

VIETNAM

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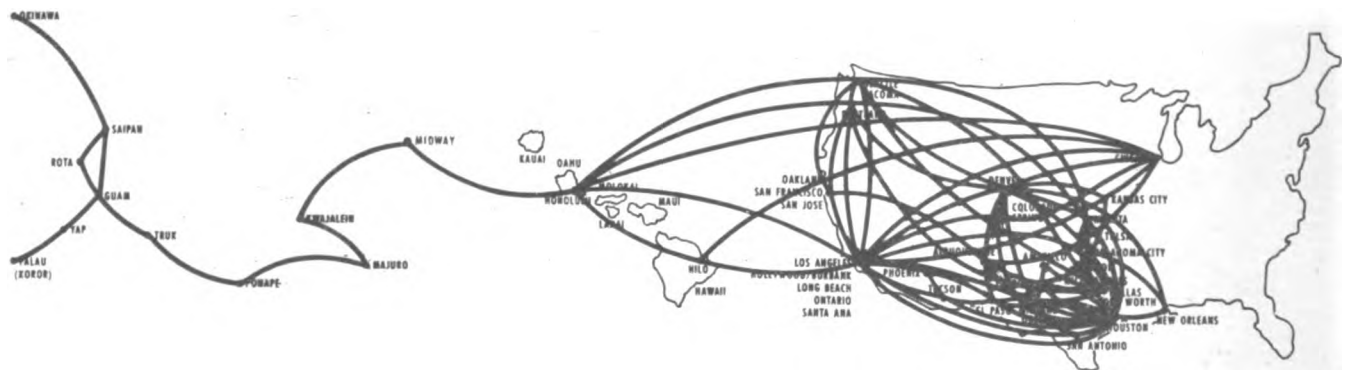
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FROM OUR READERS

Thank you for sending me the Vietnam Magazine and the Newsletter with such regularity over the past three years. Each issue presents a different facet of life of your extraordinary nation and people. You are winning many friends for your country with a dispassion of the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of Vietnam.

May the efforts of the Vietnamese people to get a place in the democratic sun be rewarded. May the images of the maimed child, the broken window, the fallen peasant, the bombed-out school be things of the past. And may they soon be replaced by the higher cultural and artistic yearnings, by smiling paddy fields and of course by the bewitching *ao dai* to which your latest issue refers.

I will continue to look forward to receiving the very interesting literature put out by your organization. My only regret is that for obvious difficulties, I can neither subscribe to the magazine nor become a patron. This gives me a guilty feeling every time I receive the materials gratis but I am afraid there is no other way.

I have been and I will remain an admirer of your country and will look forward to the day when I can actually visit Vietnam and see for myself the splendid tasks of reconstruction and restoration going on there.

S. N. VISVANATH
Oil India Ltd.
Duliajan P. O.
Assam, India

I would like to congratulate you for the work of your Association. I was fortunate to receive a copy of the Vietnam Magazine from the Ambassador of Vietnam here and I will appreciate it very much if you can put me on your mailing list.

Dr. B. ALAMI
13 Rue Ibnou Malik Racine
Casablanca, Maroc

I am now in Form III of the Convent School and my yearly examination is approaching. I would be sitting for eight subjects, one of which is geography where Vietnam is one of the countries involved. I will be pleased to receive some materials like magazines or books which will help me in my coming exams.

KHALIDAH BTE ABD. RAHMAN
42 Jalan Duku, Kg. Dato
Su Amar Muar
Johore

Your Vietnam Magazine has helped us so much not only to know the real situation in your country, but also to better introduce beloved Vietnam to the French people.

TRINH BA LAN
Cit  Descartes, Room 477
86 Poitiers, France

VIETNAM *Magazine*

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Cover: Famed movie and stage star Thanh Nga sits among the flowers in an atmosphere appropriate to the celebration of the most important Vietnamese holiday: Tet.

The disastrous war in Vietnam has moved the conscience of the world as the people's misery and sufferings have been manifold. Vietnam is always in the world news. People of Vietnam should decide their own fate without any outside intervention.

On this subcontinent, we in India have full sympathy for the Vietnamese and hope that this land of beauty, ancient culture and civilization will be saved from destruction.

Unfortunately, for want of authentic materials from Vietnam, the press here cannot project the true image of the conflict to inform the masses. We got your address from our Far East correspondent and this has prompted us to address this letter with a request for informative materials on Vietnam.

We are particularly interested in magazines and books pertaining to the cultural life of the people, their arts and crafts, industries, sports, theater, drama, architecture, and others.

On receiving your materials, we will immediately provide a free display stand in the exhibition hall. We would welcome any assortment of postage stamps too.

The President
of the Library Press Club
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11 Taksal, Jhansi
C.-Rly (U.P.) India

I have been writing to the Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations since 1970 and I noticed that most people who correspond with you only asked for stamps and pamphlets. I think this is rather unfair to you, so now I am going to exchange stamps with you. Enclosed are 50 Malaysian and Singapore stamps. I hope your philatelist club will like them.

I also would like to thank you for giving me the addresses of the embassies of Laos, Taiwan, Korea and Cambodia. It has helped me correspond with them.

LAU PENG NAM
29 Jalan Abdullah
Muar, Johore
West Malaysia

We are very grateful for the many publications which you have sent to our library. We are sure that these materials are appreciated by the many students and scholars who use our collection.

We would very much like to obtain two copies of Nguyen Xuan Canh's *Vietnam: Postwar Economic Policies* published in 1969. Thank you for your kind attention.

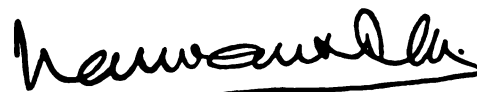
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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Would you be willing to be a Patron? Your support will assist the Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations in attaining its various objectives, including the publication of **Vietnam Magazine**.

If you decide to participate as a Grand Patron or an Honor Patron you will receive a special scroll, as well as be included in our Honor Roll. To be an Honor Patron a minimum payment of US\$850.00 (or equivalent) is required; to be a Grand Patron a minimum payment of US\$425.00 (or equivalent) is required.

If you would like to learn more about our activities, we indeed would be pleased to hear from you.



President
TRAN VAN LAM

I am a Brazilian student of history and philology and am now studying Asian countries, their people and their language. As one cannot find any books or pamphlets about your country, I address this letter to you to ask, if possible, for a grammar book and an English-Vietnamese dictionary.

GETULIO MEDEIROS
58000-Joao Pessoa — P.B.
Brazil

I belong to a group of young people who are struggling against war and prejudice. We publish a little newspaper and would appreciate your sending us information and pictures.

We are shocked by North Vietnamese aggressors killing children and old men and women. What have these children done that they have to die so early in life by the cowardly enemy? This enemy knows only victory through force, and that is why it is a source of much trouble at the peace talks in Paris.

WOLFGANG WIRSCHSTEIN
D-5719 Seidfeld
Asmecke 15
Federal Republic of Germany

We attach herewith a cheque No. P-147129 for the sum of \$17.50 as payment for **Doing Business in Vietnam** and **Vietnam Economic Report**.

S. SALOMON
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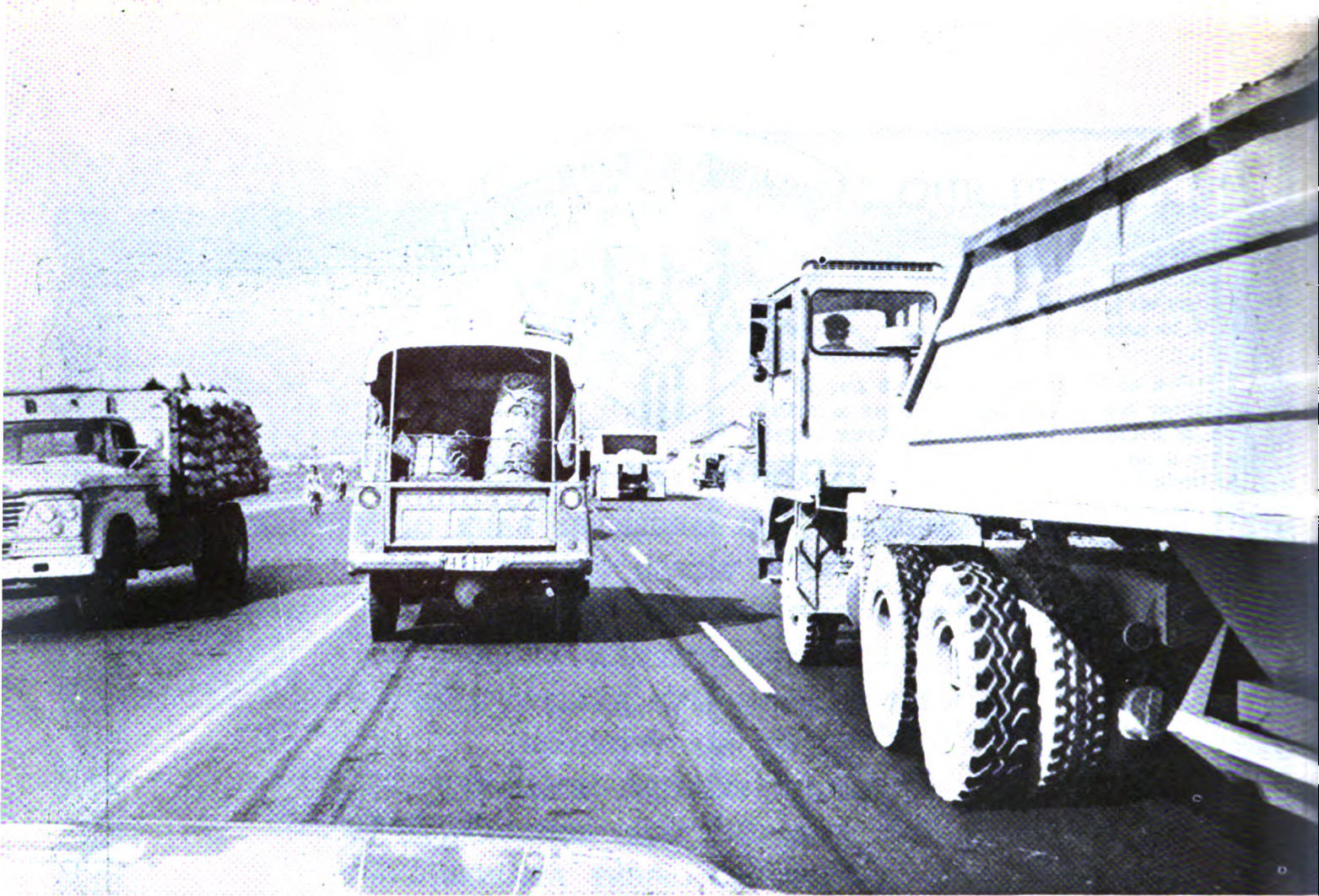
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One of the busiest highways in Vietnam is the modern expressway running north from Saigon to Bien Hoa.

People on the Move

People and their produce are on the move in the Republic of Vietnam. From the canals deep in the Mekong Delta, where food and farmers and their families flow toward markets, to the capital of Saigon where networks of roads, railroad tracks, waterways and air routes fan out through the nation, progress in improving transportation is keeping pace with growing security. The open road beckons as never before, and the isolation of hamlet life is crumbling as Vietnamese take advantage of opportunities to travel. They are widening their horizons, trading in more distant marketplaces, commuting to schools offering higher education, meeting new people and carrying with them new experiences and new ideas.

Improvement in transport facilities is evident in these statistics :

- * The railroad in 42 months has increased the number of its passengers by nearly 640 per cent ;
- * Four thousand kilometers of main highways

are being reconstructed in a nationwide project that already has upgraded 2,491 kilometers and should be completed by June 1972 ;

- * Ships arriving at Saigon Port have increased 126 per cent in the past decade ;
- * More than 1,500,000 passengers are using the national airline every year.

The Railroad

The Vietnam Railway System was known before World War II as one of Asia's finest, linking Saigon with Paris via Chinese and trans-Siberian connections. Today it consists of 1,240 kilometers of meter-gauge tracks within South Vietnam, including 1,109 kilometers of a well-engineered main line and 131 kilometers of branch-line spurs. The main line runs from Saigon north along the South China Sea to Dong Ha, a small, long-disused station just below the Demilitarized Zone at the 17th parallel. But now

Transport facilities improving

neither man nor pig can make that journey uninterrupted. About 65 per cent of the total trackage is being used — 710 kilometers of main line and 104 kilometers of branch lines. The main line, however, is not continuous; it is broken into three operable segments:

- * 116 kilometers from Saigon east through Xuan Loc to Gia Huynh,

- * 460 kilometers from Long Thanh north through Nha Trang to Phu Cat, and

- * 134 kilometers from Da Nang northwest through Hue and on to a point about 24 kilometers south of Quang Tri.

Like Phoenix

Twice destroyed in the past 30 years and now being rebuilt for the second time, the Vietnam Railway System (VNRS) is like the *phung hoang* of Vietnamese folklore, the phoenix that rises renewed from its ashes. Reconstruction work is underway on the southernmost of the inoperable segments, the 83-kilometer stretch from Long Thanh to Gia Huynh. Work crews then will move north to the other two wrecked gaps in the line: the 289-kilometer segment from Phu Cat north to Da Nang, and the stretch of track running 37 kilometers south from Dong Ha. If all goes well — funds and security permitting — the last of these three sections, ruined by warfare, sabotage and floods, should be back in operation sometime in 1974.

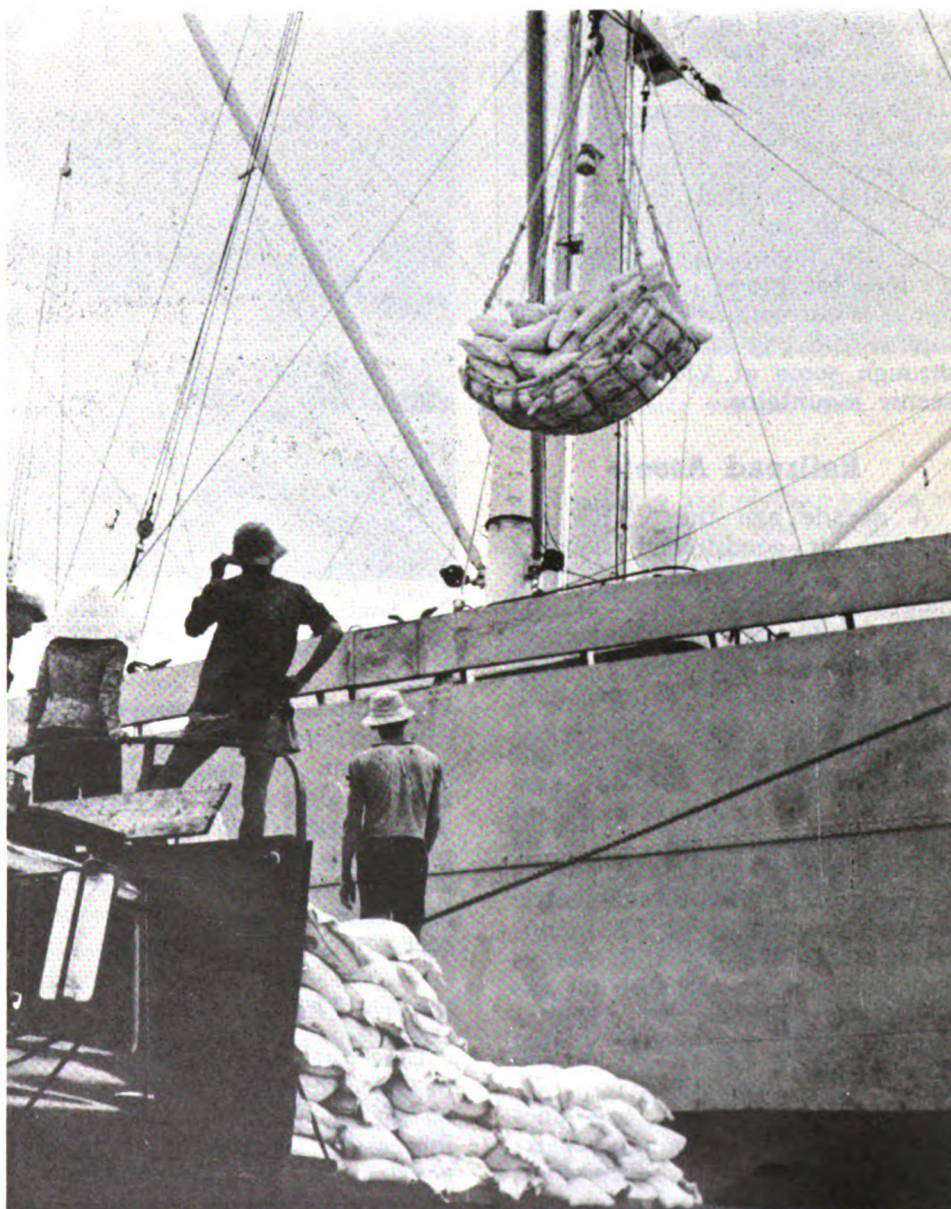
American bombers in World War II badly damaged the railroad when it was operated by the Japanese military. The Indochina war from 1945 to 1954 added more damage as the Viet Minh systematically blew bridges, tore up and hid tracks, and sabotaged operating facilities. With U.S. government help, the Vietnamese restored the line to full operating efficiency after the 1954 Geneva Agreements. Then the Viet Cong

started harassing the railroad in 1960, firing at trains, shooting repair crews, placing land mines and command-detonated mines on the roadbed, dropping bridges and twisting rails out of line with jacks. But it was a disastrous series of typhoons, culminating in widespread coastal floods in February 1965, that finally tore the rail line into unconnected segments. Still the trains kept running.

Even in its present state, cut into three parts, the 86-year-old VNRS is continuing to perform

its economic, psychological and logistical roles. It is stimulating competition with other modes of transport, providing the sense of security that local people feel when they see the trains running, shuttling heavy equipment and bulk materials to construction sites that other carriers could not handle so efficiently, serving an ever increasing number of passengers, and moving nearly 600,000 tons of general cargo each year.

Between January 1968 and June 1971, cargo moved by the railroad increased 50 per cent while the



At Saigon Port, vessels used to tie up to 21 midriver buoys and discharge cargo onto lighters. Since 1969 they have been able to get wharfage space.

number of its passengers soared more than 638 per cent. In 1968 the daily average of cargo moved was 1,095.8 metric tons, compared with last year's 1,643.8 tons. Passengers in 1968 averaged 1,036.5 a day; this year the figure reached 7,656.8.

With the completion of big military base construction projects along the coastline and with the gradual redeployment of U.S. forces from Vietnam, cargo shipments have slacked off somewhat in 1971. But with improved security, the number of passengers has continued to rise. In the first half of 1971 the railroad moved 260,000 tons of cargo and 1,385,881 passengers.

The French-built VNRS, which negotiates 27 tunnels and 413 bridges, has grades of one per cent or less along 94 per cent of its length and no grades steeper than 1.5 per cent — except on its 84-kilometer spur from the coast to Dalat. On that branch line leading to the mountain resort and the high-plateau vegetable gardens the grade is 12 per cent, but it is surmounted by use of an alpine-type cog railroad running through some of Vietnam's most scenic mountains.

Railroad Assets

A decade ago the VNRS ran luxury, air-conditioned sleeping cars on an overnight train from Saigon to the beach resort of Nha Trang. Today the luxury sleepers are deadlined and more work-horse type cars are in operation. The railroad's assets include 164 passenger cars and 1,124 freight cars ranging from two-axle cars of 10-ton capacity to four-axle cars of 40-ton capacity. It has 85 vintage steam locomotives and 56 comparatively new diesel-electric locomotives, mostly of U.S. manufacture. In 1965, 200 U.S. Army-owned cars were procured for the VNRS: 111 flatcars, 61 gondolas and 28 40-ton mechanical refrigerator cars.

Line shop facilities are adequate for handling minor repairs to motive power and rolling stock, and major repair shops are located at Saigon, Di An, Thap Cham and Da Nang. Shops are

well supervised and staffed by highly trained technicians, and a large percentage of the supervisory personnel have had experience on U.S. railroads.

"Under the present conditions, we can't make money," says Nguyen Trong Kha, assistant to the railroad's adviser. "But if the railroad can provide through service between Saigon and Hue, then Air Vietnam and other carriers would face stiff competition. Like most Asian people, the Vietnamese are not in a hurry when they travel

designated as primary lines of communication (LOC) have been repaired, resurfaced or widened. Most of the remainder should be reconstructed by June 1972.

In 1967 less than 2,800 kilometers of roads were good enough to be classified as LOC. The 4,075 kilometers of roads now designated as LOC are fed by some 2,600 kilometers of asphalt, stone or laterite interprovincial roads and these in turn are fed by some 14,400 kilometers of provincial roads. While the interprovincial



South of Phu Cat, this train runs with flatcars hooked ahead of die to detonate any land mines the Viet Cong may have placed on the tracks.

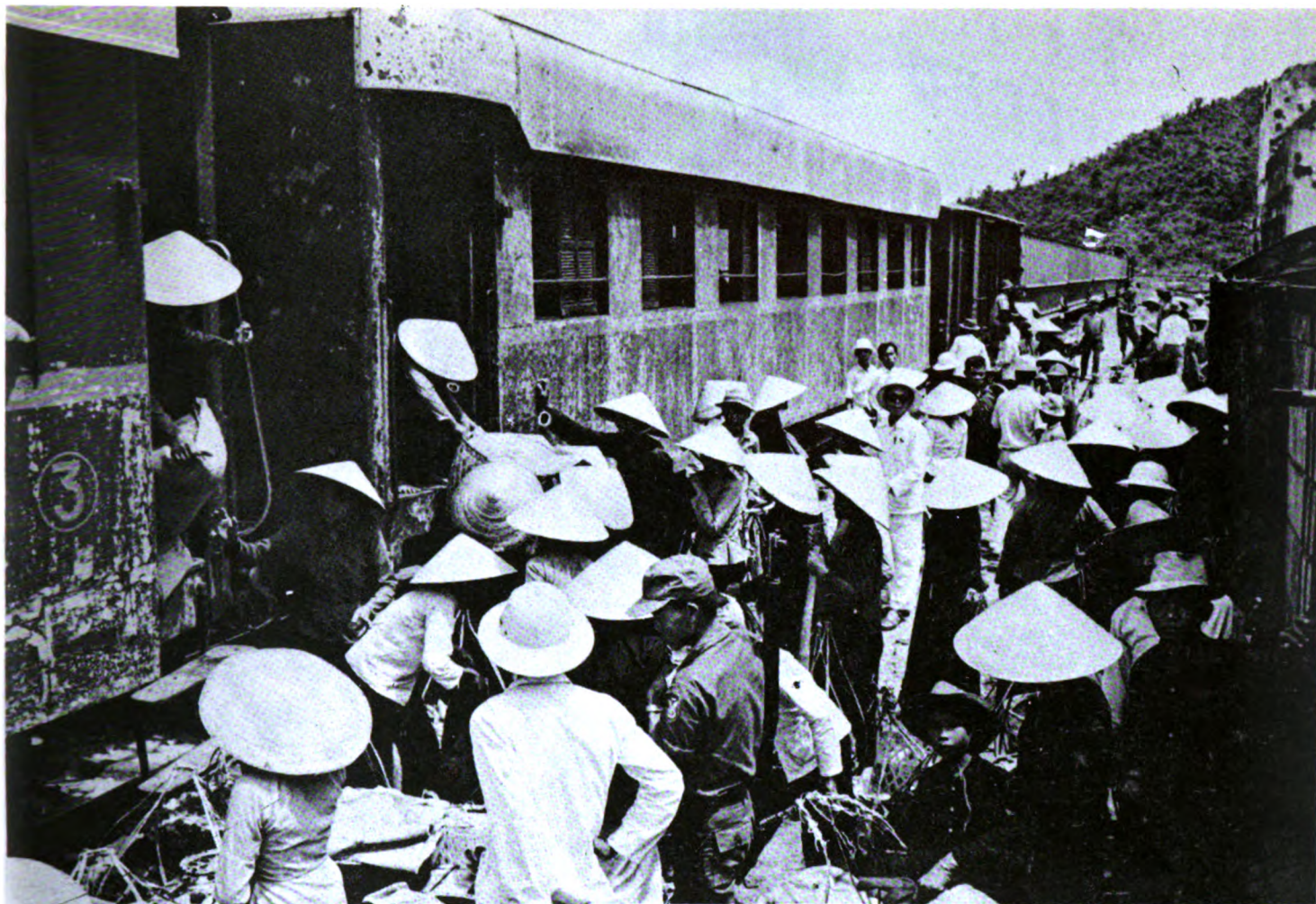
We want to ride on some form of transportation where we can carry our belongings. The railroad is ideal for that. From the psychological viewpoint, when people see the railroad is running it means for them that security has been restored. That is when you get control of the area."

The Highways

Like the railroad, South Vietnam's highways have been battered by years of war. But with increasing security a road-reconstruction project launched in January 1968 is being accelerated. So far 2,491 kilometers of highways out of the 4,075 kilometers

and provincial roads are not included in the mammoth reconstruction program, many of them are being repaired and maintained by villagers working in government-supported rural self-help projects.

The security situation along the highways has seen dramatic improvement. In 1967 some 1,680 kilometers were considered secure — that is, traffic could move during daylight without military escort. By March 1971 highways classed as secure had increased to 3,300 kilometers. Thus 72 per cent of the LOC highways are secure, while 24 per cent are "open" and four per cent are "closed." An open road handles



Growing security induces more Vietnamese to travel. Here passengers board a train between Nha Trang and Phu Cat. In the past 42 months, the railroad increased the number of passengers by nearly 640 per cent.

traffic with military escort; a closed road usually is traversed only in conjunction with military operations. From the tip of Vietnam at Ca Mau to the Demilitarized Zone, only about 100 of the 1,500 kilometers on Routes 4 and 1 are not considered secure enough for daytime travel now. (Regardless of their security ratings, roads are not regularly traveled by any but military forces at night because of curfew hours.)

The road reconstruction project is being handled by 10,000 men of U.S. engineer battalions, 3,000 men of ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) engineer battalions, 400 Korean engineers, 100 Australian engineers, 5,000 men employed by RMK-BRJ, the prime contractor for the OICC (Office in Charge of Construction, U.S. Naval Facilities Engineering Command), and 1,000 men hired by Vietnamese contractors.

Equipment worth some US\$40 million is being used on the nationwide job. Military battalions are employing about 1,500 major pieces of operating equipment and civilian contractors about 1,400. Materials used so far total 8,750,000 tons of base rock and 3,750,000 tons of asphaltic concrete.

Included in the program is repair or rebuilding of 200 bridges totaling 11,240 meters in length. RMK-BRJ now is working on major bridges at Bien Hoa (800 meters), the Saigon River (455 meters), Binh Loi (555), Tan An (262) and Ben Luc (514). All are expected to be completed by June 1972.

As part of the Vietnamization program, the ability of the Vietnamese to reconstruct roads according to modern construction standards and long-life design has been considerably enhanced by

U.S. military and civilian advisers. Technical advice and on-the-job training have been given in quarry operation, asphaltic concrete design, equipment maintenance and prestressed concrete construction techniques. This know-how, coupled with road-building equipment slated to be turned over to Vietnamese government agencies as the Americans withdraw, should do much to insure future maintenance and expansion of Vietnam's highway network.

The Ports

South Vietnam's chief port is Saigon and its subsidiary facility just up the Saigon River at Newport. Ships arriving at the capital have increased 126 per cent since 1960. That year 1,304 ships unloaded 3,088,414 tons of cargo; in 1970 a total of 2,952 ships discharged 7,376,093 tons. Before 1969



There has been no congestion at Saigon Port since 1968 and the pilferage rate is among world's lowest.

the ships were tied to 21 midriver buoys and discharged by lighter. Now they discharge from shipside to truck, a method eliminating cargo congestion, and double handling.

Congestion tied up Saigon Port in 1967 and 1968 but was overcome by importing modern U.S. cargo-handling equipment — fork-lifts, cranes, warehouse tractors — which permitted speedy off-loading and efficient in-transit storage. Cargo-handling equipment comes from three sources: items left in Vietnam by departing U.S. troops and transferred to the government of Vietnam; items declared surplus in the United States, West Germany and Japan; and new items purchased by the Port Authority, in which case the Agency for International Development (U.S. AID) pays 27 per cent of the cost plus ocean freight.

Port Authority income from docking, wharfage, warehouse and customs clearance fees increased from 312,838,303 piasters in 1968 to 687,531,182 piasters in 1970. ^{1/} At the same time the loss due to pilferage was cut to less than one per cent. This contrasts with Nha Trang, which used to have a very low pilferage rate until port facilities were disrupted by two typhoons in 1968; now many coastal skippers refuse to call at Nha Trang because of pilferage from ship to pier, from pier to truck and from truck to warehouse. The situation is slowly improving, but Nha Trang remains far behind Saigon in effective security. "Saigon," says a Port Authority official, "has the lowest

^{1/} Probably the best measurement of the purchasing power of these sums is the «accommodation» exchange rate of 275 piasters per US\$1 set in October 1970.

pilferage rate of any major port in the world. And there hasn't been a congestion surcharge levied by any shippers' conference on Saigon cargo since 1969."

To insure that the congestion experienced at the height of the big buildup of U.S. forces in Vietnam does not recur in future, a major rehabilitation of Saigon Port's facilities is now nearing completion. Much of the work is being done by the OICC and its prime contractor, RKM-BRJ, as well as Vietnamese contractors. The project has included paving, draining, piping for a commercial water system, electrical facilities, rehabilitating railroad spurs within the port, fendering, fire protection, renovating 15 warehouses, desilting and dredging. The dredging has lowered the riverbed from five meters to its present 10 meters and will permit 14 deep-water

New ports are being constructed

piers to accept ships at maximum draft.

For years Saigon Port got along with two pre-World War II military-surplus tugboats. But in May and June 1971 nine new tugboats, provided by U.S. AID at a cost of US\$1,250,000, arrived from Taiwan shipyards. Three are ocean-going tugs of 1,000 horsepower while the others, also ocean-going, are smaller tugs of 450 horsepower.

Making it easier and safer for vessels to negotiate the 72-kilometer channel from the South China Sea to Saigon Port is a project to clear the riverbed of sunken derelicts, many of them Japanese vessels sent to the bottom in World War II. Since 1967 the U.S. Coast Guard has been teaching water safety to Vietnamese personnel, who are now utilizing marker buoys and warning lights in rivers and offshore to keep mariners away from navigational hazards. U.S. geographical teams are charting the waters. And now about 100 Vietnamese are patrolling in Marine river boats, acting in a capacity similar to the Coast Guard's off American shores.

10-Year Program

A 10-year expansion program for Saigon Port, still in the planning stage, includes the purchase of land for a commercial barge site, construction of concrete piers and replacement of temporary warehouses with permanent ones. The program envisions the easing of the present shortage of longshoremen and stevedores as well as supervisory personnel with the coming of peace. U.S. advisory personnel, military and civilian, have helped in port operations since the military draft made the manpower shortage acute, but complete Vietnamization of operations should be effected by January 1972.

Meanwhile, new ports are being constructed at the Delta cities of Vinh Long and Can Tho under a project financed by the World Bank and launched in late 1968.

"Although these ports probably won't be completed for another 18 months, they are in use now," says Ralph Shepard, chief of the U.S. AID transportation advisory section. "Piers and temporary access roads are completed at both places and the foundations have been completed for warehouses. These have been turned over to the Vietnamese government, but there will be some land-filling to do before the rest of the jobs is finished."

The new ports will handle vessels with a capacity of 3,000 tons drawing a maximum of five meters of water. Says Shepard: "Commercial contractors soon will be able to move into the Delta with small coastal-type vessels and load rice where it is grown. It will be moved directly upcountry for distribution from various outports — Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang — where it is needed. The Highlands do not produce enough rice to meet local needs, so Delta rice must be shipped north. When Can Tho and Vinh Long ports are completed the bulk will go directly to Cen-

tral Vietnam without having to go through Saigon. And security at both ports is excellent."

Airports

War has created air terminals in South Vietnam that witness more landings and takeoffs than any other airport in the world. The Bien Hoa air base, some 30 kilometers north of Saigon, had 1,034,396 landings and takeoffs last year. Da Nang and Tan Son Nhut airports each handle well over 700,000 such operations annually — traffic equal to or surpassing the average at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, known as the world's "busiest" air terminal.

The country has about 500 military and civilian airfields. After the American withdrawal, Vietnam's Department of Civil Aviation will decide which fields will be maintained for postwar civilian traffic.

The principal gateway to Vietnam is the airport for Saigon at Tan Son Nhut, where 22 airlines



Four thousand kilometers of main highways are being reconstructed throughout Vietnam in a project that has already upgraded some 2,500 kilometers.

have regular landing rights or charter flight rights. The U.S. Defense Department is financing a comprehensive program to modernize the Air Traffic Control Center at Tan Son Nhut and to train Vietnamese personnel to take full responsibility for its operation. Forty-three Vietnamese air traffic controllers were trained in the United States during 1970 and 49 completed 10-week to seven-month courses there last year. An additional 39 are slated for training in America before the end of 1974, and Vietnamese air traffic control instructors soon will start training Vietnamese in Vietnam. A training center for that purpose is nearing completion on Cach Mang street near Tan Son Nhut and should be in operation by the start of this year.

Airport Tower

At the Tan Son Nhut airport a new eight-story tower was completed in March 1971 and equipped with electronic gear, elevators, its own water system and air conditioning. All personnel now are Vietnamese except for one U.S. adviser. By the start of this year Vietnamese air traffic controllers will be using a US\$1 million radar so new that only two U.S. airports so far have installed it.

Modernization of the telecommunications building at Tan Son Nhut is nearing completion at a cost of US\$85,000 in U.S. Defense Department funds and 20,798,400 piasters in Vietnamese government funds. The Vietnamese also are building an auxiliary structure for storage, at a cost of 5,900,000 piasters.

These improvements not only will benefit the many foreign carriers flying into the airport but the Tan Son Nhut-based national airline, Air Vietnam. From 50,000 passengers in 1960 Air Vietnam increased its capacity to 1,438,000 on domestic flights and 107,750 on international flights in 1970. So air-minded have the Vietnamese people become in the last decade that many of the nation's university professors commute by plane from campus to campus, teaching classes as far apart as Can Tho and Hue, while Saigon-based government officials make inspection



Traffic including all modes of transport rolls on Route 1 south of Phu Bai.

trips throughout the provinces as a matter of routine now.

Municipal Transport

Vietnamese are traveling greater distances and more frequently than ever before. But sometimes it takes them nearly as long to get from Tan Son Nhut to their Saigon homes as it does to fly from Hue to Tan Son Nhut. Saigon's traffic jams are among the world's worst.

"You have to remember," says Traffic Commissioner Nguyen Ngoc Em, "that this is a city whose population jumped over a short period from 800,000 to more than three million. One of the headaches in Saigon is that we don't have buses or subways, so the inhabitants have to use such means of transportation as the two-wheeled Honda motorbikes and the three-wheeled Lambretta scooter-jitneys. In 1965 there were fewer than 50,000 two-wheeled vehicles in Saigon. Now we have 300,000."

The city also has from 7,000 to 8,000 Lambrettas, trying to fill the gap left by the bankruptcy of the

municipal bus system nearly two years ago. There are fewer than 4,000 taxis operating in Saigon, mostly battered old Renaults, and the number is steadily declining as cab drivers price themselves out of business by raising fares.

"We have discussed a number of steps that might be taken to improve the traffic situation," says Em, "but for a number of reasons none of them has been put into effect. For one thing, because of the war we don't have the necessary funds. We don't have enough traffic lights and 'left turn' signals. There is a shortage of good quality paint for marking dividing lines on roads. The paint we use is so bad that by the time we've finished painting the second of two streets the first needs to be repainted."

Plans are being discussed to revive the municipal bus system under private ownership, but first must come financing and then training of personnel. Like many of Vietnam's transportation problems, this one probably will have to await the return of peace before it can be solved. In the meantime, Vietnamese will be traveling at a steadily swelling pace.

The Major Teachings of Vietnamese Buddhism

Buddhism as founded by Buddha and practiced by Buddhists today, is not monolithic. Established about 500 B.C. as a revolt against conditions in India out of which Hinduism also arose, Buddhist philosophy is divided into such major schools of thought as Theravada (Teaching of the Elders), Mahayana (The Larger Vehicle), and Mantrayana (the Tibetan version). These schools are subdivided into approximately a thousand sects.

In Vietnam, some 16 of the Buddhist sects, including both Theravada and Mahayana, have joined together in the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam. Many of these are also strongly represented in the Vien Hoa Dao, The Institute for the Execution of the Dharma, headquartered in Saigon. The differing interpretations of the various sects lead to diversity of thought and behavior at times. When such forces as geography, climate, diet, economics, etc., are added to these religious concepts, there is little wonder that differences are to be noted.

Within Vietnam, Buddhism undoubtedly fills the need of many people which Anismism and Confucianism leave void. Philosophically, Buddhism ties man to the universe eternally — past, present and future. In so doing, it provides some comfort to the bereaved, a sense of meaning to existence, and a philosophy (thought pattern) of adjustment to those things which the Vietnamese Buddhist adherent does not believe can be changed.

The major teachings of Buddhism are found in the Benares Sermon of Buddha. This sermon stressed a "Middle Way" between the extremes of licentiousness and asceticism. That this "Middle Way" might be realized by humanity, Buddha proclaimed what is now known as the Four Noble Truths which simply stated are : (1) Existence (life) is a succession of suffering or, to exist is to suffer ; (2) Suffering is created or caused by desires or cravings ; the ignorance of true reality allows ambition, anger, illusion, etc., to sustain an endless cycle of existence ;



In this temple of worship in the old imperial city of Hue, Vietnamese royalty practiced Buddhism.

(3) The extinction of suffering can be achieved only by the elimination of desire; 108 desires of humanity have been classified by the Buddhist prayer beads; (4) The elimination of desires or cravings can be achieved only through the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddhist adherent tries to perfect himself in this Path which is composed of: (1) right views; (2) right resolve; (3) right speech; (4) right action; (5) right living; (6) right effort; (7) right mindedness, and (8) right concentration.

The Five Commandments or Prohibitions of Buddha expressed in the negative are: (1) Do not kill; (2) Do not steal; (3) Do not be unchaste; (4) Do not lie, and (5) Do not drink alcohol. The positive approach to these commandments are: Preserve life (all life); give alms to the poor and respect their property; be chaste (which in popular Buddhism seems to have different connotations than the ideals of western morality, the term appears to imply discretion rather than restraint in conduct); speak the truth, and avoid those drinks or foods harmful to oneself or to others.

12 Principles

The Twelve Principles of Buddhism are as follows:

1. Law of Flux. The first (act of existence) is the law of change or non-performance. This law declares the world (universe) and everything in it to be impermanent, changing and in constant flux. All things (living and non-living) pass through the same cycle of existence — birth, growth, decay, and death. Life is the only continuous force seeking expression in changing or new forms. Someone expressing his concept in simple form observed, "Life is a bridge, therefore build no house on it."

In this concept, life is a continuous flow and anyone clinging to any particular form, regardless of its splendor, will suffer by resisting the flow. The Buddhist is therefore to struggle to escape this state of constant impermanency by seeking Nirvana. Nirvana is that permanent state which is perfect peace (tranquility) that is both eternal and absolute.

2. Discontinuity of the Soul. The law of change applies equally to the "soul." Only that ultimate "Reality," that "namelessness" which exists in Nirvana is beyond change. All forms of life, including man, are merely manifestations of this Reality. The classic illustration of the flow of life within man is that man no more owns that life within him than the electric light bulb owns the current which gives it light.

3. Karma. The universe is merely the expression of law. All effects have causes, so that man's character is the sum total of his previous thoughts and actions. Karma, which means action-reactions, governs all existence so that man is believed to be the sole creator of his circumstances. His reaction to such conditions determines his future status and ultimate destiny. By following the Eightfold Path, man can gradually so purify his inner nature that he can achieve liberation from the continuous cycle of re-birth. Such a development or process covers great periods of time involving repeated life cycles on earth, but providing everyone with the ultimate realization of Nirvana.

4. Unity of Life. All life is one and really indivisible, though it has innumerable, ever-changing perishable forms. Thus, though every form must die, death or cessation of life is not possible, and is an unreality.

Paradoxically, this doctrine that the personal self is not real is pivotal in Buddhist theology. Since there is no individuality of the self, there can be no continuity of the individual. Instead, it is the life-force which continues its almost endless cycle.

This is sometimes illustrated by comparing the individual to the waves of the sea. The waves are a part of the whole sea, but they return to it without separate identity. Therefore, when a man dies, he is absorbed again into the total universe, or totality of being. This principle stresses that man is no more a separate corporal and spiritual entity in life than he is in death, even though such an illusion exists. Therefore, some Buddhists prefer the term "de-

mise" to "death." They believe that there is no death; that life is merely confined to one's body for a short time. Even so, that life-force is to experience a series of reincarnations so that eventual Enlightenment (Nirvana) is acquired.

This doctrine makes the distinction between reincarnation and transmigration of the soul. The latter is declared within Hinduism and refers to the continuing existence of the individual soul incarnated in either higher or lower forms of life. Reincarnation of the life-force is understood by learned Buddhists as the teaching of Buddha. However, within popular Buddhism, many adherents tend to think of themselves as personal candidates for reincarnation and Nirvana. To them, the earning of "Merit" through good works, promises to improve one's status in future existences. Within popular Buddhism, this hope of a personal reincarnation seems to have more validity than the hope of Nirvana. In this way he can realize the rewards and benefits of his personal labors and sacrifices in a more tangible fashion.

The understanding of all life as a unity is believed to create compassion, or a sense of identification with life in all other forms. Compassion encourages eternal harmony so that the breaking of this harmony creates suffering and delays personal enlightenment. Since one does not possess a permanent self, little reason exists for seeking great wealth or property, especially since possessions tend to prolong the cycle of existence because material things encourage desires or cravings.

5. Existence. Existence is suffering. In ignorance, man thinks he can successfully struggle for and achieve his own interests. This wrongly-directed selfish energy creates suffering. Man must learn that desires or selfish cravings are wrong and must be reduced and finally eliminated.

6. Salvation. Self-salvation is the immediate task of every man. Increased understanding of the Dharma (teaching) can be gained as the Eightfold Path is followed. By facing existence as it is,

... understanding of all life as a unity

and learning by direct and personal experience, gradual release from the endless cycle of existence is acquired.

7. Eightfold Path. This Path is composed of eight successive steps. These are: (1) Right or perfect views which presuppose preliminary understandings; (2) Right aims or motives; (3) Right purpose; (4) Right speech; (5) Right acts; (6) Right livelihood; (7) Right effort, and (8) Right

concentration involving development of mind. These, successfully achieved, result in full or complete enlightenment. Because Buddhism is a way of life to the Buddhists and not merely a theory, the following of this Path is believed essential for self-deliverance to each one. Buddha's thoughts in this may be summarized as "cease to do evil, learn to do good, cleanse your own heart."

8. Impersonality of the Supernatural. A God with describable attributes is not the final reality: such reality is indescribable. However, Buddha, a human being, did become the All-Enlightened One, because the purpose of life is to achieve enlightenment. Therefore, that state of consciousness, Nirvana, the complete extinction of selfhood, can be attained on earth. All men, as well as all other forms of life, possess the potentiality of enlightenment. Buddhism therefore says to each adherent "look within as you are Buddha is the process of becoming."

9. Guidance of Buddha. Because the Eightfold Path is the way to Nirvana, the basic required faith in Buddhism is that a guide (Buddha) has trodden this way and it is therefore worthwhile to follow him. Buddhism requires that the whole man, not merely heart and mind, be developed equally.

10. Inner Life. Buddhism emphasizes the need for meditation and mental concentration in the development of the inner spiritual faculties. It stresses that the subjective life is as important as external facts so that periods of inner activity are essential for a balanced life. The Buddhist is not to get "caught up in the passing show." He must develop a watchful attitude to those circumstances which man creates so that he may keep his reactions always under control.

11. Individual Responsibility. Since Buddha taught "work out your own salvation," Buddhism believes the authority for final truth to be the intuition of the individual. The individual must be his own final authority. In view of this belief, man suffers the consequences of his own acts. Moreover, prayer to Buddha or to any other god will not prevent an effect from following its course. (While taught as theory, popular Buddhism in Vietnam seems to modify this concept.)

In this respect, it ought to be remembered that Buddhist monks



... every form must die, death or cessation of life is not possible.

(bonzes) are teachers and examples. Only in popular Buddhism are the bonzes intermediaries between the individual and ultimate reality.

This same principle of Buddhism is the basis for "Buddhist tolerance" which is to be practiced toward adherents of other faiths and religions or philosophies. This tolerance is based upon the concept that each man is his own means of salvation, and no one has the right to interfere with another's journey toward that goal. It is only natural that this ideal is not always realized by all peoples in all places. But it is probably as practiced by its adherents as are similar concepts by those of Judeo-Christian persuasion.

12. Man's Life Situation. Buddhism is a system of thought and religion which attempts to explain existence and man's relation to it. In philosophy it claims to be neither pessimistic nor escapist. It does insist on self-reliance while declaring man to be the creator of the conditions of his present life and the sole designer of his destiny.

Buddhist Virtues

The five colors of the Vietnamese Buddhist flag signify the five virtues which Buddhists believe vital. While there are differences of opinion as to which color might represent a particular virtue, the virtues themselves are ideals held before the adherents by the Sangha. These virtues are developed as the adherent follows the Eightfold Middle Path and subdues the 108 desires or cravings which stand between man and Nirvana.

The moral quality most cherished by the Buddhist ideal is compassion. The use of this term infers a genuine concern for all living creatures as Buddhism makes no distinction between the life of man and that of animals, etc. Buddha told several stories of holy men who demonstrated this compassion by giving their lives to save the life of some animal. This quality is also demonstrated by the possession of the strain-cloth so that all drinking water can be strained to prevent the

needless intake of even microscopic life. However, care is taken to illustrate the difference between deliberate killing and accidental killing. While the Buddhist theologians discuss these differences, the adherent of Buddhism in practice does not seem overly concerned about minor items and the Sangha (Order of Buddhist Clergy) has upon a number of occasions permitted or encouraged violence and loss of life when it was deemed necessary.

Patience is perhaps the second most important virtue of Buddhism. The quality of patience demonstrated in the daily life of the Vietnamese is almost unbelievable. Quietly, and without complaint, with a sense of certainty that everything eventually will work out, the peasantry waits for the appropriate action to occur. Since this virtue is so greatly stressed, the common folk of Vietnam take much abuse before reacting violently. Instead of shouting, screaming or loudly swearing, they smile at their opponents or adversaries. Undoubtedly, this high regard for patience springs from the concepts of Karma.

Optimism is a virtue which many members of the Sangha say is stressed. If misfortune occurs, the Buddhist adherent should consider it to be the consequence of the bad deeds of a previous existence which the Law of Karma extracts impersonally. Therefore, the individual has less of a debt to be paid off and can be happy and optimistic for the future. Others say that this virtue is courage, since it is courage that gives one strength to face the difficult and view the future with confidence.

Serenity as a virtue is best symbolized by the various statues of Buddha, especially those where he is seated with folded hands. To the Buddhist, serenity is a virtue which can be possessed only by those with purity of heart. Such purity may be developed by adherents as improvement of actions, thoughts, speech and intentions is realized. Serenity can be achieved only by the destruction of the desires which hinder freedom of mind; Nirvana cannot be achieved until serenity is a fact.

Freedom is a virtue to be greatly sought. It is an inner freedom from desires, and release from tensions caused by fear, want, or possessions. The shaven head and the robe of the Buddhist monk are symbolic of this virtue. They signify renunciation of the possession of material things or normal desires. Inner freedom must be achieved in order to escape the Wheel of Reincarnation into Nirvana.

Dynamism, according to some bonze, is another virtue to be sought. Dynamism is the quality by which the Buddhists not only seek to escape repetitious existences, but seek to help others achieve Enlightenment also. Since Buddhism teaches man must be his own "saviour" from the Wheel of Life, this is a virtue of great value and one to be esteemed as worthy of admiration.

Buddha in VN Buddhism

The members of the Sangha (monks, nuns, etc.) as well as the intellectuals within Buddhism, know that Buddha is not "God" (that is the supreme power), nor did Buddha ever claim this status. Neither did he ever claim the power to reverse the unalterable law of cause and effect called Karma with its impersonal out-working in each existence. Rather, Buddha, to them, is believed to be the Enlightened One, the symbol of what man can achieve. He is a teacher from whom men seeking freedom from the Wheel of Endless Existence might better learn how to escape into Nirvana.

But to the adherent of popular Vietnamese Buddhism, especially of the Mahayana school, Buddha seems to be the Supreme Being. They appear to visit the pagodas to worship and make petitions of the One so majestically symbolized therein. Many Buddhist adherents believe that Buddha will help them in their various problems, that he will grant them protection, or children, etc. Many seem to be sure that Buddha can bring prosperity and long life. Their concept of Buddha seems to resemble the prayer-hearing and answering God that Christianity affirms. Since all men have the opportunity to escape eventually

Attainment of Enlightenment, Nirvana goals

into Nirvana and thereby become Buddhas, there is an obvious difference between concepts of the supreme Buddha and the "Christian" God ; but in much of everyday life, the attitude of worship, reverence towards and confidence in Buddha is strangely similar to that expressed by many who live in the Judeo-Christian heritage.

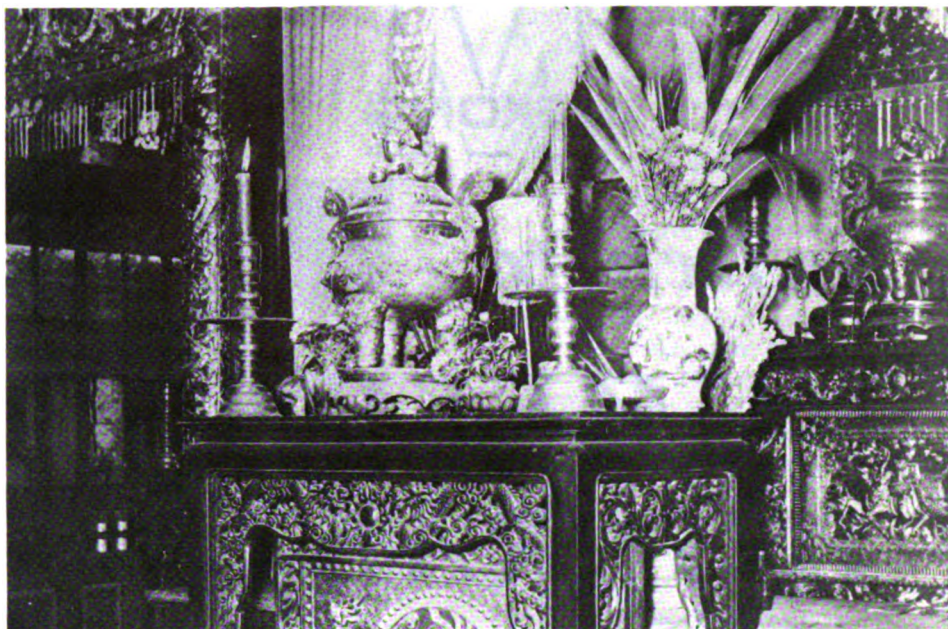
Buddhist Ceremonies

1. The Functions of the various ceremonies are: to venerate the Buddha idea ; to regulate and maintain the Sangha monastic routine ; to instruct the laity ; and to provide links between the human-social order and the cosmic-natural order of all existences, etc.

2. Major Buddhist Sangha Ceremonies. These are several in number. Without using their Vietnamese names they are: (a) the initiation ceremony for novices following their period of probation ; (b) ordination ceremonies for monks and nuns ; (c) ceremonies which conclude the monastic residence or "retreat" (these normally take place at the end of the rainy season and are practiced by the Theravadists much more than those among the Mahayana adherents) ; (d) the annual ceremony in which the laity dedicates cotton cloth to the monks which is used to make their robes (this, also, is more Theravadi than Mahayanist) ; (e) periodic meetings at each new moon and full moon for sermon recitation and to hear disciplinary rules repeated.

Buddhism has many ceremonies which involve both Sangha and laity. Normally, non-Buddhists are welcome as observers at any service where Buddhist laity is allowed. Basically, however, Buddhism does not emphasize collective worship which requires the assembly of many believers at one time. Each adherent is required to solve his own problems and seek escape from the Wheel of Life into Nirvana.

The Theravadists celebrate the Birth, Enlightenment, and Demise of Buddha on the same day of the



Ornate Buddhist altar in a temple in Gia Dinh.

year, usually in May. This school adheres to the belief that Buddha was born, received Enlightenment and died on the same day of different years. They commemorate all three events at the same time. The Mahayanist school in Vietnam celebrates Buddha's birthday on the 8th day of the 4th month of the Chinese lunar year. By way of contrast the Japanese, Tibetan and Mongolian calendars designate the occasion as the 4th day of the 6th lunar month. Buddhists in America believe Buddha's birthday to be April 8, his Enlightenment or Bodhi Day (named after the bodhi tree under which he sat when awaiting Enlightenment) as December 8 and Nirvana Day (date of his death or demise) as February 15.

Roles of Buddhism

According to Buddhist spokesmen, Buddhism has many roles. These roles in simple terms include:

1. Helping all people to obtain Enlightenment and to realize Nirvana. This role requires concern for public good so that the Sangha and lay associations conduct educational, cultural and welfare activities on many levels.

2. The utilization of Buddhist art in all its forms to promote Buddhism's idealism. This undoubtedly would include the understanding of art in its broadest terms, including architecture, music, art, etc., as well as in the traditional sense of pictures and sculpture.

3. To provide advice, guidance, humanitarian goals and values to society and to the governments of society. Because wrong conduct can not be tolerated due to its inconsistency with Buddhist ideals, such conduct must be opposed, and if necessary resisted by force. The Sangha (Buddhist order of clergy of all levels) has supported war from time to time when such war was believed necessary. Such support has included material assistance in the forms of supplies, facilities and personnel.

4. The active participation in political affairs has been practiced in Asia by the Sangha members directly. They have encouraged the Buddhist laity to have active roles in politics. The leaders of Buddhism are deeply concerned about the origin, establishment, purpose, function, administration and goals of political power both in theory and practice.



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By VAN NGAN

Nguyen Van Ly's son spent almost two hours removing the ashes from the kitchen which had been accumulating for a year. He was covered with soot. The six old earthenware "bu-rau" — a kind of grill used to support pots and pans while cooking — were dumped into a basket to be thrown away. Carefully the boy replaced them with new grills which he put in groups of three forming a triangle.

Each year, on the 23rd day of the 12th month of the Lunar Calendar, the Ly family makes the same change in the kitchen. Yellow clay is mixed with husk, moulded into the shape of a grill and then left to dry in the sun. While the family was busy in the kitchen, the father lay prostrate before the family altar where he invoked the home spirits thus :

Offerings

"Today is the 23rd day of the 12th month. I, Nguyen Van Ly, from the village of Thuy Phuong, Hoai Duc district, Ha Dong province, beseech the spirits governing the land and the kitchen to judge my work favourably and report this to the Emperor of Jade. To show my respect and gratitude, I offer clothes, hats, gold and silver and a carp needed to transport you through the sky." When he had finished, Mr. Ly struck a bell, then prostrated himself four more times before the altar.

The altar was lit with lamps and candles. Besides a tray of food, there were a mandarin's hat, two man's shirt a woman's blouse, two pairs of boots and one pair of women's shoes, all made of paper. Next to the tray of food was a glass bowl with a live carp. With the family silently looking on, Mr. Ly went to the kitchen, fetched perfumed water prepared from five fragrant ingredients and sprinkled this on the new grills and the four corners of the kitchen. The ceremony wishing the spirits of the home a successful voyage on their way to the Emperor of Jade thus ended.

This traditional ceremony has been performed from time imme-

The Home Spirits and The Emperor



COURT OF THE EMPEROR OF JADE

morial. Many Vietnamese believe that three spirits keep an annual record of what takes place in the home and report to the Emperor of Jade on each 23rd day of the 12th month of the Lunar Calendar.

To keep the spirits happy and to show them respect, numerous offerings are made throughout the year, usually on the 1st and 15th day of each lunar month and on such special occasions as an anniversary of a death in the family. But in this annual ceremony, the family implores the three spirits to report favourably on the household and offers them money, clothes and a carp, for tradition has it that the carp becomes a flying dragon for the trip to the Emperor of Jade.

Once upon a time, so goes the legend of the three spirits, there was a woman who had two husbands. She didn't plan it that way for she started out with one. The couple did not have any children and it was an unhappy marriage. Finally, after yet another quarrel, the wife, Thi Nhi, left home. Not

long afterwards she met another man and married him. There were as yet no legal divorce complications in those days.

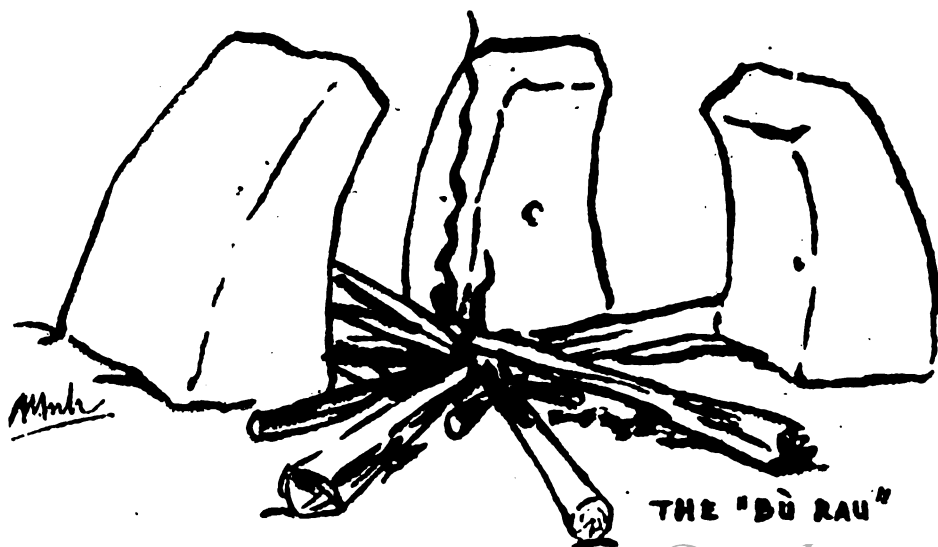
The first husband, Trong Cao by name, eventually overcome by guilt and remorse, decided to reclaim his wife. In due course he found her, but his search had

taken all his savings and he was but a shadow of his former self. Filled with pity and sorrow, she took him to her new home and gave him some nourishment. While he was eating, husband number two, Pham Lang by name, came into view and to prevent an embarrassing situation, Thi Nhi persuaded husband number one, Trong Cao, to hide in a hay stack.

Unfortunately, history seldom conforms to ingeniously laid plans. Pham Lang, absent-mindedly, decided he needed ashes to fertilize his fields and set fire to the hay stack. Trong Cao, husband number one, was burned to death and wife Thi Nhi, trying to save him, perished in the effort and the second husband, Pham Lang, trying to save his wife, met with the same fate.

Moved by the tragedy of this love triangle, the Emperor of Jade appointed Pham Lang genie of the kitchen, Trong Cao, spirit of the earth and Thi Nhi genie in charge of records. To honour this trio, Vietnamese from time immemorial, have arranged their kitchen grills in groups of three.

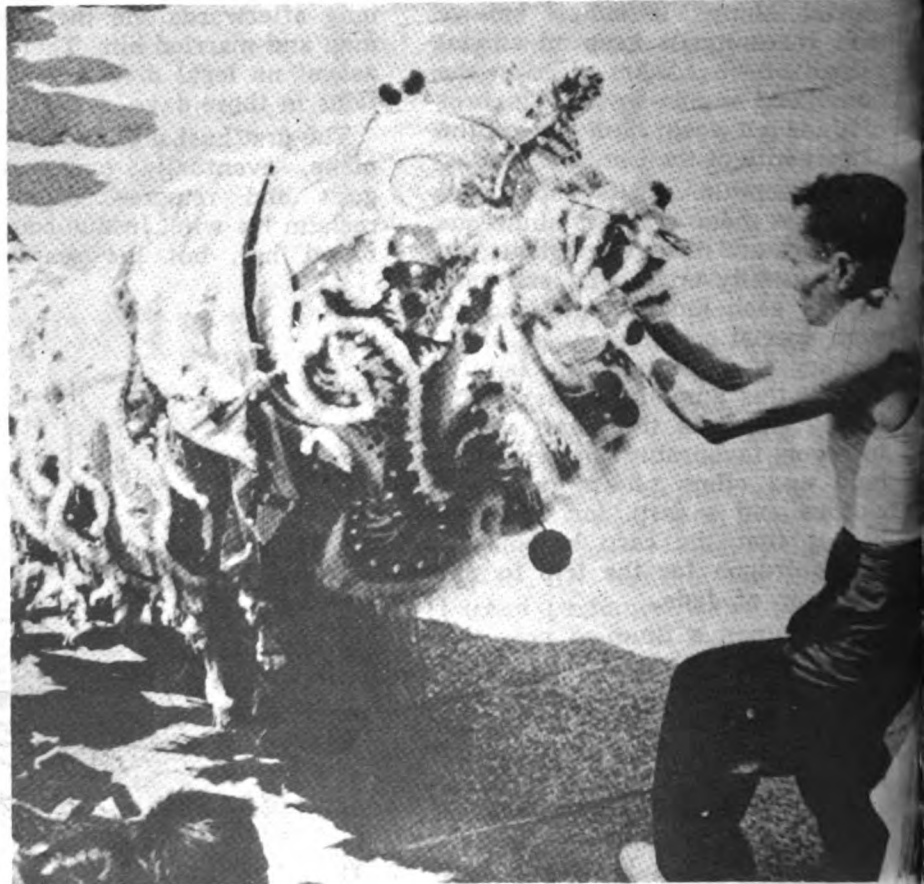
The tradition of celebrating the departure of the three spirits on the 23rd day of the 12th month of the Lunar Calendar is still widely observed although offerings today are likely to be mainly fruit and bread. But, with all traditions of folklore, this one too stands in danger of erosion, for more and more Vietnamese are beginning to use metal grills and gas stoves.



THE "BÙ RAU"



Vietnamese flock to pagodas for communion with ancestors (above). A praying monk draws attention as he kneels on street (left). Unicorn or dragon dance is a standard feature of Tet. At right: Flower mart.



The holiday of Tet

YEAR OF THE MOUSE

Tet is actually a three-day holiday which marks the beginning of the Lunar New Year, which synchronizes with the Chinese New Year and is closely tied to the Spring Equinox.

To many this means the annual awakening of nature. Each year of the 12-year cycle has the name of an animal; 1970 was the year of the dog, 1971 the year of the hog, and 1972 the year of the mouse.

Due to religious beliefs, age-old traditions and customs, Tet is the single most important holiday season in Vietnamese life. The first visitor of the new year is

vitaly important to them as is the urgent necessity to avoid anything unpleasant or sickness for fear that such will be repeated throughout the year.

Tet is the time when all debts must be cleared up, when ancestral graves must be visited and cleaned up, when ancestor family altars must receive special attention with incense, prayers and flowers as well as food offerings.

To many people of this beautiful land, Tet is the opportunity to renew the communion of the dead with those of the future through the veneration offered by those presently living. It is a renewing

of spirit and body, a settling of old accounts, financial and spiritual.

Tet is the time when families want to be together as much as people from the West do at Christmas. At this time the "God" or "Spirit" of the Hearth must go and render account of the family to the Heavenly Emperor in the Jade Palace.

To make sure that the report will be favorable, some families place honey or other sweets on their paper Gods of the Hearth or kitchen before they are burned and sent on their way. To be sure of a good report for the home, gifts of fruit, a new paper coat and a paper carp (sacred fish) for riding are added as inducements, while in the delta, paper animals for burning may be added.

Year-end Rites

While firecrackers and other explosives were used in peacetime to drive away evil or dangerous spirits, these are now strictly forbidden. But so that past, present and future may be joyfully united, the year-end ceremony of sacrifices still occurs as an invitation to the deceased to take part in the feasting.

The celebration continues for three days, ending the evening of the third day, when all ancestral souls who have returned to the family for the occasion, must depart for their world. It is then that artificial silver and gold paper money is burned by the family. This allows the departing "ghosts" to hire sampans to transport them across the river that divides "spirit heaven" from the world of the living.

When the "hearth spirits" or "gods" are absent to make an annual report to the Jade Emperor, the Vietnamese peasant



Victory over demons recalled

wants protection from evil spirits, etc. As a consequence, Buddhism plays an important role during the three-day Tet holiday period.

The villagers feel that protection is gained by the special preparation of a long bamboo pole. The pole is stripped of all leaves but the very top ones and a red eight-sided paper, bearing the symbols of Buddha's Eighthfold Path of righteousness, is then attached. This pole, which may also have some areca nuts and betel leaves tied to it for the good spirits, is planted in their yards.

Sometimes small bells which tinkle in the breeze and frighten evil spirits away, or a small plaited bamboo square symbolizing barriers which they cannot overcome are used. A small gong, which serves as an emblem of Buddha, may also be found attached to these poles.

Buddha's Victory

Children are often told the story of Buddha's clever victory over demon spirits. Briefly told, it seems that the land of Vietnam was being overrun by terrifying demons. The inhabitants were frightened, helpless, and always fleeing. But Buddha arrived in answer to their prayers to save them from their desperate situation.

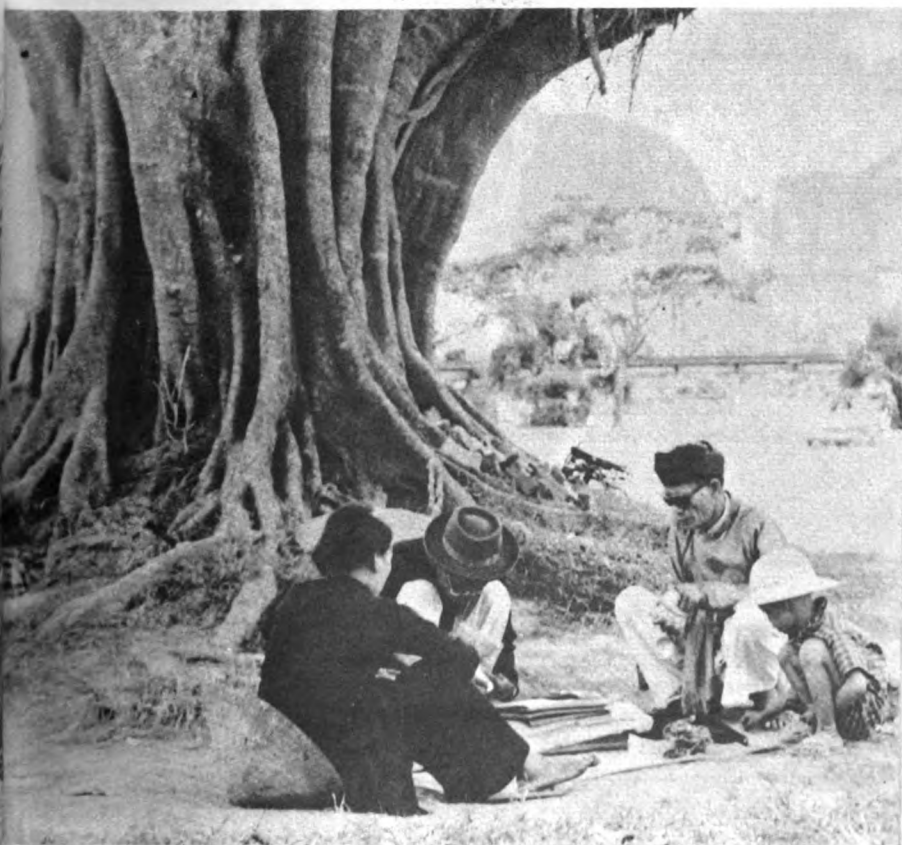
Buddha sought to purchase some Vietnamese soil, but could buy only as much as could be covered by his cloak, for which he promised precious stones and many jewels. The demons, being greedy, agreed. Buddha then backed his demand for the departure of the demon spirits by throwing down his cloak which grew in size until it covered the land. He then turned the land over to the people.

The raising of the simple bamboo poles about their homes on the 23rd day of the 12th month of each lunar year is in remembrance of Buddha's power to deliver from evil.



Tet is the holiday that sees much demand for fruit and sweets.





The streets are jammed, the corridors to shops inside buildings (right) are packed. Fortune telling under a banyan tree (above) is very popular.

Joy on the New Year

The 'First Writing'

By THUY NGOC

It is crisp this morning, the first of the New Year. I have already started an aloe wood fire to chase away the wicked atmosphere of yesteryear and have washed my hands in perfumed water. Now it is time for the "first writing of this new year," a most important task.

Yes, all is in readiness; the scarlet red *Hong Dieu* paper for cheerfulness and luck, a new brush pen of sable for cleanliness and purity, and a fresh slab of stark black ink symbolizing stability.

What shall I write to guide the destiny of this coming year? A "Duong" poem like Phan Dinh Phung, "The oriole sings melodiously in the yard..." That would be in keeping with Vietnamese heritage.

How far back are the origins of the first writing of the New Year tradition? Thousands of years, back into the antiquity of ancient China where the beauties of graceful calligraphy prompted man to seek in the written word not only the moral worth of the author but the external symbolization of his character within the disciplined beauty of his penmanship. How true is the old Vietnamese maxim, "Senseful ideas, beautiful handwriting."

The "first writing of the New Year" is the most important. For each year is a completely new phase of life, a circle of destiny. What happened last year is forgotten; just as nature shrugs off the moldering leaves of winter, so does man. A new period is begun, different, vital, promising. One's thoughts at this first moment must be noble and enriching.

True, many uneducated people buy quick poster calligraphs from fortune tellers at the pagoda rather than trust themselves to the ritual of the first writing. But I prefer

to cast my own fortune with my own hand. Happiness, luck, wealth, joy, all may be mine during this New Year.

Ah, but that too is an ignoble thought for this occasion. On New Year's morn, one must rise above mundane things, for beauty and honour go beyond self. That is the importance of a New Year, of the "first writing." No mere Phuc (fortune) or the usual "five happiness" calligraphs suffices for one's own home.

The first writing must be elegant, noble and beautiful, such

as the verses of famed female poet Ho Xuan Huong:

"On the last night of the old year, doors should be closed tightly else Satan will bring in his devils,

"On the first day of the new year, the Creator opens wide the door for the Lady to welcome spring."

I must elevate myself to a lofty plane and execute the writing with precision, clarity and strokes bold yet delicate, full-bodied yet sharply defined. It must be a work of art, jet black upon crimson red, and shall be kept throughout the year in the confucianist tradition.

What shall I write? It must be universal, something to set the mode of life for the coming year, to create the tone and temper of events for my family and my country.

Ah, I have it!

"Hoa Binh" — Peace. How perfect!



A Vietnamese scholar deeply engrossed in the "first writing of New Year"

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Two young connoisseurs sample the quality of rice cakes—attributed to a god's recipe—during Tet.

THE RICE CAKES FOR TET

By TRONG NHAN

Emperor Hung Vuong XVIII, so legend has it, was undecided which of his five sons should take over the throne of Vietnam. One day before the lunar New Year, he ordered his boys to each bring him an offering for the New Year. The one with the most precious gift, he declared, would earn the kingdom.

The youngest son pondered the offer and fell asleep while the others went out eagerly to seek fabulous presents. In a dream, the youngest son envisioned a god who instructed him on a new rec-

ipe for rice cake. Using sticky rice surrounding a round filling of well-boiled and pounded green peas with bits of pork from the shoulder or jowl cuts, the cake was wrapped in six leaves of the *Dong* tree. Carefully boiled, the cake possessed an unusually delightful aroma and taste. The youth made the cake and presented it to his father. He won the crown.

Whether true or not, the story is often told in Vietnam where glutinous rice cakes are carefully made to serve as gifts for the Tet New Year period. People general-

ly avoid cooking and doing any kitchen chores during the long Tet festivities — and the rice cakes preserve well.

Called *Banh Chung*, the square cakes, about ten inches wide and two inches deep, are offered in memory of ancestors before small family altars. They are also often presented at weddings as a symbol of the earth or girl principle while a round cake represents the boy or heaven principle. In old Vietnam the people believed the sky was round and the earth square.

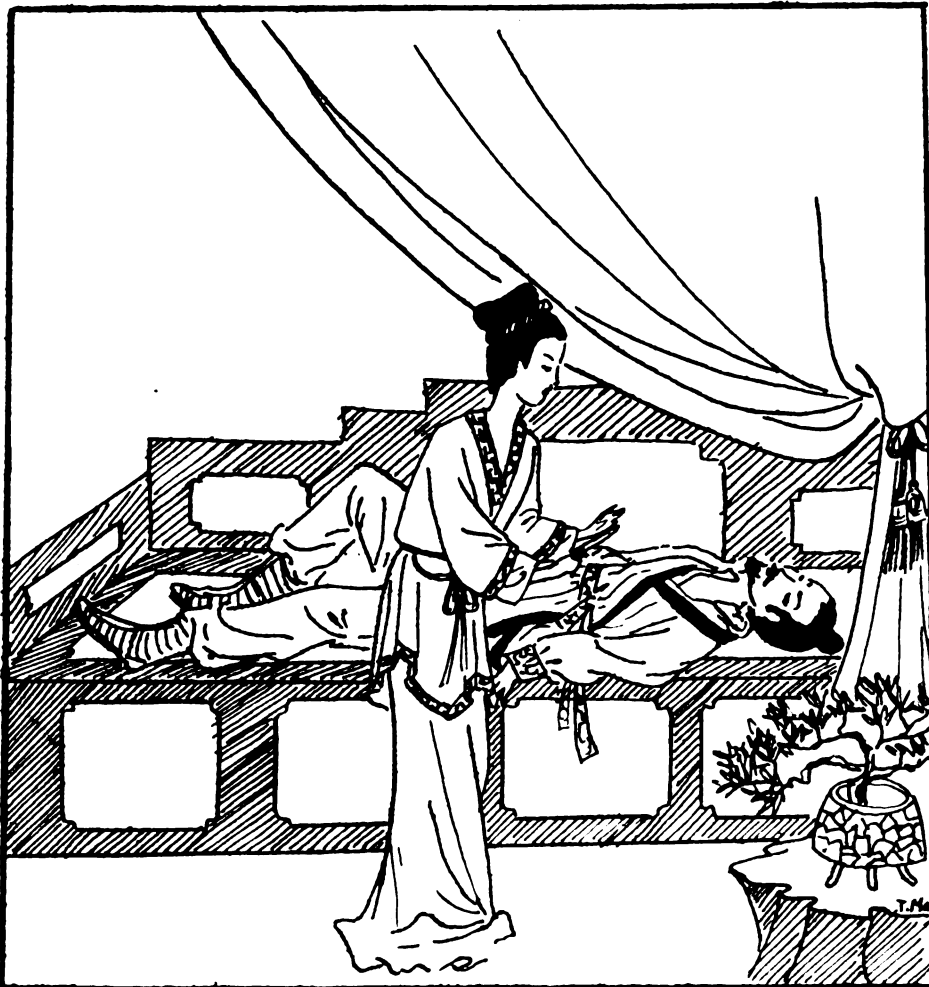
In the cities, sticky rice cakes can be purchased in the markets, but most peasants still make their own as a special food for the three days of Tet, the lunar New Year. The sticky rice reminds them of the closeness of their families while the pork and leaf wrapping are indications of a bountiful harvest.

Compassionate Lady

QUAN AM

Thi Kinh, a very beautiful and talented young maiden, was of a humble family but she was sought in marriage by many of the richest and most handsome of men.

To the surprise of all, she refused them and married a poor unattractive peasant. While life was difficult, Thi Kinh shared the hardest chores with him and found happiness in doing so.



A stray hair in his beard led to her being driven away from the house.

One summer afternoon while her husband was asleep on a hammock, she noticed a stray hair of his beard growing in the wrong direction. She got hold of a sharp knife with the intention of cutting it off, but her touch and the feel of the blade caused the man to suddenly move his head, resulting in his being wounded. Frightened, he shouted for help and accused his wife of attempting to kill him.

Utterly dismayed that her husband thought thus, Thi Kinh offered no statement, a silence which was deemed tantamount to admission of guilt. She was driven from the house and nobody took pity on her. Her family disowned her and her former suitors and the village women who had never forgiven her for being beautiful treated her badly.

Finally weary of all this, Thi Kinh sought to renounce the world and seek solace in religion. She disguised herself as a man and entered an order of Buddhist monks.

In spite of the simplicity of her religious garb and shaven head, she still was a very attractive individual, and this was noted by the devotees of the pagoda.

'Handsome Bonze'

A young girl fell in love with the "handsome bonze." She pleaded with Thi Kinh to forsake the order and marry her. Thi Kinh cut her short by asking her to respect the holy vows. In turn the disappointed young woman reacted by having an affair with the first man who sought her out, and when pregnant, went to another village where she gave birth to a child.

The mother placed the baby in a basket and left it at the gate of the pagoda after writing a note accusing Thi Kinh of being its father. While the head monk was reading the note, with all his followers around, the baby began to cry. With typically feminine reaction, Thi Kinh picked up the baby to quiet it. This gesture was interpreted as confirming the charge, and Thi Kinh was expelled from the pagoda as she had been from her home.

Pity for the child and herself forced her to beg. She thus became a familiar sight as she walked about with the child in her arms and a beggar's bowl in hand.

Then came the day when she could no longer sustain herself, so she returned to the pagoda and knocked at the gate of Buddha. After revealing her secret and begging for pardon for her sins as well as for forgiveness of those who had caused her misery, Thi Kinh collapsed to the ground and died.

Royal Decree

Deeply moved by her abnegation and chastity, the Emperor of China signed a royal decree raising Thi Kinh to the rank of divinity with the title of "Quan Am Dong Tu" — The Compassionate Protectress of Children. Today, the cult has spread throughout the Far East.

Pictures of Thi Kinh or Quan Am abound in Vietnam, and if one visits old Vietnamese temples and looks under smoke blackened by the burning of incense and decades of dust, there Quan Am sits with child in arms, an unchanging smile on a beautiful serene face.



Pity for a child not her own led Thi Kinh to a life of begging.

*A very happy and prosperous
Tet to one and all!*

A Career of Service to her Countrymen

Mrs. Ca Te is a well-known personality in Vietnamese political circles. Until recently, it was unusual for a woman in Vietnam to show an interest in politics, but Mrs. Te has been active politically since 1931 when she was only 25 years old. Now 64, Mrs. Ca Te still participates in politics, and is very active in social welfare work as well.

Her political career has been as turbulent as Vietnam's history. She first became interested in politics during the anti-French movement which began in 1931. She was an active member until the group became the Indochinese Communist Party in 1938.

In 1942 she joined the Dai Viet Party, and for a time served as counselor to the North Vietnam Mission. When the Viet Minh rose to power, they terrorized, arrested, and killed seven of her relatives.

Council Member

From 1954 to 1963, under the Ngo Dinh Diem government, nationalist parties were forbidden, so she avoided political activities. After the overthrow of the Diem regime, Mrs. Te was asked to participate in the Council of Notables during the regime of General Duong Van Minh.

The Dai Viet Party is now divided into several sects. Mrs. Ca Te has not joined any particular group, but still participates in the party's activities and commands the members' respect. Of the 40 or 50 female party members, she is the senior woman.

In a recent interview, Mrs. Te gave her opinion on the present government: "It is a good government and President Thieu is a wise leader. He has rapidly learned to be a good politician as well."

Commenting on women in politics, she said that few women in Vietnam are involved in politics because it requires more time than most women are willing to give. "The women of Vietnam must have political consciousness, though," she added. "They must know how to use their ballots to elect the right men. In the near future, women will play a more active role in politics."



Mrs. CA TE

Besides her interest in politics, Mrs. Te is involved in the social welfare field. She is Secretary-General of the Vietnamese Women's Social and Cultural Group which was formed to help the needy and refugees. This organization, which now claims over 6,000 members, has no religious, political, or social affiliations. As a leader of the group, Mrs. Te helps direct its many welfare programs.

The accomplishments are impressive. Orphan villages have been

set up, and kindergartens are operating in various areas. Classes are held in sanitation, housekeeping, and foreign languages. Vocational training is also given. For example, 12 classes of 50 students each are learning tailoring.

Tuition Free

During the course, two hours a week are devoted to civics, so the women learn more about their government while they learn a useful trade. Children from 10 to 15 are taught to weave baskets which are exported to England. All of these classes are not only tuition free, but the entire family of the trainee is cared for by the social welfare cadre.

The group will soon establish pawn shops at markets so that families will no longer have to pay exorbitant interest rates to borrow money. Plans are also under way to open supermarkets in heavily populated areas.

Although Mrs. Ca Te has the support of the labouring class because of her interest and help, she does not intend to run for any political office.

Plant Tree First

"I am now devoting all of my attention to the social welfare of women, especially those in the lower classes," she said. "Social welfare work is like politics: you cannot just sit around and do nothing. The poor need our help. It is our job to help them better themselves. By doing this they will see that their lives can be improved. Our actions should inspire a following. We will never have fruit if we do not first plant the tree."

Mrs. Ca Te works unselfishly toward this goal: to raise the standard of living of women so that they learn to develop a social consciousness. She explained why: "Success or failure in Vietnam depends a great deal on our women. Since they constitute half of our population, their voice can decide our nation's future."

Women of Vietnam



Famed beauty and movie star Tham Thuy Hang is the head and founder of (South) "Vietnam Film Company" which has turned out four successful films in the past two years.

Miss Thao Ly, who is 21, made her debut as a singer of classical Vietnamese music. She has appeared many times in concerts, radio and television programs. She is well known for her recordings and donating time to charities.

Orang-outang lips ?

The 8 Delicacies

In the old days, Asian royalty savoured some of the most exotic foods ever conceived by gastro-nomic experts, and the kings of Vietnam were no exception. They served, only to very special guests, "The Eight Delicacies."

Fortunately, today, you can still find a few of these eight delicious foods but the others are either too rare or the recipes have been lost in antiquity. Of course, many persons today would not think these foods so exotic or even palatable.

The eight delicacies were peacock pie, phoenix pie, rhinoceros skin, bear hands, deer tendons, orang-outang lips, elephant foot sole, and swallow's nest.

Even a gourmet with a hardy stomach may find orang-outang lips a bit hard to swallow. One wonders why only the lips were fancied by the royal eaters, but then, who would want any other part of the animal ?

The sensitive foot pad of the

elephant, the tender inside skin of the rhinoceros, and the often-licked paws of the bear were considered to possess medicinal qualities. The ancients believed the rhinoceros could endure cold and inclement weather and his flesh was deemed to be valuable against rheumatism. Even today, oriental medicine shops can supply powdered rhinoceros horn for rheumatics.

Bear meat, and the most tender part is the paw, has similar properties of benefit to the aged.

The ancients also marveled at the extreme tactile sensitivity of the lumbering elephants. Even though huge in size and apparently clumsy, the elephant seldom stumbles into a trap or steps on his handlers. Eating the thin, reportedly succulent layer of sensitive flesh of the pad would give the diner some of this same awareness, so the theory went.

Deer tendons, like the more common deer horn medicines,

serve as a tonic for humans, improving the blood, kidney action, perking up appetite, and curing insomnia.

While these items may seem a bit outlandish today, three of the eight delicacies are still available and readily obtainable in Vietnam.

Nem Cong, or peacock pie, is a variation on the common *Nem*, a mixture of lean pork and grilled rice wrapped in banana leaves. The peacock meat must be pounded soft and mixed with the rice and condiments before wrapping in small sausage-size chunks inside the leaves. Allowed a short aging period of a few days, the delicacy can then be eaten without further cooking.

Few Vietnamese today possess the royal recipes of old, but any traveler to Vietnam should try one of the *Nem* varieties — and preferably the famed *Nem Cong*.

Phoenix pie is made from a variety of pheasant known as *Phuong*, which is pounded, then fried with condiments. While the Vietnamese consume great quantities of chicken and duck, it is the pheasants and smaller birds which are believed to be the more succulent. Today it is difficult to find pheasant in the restaurants of Saigon, but they can be obtained on special order.

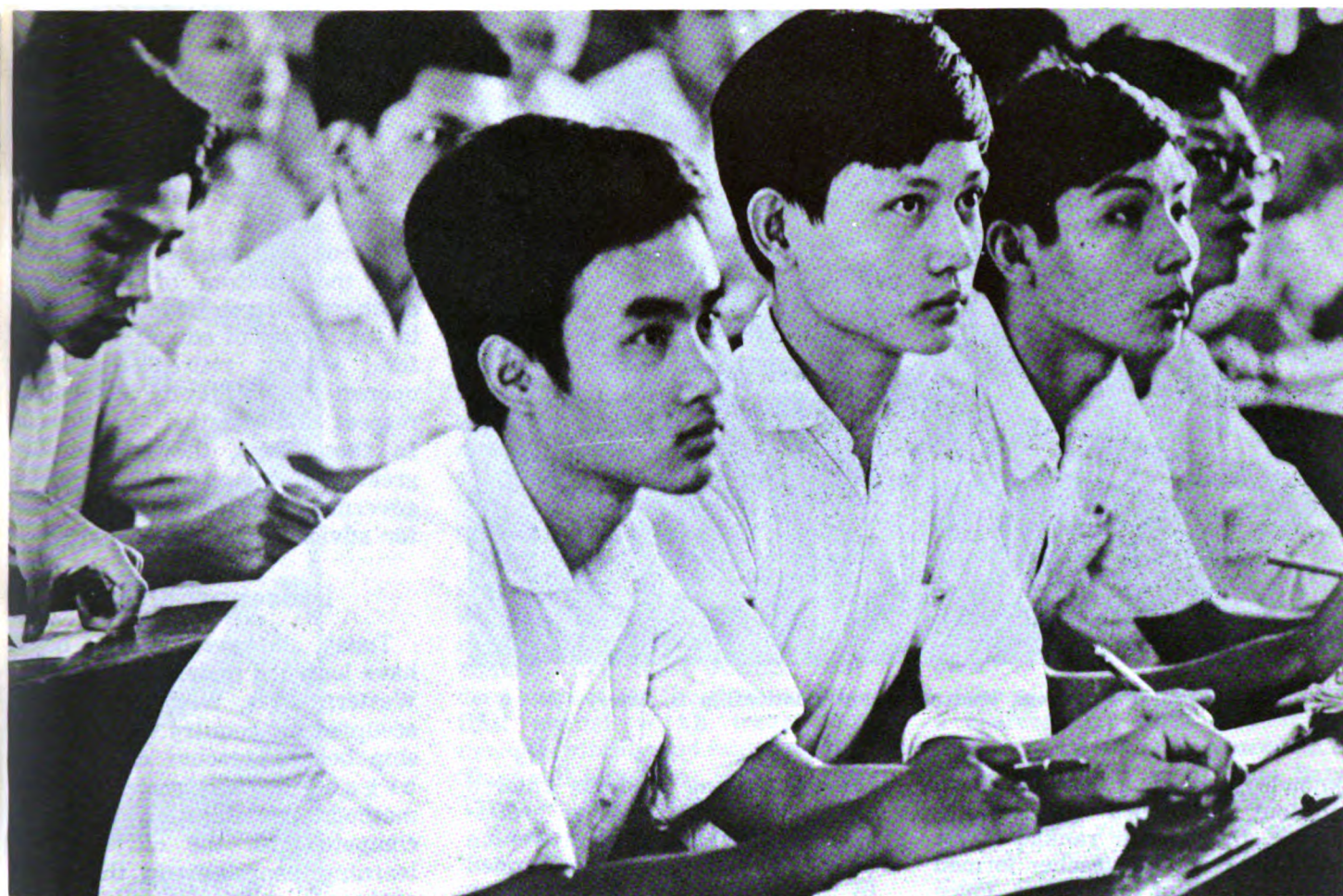
The last of the eight delicacies is today the most common: bird's nest soup. Few gourmets around the world know, however, that the finest bird's nest comes from the islands off the coast of Vietnam where thousands of swallows annually build their nests.

The swallows collect material from the sea and digest it into a kind of gelatinous saliva string which they use to anchor their nests to the rocky island cliffs. Carefully collected and cleansed, the nest material is boiled into soup of a delicious sweet taste.

The best nest strings are red (and expensive) while the more common are translucent white.

You may not be able today to find the lip of an orang-outang or the sole of an elephant on the menus of Saigon's better restaurants, but you can enjoy some *Nem* and a bowl of swallow's nest soup and eat like a king.





Students in rapt attention during lecture at Petrus Ky High School class in Saigon.

Teacher-student ties

By VAN NGAN

"He who teaches you a word, or even half a word, is your teacher." This ancient saying used to describe the relationship which existed between teacher and student in Vietnamese society. It was the second of the three most important obligations of a Vietnamese — the responsibilities to the Emperor, the teacher and the father. Whoever failed to observe them was punished by law and condemned by public opinion.

Today, the duty to the Emperor no longer exists. The ties between teacher and student have loosened under the impact of Western ideas. However, they still remain important and are second only to the

duty of filial devotion. The Vietnamese still venerate learning and are reluctant to break with old traditions. In traditional Vietnamese society of days gone by, the teacher came before the father whose merit was to bring children into the world and raising them, whereas the teacher provided knowledge, moral and spiritual training.

Ethics and good manners have always been of great importance to the Vietnamese people because they define the basic virtues a man should have: to fulfill one's obligations towards parents, ancestors, older persons, relatives and neighbours. Children must love, respect

and take care of their parents when they are alive, and worship them when they are dead. One respects one's elders and treats the young with consideration. A civilized man lives in harmony with all people.

The first objective of learning, therefore, was to become a civilized man. Success at examinations for the mandarinship was considered of secondary importance, as learning was but a means to preserve morals and ethics in society and not an aid for self-aggrandizement or to gain personal wealth.

One should first cultivate ethics and manners before acquiring



In rural classroom, student-teacher relationship is closer.

knowledge, for a learned man without principles is despised. Hence, the teacher ranked above the father, for the teacher formed the character of his student. Once he had accepted a student, his reputation was at stake and he assumed responsibility for the student's actions. So, if the student turned out badly, the teacher was blamed for he had failed in his task.

Helping Teacher

Faced with such responsibility, the teachers in olden days were strict with their students. To punish a student, the teacher often beat him with a bamboo stick and praise was infrequent. The student strictly obeyed his teacher. Among his duties, he had to help his teacher at school, boil water for tea, sweep the classroom and perform other menial tasks. At home or at play, in his relations with others, the student was expected to avoid doing anything that might reflect unfavourably upon his teacher.

The student did not pay for his schooling but an occasional bottle of wine, a bag of rice or a few yards of fabrics were always welcomed. However, the teacher never accepted money. Upon graduation,

the outstanding students entered the mandarin or other professions. But whatever their station in life, former students continued to follow their master's teaching, and on the occasion of important holidays such as the Lunar New Year sent presents as an expression of respect and gratitude.

When a teacher died, his students would gather at the funeral. Even those in high positions at the Court attended the ceremony and went into mourning for a period of one year. After the teacher's death, his students formed an alumni association. Whether they were high-ranking officials or plain citizens, they all joined.

The purpose of the association was to commemorate the anniversary of the teacher's death every year. All students contributed money for this ceremony. And on that particular day, the works of the teacher would be recalled and his favourite poems read. Harmony and order prevailed in Vietnamese society for centuries, largely due to such close bonds between teacher and student.

From ancient times till 1884, when Vietnam lost its independence, scholars monopolized key posts in the administration as well as in private professions. They set

the standards of society and their conduct was reflected in a Vietnamese proverb implying that the supreme achievement in life was to be a "mandarin in the prime of life, and a teacher in retirement."

As there were only few schools in the country, started by the Emperor for members of royalty and the children of mandarins, ordinary citizens had little choice in the matter of education. Therefore, when retired mandarins opened schools, they enjoyed respect and prestige as teachers. In those days, the scholar had great influence on his society. The government often called on him for advice and assistance.

Loosened Bonds

Today, however, these bonds have loosened under the impact of Western ideas. When the French occupied the country, the relationship between teacher and student began to deteriorate. Foreign methods of education began to compete with the old ways of learning, especially in the urban centers.

French schools applied Western methods of education. A teacher was responsible for one class for a whole year. It became impossible for the teacher and the student to develop a close relationship in such a short time. Teachers were paid by the government and teaching was no longer regarded as a sacrifice and an honour.

Today, teachers are often quite young. Influenced by Western culture, they no longer accept the authority of old traditions. Some teachers even marry their students. Many believe the traditional Vietnamese relationship between teacher and student has become obsolete.

For a long time, there has been a movement afoot in South Vietnam seeking to restore the teaching of ethics and ancient traditions as a means to resist the encroachment of Western culture. The task will not be easy, because the war and related problems have caused many of the younger generation to view an education primarily as a means for personal gain and riches.

Put 'Ong Cop' in your tank

When a Western big-game hunter bags a tiger, he has visions of a beautiful skin rug on the floor before his fireplace. The Vietnamese hunter, on the other hand, sees in this majestic beast a pile of bones worth a substantial sum of money.

Tiger bone paste is a much-sought medicine in the Orient, bringing about 13 U.S. dollars an ounce at the herbal shops. Vietnamese, like most Asians, have deep respect for the tiger, a beautiful animal with tremendous strength, vitality and fabled agility. They call him "Ong Cop" or "Sir Tiger," out of respect.

When a hunter succeeds in killing a tiger, he begins a careful processing of the animal so as to preserve every useful bit of the beast and especially to capture the inherent vitality of this lord of the jungle.

First, he burns the moustaches of the tiger, fearing that evil men might use the hairs to concoct a strong poison.

Then the skin is carefully stripped and cleaned of any semblance of fat or meat. A flawless hide brings a good price.

The meat is butchered for a feast — but only after it has been de-boned. Professional skinners are often called in to be certain that no bit of tendon or flesh clings to a bone. The bones are washed in a stream and repeatedly scrapped and marrowed, then laid to dry in a wind-swept spot.

After cleansing, the bones are soaked in rice alcohol and roasted to prevent decay. If they are not sold immediately, they will be dried in the sun for a long time.

A tiger skeleton, worth some \$500, can weigh up to 30 kilograms.

Medicine makers prepare the bone paste, called *Cao Ho Cot*, by a careful boiling process which takes three days. The bones are

placed in a pot of boiling water over a slow, even fire. A cook must constantly tend the fire to keep it from over-heating or dying out.

As the soup forms, it is ladled out into a second pot where it continues to simmer. An equal amount of water from a third pot is added to the bones. This continues until the resulting soup loses its brown colouring and turns clear.

The soup is then simmered over a charcoal fire until it forms a viscous paste which is poured on a plate to cool. It is cut into bars of ten ounces each. A good tiger skeleton will yield about 30 ounces of high quality paste, although many medicine shops will introduce other ingredients to double the weight. An ounce or 62 grammes of pure paste sells for 1,500 piasters (about 13 U.S. dollars).

For Poor Health

Tiger paste is prescribed for persons in poor health and especially for elderly patients having swellings, paralysis, and arthritic pains. The paste is mixed in rice soup or in alcohol, often in combination with other bone mixes such as deer bone paste or monkey paste. Western doctors have discovered the usual properties in tiger bones — calcium, phosphates, and chlorides. The one unusual property is a richness of amino acids, the medicinal qualities of which are still being explored by Western drug researchers.

If you are tempted to try a prescription, beware: healthy persons who take tiger bone paste develop side-effects including rashes, irritability, or bursts of intense excitement and energy.

Unless you want to put an "Ong Cop" in your tank, you may decide to settle for the more common deer paste or monkey bone concoctions.

Technology of RMK-BRJ

MONUMENT TO COOPERATION

Much has been written about the departure of American troops from South Vietnam. Over fifty per cent of the more than half a million United States forces have already left the country. But few people are aware that in June 1972 another force is leaving this nation — the army of construction workers of a vast American company, popularly known by its initials RMK-BRJ which came to these shores ten years ago.

Statistics usually make dull reading, and the fact that RMK-BRJ bulldozers have moved 87 million cubic yards of earth during this period means little to the average reader. Figures become more meaningful when they are translated into something more tangible. For instance, road construction workers of RMK-BRJ poured nine million tons of asphalt, enough to build a highway from Saigon to Paris. It was used in

construction of city streets, roads and highways all over South Vietnam which today speed trade and commerce from the Mekong Delta to the cities of Hue and Quang Tri near the Demilitarized Zone.

In housing and building construction the company used enough concrete to build a wall two feet wide and five feet high completely around the territory of South Vietnam.

30 'Empire States'

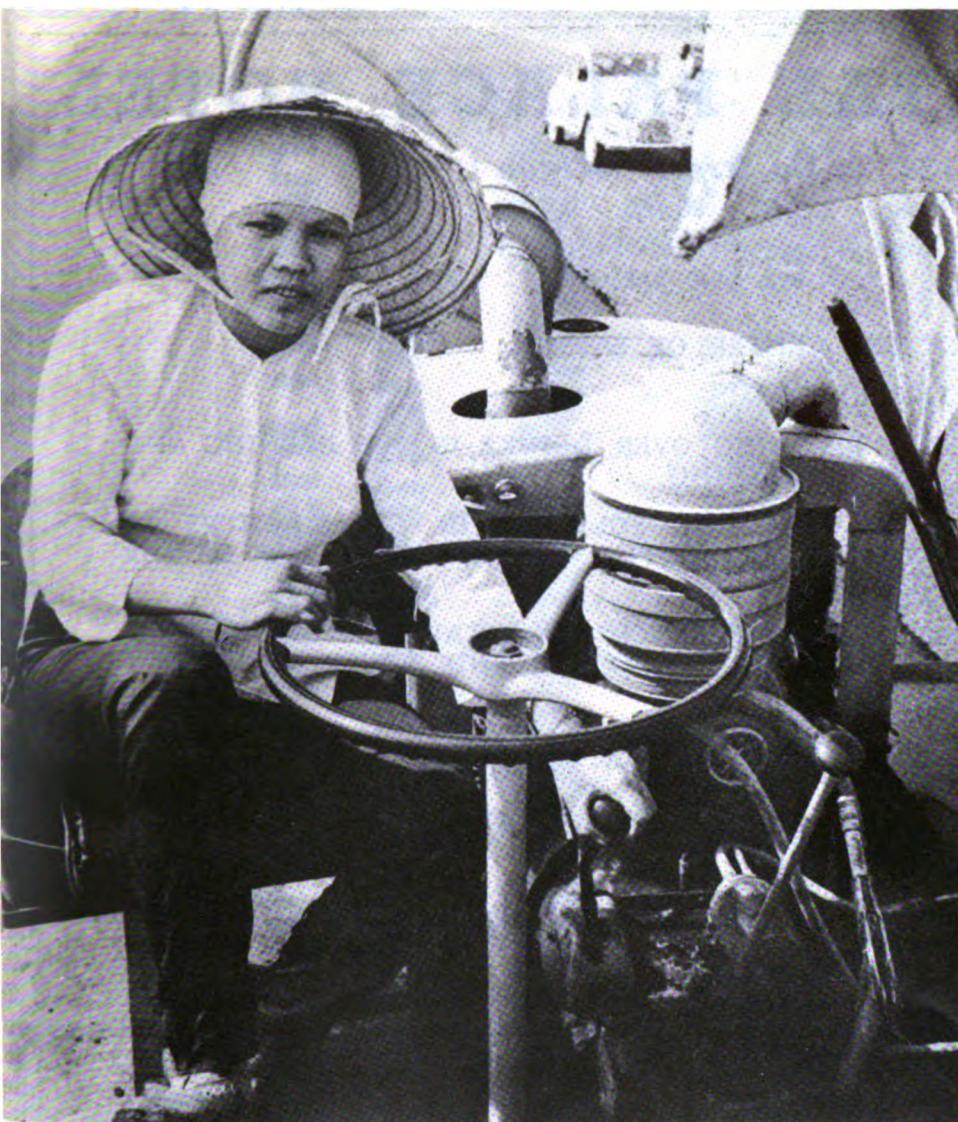
Most people are familiar with the Empire State Building in New York which is 102 stories high and has been photographed by tourists and visitors probably as often as the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Big Ben in London. RMK-BRJ has built the equivalent of almost 30 Empire State Buildings in South Vietnam. Its dredges have cleared waterways in this country to the extent that it took to build the Suez Canal. At its peak employment period the firm had a total of over fifty thousand people on its payroll, close to 41,000 of those Vietnamese nationals. They were trained as carpenters, masons, oilers, cooks, mechanics, plumbers, accountants, secretaries, welders, electricians, drivers, heavy equipment operators and hundreds of other jobs required in the reconstruction of South Vietnam.

Worth of Projects

The equipment alone needed to do this job came to the total value of over two hundred million US dollars and transportation — land, water and air — involved over one hundred ships and barges, over one thousand trucks and a dozen aircraft. In total, the firm has completed nearly two million US dollars worth of projects in South



Construction of one of many bridges in South Vietnam by RMK-BRJ firm.



***buildings
will crumble
but not what
minds hold***

Vietnam. All of the work was financed by the taxpayers of the United States and done under the direction of the U.S. Naval Facilities Engineering Command.

But all this is only part of the story. The General Manager of RMK-BRJ, Mr. John B. Kirkpatrick, said:

"In South Vietnam, we have built many things of which we can be proud. Permanent structures and facilities will be here for decades a testimony to the United States' faith in the Vietnamese people. As further evidence of this faith, there was an opportunity we did not want to miss: To pass on to our Vietnamese fellow workers what we know about the fine art of construction, not just to handle a power saw or a bulldozer but the abilities of leadership and confidence with which the Vietnamese can undertake any job and see it through from start to finish.

Knowledge, Ability

"After we Americans have departed, the finest contribution we leave behind are thousands of competent Vietnamese men and women who can do anything they set their minds to. Creating an idea or adding to someone's knowledge is the same as creating a useful building. But buildings eventually rust or crumble away.

"What will remain after RMK-BRJ leaves next year is knowledge and ability in the minds and hands of our Vietnamese friends — a perpetual monument to the joint labors of Vietnamese and Americans in South Vietnam."



Women are in the driver's seats on many road-building projects. This one was trained by RMK-BRJ. Surveyor maps the route as RMK-BRJ widens a road.

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