was associated with secret societies which were instrumental in overthrowing Chinese dynasties. In Communist China, the Taoists have been persecuted as counter-revolutionaries.²⁰

Confucianism

Confucianism is largely a Western term applied to the system of thought set forth by the sage Confucius (551–479 B.C.) and his followers. The Chinese generally call this body of thought K’ung

Chiao ("Confucian Teaching") or Ju Chiao ("Teaching of the Learned"). Confucianism is frequently considered to be a philosophy, since much Confucianist thought concerns the organization of the state, of society, and the relationships between men. But Confucianism also contains religious elements which are viewed by the Chinese as a form of *chiao* meaning "to educate."²¹

Religion, according to the Confucianists, is primarily moral cultivation, but spiritual overtones and practices are also present. Confucius did not concern himself with spirits and the afterlife except to say that spirits should be respected but kept at a distance. That is, men should learn to direct their own destinies instead of placing themselves at the mercy of the spirits. Confucius taught his followers to believe in a heaven but only as the source of all moral law and principles. Heaven, according to Confucius, "is not anthropomorphic and 'he does not speak,' but he is superhuman, purposive, the source of truth and goodness, completely overwhelming and mysterious."²² For this reason the "Confucianists call their Way the 'Way of Heaven' and their Principle the 'Principle of Heaven.'" ²³

Placing great emphasis on the practice of religious ritual, Confucianism has always promoted such ancient rites as the worship of heaven, homage to ancestors, and the commemoration of great men. In the past, the Emperor, representing the people, performed annual rites at the Altar of Heaven to ensure cooperation between man and the universe, to give thanks, and to pray for a good year. Confucianism advocates the sincere performance of rites of ancestor worship, not because ancestors have power over the living, but rather to unify the dead and the living and so strengthen the family unit. To show respect for great men, Confucianists, as a matter of tradition, built temples in their honor and performed seasonal rites to them. The most respected of these was and is, of course, Confucius; temples in his honor have been erected in nearly all Vietnamese provinces. In general, however, Confucius has not been deified but has been given such titles as duke, king, "Great Perfection, Ultimate Sage and Foremost Teacher."²⁴

Confucianism is not an institutional religion with a sacred scripture, clergy, or creed; it is, however, religious in its observance of traditional rites and in its philosophy. Confucianism does not teach immortality in the sense of the existence of a heaven and hell; it does teach immortality in the humanistic sense of virtue, wisdom, and achievement. Good and evil ensure their own consequences.²⁵

Confucianist temples, located in the major towns of the Republic of Vietnam, contain only altars, honorary tablets, and maxims from Confucius carved on panels. Traditionally, Vietnamese, and per-

haps the Chinese, Confucianists celebrated the festival of Confucius in the autumn, on a day designated by the astrologers. Offerings of flowers and rice wine were placed on the maxim altars and an invocation read before each one. The ritual was repeated before the altars of the four philosophers, the altars of the parents of Confucius, and the 72 tablets of the eminent scholars. Instead of temples of Confucius, villages have altars to the Master of Philosophy; larger villages might group together three altars in one enclosure, whereas smaller villages would have only one.²⁶

Confucianism has had a profound effect on the economic organization of Chinese society. Coupled with the cult of the ancestors, Confucianism stresses the importance of family, the creation of a true kinship society, and the procreation of male heirs, essential to the perpetuation of the clan. Largely due to Confucianist teaching, the Chinese family forms a tight economic unit, an affluent member often providing for all. A consequence of Confucianism has been the tendency to avoid risk unless the interests of the family are at stake.²⁷

Buddhism

The Chinese have been deeply influenced by Mahayana Buddhism, which is intertwined with Taoist and Confucianist elements.²⁸ By winning the favor of Buddhist divinities, the Chinese hope to dispel the evil and receive the good of this life; by doing charitable works, supporting the temple and monastery, saying prayers, and following a vegetarian regimen, the Buddhist can acquire merit which may be useful in the life beyond the grave.

The vast Buddhist pantheon includes both foreign (Indian) and indigenous gods. Mahayana Buddhists revere innumerable Buddhas, including Gautama and especially Amitabha Buddha. At death, those of the faith of Amitabha Buddha allegedly enter the Pure Land (paradise) or "Western Heaven." In addition, Buddhists worship bodhisattvas as deities (persons, living or dead, who refrain from entering Nirvana in order to save others). Among the most widely worshiped bodhisattvas are Kuanyin, Goddess of Mercy, who is reputed to deliver the believer from danger and to grant children; Ti Tsang (called God of Hell); and Wen-Shu, the embodiment of wisdom.²⁹

The true Buddhists are mainly the professionals—the monks (*ho shang*), the teachers of Buddhist law (*fa shih*), and the nuns. A man desiring to become a monk enters the monastery as a novice, and at that time takes 10 vows, including promises not to steal, take life, be unchaste, lie, or drink alcohol. A monk tutors the novice in the sacred writings and in the ritual. The majority of the monks know only a small part of the ritual and may not even comprehend the meaning of the little they know. A small group

of monks are, however, extremely learned, having spent their lives meditating.

With the completion of his novitiate, the candidate enters the state of *lohan*, when he is seeking his own salvation. Lastly, he takes the vows of a bodhisattva to seek salvation for others as well as for himself.

The monk abides by certain rules of conduct. He must remain celibate, serve as a monk for life, eat no flesh, and continue to adhere to his earlier vows.³⁰ The Chinese monk wears grey, brown, or saffron-yellow garments consisting of a loose-fitting, long-sleeved jacket and trousers. Chinese monks are rarely called by the Chinese except in times of misfortune and death; they are invited into the Chinese home only to conduct funeral services. When the gods are favorable there is no need for the monks' services.³¹

Chinese Temples

Chinese temples combine Buddhist, Taoist, Confucianist, and animistic elements. Designed along traditional Chinese lines, the temples are made of brick or stucco with tile roofs and dragons under the eaves. Taoist gods and Mahayana Buddhist images are often present in the temple. In some areas the temples are in disrepair, indicating a decline in the influence of the temple in the Chinese community. The temples depend on public support, for in Chinese temples no collections are taken—the very idea is offensive—but money is acquired through the sale of incense, candles, and voting papers. In addition, the temples receive money through the services of votaries (fortunetellers), donations, and fees for the services of the monks.³²

There is no congregation in the Chinese temple. The laity consists of those wishing to worship in any temple at any time. Worshipers may attend a certain temple until the gods there no longer benefit them, at which point they may choose another. Most worshipers visit the temple only on the 1st and 15th days of each lunar month and during religious festivals. On these occasions the temples are filled to capacity with worshipers and their offerings. Worship is on an individual basis and consists of bowing, praying, burning incense and candles, or offering food, drink, and paper money to a certain god. The monks do not as a rule take part in the rituals.³³

Principal Holidays and Festivals

Most Chinese holidays and festivals have an underlying religious significance, although the social and recreational aspects are sometimes more evident. Some holidays are observed only within the home; others, by the whole community. Not all festivals are of equal significance, and the importance of each may vary according

to the community. Among the principal Chinese holidays are: the New Year, Lantern Day, Ch'ing Ming, Fifth Month Festival, Chung-yuan, Mid-Autumn Festival, and the Winter Festival.

The most important Chinese holiday is the New Year, which begins on the first lunar month, and lasts for 3 to 5 days. Since the Chinese measure time by both the lunar and the solar month, with an intercalary month added in some years, the date of the New Year varies, the earliest being January 21 and the latest February 19. New Year preparations begin a week in advance, when people bearing elaborate offerings flock to the temples. Moreover, food is prepared in advance because, according to custom, no cutting implement may be used during the New Year festival, and nothing may be killed on the first day of the year. Gifts of money wrapped in red paper are given the children; god papers are renewed.³¹ A few days before the New Year, the Kitchen God is believed to return to heaven to notify the gods of the family's conduct since the last anniversary. The family signals his departure by burning the god's image and welcomes his return, on the eve of the New Year, by pasting a new image of him over the kitchen stove.³²

The New Year is a time for paying debts, feasting, visiting friends and relatives, honoring the ancestors and exchanging gifts—usually of food. To accept all the contents of a gift basket is considered a breach of etiquette; a portion is usually returned to the sender as an indication that the gift is too generous. During the first 10 days of the New Year, all the gods are worshiped, the birthdays of all domestic animals celebrated, and all the stars are honored. With the advent of each new year, another year is added to the ages of all family members. During this festival the Chinese also celebrate birthdays, thus a child is 1 year old at birth and 2 years old after the first New Year.³³

Lantern Day, on the 15th day of the first lunar month, is primarily a religious celebration. Traditionally in southern China, during this holiday marking the official end of the New Year festival, a procession displayed the image of Buddha, and lanterns were hung out at each home. In Thailand, the Chinese have no procession but give dinner parties at home and visit the temple to determine whether or not the gods will favor them in the coming year. This determination is made by casting on the floor two small pieces of wood or *bei*, each having one flat and one round side; the gods will be favorable if one flat side and one round side turn up. When this happens, the individual buys cakes and candy at the temple and promises to pay more, the interest on the debt increasing at each throw. The confections—replicas of temples and lions of hard white sugar—are taken home to the children. In the evening families again visit the temple to make offerings of oranges, noodles,

incense, and candles.³⁷ The Chinese in the Republic of Vietnam also use the *bei*, but whether the above ritual is observed is not certain.

The principal spring festival is Ch'ing Ming, celebrated at the end of the second or the beginning of the third moon, when the family visits the graves of the ancestors, cleans and repairs the tombstones, and makes offerings. When the ancestors were cremated, their remains were placed in tin boxes and stored in warehouses. During Ch'ing Ming, the family opens the boxes and makes the traditional offerings by burning incense and paper money and by presenting food and drink. Chinese musicians sometimes play on this occasion.³⁸

The Fifth Month Festival, sometimes called the Dragon Boat Festival, falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. Originally boat races were held on this day, but today offerings are made to temple gods, animistic shrines, and household deities. Women prepare cakes of glutinous rice and nuts, offer them first, as a ritual, to the gods and then serve them to the family. This festival is mainly social and serves to break the daily routine.³⁹

Chung-yuan, on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month, is a time to commemorate the ancestors. Observance of this day varies according to the dialect group. In Thailand, the Cantonese, in lesser numbers than at Ch'ing Ming, visit the cemeteries, make offerings to the ancestral spirits, and clean the graves. The Teochiu observe the day at home, for they believe the spirits wander and may be dangerous if not appeased. Elaborate offerings of food and drink (whisky, Coca-Cola) are made, paper money burned, and coins and rice thrown around the shop or home. According to traditional belief, if the spirits are sufficiently tempted by these offerings, they will not molest the family. In the evening these offerings are consumed by the family.⁴⁰

The Mid-Autumn Festival or Moon Festival, on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, is almost as merry a celebration as the New Year. In the evening, shopkeepers set up richly decorated tables on the sidewalk and display all their wares, especially such things as cologne, face powder, and silks, as well as gold and silver paper which will be burned at the curb. Suspended above the displays are lanterns—shaped like fish, temples, and airplanes—as well as gas lamps. Until midnight, crowds of people stroll about the streets and watch actors perform on stages erected in the squares. Women turn out in great numbers, because the Moon Goddess is said to appear at this time to listen to and sometimes grant women's requests. Offerings are also made in the temples and homes. At midnight the family is supposed to sit beneath the full moon and eat moon cakes made of coconut and dates. This

custom commemorates the Chinese rebellion against the Mongols, when the Chinese population read the announcement of the rebellion on slips of paper hidden in cakes. In addition, the festival is a time for strengthening the emotional ties of the Chinese with their homeland.

The Winter Festival, on the 25th day of the 11th month, is a time for integrating the family. Sweetened flour balls are presented to the household gods who are believed to return to heaven and report on the family. Eating these flour balls also assures the individual of good fortune during the coming year. On this day, all the family returns to the parental home and partakes of a feast.⁴¹

Competition is so keen in the Chinese community that the Chinese generally work Saturdays and Sundays and take no more than 3 days a year for holidays—except for occasional weddings and funerals.

The various festivals, like the Chinese religion in general, give moral support and comfort to the individual in time of crisis and misfortune. They also help to reinforce the solidarity, mutual aid, and cooperative characteristics of the Chinese and to strengthen their emotional ties with the homeland.⁴²

Summary

To summarize, Chinese religion is essentially optimistic. Men, according to orthodox Confucianism, are naturally good; human life is worth preserving. Prosperity ensues from obedience to moral law, and disaster results from evil actions. Buddhism reinforces this optimism, teaching that good triumphs over evil. Chinese religion is also strongly ethical. Confucianism stresses man's duty to man and praises such virtues as filial piety, loyalty, and sincerity. Buddhism also emphasizes that suffering results from wantonness.

All Chinese religions, some more than others, emphasize ritual. In certain cases the stress on the performance of ritual is stronger than that on living an ethically good life. Confucianism, however, unites ethics and rituals in the belief that ritual is meaningless unless performed with a moral purpose; conversely the performance of ritual assists in moral development.

Chinese religion is both utilitarian and nonutilitarian. The social aspects of religion were meant to facilitate relations between man and man and between man and the spirits. Taoism provides the means for attaining immortality on earth; according to Buddhism, man can aspire to a blessed afterlife by adhering to its doctrine. The superstition of the Chinese reinforces the utilitarian aspect of their religion. Offerings are made to obtain immediate protection or benefits. Lastly, Chinese religion has both a social and an in-

dividual facet; Confucianism teaches that religion is destined to save society, yet, together with Buddhism and Taoism, it also aims to perfect the individual.⁴³

SECTION VII

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

The role of the Chinese in the economy of Vietnam has been compared with that of the "blood circulation system of a human body." This indispensability is explained by the fact that the Chinese have penetrated virtually every field of economic activity, especially trade—four-fifths of Vietnamese trade was in Chinese hands in 1958—banking, and commerce. The Chinese exert a tremendous influence over the country's agriculture; although few are directly engaged in farming, their loan and transportation facilities are of vital importance to Vietnamese farmers. Even in outlying regions, the Chinese are in close contact with the majority of the populace and have established a complex economic structure on the basis of trust and credit.²

To integrate the Chinese into the Vietnamese body politic and to loosen the Chinese stranglehold on the economy, Ngo Dinh Diem issued two ordinances—one primarily political and the other economic—specifically directed at the Chinese.³ The first decree, Ordinance No. 48 of August 21, 1956, imposed Vietnamese citizenship on all Chinese born in Vietnam.⁴ The local-born Chinese (estimated to number about 500,000) were obliged to adopt Vietnamese names, pay taxes, and register for military service as Vietnamese citizens. All other Chinese were considered foreigners.⁵ The other ordinance, Decree No. 53 of September 6, 1956, prohibited foreigners—namely Chinese nationals—from engaging in 11 professions; foreigners could not be fishmongers and butchers; retailers of products in common use (*chap-pho*); coal and firewood merchants; dealers in petroleum products; secondhand dealers; textile and silk merchants handling less than 10,000 meters; metal scrap dealers; cereal dealers; transporters of persons and merchandise by surface vehicle or boat; rice millers or processors; and commission agents.⁶ Thus, no longer were Chinese allowed to be merchants exclusively. Those in the first seven professions were allowed 6 months in which to comply with the decree, while those in the last four were given 1 year to liquidate or turn their businesses over to Vietnamese.

Needless to say, the two decrees had far-reaching effects, causing civil disobedience and diplomatic reactions in Taiwan as well as in Saigon.⁷ The Chinese countered almost immediately with economic

reprisals which nearly precipitated the collapse of the Vietnamese economy.⁸ They withdrew large sums of money from their banks, until almost a sixth of the country's currency—between 800 million and 1.5 billion piasters—had been removed from circulation. In an earlier article, the author who cites these figures says the Chinese withdrew only 400 to 600 million piasters and “sat on it.”⁹ The value of the Vietnamese piaster on the Hong Kong free market was temporarily depressed from the official 35 to \$1 to 90, and to 105, and finally to 81 (the normal free rate being 75 to 80 to \$1).¹⁰

Chinese in charge of the Hong Kong and Singapore markets were urged to boycott Vietnamese rice; as a result, the country's rice exports virtually ceased.¹¹ Distribution problems resulted because of the insufficient number of Vietnamese willing to take over Chinese businesses; only 34 percent of the total businesses in the restricted categories found Vietnamese willing to assume ownership. In the Saigon area, for example, only 96 Vietnamese came forth to claim 1,013 chap-pho (grocery-general stores) vacated by the Chinese. By mid-July 1957, the number of unemployed Chinese had soared to 25,000 in the Saigon area alone.

Repercussions from the Government decrees were also felt in remote rural areas. Chinese rice millers, who usually lent money to the Vietnamese farmers to help them through the lean months prior to the harvest, refused to lend money and the Chinese middlemen who generally transported the farmers' rice, pork, and other products to the mills and to market failed to do so. Consequently, farmers turned to barter for their needs, and products were sold on the spot at any price.¹²

Only when the Chinese had partially withdrawn from economic activity was the extent of their economic power fully revealed. Due to their unusual system of credit and exchange and their elaborate commercial networks, the Chinese had frequently completed large business transactions on a small monetary base.¹³ These factors, coupled with the loss in tax revenue from the Chinese businesses, explained the depletion of Government funds and the consequent inability of the Government to pay customs and storage rates on consumer imports which were flooding the country. Consequently, tons of merchandise—which now had to be paid for in advance—stockpiled in the ports and deteriorated for want of proper storage facilities.¹⁴

When the economic crisis failed to improve, despite capital aid from the Government and lowered bank rates, the Government in July 1957 relented and agreed to compromise. The Chinese were to be permitted to reopen their shops on the condition that they would take Vietnamese partners, or a Vietnamese wife in whose name the business could be placed, or that they become Vietnamese

citizens. Refusal to comply with these conditions would result in deportation to Taiwan. Later events showed that the compromise had been a mere face-saving device for the Government, and the Vietnamization of the economy had been only nominally achieved. The nature of the compromise was revealed in partially secret testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee in March 1958:

The Vietnamese required that the second-generation (i.e., born in Vietnam) Chinese own at least 51 percent of the company. That enables them to say it is a Vietnamese company. Their parents, who retain Chinese nationality, own 49 percent. Of course, it is all the same group of people, but it is a Vietnamese operation with Chinese support.¹⁵

By December 1957 most Vietnamese companies were believed to be of this type. According to a census of importers, producers, and end users, 677, or about 25 percent out of a total of 2,758 such enterprises, were still fully Chinese owned at the end of 1957.¹⁶ In 1961, the Chinese controlled more than 80 percent of all capital in retail trade¹⁷ and 75 percent of Vietnam's economic activities.¹⁸

Thus Decree No. 53 weakened the Vietnamese economy and aggravated the already strained relations between the Chinese community and the Vietnamese Government. Further alienation of the Chinese resulted when the Cholon police commissioner forced Chinese merchants and intellectuals to organize "wipe-out illiteracy" classes in which Vietnamese was to be the only language of instruction, to remove all Chinese signs from their shops, and to Vietnamize their names. The absence of free choice, not the principle behind these orders, annoyed the Chinese. In fact, it is precisely this failure on the part of the Government to allow the Chinese free exercise of their will which explains why the Chinese in the Republic of Vietnam, contrary to those in other Southeast Asian countries, have fought so hard to preserve their Chinese citizenship.¹⁹

Predominant Occupations

The Chinese in the Republic of Vietnam are engaged in practically every occupation, from agriculture through banking and light industry, to wood carving and shoemaking.

Agriculture. Even prior to the arrival of the French, the Chinese had been especially active in the cultivation of pepper, mulberries, and tea, market gardening, and pigbreeding. Pepper is grown mainly in An Giang, Kien Giang, and on the island of Phu Quoc according to very exact, time-honored methods.²⁰ In the past, Chinese landowners imported their own countrymen from Hainan to work in the pepper fields, and the Chinese owned most of the large market gardens adjoining the major towns, which provided the populace with local as well as Chinese vegetables.²¹ Because the return on rice cultivation is meager, competition from native

cultivators great, and because in the past the Chinese were barred by law from owning the best ricegrowing land,²² the Chinese do not generally cultivate rice. There are, however, exceptions: in Ba Xuyen and An Xuyen Provinces most of the rice production is in Chinese hands. Most Chinese farmers are of Teochiu, Hakka, and Hainanese origin.²³ In Da Lat, Baria, and other wooded areas throughout the country, the Chinese engage in small lumbering enterprises whose products are mainly destined for local markets. In 1957, there were 276 such enterprises, 160 of which had main offices in the Saigon-Cholon area.²⁴

Rice Processing. Traditionally the rice trade has been controlled by the Chinese. In the past they dominated every phase of rice marketing, transportation, and processing; it was estimated that the Chinese owned 75 percent of Vietnam's 70 rice mills.²⁵ Correlated with this were the operation of commissaries and grocery stores and the function of moneylending between harvests.²⁶ Rice milling is the most important industry operated by the Chinese, but since the world depression in the 1930's it has not thrived as it did a decade earlier, when Cholon's factories alone produced 8,090 tons of white rice every 24 hours. In 1948 the Viet Minh sabotaged 11 of the Chinese rice mills. Since then many large rice mills have been replaced by smaller mills dispersed in more rural areas.

Textile Manufacturing. Second in importance to rice production is the manufacture of thread and cloth. In 1959, more than 600 textile workshops were engaged in spinning and weaving. However, until 1959 most manufacturers were small family businesses, and Vietnam lacked a large textile mill.²⁷ In July 1959, a Vietnamese-Chinese textile plant (VINATEXCO) was opened at Ba Quec in Gia Dinh Province. Built with private Chinese and Vietnamese capital and backed by a loan from the Industrial Development Center with the support of the American Aid Mission, the plant was scheduled to produce 10 tons of cotton yarn and 32,000 yards of fabric daily, satisfying one-quarter of the Republic of Vietnam's textile needs.²⁸

Other Light Industries. The most important of these is the manufacturing of candles and incense sticks used as offerings in most religions. Also significant is the manufacturing of rubber, stone, clay, and glass products, and wooden ships, used mainly for transporting rice along the inland waterways. Food and associated industries include sugar refining in the areas of Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh, Thu Dau Mot and Cholon; the making of fish, soya and bean sauces; rice flour noodles; soya bean cheese; confectionaries; and coconut and peanut oil.²⁹ There are many other small Chinese-operated industries too numerous to mention.

Nonmanufacturing Occupations. Retail trade is the most signifi-

cant nonmanufacturing operation, for in 1959 it included 15 subcategories with 2,123 Chinese firms or authorized dealers (those having a Government franchise). The leading subcategory is no doubt the grocery, a combination of the American grocery, drug, and dime stores. Next in importance is the Chinese medicine shop which, in the absence of modern medical facilities, supplies the hinterland inhabitants with Chinese and Vietnamese medicinal herbs. The Chinese pharmacist is also called upon to diagnose and to treat patients in their homes. These two types of small businesses play a vital role in the domestic economy, for they are found in almost all areas, even the most remote. The nature of these businesses also seems to allow the Chinese to remain abreast of the ideas and activities of the populace.

Third in importance are rice shops and secondhand goods stalls, each of which had some 200 dealers in 1959.³⁰

Wholesale businesses consist of 30 subcategories which include 1,856 firms. The most important of these is the import-export business; in 1959 there were 350 import-export firms, most of which had been in existence since mid-1955. Prior to the imposition of a margin deposit of 350,000 piasters, more than 20,000 such firms existed in Saigon-Cholon alone.³¹

That the scrap copper and iron business, mainly handled by the Fukienese, is of considerable importance is demonstrated by the recent shipment of 40,000 tons of iron scrap to Japan.

Next in importance is the bazaar trade, an expanded version of the grocery store. Textiles and agricultural products are equally important in the bazaars: in addition to rice and rubber, the latter category includes such surplus items as green beans, cattle hides, duck feathers, and dried fish. These items are also exported to Hong Kong and Singapore under a barter system.³²

Transportation. Transportation, comprising six subcategories and 165 dealers, is mainly in Chinese hands. Most products are transported from Saigon to the interior and back, and from village to village, along highways.³³ In the Mekong Delta, however, transportation is principally by water, and the Chinese—private individuals, landowners, and shipping companies—own most of the junks and tugboats. The Chinese also own several small steamers (500 tons) which formerly sailed between Saigon and Haiphong, and Saigon and Da Nang. Since the Chinese have a monopoly in transportation, most farmers depend on them to carry their produce to market.³⁴

Banking and Commercial Facilities. Five Chinese banks—one branch of the East Asia Bank, two of the China Bank, and two of the Bank of Communications—operate in the Saigon-Cholon area; in conformity with Government regulations, these banks give serv-

ice to clients of all nationalities. Chinese pawnshops and money-lenders also play a significant role by extending credit to small firms and to members of the urban working classes and peasants.³⁵

Service Industries. The Chinese firms or authorized dealers in both urban and rural areas totaled 15,748.³⁶

Chinese Economic Organizations

The most significant and powerful Chinese business association is the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, whose apparent function is to further Chinese business interests. Originally organized in 1903, it was officially incorporated in 1910. Until 1959, the membership comprised representatives of the five congregations and the leadership rotated among the Cantonese, Fukienese, and Teochiu, who held five votes each. The Hakka and Hainanese, with only three votes each, were not permitted to assume leadership. Since 1959 the Chamber has been reorganized—to reduce the influence of the dialect groups—and members are now selected from the trade associations.³⁷

There are 48 Chinese Trade Associations in the Republic of Vietnam, with a membership of 1,381 Chinese businesses—1960 figures. The leading concerns are the medical association, 75 firms; the jewelry association, 69 firms; and of lesser importance, the weaving association, 345 individual or family members; the teahouse association, 209 members; and the tailors' association, 200 members.³⁸

Occupational Specialization by Dialect Group

Traditionally, each dialect group or congregation specialized in a particular field of economic activity. In this way, each group maintained a more or less self-supporting, independent economy. In general, the five groups may be characterized as follows:

1. The Cantonese or Kwong-fu. This group consists mainly of laborers; that is, persons engaged in railway construction; handicrafts, such as sauce making, brewery, copper and iron utensils; tanneries; gold- and silversmithing; shoemaking; laundry; cooking; painting; and various service industries, such as department stores, hotels, and theaters.³⁹

2. The Fukienese or Hokkien. Although few in number—8 percent of the Chinese population in 1950⁴⁰—the Fukienese are the principal Chinese merchants (especially in rice) and are therefore generally the wealthiest.⁴¹ Their secondary activities include shipbuilding (junks), shipping, motorcar repairs, bicycle supply, exchange houses, and banking. They operate rubber goods, sugar refining, coconut oil pressing, pineapple packing, and confectionery.⁴

3. The Teochiu. Especially concerned with good businesses, this

group deals particularly with the production of rice, raw fish, dried salt fish, pepper, and vegetables. Associated with these businesses are such enterprises as rice milling, market gardening, wine making, and tobacco growing.⁴³ Many Teochiu are also boatmen and cooks.⁴⁴

4. The Hakka or Kheu. Like the Cantonese, the Hakka engage in handicrafts such as shoemaking, tailoring, gold- and silversmithing, and in such concerns as rice milling and iron founding. Some Hakka operate pawnshops and exchange houses, while others follow professions such as medicine and teaching. Few if any corporations are run by the Hakka group.⁴⁵ They are also farmers and workmen.⁴⁶

5. The Hainanese or Hailam. Lowest on the economic and social scales, this group is primarily engaged in domestic service, small restaurant and teashop businesses, fishing, junk shipping, and factory and coolie labor.⁴⁷

Trade With Other Groups

The Chinese have established a complex trading system which neither the Vietnamese nor the Europeans have succeeded in duplicating. The preeminence in trade which the overseas Chinese have attained is explained partially by their ability to mingle easily with the local inhabitants of their adopted countries, their willingness to speculate and to serve as intermediaries, and their elaborate system of mutual assistance. To understand the intricacies of Chinese commerce, it is necessary merely to examine the rice trade, which is characteristic of the Chinese business method.

Traditionally, Chinese rice merchants maintained rice mills to process the paddy for exporters. When they functioned in both capacities, they were called miller-exporters and were generally located in Cholon. The rice millers usually could not purchase paddy directly from the farmers, but had to use intermediaries or paddy merchants, who were organized into syndicates and who specialized in this phase of the trade. These merchants, operating through the intermediaries of agents and *ramasseurs* (literally gatherers or collectors), were also essential to most rice farmers, who needed them to provide transportation of their rice to the mill.⁴⁸

The paddy merchants, situated in the urban areas, did not purchase the paddy themselves, but rather through their agents, located in the rice-growing districts and river ports, who in turn directed the activities of the *ramasseurs*. The agents, the second group of middlemen, often were also grocers. Occasionally large grocers avoided using the services of one middleman by purchasing paddy directly, transporting it to town themselves, and reselling it to the paddy merchants.

The agents, according to custom, dealt only with transactions of 10,000 *gia* (a Vietnamese measure equal to 40 liters). Their accountants handled business amounting to 5,000 to 10,000 *gia*; their subaccountants, quantities of 400 to 5,000 *gia*; transactions below 500 *gia* were handled by the ramasseurs.

The ramasseurs were actually in charge of buying the paddy in the village markets; in many cases the paddy had already been promised in payment of a loan made before the harvest.⁵⁰ The ramasseurs bought the paddy with capital provided by the agents, who in turn received credit from the urban wholesale merchant.⁵⁰

The Chinese are frequently accused of usury, of exploiting the debt-ridden farmers, and of capitalizing on their improvidence. The Vietnamese generally do not save for the future, especially since the local Chinese grocer, known as Uncle, will nearly always give them credit, while at the same time securing rights on the crop.⁵¹

Recently these rice traders have been of positive assistance to the Vietnamese Government. In October 1965, the Government forces and the Communists were each preparing to seize the harvest, estimated at 220,000 tons, from the vicinity of Bac Lieu, an area mostly under Viet Cong domination. To prevent the Communists from getting the lion's share of the paddy, as they have been attempting to do each year, the Government sent out Chinese merchants to buy rice directly from the farmers. Because the Chinese are usually apolitical, they alone dare to enter such Communist-held areas without fear of reprisals. In addition to fanning out into the paddy areas, the Chinese reportedly maintain granaries in Bac Lieu which are dummy organizations designed to deceive the Communists.⁵²

According to an earlier report—July 1965—Vietnamese resentment against the Chinese had increased because of a rise in the price of rice. The increase was attributed partly to Viet Cong interference with paddy shipments and partly to Chinese speculation. To curb speculation, Premier Nguyen Cao Ky threatened to shoot rice dealers convicted of hoarding and speculation.⁵³

SECTION VIII

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

For centuries the Chinese have played a dominant role in the economic activities of Vietnam while remaining politically separate. The Chinese lived in their own communities, operated their own trade-political associations, established and enforced their own laws, and considered themselves citizens of China.¹

When the Chinese emigrated and settled in Vietnam, they grouped themselves, according to dialect or province of origin, into communities called bangs, which the state officially recognized in 1814. The leaders of these groups, *bang truong*, were chosen by the local authorities and were held responsible for the behavior of their people. The Chinese, at that time, enjoyed the same civil status as the Vietnamese and were subject neither to military service nor to the *corvee* (labor in lieu of taxes).² They could appeal to the local courts and own property, but they were not permitted to seek state employment.³ The precolonial Annamese regime did not attempt to limit the economic and social position of the Chinese, but rather enabled them to function smoothly as a community separate from the Vietnamese.⁴

The French colonial regime, on the other hand, subjected the Chinese to a series of regulations in an effort to "establish and maintain an equilibrium between the Vietnamese and the Chinese."⁵ They imposed heavy poll taxes on the Chinese and to curb Chinese immigration, required all citizens to carry identity cards, permits of circulation, and temporary passes.⁶ The French also maintained a system, initiated by the Emperor of Annam, whereby immigrants were not permitted to settle in the country unless they were sponsored by the chief of a village or bang and had their names registered.⁷

The French continued the bangs (or congregations, as they called them), since these organizations provided an effective means to control the steadily multiplying Chinese population. They entrusted to the leaders of the congregations such functions as tax collection, immigration control, and the settling of disputes within the Chinese community. Eventually, the Chinese reacted against the powers of the congregation leaders, who they believed were collaborating with the French against the rest of the Chinese com-

munity; but Chinese protests went unheeded until 1930, when the government of China intervened in their behalf.⁸

Small concessions were gained in the Nanking Franco-Chinese agreement of 1935 when the Chinese were granted most-favored-nation privileges of travel and residence.⁹ However, they were not allowed to own the most fertile red lands on which rubber and other export crops were cultivated.¹⁰ In southern Annam, the Chinese were not permitted to lease the village fishing sites which were auctioned by the provincial governments each year.¹¹ Finally, they were still barred from employment in the colonial government.¹² The Franco-Chinese treaty of Chungking (1946), signed when China was one of the Big Four, granted the Chinese "tax status equal to that of Indochinese nationals and jural status equal to that of French nationals."¹³

The Franco-Chinese treaty of 1948 provided for modifications of the congregation system. To appease the Nationalist Chinese Government, which felt the congregations fostered the regional allegiance of the Chinese at the expense of loyalty to national China, the French renamed the congregations with the more anonymous term of Chinese Regional Administrative Groups; in addition, the Chinese consuls were given the right to veto the candidacy of Chinese for positions of leadership in the groups, although the colonial government retained the right of ultimate choice. These groups continued to provide their members with community and civil services such as schools, hospitals, and temples. The best temples and hospitals were maintained by the Cantonese group, the largest of the five.¹⁴ The Chinese could now transfer from one association to another at will. Furthermore, the Chinese were allowed free movement, free trade, acquisition of property, fishing in territorial waters, and participation in the coastal trade in navigable waters. The traditional Chinese personal and family status was retained; placed under the jurisdiction of French tribunals, they were allowed to own property in common. The Chinese were, however, subject to an oppressive fiscal policy, which forced them to pay a special personal capital tax, a measure aimed at excluding all but the economic elite from the country.¹⁵ In effect, the Chinese were to be treated as a separate national group within the country.¹⁶ They were in a unique position, for they had no contact with local authorities except through their own elected leaders. As a semiautonomous group, the Chinese developed no other loyalties than those to their own congregations and ultimately to their native country.¹⁷ Moreover, their position enabled them to gain control of certain branches of the economy when they were granted extra-territorial concessions.¹⁸

When he came to power, Ngo Dinh Diem saw the status of the

Chinese as incompatible with the sovereignty of an independent state. To eliminate the privileged status of the Chinese and to integrate them into the Vietnamese body politic, Diem promulgated Ordinance No. 48 on August 21, 1956, which provided that all Chinese born in Vietnam were automatically granted Vietnamese citizenship.* Those refusing to accept were to be deported to Formosa. The Sino-Vietnamese (Minh Huong), however, were ineligible for repatriation.²⁰

Significantly, the decree was retroactive: all Chinese born in the country in the past, an estimated 500,000, suddenly discovered they were required to assume a new citizenship.²¹ The old alien-identification cards of Chinese born in Vietnam were confiscated, and new cards were issued attesting their Vietnamese citizenship.²²

The Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vietnam issued a communique which called the decree: "... a privilege that most countries deny foreigners born on their territory or at least grant under exacting conditions. . . . It should also be added that it is hardly conceivable that an important foreign colony can live and prosper in a state on the fringes of the national community without sharing the obligations which normally fall on its members. . . ." ²³ In conjunction with his efforts to integrate the Chinese into the community, Diem issued a second decree two weeks later which banned foreigners from 11 professions.†

As anticipated, the Chinese reacted strongly to these measures, saying they were allowed no free choice. They appealed to the Consul General of Nationalist China to intervene in their behalf. The Vietnamese Government rejected China's requests.²⁴

By August 1957, the third of the "final" deadlines, less than 80,000 to 100,000 Chinese had registered for naturalization. Over 50,000 Chinese had applied for evacuation when the Vietnamese authorities suddenly closed the registration list on July 19, 1957. At that time only 3,000 Chinese had actually completed the formalities for departure; these were airlifted to Taiwan in August.²⁵

Meanwhile, the Chinese retaliated with economic reprisals, severely affecting the Vietnamese economy. The Government finally agreed to a compromise whereby the Chinese could continue their important role in the economy, provided they were willing to join the national community. The official abolition of the congregations in 1960 marked, at least formally, the end of the social and legal separateness of the Chinese community. The sudden requirement of Vietnamese citizenship for the Chinese, however, did not necessarily assure their loyalty and cooperation as citizens.²⁶

* According to one source the decree, formulated in December 1955, granted Vietnamese citizenship to all Chinese born in Vietnam who had one parent also born in Vietnam.¹⁹

† See "Economic Organization," p. 286.

As of 1961, according to some sources, the Chinese were beginning to accept their new status.²⁷ This was partially explained by the new policy of the Chinese Nationalist Government which urged Chinese nationals in Southeast Asia to become loyal citizens of their countries of residence.

Political Consciousness and Opinion

The political consciousness and opinions of the Chinese in the Republic of Vietnam are by no means homogeneous. Many Chinese are concerned solely with earning a living and are apolitical, except for political acts affecting them directly. However, the educated Chinese and the uneducated merchants take a very real interest in politics. The latter are anxious to enjoy the wealth they have amassed and are likely to support any policy which will assure this.²⁸

Outwardly, most Chinese favor Nationalist China, mainly because Taiwan has the only Chinese diplomatic mission in the country. However, beneath the surface, Chinese political opinions are both diverse and ambivalent. The Chinese press, comprising seven publications, is almost wholly pro-Kuomintang and vehemently anti-Communist. In the past, this attitude was one of necessity and expressed fear rather than conviction; a newspaper showing independence or propagating the Communist line was immediately suppressed.²⁹

The average Chinese is believed to be a neutralist with pro-Peking, but not necessarily pro-Communist, leanings. His ties are naturally with mainland China, the motherland and the home of his kin. This feeling is, of course, stronger in those residents born in China than in the local-born Chinese. The Chinese also admires Communist China for rising from its chaotic, backward state to its present position as a great power.³⁰

Moreover, the Chinese realize that it would be advantageous for them to have the support of a strong China. Since Taiwan was unable to alleviate their plight in 1956, many Chinese hope that Communist China will be able to protect them in the future. Some Chinese express the feeling that a powerful China would have made certain that they retained their privileged status in Vietnam.³¹ Yet the Communist ideology and way of life are anathema to the Chinese businessman, who is a capitalist in the fullest sense of the word.³² Being both practical and prudent, many Chinese have elected to follow an ambivalent course, espousing neither communism nor democracy, until the outcome of the struggle between the two ideologies becomes more certain. Meanwhile, they will continue openly to back Taiwan while they follow the development of Communist China's power with great interest.³³

The one form of political activity which has always appealed to the Chinese is the secret society. One of the most powerful has been the Triad (Heaven and Earth) Society, founded in southern China in the 18th century for the purpose of overthrowing the Manchus. These societies later became mutual aid associations, relying on veiled threats, blackmail, and intimidation to influence the local government. Imported to Southeast Asian countries by immigrants from Kwangtung and Fukien Provinces, these societies became national institutions.³⁴ By their very nature, these organizations remain cloaked in mystery. Members are obliged to make solemn vows of brotherhood, to learn secret codes, and to obey the laws of the organization and the commands of their leaders.³⁵ Since some of these societies, such as the Triad, maintain killer squads who specialize in murder and blackmail, strict discipline is generally maintained. The Dai Viet, Vietnam's closest equivalent to the Western political party, originally included a number of Triad members and employed a secret initiation ceremony, as well as a branch which functioned like the Triad killer squads.³⁶

The powerful, active Triad gained control of Singapore, attempted to take Bangkok, and spread through Vietnam via Ha Tien Province which had been leased to the society. At one time the Triad in the Republic of Vietnam included thousands of Vietnamese as well as Chinese. Indeed, since political dissension was suppressed, anyone having political aspirations was obliged to belong to such a society. The Triad has played an influential role in politics and has been implicated, under various guises, in several rebellions. Many lay Buddhists fear that the militant Buddhist movement is, in fact, more Triad than Buddhist.³⁷ Diem outlawed all secret societies, but the clandestine nature of their organization and activities permits them to continue covert operation.³⁸

Subversive Influences

Peking and the NFLSV have been working to win the allegiance and support of the Chinese in the Republic of Vietnam in several ways. Press releases and radio broadcasts (the Liberation Radio broadcasts two programs in Chinese every day³⁹) carry daily propaganda messages to the Chinese community. Front organizations, such as the China-Vietnam Friendship Association, periodically issue statements congratulating the NFLSV on their victories.⁴⁰ Propaganda has ranged from subtle persuasion to blatantly communistic appeals.

The Chinese newspapers express vehemently anti-Communist and consistently pro-United States and pro-Nationalist China views. However, these attitudes may not accurately reflect the opinions of the majority of the Chinese residing in the Republic of Vietnam. Experience, prudence, and concern for their own self-interest have

taught the Chinese not to commit themselves publicly until the victor is apparent.

However, one small group of Chinese led by Father Augustin Nguyen Lac Hoa, a refugee Chinese Roman Catholic priest and former officer in the Chinese National Army, has been actively engaged in fighting the Viet Cong in the Haiyen sector of the Camau Peninsula for more than 6 years. In July 1965, these "Sea Swallows," as they call themselves, numbered over 1,000 armed men.⁴¹ Father Hoa's small army is composed mainly of Chinese recruited from Cholon, but one company of Vietnamese and a detachment of Nung—a refugee tribal group from Southern China who are excellent warriors—joined the group during the summer of 1965. These troops patrol an area 15 miles square known as Haiyen and maintain, according to one source, the "best grass-roots intelligence network anywhere in Vietnam."⁴²

Despite the fact that Father Hoa has been internationally acclaimed as a symbol of resistance, the status of the priest and his army is ambivalent. Most of the Saigon Government is opposed to the idea of allowing a private army to operate freely in the country. Moreover, Father Hoa is suspect for other reasons: he is Catholic, a former protegee of Ngo Dinh Diem, he is Chinese, and he is a colonel turned priest. In an effort to integrate this army into the body politic, the Government appointed a Vietnamese National Army major as commander of the Haiyen sector, the position held—*de facto*—by Father Hoa.⁴³

SECTION IX

COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES

Since the Chinese live primarily in urban areas, they have access to radios, newspapers and other printed matter, and movies, all of which provide important means for disseminating information. However, no figures are available concerning the number of Chinese who actually own radios, attend movies, and read newspapers.

Estimates of the literacy rate among the Chinese in the Republic of Vietnam are unavailable at this writing. One 1950 source suggests that the literacy rate for the Chinese in Indochina was lower than that for any other Chinese community in Southeast Asia.¹ By 1960, according to another source, every province of the Republic of Vietnam had at least one Chinese school.² Considering the emphasis the Chinese place on education—they are generally willing to make large sacrifices so that their children may attend school—it is reasonable to assume that by now Chinese literacy is at least as high as that of the Vietnamese.³

In 1962 the Liberation Broadcasting Station was broadcasting in Cantonese on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, and in Teochiu on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. In that year, the Voice of America was broadcasting 66.5 hours weekly in various Chinese dialects.⁴

Of all the minority language newspapers, Chinese papers have the widest circulation. As of October 29, 1965, the 14 Chinese newspapers in Cholon were amalgamated into seven, including five dailies and two evening papers, as shown below:

Kien Quoc and Quoc Te became Kien Quoc Quoc te
Thang Cong and Dai Ha became Thang Cong
Yuan Tung and Sun Yueh became Yuan Tung
Ah Chau and Van Quoc became Ah Chau Van Quoc
Luan Zan Moi and Tieng Phong became Luan Zan Moi
Viet Hoa and Shin Shun became Viet Hoa
Sun Wun and Dien Dan became Sun Wun

Before publication, a Chinese employee of the Vietnamese Government censors the news to be printed in these papers. The news is either slanted in favor of the United States and Nationalist China or it is completely innocuous. International news is received from AP and UPI, while local news is reprinted from Vietnamese papers.

The NFLSV maintains the Liberation Press Agency which issues special communiques to the Chinese community to encourage them to oppose the Saigon Government.⁵

The United States Information Service maintains a small collection of books and periodicals in Chinese at its information centers in Saigon, Hue, and surrounding areas. They also distribute, for a fee, a Chinese-language periodical, *World Today*, published weekly in Manila.⁶ Consideration might be given to providing more educational material in the Chinese language to Chinese students. In 1959, a dearth of free or inexpensive textbooks in Chinese was reported. It was feared that unless Nationalist China or the United States could print textbooks in Chinese, the Chinese community would be forced to accept propaganda-filled books from Communist China, who was all too eager to smuggle them into the country.⁷

With their penchant for dramatization, the Chinese have taken readily to movies, when they can afford them.⁸ In 1960, there were 177 motion picture theaters in the Republic of Vietnam, 61 of which were in Saigon. The showing of free films in Chinese might serve as an excellent means for attracting the Chinese to information sessions.⁹

Word-of-mouth communication is extremely important for disseminating information. The Chinese are naturally gregarious and love to gossip together in the local teashops. Storytelling minstrels often circulate among the teashops to entertain customers with their narratives, some of which may be factual.¹⁰ News and gossip are generated by Chinese merchants who fan out into the provinces to collect rice and other produce from the peasants. Every village is said to have its Chinese shopkeeper and often a Chinese pharmacist as well, who are able to glean and pass along information obtained through their dealings with the local people.

Esthetics

Music and drama form an integral part of Chinese life, in addition to providing opportunities for self-expression. Music accompanies worship—Buddhism has its own compositions—funeral processions, festivals, and theatrical performances. The Chinese are fond of singing, frequently accompanying themselves on various types of instruments, such as drums, flutes, reeds, various stringed instruments, metal bells, and resonant stones. The theatre has been an effective agency for popular education; for everyone, literate and illiterate, can see a play and learn something from it. Dramatic performances have been presented in temples, at fairs, in the fields, and in theaters, principally as forms of diversion.¹¹ Dancing, except in theatrical performances and in some religious ceremonies, is alien to the Chinese. European-style dancing, where men and women are in close physical contact, is considered vulgar

and shocking, especially by the older, less Westernized Chinese.¹²

Chinese literature is the oldest in the world, dating from 2500 B.C. It includes the classics (*ching*) or canonical works of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, historical writings, philosophical works, poetry, drama, and fiction. Traditionally, in China anyone desiring to enter government service was required to pass an examination to test his knowledge of the classics—the guides for human behavior and morality. The Chinese still have the highest respect for scholars versed in Chinese literature. Traditionally, temples were built to the God of Literature and offerings were made to him before a birth to assure the family of an intelligent child.

Symbols and Colors

The Chinese place great emphasis on symbols and colors. The peony, for example, represents love, affection, feminine beauty, and spring. Chinese families often watch the peony to determine their fortune. A flower with full petals is an emblem of good fortune, while dry, faded flowers signify imminent poverty.¹³ The lotus flower symbolizes purity and summer. Frequently used as an emblem, the shape of the lotus flower is likened to the Buddhist Wheel of Life: the seed pod, blossom, and bud represent the past, present, and future; and the leaves and roots, offspring and steadfastness in the family.¹⁴ Of all the line symbols, the Pa Kua (eight trigrams) is the most common.* Each color has a distinct meaning: for example, red signifies happiness; white symbolizes mourning.

* See "Custom and Taboos," p. 964.

SECTION X

CIVIC ACTION CONSIDERATIONS

Any civic action program designed to improve urban conditions would probably interest the Chinese community. Such programs might include health improvement through rat control, vaccination, water purification, and education in modern medical practices; an increase in low-cost housing facilities; and the construction of more and better schools. The Chinese are, on the whole, anxious to improve their lot and would probably welcome assistance. But the Chinese are extremely proud, a factor which must be taken into account.

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