THE STUDY OF A VIETNAMESE RURAL COMMUNITY-SOCIOLOGY

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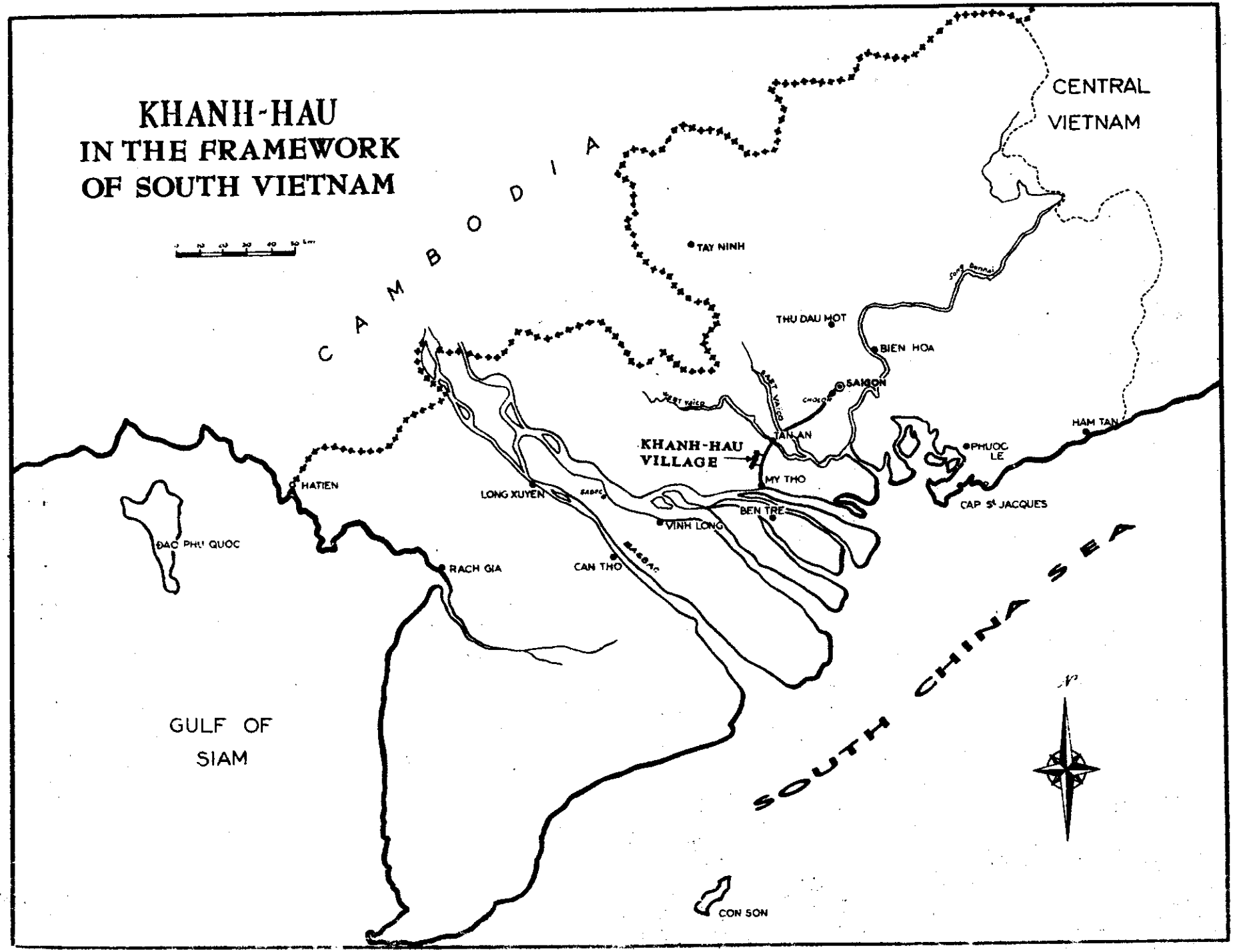
Gerald C. Hickey

Saigon, Viet Nam
December 1959


SOUTH VIETNAM
17th PARALLEL
QUANG TRI
HUE
THUA THIEN
DA NANG
TOURANE
FAIFO
QUANG NAM
QUANG NGAI
LAOS
KONTUM
BONGSON
BINH DINH
PLEIKU
QUINHON
SONG CAUT
PHU YEN
TUYHOA
CAMBODIA
DARLAC
BANMETHUOT
KHANH HOA
NHATRANG
QUANG DUC
TUYEN DUC
DALAT
NINH THUAN
PHANRANG
BINH LONG
PHUOC BINH
PHUOC LONG
LAM DONG
DJIRING
BLAO
HONQUAN
TAY NINH
TAYNINH
BINH DUONG
BIENHOA
BIEN HOA
LONG KHANH
BINH TUY
BINH THUAN
PHANTHIET
PHUCUONG
XUANLOC
SAIGON
NHATRANG
CHAUDOC
MOCHOA
KIEN PHONG
KIEN TUONG
TANAN
PHUOC TUY
AN GIANG
CAOLANH
KHANH HUNG
MY THO
GOCONG
CAP St JACQUES
HATIEN
LONGXUYEN
PHU QUOC
VINH LONG
KIEN HOA
BENTRE
THUC GIANG
RACHGIA
CANTHO
KIEN GIANG
PHONG DINH
PHUVINH
VINH BINH
KHANHHUNG
BA XUYEN
BACLIEU
QUANLONG
AN XUYEN
CONSON
SOUTH CHINA SEA


KHANH-HAU
IN THE FRAMEWORK
OF SOUTH VIETNAM
CAMBODIA
CENTRAL
VIETNAM
TAY NINH
THU DAU MOT
BIEN HOA
SAIGON
TAN AN
KHANH-HAU
VILLAGE
MY THO
BEN TRE
VINH LONG
LONG XUYEN
CAN THO
RACH GIA
HATIEN
DAO PHU QUOC
PHUOC
LE
HAM TAN
CAP St JACQUES
GULF OF
SIAM
SOUTH CHINA SEA
CON SON

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

In order to reach the village of Khánh Hậu from Saigon, one must travel southward by vehicle through the clamorous Chinese city of Cholon into the delta of the Mekong River. Without any buffer of suburbs, the delta begins at the very edge of Cholon, and the scene changes from urban to rural with startling suddenness. The paddy fields stretch away from the highway in a monotonous expanse, broken here and there by the great clumps of tropical greenery that obscure the hamlets which form the villages of the delta. The deltā village is not a collection of farmsteads clustered together in a tightly knit settlement as they are in northern and central Viet Nam. Rather, it is an area encompassing four or five hamlets and their adjacent paddy fields.

As the road continues southward into the delta, there are several small bridges and two large structural steel bridges to cross. The second large bridge traverses the West Vaico River, and on the south bank the road swings past the town of Tan An, a market town which also is the chief town of Long An province. Four kilometers south of Tan An, and some fifty kilometers from Saigon, the road passes through the village of Khánh Hậu. The hamlets that compose Khánh Hậu are set back from the highway, and the only things that distinguish this village from other

villages of the area are a sign announcing that Khánh Hậu is the site of the tomb of the 19th century Vietnamese military hero, Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức, and the newly constructed buildings of the UNESCO-sponsored School of Fundamental Education.

The village of Khánh Hậu covers an area of approximately one thousand hectares, and has a population of thirty-one hundred people, most of whom are directly or indirectly engaged in rice cultivation. Ấp Dinh, the main hamlet of the village, is accessible by a dirty spur road, but the other hamlets, Ấp Mới, Ấp Thủ Tửu, Ấp Nhơn Hậu, and Ấp Cầu, can only be reached by the paths along the tops of the bundings, the low dikes that segment the paddy fields.[1]

Khánh Hậu appears to be a typical village for that part of the delta south of the Saigon River and east of the Plaine des Joncs. It is about average in size, and has a settlement pattern which is common in the delta. Like most delta villages its economy is based on rice agriculture, and the range of secondary crops characteristic of southern agriculture is found in Khánh Hậu. The social institutions of the village also appear to be very much the same as those described in literature on Vietnamese village life. Finally, Khánh Hậu has the amalgam of Buddhism, Taoism, Cao Daism, Catholicism and village cults which characterize the religious scene in southern Viet Nam.

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[1]See the introductory section of the companion study on Economic Activities for further general information on the village of Khanh Hậu.

Historical Background

In 1917, the present village of Khánh Hậu was formed by fusing the neighboring villages of Tường Khánh and Nhơn Hậu into one administrative unit. Tường Khánh had been composed of three hamlets, Ấp Dinh, Ấp Mới, and Ấp Thủ Tửu, and the village of Nhơn Hậu had two hamlets, Ấp Cầu and Ấp Nhơn Hậu. Although the founding dates and history of these villages are not recorded, older residents of Khánh Hậu are reasonably good sources of information on the historical events of the past forty years. In addition, the descendants of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức have compiled his life history as part of the current effort to make this hero better known throughout South Viet Nam, and it sheds some oblique historical light on the origins of Khánh Hậu.

Huỳnh Đức, as he was known before receiving imperial sanction to use the name Nguyễn, was born in the village of Tường Khánh in 1748. His father and paternal grandfather had been military officers under the Lê emperors, and Huỳnh Đức was brought up in an atmosphere of military tradition. His father also had been born in Tường Khánh, indicating that the area had been settled to some extent in the early 18th century. The Marshal's life history describes how he hunted the wild animals that infested the area in his youth, and the difficulty he encountered clearing space to arrange paddy fields.

According to Vietnamese history[2], the expanding Vietnamese population, which began its migration southward from the Red River delta around the year 1000 A.D., reached the delta of the Mekong River in the early part of the 18th century. This expansion had been encouraged by the emperors, and as a symbol of imperial recognition of a newly established village, the emperor named a guardian spirit for the village. The name of the spirit (or spirits) was inscribed on an imperial decree which was then presented to the village. For its part, the village was responsible for constructing a đình, a communal temple, in which the decree was kept in a closed sanctuary where rituals honoring the spirit took place at prescribed times. Since both Tường Khánh and Nhơn Hậu received their imperial decrees from Emperor Gia Long sometime in the early 19th century, it is likely that in Marshal Đức's time, Tường Khánh was too sparsely settled to be proclaimed a village. Many older residents contend that the population influx took place around the middle of the 19th century when many refugees from the wars in central Viet Nam settled in the area.

At the age of thirty-three, Huỳnh Đức left the village to join the forces of Nguyễn Ánh who were attempting to arrest the expansion of the Tây Sơn rebels in South Viet Nam. They had

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[2]One excellent recent source on the early history of Viet Nam is Lê Thanh Khôi, Le Viet Nam (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1955).

already defeated the Trinh in the north and the Le in central Viet Nam, and Nguyễn Ánh led the only remaining organized resistance. Huỳnh Đức's military prowess soon won him a high place in Nguyễn Ánh's army, and he distinguished himself by his loyalty to his leader. At one point he was captured by the Tây Sơn who attempted to bribe him into joining them, but he escaped and journeyed to Thailand to join Nguyễn Ánh who had fled there. This voyage was made with a great many difficulties, according to his life history, and on his arrival he learned that Nguyễn Ánh had already returned to Viet Nam to resume his fight against the Tây Sơn. Huỳnh Đức hurried to rejoin his leader, and they fought together until the final defeat of the Tây Sơn in 1802. Nguyễn Ánh proclaimed himself emperor, taking the name Gia Long, marking the beginning of the Nguyễn dynasty, the last imperial dynasty in Viet Nam.

As a reward for his valuable service, Gia Long permitted Huỳnh Đức to adopt the name Nguyễn, and he bestowed on him the title of Marshal. Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức continued in the service of the emperor, and in 1815 he was appointed governor of the Gia Dinh area. During this period his protege, Lê Văn Duyệt, entered the military service of Emperor Gia Long where his outstanding achievements eventually won him a generalship and a reputation as the most famous hero of southern Viet Nam. After several years in the civil service, Marshal Duc retired because of ill health, and he returned to his natal village of Tường Khánh where he died in 1819. His tomb was

constructed in the village, and Emperor Gia Long sent special envoys to assist at the funeral and award posthumous honors to the family of this hero.

The arrival of the French in the middle of the nineteenth century marked the advent of Western influence that eventually would seep into village society, bringing about social and technological changes. In Tường Khánh and Nhơn Hậu, there were no outstanding historical events until 1917 when the village of Khánh Hậu was established. The council house in Ấp Dinh, one of the hamlets of Tường Khánh, became the administrative center of the new village, and Nhơn Hậu lost its council house. While the đình in Ấp Dinh unofficially became the principal đình of the village, the đình in Ấp Nhơn Hậu was to function as a ritual center.

The task of selecting a new Village Council rested on a committee composed of village elders, property owners and men of good standing from all hamlets. The candidates, all of whom were members in the recently dissolved councils, were voted upon, and six members of each former council were elected. Since that time there has been an attempt to maintain an equality of membership between the two former villages, notwithstanding the difficulty of doing so when the size of the Village Council was reduced in recent years.

The economic crisis of the early 1930's affected the village of Khánh Hậu rather severely. The price of rice fell from 1.10 piastres to .27 per gia, and it remained at a low level until

World War II. When the war began, the French instituted a military conscription which drew some of the male villagers into the army, and the colonial administration solicited cash contributions among the villagers to aid the war effort. The war, however, was far away and had no real impact on the village of Khánh Hậu. With the fall of France in 1940, the Vichy regime assumed control over the colony, and collaborated with the Japanese when they invaded Indochina late in 1941. Japanese troops were concentrated in various parts of Viet Nam, although the only time the villagers of Khánh Hậu saw them was when they passed along the national highway on maneuvers. In the spring of 1945, however, when the Japanese gained complete control of Indochina, a concentration of their troops was stationed in nearby Tân An, and a small detachment was sent to guard the bridge at Ấp Cầu. During the occupation period the village was plagued by an increasing number of shortages, particularly in such things as cloth, fuel for lamps, gasoline, parts for bicycles and a wide range of manufactured goods.

The Viet Minh, as the national resistance movement, had been active against the Japanese, and when their surrender appeared imminent, this resistance became open with a considerable support from the delta villages. When the Japanese quit Viet Nam in August, 1945, the Viet Minh organized their own administration in every village by replacing the traditional Village Council with their own Ủy Ban Hành Chánh, an Administrative Council. In Khánh Hậu, the Việt Minh party members elected six members, two of

whom were upper class landowners, while the remaining four were ordinary farmers.

In January, 1946, the French reoccupied Indochina, and reestablished the colonial administration in Cochinchina. The Việt Minh Administrative Council in Khánh Hậu was disbanded, and the Village Council was reinstated. The French also established a military post in Khánh Hậu near the council house in Ấp Dinh. The garrison was composed of Vietnamese and Cambodian troops under French officers. The Việt Minh went into hiding, but continued their activities against the French. In Khánh Hậu this situation brought about a curious social and political schizophrenia which characteristized Vietnamese village life during this period. By day, the French controlled the village, but as the sun descended this area of control contracted to the barbed wire enclosure of the military stockade. The village was split in its sympathies and accusations of being pro-French or pro-Việt Minh were common. Those accused of being pro-French were likely to be victims of the periodic punitive Việt Minh raids on the village at night, and many left the village for the relative security of Tân An. Big landowners also were apt to bear the brunt of these raids; for example, the present Ke Hien, the highest venerable of the village and biggest resident landowner, was denounced by the Việt Minh, and his sumptuous house was completely destroyed in one of their nocturnal raids. On the other hand, those accused of being pro-Việt Minh were often apprehended by the French, and more than one

villager disappeared suddenly. In 1946 the council house was burned by the Việt Minh, and the French burned the đình in Ấp Nhơn Hậu when they learned it was being used as a meeting place by the Việt Minh.

Some of the wealthy villagers were kidnapped by the Việt Minh, although none suffered death at their hands. The only victim of these troubled times was a girl who lived in Ấp Cầu. Hearing that there was a Việt Minh meeting taking place in a house in the hamlet, troops from the post were dispatched to conduct a raid. They were erroneously directed to the hamlet chief's house, and as they approached it one of the soldiers opened fire, killing the hamlet chief's daughter.

When the debacle of Điện Biên Phủ made it clear that the French occupation was coming to an end, the activities of the Việt Minh became more open and bolder. Their raids in the village increased, and they burned the council house as well as houses of some of the landowners. The Village Council members and many villagers fled into Tân An during the confused period that preceded the Geneva Agreement. With the establishment of the new government in South Việt Nam, some semblance of order was restored, and the refugees slowly returned to Khánh Hậu, many to find their homes in ashes. Eventually troops of the newly formed National Army occupied the military post, and the Village Council resumed its functions. In this atmosphere of relative stability the people of Khánh Hậu found themselves entering a new era of postwar independance.

CHAPTER II

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

A close examination of the topographic sheets[1] for the Tân An area reveals an interpolated, but approximate, version of the settlement pattern of Khánh Hậu. The six dispersed administrative hamlets that comprise the village encompass a variety of settlement patterns, all of which are typical of patterns found throughout the delta of the Mekong River. There are clustered settlements, settlements oriented along systems of communications such as streams, canals, roads, even footpaths, and some scattered, isolated farmsteads. Around these settlements stretch the vast expanse of paddy fields. An extensive walk through the hamlets of Khánh Hậu bears out the reality of these prosaic, cartographic markings, and the familiarity born of first-hand experience in the village adds the human dimension of those aspects of society which affect and are, at the same time, affected by the physical pattern of the community.

The Farmsteads

The farmsteads which comprise the settlement of Khánh Hậu have the same fundamental characteristics. Each includes a

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[1]The available topographic sheets on the Tân An area were issued by the Service Geographique de l'Indochine, with scales of 1/100,000, 1/50,000, and 1/25,000.

house, and, if the owner has livestock, a stable which also serves as a place to store tools, fish traps, and farm implements. Often this subsidiary building is abutted to the house. The granary invariably is located inside the house, and few farmsteads in Khánh Hậu have chicken coops and/or pig stys. Most farmsteads are surrounded by a sizeable plot of land enclosed by a hedge-growth of cactus, bushes of many kinds, clumps of bamboo, and a variety of prickly tropical plants. This thick tangle of plants and trees is practically impenetrable by man or beast, and usually there is only one entrance to the enclosure.

The area immediately in front of the house is used for sunning grain, or drying reeds used in weaving, and coconut shells and rice stalks used as fuel. Among the more affluent villagers, part of this area usually is given over to a garden of flowering plants and bushes, many of which are set in ceramic pots placed on stands in the Chinese fashion. A kitchen garden is commonly found to one side of the house, and most villagers cultivate a variety of fruit trees. If there is sufficient space near the house these trees may be planted in a grove, but in most instances they grow in somewhat disorganized profusion. Many farmsteads have ponds of varying sizes and depths, fed by channels connecting with the nearest water course. These ponds are a source of fish as well as water for washing, and in recent years the villagers have been encouraged to build wooden latrines over them.[1]

[1] See companion study on Economic Activities for more details on the latrine-building program launched by the School of Fundamental Education.


WEST VAICO RIVER
TÂN AN
TÂN-HỘI-ĐÔNG LỢI-BÌNH-NHƠN
ẤP VINH-A
ẤP VINH-B
ẤP MỚI
ẤP THU-TỰU
RẠCH ĐÔN
AN-VĨNH-NGÃI
ẤP NHƠN-HẬU
ẤP CÂU
RẠCH ĐÌNH
TÂN-HƯƠNG
TO MY THO
SETTLEMENT PATTERN
OF KHÁNH-HẬU
SCALE: 1 25,000
Buildings
Road
Foot Path

Settlement Patterns by Hamlet[1]

Ấp Dinh A - B.--Ấp Dinh A and Ấp Dinh B, both of which comprised one administrative unit until 1957, form the largest and densest agglomeration in Khánh Hậu with some two hundred and twenty farmsteads. Furthermore, Ấp Dinh A - B is considered the focal center of the village since it contains most of the public buildings, the tomb of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức, and is connected to the national highway by a spur road that can accommodate any type of vehicle. Most of the shops and many farmsteads are oriented along this road, which functions as the "main street" of Khánh Hậu. According to village records, the spur road was improved in 1925 as a result of the efforts of a local mandarin who saw the desirability of making the tomb of Marshal Đức more accessible to the main road in order to encourage pilgrimages and stimulate interest in this somewhat neglected hero of the south. As the population increased, more farmsteads were constructed along the road, and it attracted new shops, public buildings, and the military post established by the French during the Indochina War.

Most of the farmsteads in Ấp Dinh A - B tend to be oriented along footpaths running more or less perpendicular to the spur road and often extending into the expanse of paddy fields beyond

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[1]Map 1 is derived from the 1/25,000 scale maps issued by the Service Geographique de l'Indochine. The position of houses and footpaths are approximations.

the residential area. These footpaths serve as focal points for small clusters of farmsteads which usually are groupings of families belonging to the same kin group or to the same religious sect. Along the western edge of the hamlet, most of the farmsteads are constructed along the bank of a small stream known as the Cần Đóp (the Vietnamese deformation of a Cambodian name), which drains into the West Vaico river.

The general appearance of Ấp Dinh A - B varies from the western to the eastern side of the hamlet. The eastern side tends to be dry and dusty in the hot season, and the flora is dominated by great clumps of bamboo which hide the houses from sight. There are relatively few ponds here, but there tend to be a greater number of gardens, cultivated primarily in the rainy season. The western side of the hamlet, on the other hand, with its many coconut groves and great leafy backdrop of water palms, has a lush, more fluvial air. Channels from the Cần Đóp course along and around the farmsteads, and thin pirogues are necessary artifacts for the residents there.

The south end of the agglomeration, Ấp Dinh-A, contains a collection of public buildings; the U-shaped, recently constructed, primary school; the century-old đình, the communal temple of the village; the village hall, the information hall, and the military post. With several of the larger shops located close-by, this forms a focal center of sorts for the village of Khánh Hậu.

Ấp Mới.-- According to some of its more elderly residents, Ấp Mới, the "new hamlet", was founded by families moving out of the Ấp Dinh agglomeration so as to be closer to their fields. The resulting settlement is one of low density, with a pattern of dispersed clusters of farmsteads and a scattering of isolated farmsteads. With seventy-six farmsteads, Ấp Mới is the smallest hamlet of Khánh Hậu. One cluster of farmsteads actually is part of the Ấp Dinh agglomeration. This section of Ấp Mới contains the Buddhist pagoda, the only shop in the hamlet, and the village nurse's house, and it forms part of the focal center of the village in adjacent Ấp Dinh-A.

A somewhat tapered section of the spur road extends several hundred feet into this part of Ấp Mới, and a number of the farmsteads are oriented along it. Three more clusters of farmsteads comprise the rest of Ấp Mới, and none of them have any particular internal orientation. Two consist of relatively close-knit collections of farmsteads whereas the remaining cluster is best described as a loose grouping of semi-isolated farmsteads. A canal, constructed in 1957 to connect the Cần Đốp with the Rạch Ông Đạo River which forms the southern border of Khánh Hậu, provides a new line of communication in Ấp Mới, in addition to being a new source of water. Several new farmsteads have already sprung up along its banks.

Ấp Mới, segmented as it is, presents no real ensemble as the other hamlets do. It resembles the eastern side of Ấp Dinh A-B

in that it tends to be excessively dry in the hot season, and the flora is dominated by bamboo which obscures the farmsteads.

When the staff at the School of Fundamental Education prepared the base map of Ấp Dinh A-B, and Ấp Mới, village elders were quick to point out that the residential area of these hamlets strongly suggests the shape of a dragon. The clusters of farmsteads in Ấp Mới form the head and neck while the Ấp Dinh A - B agglomeration forms the body. The Cần Đốp traces the arched back of the dragon, and the farmsteads along its back emerge as dorsal protuberances. This observation met with enthusiasm among the villagers for the dragon is a happy portent, an omen of good luck for Khánh Hậu.

Ấp Cầu.-- Ấp Cầu, "the hamlet of the bridge", is so named for its proximity to the highway bridge over the Rạch Ông Đạo River which forms the southern boundary of Khánh Hậu and the province of Long An as well. This hamlet has the same fluvial orientation as that part of Ấp Dinh A-B along the Cần Đốp. Its eighty-five farmsteads stretch for several kilometers along the north back of the Rạch Ông Đạo forming one continuous, elongated settlement, with only a few intermittent clusters. The farmsteads tend to be relatively large in area, and most of them have pools fed by channels from the stream.

There is one pagoda located near the highway and several shops along the main footpath that serve all the farmsteads in the hamlet. With the abundance of water, the flora of Ấp Cầu is

extremely lush with tropical vegetation. The farmsteads are comfortably shaded beneath coconut trees and areca palms, and the river is hidden by a thick screen of water palms. In high tide the water in the pools rises and the stream presses in on the houses lining the bank, giving the impression that Ấp Cầu is a hamlet of houseboats.

Ấp Nhơn Hậu.--Most of the one hundred and fifteen farmsteads which comprise the hamlet of Ấp Nhơn Hậu are located on or near the west bank of a stream formerly known as the Arroyo de la Poste, and now called the Rạch Đồn. This stream forms the eastern boundary of Khánh Hậu, and it connects the two river towns of Tân An on the West Vaico River some four kilometers north of Khánh Hậu, and Mỹ Tho on the Mékong, twenty kilometers to the south. At the confluence of the Rạch Ông Đạo and the Rạch Đồn, the hamlets of Ấp Cầu and Ấp Nhơn Hậu meet, forming the southeast corner of the village.

The pattern and appearence of Ấp Nhơn Hậu are very similar to Ấp Cầu. It is an elongated settlement, with a few clusters of farmsteads, one of which contains the Taoist temple, and the đình. When Ấp Nhơn Hậu and Ấp Cầu formed a separate village the village hall also was located there. It, too, has the profusion of tropical growth characteristic of the river settlements already described. Between the main body of Nhơn Hậu and the national highway two kilometers to the west there are isolated farmsteads scattered throughout the paddy fields.

Ấp Thủ Tửu.-- The ninety-two farmsteads of Ấp Thủ Tửu form one relatively dense cluster which looks like a large island in the midst of the paddy fields. Within the cluster, the farmsteads are more or less oriented along a small stream called the Rạch Thủ Tửu, a branch of the Rạch Đồn. This stream is too narrow to constitute any kind of natural dividing line within the hamlet. There are a few stores in the hamlet, but no public buildings or religious edifices.

Systems of Communication

The dispersed character of the settlements that makes up the village of Khánh Hậu presents a greater problem of internal communication than it does external communications. The national highway segmenting the village is a major line of communication north and south, and no farmstead is more than three kilometers from it. On the other hand, to go from far removed parts of Ấp Cầu or Ấp Nhơn Hậu to the village hall in Ấp Dinh-A necessitates a trip of at least five kilometers. One can always leave the village by any one of the many public carriers on the national highway, while the most feasible form of getting about the village is on foot, a means of travel which is arduous in the mud of the rainy season, and uncomfortable under the brazen sun of the dry season.

There are no automobiles in Khánh Hậu. Two relatively wealthy villagers own motor scooters, and there are fifteen motor bicycles registered at the village hall. A man in Ấp Dinh owns

a rather battered motorcycle transport, one family has a horse and cart, and another has a team of oxen and a large, heavily built cart with great solid wood wheels. Finally, there are an estimated two hundred bicycles in the village, and an unreported number of pirogues and sampans.

Internal Communications.-- Within Khánh Hậu the two major means of communication are by footpath and water. The entire village is interlaced with footpaths that serve all the farmsteads and traverse the paddy fields on the bundings to connect the hamlets. Since the completion of the canal through Ấp Dinh A-B and Ấp Mới in 1957, the water course in the village forms one system which serves all the hamlets. The national highway functions as a means of communication within the village for any north-south travel, and the spur road facilitates travel into Ấp Dinh A-B and part of the Ấp Mới agglomeration.

Land communication to hamlets not served by the spur road is restricted to two-wheeled vehicles such as bicycles, motor scooters, and motor bicycles. Even these vehicles are difficult to maneuver over the narrow bumpy bunding paths, and most of these paths are virtually impassable by vehicles in the rainy season. Most villagers prefer to go by foot, and in the dry season it is possible to take short cuts across the desiccated fields.

The system of canals and streams offers a feasible, although somewhat circuitous, route for transport by sampans and pirogues

from one hamlet to another. Most water transport is from the outside, usually nearby market towns, and occasionally distant places such as Biên Hòa or Thủ Dầu Một. Water transport within the village is restricted to such things as paddy cultivated in fields distant from the farmstead, and water-palm fronds for house construction. For example, the fronds grown around Ấp Thủ Tửu are considered superior to those cultivated in other hamlets, and the purchase of several hundred by a resident of Ấp Dinh-A requires that they be transported by coolies or by sampan, and the latter means is considerably less costly.

In addition to using boats to transport paddy at harvest time, a number of motor vehicles are hired for this purpose. This is particularly true for farmers living in Ấp Dinh A-B whose fields are located on the other side of the national highway. Horse carts, motorcycle transports, and even small busses are hired to pick up the sacks of paddy along the road and transport them to the farmstead or to the point on the spur road nearest the farmstead.

External Communications.-- The network of streams and canals in and around Khánh Hậu is a microcosmic part of a vast waterway system dissecting the delta of the Mekong River, rendering practically every village and town in the region accessible by water transport. Furthermore, the national highway segmenting Khánh Hậu is a major line of communication from the Saigon-Cholon agglomeration to the cities and towns in the southern delta area.

These two systems combine to make Khánh Hậu highly accessible not only to most parts of the delta, but to Saigon-Cholon and towns above the delta such as Biên Hòa and Thủ Dầu Một.

Until July, 1958, a railroad running from Saigon to Mỹ Tho flanked the national highway which stopped at the Tân An station, less than four kilometers from Khánh Hậu. The removal of this means of communication does not appear to have affected the external accessibility of the village, however, as the national highway has been widened and the number of busses and other public carriers using it has increased considerably during the past two years.

The variety of public transports using this highway is almost staggering. There are relatively large interurban busses, most of which do not stop at Khánh Hậu but which concentrate on transporting passengers and goods between the larger market towns and cities. There also is an array of smaller busses, converted truck-buses, motorcycle transports, motor-scooter transports, taxi services, jitney services and horse carts, all of which can be flagged down along the highway. These carriers are the major means of transporting produce to and from the local markets. The visitor in Vietnam is invariably surprised and amused by the variety and quantity of goods and livestock piled high on the roofs of these transports. There also are large, relatively new, delivery trucks belonging to big Saigon-Cholon firms, and clanking, hybrid trucks of private

transporters carrying bulk goods from Saigon to the market towns in the delta.

Since Khánh Hậu has no market there is a considerable daily movement of villagers to and from the markets in neighboring Tân An and Tân Hưởng. Small scooter and motorcycle transports, as well as occasional small busses, enter Ấp Dinh A-B to bring villagers and their purchases from the market at Tân An. They also come to pick up produce or livestock being purchased by merchants of Tân An, and at harvest time they are busy transporting paddy to granaries of farmers or rice merchants and to rice mills. Goods are delivered to the village shops by a variety of vehicles; delivery truck such as pick-up trucks, and Citroën "deux chevaux" trucks, enter Ấp Dinh A-B via the spur road to bring such things as beer, soft drinks, and manufactured products distributed by Tân An branches of firms located in Saigon or Cholon. Individual suppliers with their goods in cans, strapped on bicycles, can enter any hamlet by the bunding paths in favorable weather. They purchase tobacco, cookies, candy, and other small items from wholesalers in Tân An, and sell them to clients in the surrounding area.

A family in Ấp Mới has the only horse and cart in the village, and the son operates a transport service to and from the market at Tân An. It also is available for rental. During the months of September and October, 1958, he reportedly transported around one thousand sacks of chemical fertilizer

from Tân An to Khánh Hậu, at the rate of 2$VN per sack. One resident of Ấp Dinh B has a motorcycle transport which makes daily trips between Ấp Dinh A-B and Tân An. This vehicle also is available for rental, and during the harvest period it is much in demand for transporting paddy.

Situated as it is on water courses which form part of a delta-wide network of rivers, streams, and canals, Khánh Hậu has relatively good external communication by water. Barges are restricted to the Rạch Ông Đạo and the Rạch Đồn, but smaller sampans and pirogues can manage the canals and narrow streams, particularly in high tide. Practically the only thing transported out of the village is paddy sold to rice merchants in Tân An or Mỹ Tho, whereas a wide variety of products are brought in by means of water transport. Vendors from Tân An move down the Rạch Đồn selling food items and manufactured goods to villagers along the banks. From the area south of Khánh Hậu, where there are more gardens and fruit groves, vendors paddle their produce-laden pirogues through the streams and canals, stopping periodically to lift the log footbridges, and they sell their produce in all the hamlets. One vendor selling earthen water jars, caramic pots, and dishes had come from Thủ Dầu Một, north of the delta, starting out by transporting his wares in a barge and subsequently transferring part of the load into a pirogue so as to navigate the shallow waterways of the villages more easily.

Dissemination of News

Since there are no postal facilities in Khánh Hậu it is necessary to go to Tân An to post a letter. Letters addressed to anyone in Khánh Hậu are delivered to the post office in Tân An and from there they are sent to the district headquarters in Thủ Thừa. The courier, who makes daily trips from Thủ Thừa to Khánh Hậu bringing administrative documents, also brings this incoming mail to the village hall. From there word is sent out to those with mail, and they are expected to come and claim it. At one time there was a messenger sent from the village each day to collect incoming mail in Tân An, but lack of funds forced the discontinuation of this service.

There are six battery-operated radios in the village, all of them owned by wealthy villagers. For the most part, they only listen to these radios for a short period every day to conserve the batteries, and news programs are among the more popular programs. Those going into the morning market at Tân An often purchase Saigon morning newspapers, either for themselves or for neighbors. In addition, the man who operates the daily motorcycle transport between the village and Tân An usually purchases several newspapers on his first trip. Around twenty people in the village take newspapers regularly, but the number of readers increases considerably when the results of the national lottery are published each week.

News received by radio or newspaper is disseminated orally throughout the village by the highly effective system of gossip. The village hall in Ấp Dinh A functions as a news center; the Deputy Chief has a radio, and there usually is a copy of one of the Saigon morning newspapers available for the Village Council members and visitors who might care to read it. Each day people from all parts of the village visit the village hall where they hear news of the outside and exchange local gossip which they carry back home with them, passing it on to those they meet on the way. Each hamlet has its shops which serve as gathering places for both men and women, and as one might expect, these shops function as channels of news and gossip.

House Types

In Khánh Hậu four major types of houses can be distinguished according to the building materials employed in construction. These are: houses constructed entirely or predominantly of wood and thatch, the use of wood being restricted to the framework; houses with wooden frameworks and walls, and thatched roofs; houses of wood with tile roofs, and houses with masonry walls, wooden frames, and tile roofs. There is a relatively wide range of architectural styles evident in Khánh Hậu, and to a great extent the style of the house depends on the building material used. It is custom, however, that prescribes the floor plan of the house, so the interior layouts

TABLE I

Number and Percentage of House Types in Ấp Dinh A-B and Ấp Mới

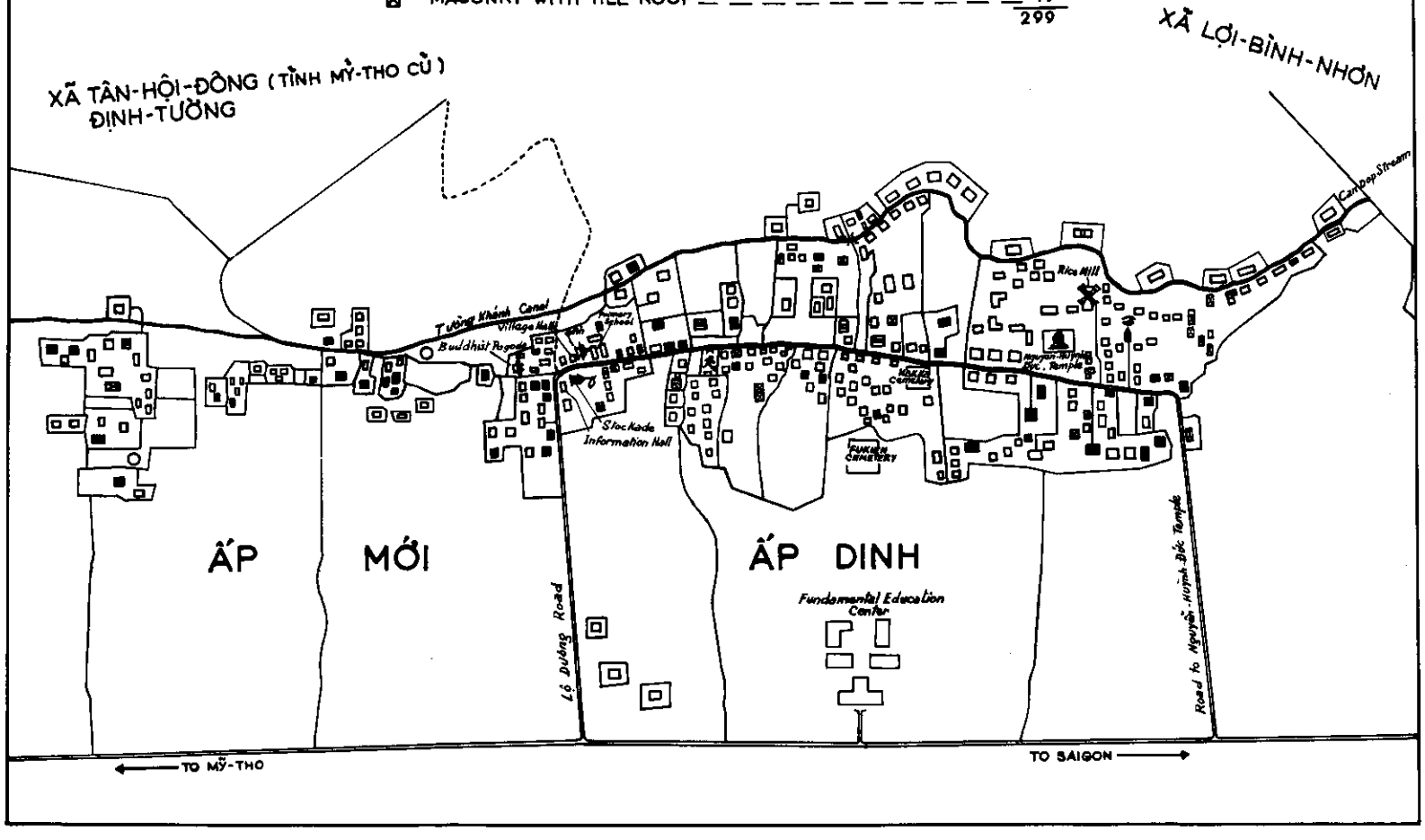
	House Type	Number	Percentage
I.	Thatched house	213	71.0 o/o
II.	Predominantly wood houses with thatched roofs	40	13.3 o/o
III.	Predominantly wood houses with tile roof	27	9.0 o/o
IV.	Masonry houseswith tile roofs	19	6.3 o/o
	Total	299	99.6 o/o

tend to be similar regardless of house style and construction material category. Map 2 presents a distribution of house types in Ấp Dinh A-B and Ấp Mới, and Table I indicates the number and percentage of each house type in these three hamlets.

Thatched Houses.-- Most villagers in Khánh Hậu live in the thatched houses so ubiquitous in the Vietnamese countryside, and while they appear at first to be very similar, they actually vary considerably in size, quality of building material, and in architectural style. The frameworks are made from locally obtainable unplaned logs, sticks, and bamboo which are fastened by cord produced from the rough fibrous stem of the water-palm fronds (see figure 2), or planed wooden beams, fitted and

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSE TYPES IN ẤP MỚI AND ẤP DINH A AND B

□ THATCHED BAMBOO WOOD HOUSES	213
■ PREDOMINANTLY PLANKS OF WOOD AND THATCHED ROOF	40
▤ PREDOMINANTLY PLANKS OF WOOD AND TILE ROOF	27
⊠ MASONRY WITH TILE ROOF	19
	299



fastened by wooden pegs to the same type of squared posts, or polished hardwood pillars. The small thatched house in Figure I has the former, somewhat rudimentary, framework which does not require the services of any specialists. This type of framework rests on the pounded earth surface of the low mound that forms the base of the house. The fitted and planed framework is found in larger thatched houses where the owner more than likely can afford the services of a carpenter. This heavier frame requires a stone base under each of the main supports, whether they be squared posts or polished hardwood pillars. The floors of the thatched houses are invariably of pounded earth.

Bamboo, sticks and small logs are cut in the small patches of forest in an around the village and in the hedgegrowths surrounding the farmsteads. Larger logs are brought into either Tân An or Mỹ Tho by boat or truck from the wooded areas north of the delta. These are cut and trimmed by local carpenters who also do the fitting and fastening of the framework. The polished hardwood pillars are more apt to be fashioned by carpenters in Tân An or Mỹ Tho where there is a more constant demand for this type of specialization.

The fronds for roof, wall and partitions are from a type of water-palm known as Cây dừa nước which grows in great profusion along the edges of the water courses in the vicinity of the village. These trees produce large, segmented nuts which are planted in

the soft mud on the edge of a canal or stream, and no further care is required to produce a water-palm. The fronds grow directly out of the water, reaching a mature height of twenty feet or more at which time they can be cut, dried, and used in house construction. The water-palm fronds from Ấp Thủ Tửu are more highly valued than those cultivated in other hamlets. The given explanation is that the water around Ấp Thủ Tửu is less brackish, permitting the fronds to produce thicker foliage of a sturdier quality.

As Figure 3 indicates, there are two methods of placing the fronds on the framework supporting the roof. Figure 3A is the lá xé roof where fronds are split in half and laid vertically on the frame. For the lá chầm roof, represented in Figure 3B, the fronds are folded along the stalks and laid horizontally on the frame. This type of roof is less common than the lá xé, and it is said to be a technique which the Vietnamese adopted from the idigenous Cambodians.

The house in Figure I is typical of the small thatched houses found in Khánh Hậu. It is a rectangular, rather low building with a straight-sloped, saddle or ridge style roof, and there usually is a small addition to one side. Many have one entrance which is invariably located at one side of the front, but most have two entrances, as in Figure I, with a flimsy partition in between. There are no windows in small thatched houses, and partitions are fastened to the framework of the house with water-palm cord.

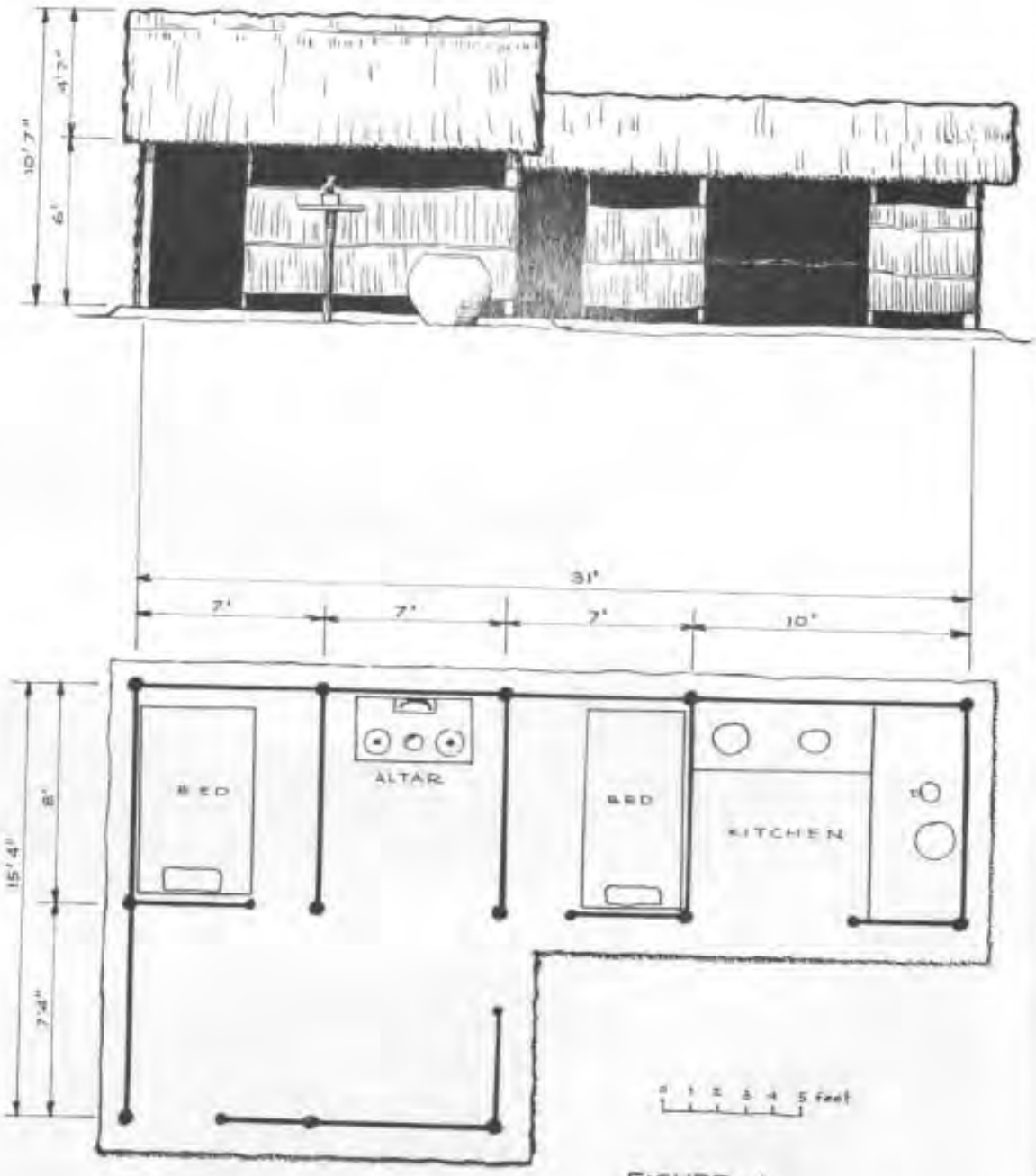


FIGURE 1

A TYPICAL SMALL THATCHED HOUSE

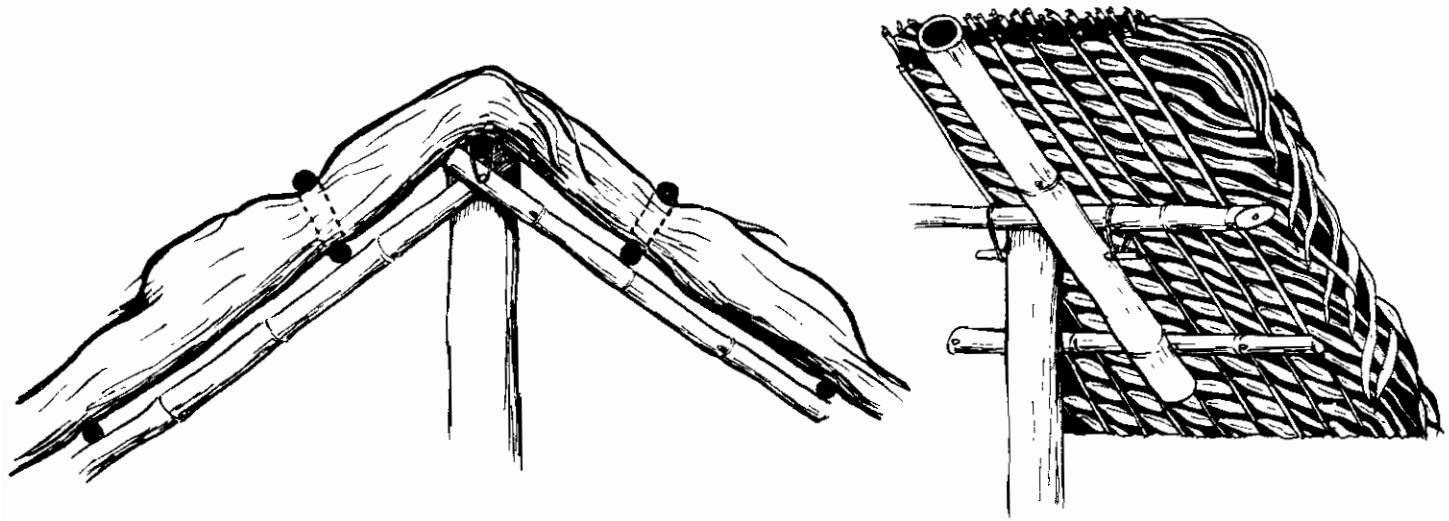
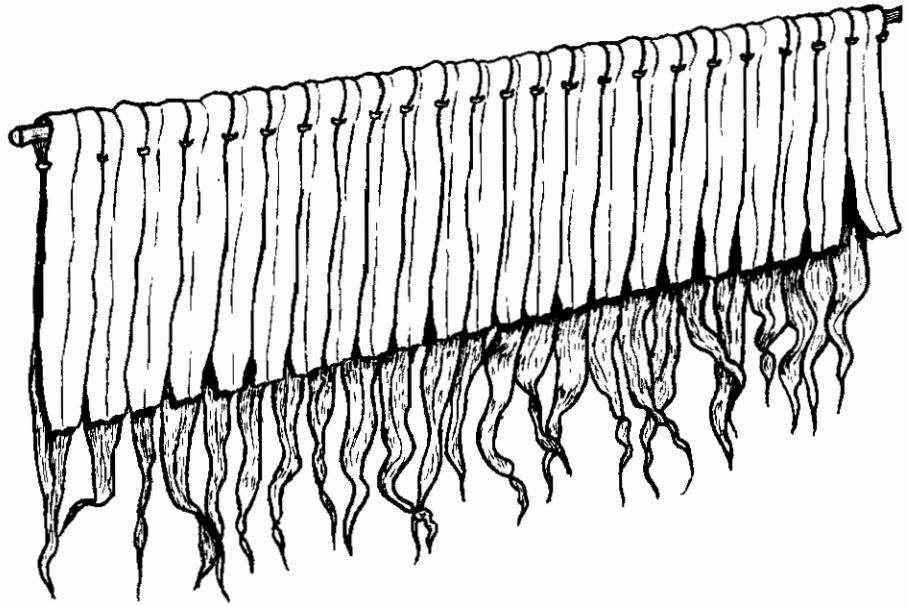
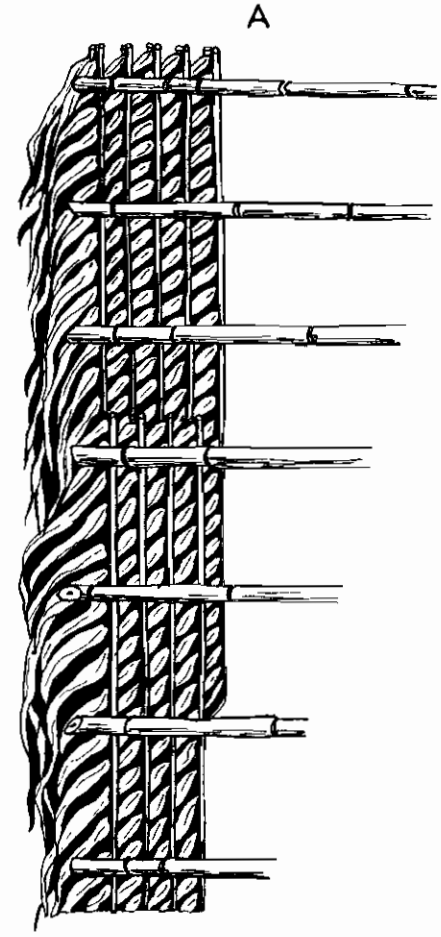


FIGURE 2

STRUCTURAL DETAIL OF A SMALL THATCHED HOUSE





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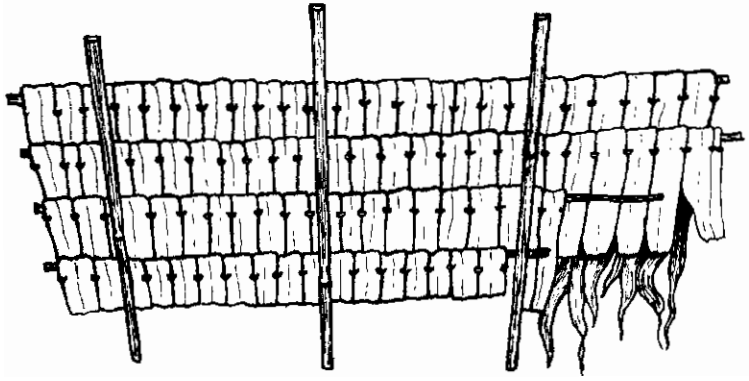

FIGURE 3

THATCHING

A. LA-XE THATCHING

B. LA-CHAM THATCHING

Every house in the village has a "place of honor" in the main room -- the center of the rear wall where the altar is located, whether it is the altar of the ancestors, a Buddhist altar, a Cao Đài altar, or a Catholic shrine (see Figure I). In the small thatched house this altar is apt to take up a great deal of space if it is on the usual cabinet, leaving little room for the table, chairs and beds. None of the houses in Khánh Hậu have attics, so paddy, tools and traps may be stored in the main room or in the shelter abutting the house. This shelter also may serve as the kitchen, which usually only consists of an open hearth of three stones (representing the three spirits of the hearth), several braziers, and a table containing the pots, dishes, bowls, chopsticks, and other things required for the preparation and consumption of meals. In many of the small thatched houses there is not much room for the kitchen inside the house, so in favorable weather the cooking is done in the rear.

The larger thatched houses are essentially an elaboration of the small thatched houses. The building material and construction of the frame is better, but there is no difference in the thatching (see Figure 4). The main room is larger, allowing room for two more altars which flank the altar in the "place of honor", more furniture such as a table in front of the principal altar where guests are received, and several more beds. In addition to the larger main room there are apt to be

several small rooms in the rear which serve as bedrooms in most houses, and a thatched addition of ruder construction than the main part. This is a multiple purpose part of the house -- a general workroom, a storeroom for paddy, tools, traps, and implements, a kitchen and bedroom. The kitchen occupies one corner and the open heart sends clouds of smoke rolling to the upper portions of the house to dissipate through the thatched roof. Paddy is stored in circular bins of reed matting, and tools are piled along the wall. Fish traps generally are attached to the beams or placed on a bamboo shelf suspended from the beams. The family spends most of its time in this room, and they usually take their meals there.

Houses with Wooden Walls and Thatched Roof.-- Figure 5 represents a typical house of the wood-thatched type. The roof styles vary for houses of this type: some have the straight roof with an addition of two slopes, so common for thatched houses; others have the gabled roof of four slopes, known as a hip roof, as the house in Figure 5, and a few have the type of roof so often found in wood and tile houses, as in Figure 6, a type generally considered "traditional Vietnamese." The wooden framework of wood-thatched houses is invariably of planed, sometimes polished, beams and polished hardwood pillars resting on stone blocks. The walls and interior partitions are of wooden planks fitted together and fastened by nails.

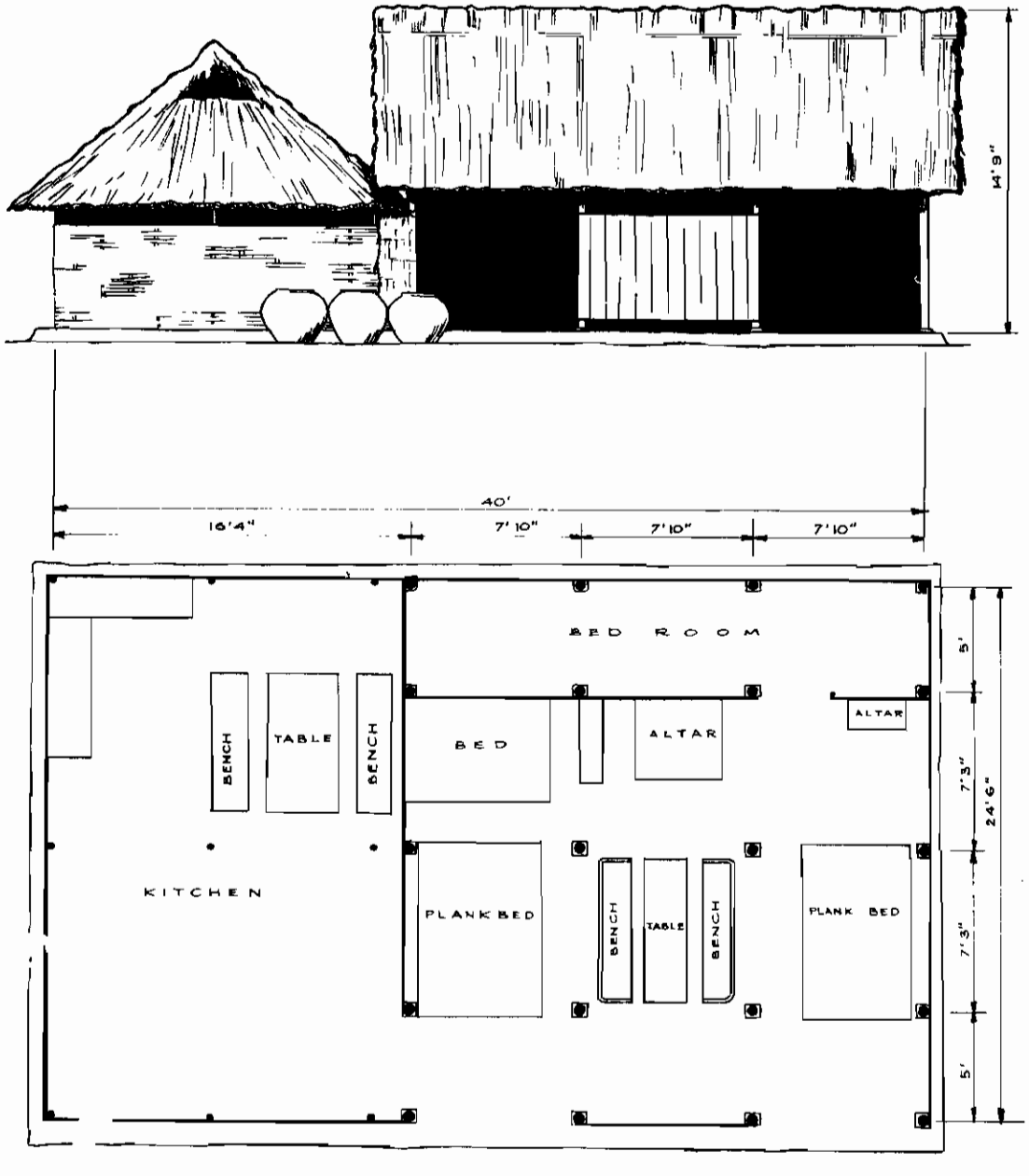

FIGURE 4

A TYPICAL LARGE THATCHED HOUSE

There usually are several windows with wooden bars. The front of this type of house is generally indented so the overhanging eave forms a small veranda, and the front of the house contains a series of paneled, or louvered doors which usually remain open during the daytime.

Most wood-thatched houses have pounded dirt floors, although in recent years those who can afford it install floors of flat brick squares set with mortar. The interior floor plan is very similar to that of the larger thatched houses; the altars line the rear wall, a table for receiving guests occupies an honored place before the altar of the ancestors, while beds, several more tables and chairs, and cabinets fill the remainder of the room. Like the larger thatched houses, the wood-thatched houses have additions which may have thatched or wooden walls, and serve the same variety of functions.

Houses with Wooden Walls and Tile Roofs.-- This type of house has many features in common with the wood-thatched type house. Generally, however, the wood-tile houses are more substantially constructed, a higher quality of wood is used in them, and considerably more workmanship has been expended on them. Since they are intended to serve as ancestral houses where the Cult of the Ancestors will be maintained in succeeding generations, they are constructed to endure for many years. The wood-tile type of house was favored by wealthy villagers before

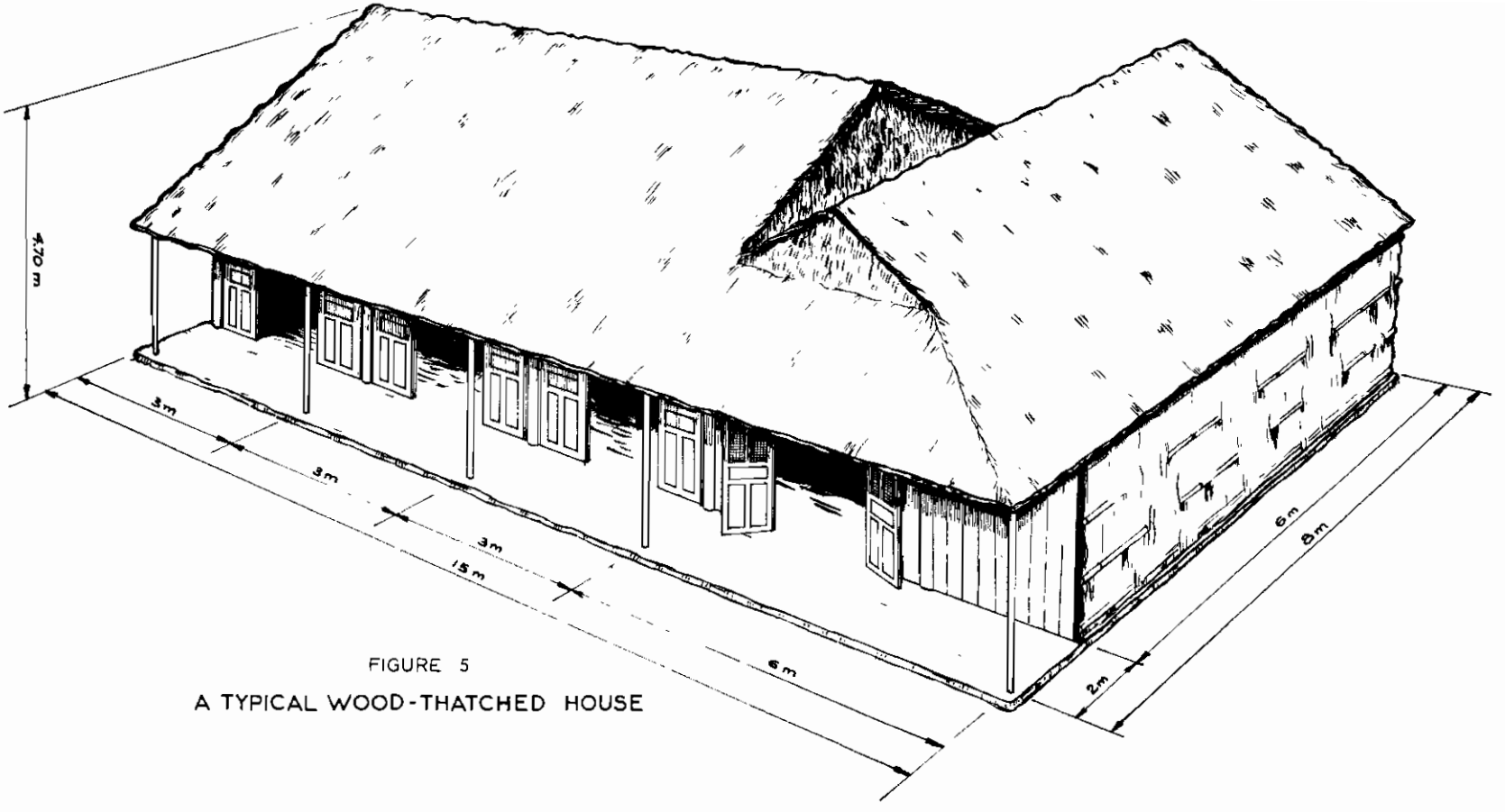

FIGURE 5

A TYPICAL WOOD-THATCHED HOUSE

masonry houses became fashionable, and they lavished considerable sums of money on fine wood for the framework and pillars and carved wood to grace the area around the ancestral altars and the front doors.

Figure 6 represents a typical wood-tile house, and since it is some forty years old it is considered an ancestral house. These houses are relatively large, and most of them have the traditional style roof of the house in Figure 6. Figure 7 indicates some detail of the elaborate framework construction with its carefully fitted beams and solid stylized roof supports. The roof itself consists of semi-cylindrical tiles arranged in interlocking, alternating concave-convex rows as shown in Figure 8. They rest on the wooden framework, and a masonry border along the apex, the sides and the eaves holds the tiles in place. On many traditional-type roofs the corners are stylized to give them an up-turned effect.

In some of the older wood-tile houses the floors are of pounded earth, but for the most part houses of this type have the same brick floor found in a few of the wood-thatched houses. The interior plan of this type of house is very similar to that of the wood-thatch house. There usually are several small bed chambers to the rear, and the main room tends to be somewhat cavernous because of the high ceiling and the fact that the partitions only reach the crossbeams. The inevitable workroom - storeroom - kitchen - bedroom is abutted to the main part of

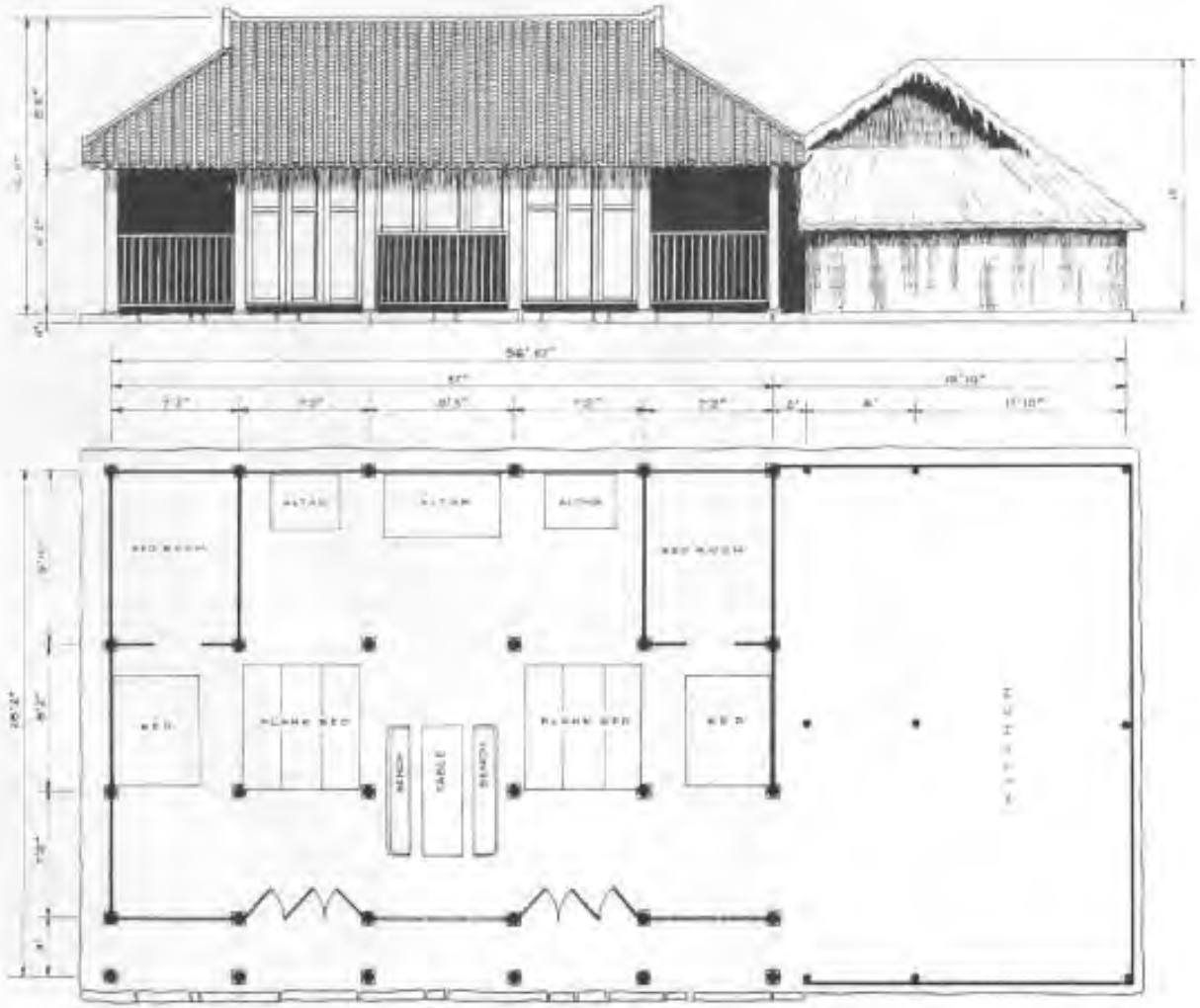

FIGURE 6 A TYPICAL WOOD-TILE HOUSE

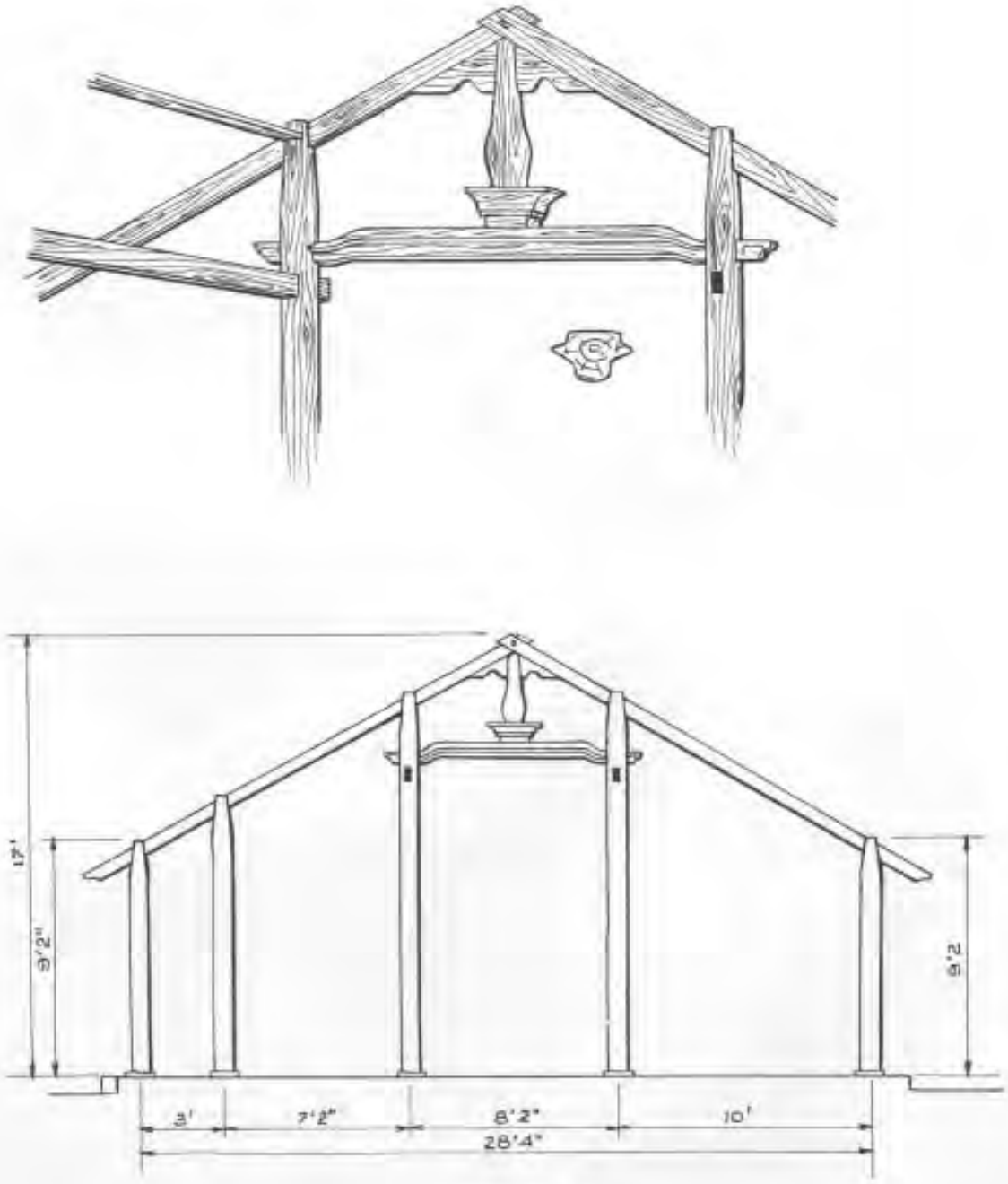

FIGURE 7

STRUCTURAL DETAIL OF A WOOD-TILE HOUSE

the house, and is invariably of wood with a thatched roof. The villagers demonstrate a certain penchant for thatched additions, regardless of the type and elegance of the house. One reason is that effort and money is concentrated on the main part of the house where the altars will be housed and the rituals performed. Another practical reason for thatched roofing in the kitchen area is that without chimney stoves the great clouds of smoke from the open cooking are more easily dissipated through thatching than through other roofing materials.

Houses of Masonry Walls and Tile Roofs.-- Prior to the war, there were few masonry-tile houses in Khánh Hậu. One of these, and probably the most elaborate house ever constructed in the village, belonged to Ông Kế Hiền, the highest venerable and the largest resident landowner in Khánh Hậu. It was a sizeable structure substantially constructed of the finest polished wood frame, thick masonry walls, and a rococo stone veranda supported by fluted columns. The elegance of this residence was enhanced by a high iron fence and an elaborate wrought iron gate. In one of their many nocturnal raids on the village during the Indochina War, the Viet Minh burned this resplendent house, leaving a charred ruin as a warning to those who might have considered constructing a similar type of house.

With the end of the war and the return of relative stability to the village, the wealthy villagers began constructing masonry

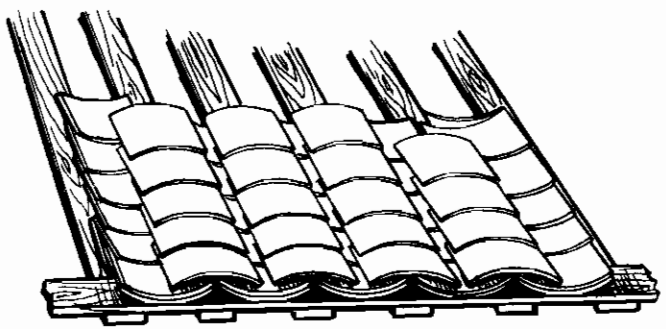

FIGURE 8

TRADITIONAL ROOF TILING

and tile houses in increasing numbers. Another incentive for this type of construction was the establishment of a brick factory on the national highway near Khánh Hậu, making bricks available at a somewhat lower cost. There is considerable variation in the architectural style of the masonry-tile houses. Figure 9 represents one type of masonry house with its straight sloping roof of flat tiles imbricated on the wooden frame, and held in place by knotches on the bottom that catch on the frame. The front of the house is dominated by a veranda from which one enters the house by any of the threedoorways. The louvered wooden doors of the traditional houses have been retained in most masonry houses, only they usually are painted a bright green or blue. Masonry houses are invariably painted buff, beige, or saffron yellow.

The interior plan of this type of masonry house resembles that of the house types already described. There are the small rear bed chambers, and the main room with its "place of honor" occupied by the ancestral altars and its typical arrangement of furniture. The floors of these houses are of flat square bricks, or dark tiles set with mortar, and a few have concrete floors. Even the newly constructed masonry houses of this type are apt to have a wood and thatch addition which serves as the workroom, storeroom, and kitchen. Masonry houses invariably have metal gutters and drain pipes to collect rainwater from the roof.

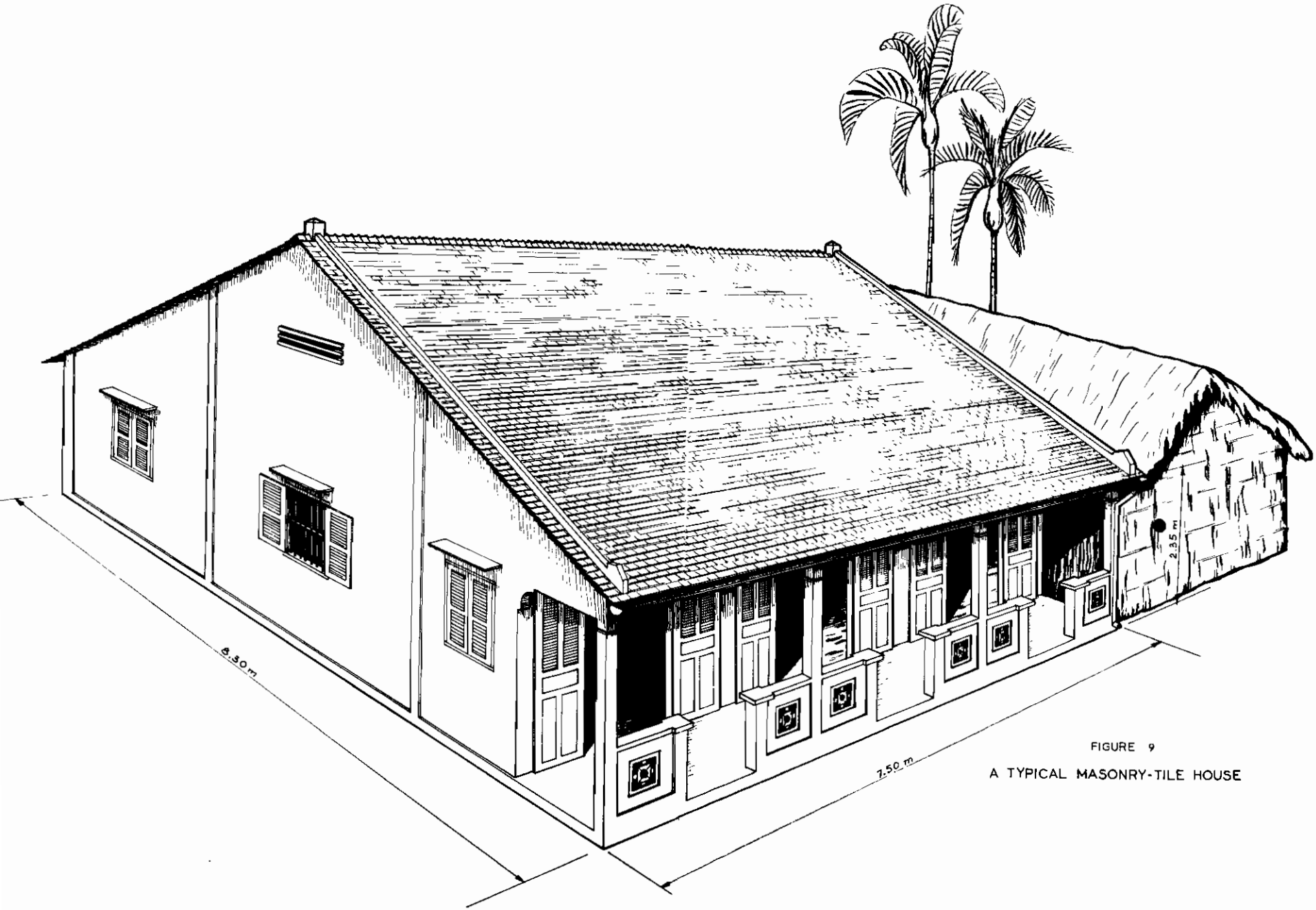

FIGURE 9

A TYPICAL MASONRY-TILE HOUSE

Notwithstanding their elegant architecture and substantial construction, many newly constructed larger masonry houses, retain the wood and thatch kitchen. In six of the larger masonry houses in Khánh Hậu cooking is done on a new type of brick stove with a chimney and fuel system. The principal fuel for these stoves is dried rice husks, and in spite of the fact that they eliminate the smoke problem most of the families owning them still have thatched roofs in the kitchens. Houses of this type also have sizable concrete water tanks abutted to the main part of the house.

Geomancy and Settlement Patterns

According to Taoist belief there are many cosmological influences that play upon the destinies of human beings. The various practices associated with astrology, palmistry, and other forms of soothsaying are ways of predicting the trends of these influences, and they provide means of deriving the most favorable effects of these influences. Geomancy has the same dual function; it enables the individual to interpret the portents of nature, and at the same time orient himself properly to his physical surroundings so as to attract the favorable cosmological influences. This becomes an important consideration in building a house, planning the layout of the kitchen, and selecting the site for the family tombs.

Villagers who can afford it retain the services of an Ông Địa Lý, a geomancer whose proficiency lies in his ability to interpret the physical signs in the vicinity in order to recommend the most harmonious orientation for structures and tombs. Ngũ hành are the five physical signs which are the basic considerations in geomantic decisions. These are kim (metal), mộc (wood), thủy (water), hỏa (fire), and thổ (earth soil). The geomancer visits the intended site of the house or tomb and looks for manifestations of these elements in the physical surroundings. He alone is qualified to interpret the signs; a low row of pointed trees might be interpreted as hỏa (fire), while a small mound may be a manifestation of thổ (earth), or possibly kim (metal). The geomancer then decides which location on the site would permit the most harmonious combination of these elements. For example, a location between the manifestation of fire and water would not be advisable since these are incompatible elements, whereas one between wood and fire would likely permit the favorable cosmological influences to flow freely. To avoid the selection of an unfavorable site, and increase the possibilities of an optimum selection, wealthy villagers hire several geomancers.

For the ordinary villager who cannot afford the services of a geomancer, there are a basic set of taboos and sanctions concerning house construction. If possible, houses should always face east, northeast, or southeast. Two directions to

avoid are west and northwest, both of which are associated with the five evil demons (ngũ quỷ). A house should never face the side of the house next door, nor should a house face the trifurcation of a road or water course. If the plot of ground is too small to avoid such an arrangement, an octogonical talisman with a small mirror in the center should be hung from the beams facing the entrance of the house to ward off the evil influences attracted by the unfavorable position of the house.

A geomancer is also consulted to select the hearth in the kitchen. If the position should be unfavorable, Ông Táo (the spirit of the hearth) is likely to be upset and cause endless difficulties for the family. In the case of the kitchen, the west and northwest sides are considered favorable positions for the hearth because its fires will bar the entrance of the evil demons associated with these directions.

Although there is no geomancer residing in Khánh Hậu, there are several in neighboring villages, and wealthy villagers summon them when their services are required. Most villagers of Khánh Hậu observe the taboos and sanctions associated with geomatic beliefs. They make an effort to orient their houses and kitchens in the prescribed directions, and those who cannot avoid violating a taboo do not hesitate to obtain the counteracting talisman.

Chapter III

VILLAGE ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

In Khánh Hậu, the formal political organization of the village is centered in the Hội Tề, the Village Council, which is functionally related to most of the formal organizations and associations in the village. The hamlet chiefs are the representatives of the Village Council in each hamlet, and such organizations as the Liên Gia, the five-family groups, and the Đoàn Thể, the four age-sex groups, are designed to establish lines of communication from the Council to every member of every family in the village. The Village Council also had a role in the Hợp Tác Xã, the Agricultural Cooperative, and it is currently active in organizing the Hiệp Hội Nông Dân, the Farmers' Association. Finally, the Village Council has a quasi-religious role in relation to the Hội Hương, the Cult Committee, and the Cult of Buddha.

The Village Council, as it exists today, as well as the Agricultural Cooperative, the Farmers' Association, the Liên-Gia, and the Đoàn Thể, have been established in Khánh Hậu since 1955. This represents considerable change in the formal political organization and an increase in organizations and associations to which villagers are expected to belong. It reflects an attempt on the part of the government to improve security, promote communal solidarity, increase mutual aid among villagers, and provide a framework in which agricultural and social welfare programs can be implemented.

Hội Tề, The Village Council. -- Every village in Viet Nam has its Village Council, although the size, composition, and specific functions of its members have always varied from village to village. The oft-quoted proverb, "Phép Vua thu lệ làng" (The laws of the Emperor cede to the customs of the village), summarizes the independent spirit that has characterized the Vietnamese village in political and administrative matters. When the French established the protectorates of Tonkin and Annam and the colony of Cochinchina in the late nineteenth century, they brought about some regional variations in village administration. The mandarin system was left intact in Tonkin and Annam, and a colonial administration was instituted in Cochinchina. Ultimately, the traditional village political and administration systems of the southern villages were more deeply affected by the French presence. The South was still being settled by the Vietnamese during the nineteenth century, and it was far removed from Hanoi and Hue, the centers of traditional culture. Consequently, the mandarin system had never been well established there. In spite of this, however, many of the older villages, such as Khánh Hậu, had inherited political systems similar to those in central and northern Viet Nam, and these were destined to undergo considerable change.[1]

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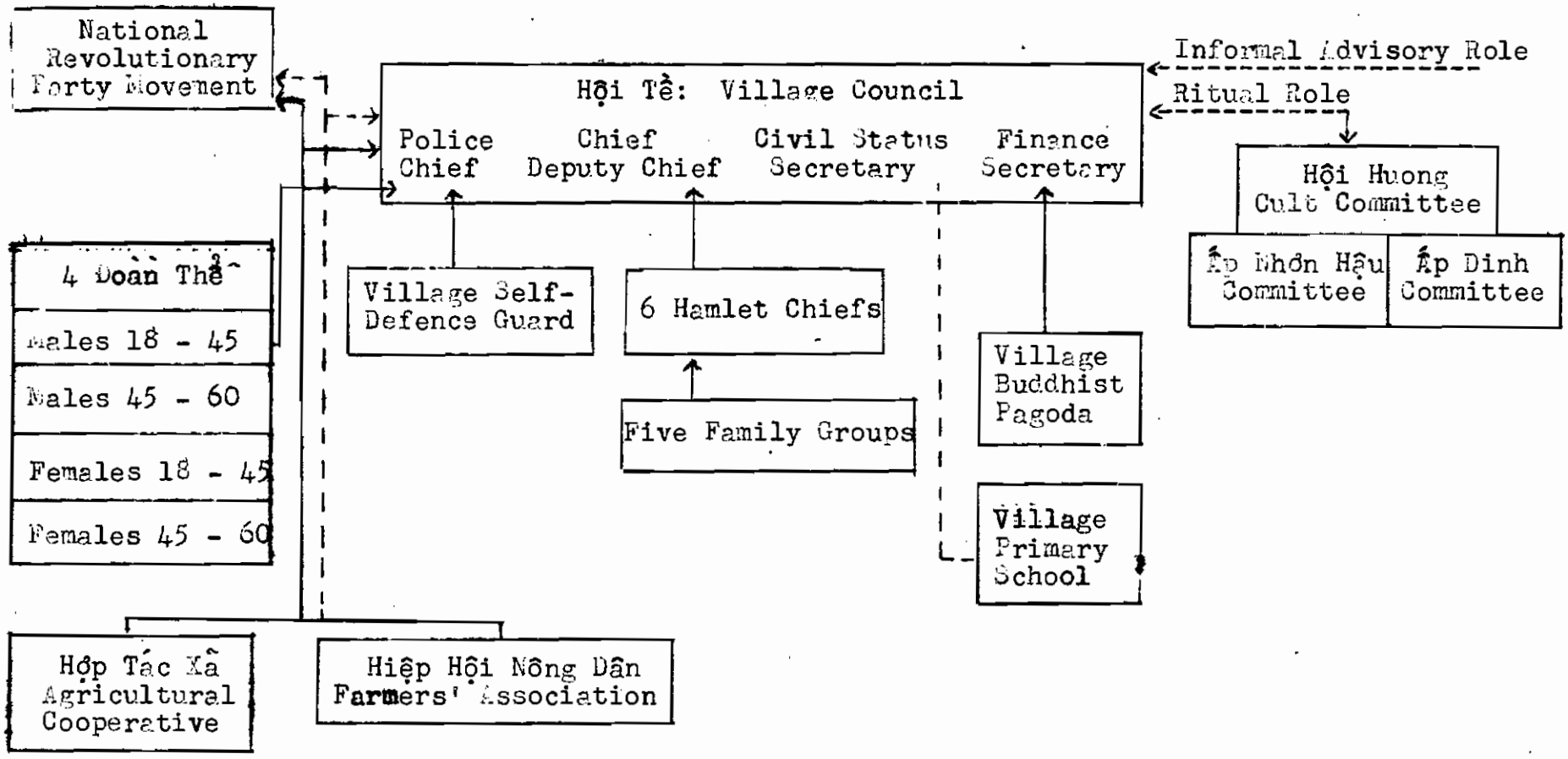
[1]Table in the companion report on Village Administration outlines the general changes that have taken place in the traditional village councils as a result of the French legislation in 1904 and 1927.

CHART I

VILLAGE ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS



+When the Farmers' Association was formed, the Agricultural Cooperative was dissolved.

_____ = Direct Relationship

-------- = Indirect Relationship

From available historical evidence, it appears that the Village Council in southern villages had functioned as a ranked socio-political hierarchy with a wide range of political powers and administrative responsibilities. In addition, the council members had the quasi-religious role of being the keepers of the Cult of the Guardian Spirit, an official cult found in every Vietnamese village. This included certain specific duties such as maintaining the đình, the communal temple where the imperial decree naming the guardian spirit is kept, as well as officiating at the cult rituals honoring the spirit.

When the French initiated legislation on the size of the village councils and the administrative functions of the members, they apparently sought to separate the sacred from the secular functions. As a result, there emerged two hierarchical bodies in southern villages: the Hội Đồng Hương Chính (the Village Council), whose functions were purely administrative, and the Hội Hương (the Cult Committee), which retained the traditional responsibilities associated with the đình and the Cult of the Guardian Spirit.

Table 2 outlines the changes in the size, titles, and essential functions of the Khánh Hậu Village Council during the past ten years. As a result of the 1904 and 1927 legislations, the Council had twelve members and two assistants. It had the right to select replacements for vacancies, subject to the approval of the provincial authorities. The 1927 law and subsequent legislation in the 1930's specified that new Council members would be chosen from a select

Table 2

Titles and Functions in the Pre-War, Viet Minh, and Present Village Councils in Khánh Hậu

I

PRE-WAR COUNCIL

Hội Đồng Hương Chính

1. Hương Cả - Village Chief
2. Hương Chủ - Deputy Chief
3. Hương Sư - Advise on laws and Regulations
4. Hương Trưởng - Maintain Village Budget and assist teachers
5. Hương Chánh - Reconcile minor differences between villagers
6. Hương Giáo - Secretary to Council and train young notables
7. Hương Quan - Police Chief
8. Hương Bộ - Maintain village rolls and accounts
9. Hương Thân - Intermediary between judicial authorities and the Village Council
10. Xã Trưởng - Intermediary between village and administration; to keep the village seal and serve as tax collector
11. Hương Hào - An executive notable
12. Chánh Lục Bộ - Maintain civil status registers.

II

VIET MINH COUNCIL

Ủy Ban Hành Chánh

1. Chủ Tịch - Chief
2. Ủy Viên Quân Sự - Police
3. Ủy Viên Tài Chanh - Finance
4. Ủy Viên Cầu Cống - Public Works
5. Ủy Viên Hộ Tịch - Civil Status

III

PRESENT COUNCIL

Hội Tề

Chánh Chủ Tịch - Chief

Phó Chủ Tịch - Deputy Chief

Tài Chánh - Finance

Cảnh Sát - Police

Hộ Tịch - Civil Status

group of villagers -- such people as landowners, retired military officers, and retired officials. Council members received no salaries. The Xã Trưởng, Hương Hào, and Hương Thôn, whose duties were primarily clerical, received and retained fees for such things as registering land sales, births, marriages, and deaths. Other members of the Council were reimbursed for official travel. In addition, the provincial budget paid the cost of food and drink which were served as part of the monthly meetings of the Council. These meetings were held in the Council House to discuss village affairs and relay any information received from higher authorities.

According to some elderly villagers, the high prestige of being a member of the Village Council was sufficient compensation, and these positions were sought after by the village gentry. New members of the Council were appointed to one of the lower echelon positions where they would remain for the two year tenure period before moving up to a higher position. The Council had considerable power, and the members appeared to have been somewhat authoritarian figures whom the villagers respected and feared. The policy of the French, however, favored a centralization of political power and administrative authority, and the implementation of this program led to a gradual diminishing of village autonomy. As a result, the village councils were steadily sapped of their prerogatives and responsibilities.

In August, 1945, when Japanese control of Indochina abruptly ceased, the Viet Minh, as pointed out previously, organized a Ủy

Ban Hành Chánh, an administrative council, in every village, with the intention of replacing the traditional Village Council. In Khánh Hậu, the Ủy Ban Hành Chánh consisted of six members: the Chủ Tịch (who replaced the Village Chief), two police agents, a finance secretary, a public works secretary, and a civil status secretary. All members of the Ủy Ban Hành Chánh were selected by the members of the Viet Minh party in the village, and curiously enough, the Chủ Tịch and one of the police agents were landowners --- two brothers from an upper class family. The other members were ordinary tenant farmers. Viet Minh control of the village was short-lived, however, for in January, 1946, the French reestablished their administration in Indochina, and soon after the former councils were reinstated in the villages.

During the Indochina War, the members of the Village Council in Khánh Hậu found themselves in a delicate position. As village leaders they were more susceptible to accusations of being pro-French or pro-Viet Minh. Some villagers contend that the confusing war years provided an opportunity for council members to exploit their position of authority; for example, one official was accused of having extorted money from villagers by threatening to denounce them as Việt Minh. After Diện Biên Phủ, when the Việt Minh raids became bolder and their raids on the village increased, the Council was forced to flee the village. Following the Geneva Conference, when relative order was restored, they returned to Khánh Hậu.

In 1953, Emperor Bao Dai declared in legislation that the village councils would be elected. The next notable reforms in village government were embodied in the legislation of 1956. The size of all village councils was fixed at four or five members, depending on the size and relative needs of villages. Khánh Hậu had a council of five members: the Village Chief, Deputy Chief, Finance Secretary, Police Chief, and Civil Status Secretary. All were appointed by the provincial authorities, and they received a fixed salary. According to the legislation, any qualified adult male resident of the village could be named to one of the positions in the council, but in Khánh Hậu, they continued to be selected from tha social elite of the village.

The Hội Tề, as the new Village Council is known, is composed of upper class villagers. One selective factor in this situation is that notwithstanding the salary, upper class villagers are the only ones who can afford to hold these positions. Salary payments are often very late, and being a village official often necessitates the expenditure of one's own money. Well-to-do villagers also are the only ones who can afford to hire laborers to work their farms, thus leaving them free to tend to their official duties in the Council.

The Village Council has the general responsibility of giving guidance to the village in all matters which affect the community as a whole. In addition to formulating the village budget and settling disputes between villagers, the Council organizes a number

of village projects, such as the current canal construction, and the project to construct a pagoda dedicated to Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức. The Village Chief has the specific responsibility of supervising village affairs, and he is the liaison between the village and the higher authorities in the district and provincial headquarters. As the village representative to the district and province chiefs, the Village Chief seeks their approval for village projects, and he reports any general problems and difficulties to them.

The Deputy Chief is responsible for social and economic affairs in the village. Social affairs include such things as official receptions and ceremonies, matters pertaining to education and social welfare. His economic responsibilities are largely in the area of public works, which includes bridge construction, road maintenance, and the upkeep of public buildings. The Civil Status Secretary is responsible for recording vital statistics such as births, marriages, and deaths, and he issues certifications of vital statistics upon request. He also functions as the Information Agent in the village.

The Finance Secretary maintains the financial records and prepares the budget in conjunction with other members of the Village Council. He also is responsible for collecting taxes. Maintaining peace and order in the village is the primary responsibility of the Police Chief. This includes supervising the self-defense corps, dealing with minor violations of the law, and

assisting the District Chief in serving legal processes and conducting investigations.

The responsibilities of the Village Council extend to arbitrating disputes between villagers. In most instances, difficulties between members of the same family are settled by the older members of the family. There are some cases of litigation over inheritance recorded in the village hall, but in general it is considered a disgrace to air family disputes publicly. Differences that arise between neighbors, however, are often difficult to resolve and many of them are brought before the village authorities. The hamlet chief should be consulted first, but it appears that most villagers prefer the neutral ear of the Village Council.

If the difficulty is serious, a grave civil wrong or a criminal action, it is referred to the district authorities. Less serious cases usually are heard by any of the Council members present in the village hall when the disputing parties arrive. Such hearings are very informal. The parties approach a Council member and both present their versions of the situation. The Council member invariably appears disinterested, often continuing to read a document or carry on some business with another villager. He occasionally may make a joke on some aspect of the case, much to the amusement of everyone but the disputing parties. This seeming lack of interest and periodic facetiousness appears to be a mechanism for preventing the discussion from becoming too heated. For example, in one case concerning non-payment of rent, the plaintiff,

a woman, was becoming increasingly excited as she explained her side of the case. Suddenly the councilman motioned for her to stop, and he advised her to consider forgiving the errant tenant who might then be moved to pray to Buddha on her behalf. He added that she was getting old and needed the prayers more than she needed the rent. Everyone in the council house laughed, the plaintiff immediately became calm, and the case was settled soon after.

Occasionally, personal relationships are invoked as a means of influencing whoever is judging the case. In one such instance, a young man was accused of behaving in a very forward manner toward a young woman of a neighboring family. The defendant's mother was pleading on his behalf, and after presenting several arguments why the case should be dropped, she pointed out that the councilman hearing the case was a kinsman of hers, and he therefore should be lenient with her son. By the same token, a councilman may refuse to hear a case because one party is a kinsman or close friend. On one such occasion, a councilman's younger brother was told brusquely that he should drop his charge against a neighbor because it was nonsense.

Punishments meted out by the Council depend on the seriousness of the offence. One villager had to bow before the Ke Hien to beg forgiveness for having insulted his son. Others are fined cash, and male villagers, such as the young man mentioned above, often are given a fixed number of days laboring in the village.

In addition to their administrative duties, members of the Council continue to have a role in the rituals held in the dinh, and the rituals in the Ấp Mới pagoda. As pointed out previously, when the present village of Khánh Hậu was formed in 1917, one Village Council was established, but there continued to be two đình and two Hội Hương, Cult Committees. Although members of the Village Council do not hold official titles in the Cult Committees, they nonetheless have the responsibility of assisting in the maintenance of the đình, as well as in the preparation for the four annual rituals held in the đình, and they are assigned specific places in the kowtowing order at the rituals. The Tài Chánh Cảnh Sát (Police) and the Hộ Tịch (Civil Status Secretary) are the official representatives of the village at the rituals in both đình.

The Buddhist pagoda in Ấp Mới, not far from the council house, is the official pagoda of Khánh Hậu. The village has several hectares of paddy land which is set aside as cult land. It is rented to the monk caretaker, and the income is used to support the annual rituals. Several members of the Village Council are expected to participate in the rituals held in the pagoda, as the official representatives of the village.

Compared with the traditional Village Council, the present Council has considerably less political power and fewer administrative responsibilities. Paper work appears to have increased, but the role of the councilman is more in the nature of a salaried village fonctionnaire than a village venerable. As one elderly

former councilman put it, "In the old days, the people were the servants of the Village Council, now the Council is the servant of the people." In general, it appears that the Village Council has lost some of the prestige that characterized the pre-war Council, in spite of the fact that the membership continues to be drawn from the village gentry. Furthermore, the disrupting years brought some face-losing incidents for the Council; at one point, it was replaced by the Viet Minh council, and this amounts to a ceding of power, and the members of the council were forced to flee the village and abandon their responsibilities.

Chủ Ấp, Hamlet Chiefs. -- Hamlet chiefs are selected from families of good reputation, and they are men known for their participation in village affairs. One is from the upper class, but the remaining five are small landowners or tenant farmers. They represent the Village Council in the hamlets, and they function as liaisons between the Council and the residents of the hamlets. They are expected to work closely with the villagers. When new programs are instituted in the village or new projects begun, the hamlet chief explain their goals, and he outlines the villagers' roles in them. They reach the people through the Liên Gia, the five-family groups, whose leaders are directly responsible to them. Periodically the hamlet chiefs organize meetings of the five-family group leaders to disseminate information received from the Village Council, and receive reports from the group leaders.

When a village project is being carried out in his hamlet the hamlet chief acts as overseer. Recently, a canal was being dug through the fields near Ấp Thủ Tửu, and the hamlet chief was kept busy trying to find drinking water for the workers and listening to the complaints of landowners who opposed the canal construction. Hamlet chiefs also pass on requests of hamlet residents to the Village Council. The residents of Ấp Cầu and Ấp Nhớn Hậu recently decided they would like a branch of the primary school in Ấp Nhớn Hậu so as to eliminate the long walk to the Ấp Dinh school. They met with the hamlet chiefs, and after the plan was endorsed by the Ke Hien, a prominent resident of Ấp Cầu, the hamlet chiefs presented it to the Village Council.

In addition to their administrative responsibilities, the hamlet chiefs have roles in the Cult of the Guardian Spirit. They assist in the organization of the rituals, and like the councilmen, they have a fixed place in the kowtowing. The hamlet chiefs of Ấp Nhớn Hậu and Ấp Cầu have more of an important role in these rituals than do the other hamlet chiefs. Three of the annual rituals at the two đình are held on the same day, making it impossible for the councilmen to be present at the Ấp Nhớn Hậu rituals. The hamlet chiefs, therefore, assume the responsibilities and ritual roles of the councilmen.

Hội Hướng, The Cult Committee

As mentioned previously, at some unspecified date in the reign of Emperor Gia Long, during the nineteenth century, the villages of Tuong Khanh and Nhơn Hậu received imperial decrees naming one or more guardian spirits to protect the villages from evil and bring them good fortune. The names of the spirits were inscribed on certificates bearing the imperial seal, and they were placed in red and silver carved wood boxes from which they could only be removed on rare occasions by members of the Village Council.

Both villages constructed đình to house the sanctuary where the imperial decrees are kept. These were built according to the prescribed canons of traditional đình architecture; wood and masonry structures with elaborate hardwood frameworks, supported by polished hardwood pillars. The roofs are of tile with stylized up-turned corners, and topped by a cornice decorated with a colored ceramic dragon motif. The interiors are divided into two sections; a closed sanctuary which is only opened on ritual occasions, and an open-sided large room used for rituals, meetings, theatre performances, and a classroom, if necessary. The đình in Ấp Nhơn Hậu was burned during the war, and its imperial decree disappeared. As a result, the identity of its guardian spirits is irretrievably lost.

Both Tường Khánh and Nhơn Hậu had their Hội Hướng (Cult Committee), responsible for maintaining the Cult of the Guardian Spirit in the village. This includes the upkeep of the đình, organizing the rituals and ritual feasts associated with the cult,

and officiating at these rituals. When the villages of Tường Khánh and Nhơn Hậu were fused in 1917 to form the village of Khánh Hậu, the two đình continued to function separately, and the two Hội Hướng also were retained. At the present time, however, there is one common Kế Hiền, the highest venerable in the Hội Hướng. He participates in the activities of both Hội Hướng and since the important Cần An rituals are on different days in both đình, he has an important part in this ritual.

Chart 2 represents the structure of the Cult Committees in Khánh Hậu in relation to their respective đình, the common Kế Hiền, and the Village Council. Traditionally, each title carried specific responsibilities in the preparation and performance of cult rituals. At the present time, however, the roles are ill-defined, and most of the titles have no particular function associated with them. The ranking within the Cult Committees is directly related to the order of kowtowing at the rituals, and it reflects a good deal about the relative status ranking in the village.

The size and structure of Cult Committees is not uniform for all villages. A village may add or delete titles as it sees fit. In Khánh Hậu the two Cult Committees are the same in their titles and their respective order, but they vary in size. There can be only one Kế Hiền, Tiền Bải, Chánh Bái, Bồi Bái, and Phó Bái, but the other titles may be awarded to a number of villagers. In principle, titles in the Cult Committees are presented on the basis of good character, loyalty to the village, and there is some

Chart 2

HỘI HƯƠNG: The Cult Committees in Khánh Hậu: Relation to the Village Council in Ritual Kowtowing Order

KẾ HIỀN

Ấp Vinh	Ấp Nhơn Hậu
Tiền Bái	Tiền Bái
Chanh Bai	Chanh Bai
Bổi Bại	Bổi Bại
Phọ Bai	Phọ Bai
Chanh Tế	Chanh Tế
Hương Quản	Hương Quản
Hương Cả or Cả Trưởng	Hương Cả or Cả Trưởng
Chu Trưởng	Chu Trưởng

HỘI TỀ: COUNCIL OF NOTABLES

Chánh Chủ Tịch (Chief)
Phọ Chủ Tịch (Deputy Chief)
Tại Chanh (Finance)

Hương Sư	Hương Sư
Hương Trưởng	Hương Trưởng
Hương Chạnh	Hương Chạnh
Hương Giạo	Hương Giạo
Hương Nhứt	Hương Nhứt
Hương Nhì	Hương Nhì
Hương Bộ	Hương Bộ
Hương Huấn	Hương Huấn
Phọ Hương Quản	Phọ Hương Quản
Phọ Hương Hào	Phọ Hương Hào
Thủ Bộ	Thủ Bộ
Thu Bổn	Thu Bổn

Cảnh Sát (Police)
Hộ Tịch (Civil Status)
Chủ Ấp (Hamlet Chiefs)

consideration given to one's educational background. Although wealth is not explicitly included as one of the qualifications, it becomes increasingly important as one moves up in the hierarchy of the committee. The financial burdens of the high venerables exclude the poor farmer of excellent reputation from attaining a title in the high echelons of the Cult Committee.

The lowest titles, Thủ Bộ and Thủ Bổn, are usually given to younger men of the village, the sons of higher venerables for the most part. Holders of these titles are considered likely candidates for higher titles at some later date, so their low status position is merely an apprenticeship period. The next range of titles, including Phó Hương Hào, Phó Hương Thôn, Phó Hương Quản, Hương Huấn, Hương Bộ, Hương Nhì, Hương Nhứt, Hương Giáo, Hương Chánh, Hương Trưởng, and Hương Sử, are given to a wide range of villagers, and they kowtow in that order at the rituals. A villager receives one of the low titles such as Phó Hương Hào when he enters the Cult Committee, and he must spend two years in that position before being elevated to Phó Hương Thôn, then to Phó Hương Quản, and so forth up the scale. There are many cases of members dropping out of the Cult Committee, and there are some cases of skipping titles in the movement upward.

The only responsibility associated with titles in this group is to contribute a fixed sum of cash at the Cầu An ritual, the largest of the four annual rituals honoring the Guardian Spirit, and also at the less important Chap Mieu ritual. The contribution of Committee Members for the Cầu An ritual was 200$VN in 1958

and 1959. While acceptance of these titles is considered to be voluntary, and an honor to the villager on whom the title is bestowed, some holders of titles complained that social pressure demanded acceptance. It is socially obligatory for men to participate in village affairs, and being in the Cult Committee is the most formalized method of doing so. Many with titles in this group are small tenant farmers, small landowners, and laborers, and many feel that the ritual assessment is an insupportable burden. One laborer expressed his attitude toward the situation by stating that if he were more articulate he would go to the Council of Notables and talk his way out of the Cult Committee.

Theoretically, after one has passed the prescribed two years as Hương Sư, he should move up in the echelon of the high venerables by assuming the title of Chu Truong. Actually few villagers reach this level without spending a period serving in the Village Council. Prior to the administrative reforms of 1957, when the Village Council had from nine to twelve members, it was customary for the qualified villager to take the lower status council positions first and then move up to higher positions. While in the Village Council he does not hold a title in the Cult Committee in spite of the fact that they are separate bodies. The emerging pattern in the new Council of Notables is for a villager to be appointed either Finance Secretary, Civil Status Secretary, or Police Chief, then serve as Deputy Chief, and finally as Chief for an unspecified period of time. As in the traditional Council, after serving as

Village Chief in the new Council, a man is given the title Chu Truong, thus entering the echelon of the high venerables in the Cult Committee.

Once in the high venerable echelon, one moves up slowly since the number of title holders are somewhat restricted, and death provides the only vacancies. As pointed out previously, wealth is a requisite for attaining the higher positions of the Cult Committee. Ke Hien, Tien Bai, and Chanh Bai must be sufficiently affluent to afford the cost of their high social positions. They must contribute cash for all the rituals held at the đình in addition to making offerings of food. For the Cầu An rituals in 1958 and 1959, the Ke Hien was expected to contribute at least 400$, and since he must attend the rituals in both đình, his yearly ritual expenditures run rather high. He also is expected to make contributions to the Buddhist pagodas, to the school for purchasing presents which are awarded to honor students at the end of the year, and donations for such things as the new pagoda being constructed in the village to honor Marshal Nguyen Huynh Duc.

Advisory Role of the High Venerables. -- Although the Cult Committee has no official political and administrative role in the village, the high venerables unofficially and informally advise the Village Council. They are elderly men, and in Khánh Hậu there is a marked respect for age. The high venerables also are of the social elite of the village, and most of them have served on the Village Council which adds to their reputation for sagacity.

The highest venerable, the Ke Hien, commands particular respect. He is owner of a great deal of land in the village, and he is the wealthiest resident. He also is considered a very adept farmer, the first in the village to use chemical fertilizer. This respect is enhanced by his generosity with the poor of the village and his devotion to Buddhism.

For most village projects there is a general meeting of all household heads to discuss the plan, although it remains for the Village Council to make any final decisions. It also is customary for the Council to discuss it with such venerables as the Ke Hien, Tien Bai, Chanh Te, and Boi Bai. Their approval on village projects serves as a final sanction in the eyes of the ordinary villagers. The high venerables were consulted for the recent project to construct a pagoda honoring Marshal Nguyen Huynh Duc, and the Ke Hien recently expressed his approval of the proposal to construct a branch of the primary school in Ấp Nhơn Hậu.

The Ritual Role of the Cult Committee. -- Ong Thần is the title of the guardian spirit or spirits which practically every village in Viet Nam venerates. Traditionally, the emperor bestowed a guardian spirit on newly established villages as a symbol of imperial recognition, and the village constructed a đình to house the sanctuary of the guardian spirit and provide a repository for the imperial decree. The guardian spirit might be a military hero, a mandarin, one of the founders of the village, a person who died violently in the village, or any figure of some distinction, whether

it be inglorious or not. This spirit is honored in prescribed rituals held in the đình, and the spirit, in return, protects the village and brings good fortune to its residents (see Table 3).

The đình in Ấp Dinh-A is the more important đình in the village because it stands next to the village hall. During the war it had been damaged, and the đình in Ấp Nhơn Hậu had been completely destroyed. Restoration of both đình has been slow, and the Cult Committee keeps the imperial decree, naming the seven mandarins who are the guardian spirits of the Ấp Dinh-A đình, in the shrine of Marshal Duc's house because they feel the đình is too ramshackle.[1]

The Cult Committees are responsible for the upkeep of their respective đình, seeing that it is kept clean and making any necessary repairs. They organize the annual rituals in the đình; and provide funds for purchasing food to be served at the feasting that follows the rituals. While members of the Cult Committee are expected to meet the greater part of the cult costs, all adult villagers are also obliged to make some contribution, however small. In addition, one and a half hectares of communal land is classified as cult land, the income of which goes to the support of the Cult of the Guardian Spirit. The guardian of the đình, who is appointed by the Cult Committee, is allowed to rent this land for 30 gia of paddy a year.

[1]Although Marshal Duc is not officially known as one of the guardian spirits of Khanh Hậu, the villagers nevertheless view him as such. His house is a village shrine, and celebrations marking the anniversary of his death attract people from all hamlets of the village and provincial officials as well.

TABLE 3

ANNUAL RITUALS HELD IN THE DINH

Cầu An ---	In Ấp Nhơn Hậu the Cầu An ritual is held in the đình on the 15th and 16th days of the second lunar month. In the Ấp Dinh đình it is held on the 15th and 16th days of the fourth lunar month. The purpose of the ritual is to request the Guardian spirit for peace and prosperity.
Hạ Điền ---	Hạ Điền, "the descent to the fields" is the ritual dedicated to Ông Thần Nông, the God of Agriculture, and it is intended to officially open the planting season, and to request Ông Thần Nông for good crops. In both the Ấp Dinh đình and the Ấp Nhơn Hậu đình it is held on the 15th day of the 6th lunar month.
Thượng Điền ---	Thượng Điền means "ascent from the fields" and like the Hạ Điền ritual, it is intended to honor the God of Agriculture. In both đình it is held on the 15th day of the 10th lunar month.
Chập miễu or Le Lập Miễu ---	This ritual marks the end of the harvest, and it honors the God of Agriculture and the guardian spirits as well. It also is a thanksgiving ritual. It is held on the 15th day of the 12th month in both đình.

The most important of the four annual rituals held in the đình is the Cầu An, the request for peace and prosperity. This is held on the 15th and 16th days of the second lunar month in the Ấp Nhơn Hậu đình, and on the 15th and 16th days of the fourth lunar month in the Ấp Dinh-A đình. The Village Council is expected to participate in both rituals, and the Ke Hien is the leading officiant. Since the three remaining rituals are held on the same dates and at approximately the same hour in both đình, the Ấp Nhơn Hậu rituals must be performed without the presence of the Village Council and the Kế Hiền. In these instances, the Tien Bai leads the rituals, and the hamlet chiefs of Ấp Nhơn Hậu and Ấp Cầu represent the village in making the offerings.

Cầu An Ritual. -- Preparations for the 1958 Cầu An ritual at the đình in Ấp Dinh-A began several weeks in advance. The Village Council was in the process of raising funds for the new pagoda that would be dedicated to Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức. They suggested to the Cult Committee that the expenses be reduced, and a meeting was called to discuss the matter. At the meeting, a councilman suggested that they delete the Hát bội, the classical Chinese opera which normally is part of the celebration. After a brief discussion, they concluded that the opera performance was not an integral part of the ritual celebration so it could be left out. To provide some entertainment for the children they agreed to show a film after the ritual (because of complications, the film was never shown).

Another expenditure which the Village Council and the Cult Committee had to resolve was the higher price asked by Ông Thầy Pháp, the sorcerer, for his role in the ritual. He had received 400$VN in 1957, and he demanded 700$VN in 1958. The sorcerer was a farmer from the village of Tân Hiệp, ten kilometres south of Khánh Hậu, and the ritual he performed was an important part of the Cầu An, so he was invited to air his arguments for a higher fee before the Village Council and several members of the Cult Committee. The Huong Le, a farmer from Ấp Thủ Tửu who was responsible for ritual protocol, was designated to deal with the sorcerer.

Briefly, the sorcerer contended that he required three assistants for his ritual, and it was costly to transport them and his equipment from Tân Hiệp to Khánh Hậu. In addition, he had to purchase material for such things as the spirits' boat, and costs had increased. The Huong Lễ listened intently, and then replied that the sorcerer had performed the same ritual the previous year for 400$VN and he could do it again this year for the same price. For one thing, the Hướng Lễ pointed out, it was not necessary to have three assistants; one or two would do just as well. The discussion continued in this vein, and finally the sorcerer declared that the only way he could perform his services for 400$VN was to make the ritual briefer and simpler. The Hướng Lễ retorted that if he eliminated something essential, he would incur the wrath of the guardian spirit who might chop off his head. Nonplussed by this argument, the sorcerer left the council house without resolving

the question. Several days later, however, he returned and agreed to perform the ritual for 400$.

As the day of the Cầu An approached, preparations became more feverish. Workers descended on the đình to clean, paint, put up decorations, and bring in the accoutrement used in the ritual. Members of the Cult Committee polished the brass candle holders and incense burners, and arranged additional altars in the open section of the đình. On the fourteenth day of the fourth lunar month the sanctuary was opened, and the main altar was prepared for the ritual. In a shack behind the village hall, women of the village kindled fires of coconut shells and began the preparation of the seemingly endless array of dishes that would be served during the ritual period. Behind the shack, two farmers began the task of slaughtering several cows purchased from villagers by the Cult Committee. These particular men are considered expert at animal slaughter and they went about it with great dexterity, carefully collecting the blood which would be served at the feast.

On the afternoon of the fourteenth day, the Huong Le arrived to supervise the preparations taking place in the council house and the đình. This farmer had been trained in ritual form and content and Chinese calligraphy by a retired railroad worker who lived in Khánh Hậu for many years. The Hướng Lễ critically appraised the preparations and gave last minute instructions to the young attendants who would assist in the rituals.

In the rear of the council house, the village clerk and several members of the Cult Committee busily recorded the cash and food offerings brought in by the villagers. Adult villagers are expected to make a cash contribution according to their means. In addition to the prescribed cash contribution expected of them, members of the Cult Committee and the Village Council usually bring large trays of glutinous rice cooked in coconut milk, or large red cans of cookies.

The first ritual of the Cầu An is called Tien Hien, the act of honoring the ancestors of the village, which began at noon on the fourteenth day. In the rear of the council house stood an altar which contained a large scroll on which the names of the deceased members of the Village Council are inscribed in Chinese characters. In addition, a small altar had been set up at the entrance, and a number of tables and chairs had been placed around the room. The members of the Cult Committee and the Village Council, all dressed in the traditional black tunics and tightly wound black turbans, began arriving before noon. The high venerables were invited to sit at a table in the center of the room where they were served tea. Food offerings were placed on a long table before the main altar, and musicians, seated on a wooden bed in a corner of the room, began playing.

Four young men and two boys, dressed in colorful robes of Taoist priests, took their places beside the temporary altar, while the participants pressed in on all sides. The two boys flanked

the altar, and guided by the Huong Lễ they raised their arms and chanted the names of the first group of worshippers. Ong Kế Hiền, Ong Tiền Bái, and Ong Chánh Bái stood before the temporary altar and performed the lay, the ritual kowtowing which consists of three low bows while standing and three while kneeling.

After they had kowtowed the three venerables stepped back, and three more venerables came forward to repeat this ritual act. The priority of bowing corresponds to the relative status positions listed in Chart 2. When the High venerables had kowtowed, the Village Chief and Deputy Chief took their turns, and they were followed by the remaining members of the Cult Committee. The other three members of the Village Council --- the Finance Secretary, Police Chief, and Civil Status Secretary, were the last to kowtow.

These three councilmen represented the village in making the offerings to the ancestors. In addition to their traditional clothes, they wore satin chest bands in the national colors. While they knelt before the altar, the four young men in ceremonial robes moved forward with a dipping step reminiscent of the stylized movements of actors in the classical Chinese opera. They carried offerings of candles, sandalwood, and rolls of prayer paper. Two of the village representatives took the prayer papers and sandalwood, and holding them aloft they bowed low in a gesture of offering. Afterwards, they returned the offerings to the attendants who continued to the main altar. There they placed the offerings before the incense burner, and returned to their places near the temporary

altar. This ritual act was repeated two more times; the second offering was rice alcohol, and the third was tea. Between these offerings, the Huong Lễ unfolded a list of the ancestors' titles which he read in a high pitched chant. After the final offerings, this list was taken to the main altar and burned.

After the ritual, the participants were invited to sit at the food-ladened tables for the first of many feasts that would take place during the next two days. The high venerables were seated at the long table immediately in front of the main altar, and the other members of the Cult Committee took their places at the other tables. The members of the Village Council acted as hosts, seating people, directing the servers, and generally seeing that the guests were well supplied with food and drink.

While the Tiền Hiền ritual was in progress, Ong Thầy Pháp, the sorcerer, and his two assistants, were busily preparing for their ritual in the đình. They had set up several small altars in the rear of the open section of the đình; one dedicated to Thái Thượng Lão Quân, the patron spirit of the sorcerer, and the other to several lesser spirits vaguely described as assistants of the patron spirit. They also had constructed a colorful boat of paper and light wood, and attached it to bamboo logs. It contained flags, paper figures representing guards, and a small paper drum.

Around three o'clock in the afternoon, the members of the Cult Committee and the Council of Notables gathered for the Thanh Sac, the procession to the shrine of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức, to bring

the imperial decree back to the đình. The village guard led the procession, followed by two lines of school children dressed in blue and white uniforms. Behind them two men carried a small altar, and several men held a banner bearing the slogan "Thành Tâm Đảnh Lễ" encouraging villagers to "attend the ritual with a reverent attitude". Next came the relicary, a large, elaborately decorated, red and gold model of a pagoda. It was flanked by assistants holding brightly colored mandarin parasols. The ritual participants, in no particular order, walked behind the relicary. As the procession moved along the main road of Ấp Vinh, villagers hurried to their doorways to watch the procession.

At the shrine, the procession was greeted by Ong Từ Đình, the descendant of the Marshal who is guardian of his shrine. The ritual participants filed into the main room, a sanctuary containing several altars, and a collection of the personal possessions of Marshal Đức. The high venerables kowtowed before the main altar while the other committee members kowtowed before the two secondary altars. Ong Từ Đình then stepped forward and removed the red and silver box containing the imperial decree from the main altar, and presented it to the Finance Secretary, who, with the Police Chief and Civil Status secretary, kowtowed before the altar. The box was then placed in the relicary, and the procession regrouped to return to the đình. Along the route, flowers and offerings had been placed on the small altars in front of the houses, and the villagers stood in reverent silence as the procession passed. A

football game in a field next to the road came to an abrupt halt as the players stood facing the procession.

In the early evening, Thầy Pháp Vào Đám, the ritual of the sorcerer, began in the đình. Musicians played in a frenzied style as the sorcerer entered clad in a short robe and wearing a headpiece of red prayer paper, known as a sớ. He began swaying and spinning in a rhythmic dance before the bàn tổ, the altar dedicated to his patron spirit. Offerings had been placed on the altar, and several black beards were attached to the portrait of the patron spirit. The sorcerer's two assistants sat on mats near by, and one of them had a bandarole which he periodically held up so that the sorcerer could read an invocation to the spirit.

This was the first of two rituals performed by the sorcerer as part of the Cầu An. The function of the rituals is to summon all evil spirits in the village, particularly those associated with epidemics, to come to the đình and participate in the ritual feasting. Dâng Sớ is the second ritual later in the day. The sorcerer and his assistants entered dressed in fantastic costumes with their faces made up in the style of the Chinese theatre and wearing the false black beards that had been attached to the altar. The sorcerer stood before his altar and, removing the prayer paper from his headpiece, read an appeal to all the souls of those who had died violently and all evil spirits in the village to assemble at the đình to partake of the food offerings which had been placed on the altar of Thái Thướng Lão Quân. After this brief ritual,

the group left the đình carrying a portable altar. Outside, they were joined by several men carrying a large orange colored drum which they beat avidly. The sorcerer and his assistants waved their arms and called to the spirits in loud voices as the group started along the road to visit all the hamlets of the village.

As darkness descended, oil lamps were lit in the đình and the council house. Behind the đình, several sacrificial pigs were being scrubbed. When one of them was prepared, it was tied to a pole and carried into the open part of the đình and placed before one of the temporary altars. A villager known as Ong Tề Gia, the specialist in sacrificial slaughtering, entered, carrying his special knife, and after praying at the altar he began his task. Two men held the pig's head back while Ong Tề Gia poured rice alcohol into the animal's mouth. He then took a small sip of the alcohol himself, after which he deftly cut the pig's throat with one sweep of the knife. The blood was collected in a basin, and when the animal ceased its movements, it was carried outside to be cleaned and dressed.

The remaining pigs were slaughtered in the same fashion, and after they were cut up, various parts were distributed in a prescribed manner. One Kế Hiền received some of the chops, and the family of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức was presented with some of the tenderloin. The other high venerables also were given choice parts of the animals, and each member of the Cult Committee received a small morsel. The Vietnamese saying, "Một miếng thịt làng bằng

một sàng thịt chợ" (A morsel of meat from the đình is worth more than a basketful of meat from the market), expresses the symbolic value of these presentations. Small pieces of pork fat also were placed on the offerings of rice and cookies, and on all the altars in the đình.

Small pieces of every part of the sacrificial animal were placed in the sorcerer's spirit boat, and candles were lit inside of it. The twelve titles of the spirits being summoned to the đình were written on a large piece of paper that would serve as the sail. When the sorcerer and his assistants returned from their tour of the village, they read more prayers before their altar, and while the drums beat loudly they placed more food and alcohol offerings in the boat. The sorcerer then invited all the spirits to board the boat and partake of the feast. Four assistants lifted the boat and a small procession formed to carry it to the Rach Ong Dia, the stream that forms the southern border of Khánh Hậu. There at the edge of the stream the sorcerer recited some brief incantations and pushed the boat into the current. Spinning erratically, it drifted seaward. Villages along they way were expected to see that it continued on its way out of fear that if it should stop within the limits of their village, the spirits might disembark bringing their evil to the place.

The feasting began again in the village hall and continued until ten o'clock. Shortly after midnight participants and some spectators gathered in the đình for the principal ritual honoring

the guardian spirits of the village. Three temporary altars had been set up in the open section, and a bed had been placed before one of the altars to hold the food offerings. Candles burned on all of the altars and several pressure lamps hung from the cross-beams. Colorful satin decorations graced the main altar, and vases of flowers on the altars lent a festive air to the đình. As the music began, the participants lined up on either side of the altars. The procedure was the same as it had been for the Thien Hien ritual; the boys chanted as the groups kowtowed in the same priority. Again, the final participants to kowtow were the Finance Secretary, the Police Chief, and the Civil Status Secretary, who, with the assistance of the same four young men in Taoist robes, made the same offerings of sandalwood, prayer papers, rice alcohol, and tea. The Hương Lễ, the Chief of Protocol, read a list of the members of the Cult Committee and the Council of Notables. When the list was taken to the main altar and burned, it marked the end of the ritual. The participants retired to the village hall where a simple meal of rice soup and a few meat dishes was served.

The following morning around eight o'clock, many of the members of the Cult Committee gathered at the village hall for a breakfast of glutinous rice from the trays of offerings brought the previous day. In the rear of the room the village clerk and several assistants continued to record contributions. The practice is for the donor to retain half the rice while the other half is served at the feasts.

At eleven o'clock, the drum summoned the participants to the đình. Although only a few responded, they gathered at the main altar, and two men entered carrying a pig trussed to a pole. One of the high venerables came forward with the sacrificial knife, holding it high while he invoked the guardian spirits to witness the sacrifice. He then stepped back and ran the knife over the throat of the squalling pig without actually cutting it. The pig was taken to the rear of the đình where the Ong Tề Gia did the actual killing, after which the carcass was carried to the kitchen to be butchered.

In the early afternoon, the ritual known as Đàn Cả, honoring the spirits of soldiers, took place in the đình. The altars were lit with candles and decked with flowers, and the bed was covered with food offerings, including the cleaned and dressed carcass of the sacrificial pig. The form of this ritual was much the same as those already described, only the order of kowtowing varied somewhat. The Village Chief and Deputy Chief kowtowed toward the end, and Ong Chánh Tế, the third highest venerable of the committee knelt alone before one of the temporary altars. The Finance Secretary, Police Chief, and Civil Status Secretary made their offerings of rice alcohol and some of the sacrificial pork before one of the temporary altars, after which the assistants in their Taoist robes carried the offerings forward to the other temporary altar where Ong Chánh Tế tasted them before they were taken to the main altar. As in the other rituals, the Protocol Chief read

his list of Cult Committee members, and at the end it was burned at the main altar. In mid-afternoon the procession formed to return the imperial decree to the shrine of Marshal Đức. The same ritual as before took place at the shrine. This marked the end of the two-day Cầu An ritual.

Other Official Cult Rituals. -- The Cult Committee also is responsible for organizing the three other annual rituals associated with the đình. Hạ Điền, "the descent to the fields", is held in both the Ấp Dinh đình and the Ấp Nhớn Hậu đình on the sixteenth day of the sixth lunar month. Thượng Điền, "the ascent to the fields", is held in both đình on the sixteenth day of the tenth lunar month. Both are primarily intended to honor Thần Nông, the God of Agriculture, whose shrine is a sizable stone tablet set on a large concrete slab located directly behind the đình. The main ritual is held there, with offerings placed on the slab, and it has the same form as the Cầu An rituals. The participants also enter the đình to make a token bow of homage to the guardian spirits.

Chập Miễu, on the fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month is the last annual ritual held in the đình. This marks the end of the harvest, and it honors the village ancestors and the guardian spirits of the village. In form, it is a simpler, briefer version of the Cầu An, including the procession to Marshal Đức's shrine to obtain the imperial decree, the Tiền Hiền ritual in the village hall, and the midnight ritual in the đình.

Liên Gia: The Five-Family Groups

The five-family system was established in Khánh Hậu in 1956; At the present time there are one hundred and twenty groups in the village, and Table 4 indicates the number of groups in each hamlet. The stated aims of the five-family groups are to promote mutual.aid among the villagers, and develop a spirit of communal

T A B L E 4

Five-Family Groups in Khánh Hậu by Hamlet

Hamlet	Number of Groups
Ấp Dinh A	17
Ấp Dinh B	29
Ấp Mới	15
Ấp Thủ Tửu	19
Ấp Nhơn Hậu	23
Ấp Cầu	17

solidarity. In addition, it functions as a mechanism for disseminating news, instructions from the village, district, or provincial authorities, and organizing demonstrations and meetings. It also serves as a means of maintaining security.

Each group is given a number, and each family within the group is given a number which must be written on a small plaque

on the front of the house. Each group also selects its own leader who is responsible to the hamlet chief. Periodically the leaders of the five-family groups meet with the hamlet chief to report on their groups and receive instructions or information that is to be passed on to the families. There also are periodic meetings of all the five-family leaders in the village. All male villagers over 18 years of age are required to attend monthly communist denunciation meetings at the Ấp Dinh đình, and their attendance is checked by the five-family group leader. In the past year the numbers of the groups and families within the groups have been changed several times with the result that many villagers have incorrect numbers on their houses, and have no idea to which group they belong.

Đoàn Thể: Villagers' Associations

Associations for male villagers are traditional in northern and central Viet Nam, although nothing comparable was ever established in southern villages. In 1956, the government launched a program to establish them in South Viet Nam. As provided in the program, four đoàn thể were formed in Khánh Hậu --- one for men between the ages of 18 and 45, another for men from 45 to 60 years of age, and two đoàn thể for women of the same age groups. The đoàn thể were organized with several objectives in view: to stimulate more mutual aid, create more community solidarity, and induce more active participation in village affairs.

Theoretically the đoàn thể are voluntary, but all villagers between the ages of 18 and 60 are expected to join them. There is a central committee for the village, and a committee in each hamlet. In addition, there is a district committee and a provincial committee. Chart 3 indicates the village and hamlet organization of the young men's đoàn thể, the only one that is actually functioning in the village. This đoàn thể is active in organizing the village football team, supplying members for the voluntary village guard, and drilling the guard. It also provides physical culture instructors from Tân An to teach calisthenics, and a group of the members periodically organize cultural events such as concerts of classical Vietnamese music.

The đoàn thể of the young women functions as an auxiliary to the young men's đoàn thể, and has no programs of its own. This lack of initiative is attributed to the natural shyness of young women in the village, and the fact that they are too occupied with household responsibilities. It is true that young women of the village tend to remain at home during their leisure time, and they are less apt to form cliques and leisure time groups as the young men do. Also, associations for young women are a recent innovation in rural Viet Nam, and they have not yet become part of village life. The đoàn thể of the older men and women appear to be completely non-functional in Khánh Hậu. They are too occupied with farm and home to participate in such an association, and many already are active in village affairs.

C H A R T 3

ORGANIZATION OF YOUNG MEN'S ĐOÀN THỂ

Đoàn Trưởng - Chief of Group
(Village Police Chief)

2 Phó Đoàn Trưởng - Deputy Chiefs

2 Thơ Ký - Secretaries

Tuyên Nghiên Huấn	-	Commissioner of Propaganda and training
Ủy Viên Xã Hội	-	Commissioner of Social Welfare
Ủy Viên Khánh Tiết	-	Commissioner for Organizing Receptions
Ủy Viên Kinh Tài	-	Commissioner of Finance
Ủy Viên Thể Dục	-	Commissioner of Physical Culture and Sports

Ấp Dinh-A | Ấp Dinh-B | Ấp Mới | Ấp Thủ Tửu | Ấp Nhơn Hậu | Ấp Cầu

Each hamlet has the same structural organization as the village committee, although the functions of the commissioners are more restricted.

Hợp Tác Xã: Village Agricultural Cooperative[1]

In 1956 a farm cooperative was formed in Khánh Hậu. The aim of the organization was to establish a credit system for the members so they may avoid "bán san mải", the practice of selling paddy to money lenders or rice merchants before the harvest, and also to purchase fertilizer at wholesale prices to sell to the members at lower than usual costs. Shares in the cooperative were sold for 100 $VN each, and members could purchase up to five. In the early stage of the cooperative it claimed a membership of ninety-five farmers from all hamlets.

From the beginning, the cooperative suffered from lack of funds. Of the 31,200 $VN pledged, only 18,000 $VN was collected. Membership diminished, and by 1958 the cooperative was practically non-functional. In June, 1958, at the beginning of the planting season, a meeting of the members was called at the headquarters of the National Revolutionary Movement Party headquarters to decide whether the cooperative should be continued. There had been hope of getting government aid, but attempts to do so were unsuccessful. At this meeting there was a proposal that the Khánh Hậu cooperative become affiliated with the highly successful cooperative in the nearby village of Mỹ An Phú. For a variety of reasons this plan was never realized, and no decision was reached concerning the future of the cooperative. Some fertilizer was purchased and sold

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[1] See section on Credit and Savings in a Rural Community for details on the credit situation in Khanh Hậu, and the economic functions of these associations.

to the members during the planting season, but no more meetings were held. With the formation of the government-sponsored program for Farmers' Associations early in 1959, the cooperative in Khánh Hậu was quietly dissolved[1].

Hiệp Hội Nông Dân: Farmers' Association

In December, a presidential decree outlined the program for forming Hiệp Hội Nông Dân, farmers' associations in all villages of South Viet Nam. The program was announced in Khánh Hậu, and in April, 1959, a representative of the district Information Service visited the village to explain the aims and organization of the program to a gathering of the villagers. The primary aim of the association would be to increase agricultural productivity by improving farming techniques with modern implements, better seeds and fertilizers. It also would provide for agricultural crdit. In addition, the association would organize political instruction classes.

The Farmer's Association in Khánh Hậu is currently being organized. In June, 1959, elections were held to select the hamlet committees, each of which consists of two members. After an uncontested election of the Election Board, residents of each hamlet voted on the candidates, and in each case two candidates received all of the votes. According to informants they had previously been selected and approved by the members in each hamlet, and the election was merely a formality.

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[1]For additional information on the failure of the Farmers' Cooperative, see the companion study on Economic Activities.

Chapter IV

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Historical works on Viet Nam describe the traditional Vietnamese village society as having four social classes: sĩ, the intellectuals; nông, the farmers; công, the artisans; and thương, the merchants. More recent investigators contend that in villages of northern and central Viet Nam, such a classification still existed before the war, and continued to have an effect on one's choice of a metier. Because of the relative isolation of southern Viet Nam from the more traditional areas of the north and center, and the strong influence of the French, the intellectual-farmer-artisan-merchant classification never became well established in village society. In Khánh Hậu there is little to indicate that such a categorical division of the society ever existed.

Older villagers in Khánh Hậu are apt to use the term "intellectual" when referring to those who are able to read and write Chinese characters, and are versed in the ritual forms associated with the various cults and funeral practices. At the present time there are only two or three villagers who can claim this esoteric knowledge, and in the past the number apparently was never very large. The term sĩ also could be used in reference to those who are literate in Vietnamese, but with the expansion of public education during the past twenty years the number of literate villagers has steadily increased so they could scarcely

be considered an intellectual elite. In any event, neither literacy in Chinese characters nor in Vietnamese appears to have ever set any villagers apart as a special social group; they were farmers like most of the villagers.

There are relatively few artisans in Khánh Hậu, and some of them also are engaged in agricultural activities. The phường, guild-like organizations of artisans found in northern and central Viet Nam, never existed in the south. Merchants in Khánh Hậu include rice merchants, shopkeepers, and those engaged in petty commerce. The rice merchants all are farmers engaged in entrepreneurial activities, while vendors usually are the wives of poor farmers and laborers. Shopkeepers are few in number, and some are the wives of farmers.

The society of Khánh Hậu can be described in terms of its social stratification, but means of livelihood would be only one of multiple factors in determining one's social position. Although the overwhelming majority of the population is engaged in agricultural activities; whether a man is a landowner, tenant or laborer has much to do with his relative status in the community. In general, social classes in Khánh Hậu are based on a number of observable characteristics, all of which are interrelated, and which reflect a great deal about some of the basic cultural values of this peasant society.

The social pressures of Khánh Hậu demand that a villager marry, have children (preferably sons), and provide well for them. Bachelors and spinsters

are marginal, childless couples are viewed with pity, and the poor providers are scorned as bad parents. These are basic requirements to be a well integrated member of the village society. In addition, villagers fall into social classes on the basis of economic level of income, status as landowner, tenant, laborer, shopkeeper, or artisan, and style of life. Drawing class lines in a small society such as Khánh Hậu is difficult, albeit justifiable. In more differentiated societies such as are found in Saigon, or even Tan An, class lines are more distinct and there are fewer social traits which characterize a way of life that cuts across class lines than in village society. Nonetheless, the villager is placed in a social category based on his ascribed or acquired characteristics. His occupational status and the amount of land he owns or rents reflect a great deal about his relative income level. His material possessions are weighed as prestige items; his participation in village affairs is evaluated; his educational background is considered to some extent. It is a value system in which conspicuous consumption plays an important role; one gains a reputation for affluence by prescribed means of displaying material wealth.

Three classes can be distinguished in Khánh Hậu on the economic basis of level of income, reflected in occupational status and the amount of land the farmers rent or own, and style of life --- an upper class, a middle class, and a lower class. Within each class there naturally is a range of variation, but those within each class do share a sufficient number of common characteristics

to warrant their being grouped together. There are, of course, those marginal villagers who are difficult to place in any class, but these are very few in number.

The Upper Class

In Khánh Hậu, an upper class can be identified among farmers who own more than four hectares of paddy land and those who rent more than five hectares. They are considered agriculturists, although some have invested in rice merchandising, rice milling, and other enterprises, and they are the most affluent residents of the village. Their level of income enables them to maintain a style of life which identifies them as the gentry, the upper class. Another characteristic of this group is that they have reached the stage where they are no longer directly engaged in agricultural activities. They either lease or sublease some of their land, and hire workers to cultivate the remainder. Their land thus tends to become an investment rather than a direct source of occupation, and most of them realize an economic surplus which they may invest in other enterprises, or loan with interest.

The family of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức is considered something of an aristocracy in Khánh Hậu. The direct line male descendants have retained the family land left by Marshal Đức, and they have the added prestige of being the keepers of the hero's tomb and shrine. The existence of family land on which the members may live rent free, and the prestige of being associated with the

family of Marshal Đức, has attracted many of the descendants related through the female line, as well as some husbands of female descendants. With the exception of several of these indirect descendants who are wealthy and have the style of life associated with the upper class, only the direct line males have ascribed upper class status by virtue of their ancestry.

Those in the high status group within the upper class form the social and political elite of Khánh Hậu, and they share a number of common characteristics. All of them are wealthy landowners; they either hold high titles in the Cult Committees and were in the Village Council or they are serving in the Village Council at the present time. They are married, all have relatively large families, and they provide well for them. Some have two, a few have three wives, and in cases of plural marriage, they maintain several households. They are the group most active in village affairs.

With few exceptions, upper class villagers never work in the fields. They oversee the important tasks such as sowing, transplanting, irrigating, and harvesting, and they are sure to be present when the paddy is being measured. As their land holdings increase, and they are able to lease or sublease larger portions, villagers of this class tend to become further removed from agricultural activities. Some invest in rice mills, a good sound investment in the minds of most villagers; several engage in rice merchandising, even in towns as far away as Mỹ An, in the Plaine des Joncs; one invested in a new gas station in Tân An; another

runs a sizeable general goods store in neighboring Tân Hưởng; and some lend money. Only a few are willing to expend income on higher education for their children. Beyond primary school education, a "practical" education such as carpentry for boys and sewing for girls is considered more efficacious than an academic education.

Practically all upper class villagers live in houses of the wood-tile or masonry-tile types. From the practical point of view, these house types are considered good investments in that they do not require the periodic replacements and repairs so characteristic of thatched houses. Furthermore, for the villager who can afford it, it is very important to have a house that will endure many years --- long enough to be an ancestral house. For the Vietnamese, the house is more than a home; it also is the sanctuary for the altar of the ancestors, the place where the cult rituals take place. The solidly constructed house, therefore, represents a material guarantee that the cult will continue for many years. The house and the land are the essence of the heritage, and it is a primary value among the villagers to have these things to pass on to the succeeding generations.

The more recently constructed masonry houses of the upper class invaribly have two new features: a water tank which guarantees a year-round supply of fresh water, and a brick stove in which rice husks can be used as fuel. Furnishings of upper class houses vary. In the older, traditional-style houses, furnishings are apt to be worn, although they are of good wood and workmanship. In all houses

of the village it is de rigueur to have a rectangular table with benches or chairs before the place of honor containing the altar of the ancestors, where guests are received and served tea. In upper class houses this furniture is of carved wood and it also may be inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Inlaid mother-of-pearl also is usually found in the cabinet on which the ancestral altar is arranged, and in the tray holding the brass containers of areca nut, betel leaf, and lime which are served to female guests. There usually are additional tables and chairs around the room, and one round general purpose table will more than likely have a marble top.

In the more recently constructed houses of masonry, the furniture usually is of light-colored, highly polished wood, and the style of the furniture tends to be more modern. In both the old and new houses of the upper class, there are traditional Vietnamese beds composed of great planks of dark polished hardwood. The wealthy villagers purchase the costliest, best quality hardwood for their beds for they expect them to remain in the family for many generations.

Most upper class families have a pendulum clock, perhaps two, and a few have battery-operated radios. A mirror or two may hang from the walls or grace the front of the more expensive clothes cabinets. Framed colored prints usually decorate the walls of the main room, and there is likely to be a collection of photographs of the immediate family and other assorted kin. Ancestral altars

of the upper class tend to dominate the main room of the house with their size and elaborateness. The cabinets on which they stand, as pointed out previously, usually are of fine wood and design, and the altar accoutrement is of the good quality. The incense burners usually are elegantly designed, highly polished brass, and the candle sticks are of brass or turned hardwood. The wooden offering stand is apt to be inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and the china plate set upon it will probably contain daily offerings of fruit. There also are likely to be fresh flowers in the large blue and white vase standing to one side of the incense burner.

In upper class houses, guests can expect to be served tea from a good china pot, placed in a metal cosy lined with padding. Many wealthier villagers pride themselves on having western-style tea cups and saucers of French manufacture. Their houses are illuminated by sizable pressure lamps which burn a white gas and throw a glaring, flourescent type of light. The only motor scooters, motorcycles, and motor bicycles in the village are owned by upper class villagers. A number of upper class villagers still rely on bicycles for transportation because motor vehicles are considered expensive and difficult to maintain.

Men of this class, with few exceptions, can be distinguished by their style of dress and general appearance. Older men tend to retain the traditional Vietnamese peasant practice of having long hair tied in small bun in the rear, and they continue to grow wispy goatees. Only rarely are any of the upper class men seen wearing

the black cloth so typical of peasant garb. For the most part, they wear loose-fitting trousers and long-sleeved, collarless shirts of white cotton, or, with those who wish to be more elegant, white satin. They also wear wooden clogs most of the time. Those in official positions, such as members of the Village Council, usually wear western style white shirts and light trousers, and, perhaps, western style shoes during their duty hours. This garb indicates that they are men of official standing in the village, and on the occasions when the Province Chief or other higher officials visit the village this group is expected to appear in western style suits and white shirts and ties. When they are relaxing around the house or taking their leisure with friends, however, they prefer the more comfortable loose-fitting, white cotton garb and wooden clogs.

All men of this class own at least one traditional black tunic of silk, calico, satin, or gauze cotton, and a black wrap-around cloth that is wound into a tight-fitting turban. The material varies in quality, and wealthier villagers have their material purchased in Saigon in order to have something finer and more exclusive.

Women of this class are less distinguished by their dress than are the men. Around the house they wear a simple cotton blouse and black pantaloons of cotton or calico. To go to a nearby shop or to visit someone in the hamlet, they wear a conical hat or a checked cotton cloth wrapped around or draped over the head to protect them from the sun. They also have a black, or perhaps a

white, tunic for dress occasions. Young women usually prefer a pastel colored material of light texture. Style is not a determinant of one's social position since the Vietnamese women's costume varies little or not at all from year to year. In Saigon there may be periodic variations such as the height of the collars, but these changes in style never reach Khánh Hậu. Women of the upper class, however, are apt to have their tunics made of better material than the other women of the village. Single girls display more jewelry than do the married women. They usually have a gold necklace, and, perhaps, several gold bracelets which they invariably wear to wedding feasts where there are apt to be young single men to appreciate them.

In addition to being part of the social elite of the village, some members of the upper class also constitute the political elite. There are several cliques of upper class villagers, and several of them share the political limelight at the present time. The Village Council is exclusively an upper class group, and the Cult Committees, which function as ranked social hierarchies with political overtones, are dominated by upper class villagers. Members of the upper class have reached the economic level where they can spend a considerable amount of time participating in village affairs, and they also can afford the cost of this participation. Those ranked high in the Cult Committees are required to make sizable cash contributions to support the rituals associated with the Cult of the Guardian Spirit, and they also are expected to make cash

donations for such things as the primary school award presentation at the end of the school year, and the current project to construct a pagoda in the village to honor Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức.

Only upper class villagers can afford the time and money to accept positions in the Village Council. The duties associated with these positions require a good deal of the official's time, so he must be sufficiently wealthy to hire laborers to work his fields. He also must have an outside income to tolerate the periodic outlays of his own money required in any official position, and to support himself and his family during the recurring periods when there are insufficient funds to pay village officials.

For the most part, it is the upper class that supports the rituals associated with the village cults. In addition to making larger cash contributions, they also make offerings of food, and since they occupy the high echelon positions in the Cult Committees, they have more responsibility in organizing the rituals and the feasting that is part of them. The ritual kowtowing functions as a public demonstration of the accepted ranking of the structure of the village, and the social elite, with their high titles in the Cult Committees, have high priority in the kowtowing order. Another token recognition of the greater prestige of those with high titles, and the direct descendants of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức, is in presenting them with the choice parts of the sacrificial animal.

The family celebrations and rituals of the upper class tend to be elaborate, even sumptuous. Wedding celebrations are large,

with many guests including kin and friends from distant places, and the feasting continues for days. It is not unusual that several head of cattle and a number of pigs be slaughtered to provide meat for the feast, and jars of rice alcohol are served to the guests along with cases of beer and soft drinks. On the anniversaries of their ancestors' deaths, they invite many guests to participate in the ritual and feasting: for example, the wealthiest man in Khánh Hậu invites some one hundred guests to participate in the feasts which he gives six times a year.

Funeral rituals and the feasting associated with them also tend to be lavish. They usually continue for several days in order that kin from distant villages may attend. The wealthy are the only ones in the village who hire the professional funeral service to provide trappings, musicians, and coffin bearers. They also hire the Buddhist monks or nuns to attend the funeral and pray before the bier. For the upper class villager, it is paramount to have a plot for family tombs which are invariably constructed of stone or concrete. It also is desirable to have the site of the tomb and its position determined by a geomancer. Among the wealthy it is customary to purchase coffins for elderly members of the family, and place them in the main room of the house. It also is desirable to have one's tomb constructed well in advance of death.

Upper class villagers do not have the problem of under-employment found among lower class farmers and laborers. Their larger land holdings keep them occupied most of the year, and in

the slack season many of them engage in entrepreneurial activities. Those who hold public office divide their days between the village hall and overseeing the operation of their farms. This does not mean, however, that they are busy working in the village hall throughout the day. They still spend some time at home or visiting friends, and the village hall being the gathering place it is, much of the time is spent chatting with people who come in, reading newspapers, and drinking tea.

Upper class villagers tend to be more physically mobile. They have more time and means to visit other parts of the region, usually to attend weddings, funerals, and other family celebrations and they also are more apt to visit Tân An, My Tho, or Saigon for pleasure. One villager has a motor scooter with which he makes weekly visits to Saigon to attend the cinema and partake of other pleasures available in the capital. Some have traveled to Banmethuot on business, and to Cap St. Jacques or Dalat for pleasure.

Villagers of the upper class are apt to spend a great deal of time at public and private rituals and feasts. Those in the Cult Committees and the Village Council are expected to attend all village ritual celebrations, the Buddhist rituals, and they are invited to a great many weddings, funerals, and rituals marking the anniversaries of ancestors' deaths. The women also attend many of these functions, although their household responsibilities require their presence in the home most of the time. Women usually visit close neighbors during the day, and their daily trips to the local

shops afford the opportunity to exchange news and gossip with women from other parts of the hamlet.

In the late afternoon and early evening, most villagers, regardless of class, have the same type of leisure time activities. During the dry season the young men gather to play soccer in a cleared rice field while volley ball is the favorite rainy season sport. Groups of young men also gather in a house to play their musical instruments and sing. Proficiency in playing such instruments as the long, semi-tubular đàn tranh, with its sixteen chords, the round, banjo-shaped đờn kìm with its two chords, or the stringed đờn cò which is played with a bow, is highly regarded by the villagers. A few who can afford it have western-style guitars.

The older men gather in the shops or in the house of a neighbor where they sit in the orange-amber light of the oil lamps drinking tea or rice alcohol, and discuss crops, local news and village gossip. Writing poetry and reciting is a favorite pastime among men, and the good poet enjoys high prestige in the village. At weddings, funerals and other occasions, the poet is called upon to compose a verse commemorating the event. A few of the older men are able to recite long passages of epic Vietnamese poetry, and this also is considered an admirable achievement.

By and large, there is little in the way of organized amusements in Khánh Hậu. Occasionally the Information Service shows a film, and there are periodic visits by traveling theatre groups

who perform hát bội, classical Chinese plays (such as at the annual Cầu An ritual at the đình), or cải lương, more modern Vietnamese plays. Recently a group of the young men organized a concert of classical music which was well attended. All of these entertainments, however, are presented in the đình at Ấp Dinh, making it difficult for those in the more distant hamlets to attend.

In any event, such organized entertainment is very infrequent, and the villagers are obliged to provide their own amusements in the darkened village. One villager summed up the situation with the statement: "When the sun goes down there is nothing to do but go to bed and amuse ourselves with our wives; that's why we have so many children."

The Middle Class

All members of the middle class in Khánh Hậu are engaged in agricultural activities. There are a few artisan-farmers, but farming remains their predominant activity. The economic level of the middle class tends to include those farmers who own between two and four hectares, or who rent between two and one-half and five hectares of paddy land. Unlike farmers of the upper class, middle class farmers have not reached the stage where their land-holdings can be viewed as an investment, producing a surplus which can be reinvested in some enterprise, nor are they like those farmers of the lower class who must seek laboring jobs to supplement their inadequate incomes. Farmers of the middle class thus either

own or rent a sufficient amount of land to maintain themselves and their families on a level well above subsistence, although any surplus they accumulate usually is not sufficient to invest in some enterprise. They are more likely to invest it in more land, whenever it is available. They also engage in stock breeding more than upper and lower class farmers do.

Middle class farmers almost invariably work their own fields. Those who do not own their own team and plow will rent them, and they usually hire a laborer or two to help with the task of preparing and planting the fields. The transplanting is always done by a hired team of workers, and several young laborers may be hired to operate the foot-powered water wheel if irrigation is required. Such constant tasks as repairing bundings and weeding are done by the farmer and his family. At harvest, the farmer, his sons and daughters, and several hired workers do the cutting, threshing, and transporting of paddy back to the farmstead. Farmers of the middle class make many of their smaller implements and tools, but they usually purchase such things as water wheels and winnowing machines in Tân An or Tân Hưởng.

The attitude of villagers of this class toward education is much the same as it is with the upper class; primary education is requisite, but anything beyond that should be "practical." If the son is not going to become a farmer it is preferable that he learn a trade, and it is well for a girl to learn sewing whether she does it for profit or not. Among the villagers, the couturiere's trade

has high prestige, and it has the advantage of being a trade that can be carried on at home, for girls of this class never work outside of the home. Helping with the family harvest is a familial responsibility, a labor of filial love, whereas being paid to do it would be déclassé, and would reflect negatively on the middle class family.

For the most part, villagers of the middle class live in houses of wood-thatch and wood-tile, but there are exceptions. Some live in large, well-constructed thatched houses which may have wood planking in the front, and others have relatively new masonry and tile houses. The hamlet chief of Ấp Mới, for example, is a man of relatively high social status who owns one and a half hectares and rents an equal amount, but lives in a thatched house. His attitude is that he would rather purchase more land and give his children a secondary school education, than have a fine house with elaborate furnishings. Consistent with this, he sends his children to secondary schools in Tân An and Mỹ Tho, and he sold his expensive ancestral altar cabinet, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, so that he could purchase more land. On the other hand a carpenter-farmer of this class lives in a substantially constructed house with masonry walls and tile roof. In addition to his farming and carpentry jobs in the village, he did some carpentry at the nearby brick factory and received his pay in kind, thus enabling him to construct a house which normally he could not afford.

Houses of the middle class villagers tend to be well-furnished, The furniture is solid, somewhat simple in style, and new furniture is only found in some of the newly constructed houses. There usually are several great hardwood beds of the type found in most upper class houses, for the middle class villagers also place considerable value on having beds that will endure for many generations. There usually is a pendulum clock, wall decorations consisting of colored prints, calendar photos, and the usual array of family photos. Villagers of the middle class rarely own radios. As in the upper class houses, the guest is always invited to sit at a table before the altar of the ancestors where he is served the inevitable cup of tea. Middle class villagers pride themselves on having good tea sets with attractive tea cosys, although the western style china occasionally displayed by upper class villagers is never encountered. The ancestral altars are arranged on carved wood cabinets, and altar accoutrement is likely to be of modest quality, and only rarely elaborate.

Many villagers of the middle class have bicycles, and a few have motor bicycles. Nevertheless, they tend to be much less physically mobile than the upper class due to the constant demands of home and farm. Also, they cannot afford to travel frequently or extensively. Agricultural needs necessitates periodic trips to Tân An or Mỹ Tho, and they do travel to neighboring villages for weddings, funerals, and celebrations of ancestors' deaths, but they rarely travel to distant towns or to Saigon.

Villagers of the middle class are less distinctive in their dress than those of the upper class. While working in the fields they wear the black cotton shorts and shirts, and conical hat so typical of the Vietnamese peasant, making them undistinguishable from the poor farmers and laborers. They also go barefooted in the fields and around the farmstead. Black cotton is usually worn during informal leisure time spent around the house or visiting close neighbors, but for anything more formal such as going to the village hall, attending meetings, or visiting Tan An or My Tho, they usually wear the loose-fitting white cotton garb and wooden clogs frequently worn by upper class men. Young men of this class are likely to have one pair of western trousers and shirt, and they may even possess a pair of western shoes. Like the men of the upper class, middle class men are expected to own the traditional tunic and turban, although they are less likely to be of the elegant fabrics typical of the more affluent villagers.

Women of the middle class do not differ a great deal in their dress from women of the upper class. They wear the same simple black pantaloons and blouse around the house and within the hamlet, and they have a black or white tunic to wear on dress occasions such as attending weddings, funerals, or village fetes. As in the upper class, younger women of this class display a certain penchant for brighter colored gowns of lighter material. They usually have some jewelry which they display at the weddings they attend.

Men of the Middle class usually participate in village affairs as much as possible, and many hold titles in the Council of Notables. Among This group, however, there are many who must relinquish their titles because the responsibilities of farm and home are too demanding. The middle class villager therefore tends to hold titles which are more honorific --- those with few real responsibilities associated with them. With the upper class dominating the Cult Committees and the Village Council, the middle class tends to be peripheral to the socio-political elite of the village. Occasionally one or two members of the middle class may penetrate this in-group, but by and large they remain outside, devoting most of their time to agricultural activities.

The family rituals and feasts associated with them tend to be less elaborate among the middle class than among the upper class. At funerals and anniversaries of ancestors' deaths they invite fewer guests, and the fare tends to be relatively modest. They usually do not observe all of the rituals associated with the traditional funeral practices, as do upper class villagers. This minimum observance extends to the ancestral anniversaries which do not last longer than one day. The number of guests invited tends to vary with the yearly fortunes of the middle class villager; for example, if his harvest is good he may invite twenty-five kin and neighbors, and if it is bad he will only invite fifteen.

Middle class weddings, however, usually are lavish. This is an event for which money is set aside, and it is an occasion when

the maximum number of guests are invited and feted with seeming abandon. It is a matter of prestige for the family to have the house properly decorated, to rent the wedding robes, and to serve a feast resplendent with many meat dishes, and unlimited quantities of alcoholic beverages.

In general, middle class villagers have less leisure time than those of the upper class. As pointed out previously, they are less likely to travel outside the village for pleasure or to visit kin. What leisure time they do have is spent in much the same way as the upper class, and upper and middle class villagers are apt to spend much leisure time together in the late afternoon and evening.

The Lower Class

The lower class, which includes the bulk of the population of Khánh Hậu, is composed of lower strata income groups, and it consequently encompasses a wider range of occupations than do either the upper or middle classes. All those classified as laborers are in this class, as are those who are unemployed. It also would include such people as widows living on money from their children, and that odd scattering of women who eke out a subsistence by engaging in small commerce selling food near the school and along the main road of Ấp Đình, or selling sticks of sugar cane, coconuts, and other fruits and vegetables purchased in Tân Hưởng or Tân An. The barbers, tailors, and most of the shopkeepers fall into this class. Finally, it would include those tenant farmers who rent

less than two and one-half hectares, and those farmers who own less than two hectares.

Within this class there is, of course, some difference between those of the lowest stratum who live on a subsistence level, and those at the highest who share some characteristics with the middle class. Many laborers usually have one or two farmers for whom they work, and their employment tends to be seasonal: from the time the rains begin and work in the fields commences, to the end of the harvest. Even during this period, they do not necessarily work every day. Some laborers must continually seek jobs either in the village or in Tân An, and a few work at the brick factory on the highway near the village. Among the laborers are women, usually widows or abandoned women who work in the transplanting and harvesting teams, and with such infrequent paid employment they are forced to weave and/or engage in petty commerce, selling such things as rice cakes, fruits, and vegetables.

Most of the farmers of the lower class do not cultivate a sufficient amount of land to maintain themselves and their families throughout the year. They are underemployed, so they seek dry-season employment, usually as laborers in the village or in Tân An. Some find jobs with middle and upper class farmers in the village, and the school of Fundamental Education is currently a source of many laboring jobs. One common characteristic of lower class families is that all members are expected to make some direct contribution to the substance of the group. The men and boys farm

and/or labor, the women weave, the girls work in transplanting and harvesting teams, or perhaps as domestics for wealthy villagers, and the small sons go trap fishing, gather firewood or guard buffalo, and the small daughters often glean fields following the harvest.

Because of this expectation to contribute to the support of the family, it is unlikely that a child of the lower class will be able to complete his primary education. It is considered important, however, that a child learn to read and write, so a family strives to keep their children in school for several years. Lower class villagers share the upper and middle class value for "practical" education, although there is little opportunity in Khánh Hậu for training in crafts and trades. Becoming a carpenter's apprentice is one possibility, but for a young man or woman to learn tailoring would require their exemption from familial responsibilities, and the cost of purchasing a machine with which to practice their metier is prohibitive for most villagers of the lower class.

Lower class villagers live in thatched houses for the most part. A few live in houses of the wood-thatched or wood-tile types, but most of these are impoverished descendants of families that had once reached the point of affluence where they could afford to construct houses like these. The poorest members of this class almost invariably live in roughly constructed thatched houses that provide little more than shelter from the elements, while those of the higher economic levels occupy the larger, better constructed thatched houses which require the services of specialists in their

construction. Most houses of this type tend to be rather cheerless, without basic comforts, and attempting to keep them clean involves a constant struggle with nature. The house fronts usually are only partially closed, and during the dry season the dust blows in freely. In the rainy season the lashing winds send rain through the countless openings, and once the pounded dirt floor becomes wet, it is likely to remain so for a long period. Consequently, although this type of house is cool, it is a damp coolness.

The furnishings in thatched houses tend to be rudimentary; a table or two, some chairs, a cabinet for storing clothes, and beds of various types, including plank beds of ordinary wood and collapsible canvas beds. New furniture in a thatched house is a rare sight, and it soon takes on a weather-beaten look due to the intrusion of the elements. Ancestral altars of lower class villagers range from simple tables with basic, inexpensive accoutrements to altars arranged on cabinets similar to those of the middle class villagers. Decorations of any description tend to be very limited in thatched houses; colored photos cut from magazines are very popular, and those who can afford it have the inevitable photos of kinfolk and friends. Most thatched houses are illuminated by small oil lamps.

The hospitality pattern already described for the upper and middle class extends to the lower class. The visitor in a thatched house is seated at a table in front of the ancestral altar where he is served tea and, perhaps, some dry cookies. The tea cosy more

than likely is a hollowed out coconut shell, and tea is served in small glasses rather than china cups.

Lower class villagers are considerably less physically mobile than those of the upper and middle classes. Since their need for market goods is not great, and the market in nearby Tân Hưởng has most of the staple items they require, villagers of this class make infrequent trips to the market in Tân An, and most of them cannot afford the amusements available in the town. Only a few ever travel to Saigon. Lower class villagers are more apt to leave the village to attend family celebrations than for any other reason. Even so, they are restricted to villages that are not too distant, for the cost of a relatively long trip would be more than most could afford.

Many farmers of this class make their own threshing sledges, harrows and small tools used in rice cultivation and gardening. Few own plows and teams so they must rent them when the planting season sets in. Many raise chickens, some have pigs and although duck breeding is considered a practical and profitable activity, it is not widespread. Their personal possessions tend to be few and simple. Women's wardrobes consist of several black or white cotton blouses and black cotton pantaloons for daily wear, and they usually possess one tunic of black or white cotton or calico for dress occasions. A few of the younger women may have tunics in pastel shades of pink or blue. Few women of this class have any jewelry. The daily costume of the men is black cotton shorts, and

a long-sleeved, collarless shirt of the same color and material. They wear the loose-fitting white cotton garb already described for the upper and middle class for attending meetings or traveling out of the village. For rituals at the dinh, at the pagoda, or at home on the occasion of weddings, marriages, or anniversary of ancestors' deaths, the black tunic and turban is proper attire. Many men of this class cannot afford this costume however, so they borrow them whenever the need arises. People of this class go barefooted most of the time to conserve their one pair of wooden clogs.

By and large, lower class villagers participate very little in village affairs. Some men may receive one of the honorific titles in the lower echelons of the Cult Committee, which involves little more than attending the four annual rituals at the đình, and making the minimum contribution of money. Several hamlet chiefs are members of the lower class, but they are chosen for their good reputation in the community, and one of these is from a family which previously had enjoyed considerably more wealth. The extent of participation in village affairs for most members of the lower class is attendance at compulsory meetings such as the communist denunciation meetings and general meetings to decide the course of village projects. They also may attend the rituals in the đình, particularly on the second day when there is a performance of the Hát bội, the classical Chinese opera which is a peripheral part of the major ritual celebration. Younger men of this class serve on

the Dân-Vệ self-defense guards, for which they receive a monthly salary and quarters in the guard stockade. Like young men of the middle class, they may play on the village soccer team.

Family rituals and feasts tend to be rather modest among the lower class villagers. The annual celebrations associated with the anniversaries of ancestors' deaths usually are simple, and as the yearly fortune of the family varies, so does the number of guests. Generally around ten close kin and neighbors participate in the ritual and the subsequent meal. Among the poor this meal is little more than what is served in the main daily meal, and there is not likely to be any rice alcohol served. Among those of the higher economic levels, the meal occasionally may include some de-luxe foods such as pork or chicken, and rice alcohol and beer may be served. Weddings and funerals tend to be more elaborate since they occur more infrequently, and a considerable part of the cost is covered by the cash gifts of the guests.

Among lower class villagers, two types of leisure time can be distinguished; involuntary leisure time due to underemployment, and voluntary leisure time when an individual seeks to relax and amuse himself following a period of work. Involuntary leisure time may occur at any time during the year when there is an insufficient demand for labor, or when their farms demand only a small part of their time. For both laborer and farmer there is a definite slack season between the harvest and the preparations for planting. They also find themselves at occupational loose ends at intermittent,

less prolonged periods during the remainder of the year. During the daytime, the small food and tea shops and the barber shops are favorite places to meet and exchange news and gossip. They also spend a good deal of time about the house or visiting friends. Following a day of labor in the fields, lower class farmers usually remain home or visit with neighbors. It is typical for five or six men to gather at the house of a neighbor where they sit drinking tea, occasionally rice alcohol, and talk while they smoke their strong black tobacco.

Social Mobility

The social classes into which the society of Khánh Hậu can be divided do not constitute rigid, caste-like social groupings. Rather, they are flexible in the sense that one class fuses into another and collectively they form one vertical social structure. There are many social institutions and patterns of social behavior that cut across class lines. It is possible for an individual to move from one class into another by acquiring those characteristics previously outlined as the criteria of social class. It might be a case of upward mobility where the individual moves from the lower into the middle or the middle into the upper class. On the other hand it may be a case of downward mobility where the individual moves from the upper into the middle or the middle into the lower class.

Social class characteristics may be either acquired or ascribed. One outstanding example of the former is the family of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức. As pointed out previously, the direct male descendants fall into the category of villagers who have ascribed upper class status by virtue of birth. They constitute an entrenched social aristocracy in which not all members have the affluence associated with the social elite of the upper class, but who, nevertheless, are considered among the gentry of the village. Those born into upper class families may be considered to have ascribed upper class status, but it is a question whether they will retain it or not. There are numerous cases of villagers who have gained higher social status by acquiring those characteristics identified with a higher class, such as purchasing land, constructing a finer house, and taking a more active part in village affairs. On the other hand, there also are examples of villagers who either in their own lifetime, or in several generations, have become impoverished, thereby losing their upper or middle class style of life, and ultimately finding themselves relegated to the lower class.

Upward Mobility. -- In analyzing examples of families in Khánh Hậu that either are undergoing or have undergone upward social mobility, a definite pattern emerges. Ownership of land is a primary value among the people of Khánh Hậu, and it is a fundamental requirement in the process of upward social mobility. An individual may rent a considerable amount of land, perhaps a sufficient amount

to permit a style of life associated with the upper class, but it still does not have the prestige value of owning land. The big tenant farmer does not have land that "belongs to the house," and economically as well as socially this puts him in a precarious position since there is no guarantee that he will be allowed to continue renting the land, or that he can pass it on to his sons. Ownership of land, on the other hand, represents security, and one gains additional prestige with the continued acquisition of land.

After a man has accumulated sufficient land to pass on to his children, he begins to think about constructing a substantial house. Here the motivation is both economic and religious. From the practical point of view, a well-constructed house of wood or masonry and tile should withstand the ravages of rain, wind, and sun, thus excluding the need for periodic repairs. In addition to its function as a residence, the house also has a semi-sanctuary status in that it will house the altars of the ancestors, and it is the place where rituals associated with the cult will be held. The desire for immortality reflected in the practice of the Cult of the Ancestors is very strong among the villagers, and it is reassuring to know that the means for carrying out the cult have been provided by the time one dies. It is extremely important that a man have sons to carry on the cult, land to provide economic support for the cult, and a substantial house where succeeding generations can maintain the ancestral altars and practice the cult rituals. The house also becomes a prestige symbol reflecting the affluence of

the owner, his character as a groups provider, and his ability as a farmer.

As the villager's financial state improves, he is free to devote more time to village activities, another essential characteristic in the process of upward mobility. Once a man has established himself as a respected member of the community and a man of means, it is likely that he will be asked to accept a title in the Cult Committee. He also may be nominated to the Village Council, although it has become more difficult to enter the Council since it has been reduced in size. Once in the Cult Committee and the Village Council, the villager has more of an opportunity to participate in village affairs. He not only attends the rituals in the đình, but he may assist in organizing them, and he is expected to make the prescribed offerings of cash and, perhaps, food. He also is expected to take active part in organizing such village projects as new canals, or an agricultural cooperative. At the present time, a villager also is expected to join the one political party in the village, and participate in the anti-communist meetings and demonstrations.

Literacy is a secondary requisite in the process of upward mobility. Having a primary school certificate is not necessary for upper class status, although it does carry a good deal of prestige. The education of one's children is important, however, for the educational system has expanded considerably in recent years, and sending one's children to school is a sign of being a good parent, an attribute highly valued in the village.

Once a man has reached the upper class in terms of his economic state and style of life, he may continue his upward striving to reach the highest echelon, that of the social elite. The only means to achieve this is by mobility within the Village Council and the Cult Committee. This process was pointed out previously; in essence, he must be appointed to the Village Council, holding several of the offices before being named Village Chief. After this period as Village Chief, he passes into the category of high venerables in the Cult Committee, where age and wealth become primary factors in upward mobility. If he should outlive the other high venerables, he very likely will succeed to the title of Ong Kế Hiền, the highest venerable in the village.

It is rare that a man moves from the lower class to the upper class and attains a place among the village venerables in his lifetime. The pattern of upward mobility in Khánh Hậu is for a family to rise over several generations. A man works to accumulate the means for purchasing some land to pass on to his sons and they are expected to build on this inheritance by securing more land. By this process a family may rise from the lower class to the middle class in two generations, and with good fortune, to the upper class in three generations. There are a few cases of families moving from the lower to the upper class in two generations.

Most of the present venerables and members of the Village Council inherited considerable land from their fathers who also were men of relatively high standing in the village. The present

Village Chief's father had been Village Chief; the Deputy Chief's father is Tiên Bái, the second highest venerable in the village; the Finance Secretary's father is Kế Hiền, the highest venerable; the Civil Status Secretary is a direct descendant of Marshal Duc and his father had been a high venerable; and the Police Chief's father is Tiên Bái in the Ấp Nhớn Hậu Cult Committee. In most of these cases, it is not so much a question of upward mobility as retaining upper class status. Rather it is their fathers who were upwardly mobile from middle class to upper class status. While all of this group are farmers by occupation, several acquired their wealth as agents for absentee landlords, and several others are rice merchants.

Laborers and farmers with small holdings have little opportunity for upward mobility. They barely subsist, and one poor harvest could plunge them hopelessly into debt. Furthermore there is little available land for purchase in Khánh Hậu, and current land prices are quite high. The land reform program is the first real opportunity most have had to gain title to land, but this only reaches a small segment of this group. Many villagers look to the National Lottery as a means to sudden wealth. This hope has been bolstered by having one poor farmer in Ấp Thủ Tựu win one million piastres several years ago. He purchased land, bought a masonry and tile house in Ấp Dinh, sent one son to receive a higher education in Saigon, and donated part of the fortune to the village for school and road construction.

For women of the village, the only means of upward mobility is through marriage. All women are expected to marry, and while they subsequently may engage in petty commerce or have a small couturiere's shop in the front of the house, their class positions are determined by their husbands. There is a definite tendency to marry within the same class, but there are cases of young men of the upper or middle classes selecting mates from the lower class. A comely girl of poor parents with a good reputation as a housekeeper may attract the attention of a young man from a wealthy family. It is more likely for girls to marry up than to marry down.

Downward Mobility. -- In Khánh Hậu, as in any society, the fortunes of a family may fall, all too often more easily than they rise. A series of illnesses or other misfortunes may ruin a family financially, or the head of the house may be irresponsible and gamble or drink away the family fortune. A family in the unfortunate position of having to sell its land, begins to descend the social ladder. It can no longer maintain the style of life which characterize upper and middle class families in the village, and the succeeding generation more than likely will find itself in the lower class.

In Ấp Mới there is one impoverished family which continues to live in a large, traditional style wood and tile house, the bleak monument of better days. The paternal grandfather of the present head of the house amassed land in the village, and constructed the family residence. When he died his son inherited the fortune and

began squandering it on gambling. As the fortune diminished, he began selling land to obtain more cash. During the war his son joined the Viet Minh. At the present time the family is poor with only a small piece of hương hỏa, ancestral land, remaining, and they are plagued with a bad reputation because of the son's Viet Minh affiliation.

Another example of downward mobility is a family which also continues to live in a ramshackle tile and wood house. The father of the present head of the house was a tenant farmer with five hectares. His economic state and his style of life placed the family at the upper level of the middle class, and they enjoyed a great deal of prestige in the hamlet. After the death of the father, the landlord refused to rent the land to his son. Since no other land was available, the son had to request the village to cultivate some of the công điền, communal land, and he was granted the use of several hectares. His family increased in size, and for the past several years his harvests have been very poor, As a result, the family is practically destitute. This year he was unable to bid for communal land, so their only source of income is from renting their team of buffalo and plouw. While the financial state of the family has diminished, they have lost their middle class style of life, and even their house has fallen into a state of disrepair. They have retained their good reputation in the hamlet, however, and the head of the house is currently serving as hamlet chief.

Chapter V

FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD

The Kinship System

In most of the literature dealing with Vietnamese society, the family is described as patriarchal. This monolithic type of kinship system is characterized by an unqualified male predominance. The father is an authoritarian figure whose power as head of the family is absolute in the tradition of the patria potestas. His decisions are never questioned, and he has the power of life and death over members of the family. Females have a status hardly better than that of servants, and they have no claim to any inheritance.

The Vietnamese kinship system as it functions in the village of Khánh Hậu could scarcely be considered patriarchal. Rather, it is a patrilineal kinship system in which the male line receives greater emphasis, and males have a predominant role, although females are not relegated to a low status. Children take the family name of the father, and they are members of his patrilineage. Males also receive the greater part of the inheritance, but females do receive some share, even land in some cases. The wife has a voice in decisions affecting the family, and in most families she is the keeper of family funds.

Structure and Terminology. -- In addition to reflecting the patrilineal character of the kinship system, the kin terminology

also indicates the principles of age-grading siblings, males in the patrilineage (male line), and cousins, which is another characteristic of the Vietnamese family. Table 1 lists the terminology applied to the range of kin normally recognized by families in Khánh Hậu. Lexically, the syntactical principles of the isolating, monosyllabic Vietnamese language permits an exactness of designating kin by use of the various modifiers. Chart 4 represents the structure of the kinship system and it demonstrates the relative position of kin according to the terms by which they are referred. It also emphasizes the bifurcation of kin into patrilineal and non-patrilineal groups.

With the exception of the family of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức, which traces its ancestry to the fifth ascending generation, families in Khánh Hậu only recognize the ancestors of the third ascending generation in the male line, i.e. Ong Cố Nội and Bà Cố Nội, the father's father's parents. The terms ông and bà are respect pronouns in Vietnamese, more or less comparable to the English "sir" and "madam", and they are honorific modifiers when referring to kin in ascending generations. The term cố indicates the third ascending generation, and nội is the modifier designating kin in the patrilineage. In the second ascending generation, there is no modifier to specify generation, and as the mother's parents are recognized in this generation, they are indicated by the modifier ngoai, meaning "outside", implying that they are non-patrilineal kin.

CHART 4

STRUCTURE OF THE KINSHIP SYSTEM

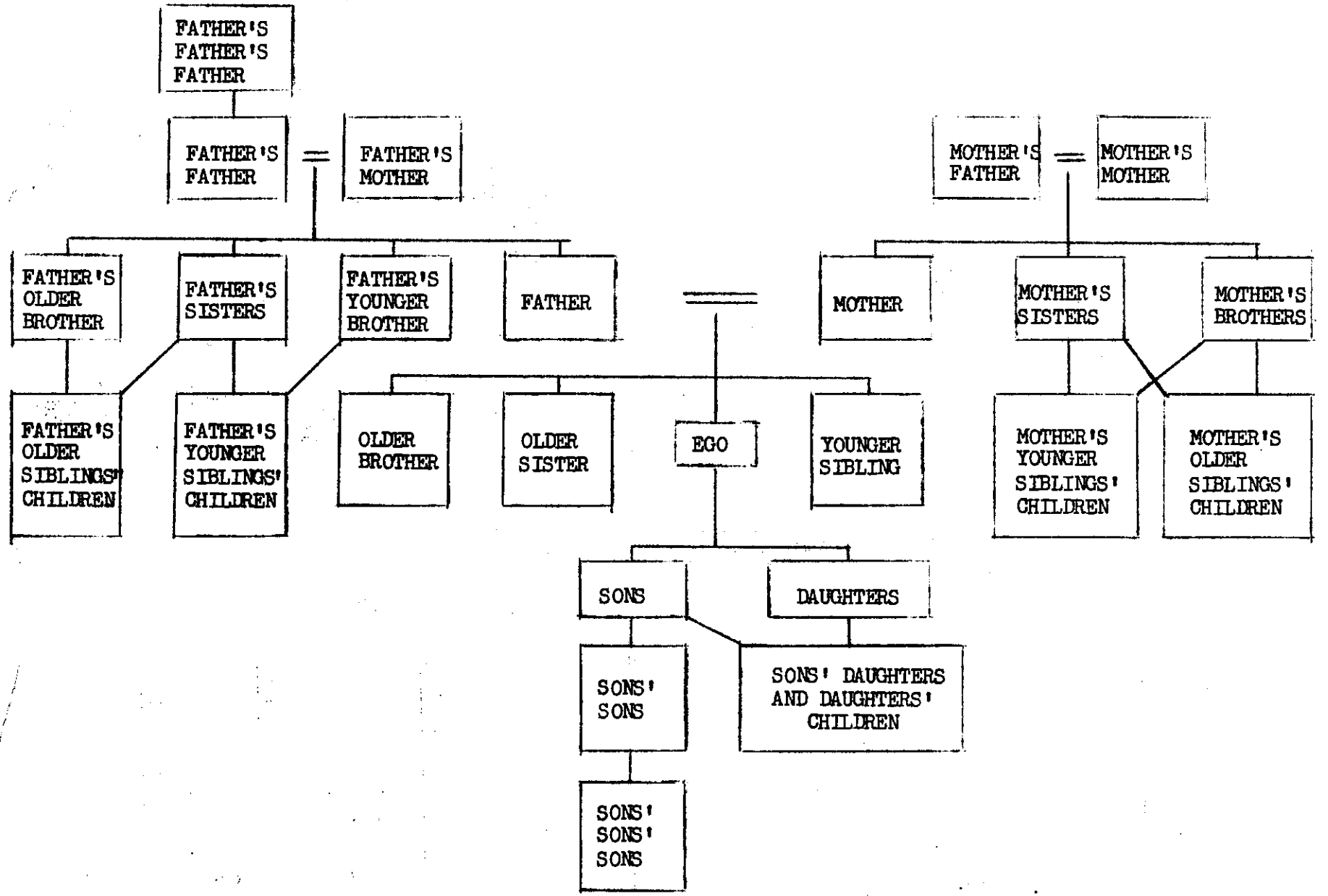


TABLE 5

Listing of Kin Terms

Third Ascending Generation	
ÔNG CỐ NỘI	Father's father's father (Patrilineal)
BÀ CỐ NỘI	Father's father's mother (Patrilineal)
Second Ascending Generation	
ÔNG NỘI	Father's father (Patrilineal)
BÀ NỘI	Father's mother (Patrilineal)
ÔNG NGOẠI	Mother's father (Non-Patrilineal)
BÀ NGOẠI	Mother's mother (Non-Patrilineal)
First Ascending Generation	
CHA or ÔNG THÂN	Father
MẸ or BÀ THÂN	Mother
BÁC	Father's Older Brothers
CHÚ	Father's Younger Brothers
CÔ	Father's Sisters
CẬU	Mother's Brothers
DÌ	Mother's Sisters
Ego's (One's Own) Generation	
ANH (HAI)	Older Brother (Eldest)
CHỊ (HAI)	Older Sister (Eldest)
EM (TRAI, GÁI)	Younger Sibling (Male, female)
ANH BÀ CON	Parent's Older Siblings' Sons
CHỊ BÀ CON	Parent's Older Siblings' Daughters
EM BÀ CON	Parent's Younger Siblings' Children
First Descending Generation	
CON (HAI, BA, TỨ etc..)	CHILDREN (First, Second, Third)
CHÁU BÊN NỘI	Male Siblings' Children (Patrilineal)
CHÁU BÊN NGOẠI	Female Siblings' Children (Non-Patr.)
CHÁU	Cousins' Children
Second Descending Generation	
CHÁU NỘI	Sons' Children (Patrilineal)
CHÁU NGOẠI	Daughters' Children (Non-Patr.)
Third Descending Generation	
CHẮT NỘI	Sons' sons Children (Patrilineal)
CHẮT NGOẠI	Sons' daughters' Children (Non-Patr.) daughters' children's children (Non-patrilineal)

Cha is a popular word for father, although in referring to one's father it is more polite to use the honorific term Ông Thân. Me is the popular word for mother and Bà Thân is the polite designation. The father's brothers are age-graded. Bác is the term for the father's older brothers, and chú is the term for the younger brothers. Cô is the general term for the father's sisters regardless of relative age. The mother's brothers are cậu, and her sisters are dì.

One's siblings are age-graded. Anh is the term for older brothers, and chi for older sisters. Younger siblings are em, with the modifiers trai for males and gái for females. Kin numeratives invariably are added to indicate priority of birth. The first born is hai (number two), so if the eldest is male, he is anh hai; if female, she is chi hai. The second eldest is ba, the third is tư, and so forth. The youngest sibling is em út. The modifier ruột may be applied to any siblings of the same parents, a necessary designation in polygynous families.

Sibling terms are extended to cousins, and they are age-graded according to the relative age of the parents. Older sibling terms anh and chi are extended to the parents' older siblings' children, and the term em is applied to the parents' younger siblings' children. The addition of the compound modifier bà con indicates that they are close kin, i.e. related through the parents' siblings. Those further removed are called by sibling terms according to the same principle as close cousins, and the modifier họ differentiates

them from closer kin. The cousin relationship can be further specified by indicating through which parents the two parties are related. If one should indicate, for example, that he is chú-bác with someone, it means that he is related through the father's brother. Cô-câu indicates a cross-cousin relationship, i.e. through either the mother's brother or the father's sister. Dì - (bạn dì) describes relationship through the mother's sister.

In the first descending generation, one's children are con. Kin numeratives are used to distinguish the children, and children are often referred to by their numerative. The sex modifiers trai and gái also may be added to specify whether they are male or female children. Cháu is a general term for collateral kin of the first descending generation, i.e. siblings' and cousins' children. The addition of the compound modifier bên nội indicates that they are children of male members of the patrilineage. Bên ngoại refers to female siblings children and children of non-patrilineal cousins. The term cháu also is used to designate direct line kin of the second descending generation, and the modifier nội distinguishes those in the patrilineage, i.e. the sons' children from ngoại, the daughters' generation, and the modifiers nội and ngoại are added to separate kin of the male line from those not related through the male line.

Charts 5 and 6 indicate the affinal kin terminology, i.e. terms used in reference to one's in-laws. Parental kin terms are extended to the husband or wife's parents, and sibling terms are

Chart 5

AFFINAL KIN: MALE SPEAKER

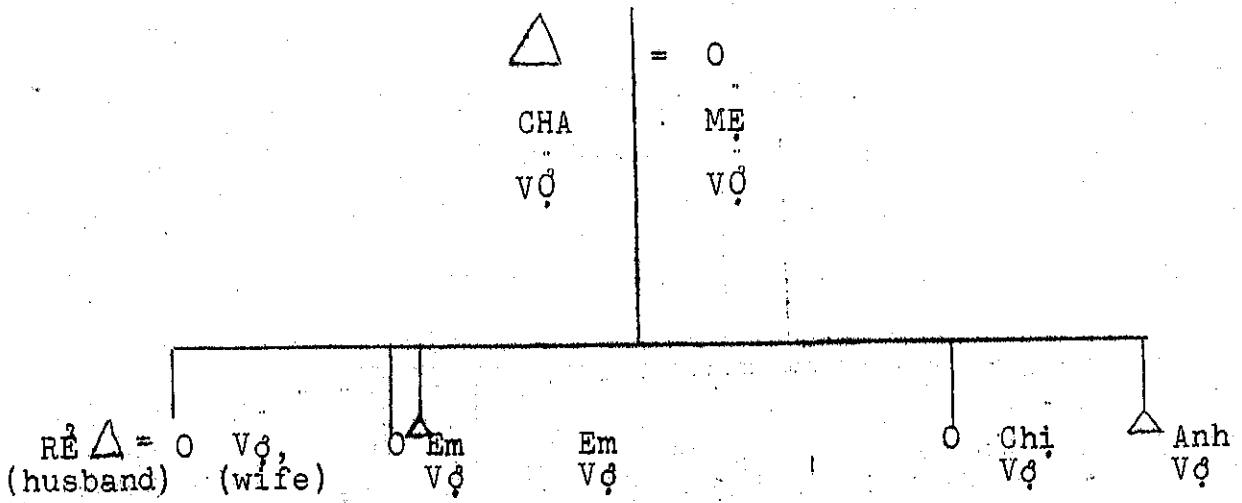
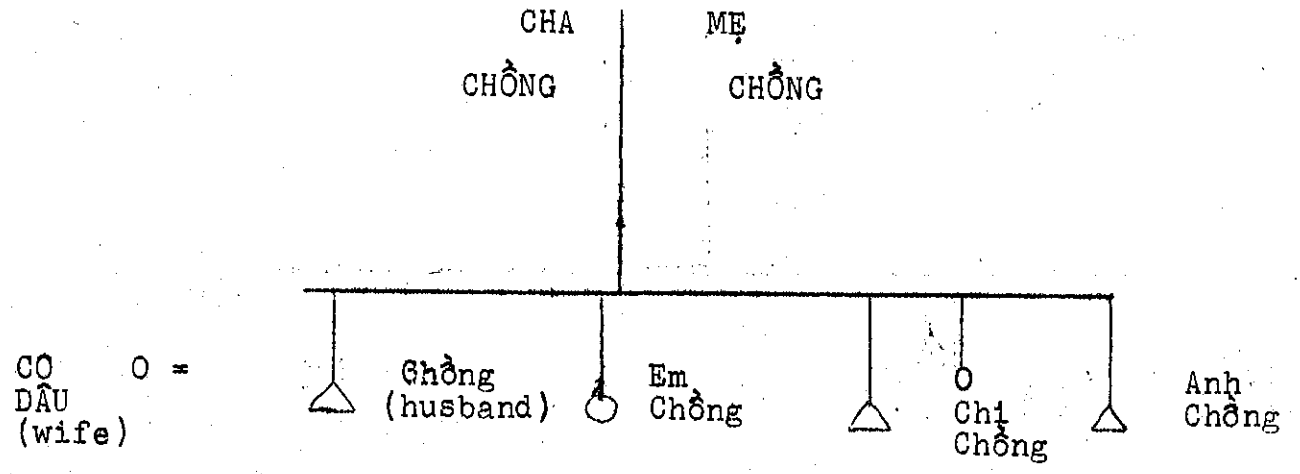


Chart 6

AFFINAL KIN: FEMALE SPEAKER



extended to the wife's or husband's siblings who are age-graded according to the relative age of the husband or wife. The affinal relationship is specified by the addition of the modifiers vợ, "wife" for the male speaker to indicate that they are his wife's kin, and chồng, "husband" for the female speaker to indicate that they are her husband's kin: for example, a husband's younger sister would be em chồng, the wife's elder brother would be anh vợ, the wife's father would be cha vợ, the husband's father would be cha chồng, and so forth.

By the same principle, kin terms are extended to the husbands and wives of siblings, and they are age-graded according to the relative age of the siblings to whom they are married. Rể is the modifier to indicate sisters' husbands, and dâu indicates brothers' wives. A younger brother's wife would be em dâu, and older sister's husband is anh rể, and so on.

The Tộc, or Patrilineage

In the traditional Vietnamese kinship system, the tộc is the patrilineal common descent group, consisting of all those related through the male line to a common male ancestor in the fifth ascending generation, i.e. the father's father's father's father's father. The head of this group is the trưởng tộc, the eldest male of the tộc. Among his prerogatives as head of the patrilineage, the trưởng tộc holds title to the hương hỏa, the inalienable family land, the income of which is used to support the rituals and

feasting associated with the Cult of the Ancestors. He also has the quasi-religious role of officiating at the rituals honoring the common ancestors. All members of the tộc are expected to gather in the ancestral house located in the village of the family for the anniversary of the common ancestor's death, and for Tết, the lunar new year.

In addition, the trưởng tộc is responsible for maintaining the gia phả, the genealogy book which families in northern and central Viet Nam keep scrupulously. He also is responsible for the upkeep of the family tombs which are located in the ancestral village. Finally, as head of the extended family, the trưởng tộc is councilor for all the members, and the arbitrator in family disputes.

Within the tộc, each ngành or individual branch has its own chief who is the eldest male of that branch, and his prerogatives and duties are much the same as those of the trưởng tộc, but for a more restricted group of kin. In addition, each family maintains its own altar for the immediate ancestors, and the responsibility for carrying out rituals in their honor rests on the head of the house.

The Patrilineage in Khánh Hậu. -- Whereas families in northern and central Viet Nam have been settled in the same villages for ten generations or more, most families of Khánh Hậu have been in the village less than three generations. As a result, the tộc only includes those related through the male line to a common ancestor

in the third ascending generation. Compared to the traditional Vietnamese tộc, therefore, the tộc in Khánh Hậu encompasses a more restricted group of kin. The sole exception is the family of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức which is considered the oldest family in the village. Its members trace their ancestry five generations or more, and even those who are ngoại, non-patrilineal descendants, prefer to emphasize their relationship to this hero. They attend the rituals in his honor and a number of them have come to Khánh Hậu to live on the family land.

Most of the traditional social institutions and practices described for the traditional patrilineage are found among the more affluent families of Khánh Hậu. Poorer families, however, tend to retain only those practices which are considered essential. As in more traditional areas of Viet Nam, the term trưởng tộc is used in Khánh Hậu to designate the head of the patrilineage, although functionally, his responsibilities only extend to siblings, their offspring, and a few cousins in most cases. Larger patrilineages usually are found only among the wealthier families, particularly those with hương hỏa. They also are likely to be the only families who attempt to keep the gia phổ, the genealogy book (southern designation). Curiously however, it is the families without hương hỏa who tend to follow the traditional pattern of recognizing the eldest male as trưởng tộc. In families with hương hỏa, the usual practice is for the adult members of the tộc to select the trưởng tộc from among the male members of good character regardless

of relative age. This investiture, however, is not absolute, and a breach of responsibility may result in a council of the adult members of the family to name a new trưởng tộc.

In families with hương hỏa, the trưởng tộc has the sacred trust of holding title to this family land which is alienable with the agreement of all the members of the family, although, in fact, there are no cases of hương hỏa being sold in Khánh Hậu. With the exception of the family of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức which recognizes a larger number of ancestors, families of Khánh Hậu celebrate the death anniversaries of six ancestors -- the parents, father's parents, and the father's father's parents. The responsibility of carrying out these rituals does not necessarily fall on the trưởng tộc. Often it is divided among the adult males so as to avoid putting a financial burden on any one member of the family. This is particularly true of families without hương hỏa, since, in the absence of any institutional source of funds to support the cult, they are more at liberty to devise their own means. Also if one member is wealthier than the others, he may assume the responsibility for having cult rituals and feasts in spite of his not being trưởng tộc. There are even some cases where the hương hỏa is not used to support the cult; for example, the village chief has title to the hương hỏa in his family, but since he is wealthier than his two brothers, he assumed the responsibility for having the cult rituals, and he divided the hương hỏa between his brothers for their use.

Affluent families in Khánh Hậu strive to construct substantial houses that will become ancestral houses after one generation. Ultimogenitor determines inheritance of the paternal house in Khánh Hậu, so the ancestral house is not necessarily the residence of the trưởng tộc. It also is important for the village gentry to have burial grounds in which a geomancer selects the sites for the family tombs. These usually are elaborately constructed of stone or concrete, and just before Tết, the lunar new year, and during the Thanh Minh period early in the lunar year, the trưởng tộc is responsible for seeing that the family tombs are cleaned and repaired. On the anniversary of an ancestor's death it is customary for the trưởng tộc to lead members of the family in a visit to the ancestral tombs. Only several of the wealthier families of Khánh Hậu maintain the gia phổ, the genealogy book, but in those that do, it is the responsibility of the trưởng tộc.

None of the poorer families in Khánh Hậu have hương hỏa, and their patrilineages tend to be very small in number and range of kin. The role of the trưởng tộc, therefore, diminishes considerably in terms of prerogatives and responsibilities. The responsibility for cult rituals is invariably divided among the adult male members, and they invite a very limited number of kin and friends to participate. They usually have no family burial plots, but must request the village for a burial site in the communal cemetary, and they cannot afford to consult a geomancer to select the grave sites. The graves are marked by mounds of earth and the trưởng tộc

is responsible for seeing that they are rebuilt at the prescribed times each year. Ancestral houses would be very rare in this group since their thatched houses are not likely to last more than one generation.

Inheritance

In Khánh Hậu, inheritance is a matter for the parents to decide, but such decisions tend to follow more or less definite patterns. If the husband should die first, his wife may assume title to both real and personal property, but in most cases some arrangement, perhaps a will, has been made for the children to inherit most of the property. In families that have acquired some land, it is common for the parents to declare part of the land to be hương hỏa. Traditionally the hương hỏa was inalienable, and it was not to be rented, although in Khánh Hậu both are possible. With the consent of the entire family, he who holds title to the hương hỏa may sell it, and it also may be rented with the understanding that the income will be used for the cult.

The parents decide which children shall receive what part of the remaining property, and there is not expected to be any conflict over their decision. Traditionally primogeniture determined the inheritance of the paternal house, but this has changed, and in Khánh Hậu it is the principle of ultimogeniture which determines the inheritance of the paternal house. Villagers reason that this is more just, since the eldest has more opportunity to establish

his own household while the youngest is left to care for the aging parents. If the parents do not decide the inheritance, the children are expected to do so themselves. In some cases, the females receive a share of land equal to that of the males, with the exception of the son who receives title to the hương hỏa.

If the land holding is small, the title may be vested in all of the sons with the agreement that each will have use of the land for a fixed period. One farmer with considerable land holding expressed the opinion that this system of rotating usufruct is the most feasible, particularly for the hương hỏa, because it would give all the sons the opportunity to become familiar with that piece of family land.

Actually, inheritance is a source of many conflicts in Khánh Hậu. Two prominent villagers retain a deep animosity toward each other as a result of litigation over property which a childless aunt left some years ago. There also are other cases where the trưởng tộc has spent all of the income from the hương hỏa prior to the ancestors' anniversaries causing great consternation among the siblings. In one family the trưởng tộc became a Catholic and his siblings brought a formal complaint before the tribunal in Tân An on the grounds that his religion prevented his carrying out the role of trưởng tộc property and he therefore forfeited the title to the hương hỏa. The court held, however, that while he could not practice the cult rituals before the altar of the ancestors, he could have masses said for them with income from the hương hỏa,

and he could continue to give the ritual feasts, so he had the right to retain the title to the hưởng hỏa.

Marriage

When a young man reaches the age of twenty-one, and a girl the age of seventeen, they have arrived at the ideal time of life to be married. By the same token, the age of twenty for young men and eighteen for girls are unfavorable ages for marriage and should be avoided, if possible. In Khánh Hậu, the children of well-to-do parents tend to marry early, even as early as the age of sixteen, because they have the guarantee of parental support during their first years of marriage. Children of poor parents, however, must wait until they have accumulated sufficient funds, so they are apt to have passed the ideal age when they marry.

Preliminary Arrangements. -- When a young man decides to marry, there are several ways for either him or his parents to go about selecting a wife. The traditional system of arranged marriages is still practiced in Khánh Hậu. Often two close friends make an informal agreement when their children are small that they will marry when they reach the proper age. In such cases the children are brought up with this idea, and they tend to accept it without complaint. It also is common for the young man's parents to arrange marriage with the parents of a girl recommended by kin or friends.

At the present time, girls in Khánh Hậu no longer remain in the semi-seclusion of their own homes as they did in the past.

With the expansion of education there has been an increase in social contact between boys and girls, so when a young man selects his own wife, she is likely to be a girl of his acquaintance. If he has no particular girl in mind, the usual procedure is to go about seeking information on available girls in Khánh Hậu or neighboring villages. This is done quite easily, for there is an abundance of matchmaking older women who are keenly aware which young men are seeking wives, and the type of girl each prefers. There are a definite set of qualifications for the ideal wife; she must be of a respectable family which does not have a history of bad health or oddities of any sort, and it is preferable that she be of the same social level as the young man. She must be a capable housekeeper, and robust good health is considered more important than a fair face. Although it is definitely preferable that the young woman be a virgin, it is not a prerequisite so long as the girl is not known as a woman of easy virtue in the village.

Once the selection has been made, either the young man or his parents ask an older male or female acquaintance to act as intermediary. Male intermediaries are called Ong Mai, and the females are Bà Mai. This should be a person of good character, the parent of many children, and it is preferable that the Ong Mai have a beard, the sign of age and wisdom. The intermediary informally visits the girl's parents, and whether or not they are aware of the purpose of his coming, they are expected to show great astonishment. After the intermediary explains the reason for his

visit, they consult the respective horoscopes to determine if the pair are compatible, and if the future holds the promise of many children, happiness, and prosperity. When the girl is informed of the young man's intentions, she is expected to feign reluctance, although if she really does disapprove, the negotiations are broken off abruptly with the excuse that she is too young, or that their horoscopes do not indicate future bliss.

Coi Mát: The First Meeting. -- If both parties agree to the match, they consult the lunar calendar to determine an auspicious day for the Coi Mát, the first meeting of the parents and discussion of prospective finances. On the appointed day the young man, his parents, and the intermediary proceed to the girl's house bearing gifts of rice alcohol, fruit, and flowers. Her parents await them at the doorway, and invite the visitors into the house to take tea with them. When they are seated and have chatted for several minutes, the girl appears with a tray containing the tea things and some cookies, and she serves the guests without speaking or looking at them. This gives the young man and his parents the opportunity to observe her deportment. The visit also affords the boy's parents the opportunity of seeing what kind of a house her parents have.

If the young man's parents are pleased with the visit, they extend an invitation to the girl's parents to visit them, for they are anxious to show them what a fine family their daughter is entering. After these mutual visits, the parents again consult

the lunar calendar for a favorable day on which to hold the engagement celebration.

Lễ Hỏi: The Engagement. -- On days considered favorable for engagements, it is common to see young men, their intermediaries, and a group of male kin dressed in traditional clothes hurrying through the village in single file on their way to engagement celebrations. The young man carries a tray containing the traditional engagement gifts of gold earrings, and if he is from a well-to-do family, other jewelry as well. The rest of the party carry bottles of rice alcohol, food, and a variety of other gifts.

The girl's close kin gather at her house to receive the young man and his group, and participate in the celebration. Upon entering the house, the young man proceeds directly to the altar of the ancestors where he kowtows as a symbolic acceptance of the girl's ancestors and family. He also kowtows before the girl's kin, after which he presents the gifts to the girl's parents. With the performance of these ritual acts, the couple are considered engaged, and the assemblage sits down to a feast. The fiance's parents have already consulted the couple's horoscopes to determine the best day for the wedding, and in the course of the meal, they announce the date. Normally the wedding is held several months after the engagement; however, if a close relation of either party is on the verge of death, the wedding is held as soon as possible. This is known as cưới chạy tang, "marriage running ahead of mourning." Otherwise it would have to be delayed until after the long mourning period.

After the engagement and prior to the marriage, the parents meet to agree upon the sính vật, the bride price. This varies depending on the affluence of the fiance's family. Wealthy families present a sính vật of sizable proportions, including such things as bolts of cloth, jewelry, food, and jars of rice alcohol. Poor families usually give the minimum sính vật which consists of the mâm trầu cau... a tray of betel leaves and areca nuts, which are the symbols of unity and faithfulness. With the exception of the mâm trầu cau, the bride price is sent to the fiance's house.

A traditional practice which receives token performance at the present time is làm rể, the service period that the fiance is expected to spend at the fiancee's house working for her parents. This fixed period is spent doing whatever tasks her parents require, such as cutting wood, carrying water, or helping with the planting or harvesting. It is considered a demonstration of the fiance's good character, and his ability as a farmer and breadwinner. In many families, the most that is required is that he put in a brief appearance at the fiancee's house, and stand about, never speaking unless addressed, as a demonstration of good deportment.

Lễ Cưới: The Wedding. -- As the day of the wedding approaches, both families begin feverish preparations. The fiance's house is enlarged by removing the front wall and constructing a thatch and bamboo shelter to accommodate the many guests. This addition is decorated with palm fronds, and gaily colored festoons hung from the ceiling. Tables, chairs, glasses, chinaware, and chopsticks

are borrowed from kin and neighbors, and both families prepare their ancestral altars for the coming rituals. The brass altar accoutrement must be polished, and well-to-do families purchase new silk or satin hangings for the altars. The furniture is cleaned and polished, and new mats are placed on the beds in the main room. If it is a large celebration, an addition may be constructed in the rear of the house to serve as a kitchen. Several days before the wedding, female kin of the bride and groom gather to prepare the staggering variety of dishes that will be served at the feast. The women sit chatting and gossiping while they chop vegetables, meat, and fish, and the braziers burn continually. Wealthy families slaughter an oxen and several pigs, and a few even hire cooks from Tân An to direct the activities in the kitchen.

The wedding celebration begins at the groom's house on the eve of the wedding when friends of the groom's family gather to eat and drink in an atmosphère of festive gaity. Candles are lit in the main room, and music fills the air as the guests arrive and present the groom's father with cash gifts which he will keep to defray the cost of the feast. In many instances the celebrating lasts well into the night, and some of the guests are apt to remain until the next morning.

On the morning of the wedding, the guests begin gathering at the groom's house to sip tea while awaiting the departure of the wedding procession. The altars of the ancestors have been decorated with flowers, and offerings of fruit, rice alcohol, and

tea have been placed on them. A small altar dedicated to the Spirit of the Soil has been set up in front of the house, and like the other altars, it contains a specified number of offerings. After the groom dons the traditional blue wedding robe, his father gives the signal for the procession to leave.

The procession is led by the Rể Phụ, a close friend of the groom, who acts as his assistant. He carries a tray containing the gifts of gold, earrings, the traditional wedding gifts, as well as ceremonial rice alcohol. He also may carry the red wedding gown and large, round wedding hat to be worn by Cô Dâu, the bride. Chú Rể, the groom, follows the Rể Phụ, and he carries a large, circular red and gold box containing the mâm trầu cau, the symbolic gifts of areca nuts and betel leaves. They are flanked by assistants carrying long handled mandarin parasolds. After them come the intermediary and the male kin of the groom, all carrying large black unbrellas to shade themselves from the sun. The younger women, usually dressed in brightly colored dresses and wearing their gold jewelry, follow, and the older women, dressed in their black tunics, bring up the rear of the procession. If the bride lives in a distant village, the groom's father usually rents automobiles and sometimes a bus to transport the wedding party to and from the bride's house. In the event that they must travel by wheeled vehicles or by boat, the symbolic gifts of betel and areca must be well covered lest they bring disaster to the carrier.

The bride's kin and friends of her family gather in the decorated main room of her house to await the groom and his party. As the procession approaches the house, the intermediary pours two glasses of rice alcohol and presents them to the bride's parents who come forward to greet the group. The intermediary explains that they have come for the bride, and he begs their permission to enter the house. He then gives the bride's parents the tray of areca and betel which they place on the altar of the ancestors.

Either a venerable old man or the fathers of the couple perform the Lên Đèn, a ritual in which red candles are lit and held aloft before the altar of the ancestors while prayers are recited. More than likely some flammable fluid has been poured on the wicks to assure their igniting immediately because it is believed that if they go out, the couple will have an unhappy married life. The groom then approaches the altar and kowtows as a sign of reverence and respect for his bride's ancestors. He also performs this symbolic act before the bride's male and female kin. Afterwards he takes the box containing the bride's wedding robe and hat to her in a back room where she has been waiting. By this time, the guests have been served tea or iced soft drinks, and are busily chatting. When the bride is garbed in her wedding finery, she and the groom emerge and pass from table to table displaying the tray of gifts. Shortly afterwards the wedding procession reassembles, only this time the order varies: the groom leads, followed by the bride, the Rể Phụ, and the intermediary. The bride's kin and guests join the rest of the procession.

This colorful procession wends its way across the paddy fields back to the groom's house. While the guests file into the house, the bride and groom, accompanied by their fathers, light joss and kowtow before the altar of the Spirit of the Soil. The guests, meanwhile, are shown to their tables. The elderly men are seated at a table directly in front of the altar of the ancestors while the other men occupy the tables around the main room. Women are seated at tables under the temporary shelter, and the older women invariably gather on the hardwood beds where trays of betel leaves, areca nuts, and pots of lime have been placed for their convenience.

Tea is served to the guests, and the noise of conversations soon fills the house. The bride and groom enter accompanied by their fathers and the intermediary, and proceed to the main altar where the intermediary lights two candles and holds them high while he informs the ancestors of the marriage. The couple step forward to kowtow before the altar and then taking a reed mat, they kowtow before their elderly male kin, the younger male kin, and the female kin in that priority. Their fathers usually guide them through these ritual acts, and the guests take little notice of what is occurring.

With the wedding rituals performed, the couple take the tray containing the gifts and pass it among the guests to receive cash gifts from their male kinfolk, each of whom are expected to donate around 100$VN. The elderly ladies, busily chewing betel and areca, usually attempt to chide them into giving more than the expected

amount. This is done in a joking spirit, and everyone is greatly amused. These cash gifts are retained by the couple.

After the rituals and gift giving, nhóm ho, the wedding feast begins. Young men who are friends of both families, do the serving, while the bride and groom move among the tables seeing that the guests are well supplied with food and drink. The bride is responsible for the female guests, and the groom takes care of the male guests. Neither the bride nor the groom join the wedding feast, nor are they permitted to speak to one another. Both are expected to appear very grave, and it would be a breach of custom to display any signs of enjoyment. A great variety of dishes are served, accompanied by beer or rice alcohol for the men and soft drinks for the women. As the meal progresses the men tend to become boistrous and jovial, and signs of drunkenness are regarded with much amusement. The women, on the other hand, eat and drink sparingly and speak in low tones.

When the bride's parents and close kin have eaten, they prepare to depart. After bidding farewell to their hosts, they walk to the entrance of the farmstead accompanied by the bride. As they begin to move out across the paddy fields, the bride returns to the house, hiding her face as she quietly weeps. The feasting continues until early evening, and finally toward the end the bride and groom remove their wedding robes and go to the kitchen to eat. After the guests have departed, the house is cleaned and put back in order and the bride and groom retire to a room set

aside for them. Passing into the bridal chamber, the couple observes a simple ritual act known as nhập phòng dàn trải, wherein the bride steps in first while her husband stands back. This is to avoid having her step on her husband's shadow on the belief that if this should happen, he will be a henpecked husband.

Traditionally, the couple was expected to refrain from sexual intercourse for the first three days. After this period they would observe the Le Phan Bai, a ritual visit to the bride's house. At the present time, however, this visit may take place within a reasonable time after the wedding, and there is no restriction as to when the marriage may be consummated. When they arrive at the bride's house, they proceed to the altar of the ancestors where an elderly male kin or friend performs the Vô Mâm Trầu. This consists of opening the box of areca and betel which was placed on the altar the day of the wedding, and removing the contents. The areca nuts are then sliced and wrapped in the betel leaves, to be distributed among kin and friends as a symbolic announcement that the marriage is completed.

Residence. -- Traditionally, residence after marriage is temporarily patrilocal, i.e., the couple remains in the husband's paternal house until they have the means to establish their own household. If, however, the husband is the only son, residence is absolutely patrilocal, and in Khánh Hậu, this also is true for the youngest son since he will inherit the paternal house. In well-to-do families, where the father can provide a house for his sons, residence usually is neolocal.

Matrilocal residence is not uncommon in Khánh Hậu. When the bride is the only child or has no brothers, the couple may go to live with her parents. This also is true when the bride has inherited land, particularly if it is located in another village. The existence of family land for rent-free farmstead sites is another lure for residence near the wife's family. In Khánh Hậu the family of Marshal Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức has such land in the village, and some of his female descendants have come to the village to live on the family land, and also enjoy the prestige of being associated with the family of this hero.

Polygyny and Concubinage. -- In Khánh Hậu, distinguishing polygyny from concubinage presents problems, particularly among the middle and lower classes. Married men often make liaisons with other women, and whether it constitutes a second or third marriage or simply an informal, perhaps temporary affair, is never clear. The prescribed manner of taking a second wife tends to be adhered to more by wealthy villagers. There is no ceremony of any sort, nor is there a legal registration. In those cases where the second wife, vợ nhỏ or vợ bé (little wife), is going to share the house with the first wife, vợ lớn (big wife), her permission must be obtained. The second wife is usually younger, and she has a subordinate role which requires that she do most of the housework.

In many cases, the second wife either has her own house or the husband provides her with one, and this is considered a much more advisable arrangement. It is better that the wives be

separated, and the husband can divide his time between the two households as he pleases. Both arrangements are clear cases of polygyny. The second wives are recognized in the village as such, and the children are considered the legal offspring of the father. They take his family name, and share in the inheritance.

In Khánh Hậu, concubinage takes the form of a liaison which is considered temporary from the outset. Within the village these may be clandestine affairs, or an overt visiting arrangement although the woman is never considered a wife. Most of these liaisons are very casual, and not restricted to any particular social class. Many of the wealthy men of the village, however, prefer to have concubines in neighboring villages or in Tân An so as to avoid any complications. If children should be born of such a union, the father has the prerogative of deciding whether to recognize them or not.

Polygyny serves a variety of functions. Having a second or third wife is a manifest sign of affluence, and it has a good deal of prestige value in the village. It also is a means of providing sons when the first wife is barren or has not given birth to any male offspring. When the first wife is aging and has lost her looks, taking a younger woman as the second wife is a continuation of conjugal bliss for the husband, and in cases where the first marriage had been arranged, taking a second wife permits the husband to exercise his own choice, and, perhaps, select a wife with some element of romance. Finally, polygyny, in some cases, may be

motivated by economic advantages. An unmarried girl with an inheritance, or a widow with a house and land, makes a desirable second wife.

In Khánh Hậu the pattern is for a man to take a second wife after ten or fifteen years of marriage. There are no cases of polygyny among younger men. Several villagers claim to have three wives, with three separate households, but these are few in number.

Separation. -- There are no recorded divorces in Khánh Hậu. If a couple does not have children, and they decide they can no longer live as man and wife, they agree to separate without recourse to any legal authority. If they have children, however, there are strong social pressures, particularly on the part of kinfolk, to remain together in spite of their incompatibility. In these instances, the wife usually bears the brunt of the difficult situation. She is expected to accept her unhappy role stoically, showing no outward sign of discontent, and carrying out her responsibilities as a wife and mother with all the scrupulousness of a happily married woman. The unhappy husband, on the other hand, has several outlets for his discontent. If he is well-to-do, he may take a second wife and establish another household where he may spend most of his time, or he may console himself with a concubine.

There are a number of abandoned women in the village, particularly in the lower class. In some instances it is the only

resort when a couple can no longer tolerate living together, and the husband cannot afford to take a second wife. In other cases, the husband simply leaves his wife to go live with another woman. If the wife's parents are still alive, she may go to live with them, otherwise she will have to support herself and her children, and if she is fortunate she will receive some assistance from kin or friends.

Pregnancy and Birth

In Khánh Hậu the telltale sign of pregnancy is to miss a menstruation period, and when this is followed by a loss of appetite and sleeplessness it is considered definite. With these unmistakable symptoms, the woman begins observing a set of taboos and prescribed behavior designed to ease the strains of pregnancy and guarantee the birth of a well-formed, indefective child. In her diet, she should avoid foods considered "unclean" such as beef, dog, mouse, rat and snake, lest the child be an imbecile. Alcohol is considered bad for pregnant women, although chewing betel and areca, or smoking tobacco are permissible. During the entire pregnancy period, the woman is cautioned to refrain from sexual intercourse.

Certain behavior also is considered taboo. The pregnant woman should avoid heavy work such as carrying heavy loads, and she should walk with great caution so as to avoid stumbling. She should remain at home as much as possible, and it is defendu for her to

attend weddings or funerals. It also would be wise for her to shun places of worship and shrines in the village for fear of incurring the wrath of the spirits residing in these places, and for the same reason she should avoid the roads and footpaths at noon and five o'clock in the evening because these are the hours when the spirits leave their sanctuaries to promenade. In the house she must be careful not to step over one of the hammocks out of fear that the child will be inflicted with a lethargy causing it to keep its eyes closed for seven days after birth.

The pregnant woman also can be a source of misfortune to others. For example, if she should step over a hammock where her husband is sleeping, he may be afflicted with sleeping sickness. This also could occur if he should finish a glass of some beverage left by his wife.

As the time for birth approaches, a special bed of bamboo with no mat is arranged behind the altar of the ancestors or some other relatively private part of the house. When the labor pains begin, the woman takes to this special bed, and an experienced older woman, or a woman who has received some training in mid-wifery, is summoned. In Khánh Hậu the preference is still for an older woman because they are considered more experienced, and modern methods of childbirth continue to be regarded with some suspicion. A female neighbor or relative is called in to assist. The husband is expected to remain out of the house during the labor and birth.

No matter how difficult the birth, the woman must not cry out, for it would draw the attention of the neighbors and the family would be embarrassed. Traditionally, the umbilical cord was cut with the sharp edge of a piece of china, but at the present time, knives or scissors are more commonly used. Another traditional practice which is diminishing in the village is to swaddle the newborn infant in the cast-off clothes of its siblings. An increasing number of families purchase new cloth to use as swaddling.

The new-born child is bathed in tepid water, swaddled, and given to the mother as soon as possible. Finally, the husband is permitted to enter the house to see his child. Following the birth, a brazier of burning wood is placed under the bed in the belief that the mother has dissipated the heat of her body, and it must be replenished. For several weeks, any food she is served will be well seasoned to increase this heating process. After two or three days, a small pot is filled with hot coals and passed over her body periodically to tighten the skin and prevent sagging of the abdomen. After this "ironing" of the body, cinnamon and other sweet herbs are boiled in water, and the woman is bathed with this fragrant concoction to "cleanse and sweeten her."

The child is kept with the mother almost constantly, and after seven days they are moved to one of the ordinary beds in the main room of the house. The bamboo bed is either discarded or burned, and the brazier is placed under the new bed where it will remain

as long as the woman remains there. The prescribed period to remain in bed following the birth is one month; however, in Khánh Hậu most women must quit their beds after ten days to resume their household routines. Following the birth of the first child, the parents are expected to refrain from sexual intercourse for at least one hundred days, but for subsequent births there is no restriction.

Funeral Practices

In Khánh Hậu, as a man grows old, he prepares to join his anoestors. In many respects, his whole life has been a preparation for this. To marry and have sons is the means to the immortality of a continuing line in which the male descendants carry on the Cult of the Ancestors. A man labors to accumulate land to pass on to his sons, and also to have hương hỏa which will support the rituals associated with the Cult of the Ancestors. He also strives to construct a substantial house which will become the ancestral house where the cult rituals will be performed. As old age comes upon him, the man who can afford it purchases a carved wooden coffin which is placed in the main room of his house, and he sets aside money for the construction of his tomb. It is consoling for the elderly villager to see the coffin and the tomb in which his mortal remains will be preserved. This is reflected in the popular Vietnamese proverb: "Sống có cái nhà, thác có cái mồ," "When you are alive you must have a house; when you die you must have a tomb,"

The ideal tomb, the type constructed by the wealthy, is of stone or concrete, and located on a site selected by the geomancer. The Kế Hiền, the highest venerable in Khánh Hậu, and his wife have two large, costly (50,000 VN each), concrete tombs located in a nearby pagoda in Ấp Cầu. They often visit their tombs and supervise the work being done on them. Villagers of lesser means usually have stone markers on their graves while the poor merely have a grave marked with piles of earth.

When a man dies, kin living in the village immediately gather at the house to assist in the numerous preparations for the funeral and burial. One member of the family is dispatched to the village hall to report the death to the Civil Status secretary, and to request permission to keep the body for a specified number of days. An elderly experienced villager is summoned to advise the family on the prescribed behavior for mourning and ritual form of the funeral, and he consults the deceased's horoscope to determine the favorable days and hours for rituals. The family then divides the various tasks. The house must be cleaned, and perhaps expanded by removing the front partitions and constructing a temporary thatched roof to shelter the guests. Tables and chairs must be borrowed from neighbors, and the coffin must be purchased (if they have not already done so). The monk must be notified, and someone is sent to inform kin in distant villages of the death. The women gather in the kitchen to begin preparation of the seemingly countless dishes that will be served during the funeral period.

The first ritual act is to wash the corpse and dress it in the traditional black tunic and turban. Many villagers in Khánh Hậu retain the practice of ngậm ngọc, placing a few grains of rice in the mouth of the corpse. Another practice is to place a bunch of bananas on the chest of the corpse in the belief that this tantalizing food will divert the appetite of Thiên Cẩu, the Celestial Dog, who descends to eat the entrails of the deceased.

Liệm or nhập quang is the ritual placing of the corpse in the coffin. The members of the family lift it in and then place the clothes of the deceased around the corpse. Some villagers retain the practice of placing a bowl of rice at the head of the coffin in the belief that the corpse, once placed in the coffin, may rise up, and the rice is thrown at it to force it back in place.

If the deceased is the head of the family, the trưởng tộc, the coffin is placed before the central altar of the house, otherwise it is placed in front of one of the side altars. With the preliminary preparations completed, the family gathers before a small altar arranged in front of the coffin for the phục hồn, a ritual offering of food to the soul of the deceased. Three bowls of rice, three small cups of tea, and several other dishes are placed on the altar, and the family kowtows three times in priority of relationship. For the duration of the funeral, three such ritual offerings will be made each day. After the phục hồn, there is the phát tang, distribution of mourning clothes. Among the

wealthy this is done by the Buddhist monk. High mourning, a period of three years[1], is observed by the widow, the children, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren of the patrilineage. Low mourning, a period of one year, is for widowers, sons-in-law, and non-patrilineal granchildren. Cousins may ask permission of the family to mourn for one year. Parents do not mourn for their deceased children, and there are no rituals held for unmarried children. A special altar is arranged in the main room of the house in honor of the deceased child who is buried immediately. The costume for those in high mourning consists of a roughly made robe of gauzy cotton with patches on it to give it an abject appearence. The males wear a head piece of rough straw called a bích câu, and the females wear a veil known as a khăn. Those in low mourning merely wear a white band around the head.

With the mourning clothes distributed, the nhân điếu period begins. This corresponds to the western practice of holding a wake. Kin, neighbors, and friends, dressed in traditional clothes, come to the house to pay their respects to the sons who stand before the bier, and to kowtow in honor of the deceased. The guests bring offerings of cash, food, and at one funeral for a wealthy villager who enjoyed the reputation of being a hardy drinker, there were innumerable bottles of various kinds of rice alcohol piled high on the altars and around the bier, giving the room the air of a wine cellar.

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[1]Mourning actually lasts two only years in Khánh Hậu

At funerals for wealthy villagers, particularly men who were high in the cult committee, the nhận điếu may last from five to seven days in order to permit kin and friends to come from distant places. On such occasions, the guests bring large colored satin or silk bandaroles called tấm vảng on which the good qualities of the deceased are extolled in Chinese characters. Wealthy families also hire musicians to play during the daytime. At most funerals, the nhận điếu is marked by copious feasting and drinking, and the atmosphere is apt to become merry and even boistrous as the men consume more rice alcohol. The men, as usual, eat at tables in the center of the room with the most honored guests nearest the bier, while the women remain at one side of the room drinking tea and chewing betel leaves and areca nuts. Funerals of villagers of moderate means still tend to be lively occasions, but among the poor, there is considerably less feasting and the nhận điếu usually only lasts one day.

At the end of nhận điếu, the family gathers before the bier to kowtow and the next phase is chốn, the burial. The first ritual act is động quan, to carry the coffin out of the house. Among the wealthy it is customary to hire a group of specialists known as nhửng quan to act as pallbearers. They are villagers organized and trained for this purpose by a leader known as Bái Quan. They go about their task as a team, directed by the Bái Quan who gives his signals on the cập sanh, two wooden sticks which he strikes together a prescribed number of times. The twelve nhửng quan

the carved, gilt and red catafalque borne by the nhân quan. The poor simply have a group of young neighbors bear the coffin to the grave without the catafalque and other trappings.

Musicians flank the catafalque playing their horns, drums, and simple stringed instruments, and the nhân quan chant Hò Đưa Linh, dirges about such things as the sadness of the separation that death brings, and the temporality of the tomb. The immediate family follows closely behind the catafalque. The sons, bent low, leaning on roughly cut sticks, come first, followed by the widow, the daughters, and other kin. The remaining mourners walk behind in no particular order. The Buddhist monk recites some prayers at the grave, and after the family kowtows, the coffin is lowered into the grave.

After the burial, the family returns to the house to recite the trinh vong, 5 ritual prayers entreating the soul of the deceased to leave the grave and come to reside in the altar of the ancestors. The accoutrements from the portable altar carried in the funeral cortege are placed on the altar of the ancestors, and the family kowtows before the altar. Three days after the burial, the members of the immediate family put on their mourning clothes and return to the grave for the mở cửa mả, the symbolic opening of the grave to permit the soul of the deceased to leave the grave and go to the altar of the ancestors. Joss is burned on the grave, and a chicken is tied to a stick of sugar cane and led around the grave three times. Poor villagers perform this ritual without the chicken.

Cao Daists in the village observe the traditional funeral rituals with few innovations. Instead of having the Buddhist monk participate, they invite a group of the faithful Cao Daists to pray before the bier. They also bring bandaroles with Cao Dai symbols and prayers inscribed on them.

Catholic villagers, however, observe funeral rituals very different from the traditional practices. Ong Giáp is the title of the leader of the Catholic community in the village, and if a Catholic villager is dying, he is expected to maintain a deathwatch so as to summon the priest from Tân An for the last rites of the church. If the family of the deceased is wealthy, they transport the corpse to the church for funeral services, otherwise the priest comes to the village to lead prayers before the bier. The arrangement of the bier is similar to that of the traditional funeral. Burial takes place in a small Catholic cemetary located on the edge of Ấp Dinh.

Family Cults

The Cult of the Ancestors. -- After death, the soul of the deceased returns to the family house where he remains as an unseen member of the household to observe the mortal activities of his family. During the first year following the funeral, there are a series of prescribed rituals, most of which are not considered obligatory, and therefore are not practiced by many of the villagers because of the expense involved. The first forty-nine days for

deceased males and sixty-three days for females, are marked by rituals every seven days. These are referred to numerically, e.g. Bảy Ngày (Seventh Day) is the ritual on the seventh day, Mười Bốn Ngày (Fourteenth day) is the ritual on the fourteenth day, and so forth. On these occasions, the immediate family gathers at the house of the deceased, and kowtows before the ancestral altar after making some offerings. Wealthy families retain the services of a Buddhist monk to pray at these rituals. The rituals on the twenty-first and forty-ninth days are considered very important, and they tend to be relatively elaborate. In many respects they resemble the nhân điếu period of the funeral. The altars are aglow with candles and heaped with offerings, and the sons, dressed in their white gauzy mourning costumes, again take up their positions by the altar to greet the kin and friends who attended the funeral. After the offerings are made, and the kowtowing is done, the entire assemblage sits down to a large feast.

Một Trăm Ngày, the One Hundreth Day, is marked by a ritual similar to the rituals of the seven days. None of these rituals is strictly prescribed, and they usually are performed only by upper and middle class families. Làm Tuần Giáp Năm is the ritual observance of the first anniversary, and it is performed by rich and poor alike, with some variation. Prayers are recited before the ancestral altar during the eve of the anniversary, and wealthy families usually have the Buddhist monk lead the prayers. On the following day, a ritual and subsequent feasting, similar to the

celebrations of the Twenty-first Day and Forty-ninth Day takes place. Mãn Khó is the celebration of the second anniversary, and it signals the end of mourning, although in principle mourning is supposed to last three years. After the usual offerings, prayers, and kowtowing, there is the Xa Tang --- removal of mourning clothes which are then burned on the altar.

On the subsequent anniversaries of the death, there is a ritual celebration held in the house of one of the male, patrilineal descendants. The family divides the responsibility for these rituals among the male descendants in the patrilineage, and the division is such that no deceased member of the patrilineage is without a cult. In Khánh Hậu, ancestors up to the third ascending generation of the patrilineage are worshiped, i.e. the paternal greatgrandparents. The trưởng tộc, the head of the patrilineage, assumes the cult responsibility for the paternal greatgrandparents, and, if he is reasonably affluent, for the paternal grandparents as well. As pointed out previously, there is considerable variation in the division of cult responsibilities. Usually, however, the eldest son offers the cult rituals for the father, while one of his brothers has rituals for the mother. The family decides who will carry out the cult rituals for any childless members.

Cúng Dỗ or Kỵ Cơm are the anniversary celebrations. The number of guests and the elaborateness of the feasting depends on the host's economic state. The wealthiest man in Khánh Hậu invites

some one hundred guests, and the feast includes many meat and vegetable dishes, rice of fine quality, rice alcohol, beer, and a variety of soft drinks, whereas the poor villagers usually invite around six guests, and serve a simple meal of fish, soup, and ordinary rice, with tea. The form of the ritual resembles those already described, and the guests usually take their turns kowtowing. Among the well-to-do, anniversary celebrations often last two days, and they are occasions for considerable drinking and merrymaking.

Visiting the graves of ancestors also is a prescribed practice which is part of the cult. This is done twice a year --- just before Tết, the lunar new year, and at Thanh Minh, a thirty day period which begins on a variable date in the second lunar month. On the latter occasion, the family gathers at the house of the trưởng tộc and walks to the family graves, which normally are located in one area. They carry joss, food, tea, and rice alcohol, all of which are offered to the ancestors. When this is done they pass from grave to grave, kowtowing and placing joss on each one. After this simple ritual, the graves are weeded and the earth banked up on them. The stone tombs also require some cleaning, perhaps whitewashing, and some weeding. Fixing the graves is known as Tảo Mộ or Dẫy Mộ, and the state of the ancestral graves is considered a reflection on the character of the family.

Tết Nguyên Đán: The Lunar New Year. -- As the lunar new year comes to a close, and the harvest is gathered, the people of Khánh Hậu give themselves over to a holiday mood and indulge in a variety of village and family celebrations. Thượng Điền, the village feast marking the end of the harvest, is followed closely by Tết Nguyên Đán, the lunar new year which is celebrated in the Chinese fashion. Tết, as it is usually called, is essentially a family celebration. It is the time for everyone, even the urban dweller to return to his natal village or the village of his family, where his family's land and family tombs serve as reminders of his rustic origins. There he reestablishes bonds with kinfolk scattered throughout the delta, and for one week he becomes a villager again, participating in the simple pleasures of peasant life.

During the twelfth lunar month, the family gathers at the house of the trưởng tộc for the ritual Dẫy Mộ, the fixing of family tombs and graves. There are two prescribed means for carrying out this ritual. First, the family may carry the necessary joss, prayer papers, and offerings of cakes, chicken, paper money, tea, and rice alcohol to the graves. After requesting the Spirit of the Soil for permission to disturb the earth, they make ritual offerings of paper money and prayer papers, after which they kowtow before all the graves and place burning joss on them. Then they set to work weeding, digging, and piling earth on the graves. When this task is done, they settle down to a picnic-like feast of the food offerings.

It also is permissible to take the joss, prayer paper, and paper money, but no food, to the graves, where they have the ritual. Afterwards they return to the house of the trưởng tộc where the food offerings are made at the altar of the ancestors. When this ritual has been performed, the family gather in the main room of the house for a feast. Among poor villagers there usually is a simple ritual at the graves, followed by a ritual at the house, but no feasting. During this period, small groups of villagers can be seen digging in the hard, cracked earth to disengage great chunks of soil which they pile on the weathered mounds that mark the graves of relatives long deceased. There are a few altruistic villagers who go about fixing the graves of those who no longer have kin in the village. They also usually burn some joss on these abandoned graves.

On the twenty-third day of the twelfth lunar month, the family celebrates the departure of Ong Táo to the heavens where he will report their activities to the Emperor of Jade. Ong Táo is the collective designation for the three spirits of the hearth. They observe the daily activities of the family member, and exercise a great deal of influence over their destinies. It is common for the family to place their children under the protective care of Ong Táo, and they make daily offerings of joss to placate this spirit.

The ritual on the twenty-third day is relatively simple. Red paper with a sketch depicting the departure of Ong Táo on a large

carp, a celestial horse, or a phoenix, is burned on the altar in the kitchen, then the family sits down to a feast of traditional Tết food, including glutinous rice and chè, a sweet soup of beans and rice flour. During the absense of Ong Táo, no joss is burned on the altar. On the thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month, Ong Táo returns, and as this is the day the ancestors are being honored, Ong Táo also is invited to participate in the celebration. Poor villagers observe this ritual by burning joss on the altar, and making a symbolic offering consisting of a small bowl of rice.

Lễ Ra Mắt Ong Bà: Receiving the Ancestors. -- On the thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month, each family gathers at its own house to prepare for the arrival of the souls of the ancestors and the return of Ong Táo. A few families retain the practice of preparing a cây nêu, a symbolic tree made with bamboo branches on which some prayer papers, a rectangular talisman of straw, a small sack of rice, a small sack of salt, and a container of water are tied. Joss is continually burned on the ancestral altar, and around nine o'clock in the evening firecrackers are exploded to chase away evil spirits before the cây nêu is placed before the entrance of the house. Anyone entering the house during this period must wash his feet at the door.

While awaiting midnight, the auspicious hour for receiving the ancestors, the women prepare chè, the same sweet soup eaten at the feast for the departure of Ong Táo. Well-to-do villagers explode firecrackers almost continually, whereas the poor guard

their few firecrackers for midnight when it is most important to keep evil spirits away from the house. This is the hour when the souls of the ancestors and Ong Táo arrive, and their entrance must not be spoiled by the presence of evil spirits. The members of the family, dressed in their traditional clothes, gather before the altar of the ancestors, and the eldest male makes an offering of food, and burns red prayer paper. Each member of the family then takes a burning stick of joss and kowtows before the altar. This ritual is followed by a feast of traditional Tết food. Throughout the remainder of the night, prayers are recited intermittently before the ancestral altar.

Mồng Một is the first day of Tết, and with it comes a certain anxiety that bad luck will enter the house and plague the family during the entire year. The primary function of the cây nêu is to bar the entrance of Thiên Cẩu, the Celestial dog, who is the carrier of ill fortune. Firecrackers also frighten Thiên Cẩu away, so the cây nêu is not considered absolutely essential. Wealthy villagers purchase cây mai, leafless branches of a tree that should blossom with exquisite yellow flowers on the first day of Tết, portending good fortune for the family. On this day there is a great deal of visiting, so some members of the family remain at home to receive guests and serve them tea, rice alcohol, and the traditional candied fruits and vegetables. Guests with names which are considered favorable, such as Tốt (Good), Phước (Luck), Lộc (Abundance), and Thọ (Longevity) are particularly welcomed since

they bring with them the good fortune their names import. On the other hand, those with unfavorable names such as Mèo (Cat) or Chó (Dog) are not encouraged to visit. Around six o'clock in the evening, offerings are made at the altar of the ancestors, and the family joins in a feast.

The second day of Tết, known as Mồng Hai, is spent in much the same fashion as the first. The visiting continues, and there are the periodic rituals at the altar of the ancestors. Unlike the first day, however, there is no anxiety about bad luck, and a holiday air begins to pervade the village. There is a good deal of feasting and drinking, although villagers complain that Tết is not the same without the customary gambling.

On Mồng Ba, the third day, well-to-do villagers observed the rituals to two military heros, Hành Binh and Hành Tướng. A chicken is boiled and prepared in a special way, and these spirits are invited to partake of it. In return, the family asks them to protect the house during the coming year. After eating this ritual dish, the feet of the sacrificial chicken are hung from one of the rafters. If the claws draw inward, it is considered a good omen, but if they open, it is believed that they release bad luck.

The fourth day of Tết is marked by the ritual known as Đưa Ong Bà, the departure of the ancestors. This resembles the other rituals honoring the ancestors, and it also is a propitious time for exploding firecrackers. The fifth and sixth days are spent without any particular ritual observances. The fifth day is

considered an inauspicious time for traveling, having feasts, and a variety of other activities. On the seventh and last day of Tết, the cây nêu is removed, and the various talismans are kept in the house throughout the year. The family has a final meal to mark the end of the new year celebration.

Thiên Shrines. -- In front of most houses in Khánh Hậu, there are small shrines dedicated to Thiên, the Spirit of Heaven. These range in elaborateness from simple planks of wood set on a post or tree trunk to a small concrete structure. The prescribed offerings include three cups of tea or rice alcohol, a small dish of rice, a small package of salt, and burning joss. On the first and fifteenth day of each lunar month, offerings are made at these altars to keep the spirit there to protect the house and its occupants. Every member of the family also has his own feast day known as Cúng Sao, when his star is in its zenith. In order to attract the most favorable influences of this star, one should light a great many candles at the Thiên shrine on the belief that the brightness of the candlelight will attract the brightness of the star.

Cult of Linh Thần Thổ Võ, the Spirit of the Soil. -- There are numerous occasions when the family pays ritual homage to Linh Thần Thổ Võ, the Spirit of the Soil. When a new house is being constructed, a ritual to this spirit is prerequisite to any of the actual work. An altar, containing the usual accoutrement, is arranged on the site, and offerings are made to the Spirit of

Agriculture to obtain his permission to use that particular plot of ground.

Before planting their seed beds, many farmers have a simple ritual, offering food and burning joss, to entreat the Spirit of the Soil to being them luck with their crops. At weddings, the bridal couple make offerings and kowtow before a small altar dedicated to Linh Thần Thổ Võ, before entering the groom's house.

Division of Labor in the Family

Division of labor in the family varies according to the social class, the season, and the household composition. The families of laborers and small tenant farmers tend to divide labor in much the same way. They are closer to a subsistence level than any other group in the village, so all able-bodied members of the family are expected to contribute to the sustenance of the family. This is particularly true in years of lean harvests such as 1957 and 1958.

The father is, of course, the major breadwinner of the family. Laborers tend to be most actively employed during the planting and harvesting since most of them work for farmers. Normally, the farmers hire the same workers from year to year, thus giving most laborers a steady, if seasonal, employment. The small tenant farmer also is most active during the planting and harvesting, and he has the added chore of repairing his implements and caring for his draft animals, if he has any. After the harvest, both the

laborer and the small tenant farmer divide their time between maintaining their farmsteads and seeking additional employment. The dry season is the time for replacing thatch and making any other necessary house repairs, and since mutual aid is more prevalent among lower class villagers these tasks are usually performed with the assistant of kin and neighbors.

Both small tenant farmers and laborers must supplement their incomes by seeking dry season employment in the village or in Tân An. Repairing bundings and digging irrigation channels often requires hired assistance, and the School of Fundamental Education keeps many laborers and available tenant farmers busy working on their agricultural projects. Some villagers go to Tân An seeking employment as coolies, and those that find work also try to find a place for kin or friends with the same employer.

In families of laborers, small tenant farmers, and small landowners, grown sons usually work with their fathers until they have established their own households. As long as they are living in the paternal house, however, they also have the status of breadwinners. If the son should remain in the paternal house after marriage, his wife has much the same role as the grown daughters. In families of this economic level, the daughters are expected to seek employment. Most work in the transplanting and harvesting teams, and girls from small tenant families assist their fathers or husbands with field work, doing such things as wedding, harvesting paddy, winnowing, weighing of paddy, and storing it in the bins.

The wives usually assist in sunning the paddy. Women also help the men carry the straw collected in the fields back to the farmstead. A few girls may work periodically as domestics for wealthy families, and some girls of poor families may be fortunate enough to become apprentices to seamstresses in the village.

Older women of this class often weave mats and baskets on demand, and most of them tend small kitchen gardens. In some cases, they sell part of the produce in the village. Some women engage in small commerce, selling sugar cane or coconuts purchased in the market in Tân An or Tân Hưởng, and a few make rice cakes to sell along the main road. Practically the only women who are engaged in petty commerce on a relatively full time basis, however, are those whose husbands are deceased, disabled, or have abandoned them.

The primary role of the women of this class is to maintain the home and care for the children. Their daily routine and responsibilities remain fairly constant, and only the schedule for meals varies with the agricultural cycle. The wife remains in the farmstead most of the day, and she rarely assists in the field work. A few of the wives also work on the transplanting and harvesting teams, but in most instances, their household duties prevent them from working outside. Marketing trips to Tân An are an infrequent necessity since they have neither the need nor the means to purchase most of the goods sold there. They have their own paddy, and periodically either the wife or one of the daughters

carries baskets of it to the local rice mill to be husked and polished. Vegetables, fish, and condiments such as nước mắm or mắm nêm, which are part of the daily meals, are purchased at one of the local shops. Usually one of the little girls is sent on such errands.

Household tasks include preparing the meals for the family, and for the transplanters if the family hires them. The houses must be swept out several times a day, and clothes must be laundered several times a week. Caring for clothes is not a pressing responsibility since villagers of this class particularly the males, do not wear many clothes. Carrying water is a daily task, and several times each week the women seek firewood which also must be chopped. Much of the wife's time is spent caring for the inevitable infant --- nursing it, rocking it to sleep in a hammock, and bathing it. A periodic responsibility of the women is to prepare the meals that are served at family celebrations. Among the lower class villagers, however, these are never very elaborate, so they do not require a great deal of time and effort.

Younger children also have some responsibilities in families of the lower class. They are expected to take care of their younger brothers and sisters, and they search for firewood around the village. If the family should engage in such activities as raising ducks, the small sons are responsible for guarding them, and some boys are hired to guard buffalo. Boys also contribute directly to the family larder by trap fishing in the flooded paddy

fields, the canals, and the streams. They also search for wild fruit, and at harvest time, children of poor families glean the fields for sprigs of paddy. In very poor families, the need to giúp đỡ cha me, "aid the parents," prevents the children from attending school.

One of the characteristics of the middle class in Khánh Hậu is that the head of the house and adult sons tend to be engaged exclusively in agricultural activities. Their primary responsibilities revolve around farm and home, and they normally do not seek outside employment, although the poor harvests of 1957 and 1958 have forced some to do so. Those who do not own draft animals and a plow, must hire them to prepare the fields for planting, and all farmers of this class hire transplanting teams. Most of the other tasks are performed by the farmer and his sons, and the whole family joins in the harvest activities, aided, perhaps, by several hired workers. They cut the stalks, thresh, and transport the paddy back to the farmstead. There the wife and daughters do the winnowing and sunning of paddy before storing it. As in families of lower class farmers, the girls assist in collecting and transporting straw back to the farmstead. By and large, there is less mutual aid among farmers of the middle class. When their houses need repairs or the thatching must be replaced, they usually hire workers to do it.

The role of the wife in the middle class does not vary greatly from that of the lower class wife. Their responsibilities are

essentially the same in maintaining the household --- cooking, washing clothes, caring for the children, and tending the kitchen gardens. They also prepare the periodic feasts associated with the various family celebrations. Women of the middle class do more marketing in Tân An or Tân Hướng, but they are less likely to be engaged in petty commerce. They also are less likely to engage in some home industry such as weaving. Some of the girls learn sewing, and they may purchase a foot-powered sewing machine and carry on the coutouriere's trade in the home, but they rarely, if ever, work on the transplanting teams. The responsibilities of girls in the middle class are more in the home, helping with household tasks, than in contributing financially to the sustenance of the family.

Children of the middle class generally are not expected to participate in the familial division of labor to the extent that lower class children do. Farmers of this class may own livestock and the boys are responsible for guarding them when they are grazing or bathing, but this is not a full-time task. Boys and girls also are expected to care for their younger siblings while the women of the house are occupied with other responsibilities.

Most upper class farmers in Khánh Hậu have the means to hire laborers to do the necessary work on their farms, but they still must supervise such things as the planting, transplanting, and the harvesting. This also relieves their sons of any responsibility to assist in the farm work, although at harvest, both the sons and

daughters may contribute some labor because of the necessity to carry out harvesting activities as soon as possible. The women also may sun the paddy and winnow it. Among upper class villagers, there is little mutual aid for such things as house construction and repairs for several reasons. First, they usually live in houses that require specialists for any work done on them, and secondly, they can afford to hire whatever help they require.

While the head of the house is required to labor less, and the sons and daughters are relatively free of the responsibility of contributing directly to the sustenance of the family, the wives in upper class families have the same essential role as those in the lower and middle classes. In fact, household demands are liable to be greater among the upper class, resulting in more work for the women. There are few part-time domestics, and only one resident domestic in the village. The women of the house must do the marketing in Tân An or Tân Hưởng. The houses of upper class villagers are larger, better furnished, and therefore require more care. Villagers of this class have larger wardrobes, and they tend to eat more elaborate meals and entertain visitors more often. Furthermore, their family celebrations are more elaborate, and the women are responsible for the planning and preparation of the feasts. On the other hand, they are often relieved of such arduous tasks as carrying water since many of their houses either have water tanks or a large number of earthen jars for storing water, and they purchase their firewood.

Chapter VI

RELIGION IN KHÁNH HẬU

In many respects, Khánh Hậu presents a microcosmic view of the religious situation in South Việt Nam. Historically, a number of religious movements have swept the area, each leaving its imprint on the population, and resulting in an amalgam of religions at the village level. The traditional Mahayana Buddhist-Taoist-Confucius religious system of the Vietnamese replaced the Hinayana or Theravada Buddhism of the Khmer population which previously occupied the delta region. Catholicism was established in the south during the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and Cao Daism, a synchretic religion incorporating Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, with lesser amounts of Catholicism, Indian mysticism, and a scattering of other religious beliefs and practices, has become widespread in the south during the past thirty-three years.

All of these institutionalized religions have been established in Khánh Hậu where, in many instances, they are practiced by the same people, possibly in the same place, but at different times. There is little or no conflict among them, and it might be said that where they do not fuse, they simply co-exist.

It is difficult to categorize the array of cults practiced in Khánh Hậu, but for the purposes of description, the following outline will be used:

I. Institutionalized Religions

A. Mahayana Buddhism

B. Catholicism

C. Cao Daism

II. Village-Sponsored Cults[1]

A. The Cult of the Guardian Spirit of the Village

B. The Cult of Tien Hien, the Village Ancestors

C. The Cult of Ong Than Nong, the Spirit of Agriculture

III. Group-Sponsored Cults

A. The Cult of Quan Cong

IV. Family Cults[2]

A. The Cult of the Ancestors

B. The Cult of Ong Tạo, the Spirit of the Hearth

C. The Cult of Ong Thiên, the Spirit of Heaven

D. Cúng Sao, the Star Cult

E. The Cult of Linh Thần Thổ Võ, the Spirit of the Soil

F. Household Talismans

V. Individual Cults[3]

A. Sorcerers

B. Healers

C. Private Shrines

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[1]These cults are discussed in Chapter III

[2]Family Cults are discussed in Chapter V

[3]Sorcerers and their functions are discussed in Chapters III and VII. Healers are discussed in Chapter VII.

Buddhism

Part of the cultural heritage from the long Chinese occupation of Việt Nam is Mahayana Buddhism, which remains the predominant institutionalized religion in Vietnamese society. This religion was carried southward by the expanding Vietnamese population, into the delta of the Mekong River where the indigenous Khmer population practiced Hinayana or Theravada Buddhism. Hinayana Buddhism has remained the religion of the ever-diminishing islands of Khmer-speaking populations in the delta, but it has been replaced by the Mahayana Buddhism throughout most of the region. By and large, there seems to have been little fusion of the two. Here and there one finds a Hinayana deity being venerated by the Vietnamese, but it is exceptional.

In recent years, there have been significant innovations in Buddhism in South Việt Nam. Around seven years ago, a movement began in Saigon to form a hierarchical committee for the purpose of centralizing the control of the thousands of pagodas scattered throughout the country. This movement gained momentum as Buddhist refugees came to the south, and the need for more organization became apparent with the influx of Catholic refugees and the continued expansion of Cao Daism. The Khánh Hưng pagoda in the Hòa Hưng quarter of Saigon became the headquarters of the new Buddhist Association of South Việt Nam, and the school for monks was established there.

Ấp Mới Pagoda. -- The Buddhist pagoda in Ấp Mới, not far from the council house, is considered the "village pagoda." It is supported by communal land, and village officials have a role in the major rituals held there. This pagoda was constructed some sixty years ago with funds solicited from residents of Ấp Mới, Ấp Dinh A-B, and Ấp Thủ Tựu. One wealthy villager donated the large plot of land on which the pagoda stands, and others donated land to the village for the purpose of supporting the pagoda. The location of the pagoda is considered favorable since it stands near the oldest tree in the village. This gnarled giant is thought to be sacred because of its great age, and nearby residents believe its inviting shade attracts the spirits when they promenade, so they caution their children to avoid it, especially at noon.

The pagoda is a substantial structure, the main part of which is constructed of a hardwood frame supported by polished wooden pillars. The roof is of tile, and the side walls are of wooden planks while the front is masonry. Behind the main part of the building there is a somewhat rambling addition, and the thatched house belonging to the resident monk stands to one side. The sanctuary occupies about three quarters of the main building. The remaining one quarter and the abutting structure to the rear form one large room which houses several altars, and serves a variety of functions. It is used as a reception room when there are visitors and it is a meeting room for the faithful. When the nearby primary school becomes overcrowded, it is used as a temporary classroom.

The sanctuary contains six altars. The main altar has figures representing Di Dà, the first incarnation of Buddha, and two small figures of Ana and Ca Ip, both assistants of Di Dà. The one side is the statue of Thích Ca, the first reincarnation of Buddha, and a statue of Ông Dức Lam, the deity in charge of rituals in the pagoda. The smaller altars along the walls of the sanctuary are dedicated to a variety of Buddhist deities. Quan Công or Quan Dế, the Chinese warrior who is venerated as a Buddhist saint, shares his altar with his two assistants, Châu, a black figure, and Binh, a white one. Another altar contains a statue of Bà Cửu Thiên Huyền Nữ, a goddess who is considered the protectress of women and newborn infants. Between the two front entrances stands an altar containing two figures, one representing Ong Tiêu, the Chief of Hell who commands all demons, and Ong Hộ, also known as Hộ Pháp, the protector of honest men. At another altar, a very colorful figure standing by a stylized lion represents Tam Tang, a Buddhist monk sent from China to India during the Đường dynasty to seek the true prayers of Buddha.

The rear room also contains several altars, only one of which is dedicated to a Buddhist deity. This is the goddess Chu An De Phat Mau, a spectacular figure with eighteen arms. Along the wall separating the sanctuary from the reception room, there are three altars, each containing tablets covered with Chinese characters. The central altar is dedicated to the villagers who have donated land for the pagoda. To one side is a small altar dedicated to those who have given donations for the repairs and maintenance of the pagoda. The

remaining altar is in memory of the present guardian-monk's father, the first resident monk of the pagoda.

The present resident monk is a small man of fifty years, married, and the father of three sons. His father was the first resident monk in the pagoda. After his death, several other monks were appointed to this position, but they proved unsatisfactory and the Village Council hired the present monk some twenty years ago. The resident monk learned the prayers, ritual procedures, and Buddhist dogma from his father, and he studied Chinese characters in school. He possesses several old certificates attesting to the fact that he is a bona fide monk, although he has no contact with the Central Buddhist Committee, and he carries on his functions without any hierarchical control.

Although the monk does not observe the dietary restrictions prescribed for most Buddhist monks, he carries out the daily schedule of rituals listed in Table 6. These are performed without the assistance of any of the faithful. On the great annual feast days, however, the Village Council is invited to participate, and usually at least one member attends as the village representative. Around seventy or eighty faithful gather at the pagoda for these rituals. The younger brother of the monk, who also is a monk, and lives across the road with his family, has no official status, although he assists with the rituals. He rents some of the pagoda land from his elder brother.

Two and a half hectares of the village communal land is classified as pagoda land, and it is set aside for the use of the resident monk. He rents part of it, and hires workers to cultivate the remainder. With normal rainfall and other favorable conditions, the two and a half hectares produce around two hundred gia of paddy, and a certain portion of paddy realized in harvest and rent is paid to the Village Council for the use of communal land. The income from the land is sufficient to support the monk and his family, but leaves little for the rituals held in the pagoda. As a result, the monk must rely on the faithful to bring donations of cash and food when they come to assist at rituals. In addition to cultivating rice, the monk keeps a kitchen garden in the area around the pagoda.

There is a pagoda committee of lay members of the congregation, organized for the purpose of stimulating greater interest in Buddhism, encouraging greater participation in the rituals, and seeing to the general welfare of the faithful. It is composed of several villagers with one designated the chief. They have no role in rituals nor do they receive any salary.

The Ấp Cầu Pagoda. -- Twenty-five years ago, a Cu Si[4] from Ấp Cầu established a chua am, a private shrine, in his house and dedicated it to the Buddha (Cái Am). He was a member of one of

[4]Cu Si is a semi-reclusive Buddhist mystic. For further details, see the section on Cu Si later in this chapter.

the wealthiest families in Ấp Cầu, and with contributions from his affluent kin, he eventually constructed a building to house the shrine. In time, it was enlarged into a pagoda, and at the invitation of the Cu Si, a Buddhist monk came to reside there. A young man from the hamlet began to study Buddhist dogma with the monk, and after the death of the Cu Si and the monk, he became a monk and took up residence in the pagoda.

During the war, the front part of the pagoda was burned, but the sanctuary was saved (villagers believe this to be a miracle). Reconstruction was begun with a cash contribution by the Ong Ke Hien, the wealthiest resident of Ấp Cầu, and the elder brother of the deceased Cư Sĩ. The new structure, substantially built with masonry walls, tile roof, and concrete floor, became the sanctuary, and the old sanctuary was converted into the monk's quarters. Ong Ke Hien also contributed one hectare of paddy land to the pagoda, and he agreed to give the monk one hundred kilo of rice each year.

The sanctuary is dominated by a high altar containing a number of painted figures representing various Buddhist deities. A large gilded Buddha occupies the top level. Below it are the figures of A-Anan, one of Buddha's assistants; Thich Ca, a reincarnation of Buddha; Ca Dip, who replaced Thich Ca after his death; Dat Ma, the twenty-eighth reincarnation of Buddha; Quan Am, the Buddhist goddess of mercy; Di Dà, the first reincarnation of Buddha; and Di Lac, the fat, laughing Buddha with six small figures representing Van Thu, the six temporal senses, the guardian of the pagoda;

Quan Cong, the great Chinese warrior who became a Buddha; Ong Tieu, a spirit who frightens away evil spirits, and Hộ Pháp, the protector of honest men.

The old part of the pagoda, which served as the monk's quarters, is abutted to the rear of the sanctuary. When the monk resided there, it was simply furnished. It only contained one carved figure, that of Ong Dám, a Buddhist deity who is an example of faith for simple, unlettered folk. According to legend, Ong Dám was an illiterate woodcutter who had no religious instruction. Very often during the day, however, he would chant the prayer, "Nam mo A Di Dà Phật" (I venerate the Buddha A Di Dà). As a reward for his sanctity, he was proclaimed a Buddha of the Bo Tát, the lowest order of Buddhas. He is represented by the gilded figure of a husky man holding a large ax and sitting on a tree stump.

The monk who occupied the pagoda until May, 1958 was from a large family of farmers in Ấp Cầu, and he entered the religious life at an early age to study with the monk and the Cử Sĩ in the pagoda. This ascetic man observed the strict regime of the Buddhist monk. He kept his head shaved andcontinually wore the dark brown monk's garb. He was unmarried, and ate a sparse vegetarian fare. His day was spent in prayer, taking care of the pagoda, and tending his kitchen garden. He hired workers to cultivate the one hectare of land, the income from which was used to maintain the pagoda and help meet the cost of the feasts given after each of the rituals attended by the faithful.

Following a decision that he needed more formal training in Buddhist dogma, the monk left Khánh Hậu to study at the Ấn Quang pagoda in Saigon. Prior to his departure, he requested that a group of Bà Vãi, Buddhist nuns, be sent from the school in Mỹ Tho to replace him in the Ấp Cầu pagoda. The head of this school is a niece of "Ong Kế Hiền", and she complied by sending a group of four nuns to Ấp Cầu. One woman who had been a nun for many years and had received considerable training, was designated Sư Cô, the superior. The Ni Cô, or ordinary nuns, are women of varied backgrounds and ages. All shave their heads and wear the dark brown robes of the Buddhist religious.

The nuns are organized as a religious community with each member delegated certain responsibilities. One of their first projects was to organize a pagoda school to give instruction in reading, writing, and Buddhist prayers to pre-primary school-age children free of charge. One nun is responsible for running the school, which is located in a thatched addition abutting their quarters. The other nuns divide the labor of cooking, cultivating the kitchen garden, and maintaining the pagoda. They hire workers to plant and transplant the one hectare, but they do their own harvesting. They do not receive rice from Ong Ke Hien, as the monk had, but they do receive periodic cash donations from him.

In addition to his financial support of the pagoda, Ong Kế Hiền recently sponsored a Buddhist conference in Ấp Cầu. Learned monks came from the large pagodas in Saigon to lecture on Buddhist

beliefs and the life of Buddha, and a special building was constructed to house them. An American travel film was shown to provide entertainment for the many people who came from the surrounding area, and Ong Kế Hiền contributed one hundred kilos of rice to distribute among the needy who attended. As sponsor of the pagoda, Ong Kế Hiền was granted the right to construct both his and his wife's tombs on the pagoda grounds.

Soon after the nuns occupied the pagoda, they brought about a number of changes in the physical appearance as well as in the rituals and the program of pagoda activities. The figure of Ong Dám was moved to the main altar, and they added many feminine touches to the living quarters; brightly colored scrolls were hung on the walls, flowered pillows were placed on the severe wooden beds, and a green tea cosy graced the table where guests are received. In addition to the pagoda school, they added a library of Buddhist literature. In the semi-monthly Sám Hối ritual, which is intended to ask forgiveness of Buddha, they instituted the practice of public confessions. In the course of the ritual, those who have committed any wrongs confess them to the congregation. According to the Sư Cô, this is an old practice based on a Buddhist principle.

The nuns observe a strict daily schedule. At 5:00 a.m. they rise and observe the Cong Phu ritual before the main altar. Unlike many Buddhist religious, however, they do not have the practice of Khất Thực, begging food from the faithful. They spend the

Table 6

CALENDER OF BUDDHIST RITUALS IN KHÁNH HẬU

I. Tam Nguồn: The Three Great Annual Rituals

1. 15th day of the 1st lunar month --- Thượng Nguồn, to mark the beginning of the new year.
2. 15th day of the 7th lunar month --- Trung Nguồn, the mid-year festival.
3. 15th day of the 10th lunar month --- Hạ Nguồn, to mark the end of the year.

II. Những Ngày Vía: Lesser Annual Buddhist Rituals

1. 1st day of the 1st lunar month --- Thích Ca Xuất Gia, to celebrate Buddha's departure from his family
2. 8th day of the 2nd lunar month --- Thích Ca Nhập Diệt, marking Buddha's first mystical experience.
3. 15th day of the 2nd lunar month --- Quan Am Dán Sanh, the birthday of Quan Am.
4. 19th day of the 2nd lunar month --- Phổ Hiền, the birthday of Phổ Hiền.
5. 21st day of the 2nd lunar month --- Chuẩn Dề Phật Mẫu, the birthday of Chuẩn Dề Phật Mẫu.
6. 6th day of the 3rd lunar month --- Thích Ca Dản Sanh, the birthday of Thích Ca.
7. 8th day of the 4th lunar month --- Như Lai, the birthday of Như Lai.
8. 12th day of the 4th lunar month --- Hộ Pháp Di Dà, the birthday of Hộ Pháp Di Da.

9. 1st day of the 6th lunar month --- Quan Am Xuất Gia, to mark Quan Am's departure from her family to become a religious.

10. 19th day of the 6th lunar month --- Dại Thế Chi, the birthday of Dại Thế Chi.

11. 13th day of the 7th lunar month --- Dại Tăng, the birthday of Dại Tăng.

12. 30th day of the 7th lunar month --- Nhiên Dăng, the birthday of Nhiên Dăng.

13. 22nd day of the 8th lunar month --- Quan Am Thành Đạo, sanctification of Quan Am.

14. 19th day of the 9th lunar month --- Thích Ca Cổ Phật Nhập Diệt, to celebrate Thích Ca's state of nirvana.

15. 8th day of the 10th lunar month --- Di Dà Dẫn Sanh, birthday of Di Da.

16. 8th day of the 12th lunar month --- Thích Ca Đắc Đạo, celebration of Thích Ca's becoming a Buddha.

III. Monthly Rituals

On the 14th and 30th days of each lunar month, there is the Sám Hối ritual.

IV. Daily Rituals

- 5:00 a.m. --- Công Phu
- 6:00 a.m. --- (Ấp Mới Pagoda) Cong Com
- 12:00 noon --- (Ấp Cầu Pagoda) Cong Com
- 5:00 p.m. --- (Ấp Mới Pagoda) Cong Phu
- 8:00 p.m. --- (Ấp Cầu Pagoda) Cong Phu.

morning at their delegated tasks, and at noon they perform the Cúng Cơm, a ritual offering of food to Buddha. Afterwards, they take their one daily meal. At 8:00 p.m. there is another Công Phu ritual accompanied by a ritual offering of soup to the errant spirits, the wandering souls of those who have no descendants offering a cult for them. At 10:00 p.m. they retire.

In addition to their daily ritual schedule, and the observance of the annual rituals, the nuns are often summoned to pray at the bedside of an ailing villager or at a funeral. They receive a fee for these services, so the more affluent villagers are the only ones who request their participation. They have little or no contact with the monk in the Ấp Mới pagoda. According to the Sư Cô, however, if he should request their assistance, they would be only too willing to respond.

Cư Sĩ, Buddhist Quasi-religious. -- In addition to the monks and nuns residing in the two pagodas, carrying on private and public Buddhist rituals and observing the rules and regimes of a Buddhist religious, there are quasi-religious called Cu Si who practice private cults within their own homes. Khánh Hậu has two Cu Si, both male residents of Ấp Cầu, and both have spent periods studying Buddhist dogma with learned monks. One Cư Sĩ, a man of sixty-eight years, has the appearance of a holy man -- piercing eyes, a thin, ascetic face, and a surprisingly full black beard. When he was twenty-five years of age and already married, he left his family to go to the mountain of Tà-Lơn in Kampot province in Cambodia to study

with the Buddhist monks there. He remained at this retreat for more than two years, only interrupting the study period to make several trips back to Khánh Hậu to visit his family. In addition to studying Buddhist dogma, he learned Chinese caligraphy, and gained a proficiency in healing by exorcism and the use of amulets and medicines made from roots and herbs. After this study period, he returned to Khánh Hậu to live with his family and work as a laborer.

The other Cử Sĩ is a younger man who began to study Buddhism at the age of fourteen. He spent a period studying with monks on Ba Den mountain near Tây Ninh and at the large pagoda of Vinh Trang on the edge of Mỹ Tho. The war disrupted studies at the Vĩnh Tràng pagoda, so he returned to Khánh Hậu and married. He cleared a place for his house in the midst of a swampy area of Ấp Cầu, and rented one hectare of land to cultivate rice.

Cu Si,are expected to observe five of the ten taboos prescribed for Buddhist religious, viz. against killing, drinking alcohol, smoking, sexual pleasures, and stealing. Neither of the Cử Sĩ observes all five interdictions, nor do they shave their heads and maintain a vegetarian diet. Both, however, practice the same Buddhist cults in their homes. The main rooms of their houses are arranged like pagodas, with altars dedicated to a variety of Buddhist deities. They have the same accoutrements -- gongs, parasols, incense burners, and hangings, found in Buddhist sanctuaries, and they wear the monk's garb during their rituals.

Both follow a daily ritual schedule similar to that of the Buddhist religious. At 6:00 a.m., noon, and 6:00 p.m., they perform the Công Phu rituals, which consist of prayers and kowtowing before the altars. The wife of the elder Cử Sĩ participates in his rituals, although these rituals normally are performed by the Cử Sĩ alone. They have no rituals marking the great annual Buddhist feasts, but unlike the monks and nuns in Khánh Hậu pagodas, they have the ritual Xin Xâm before the altar of Quan Cong, the sainted Chinese warrior. This consists of shaking a container of sticks on which fortunes are inscribed in Chinese characters. The first stick that pops out bears the fortune of the shaker, and it must be interpreted by the Cử Sĩ.

Both Cử Sĩ are healers, and their services are much in demand. They use exorcism to cure madness, and they prepare amulets designed to prevent illness and misfortune. They also employ a wide variety of herbs and roots to prepare medicines. The elder Cu Si enjoys a good reputation as an effective healer, and clients come to him from distant places to obtain cures. Both Cử Sĩ often travel to other hamlets and neighboring villages to pray or bring medicine to the gravely ill. They also assist women having difficulty giving birth. For these services, they usually receive a fee.

In addition to his other talents, the elder Cử Sĩ practices a special form of geomancy concerned with interior plans of buildings of all types. This is based on the Taoist principle

of dương (light), the male principle which deals with things associated with the living, as opposed to âm (darkness), the female principle dealing with things associated with death, such as tombs. Feeling that dealing with both principles is dangerous, the Cu Si restricts himself to dương, and he advises the most propitious arrangements for buildings, relative to the four cardinal points. He visits the site for the building and then consults his book on the principles of dương to work out the best floor plan and interior arrangement. He was consulted in the planning of the new pagoda constructed by the Buddhist nuns in Mỹ Tho.

Buddhism in the Home. -- The Buddhist faithful in Khánh Hậu almost invariably maintain at least one altar to one or more Buddhist deity in their houses. Sizeable altars usually share the place of honor with the altar of the ancestors, with one before or behind the other. Small Buddhist altars may be placed in any part of the main room of the house, and in small houses lack of space may require that they be attached high on the wall or even on the cross-beams. The deities being venerated depend on the preference of the family or the head of the house. An altar may include a number of deities such as Thích Ca (most commonly venerated), the goddess Quan Thế Am, or the Chinese warrior Quan Công. Older women very often prefer to honor the goddesses (particularly those such as Cửu Thiên) considered the protectoresses of households and children.

The faithful Buddhist family normally observes three Công Phu rituals each day at the altar. These are at 6:00 a.m., noon, and 6:00 p.m., and consist of burning joss, kowtowing, and praying. Some make offerings of tea or food on the altar once a day. Since the Buddhist altar and the altar of the ancestors usually occupy the same place in the room, these rituals have the dual function of honoring both the Buddhist deities and the ancestors.

Catholicism

Catholicism has been established a long time in Việt Nam, particularly in the north, where, prior to 1954, the densest concentrations of Catholics were found. Catholicism was introduced into Khánh Hậu sometime in the early twentieth century, and at the present time there are twelve Catholic families in the village, comprising some eighty people. The first Catholics in the village were residents of Ấp Dinh-B, so most of the present Catholic population is concentrated there. There are a few Catholic families in Ấp Dinh-A and one in Ấp Nhơn Hậu. The nearest church is on the edge of Tân An, some three kilometers from the village, and the faithful must travel there to attend services. Periodically the priest comes to the village to visit his parishioners, or to administer the sacraments to those unable to journey into Tân An.

The Catholic residents of the village have their own giáp (association). The owner of the Ấp Dinh-B rice mill is the current Ong Giáp, the chief of the group, appointed by the parish priest.

He is the liaison between the priest and the faithful in the village. His responsibilities include visiting the parishioners' homes, passing on any messages received from the priest, and summoning the priest when his services are needed. If any Catholic villager should be near death, the Ong Giáp keeps a watch so he can hurry into Tân An and bring the priest to administer the last rites.

Most of the conversions in the village come about as a result of marriage; in a mixed marriage, the non-Catholic is expected to embrace the faith. There is a preference, however, for Catholics to marry Catholics and while they are relatively few in number in Khánh Hậu, attendance at services in Tân An affords an opportunity for young people from different villages to meet.

The one thing that distinguishes Catholic houses is their reception rooms; the place of honor is occupied by a Catholic shrine, usually dedicated to the Sacred Heart, instead of the usual ancestral or Buddhist altar. These shrines closely resemble the traditional altars, although they have no gongs, incense burners, and offerings.

Cao Daism

General Background. -- According to Gabriel Gobron[1], the Cao Dài religion was founded in the year 1925 by Mr. Ngô Văn Chiêu, a Đốc Phủ in the Department of Criminal Investigation of Cochinchina. Long an advocate of spiritualism, Mr. Chiêu spent much of his spare time organizing seances. While serving at the district headquarters on the island of Phú Quốc in the Gulf of Siam, Mr. Chieu and his friends contacted a spirit that identified itself as Cao Dai (the High Throne), but it failed to explain the meaning of the term. In a later seance, the spirit manifested itself again and directed Mr. Chiêu to symbolize him with an enormous eye emitting bright rays of light.

Soon after, Mr. Chiêu was transferred to Saigon where he continued to conduct seances with a small group of devotees in a house on a back street of Cholon. He now began to employ the "corbeille a bec", a basket-like object with an arm attached, which holds the writing instrument. When the basket is held by the medium, preferably a youth between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, the arm swings around, spelling out the spirit message on paper. On Christmas Eve, 1925, during one of these seances, the Cao Dai let it be known that he was "the supreme being," and he directed the group to be his disciples and organize a new religion bearing his name. The first converts were acquaintances of members of the

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[1]Gobron, G., Histoire du Cao Daisme (Paris, Deruy), 1948, p.5

group, mostly clerks and low-ranking functionaries from the various colonial government bureaus in Saigon. Soon, however, it spread through all the ranks of the government.

One high official organized a seance group that met in a restaurant in Cholon, and one of his sessions was attended by a wealthy businessman named Lê Văn Trung. In the course of the seance, the spirit directed the visitor to become a Cao Dai, and it went on to state that it was his mission to lead this new religion. Mr. Trung was deeply affected by this message, and, according to Gobron, he gave up his business and his mundane style of life (including his opium smoking), and devoted full time to the Cao Dai religion.

The organization of the group does not appear to have been very well established at this stage, and Mr. Trung superseded Mr. Chiêu as the recognized head of the religion. Conversions were swelling the ranks of the faithful, and on October 7, 1926, an official declaration of Cao Dai as an institutionalized religion, signed by twenty-eight members, was filed with the Governor of Cochinchina. In March, 1927, the group acquired a sizable plot of land in Long Thanh village, Tây Ninh province, near the town of Tây Ninh, and there they established their Holy See with Le Van Trung proclaimed the first Pope.

The period that followed was one of great expansion, and, although Gobron neglects to mention it, a period of great dissension among the hierarchy. A number of the high dignitaries, discontented

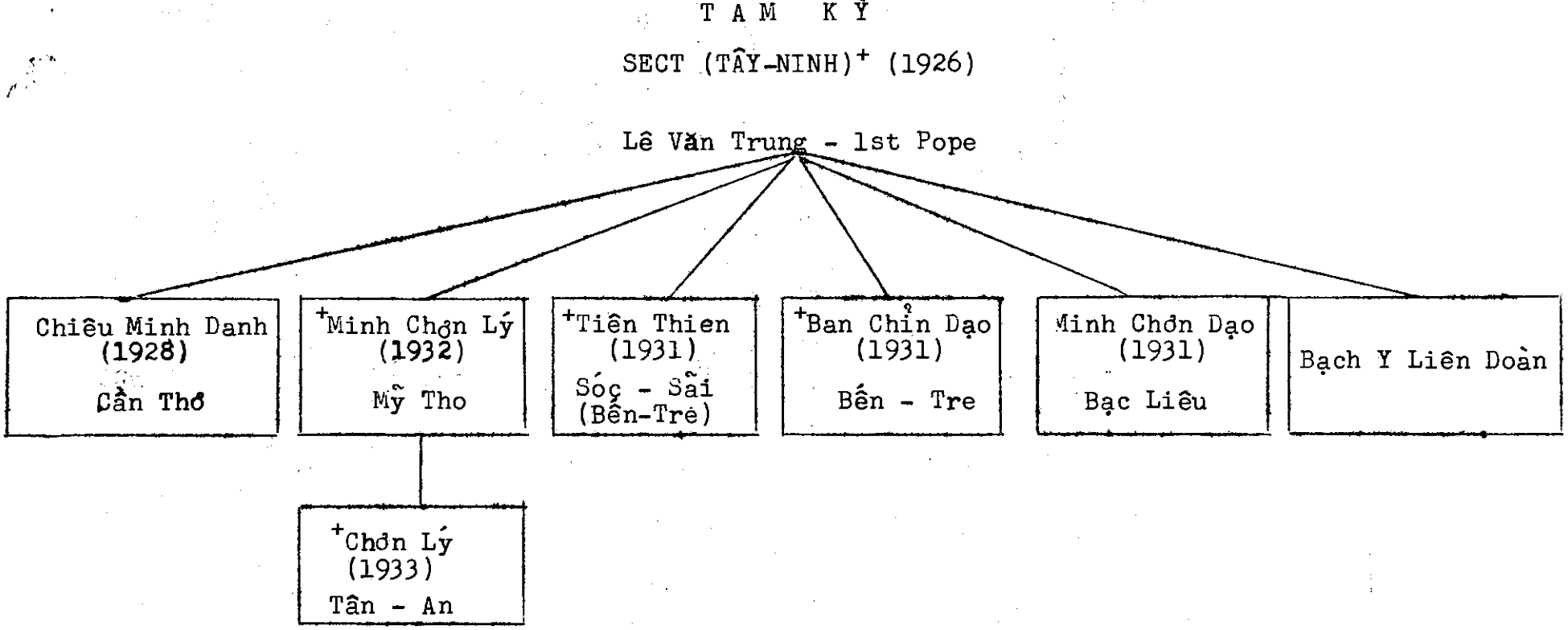
with the Pope's policies, left Tây Ninh, and out of this exodus, eleven new Cao Dai sects resulted. Eight of these survive in recognizable form at the present time (see Chart 7).

The Chiêu Minh Danh was the first separate sect to be formed. Mr. Chieu, the founder of Cao Daism, organized this sect at Cần Tho in 1928. Đốc Phủ Nguyễn Ngọc Tưởng, one of the high dignitaries of the Tam Kỳ, left Tây Ninh in 1930 because of a disagreement with the Pope concerning the establishment of a Cao Dai army. He went to Bến Tre where he organized the Ban Chỉ Đạo sect, and he became pope of this group in 1934. Another dignitary, Mr. Nguyễn Hữu Chín, quit Tây Ninh in 1934 with fourteen followers known as the seven saints and seven sages, to preach his version of Cao Daism throughout the delta area. His sect is known as the Tien Thien, a name given by a spirit during a seance. This group had no holy see until 1955, when they constructed their cathedral at Sóc Sãi, thirteen kilometers from the town of Bến Tre.

Another dissident, Đốc Phủ Nguyễn Háo Ca, received a spirit message directing him to establish his own sect, so he left Tây Ninh in 1931 and eventually went to Mỹ Tho where he founded the Minh Chơn Lý sect. In 1933, a small group of followers broke away from the Minh Chơn Lý and, under the leadership of Doc Phu Nguyễn Văn Kiên they organized the Chơn Lý Tầm Nguyên sect in Tân An. Two lesser known and relatively small sects known as the Minh Chơn Dạo and the Bạch Y Liên Đoàn were established in Bạc Liêu and Tây Ninh respectively.

Chart 7

SECT BRANCHING OFF TÂY-NINH SECT (TAM KY SECT)



+ Adherents in Khánh Hậu

. Cao Daism in Khánh Hậu. -- In Khánh Hậu there are adherents of four of the existing Cao Đai sects -- Tam Kỳ, Minh Chơn Lý, Tiên Thiên, and Ban Chỉn Dao. Of these, only the Tiên Thiên and Ban Chỉn Dạo sects have temples in the village. It appears that the first converts to Cao Dai in Khánh Hậu belonged to the Tam Kỳ, which, prior to 1955, was the largest, wealthiest, and best organized of the Cao Dài sects. Since that time, however, the other sects have expanded and many Cao Daists in Khánh Hậu have shifted adherence to them, particularly the Tien Thien and the Ban Chỉn Dạo. The Minh Chơn Lý has gained relatively few followers in the village.

One of the primary factors contributing to this shift was the decline of the Tam Kỳ. It was the only Cao Dài sect tolerated by the French administration. Most of the other sects were viewed with disfavor, and their activities were severely restricted. After the departure of the French and the difficulties between the newly formed national government and the Tam Kỳ, this sect declined while the other sects were allowed to function openly. They began to proselytize actively in the villages, and the Tien Thien and Ban Chỉn Dao gained a large following in Khánh Hậu. They had established temples, another factor which contributed to their success. The Tam Kỳ sect had never constructed a temple in the village so their followers had no focal point around which they could rally. Also, the doctrines and organization of the Tiên Thiên and Ban Chỉn Dạo closely resemble the Tam Kỳ, permitting villagers to make the change with relative ease. Finally, many of the villagers

undoubtedly preferred to be identified with the less controversial sects.

The Ban Chỉnh Dạo Sect. -- Đốc Phủ Tướng, the founder of the Ban Chỉnh Dạo sect, quit Tây Ninh in 1931 and went to Bến Tre where he established a holy see for his newly established sect. In 1934 the group began construction of its cathedral which was completed in 1940. During this period, the sect gained a wide-spread membership throughout southern Viet Nam. With the war, many of the Cao Dai sects encountered great difficulties with the French administration, but the Ban Chỉnh Dạo was allowed to carry on without interference. The leaders of the sect attribute this to the fact that their leader, Đốc Phủ Tướng, was a very contemplative man, removed from things political, and consequently no threat to the administration. He died in 1951, and the sect has been under the direction of a committee that recently decided to change the name of the sect to the Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ, Bến Tre. This is the same title as that used by the Tam Ky sect at Tây Ninh, with the addition of the designation Bến Tre to indicate that it is a separate group.

In many respects, the Ban Chỉnh Dạo is very similar to the Tam Ky sect; their doctrines are the same, their pantheon of saints is the same, and their rituals are similar, although the Ban Chỉnh Dạo does not have the seances with the beaked-basket. The Ban Chỉnh Dạo cathedral is smaller than the elaborate Tam Kỳ cathedral at Tây Ninh, and architecturally, it is less eclectic. Its form

and floor plan are the same, however, and the Bến Tre cathedral has the characteristic twin spires as well as the octagonal tower in the rear. One typical Tam Kỳ feature that is missing is the great eye on the large blue globe behind the main altar.

At the present time, the Ban Chin Dao sect claims to have some two hundred and sixty-nine temples throughout Viet Nam. In the early 1930's this sect began to have converts in the Khánh Hậu area. One of the sect leaders was the Director of the primary school in the neighboring village of Tân Hướng. As the number of faithful increased in Khánh Hậu, they began to make plans for their own temple. In 1955, with funds solicited from the faithful, the leaders of the local group purchased a wood and tile building in Tân An for 30,000$VN. A wealthy member of the congregation donated a plot of ground in Ấp Dinh-A, and the structure was reassembled on it.

Near the main entrance, there is a small altar dedicated to Dức Hộ Phát, Christ, who is represented by a very stylized portrait. The main altar is surrounded by brightly colored silk hangings and mandarin umbrellas, and flanked by the Binh Khi, decorative weapons which are found by Buddhist and Taoist altars. The dominant feature of this altar is an elaborate throne containing a portrait of Mr. Nguyễn Ngọc Tướng, the founder of the sect. Behind and above the throne is the symbolic Cao Dài eye emanating bursts of light. In front of the throne there are carved figures representing deities of the Cao Dài pantheon -- Lạo T'se, Thích Ca, Quang Thế Am,

Confucius, Christ, Lý Thái Bạch, Quang Công, and Khương Thái Công. The altar also contains most of the accoutrement found on Buddhist and Taoist altars. To the left of the main altar is a small altar dedicated to the sainted Chinese warrior, Quang Công.

At the present time, the Ban Chỉnh Dạo sect claims a membership of three hundred, most of whom are from Khánh Hậu. There are temples in Tân An and the neighboring village of Tân Hương which are local focal centers for the sect, so the Khánh Hậu temple draws most of its congregation from the village. There are one or two converts each month. This is due to proselytizing by ordinary practicing Cao Daists among close friends and kin, particularly those living in the same quarter of the hamlet. Some of the village leaders have become Cao Daists as a result of spirit messages received by members of sects represented in the village.

The Ban Chỉnh Dạo sect has an elaborate hierarchical organization centered in the holy see at Bến Tre. There a committee of three leaders, assisted by several additional committees and an array of dignitaries organized into male and female groups, comprise the administrative and religious hierarchy of the sect. Việt Nam is divided into regions, each of which has a liaison committee. The liaison committee in Tân An is composed of several appointed members, and its major function is to disseminate news and pass on directives received from Bến Tre. It has no delegated authority over the village congregations.

Chart 8 indicates the organization of the Khánh Hậu temple, and it typifies the local organization of the sect. The Dầu Họ Dạo, Chief of the Congregation, is elected by the Ban Cai Quản, the Administrative Committee, for a two year period. The committee, in turn, is elected by the faithful for an indefinite period. The Chief of the Congregation is responsible for all the affairs of the congregation. He reports directly to the Central Committee in Bến Tre which he visits at least three times during the year, to assist at the Tam Nguôn, the three most important annual rituals. None of the positions in the Administrative Committee have responsibilities which require a great deal of the individual's time, and some are non-functional; for example, there is a Guardian of Temple Land, but this congregation has yet to acquire any land.

In addition to the Administrative Committee, there is a Village Committee composed of the Tiên Tri Sự, the appointed chairman who is assisted by the Thông Sự, an elderly learned man, and each hamlet in the village has a Phó Trị Sự who is the local representative of this committee. The primary function of the Village Committee is to maintain contact with the faithful. The Cult Committee has the responsibility for organizing the annual rituals and fetes and seeing to it that the daily rituals are carried out in the temple. The Thủ Từ is guardian of the temple. He is an elderly man who lives in a thatched house nearby, and he is responsible for the general upkeep of the temple.

Chart 8

ORGANIZATION OF THE BAN CHIN DAO SECT IN KHÁNH HẬU

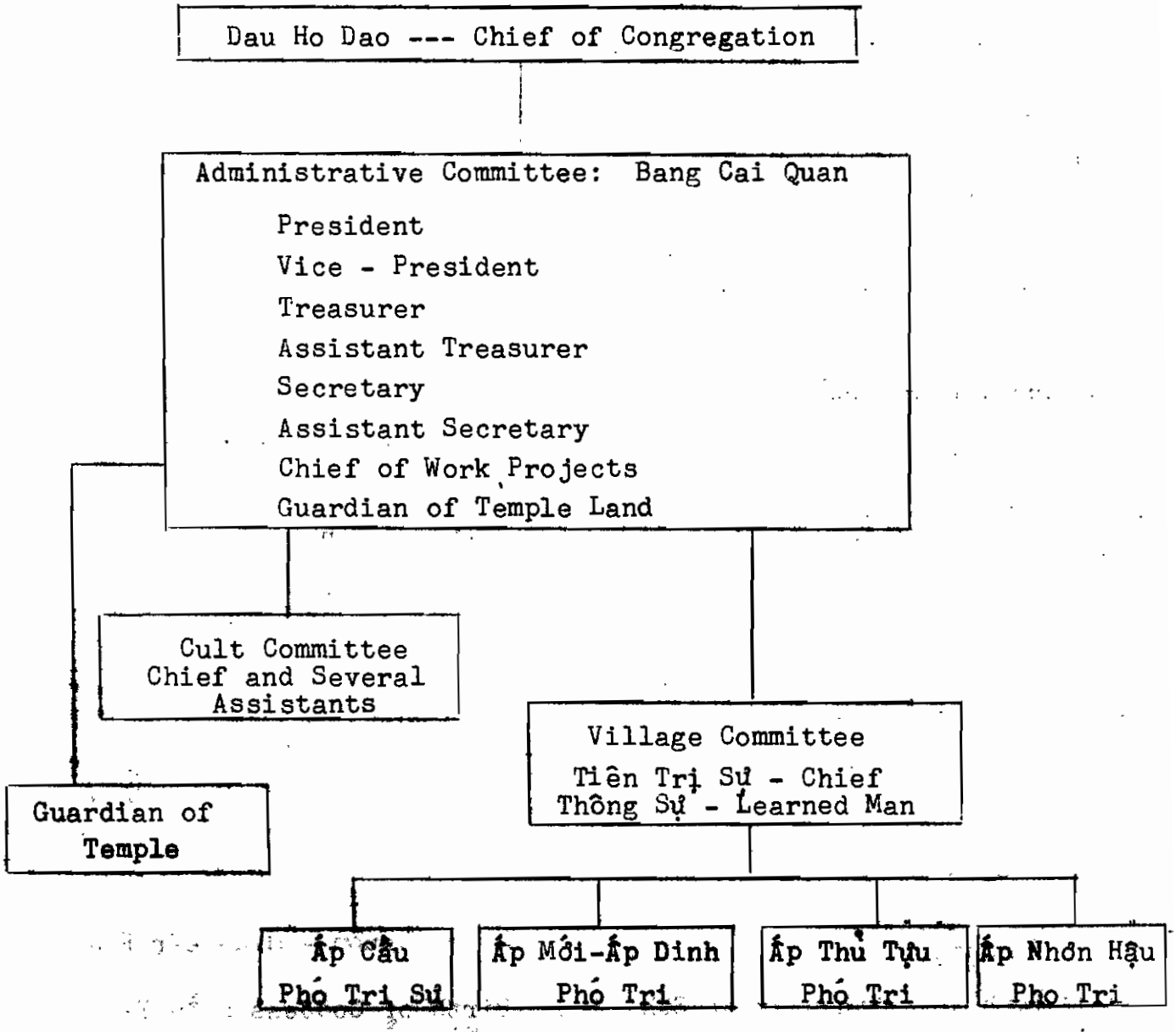


Table 7 lists the annual, monthly, and daily rituals held in the temple. The annual and monthly rituals attract many members of the congregation, but few are free to attend the daily rituals. Periodic retreats are held for the faithful, and after an individual has been a member of the sect for more than one year, he is expected to spend from five to seven days in Bến Tre studying Ban Chin Dao dogma. Actually, the only ones who conform to this rule are those with time and means to make the pilgrimage.

Table 7

BAN CHIN DAO RITUALS

I. Annual Rituals[1]

8th and 9th Days of 1st Lunar Month	Feast of Cao Dai Supreme Being
14th and 15th Days of the 1st Lunar Month	Thượng Nguôn, Beginning of Year
14th and 15th Days of the 2nd Lunar Month	Ann. of Thái Thượng Lão Quân - a Celestial Diety
12th and 13th Days of 3rd Lunar Month	Feast of the Papal Election
8th Day of 4th Lunar Month	Birth of Thích Ca, Second Reincarnation of Buddha.
24th and 25th Days of 5th Lunar Month	Birth of the Pope
14th and 15th of 7th Lunar Month	Trung Nguôn - Mid-Year Feast
14th and 15th Days of 8th Lunar Month	Birth of Goddess Diêu Trì Kim Mẫu
24th and 25th Days of December	Christmas

[1]There are additional rituals held during the year, which are fixed by seances.

Monthly Rituals

Eve of 1st and 15th Days of each Lunar Month

Daily

5:00 a.m.
12:00 noon
5:00 p.m. -- Công Phu
12:00 Midnight

The Tiên Thiên Sect. -- After Nguyễn Hữu Chính, the founder of the Tiên Thiên sect, left the holy see at Tây Ninh in 1931, he and his followers settled in the nearby town of Long Thanh. From there they traveled throughout the delta preaching and proselytizing. By the beginning of the war, they had established seventy-two village temples, although they were still without a holy see. This was due primarily to disapproval of the sect by the French administration, which grew out of suspicion that the sect leaders were active in the national movement. This, however, did not prevent the sect from continuing its activities clandestinely, and at the end of the war they counted thirty-six additional village temples (bringing the total to one hundred and eight temples). After the war, the sect finally succeeded in establishing a holy see at Sóc Sãi, a small town located in an area of thick coconut groves, eighteen kilometers from the town of Bến Tre, where they began construction of a cathedral which was completed in 1957.

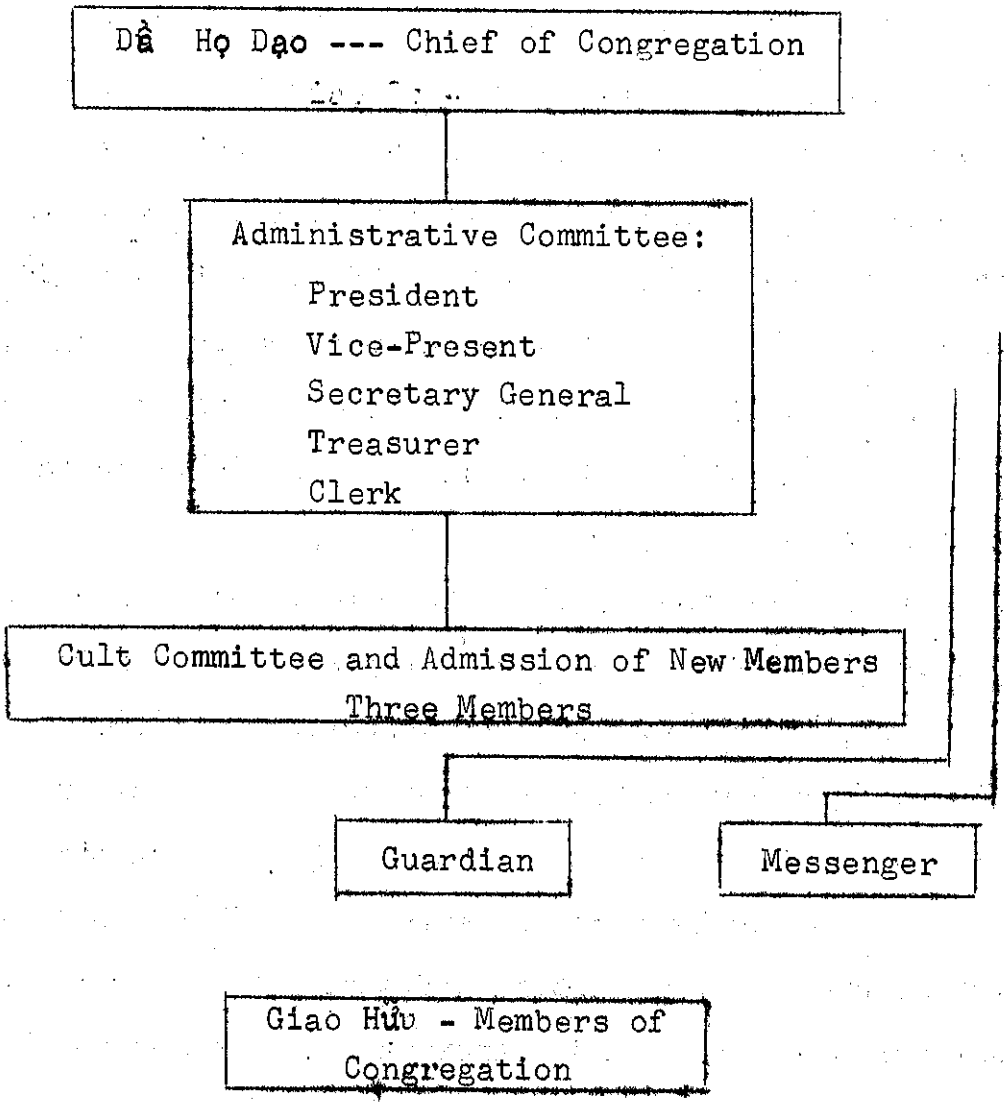
The Tiên Thiên sect closely resembles the Tam Kỳ and the Ban Chỉnh Dạo sects in organization and religious beliefs. Their cathedral is a smaller version of the Tam Kỳ cathedral in Tây Ninh, although it is considerably less elaborate in its general motif. Unlike the other Cao Dài sects, the Tiên Thiên has no fixed calendar for the great annual rituals at the holy see. They hold seances to receive messages from the great spirit regarding the date and time for each ritual.

In 1931, Tiên Thiên was introduced into the neighboring village of Tân Hưởng, and it soon spread into Khánh Hậu. Mr. Võ Văn Chiêu, one of the founders of the Tiên Thiên congregation in Khánh Hậu, who also is the present Chief of Congregation of the temple in Ấp Dinh-A, was the first Cao Dai convert in the village. He had heard about the new religion in 1926, and at a seance, he was directed by the spirit to leave Khánh Hậu and become a Cao Dai. He left his farm in Ấp Nhơn Hậu in the care of his sons and journeyed to Tây Ninh where he remained until 1928. He had become a disciple of Mr. Nguyễn Ngọc Tưởng, whom he followed to Bến Tre when this Cao Dai leader quit Tây Ninh to found his own sect, the Ban Chỉnh Dạo. Mr. Chiêu remained in Bến Tre until 1931 and then went to Tân Hưởng where he helped establish the Ban Chỉnh Dạo temple.

In 1939 the French administration began restricting the activities of the sects for political reasons, and many were forced underground. During the Indochina war, French troops burned the Ban Chỉnh Dạo temple in Tân Hưởng, and in order to reconstruct it

Chart 9

ORGANIZATION OF TIEN THIEN SECT IN KHÁNH HẬU



the sect leaders had to sign an agreement with the French authorities that they would refrain from all political activities. About this time, Mr. Chiêu quit the Ban Chỉnh Đạo sect for unspecified reasons, and joined the Tiền Thiên sect. He returned to Khánh Hậu where he began organizing the Tiên Thiên congregation.

In 1949, Mr. Chiêu, assisted by a farmer from the neighboring village of Lợi Bình Nhơn, and the father of the present guardian of Marshal Dức's tomb established the Tien Thien temple in Ấp Dinh-B. The Marshal's descendant had been converted to Cao Daism as a result of a spirit message received by Cao Daists in Cần Thơ. The message was purported to have been received from the spirit of Marshal Dức, and it directed his descendant to embrace Cao Daism. The farmer from Lợi Bình Nhơn also had been advised to become a Cao Daist by a spirit message.

They solicited contributions in the village and rented a plot of ground in Ấp Dinh-B. The first temple was a thatched structure that cost 1,000$VN, and when they had collected 39,000$VN, they purchased a traditional style wood and tile building in another village and had it transported to Khánh Hậu. The third stage of construction took place several years later when a masonry and frame structure was constructed in front of the existing temple. This new structure houses the sanctuary, and the wood-tile building serves as a residence for some of the leaders as well as a reception room. The thatched building is the kitchen and storeroom.

The main building is the only two-story structure in Khánh Hậu, and it is one of the most substantially constructed buildings in the area. The sanctuary contains a central altar which is dominated by a portrait of the great Cao Dài eye. It is surrounded by vases of flowers, incense burners, candles, offering plates, and other objects normally found on Buddhist and Taoist altars. An altar to the left is dedicated to Quang Thế Am, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, and one to the right of the central altar contains a large print depicting the meeting of all religions. In the small room on the second story there is an altar containing a large Bác Quáy, the octagonal Taoist symbol, which protects the temple from evil spirits. There are several altars in the reception room to the rear of the sanctuary. A central altar is dedicated to Marshal Dức. An altar on the right side of the room is for the deceased male members of the sect, and one on the left is for the females.

The Chief of the Congregation is elected by the Administrative Committee, and the Administrative Committee is elected by the congregation. Their tenure of office is indefinite. The Chief is directly responsible to the Central Committee in Sóc Sãi, and he makes periodic trips to the holy see to attend the great rituals at the cathedral and also report on the activities of the congregation in the village. The Administrative Committee has general administrative responsibility for the operation of the temple and for financial affairs. This committee appoints the three members

of the Committee for New Members and Cult Rituals. As the name implies, this committee organizes the rituals, and studies the backgrounds of postulants to the sect.

The temple guardian is an elderly man who helped found the sect in Khánh Hậu. He resides in the building behind the sanctuary and is responsible for the upkeep of the buildings. The messenger is appointed by the Central Committee, and one of his primary responsibilities is to carry messages to the holy see at Sóc Sãi. None of the sect officials receive any salary. They are farmers, and their official duties only require a portion of their time.

In addition to the annual rituals listed in Table 8, there are daily rituals held in the temple. Each day at 5:00 a.m., noon, and 5:00 p.m., there is the ritual Cong Phu, which is very similar to the Công Phu of the Buddhists. This consists of Niêm Hương, burning joss and kowtowing, followed by Khái Kinh, chanting of prayers. At 11:00 a.m. there is a longer ritual, similar to the Công Phu, performed before the main altar. These are attended by the small group of sect leaders who reside at the temple, and those faithful on retreat.

The prescribed retreat period is one hundred days, and all faithful are expected to make at least one. If a member of the sect receives a spirit message directing him to make a retreat, he must do so regardless of obligations, responsibilities, or other obstacles. A section to one side of the main altar houses the men while another section on the opposite side of the building houses

Table 8

CALENDAR OF ANNUAL TIEN THIEN RITUALS IN KHÁNH HẬU

14th Day of the 1st Lunar Month	To honor war dead
15th Day of the 1st Lunar Month	Thượng Nguôn ritual to mark beginning of the New Year
15th Day of the 2nd Lunar Month	Feast of Thái Thượng, the supreme being
14th Day of the 7th Lunar Month	Ritual to honor war dead
15th Day of the 7th Lunar Month	Trung Nguôn, Mid-Year Festival
9 th Day of the 9th Lunar Month	Ritual honoring the Anniversary of Marshal Nguyễn Huynh Đức
14th Day of the 10th Lunar Month	Hạ Nguôn, end of the Year Ritual
15th Day of the 10th Lunar Month	Ritual for war dead
25th of December	Christmas

Each Lunar Month: Eves of the 1st and 15th Days

the women. At 4:00 a.m., 4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m. and midnight, there are ninety-minute meditation periods for those on retreat, and during the meditation, the individual is supposed to achieve a state of complete trance. In addition, there are daily yoga exercises at unspecified times, and daily public confessions at 7:00 a.m.

Seances are held frequently. There is a special seance held during the ritual on the 15th day of the 2nd lunar month. The beaked basket is used, and it is held by a youth between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, as prescribed.

The Minh Chơn Lý Sect. -- After Dốc Phủ Ca broke away from the Tam Kỳ sect, he went to Mỹ Tho where he established his holy see and began formulating the doctrines for his sect, known as the Minh Chơn Lý. His beliefs and practices marked the first real departure from the existing Cao Dài beliefs, symbols, and ritual forms. He instituted the worship of three main deities, called the Tam Trầm. These are Lý Thái Bạch, the Supreme Being, Phật Quan Am, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, and Quang Cong, the sainted Chinese warrior. In 1938, Mr. Ca brought about further reforms. He rejected the usual Cao Dai as the central symbol of the supreme being, and replaced it with the Nhan Tam, the "Eye of the Heart." This is represented by an eye set in a large red heart from which rays of light emanate. This innovation was based on the theory that the eye simply records what is seen, while it is the heart that has full realization. True knowledge, therefore, is found in the heart.

The Minh Chơn Lý recognizes a major pantheon of five great saints -- Buddha, Lao T'se, Confucius, Christ, and Ngọc Hoàng, the Emperor of Jade. In the central altar at the cathedral in Mỹ Tho, and in Minh Chơn Lý altars in the homes of the faithful, the Nhân Tâm symbol occupies the dominant place and below it are fifteen small oil lamps arranged in a pyramid of five tiers. The top lamp represents the Supreme Being, while the remaining lamps represent the two other great deities, the five great saints, and other prophets venerated by the sect. While such saints as Moses, Jeanne d'Arc, and Victor Hugo are not represented, they are mentioned in the prayers.

Unlike other Cao Dài sects, the Minh Chơn Lý do not tolerate many of the traditional Vietnamese religious beliefs. They do not permit any beliefs in animist spirits nor do they allow their members to practice spiritualism or sorcery. Such traditional practices as the Thiên cult or the Cult of Ong Táo are forbidden. They do, however, allow sect members to practice the Cult of the Ancestors. The taboo on eating any food derived from living creatures is not observed by the Minh Chơn Lý.

In the early 1930's, the Minh Chơn Lý gained several converts in Khánh Hậu, and at the present time, there are some twenty adherents to this sect. They have no temple in the village, nor is there one in the surrounding area, so they meet in a private residence in Tân An on the 29th day of every lunar month for rituals. The group prays together, and a representative of the

holy see in Mỹ Tho comes to give instruction in the tenets of the sect. Afterwards, there usually is a dinner.

The faithful maintain altars in their homes. No offerings are made to the Supreme Being, however, on the premise that he does not require such sustenance. Each day there are four prescribed rituals before the private altars -- at 5:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5:30 p.m. and midnight. There also are three prayer periods daily at 9:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Those who are absent from the house during any of these hours are exempted.

Relations Between the Cao Dài Sects in Khánh Hậu. -- The Tiên Thiên and Ban Chỉnh Dạo sects in Khánh Hậu have relatively close relations which arise from their basic similarities. They share a great many beliefs, and their ritual forms are very much the same. Members of both congregations are free to assist at the rituals in either temple, and often formal invitations to the leaders are exchanged. Since the Tam Kỳ sect has no temple, nor any formal organization in the village, its members relate to the other sects as individuals, not as a collectivity. One would expect this also to be true of the Minh Chon Ly sect, but a recent incident in the village indicates a certain amount of conflict between this sect and the Tiên Thiên.

This incident occured on the occasion of the death of one of the Tiên Thiên sect leaders. Since he was a well-known figure in Ấp Dinh-B, his eldest son organized a fittingly elaborate funeral celebration and invited the representatives of several of the

locally represented religious groups, particularly the Buddhists and the Minh Chơn Lý. The Buddhists sent monks who prayed, and the Minh Chơn Lý sent a representative from the cathedral in Mỹ Tho. When he arrived, he placed a portrait of the Minh Chơn Lý symbol, the eye in the heart, on the coffin. The host left it there, but several members of the Tiên Thiên group who were present removed it, and indignantly handed it back to the Minh Chơn Lý representative who immediately departed. The following day some of the Tiên Thiên group called on the deceased's son to remonstrate with him for allowing representatives of outside religions to come in and practice their rituals at the funeral.

A Group-Sponsored Cult

The Cult of Quang Công. -- The Chinese warrior Quang Công is almost an omnipresent deity in Khánh Hậu. He is venerated by the Buddhists, the Cao Daists, and many villagers honor this deity with a place on their family altars. In addition, there is a pagoda in Ấp Nhơn Hậu dedicated to Quang Công and supported by a group of villagers from the surrounding area. The original pagoda was constructed in the late nineteenth century, and some fifty years ago, the present Ong Kế Hiền's maternal grandfather raised funds in the village to construct a new pagoda. Although it was untouched during the Indochina War, it had fallen into a state of disrepair. After the war, a Pagoda Committee was formed and

raised 45,000$VN to reconstruct the pagoda, and the present building was dedicated in 1958.

The new Quang Công pagoda is a substantially constructed building of masonry walls and tile roof. Architecturally it resembles the Buddhist pagoda in Ấp Cầu, although it is less elaborate and somewhat smaller. The interior contains one main altar with three large polychrome wooden figures of the honored deities; Quang Công occupies the center, flanked by Châu Xướng and Quan Bình, his two assistants. To one side there is a small altar containing a tablet honoring those who constructed the original pagoda, and a similar altar on the opposite side of the room is dedicated to those who have given subsequent donations.

The pagoda committee is composed of villagers who also are members of the Cult Committee of the Ấp Nhơn Hậu dinh. They solicit donations for the upkeep of the pagoda, and they organize the various rituals held there. The committee also selects a male resident of Ấp Nhơn Hậu to be guardian of the pagoda and officiant at the daily rituals. While he receives no salary, he has the use of the one hectare of land that surrounds the pagoda.

There are three great annual rituals held in the Quang Công pagoda -- Ngày Sanh, the birthday of Quang Công on the 13th day of the first lunar month, Ngài Hiển Thánh, the feast of Quang Công's sanctification, on the 13th day of the fifth lunar month and Rằm Tháng Bảy, on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month. The form of these rituals closely resembles the rituals held in

the dình. Pigs are sacrificed, and the participants bring offerings of food and cash. They also kowtow according to a prescribed priority based on positions in the Pagoda Committee. There are daily rituals performed by the pagoda guardian at 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Chapter VII

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Health Practices

In the course of carrying out field research in Khánh Hậu, practically every house in Ấp Dinh-A, Ấp Dinh-B, and Ấp Mới, as well as a great many houses in Ấp Thủ Tựu, Ấp Nhớn Hậu, and Ấp Cầu were visited. In most of these houses, there were individuals who complained of some ailment, and in some houses there were people who were seriously ill. Several women appeared to be in advanced stages of tuberculosis, one man was almost completely paralyzed, a brother and sister had excessively distended abdomens, and several household heads were unable to work because of undiagnosed internal difficulties[1]. There were many complaints of gastro-intestinal upsets, and headaches were common. A number of children were suffering from skin eruptions of various kinds, and many were debilitated by periodic diarrhea.

Villagers share the same beliefs concerning the causes of ill health. It is one of the many misfortunes attributed either to evil spirits, or to evil influences brought about by a state of disharmony with the elements. Briefly, the cosmological view of the villager gives rise to a qualified fatalism. The individual is the pawn of favorable and unfavorable influences which make up

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[1]The paralyzed man, and the brother and sister have died since.

the universe and are channeled to humans by the positions of the stars. These influences are manifest in signs and portents which the individual must observe and seek to interpret. He also must try to maintain a state of harmony with the elements so as to permit the favorable influence to reach him. The individual's resignation to the forces of fate is demonstrated in the continual need to consult his horoscope and the lunar calendar for guides to behavior.

This fatalism, however, does not extend to accepting illness as an inevitable and inalterable part of one's fate. When such a misfortune occurs, there are prescribed ways of attempting to overcome it. If there is a sorcerer available, he may be consulted. This specialist has the power to influence evil spirits, and he may perform an exorcism to effect his cure, or he simply may recommend some means of placating the evil spirits. Errant spirits, i.e. those without cults in their honor, are considered a common source of illness, and the usual means of propitiating them is to arrange a small altar before the house and heap it with offerings of joss, rice, and rice alcohol. One also may seek the services of a healer. In Khánh Hậu there are several, and each has a talent for curing specific types of ailments[2].

Chinese medicine, which includes a wide range of folk medicines and medical practices, also is another means of curing

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[2]The healers include the two Cu Si described in Chapter VI.

illness. For specific symptoms and common ailments, there are stock medicines available at the Chinese pharmacy in Ấp Dinh-A, and the pharmacist also functions as a doctor, diagnosing illnesses and treating them with the coins, suction cups, and other accoutrements used in this type of medicine. Well-to-do villagers are more apt to turn to western medicine since they are more familiar with it, and they can afford it. Poor villagers may receive approval to use the clinic in Tân An, or they may visit the council house at the prescribed hours when the village nurse holds his clinic.

In some cases, illnesses go untreated. Children who appear to be suffering from chicken pox or small pox are permitted to mix freely with other children. The villagers believe that the skin pustules are caused by the wind, so the only precaution is to keep the child covered with a scarf. Another common neglect is to leave open sores exposed to dirt and flies. After all the available healing techniques have been tried without success, villagers tend to become apathetic, and assume, fatalistically, that the ailment is something predestined and, therefore, incurable. When a man's legs begin to swell, and a woman's face swells, death is thought to be imminent, and all one can do is wait.

Ong Thầy Pháp, the Sorcerer. -- There are no resident sorcerers in Khánh Hậu. One villager is considered a sorcerer by some, but he denies this, saying that although his father practiced sorcery, he never learned the secrets. There are, however, sorcerers in neighboring villages, and, as pointed out previously, each year

one is hired to perform the special rituals which are part of the major celebrations held in the đình. Sorcerers cure by exorcising evil spirits, and the primary function of the sorcerer at the Cầu An ritual, the most important of the annual rituals held in the đình, is to exorcise the entire village of evil spirits (particularly the cholera spirit) that bring epidemics. For the most part, however, sorcerers deal with individuals, and in addition to healing, they also sell amulets to protect against evil spirits.

The sorcerer hired for the Cầu An celebration is a man of 52 years, with two wives and four children (one wife lives with her parents because he cannot afford to establish a second household). He lives in a village near the town of Tân Hiệp, south of Khánh Hậu in Mỹ Tho province, where he rents seven công of paddy land. Both his father, and his father's father were sorcerers. He learned the ritual forms, the magic formulae, and the art of making amulets by assisting his father, and at the present time his eighteen year old son is serving as his apprentice. Sons may become sorcerers, but the secrets are kept from the daughters because they marry out of the family, thus risking divulgence. His son assists in simpler rituals, and as his proficiency increases, he will participate in more complicated rituals such as the Cầu An. According to the sorcerer, his metier is grueling, as well as hazardous. Since he works against evil spirits, they continually seek to do him harm; for example, only four of his eleven children have survived, a fact he attributes to the influence

of evil spirits. He likens his rituals to theatrical performances in that they must be done with exactness. Furthermore, they are exhausting because they often last all night, and most of the rituals entail drinking a great deal of rice alcohol.

This particular sorcerer derives his power to influence spirits and cure illnesses from Ong Thầy Thượng, a powerful spirit whom he venerates with daily offerings and prayers. He also is a devout Buddhist. His house contains altars to Buddha and other dieties, and he observes the prescribed dietary restrictions. In addition to these cults, he practices the Cult of the Ancestors.

Sorcerers often specialize, and this sorcerer cures mental illnesses since they are attributed to possession by evil spirits. Exorcism is the usual means of ridding the victim of the evil spirit, thus curing the malady. He employs a variety of amulets, and the ritual involves cutting the upper part of the left arm or his tongue to obtain blood with which to write the special formulae which frighten the demons away. The sorcerer admits that he meets with lack of success in some cases, although he rationalizes that these illnesses are not due to evil spirits but rather some physical cause such as malfunction of the heart or liver. The fee for his services depends on the gravity of the ailment and the means of the patient. For poor patients, he usually only charges the cost of his transportation. He also sells amulets and talismans at fixed prices. The fee for his performance at the village rituals depends on the elaborateness of the ritual, and, as pointed out

previously, it usually involves some bargaining with the village officials.

Healers. -- In Khánh Hậu there are several healers, each of whom specializes in particular ailments, and they employ a variety of healing techniques. One impoverished woman who was abandoned by her husband is a type of medium-healer known as Bà Cốt. Some nineteen years ago, she discovered that she had the power to cure certain female ailments, particularly those affecting the breasts, and she also discovered an affinity for healing children's illnesses. Her patroness is the goddess Bà Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu, for whom she maintains a shrine in her house. Bà Cốt's method of healing is a combination of folk medicine and occult intervention. She prays over the patient, invoking the power of the goddess, after which she gives the patient some special water and a medicine made from certain herbs. For children, she usually employs herb medicine in addition to a talisman of colored strings woven into a necklace. Bà Cốt also has an extensive knowledge of Chinese medicines which she uses in her cures, and she is often called upon to perform the services of a midwife. In her metier it is forbidden to charge fees, although she is free to accept tokens of gratitude.

Another resident of Ấp Dinh-A is a healer with a reputation for curing a wide range of ailments and injuries. He is a Cao Daist, and claims his power derives from the supreme being, and it manifest itself ten years ago. He did, however, learn some of his techniques from an elderly healer who lived near the Cao Dai

cathedral in Tây Ninh. His healing techniques include using talismans, magic cloths, praying over the patient, and some traditional medical practices. Magic cloths are used on such things as broken bones and sprains, and he usually rubs some rice alcohol on the swollen area. This is accompanied by incantations. Other ailments such as colds and headaches are cured by letting blood. In the course of the cure, the healer councils his patients to believe without any doubt that it will be effective.

A third healer living in the village specializes in bone injuries. His healing techniques, which were passed on to him by his father, do not involve invoking spirits, talismans, or any other form of sorcery. Rather, they involve rudimentary bone setting; for example, if someone breaks his arm, the healer carefully bandages it, changing the dressing every three days. He also gives the patient an alcoholic medicine to ease the pain and stimulate the blood circulation. After several weeks, the bandage is removed, and the arm is massaged. If it does not appear to be healed, the process is repeated. For more serious injuries, the healer makes a thick paste that is applied around the area of the break, and it hardens into a crude cast. The patient must remain in bed until the injury appears to be healed. This particular healer enjoys a good reputation in Khánh Hậu and neighboring villages, and he charges a fee for his services.

Chinese Medicine. -- "Chinese medicine" is a generic term for thuốc bắc (northern medicine), which includes a wide range of

medical practices and medicines of Chinese origin, and thuốc nam (southern medicine), which is indigenous Vietnamese folk medicine[3]. Until recently, Khánh Hậu had two shops, both operated by Chinese, which dealt in Chinese medicine. The one shop which functioned exclusively as a pharmacy and dispensary of sorts, closed, and the proprietor moved to Mộc Hóa, in the Plaine des Joncs. The remaining shop, located in Ấp Dinh-A, is a general store in addition to being a pharmacy.

The proprietor of the general store-pharmacy functions as a doctor as well as a pharmacist. When he receives a summons to attend a sick person, he goes to the house to examine him and determine the cause of the illness. He may treat the patient by letting blood, the pinching process, the use of suction cups, or any of the myriad traditional Chinese practices. He also may decide to administer medicine, perhaps one of these prepared by larger pharmacies in Saigon, Cholon, or Tân An, or a medicine which he mixes himself at the shop. Some of the ingredients are purchased from wholesale dealers, and others are available in and around the village. It is common to see medicinal roots, herbs, and fruit spread on large circular reed mats before the shop to dry in the sun.

Some villagers, such as the Bà Cốt mentioned previously, purchase the ingredients for medicines, and mix their own at home.

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[3] Thuốc nam in southern Viet Nam undoubtedly includes some Khmer and Cham folk medicine.

Others gather local herbs, plants, and roots known for their medicinal properties, and prepare medicine as they require it. A few villagers cultivate medicinal plants; for example, one man grows a plant that produces flowers that are ground up and consumed with food to relieve his asthmatic pains. Thuốc bắc and thuốc nam also includes a certain number of preventative medicines. The gnarled root of the red pepper plant is sometimes hollowed out and used as a cigarette holder on the belief that the heat of this plant is transmitted to the lungs, thereby preventing tuberculosis. There also are a number of concoctions prepared at home or purchased from the pharmacist, which are intended to do such things as "refresh the heart and stomach." Many of these contain a good deal of rice alcohol. One such mixture which is considered particularly good for stimulating robust health contains porcupine entrails in rice alcohol.

Western Medicine. -- Thuốc tây (western medicine), is not widely employed in Khánh Hậu. None of the shops sell prepared western medicine. There is one man who has received some nursing training in the hospital at Tân An, and several others who are authorized to give inoculations. The School of Fundamental Education provided some medical service, and when it moved from Ấp Dinh-A to its new quarters near the main highway, the responsibility for this service was assumed by the Village Council. The male nurse was appointed the village nurse at the salary of 400$VN per month. A very limited amount of medicine was placed at his

disposal in the council house, and he holds a clinic twice a day for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. He only treats minor ailments. More serious cases, if they are reported, are sent to the hospital in Tân An.

The village nurse had worked as an assistant in the Tân An hospital for several years, and after his marriage he moved to Khánh Hậu where he has since engaged in private practice. In addition to serving as the village nurse, he takes patients on his own time, and he purchases his own stock of medicine. He supplements his income by renting thirteen công of paddy land in the neighboring village of Tân Hưởng.

Only the more affluent villagers can afford western medicine. Not many appear to take advantage of the village medical service, and only the desperate attempt to get medical attention in Tân An. Inoculation is the most popular form of western medicine, and shots are administered indiscrimately in many instances. One elderly man in Ấp Mới was suffering from a combination of fever, severe coughing, and bodily pains, and in the course of several weeks, he was given shots of penicillin, hostamycine, thioderazine, solucampher, septicemine, teoneptale, and vitamin B-1[1].

The least acceptable of the western forms of medicine is hospitalization. Villagers, no matter how ill they may be, are reluctant to leave their families and put themselves in the care of strangers. They express anxiety about how they will be fed, and they worry about their families. In one family, the brother

[1]He lived!

agreed to be hospitalized when all other forms of medical treatment had been unsuccessful. Unfortunately, he entered the hospital too late, and died soon after. His sister, who developed the same symptoms, refused, steadfastly, to enter the hospital on the belief that it caused the death of her brother, and her neighbors supported her view.

Hygiene. -- Recent programs instituted by the School of Fundamental Education and the Ministry of Health have made some inroads in the area of personal hygiene and public health. When Mr. Nguyễn văn Mừng was director of the School of Fundamental Education, he was singularly successful in convincing a number of villagers of the need for vaccinations against small pox and chicken pox. The Village Council supported the program and informed the villagers when the inoculation team would visit their hamlet. Many villagers responded and brought their children, although they themselves expressed some reluctance to be inoculated.

Mr. Mừng also initiated a hygiene program which was beginning to manifest some success under his direction. Many residents in Ấp Dinh-A and Ấp Dinh-B constructed latrines over their fish ponds in response to a program instituted by Mr. Mừng and the School of Fundamental Education. Plans also were made for a maternity center, and posters graphically illustrating such things as prenatal care, were placed around the village.

Attempts to convince villagers that their dubious drinking water should be boiled, met with great skepticism until Mr. Mừng

showed a group a sample of their drinking water under a microscope. The sight of the "animals" wiggling around in it horrified them, and many began to boil their water. Since Mr. Mùng's departure, however, there is some evidence of backsliding. One elderly woman explained that while she continued boiling water from the canal (which is drunk only when other sources of water are exhausted), she had discontinued boiling rain water, regardless of how long it had been in the earthen jars. To her rain water was clean, and she did not regard boiled water as "fresh."

Education

Some thirty-five years ago, the French administration established a primary school in Ấp Dinh-A and named it after Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức. It consisted of three classrooms and offered instruction in the first three grades of the five-grade Vietnamese primary education. During the period in late 1945, when the Japanese had withdrawn from Viet Nam, and the Viet Minh assumed temporary control of the village administration, the school was burned. When the situation became relatively calm again, the villagers rallied and constructed a new school building of wood with thatched roof. In 1949 two classrooms were added and several teachers were recruited to expand the course of instruction to five grades, thus permitting the children of Khánh Hậu to receive the primary education certificate.

The same year, the new director of the primary school began a campaign among the villagers to raise funds for the construction of a new school building. The villagers responded enthusiastically, and the government contributed 50,000$VN, enabling the construction of a five-classroom, masonry building with a corrugated iron roof. In 1952, Mr. Phùng văn Đệ, a resident of Ấp Thủ Tựu won 1,000,000$VN on the National Lottery, and generously contributed 130,000$VN to the village for the construction of an additional five-classroom building with a large water tank. Recently the Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức school acquired an additional building when the School of Fundamental Education abandoned its original quarters and moved to its new building near the main highway.

The đình is used as a classroom, and a shack behind the council house that previous only served as a kitchen during village fetes, is used as a classroom for advanced students. A somewhat airless quonset hut built by the French troops during the war, and subsequently used by the School of Fundamental Education, also has been converted into a classroom.

At the present time, the Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức school consists of a sizable compound of three buildings with fifteen classrooms --- three for each grade. The buildings surround a large play-area shaded by trees, and beautified by a flower garden. Current enrollment is 778, approximately half of whom are girls[4]. In 1945

[4]The Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức school also has students from the neighboring villages of Loi Binh Nhon and Tan Hoi.

the enrollment was 120, and this increased to 636 by 1950. A new secondary school was recently completed on the edge of Tan An, less than four kilometres from Khánh Hậu. Approximately 20o/o of those who receive the primary school certificate at the Nguyễn Huỳnh Đức school attend secondary school.

Primary education is free, and while the Ministry of Education supplies a limited number of texts, most students must provide their own. There is no library, and the only medicine available is at the nearby council house. Students also must provide their own food. Those living in Ấp Dinh-A, and parts of Ấp Dinh-B and Ấp Moi can go home for their midday meal, but those from more distant parts of the village and neighboring villages must carry their food. At noon, the children group around the school yard and the đình to eat from metal food containers. Most have rice garnished with a bit of fish, perhaps a cooked vegetable, and some condiment such as nước mắm or mắm nêm. Only a few have meat. Some children purchase food from the vendors who set up small stands near the school, and others go to nearby shops to purchase sandwiches.

The curriculum of the school is the standard primary school curriculum prepared by the Ministry of Education. Previously, the province was responsible for the administration of the school, and the provincial budget paid the teachers. When the School of Fundamental Education was established, it assumed technical responsibility for the courses at the primary school. Recently,

the School of Fundamental Education also began to assume administrative responsibilities; the primary school teachers were placed under the authority of the School of Fundamental Education, which also pays their salaries. This is partly due to the difficulty in recruiting teachers for villages such as Khánh Hậu. Nine of the fifteen primary school teachers were trained by the School of Fundamental Education, and the present director of the primary school is from the staff of the School of Fundamental Education. A few of the teachers live in Ấp Dinh-A where they rent houses or board with well-to-do families. Some live at the School of Fundamental Education, and the remainder live in Tân An.

Education has been expanding considerably in the village of Khánh Hậu. In addition to the enlarged primary school and the establishment of the School of Fundamental Education, there have been some courses in reading and writing organized for adults as part of the anti-illiteracy campaign. Education facilities remain inadequate for the growing demands in Khánh Hậu. The growing number of primary school pupils, however, has tended to magnify certain problems. One of these is the great distance some of the children must walk to reach the school in Ấp Dinh-A.

Chapter VIII

SOCIAL RELATIONS IN KHÁNH HẬU

Intra-Village Social Relations

Vietnamese villages are often characterized as semi-autonomous social, political, and economic units which manifest qualities intrinsic to the gemeinschaft type of society. As the term indicates, this type of society has predominantly cooperative features; its members have a strong sense of identification with the collectivity, the community, and relationships are based on strong ties of kinship and close daily contact. There is a great deal of mutual interdependance and mutual aid among the members, and they share a homogeneous set of social values manifest in a strict adherance to social customs and practices.

The Village Level. -- The village of Khánh Hậu, considered in its entirety, could only in some aspects be considered a gemeinschaft type of society. Rather, it functions more as an administrative unit, co-extensive with a given geographical area, than it does as a natural social unit. Communal spirit does not extend to the village level, a phenomenon which is variously reflected in individual as well as group attitudes and behavior, and relative difficulty in establishing programs based on the premise that the village as a whole is imbued with communal esprit.

In Khánh Hậu, it is the smaller units -- the family, residence groups, and, to some extent, the hamlets that display gemeinschaft

qualities. The individual villager's sense of identity with these units supersedes identity with the village. Among the small groups, particularly the lower class groups, one finds the primary group relations and mutual aid generated by a strong sense of common goals and problems. There are fewer monetary, contractual, and impersonal relations at this level.

Multiple factors contribute to this relative lack of communal spirit and internal cohesion on the village level. One of the most important is that the hamlets which comprise the village of Khánh Hậu (and most delta villages) are dispersed, and physical distance tends to give rise to social distance. Some hamlets of Khánh Hậu are relatively inaccessible to other hamlets, whereas they may be literally a stone's throw from a hamlet in a neighboring village. A resident of Ấp Cầu or Ấp Nhỏn Hậu is more likely to have frequent, perhaps daily, contact with residents of neighboring hamlets living across the narrow streams that are the borders of Khánh Hậu, than they are with fellow villagers some four or five kilometers distant in Ấp Dinh-B.

The effect of this internal fragmentation is compounded by the fact that there are no real focal centers in the village; places where the residents converge frequently for one reason or another, thus increasing the amount of social interaction. The đình often is described as the social and religious center of the Vietnamese village, and this is true only in a limited sense. There are four rituals held at the đình in the course of the lunar

year, in addition to a variety of meetings, and some organized amusements such as performances of the Cải Lương, popular Vietnamese theatre, by ambulant players. Actually only members of the Hội Hướng, the Cult Committee, are expected to attend the rituals. Cầu An, the most important ritual held at the đình attracts many more villagers only if there is a performance of the Hát Bội, the classical opera. In 1958 when (for economic reasons) it was decided not to have the Hát Bội, the attendance was less than half that of the 1959 ritual when the Hát Bội was included. The đình in Ấp Dinh-A also is used for various meetings such as the monthly communist denunciation meetings. Attendance is compulsory for all adult males, but there is little socializing since the audience tends to disperse rapidly, following the meetings. The function of the đình as a focal center, therefore, is relatively restricted; it only attracts a segment of the population on infrequent occasions. In Khánh Hậu this function is further restricted by the fact that there are two đình, and two Cult Committees.

The council house does not function as a focal center. Most villagers only visit there occasionally to take care of some administrative necessity such as registering a birth or death, and some villagers only go to the council house to settle some conflict with another villager. There is a small group that spends considerable time in the council house, but these are men who live nearby in Ấp Dinh-A or Ấp Mới, and they form something of an informal clique.

Neither the Buddhist pagoda in Ấp Mới, nor the pagoda in Ấp Cầu could be considered focal centers in Khánh Hậu. Their congregations, particularly that of the Ấp Cầu pagoda, are small, and both pagodas only serve religious functions in the village. The two Cao Đài temples in Ấp Dinh A-B are focal centers for the restricted resident groups located around them.

One might speculate that if Khánh Hậu had a market as do many of the other villages, it would serve such a function. More than likely, however, the market in Tân Hương would continue to draw many residents of Ấp Cầu and parts of Ấp Nhơn Hậu and Ấp Mới, because of its proximity, and the Tân An market would undoubtedly continue to be the source of most manufactured goods. Furthermore, marketing for food is a female task, so the type of market which Khánh Hậu could expect to have, would probably serve only a limited function as a focal center.

Another factor, one which is unique for Khánh Hậu, and which has contributed to the lack of internal solidarity on the village level, is that Khánh Hậu had previously been two villages. This has given rise to certain dichotomies which have persisted. The most manifest of these is the before-mentioned existence of two đình, and the consequent separation of the Cult Committees. This has tended to diminish any effect the Ấp Dinh-A đình may have as a focal center. Finally, the war affected Vietnamese society, particularly village society, deleteriously. In terms of social relations, it generated an atmosphere of suspicion among villagers,

combined with an aura of fear, and it created a great many conflict situations in village life.

The recent attempt to organize the Hợp Tác Xã, a Farmers' Cooperative, in Khánh Hậu reflects the lack of communal spirit on the village level. This cooperative was established several years ago on a voluntary basis, with governmental encouragement, and it met with relatively little success. Its membership was never very large, and as a village organization it was non-functional throughout most of its existence. To begin with, this was the first experience the villagers had had with a village-wide cooperative effort. The traditional cooperative units are the household group, the extended kin group, and the residence group, and in all three they are dealing with people whom they know, and presumably, trust. The success of the Hợp Tác Xã depended on close cooperation among a number of villagers who scarcely knew one another, who, in many instances, had infrequent social contact, and who belonged to different cliques, and, perhaps, opposite camps during the war. The most recent general meetings reflected a general lack of confidence in the organization, and a great deal of self-interest on the part of some members. With the establishment of the new Hiệp Hội Nông Dân, the Farmers' Association, the Hợp Tác Xã was quietly dissolved.

The canal construction project which began several years ago, has achieved more measurable success than the Hợp Tác Xã, primarily because it relied on cooperation of residents of the same hamlet.

Each family in the area to be served by the canal was given an allotted section to dig, and the work was carried out effectively. This project, however, was not a spontaneous village effort. It was suggested and encouraged by Mr. Nguyễn văn Mừng who was then director of the School of Fundamental Education, and it was sanctioned by the Village Council. Despite its obvious benefits, however, the canal project met with some opposition by landowners. One, for example, complained that the canal was too wide, thus taking up too much of her paddy fields, while another complained that its somewhat erratic course made plowing of his fields more difficult.

Inter-Hamlet Relations. -- Within the village, residents of proximate hamlets tend to have more frequent contact with one another than they do with other hamlets of the village. This gives rise to a greater amount of intermarriage between families of close hamlets, and if the residents share the same đình or pagoda, it contributes greatly to a strengthening of their social relations. Since the administrative division of Ấp Dinh-A and Ấp Dinh-B is relatively recent, and they form one agglomeration, they should be considered as one hamlet, so relations between them are in the nature of intra-hamlet relationships.

Those residents in that part of Ấp Mới contiguous with Ấp Dinh-A, have considerable contact with residents of Ấp Dinh A-B. They meet frequently at the Buddhist pagoda, the Cao Đài temples, the đình, the council house, and the various shops along the spur

road. Those living in the more distant clusters of Ấp Mới do their marketing in nearby Tân Hương, but many of them have close kinship ties with residents of Ấp Dinh A-B. This arises from the fact that many of the present residents of Ấp Mới, or their ancestors, migrated from Ấp Dinh A-B so as to be near their paddy fields.

Ấp Nhơn Hậu and Ấp Cầu also form one string settlement along the streams forming the southern and western borders of Khánh Hậu, so there tends to be close relationship between these two hamlets. In addition, they share the same đình, and a group of residents from both hamlets support the Cult of Quang Cong, which is practiced in a pagoda in Ấp Nhơn Hậu. There also is a certain amount of identification with the old village, which lends a feeling of separateness from the other hamlets of Khánh Hậu. This feeling is reinforced by the fact that these two hamlets have their own đình and Cult Committee, and they share a number of common problems; for example, the current project to have a branch of the primary school in Ấp Nhơn Hậu arises from the hardship imposed on their children because these hamlets are so far from the school in Ấp Dinh-A.

Ấp Thủ Tựu does not appear to have such close ties with any other hamlet. It is almost midway between Ấp Dinh A-B and Ấp Nhơn Hậu, and there is no preponderance of kin ties with either hamlet. In general, however, residents of Ấp Thủ Tựu have more occasion to visit Ấp Dinh A-B than they do any other hamlet of

the village. A number of the adult males belong to the Cult Committee for the đình in Ấp Dinh-A, and some of the residents attend rituals at the two Cao Đài temples in Ấp Dinh A-B.

Social Class and Social Relations. -- Social class is not necessarily a determinant of social relationships in Khánh Hậu. While members of certain social classes tend to form informal social groups by virtue of their being neighbors or kinfolk, it is equally as common to have social groups composed of members of different social classes. There is one group of present and former Village Council members who form the social and political elite, as has been pointed out, and this is the only outstanding one-class, village-wide social group that manifests in-group characteristics.

At gatherings for such things as rituals at the đình, weddings, funerals, and other family celebrations, no single class is exclusively represented. Furthermore, there are no sections of the village which are occupied exclusively by any one class. Within every hamlet there are scatterings of house types associated with the three social classes[1]. This mixed occupancy of quarters within the hamlets, and the common participation in social activities, gives rise to a great deal of social contact between members of different social classes, and results in strong social relationships between them in many cases.

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[1]See section on House Types in Chapter II.

Relations with the Outside. -- As pointed out previously, the dispersed settlement pattern of Khánh Hậu often results in villagers having more contact with residents of neighboring villages than they do with fellow villagers. Some of the hamlets of Lợi Bình Nhơn are relatively close to Ấp Dinh A-B, and they come into that hamlet to shop and visit kin and friends. Along the main road of the hamlet, it is common to chat with a peasant who turns out to be from Lợi Bình Nhơn. Some also come into Ấp Dinh A-B to attend rituals at the Cao Đài temples. Children from Lợi Bình Nhơn and Tân Hội Đông attend the primary school in Ấp Dinh-A.

Residents of hamlets in nearby Tân Hội Đông also have frequent contact with those living in Ấp Mới as well as villagers in Ấp Dinh A-B. Ấp Nhơn Hậu is strung along the Rạch facing hamlets of the neighboring village of An Vĩnh Ngãi on the opposite bank, while the Rạch Ong Đạo, a relatively narrow stream, separates Ấp Cầu from a hamlet of the village of Tân Hương directly opposite. Ấp Thủ Tựu is the only hamlet in the village that does not seem to have any outside orientation. It is not near the hamlets of any of the surrounding villages, and therefore, its residents are less likely to have contact with outsiders than the other villagers do.

Khánh Hậu has a great deal of official contact with neighboring villages. At rituals in the đình, or such things as the celebration of the anniversary of Marshal Đức's death, members

of the Village Councils from neighboring villages are invited to participate, and some venerables from neighboring villages often attend rituals and celebrations in Khánh Hậu. Members of the Khánh Hậu council, on the other hand, frequently visit neighboring villages to assist at such things as the dedication of a new pagoda or a new school.

Villagers leave Khánh Hậu frequently to visit markets in nearby Tân An and Tân Hướng. Many also make periodic visits to the small, but busy town of Tân Hiệp further south along the main highway, and some have occasional business in the town of Mỹ Tho, twenty kilometers south, on the Mekong River. A few of the more adventurous or entrepreneurial villagers travel greater distances into the Plaine des Joncs, to Biên Hòa, Thủ Đầu Một, and several brothers at one time had a transport business between Tân An and Banmethuot, in the highlands.

A number of the villagers have visited Saigon for a variety of reasons[2]. Most of those who travel to the capital and remain longer than one day, have relatives with whom they can stay. Others are attracted by the periodic national fetes, and it is feasible to leave the village early in the morning by one of the many public transports serving Tân An, and return before nightfall. Nevertheless, the cost of such a trip is prohibitive for many villagers, and some are afraid of the city. Country people are

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[2]See section on mobility of village population in Chapter III of the companion report on economic activities.

easily identifiable in Saigon with their black cotton clothes, often bare feet, and somewhat lost air. In Saigon, the term "nhà quê" (peasant) is used in a pejorative sense to indicate someone who is unsophisticated and devoid of social graces. The peasant is considered as something of a bumpkin, while the peasant views the city dweller as someone with a better material life, but with no land and little space.

Intra-Hamlet Social Relations

Within the hamlets, family groups and residence groups manifest relatively strong associative, primary group relations. These groups tend to form networks of close relationships within hamlets, particularly smaller hamlets such as Ấp Thủ Tựu and Ấp Mới. Within family groups, particularly those consisting of siblings and close collateral kin who live in the same section of the hamlet, there is a pattern of face-to-face relations, and considerable mutual aid. Among well-to-do villagers, this may simply consist of loaning money to poorer kin, renting tham paddy land at lower rates, or allowing them rent-free space for their farmsteads. Among most of the middle and lower class villagers, however, it extends to assisting in such things as building a new house, repairing the house or farm tools, replacing thatch, and even helping with the planting, irrigating, and harvesting.

There is a tendency for close kin to live in the same quarter of the hamlet, and male siblings, particularly, prefer to group

together. These form the closest-knit social groupings in the village. The existence of family land in the village attracts kin to reside on it, resulting in concentrations of both patrilineal and non-patrilineal kin in one section of a hamlet. Intermarriage within a hamlet also results in an extensive network of kin; for example, in Ấp Mới, at the present time more than half the residents are related. Kinfolk tend to have a great deal of contact. Those in the same hamlet visit a great deal, and there are frequent family celebrations which bring members of the family together to observe rituals and participate in the feasting that follows.

Residence Groups. -- Residence groups manifest the same associative qualities which characterize the kin groups. In fact, close neighbors who are not kin may have stronger ties than kinfolk who live apart. This is reflected in the oft-quoted Vietnamese proverb: "Bán bà con xa, mua láng giềng gần", "Sell distant kin, buy close neighbors!" Among many lower and middle class villagers, these closer relationships are reinforced by a mutual interdependence. Mutual aid is common these residence groups, and it arises from the need for assistance in house construction, replacing thatch, or such things as irrigating and harvesting. Lower class villagers cannot afford to hire labor, so they rely on mutual aid with neighbors. Reciprocity still is an important element in this practice, however, and households without adult males often must hire workers whether they can afford it or not.

In some cases, the solidarity of the residence group is compounded by strong religious ties. Most of the fifteen Catholic families in Khánh Hậu are located in the northern portion of Ấp Dinh-B, and they are organized into a group with their own leader who acts as liaison with the parish priest in Tân An. Their common religious affiliation tends to give them some in-group feelings, but does not isolate them. Villagers are singularly tolerant of religious differences, and the Catholics do not manifest any minority attitudes. They have close relations with their non-Catholic neighbors, and they take an active part in village affairs. While their religious beliefs do not permit participation in the rituals at the đình, one of the Catholic leaders represents the rest of the group at these rituals where he has the responsibility of recording the villagers' contributions.

There also are concentrations of Cao Đài families around the two Cao Đài temples in Ấp Dinh A-B. The pattern of Cao Đài conversions in Khánh Hậu has been one where Cao Daists proselytized among kinfolk and neighbors, resulting in Cao Đài clusters throughout the village. The largest of these clusters are in Ấp Dinh A-B, and this is where the two temples were constructed. The presence of the temples also brought about additional conversions among the residents of the hamlet. In the SF Cao Đài quarters of Ấp Dinh A-B, the temples function as focal centers. There are frequent rituals held in them,

and since women have a role in Cao Đài rituals the attendance is large. In addition, the committees associated with the temples periodically organize such things as retreats, study sessions, and meetings of the faithful.

Proximity of residence, common religious bonds, and kinship ties, in some cases, give the Cao Đài groupings strong in-group feelings, and like the Catholic groups, this does not mark them as a minority group in the village. They are not restricted from participation in village rituals, and they retain such common village religious practices as the Cult of the Ancestors and the Thiên shrines. Within these Cao Đài residence groups there is a great deal of mutual interdependence and mutual aid. In some instances, it extends beyond such things as house repairs; for example, one well-to-do Cao Đài villager altruistically gave gratuitous use of his irrigation wheels to a group of fellow Cao Daists who are poor tenant farmers.

Chapter IX

CONCLUSIONS

On the national level, Vietnamese society can be described as plural in that it encompasses a wide range of ethnic groups which represent an equally wide variety of types of societies. In South Vietnam, one polar type, the urban society, is centered in the Saigon-Cholon agglomeration, and the opposite pole, the primitive type of society, is represented by the small, semi-nomadic groups such as the Katu of the central highlands. In between, there is a continuum in which the societies occupy varying positions between these two extremes. Robert Redfield[1] describes this type of framework as the folk-urban continuum, and he defines it in the following paragraph:

> Thus restricted, "society" still includes both types of society mentioned in the first paragraph: the folk societies, both primitive and peasant, as well as the city, nationality and nation. A comparison of some societies of the former group yields a characterization of two type-societies: the one, small, isolated, non-literate and homogeneous; the other, large non-isolated, literate and heterogeneous. "Small" has to do with the numbers of the individuals in the community; "isolated" refers to a condition in which contacts within the community are intimate and many, while contacts without the community are few; "literate" has to do with the extent and effectiveness of the use of writing for communication with other societies and with the past; and "homogeneous" as compared with "heterogeneous" refers to a society in which habits tend to conform to customs. It is recognized that differences among particular societies are differences of degree along continua, and that to be investigated are questions as to the extent to which any series of societies will distribute.

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[1]Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society," (Unpublished Document)

> themselves in uniform order if serially arranged according to degrees of difference and resemblance as to each one of these characters."

Considering the Vietnamese as a separate ethnic group, however, the continuum ranges from folk, as peasant society, to urban society. Khánh Hậu can be placed within this continuum as a peasant society somewhere between the folk and urban extremes, but with strongest affinities toward the folk side. While Khánh Hậu has a population which is about average for delta villages, it could not be considered small, nor is it a compact settlement, a concept implicit in the notion of smallness. In many respects, the village of Khánh Hậu as a whole could not be considered isolated. There is considerable contact with the outside, and many contacts within the village are casual, impersonal, and contractual. Within the village, however, these two folk characteristics are found in varying degrees at the level of the hamlet and the residence group, both of which tend to be small and relatively isolated.

There is a relatively high percentage of literate villagers in Khánh Hậu, although reading and writing have only limited utility in the village. There is no written history, no library, nor are books much in evidence around the village. With rare exceptions, reading is not a leisure-time activity. Relatively few villagers read newspapers, and only village officials and a scattering of merchants use their ability to read and write in their daily work.

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responsibilities of housewives are much the same regardless of class. A few upper class occasionally hire domestics, but by and large, women perform their own household tasks with the aid of their daughters. They do their own washing, cooking, and care for the children, as well as carry paddy to the mill, fetch water, and tend the kitchen garden.

With the exception of a small group of Catholics, villagers share many religious beliefs and practice many of the same rituals. The relatively recent advent of Cao Daism in the village has had no alterable effect on this pattern, since the adherents of this religion are permitted to practice the traditional cults. Men of all classes participate in the rituals in the đình and the pagoda, and almost every house in the village has its ancestral altar, an altar dedicated to some Buddhist deity, shrines honoring Ong Tạo, the Spirit of the Hearth, and a shrine dedicated to Ong Thiên.

The normal life cycle of the villager is marked by prescribed forms of behavior to which most villagers conform. There are a minimum number of ritual practices associated with birth, age-cycles, marriage, and death, and these are observed by villagers of all classes essentially in the same manner. For example, the same basic marriage and funeral rituals are performed by rich and poor alike. There are additional rituals which may be performed as part of these rites de passage, but they are not essential and usually they are only observed by the well-to-do. There also

is considerable variation in the elaboration of the feasting associated with these rituals, but this does not amount to a significant difference in the celebration.

As pointed out in Chapter VIII, social class is not necessarily a determinant of social relations. Celebrations in the đình, the pagodas, and in private homes tend to draw kin, friends, and neighbors from all classes. In addition, no part of the village is considered exclusive; the masonry houses of the rich and the thatched houses of the poor are indiscriminately mixed in all hamlets.

This characteristic homogeneity of social values and the relatively high degree of conformity to prescribed social practices, implies a rigid pattern of behavior in which the individual has few alternate choices of conduct and little opportunity for innovation. This notion would be reinforced by an examination of the cosmological view of the villager which seems to subject him to the dictates of the lunar calendar and horoscope, and commit him to a continual fear of antagonizing capricious spirits. Actually, however, the conservatism which results from binding traditions is not universal in Khánh Hậu. There is adherence to customs; lunar calendars and horoscopes are widely consulted; and the multitude of rituals are performed in the prescribed manner. Nevertheless, there has been considerable social as well as technological change in Khánh Hậu, indicating that there is a dynamic aspect to this society.

Several factors contributing to this situation can be isolated. First, the beliefs and traditional practices typical of Khánh Hậu have an inherent flexibility, and many of the taboos and sanctions have only a limited effect on the individual's activities. For example, the lunar calendar only prescribes or prohibits specific behavior for specific days; for example, a farmer may be prevented from planting on a particular day, but he may do so the following day with no inconvenience or loss. There also are remedial rituals or practices for the breach of prescribed behavior. A villager may violate the taboo against building his house facing the trifurcation of a road, but he may ward off the evil effects by obtaining the proper talisman.

Western influence brought about by the French also generated a number of changes in the village. Since southern Viet Nam was being settled by Vietnamese when the French arrived, it was easier for them to establish a new administration and introduce many new institutions and practices. A comparison of village society in northern and southern Viet Nam undoubtedly would draw out many historical changes which can be attributed to the French influence. In addition, there are historical changes which were the result of the long migration to the south. The expanding population eventually was far removed from the traditional cultural centers of Hanoi and Hue, and this is compounded by the fact that southern society had been influenced by the Cham and the indigenous Khmers. Finally, the war had a disrupting effect on village society, and this precipitated many changes.

In the area of technological change[2] some of these influences are apparent. Many species of rice cultivated in Khánh Hậu are indigenous to the delta, and the fact that their names are deformations of the original Khmer designations, indicates that they were adopted by the Vietnamese settlers. A Cambodian type of plow is widely used in the village, and many houses have roof thatching arranged in a style adopted from the Cambodians.

The introduction of chemical fertilizer can be traced to French influence. The gas-powered pump (although there are only a few) also was introduced by the French, as were motor vehicles. Some French foods were adopted by the villagers. Wine and brandy occasionally are served at family celebrations given by well-to-do villagers, and at the village feasts, beef ragouts usually are part of the fare. At one feast, the hosts particularly called attention to the piece de resistance, fish cooked in butter, a rare item in the village. French bread is part of the daily diet of many villagers, and some canned French food is available at a few of the village shops, although they are considered luxury goods which only the wealthy can afford. Curried dishes are often served at celebrations, but this may be due to Cambodian or Cham influence rather than French. A comparison of Cham, Cambodian, and southern Vietnamese cuisine would undoubtedly bring

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[2]Ultimately this is Indian influence carried by the Cham and the Cambodians (Khmers)

out many similarities which are not shared by Vietnamese of the center and the north.

Western medical practices were introduced into village society during the time of the French administration by means of a service medicale centered in Tân An. As a consequence, western medicine in Khánh Hậu tends to be of a type that requires the supervision of a doctor, nurse, or individuals certified to give inoculations. Western medical practices, particularly hygiene, however, are becoming more widespread in the village due to the program instituted by the School of Fundamental Education. Thuốc nam, traditional southern medicine, undoubtedly includes many Cham and Cambodian practices, but a more exhaustive study of comparative folk medicine would be necessary to isolate them.

There also have been some changes in house types due to Western influence. Newly constructed masonry houses in Khánh Hậu have a number of features which mark a departure from the traditional canons of architecture. Wide verandahs, fluted columns, tile floors, and straight, modern roofs with fixed tiles are relatively recent innovations. Some Western style furniture also is found in many of the newly constructed masonry houses.

In many of these instances, the innovators are of the upper class. According to all accounts, it was well-to-do farmers who first used the chemical fertilizers that later became widespread. Wealthy farmers also introduced the use of the gas-powered pumps. It is the masonry houses of the upper class villagers that

incorporate any new architectural features. Villagers of this group, of course, are the only ones who can afford many of the new things, and they also can afford the risk involved in experimenting with new farming techniques. Nevertheless, as a group, they are amenable to change, and as the elite, they are the pace-setters in the village.

There have been a number of social changes in Khánh Hậu. The French administrative reforms of 1904 appear to have separated the sacred from the secular functions of the traditional Village Council. In southern villages this resulted in the emergence of two hierarchical bodies; the Village Council which was specifically administrative, and the Cult Committee which assumed the responsibility for maintaining the Cult of the Guardian Spirit of the Village. The next sweeping change occurred during the war when the Viet Minh replaced the existing Village Council with their Administrative Committee. This marked a trend toward smaller village councils, with new titles and functions, for the members. Although the pre-war Village Council was reinstated when the Viet Minh control ended, the administrative reforms of 1957 instituted the same sort of changes that had been established by the Viet Minh.

Education has expanded considerably in Khánh Hậu, and this has precipitated some changes. At the present time it is possible to get a primary school certificate, and perhaps continue on to secondary school in Tân An, thus expanding one's occupational

opportunities. It also has increased contacts between young villagers, and girls are no longer expected to remain in the seclusion of their homes as they were in the past.

Many changes in the kinship system may be attributes to the long migration of the Vietnamese over a thousand years, and more recently, some changes may be attributed to the war. The southern family, particularly the patrilineage, appears to encompass a more restricted group of kin than it does in northern and central Viet Nam. There also appears to be more flexibility in the patrilineage in Khánh Hậu; the head of the patrilineage may be selected from any of the adult male members instead of invariably being the eldest, and the duty to perform the rituals associated with the cult of the ancestors is divided among the male members of the patrilineage. The genealogy book, which is so common in northern and central Vietnamese families, is found in only one or two families in Khánh Hậu.

Since the war, there have been some changes in marriage practices. Arranged marriages are less common, and it no longer is necessary to marry outside of the hamlet. It also is possible at the present time to marry a person with the same family name as long as it has been reasonably established that there are no kin ties. Làm rể, the service period expected of the fiance, is no longer required in many families. Since the war, there also has been a reduction of the bride price.

Some of the greatest social changes have taken place in the organization and practice of religion in the village. There has been a marked increase in hierarchical organization and control among the Buddhists in South Viet Nam, and it is reflected in the changes that have taken place in the Ấp Cầu pagoda. The well organized community of Buddhist nuns, their pagoda, school, and their recent Buddhist conference, are new in Khánh Hậu. They are manifestations of an increased formalization of Buddhism at the village level.

The establishment and expansion of Cao Daism in Khánh Hậu reflects the rapid and effective development of this religious movement in South Viet Nam. Evidence indicates that the Tam kỳ sect had a preponderance of followers in the village prior to the establishment of the present government. With the clash between the Tam Kỳ and the national government, however, and the decline of this sect, many of the Cao Daists in Khánh Hậu shifted loyalty to the Ban Chỉ Đạo and Tien Thien sects which had been in disfavor with the French administration and were now permitted to function freely. Within a period of five years, these sects had established two temples in Khánh Hậu, gained hundreds of adherents, and emerged as the most influential religious force in the village.

Several factors contributing to the success of Cao Daism in the village may be isolated. First, there is considerable religious tolerance in the village, and a new religious movement

would not likely meet with any opposition from the established religions or from the villagers in general. Secondly, village society is cult-oriented. The ordinary villager practices a wide variety of cults, all of which are permitted by the Ban Chỉ Đạo and Tien Thien sects. Furthermore, in becoming a Cao Đài, he has the opportunity of expanding his pantheon and worship all of the deities in a single ritual, the form of which he understands. Although Cao Daism is new, it has retained all of the ritual forms of the Buddhist-Taoist tradition. Finally, Cao Daism was established and expanded during a period of intense nationalism and Cao Đài literature invariably underlines the fact that it is a religion which began in Viet Nam, and was founded by Vietnamese.

Catholicism has been established in Khánh Hậu for a long time, although it could not be considered a significant innovation because of the relatively small number of Catholics in the village and the lack of a Catholic church. The presence of Catholicism does not seem to have brought about any measurable changes in village society.

All of these changes indicate a transition that is taking place in Khánh Hậu, and it probably reflects the same situation throughout rural South Viet Nam. The relative autonomy which formerly characterized Vietnamese villages is diminishing as the villages are more and more integrated into the developing national superstructure. Contact with the outside has increased

considerably during the past twenty years, and in recent years there have been new bonds established between the village and the central government. As time goes by, the old Vietnamese proverb, "Phép vua thua lệ làng" (The law of the Emperor cede to the customs of the village), becomes less applicable. This increased control from without is even reflected in the two most important religions in the village --- Buddhism and Cao Daism. Hierarchical organization is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Cao Đài sects in Khánh Hậu, and the Buddhist nuns of the Ấp Cầu pagoda recognize the hierarchical authority of the Buddhist Association of South Viet Nam.

In spite of these changes which have affected certain areas of village society, the basic cluster of traits and institutions which characterize the village way of life have persisted. The traditional values, practices, and rituals continue to be honored and observed, and they are being transmitted to the younger generation as they were in the past. The ordinary villager clings to the familiar. His primary concerns are his family and his farm, and his world is the world of Khánh Hậu.