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Politics

PRES. THIEU URGES VOTERS TO JOIN IN ELECTION OF CITY AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILS

Saigon, June 28, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu in a nationwide address through radio and television networks Saturday evening called on his compatriots eligible for the election of city and provincial councils to actively turn out for the 28th of June election.

The President urged all the voters to carefully select their representatives in these councils when they cast their ballots.

All those candidates who made proof of good will, speaking little but being well known by their achievements should be preferred to those who like to make irresponsible wordages, who are pro-Communist and defeatist troublemongers, the President said.

On this occasion, the President also dealt with the RVN achievements in every field during the past few months, which will be served for the impetus to annihilate all the enemy structures in South Viet-Nam.

The President still made it known that hamlet and village security will be strengthened so as to push ahead the development projects at all grass root levels.

Touching on the friendly ties with Cambodia, the President said the Republic of Viet-Nam always respects Cambodia's territorial integrity, independence and neutrality, and always abstains from interfering with Cambodia's internal affairs.

We have no attitudes and actions the President said, "which could be taxed as aggressive insofar as all the engagements we have undertaken in Cambodia result from our friendly country's demand and from a mutual cooperation between the RVN and Cambodian Armed Forces."

The President also spelled out the problems relevant to the RVN and Cambodian military cooperation at border areas which helps boost the Cambodian army and solve the repatriation of Vietnamese nationals from the friendly country.

The RVN President is determined to repatriate 64,000 Vietnamese from Phnom Penh.

Once again, the President told about the government efforts to reorganize the RVNAF structure and the administrative machinery of the Republic.

According to President Thieu, the RVNAF now count 500,000 regular, 275,000 regional and 235,000 popular aside from over three million civil self-defense (CSD) members.

Out of the CSD strength, over 500,000 are equipped with weapons "Such a CSD force," the President said, "when fully armed organizations and serve as significant permanent force in rural areas able to cope with any aggressive attempts of the enemy at the start."

The President laid stress on the fact that the government always and means to lessen the national defense budget. "This can be done if we succeed in setting up a people's armed force and in putting into effect a self-help project for the army," the President added.

In the forthcoming months, according to the President, "We should complete all the 1970 local development projects" prior to initiating the 1971 development programs at hamlet, village and province levels.

"This," the President said, "will help the local population actively participate in and positively contribute to the development projects in accordance with the self-help and self-governing principle in the sense of decentralization institution."

Dealing with the reorganization of the national administrative machinery, the President said such an objective will boost the implementation of the government programs for the service of the population in a more fruitful aspect.

At present, the President said, more than 70,000 hamlet, village, city ward officials have been provided with a better administrative background.

The Police Branch will be also strengthened and the civil servants will enjoy a better status, and sustain an effective training program, all these schemes centering on the improvement of the national administrative machinery, the President stressed.

Recently, a bill stipulating the rights and duties of the councils elected on June 28, 1970, particularly the councils' administration and development, was forwarded to the National Assembly, the President said, adding that each province will be granted a significant fund thus helping the concerned council to properly initiate necessary projects for the development of the locality.

P.M. KHIEM: ELECTION OF CITY AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILS VERY IMPORTANT IN BUILDING OF DEMOCRACY

Saigon, June 28, 1970--The election of city and provincial councils held today is very important because it represents the completion of the "Democratic House" of our country in accordance with the Constitution of the Second Republic.

Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem made the statement at 9:15 a.m. Sunday after he cast his ballot at the Saigon Prefecture's voting station.

Dealing with the "Democratic House", which was built these three years, Prime Minister Khiem stressed that in 1967 we erected the roof of the "House" -- making reference to the election of members for the Executive and the Legislative.

Then in 1968 and 1969, the Prime Minister added, the government completed the foundation of the "Democratic House" -- through the elections of village and hamlet chiefs in rural areas, reaching over 90 per cent of the infrastructure throughout the country.

Now, in 1970, we continue the building of the pillars of our "Democratic House" P.M. Khiem said, by holding the election of city and provincial councils.

To a VP correspondent's question on the improvement of the administrative machinery which was mentioned in President Nguyen Van Thieu's address to the nation Saturday, Prime Minister Khiem said such an effort will be started from central to local levels when the election of city and provincial councils is completed.

Prime Minister Khiem said so far the government has studied the establishment of tables or organization and equipment for every administrative unit, from central level to local areas.

According to P.M. Khiem, the administration will be reorganized in compliance with the Constitution's spirit that is the separation of powers or in other words, a decentralization of powers from the central to the hamlet and provincial levels.

Prime Minister Khiem stressed that such a principle which has been applied in democratic countries over the world, is quite different from the old centralization regime.

To another question relating to the strikes being staged by workers in the capital, P.M. Khiem made known that he had met with Mr. Tran Quoc Buu, Chairman of the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor in an effort to take measures for a settlement of the issue.

However, the Prime Minister disclosed, no agreement was reached between the workers' representatives and the Central Logistics Agency at a meeting held Saturday at the Labor Ministry, the Prime Minister stressed the searching for a final settlement of the problem is continuing.

INFO. MIN. TINH: ELECTION OF CITY AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILS-A TEST OF NATIONALIST ORGANIZATIONS' STRENGTH

Saigon, June 24, 1970--Information Minister Ngo Khac Tinh Tuesday evening said the forth-coming elections will be a test of the strength of the nationalist organizations and also will serve as the final opportunity for political parties to close their ranks in the anti-Communist struggle.

Mr. Tinh made the statement at the reception held at the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church's central representative office, No. 114 Bui Thi Xuan Street, Saigon on the occasion of the Church's 31st founding anniversary.

He said the unity among nationalist political parties at the present juncture is vital.

If such a unity is reached the Information Minister added we certainly will win over the Communists.

Referring to the present posture of political parties, he said the parties must win the people's confidence so as to be really strong and successful.

Minister Tinh made known that he resigned from the executive board of the Social Humanist Party since he realized it did not meet sufficient conditions to be widely known among the masses.

Attending the reception were Senate Chairman Nguyen Van Huyen, Dr. Nguyen Luu Vien, Deputy Prime Minister concurrently Education Minister, Msgr. Nguyen Van Binh, Saigon Arch-Bishop and a number of senators and cabinet members.

U.S. REPRESENTATIVES FIND ELECTION IN VIET-NAM FAIRLY GOOD

Saigon, June 30, 1970--Two members of the U.S. Representatives fact-finding delegation said Monday the procedures and regulations applied in the provincial and city council election in the RVN on June 28 were fairly good as compared to the criteria usually observed in free countries.

Reps. E. Ross Adair of Indiana and Donald D. Clancy of Ohio made the above comment after the 12-member delegation of Representatives in charge of Southeast Asian affairs had toured various voting booths and observed the activities of election committees in Saigon, the First and Third Corps Tactical Zone.

Messrs. Clancy and Adair also made known that voters went to the polls in large numbers at 10 a.m. Most of the villagers had to walk a long way to the voting booths to cast ballots.

According to these U.S. fact finders, the election took place in order and was well-organized thanks to the efficiency of responsible officials.

The American Representatives contended that election committees at districts where they visited worked systematically in receiving ballot boxes and counting votes.

Reps. Clancy and Adair and other members of the Committee for Southeast Asian affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives are on a two-week fact-finding tour in Southeast Asia.

LIVING STANDARD MUCH HIGHER IN THE SOUTH - COMMUNIST DEFECTOR

Saigon, June 30, 1970--A Communist economic expert, whose job was to devise means of subverting the South Vietnamese economy, has defected.

Living standards are so much higher in the South compared to North Viet-Nam, he said, that he despaired of accomplishing his assignment.

The defector, Vo Thanh Tong, 44, was introduced to the public in a June 25 T.V.

interview in Saigon. He explained that he crossed into Viet-Nam through Cambodia with a group of Vietnamese refugees fleeing war action. On May 10th he rallied to the South Vietnamese government.

A Southerner who left his family in Binh Duong province in 1954 and went to North Viet-Nam, Tong stayed in Communist Viet-Nam until 1969 when he was assigned to the Hanoi dominated Central Office for South Viet-Nam (COSVN). His job at COSVN, which operated at sites near the Viet-Nam-Cambodian border until allied attacks there, was to organize the Viet Cong's economic system and to study the currency and banking system of the RVN.

"I was particularly interested in why the price of piasters rose and fell," explained Tong. "If we could find a way to keep the value of South Vietnamese currency low, it would obviously cause great harm."

As he gathered information, Tong said, he was amazed to learn how high the living standard had risen in South Viet-Nam compared to conditions he was accustomed to seeing in the North.

People work hard in North Viet-Nam, Tong reported but they enjoy very little material return for their labors. He said there is a labor shortage, and inflation makes life difficult for the people.

During his 15-year stay in North Viet-Nam, Tong served with the Communist government. First he was a political staff officer of the North Vietnamese Regiment 301. Then he worked in the National Bank of Hong Quang province and was sent to the University of Hanoi for three years' study of economics and currency. Upon graduation in 1968 he went to work in North Viet-Nam's National Treasury.

Tong said that, from his observations in the Vietnamese-Cambodian area, the allied thrust into Communist sanctuaries substantially weakened the Viet Cong's logistics and communications systems. Allied operations in Cambodia were very successful, he said.

His decision to rally to the South Vietnamese government resulted from a combination of disillusionment and homesickness, Tong explained. When he went North in 1954, Tong left behind a three-year old daughter. That daughter has grown up and is married to a young South Vietnamese Army officer. Soon, Tong said, his happiness at returning home will be made even greater by the birth of a grandchild.

LOWER HOUSE DEBATES ON PROGRAM BILL

Saigon, June 25, 1970--The Lower House at its Wednesday morning plenary session continued to debate the program bill but failed to vote on any article.

The bill was endorsed in principle by the Lower House Tuesday evening after four days of hot debates.

Article 1 of the 5 article bill was divided into eight items. According to this article, to renovate the national economy and finance, the following measures must be immediately carried out:

- 1) decrease of public expenses to the maximum by
 - a. developing the civil self defense force to reduce military strength and national defense budget
 - b. extremely limiting all expenses for the functioning of public agencies
 - c. simplifying principles and procedures, rationalizing organization, strengthening the control at government agencies so as to increase efficiency and reducing personnel
 - d. saving time and protecting public properties in all agencies
 - e. limiting all conveniences reserved for leading officials especially in housing, servants and vehicles
- 2.) Increase incomes by:
 - a. issuing long-term public bonds
 - b. selling unnecessary public properties
 - c. simplifying and rendering efficient the procedures for tax collection
- 3.) Modernization of current financial formalities
- 4.) Establishing, organizing and fixing the functioning of foreign exchange, bonds, gold and products markets
- 5.) Fixing procedures and requirements for the investment of Vietnamese and foreigners
- 6.) Establishing, organizing and fixing the functioning of state-run industrial establishment, customs exempt and tourist zones
- 7.) Raising the living standards of underprivileged elements by establishing the people's mutual assistance fund, reproductive installations with government assistance, and community dwellings
- 8.) Eradication of corruption, misuse of public funds, speculation, hoarding, and dishonest dealers

Article 2 of the bill, the target of the representatives debates prescribed that "to enable quick and efficient implementation of the measures cited in Article 1, the President of the RVN has the power to promulgate decrees abolishing, modifying or replacing current laws. This power will be only used within a 150-day period (five months) beginning from the promulgation date of the program law.

The three other articles fixed procedures for the implementation of the law.

As of 12:30 a.m. the debates still went on. The representatives had lunch at the Lower House building so as to continue the debate in the afternoon.

LAW ON REELECTION OF HALF OF THE SENATE PROMULGATED

Saigon, June 29, 1970--President Nguyen Van Thieu, Saturday promulgated, in accordance with urgent procedures, law Number 007-70 prescribing the procedures of half the Senate reelection, the President's office announced Sunday.

The Law was endorsed last June 26 by the National Assembly.

According to the law, half the Senate reelection will be held next August 30.

Military

RECRUITMENT OF KHMER-BORN VIETNAMESE ILLEGAL: DEFENSE MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE

Saigon, June 24, 1970--The Defense Ministry Wednesday termed illegal the recruitment by a number of private organizations in Viet-Nam of Khmer-born Vietnamese young men to send them to Cambodia as fighting men of the Khmer Army.

In a communique, the Defense Ministry made it clear that the support to the Khmer Army is assumed by the RVNAF with the agreement of the Cambodian and Vietnamese government.

The communique stressed that no private organization is authorized to recruit soldiers under any labels or forms whatsoever.

According to the laws in force, any non-authoritative organizations or private individuals who carry out the illegal recruitment of soldiers will be prosecuted before the military court and may get the death sentence. Meanwhile, their subordinates or supporters will be regarded as accomplices and receive the same penalty, the communique added.

RVNAF ACTIVITIES REPORTED

Saigon, July 4, 1970--During the 24-hours ending at 6 a.m. Friday, forces of the RVN conducted 49 operations of battalion level upwards of which seven were terminated before 4 p.m. Thursday. Meanwhile, 20 enemy-initiated incidents aimed at South Vietnamese military units and civilians were reported.

Vietnamese military sources said the verified enemy casualties (through 6 a.m. Friday) which have been inflicted by RVNAF units taking part in all Cambodian operations were 9,752 killed and 1,431 captured.

In addition, 140 Communist returnees have been received, 17,634 individual weapons and 1,666 crew-served weapons have been seized.

RVNAF casualties in all Cambodian operations are 829 killed and 3,725 wounded.

In Quang Tri elements from the 1st Infantry Division and Armored Cavalry Units involved in the operation which occurred on July 1 and terminated at 6 a.m. Thursday in the areas four kilometers North of Hai Lang district and six kilometers East of Quang Tri City, reported killing 146 enemy soldiers, detaining five prisoners and capturing 13 crew-served weapons and 60 individual weapons.

Friendly forces suffered nine soldiers killed and 35 others wounded.

During the reporting period the VNAF flew 71 jet sorties and 33 skyraider sorties in all four Corps Tactical Zones. Pilots reported destroying or damaging 82 structures and 72 fortifications.

At the same time the Viet-Nam Navy conducted 95 naval sorties, 493 river sorties and 160 coastal sorties and controlled 4,523 vessels and 13,287 persons. Two suspects were detained by the navymen.

REORGANIZATION OF RVNAF STRUCTURES ANNOUNCED

Saigon, July 4, 1970--The President's office Thursday issued a communique on the reorganization of RVNAF structures and the territorial system.

The communique reads as follows (unofficial translation):

As President Nguyen Van Thieu had announced in his order of the day on the June 19th Armed Forces Day as well as in his June 27th address to the nation that there will be starting July 1, preliminary improvements of the RVNAF structures and territorial system then today, July 2, the RVN President signed Decrees Number 614-A TT-SL and Number 614-B TT-SL changing the Four Corps Tactical Zones into four military regions.

Separated commands of corps and corps tactical zones are now englobed into a single command of corps and military regions.

Commanders of corps concurrently commanders of corps tactical zones now become "commanders of corps and military regions."

According to the two decrees, the RVNAF now includes three main arms: Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines. The Chief of Joint General Staff is concurrently Army Commander.

Regional and popular forces now belong to the infantry and infantry divisions and regiments lie within the Army command.

Besides, in accordance with the two decrees, responsibilities and power of commanders of corps and military regions are strengthened in three main domains -- mobile operations, territorial security and pacification development. Units of all arms sta-

tioned within the military regions are placed under the command of commanders of corps and military regions.

Responsibilities and power of sector commanders, special sector commanders and subsector commanders are also extended so that they can fulfil their missions in mobile operations, territorial security and defense and pacification development with a view to pave the way for the post-war development and the carrying-out of a special P.D. program announced earlier by the RVN President.

Foreign Relations

RVN PERMANENT TRADE MISSION SET UP IN DJAKARTA

Saigon, July 1, 1970--Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem last June 26 signed a decree establishing the RVN permanent trade mission in Djakarta, Indonesia.

Mr. Do Quang Nang, Counselor at the RVN Embassy in Bangkok was appointed Chief of the Mission. His post is equivalent to a Consul-General.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister signed another decree setting up the Data Processing Center at the Finance Ministry.

This Center will work with electronic computers on documents concerning financial statistics, taxation and accounting for all agencies dependent on the Finance Ministry.

F.M. LAM HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE AT MANILA AIRPORT

Saigon, July 3, 1970--If the Communists stop fighting and at the same time withdraw their troops to North Viet-Nam, the war will end quickly in Cambodia and the RVN.

Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam, representative of the RVN government at the South-east Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) made the statement at a press conference at Manila Airport Thursday.

Asked whether or not the RVN delegation will ask for SEATO intervention, Minister Lam said the whole Indochinese Peninsula is being invaded by a common enemy. It's time for the nation-members to adopt appropriate attitudes, if SEATO really deems it necessary.

Minister Lam made known that his delegation will present the Viet-Nam situation at the Manila conference and will ask SEATO members to take decision.

The Foreign Minister said he will next ask the nation-members to send troops to help Cambodia, adding that it would be a good thing if they could find a solution able to bring peace to and protect Indochina from Communist aggression.

Dealing with the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia, Minister Lam said Prime Minister Lon Nol had expressed his regret at the American troops' pull-out from the Khmer territory.

He expressed the hope that friendly nations will continue to give support to Viet-Nam in the fight against the Communists, the common enemy of Indochina.

Concerning the RVN policy on Cambodia, Minister Lam made it clear that the Vietnamese forces do not intend to remain in Cambodia indefinitely.

The operations are conducted for three reasons: to ensure our own defense, to assist a large number of Vietnamese nationals living in Cambodia and to help the Khmer government retain its neutrality, he said.

He added that as soon as their mission is fulfilled the RVN forces will return to Viet-Nam. However the pull-out will depend on whether or not the North Viet-Nam Communists would renounce their scheme of taking over Cambodia and reestablishing their sanctuaries.

Minister Lam was guest speaker on Wednesday evening of the Vietnam-Filippino Friendship Association in Manila.

Education

EDUCATION V.M. GIVES TALK ON EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

Saigon, July 2, 1970--Education Vice Minister Nguyen Danh Dan Wednesday morning gave a talk on educational problems at a meeting of the Educational Cultural Council (ECC) at Hoan My Conference Hall.

On this occasion, Dr. Dan presented to the ECC the educational reform in which the localization of education is deemed as most necessary.

According to Dr. Dan, the education localization will cover four different programs to be applied at the country's four corps tactical zones and will pay special attention to civic education and the creation of a serious conception in the students on the role and value of labor.

In addition, Viet-Nam will have to proceed in the future to the abolition of the exam for entrance to the 6th form, the junior high school and baccalaureate part first exams.

However, Dr. Dan said that the baccalaureate exams will be only relinquished whenever we have enough 12th forms and instructors.

The Vice Minister made known that the education localization will enable each locality to manage its own schools and personnel. Then, the Education Ministry will only assume the four main tasks: study, inspection, teacher training and international relations.

Economics

ADB DIRECTOR GENERAL: FARMERS NOW VERY FAMILIAR WITH ADB SERVICES

Saigon, June 26, 1970--Lt. Col. Nguyen Dang Hai, Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) Director General, said Friday evening that the collection of debts from farmers has turned out much better since the rural people have become familiar with getting loans and paying debts.

Guest speaker of the weekly televised "People Want to Know" program initiated by Viet-Nam Press, Lt. Col. Hai said the farmers' failure to pay debts or pay in due time which occurred previously was the result of the security situation and misfortune in cultivation.

Nowadays, according to Lt. Col. Hai, farmers have proceeded to use modern technique to bring success to cultivation and animal husbandry. Furthermore, the improvement of security in rural areas has given farmers more confidence in growing crops.

In the first four months of this year, said Lt. Col. Hai, the ADB collected 1,924 million VNP as debts paid by farmers, meaning an increase of nearly 80 per cent as compared to 1,072 million VNP refunded in the same period in 1969.

The ADB Director General made known that during the same months, a total of 27,221 persons received loans from the ADB.

The ADB capital at present tops 5 billion VNP, he said, and the bank is concentrating on giving assistance to poor farmers and fishermen. Meanwhile farmers' cooperatives and organizations can also easily get loans from the ADB.

The ADB, set up in May 1967 in replacement of the National Agricultural Credit Agency has contributed a great deal to the development of the national agriculture and fishery.

It has 43 branch offices and chapters in various provinces all over the country.

Land Reform

200,000 HECTARES OF LAND TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO PEASANTS

Saigon, June 29, 1970--Mr. Cao Van Than, Minister of Land Reform, Agriculture and Fishery Development, Monday morning said, a total of 200,000 hectares of rice-field will be distributed to peasants throughout the country from now to the end of this year within the scope of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" law.

Minister Than made the above statement while presiding over a two-day nation-wide convention of ranking land officials, held at the Ministry of Land Reform, Agriculture and Fishery Reform to study the implementation of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" law.

According to Minister Than, about 30,000 hectares of land could be distributed to the peasants every month.

Besides the Land Reform Ministry is scheduled to distribute about 1.5 million hectares of rice-field to 800,000 farmers in the next three years.

In an address delivered at the convention, Minister Than pointed out two objectives of action for the entire land personnel in the forthcoming months.

The first objective is to explain clearly to the peasants the Land-to-the-Tiller law and relating circulars and communiques.

In addition, leading land officials must complete the training of land cadres from central to regional levels.

A total of 500 land cadres are now attending training courses at the National Cadre Training Center in Vung Tau.

On this occasion, Minister Than urged the convention participants to simplify land distribution procedures and set up a committee in charge of land distribution at every village.

Earlier, in his opening address, Mr. Bui Huu Tien, Land Reform Director General, made known that personnel at his directorate elaborately studied Decree No. 702 dated June 5, 1970 prescribing the implementation of the "Land-to-the-Tiller" law and have worked out an action program for its execution.

Present at the opening ceremony of the convention were 100 engineers of Agriculture, Forestry and Annimal Husbandry, besides ranking land officials throughout the country.

The convention is scheduled to end at 6 p.m. Tuesday.

Elections

65.2 PER CENT OF SAIGON RESIDENTS CAST VOTE IN CITY COUNCIL ELECTION

Saigon, June 29, 1970--A total of 353,725 Saigon residents or 65.2 per cent of registered voters cast their votes in the City Council election, authoritative sources reported.

The 9th precinct topped the list with 81.6 per cent, followed by the 7th precinct with 79 per cent and the 5th precinct with 72 per cent.

Meanwhile the number of voters who went to the polls Sunday in the 10th precinct was 56 per cent; in the 1st precinct, 57 per cent; and in the 3rd precinct, 57.9 per cent.

Miscellaneous

5 VIETNAMESE WAR VICTIMS UNDER TREATMENT IN USA

Saigon, June 29, 1970--Five Vietnamese children, war victims in a village near Hue city, are under treatment at Northridge Hospital in Los Angeles, California.

One of the victims, Le Thi Thom, 9, was wounded during the February Communist shelling which also killed her mother and her two elder brothers.

Another, Le Than, 14, an orphan, was wounded in his left arm and right leg by a Red grenade explosion last January.

The three others, Nguyen Van To, 7, Tran Van Hieu and Phan Thi Hieu, 13 suffered serious wounds from shell fragments.

The five victims received assistance from a charitable organization which has sent so far 80 war victims to the U.S. for medical treatment.

Accompanying the war victims to the U.S. was a woman cadre of the Social Welfare Ministry who is acting as a foster mother and interpreter for the children.

PROF. HOA GIVES LECTURES ON VIETNAMESE SYNTAX IN NORTH DAKOTA

Saigon, June 27, 1970--Professor Nguyen Dinh Hoa, Deputy Director in charge of linguistics and cultural affairs at the Vietnamese Study Center of the U.S. South Illinois University, on June 18 gave two lectures on Vietnamese syntax at the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The two lectures dealt with "Prepositions and Localizers in Vietnamese" and "Functive Verbs and Stative Verbs."

The Summer Institute of Linguistics set up its chapter in Viet-Nam in 1957 and since then has closely cooperated with the RVN Education Ministry in the study of Montagnard dialects and in the publishing of primer books for montagnards.

Prof. Nguyen Dinh Hoa also consulted with Prof. Richard S. Pittman on a program of mutual cooperation between the Vietnamese Study Center and the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

The Vietnamese Study Center is scheduled to publish the fourth volume of the Mon-Khmer studies.



Special Feature

HAIR: VN STYLE

In a popular Vietnamese folk song expressing the ten most striking features of a gracious and beautiful woman, long jet black hair is cited as being of first importance: «You are first loved for your hair which is tied in a cock's tail shape.» There is good reason to place a Vietnamese woman's hair in first place. Long and flowing, smooth and very fine, it makes any woman, even one otherwise not attractive, appear feminine and graceful.

In ancient times when girls were raised in traditional customs and manners, their hair was nurtured and regarded as a symbol of correctness, kindness and virtue.

«One's hair reveals one's origin,» says an old proverb which fully expressed the importance people attached to hair, especially that of a young woman. No girl dared cut her hair, and, untied, it would reach her heels.

The hair of young women is a subject which has occupied a significant place in Vietnamese literature, poetry, and art. «Her hair is silken threads of cloud, and her eyebrows crescent like moons and shadowed clouds on a quiet night,» a poet of times past sang in reference to the hair of Vietnamese girls.

Times have changed since then, and today only a few girls allow

their hair to grow long enough to reach their heels. Style changes have come in stages. A plaited braid was the first sign of change, followed by the «pony tail» when the hair was still long, but gathered behind the neck. Later women adopted the onion-shaped chignon with the hair wound behind the neck in a roll. Some Vietnamese women in the provinces still wear their hair in a chignon.

During the French period, western fashions penetrated Vietnam. Shortly before World War II, women in the cities married to Frenchmen or working in French businesses began cutting their hair and curling it into tight sausage curls with a curling iron. The curly style spread like an oil slick on water. Middle class girls disregarded public opinion and began wearing the little ringlets. The practice filtered down to the countryside, and after Vietnam was divided in 1954, hair curling shops had sprung up everywhere.

At the same time, there was a fad for dying hair. Jet black hair was tinted orange, red, and even blonde, generally with very unfortunate results. This fad was short-lived, and today few Vietnamese women change the shade of their hair.

Hairdressers are always happy to cut the waist length or longer hair of young girls. With the sudden popularity of wigs and hair pieces, the long thin strands command a high market price. However, once cut, the girl is faced with the problem of choosing a hair style. The possibilities are endless.

It now appears that hair styles are not only subject to change, but also to cycles. In Saigon at the present time, long hair is making a comeback. The gracefulness of long hair seems to have an attraction that young women are again discovering. They have begun changing back to the natural long hair, letting it grow to flow down their backs. Perhaps they now realize the true value of long hair, for, as it was once remarked, the very slender Vietnamese girls without their long hair do not differ from trees with leafless branches.

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