

VIET NAM

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Vol. VII, No. 8, 1974



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FROM OUR READERS

In the article "Land Full of Relics: a Link to Legend" (Vol. VII, No. 3, 1974) are some errors which as a Cham specialist I must point out.

The Cham may be indigenous to Central Viet-Nam and it is only surface aspects of their culture such as art, architecture, religion and literature that have been influenced by ideas diffused from India. In addition evidence reveals that many of the Cham monuments and socio-religious institutions pre-date those of the Khmer.

Truly Viet-Nam has many cultural relics much of which need restoration and should be carefully integrated into planned tourist facilities.

I commend you on your magazine and only wish it receives greater circulation.

DAVID G. SOX
Department of Geology
University of Hawaii
Honolulu, HI 96822 U.S.A.

We wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter regarding the availability of the brochure "Doing Business in Vietnam."

In an effort to aid the Council in establishing trade, we have made a personal call upon the World Trade Specialist, Mrs. Barbara Leonard, of the Saint Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association. We shall place the brochure of the Council in this International Department, where it will be gladly received, and hope that benefit will thereby be derived.

It is further suggested that the Council make contacts with parties in the enclosed list with a view towards expanding trade.

We are thus pleased and happy to be of service to the Council. We wish to offer our continuing service, should it be required—and hope that foreign demand shall soon exceed supply!

Mrs. ADELINE ROBB
4306 South Compton Avenue
Saint Louis, Missouri 63111
U.S.A.

VIETNAM *Magazine*

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Cover: The oil search is on in Vietnam. Here is the drilling rig "Ocean Prospector" operating in offshore water on the southern tip of the Republic of Vietnam. See story on page 13.

BUSINESS IN VIETNAM

REVISED EDITION

A revised edition of *Doing Business in Vietnam*, a book dealing with every aspect of business in Vietnam (establishment, investment, privileges, taxation, repatriation of earnings, etc.) and other subjects of special interest to foreign investors, has been completed by the Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations.

The revised edition is now available at US\$5.00 or equivalent.

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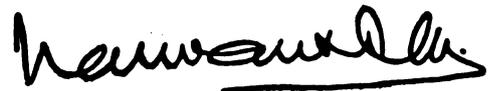
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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

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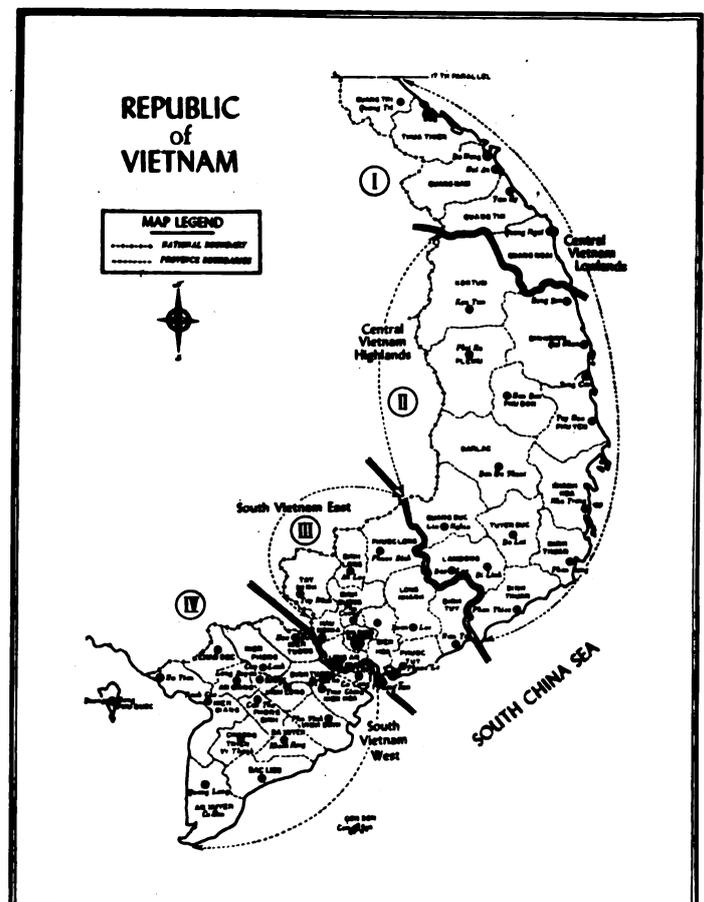
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If you would like to learn more about our activities, we indeed would be pleased to hear from you.



President

TRAN VAN LAM





Lanterns for festivals, all made at the Vu family house in Xom Chua.

A FAMILY BUSINESS

LANTERNS

By ERIC CAVALIERO

XOM CHUA, South Vietnam—The red-and-white tiles of the living-room floor were covered with jagged pieces of brightly colored Vietnamese silk. Overhead, a cluster of giant, sky-blue and silver Christmas lanterns danced in the breeze from a nearby fan.

Below it, Maria Nguyen Thi San, 71, the eldest member of the Vu family of Xom Chua, was putting the finishing touches to an even bigger star. Under the fascinated gaze of her 5-year-old granddaughter, the elderly woman's fingers deftly molded and shaped the fragile wooden framework beneath the translucent silk.

Minutes later, the Rev. Claude Collaudin was endorsing the finished product with a triumphant rap of a knuckle on the taut silky sheath.

"I don't think you'll find more beautiful Christmas decorations anywhere than these stars which are made by all the members of the Vu family working together," he said.

The long-time Saigon resident made his comments last Christmas, but right now, the family members are busy cranking out lanterns of another kind for Tet Trung-Thu (the Mid-Autumn Festival).

Father Collaudin

Father Collaudin used to be the parish priest here before moving a few months ago to the island community of Xom Cu Lao, which is completely surrounded by canals. But he still takes a keen interest in Xom Chua, where he was observed last December overseeing two parochial seasonal projects—the Vu family's Christmas lanterns and the Nativity scenes being painted by small fry of his former parish.

The young people's Yuletide pictures were based on a printed outline rather like a child's coloring book. Father Collaudin was delighted to discover that all the figures in the Nativity were depicted as Asians.



Three years ago, Father Collaudin encouraged his young parishioners to build a Christmas creche which showed Mary as an Asian woman and Joseph in Vietnamese clothes. The children, uncertain how the stable in Bethlehem might have looked, instead built a hut of dried coconut leaves, and the priest thought it was fine.

"It is better that they imagine that He came to them like that—not in a grotto they cannot visualize," Father Collaudin said.

Father Claude, who is 52, arrived in South Vietnam from his native Burgundy in February 1965. "It was the third day of the 1965 Tet holiday," he recalled, "and right in the middle of a coup." (In mid-February of 1965, Col. Pham Ngoc Thao attempted to stage a coup d'etat against the government of Lt. Gen. Nguyen Khanh. The abortive coup was defeated within 22 days.)

There always are children in the church compound, and Father Collaudin chatters with them in



Father Collaudin visiting friends.

fluent Vietnamese. A pale and tired-looking man, the priest often wears an open-necked shirt, wide black Vietnamese trousers and sandals. The Vietnamese call him "cha," or "Father," and some small children insist that this is his real name. More formally, he is known as Cha Cao-Lu-Dinh—which is the Vietnamese version of his last name—or Cha Dinh for short.

"Cha Dinh" seems to have found every narrow, cluttered side street in his former parish, and he enjoys touring them, pushing an ancient bicycle with one hand and gesturing with the other, Gallic-style, as he talks to area residents who approach him.

The slightly built cleric waves to passers-by and vendors, wearing conical hats of plaited palm, whose stalls encroach on the already overcrowded walkways. They generally respond with broad grins and shouts of "Chao (hello) Cha Dinh!"

The little Roman Catholic church of Xom Chua is a few yards away from a Buddhist pagoda and an adjoining school with both Catholic nuns and Buddhist laymen on the staff. (The name Xom Chua means "District of the Pagoda;" Xom Cu Lao, Cha Dinh's new parish translates as "District of the Island.")

Xom Chua is on the northernmost tip of Saigon and is surrounded by a canal on three sides. It is inhabited by 5,000 people who live

in tin-roofed huts of one-story cement houses. Many—like the Vu family—came originally from North Vietnam.

"Our home was in Nam Dinh, about 50 miles south of Hanoi," said Vu Trung Hy, head of the family. "About one-third of the people in the village came south when the Communists took over in 1954. The rest would have liked to have come with us but the Communists stopped them by killing them or threatening to kill them."

By manufacturing the Christmas lanterns, the Vu family is following a Vietnamese tradition. The art has grown up in this country of making the five-pointed stars with pictures of the Holy Family in the middle. There is a hole in the back where an electric light bulb or candle may be placed.

Each Christmas, the family sells the finished stars at three church locations, including John F. Kennedy Square, site of Saigon's large, orange, twin-spired basilica.

"Last year we sold our biggest lanterns for only 400 piasters (less than a dollar)," Hy said in an interview last December. "But the cost of mat has increased so much this year (1973) that we'll probably have to ask 750 piasters (\$1.50 at that time)."

He gestured toward a profusion of glossy, speckled, silk draped over a nearby chair.

"It's the imported items that cost more these days," he said. "About the only thing that didn't go up in price was the silk, but that's Vietnamese material."

He said customers for the Christmas stars include Vietnamese, Americans, Frenchmen, Italians and people from many countries.

Each year, the Vu family also makes lanterns out of bamboo covered with rice paper, for the Vietnamese midfall lantern festival, which includes a children's procession. These fragile works of art, which resemble the candy-filled pinatas Mexican children break with a stick at Christmas, are constructed in the shape of butterflies, dragons, fish, phoenix birds, rabbits, giant shrimps, jet planes and lions. They come in pink, blue, red and many other colors.

Vu Trung Hy is a telephonist with the local Vietnamese electricity company.

"I join my family at the lantern-making whenever my work permits," he said.

How many children are there in the family?

"God has given me one child every two years for the past 20 years," he said. "Next year we are expecting our 11th child—another pair of hands to help with the Christmas stars." ●



Vu family head (second from right) tells how it all started.

ACTRESS KIM VUI

GOODBYE TO THE CINEMA WORLD

By WILLIAM WERMINE

AGANA, Guam—Kim Vui, the first Vietnamese actress to brazenly smooch—delicately, of course—in bed while making the first color movie ever in Vietnam, has forsaken the cinema world for a while and is living on Guam with her American husband and two-year-old daughter.

Already, her special brand of singing has won her a devoted coterie of fans on this remote U.S. territory which lies three-and-a-quarter hours east of the Philippines, eight hours west of Hawaii, and is poised on a forever-summer latitude of 13 degrees above the equator.

During a recent political fiesta she entertained at Guam's Government House for guests of the territory's Governor and occasionally puts her unusual voice to work at a local hotel.

It's Her Voice

Kim Vui in classical Vietnamese means golden face, but it's really her voice that is gold. Every time she sings, money goes into her pocketbook, and her voice reflects a golden and unique talent. It is a mixture of Andy Devine and Marlene Dietrich with a smattering of Dionne Warwick. Deep and throaty, it drips sex.

"As a little child, I liked to wave my handkerchief at the passing pilots in their planes, she said. That was during the Japanese



Kim Vui sings in residence in Guam as relatives and husband watch.

occupation of Vietnam. I was too young to know if they were enemies or not. One clear day, a plane buzzed low over my home. I saw the red outline of the rising sun on the belly of the plane. I waved my little handkerchief and my heart warmed when the young Japanese pilot smiled to me and returned my wave.

Pilot's Attack

"Suddenly, he turned the plane around and came back," she recalled. "He swooped down like a vulture attacking a lamb. Streams of angry bullets began to spit from the wings.

"One hit my throat, another my foot. My smile of welcome became a grimace of pain as rivers of blood oozed over my white dress.

"I lost consciousness and a few days later I awoke in the hospital. My voice was not the same. The doctor said that the bullet had partially damaged my vocal cords."

The damage caused her voice to be unusual and became her fortune.

"She turns grating, irritating radio tunes into tough sounding powerhouse productions," said Bob Woods, an Agana businessman and fan of Miss Vui's talents.

Keyboard artist Ralph Lombardi, an American musician in Saigon, described her as "the most haunting Vietnamese singer on the music scene today."

According to Daniel Cameron, a former columnist for the Saigon Post, Kim Vui's voice is "sweet and low and wicked... a sexy growl that can thaw the ice in a customer's drink."

Miss Vui reached the crest of the wave, thanks to her recent hit movie, "Blue Horizon," a tragic tear-evoking drama in which she delicately kissed the hero in bed as she plunged a knife in his back. That was the penalty for his unfaithfulness. After she killed him, she turned the knife around, and... a quick jab in the throat finished the job neatly.

Packed Them In

"She really packed them in," recalled 'Pop' Nickerson, a former Saigon building contractor now working for the Navy on Guam. "About halfway through the show, I saw many handkerchiefs come out. There was even liquid in my eyes."

One of eight children in a show business family, she learned how to dance and sing before she knew her ABC's. Her father owned a travelling Hat Boi show.

(Hat Boi is the traditional Vietnamese opera dating back a thousand years. It is similar to the Japanese Noh. The Hat Boi system is similar to that of repertory theater. Each performer must play many roles. There are more than 30 different plays which the company puts on for different seasons, occasions and holidays. The pace is grueling and strenuous and the monetary rewards about the same as a taxi driver. Those who stick with the company develop a wide range of acting skills and are able to portray any emotion. Shakespearean troupes also are repertory companies. Richard Burton is a product of repertory).

Since Miss Vui was the daughter of the boss, her stagemates naturally took an interest in her. They taught her the tricks of their trade—singing, dancing, costuming, scene designing, painting and, most important, “how to keep the fans applauding and the cash register ringing,” she said.

By the time she was 15, she was Vietnam's Shirley Temple. Big name night clubs in Saigon fought for her services. Maxims, Vinh Loi, 5th Floor Majestic, Romeo and Juliet—all the top spots.

Movie Jackpot

While she was in the spotlight, world-renowned composer and promoter Tran Van Trach caught her act. He offered her a shot at the big-time. He opened the golden door—TV. She became a regular on Trach's song-and-dance show. One of his backers, a rich Chinese, sweetened the pot with a movie contract from a Hong Kong film company.

It was for \$100,000 tax free.

In Vietnam, \$1 then bought a large fish, a bottle of soy sauce, a two-pound sack of rice, a small sack of coffee, a box of sugar, a bunch of bananas, a few vegetables, a bottle of beer and bus fare home.

Politics did not hurt her.

“For years the French pushed the Vietnamese movie industry

under the rug so they could promote and sell their own films. When the French were kicked out in 1954, a vacuum was created. The government began to sponsor propaganda films, but there was something missing, that ‘something’ was cash. Consequently, talented performers were not attracted to movie making. President Nguyen Van Thieu changed that. He decided to make the Vietnamese movie industry commercial and competitive. I was part of that. I got in on the ground floor,” said Miss Kim.

“I signed with the new Vietnamese company, Dai Nam Company, and made several sentimental-tragic movies. They included ‘Blue Horizon,’ ‘Unfaithful,’ ‘Bowed Head,’ ‘Love and Hate.’ ‘Blue Horizon’ won me an Oscar in the Far East Film Festival on Taiwan. When I sang on the night club circuit I rode to work on the back of my brother's Honda motorcycle. On the premiere of Blue Horizon at the Rex (in Saigon), my chauffeur parked my sleek black Mercedes in back of President Thieu's Mercedes,” recalled Miss Kim.

After reaching the pinnacle of success, culminating in an Oscar given her personally by the President of South Vietnam, she was hit by a silver dart from the bow of Cupid.

“All my success and glory was like a bubble that could burst and break at any time,” she said. “Deep inside me I wanted to escape my fishbowl existence. Marriage offered me privacy and stability, a chance to enjoy a real life away from the glitter and falsity of the stage and screen.

“I met my husband while painting a landscape in the botanical gardens in Saigon,” she said. “The botanical gardens of Saigon are a wide expanse of jungle trees and tropical flowers in the middle of the traffic-clogged city. Lovers walk the paths much as in the Luxembourg gardens of Paris.

“My future husband was strolling down a path. He was alone. I

was painting. He stopped and asked me the price of the painting. I told him it was not for sale. He insisted, but I continued to refuse. Finally, he wheedled my address, giving the excuse that he wanted to see other paintings...”

The cool eyes turn pixie and she giggles.

“...I don't think he was interested in my paintings, however...”

“I chose Bob Henry from many men because he loved me and not my money or fame.

Promoters Unhappy

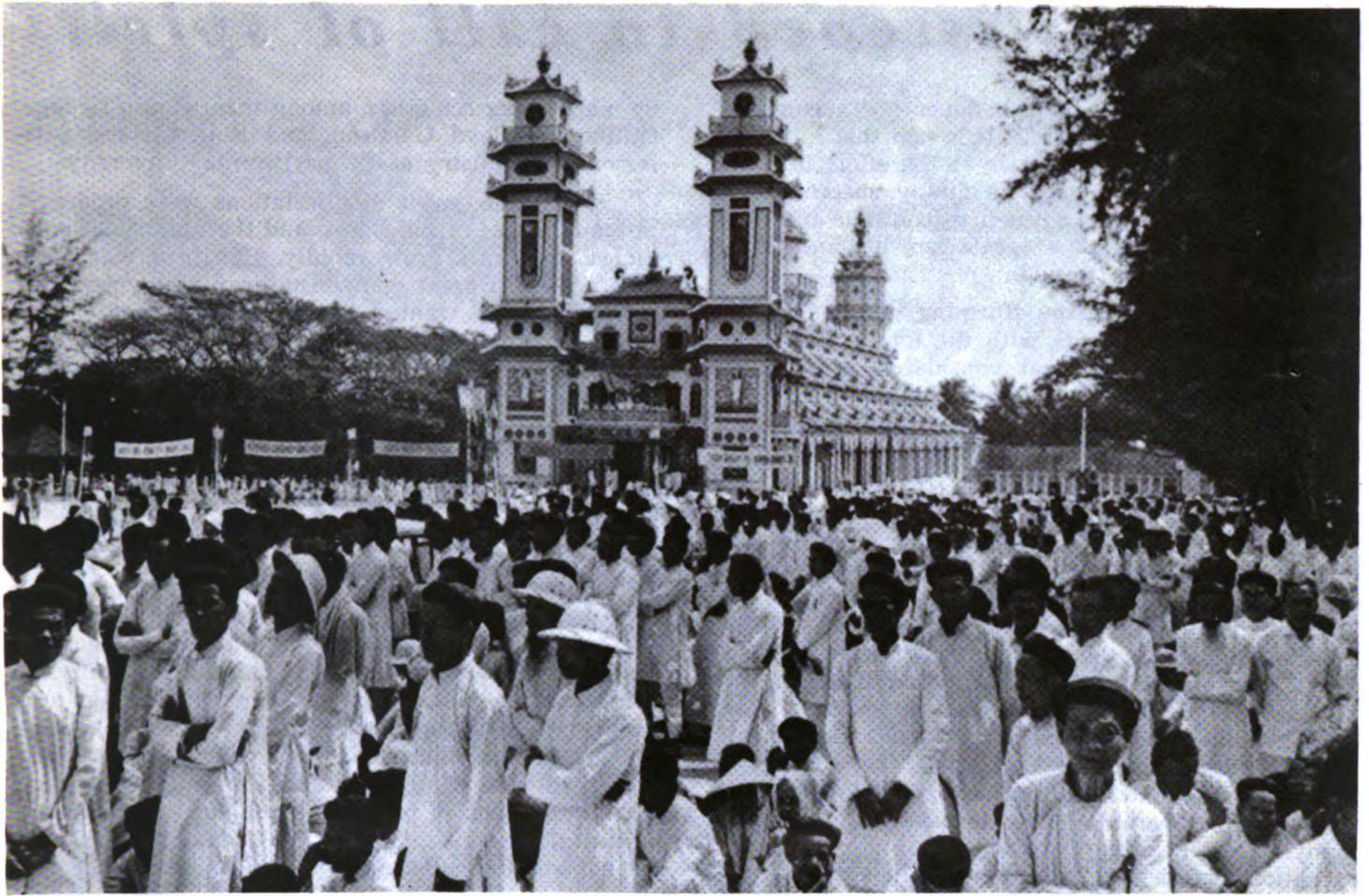
“The film promoters were not happy and they pursued me like hungry hounds,” she recalled. “I went into hiding, and Bob and I decided to escape to Guam.

“On Guam, I am my own person,” she said. “If I want to sing that is up to me. I am enjoying the pleasures of family life with my husband Bob who is an architect with PA & E (Pacific Architects and Engineers). He has had the great wisdom to bring my entire family here. My father, mother, sister and her children have come. We are one big happy family—just like in Saigon.

“Occasionally, I sing at the Fujita Hotel, which is both a luxury resort and an entertainment center here, to help balance the family budget. I am also recording ‘old gold’ type songs such as ‘You'll Never Get to Heaven,’ ‘La Paloma,’ ‘Misty,’ ‘Smoke Gets In Your Eyes.’ Soon I will release my recordings commercially.”

An aficionado of Miss Vui is Dion Carpio, a Guam builder. After hearing her at the Fujita, he commented, “She has a voice which is a distillation of thousands of suffering experiences, a voice of someone at least 50 years old, but she appears only 29 or 30 years old.”

Asked her age, she said, “I am 49 years old.”



Members of the Cao Dai faith gather in compound in Tay Ninh. Their cathedral is shown in the background.

INDIGENOUS TO VIETNAM

The Cao Dai Religion

By VAN NHAN

A must for tourists in Vietnam is a visit to Tay Ninh province, some 100 kilometers northwest of Saigon on the border of Cambodia. Four kilometers east of the capital which bears the same name as the province is located the colorful and magnificent Great Divine Temple of the Cao Dai religion.

The temple is unique, its architecture being a harmonious blending of the three principal architectures of the world: Buddhist, Catholic and Islamic.

It is the work of the late Pham Cong Tac, formerly chief of the legislative body, who began building it in 1933 and completed it in 1941 before he was deported to Madagascar by the French colonial administration for political reasons.

Construction expenses were provided by voluntary contributions from adherents of the religion numbering about 2 million.

Pham Cong Tac was neither an engineer nor an architect, but he achieved a masterpiece which followers said was due to inspiration from God and the great poet of the Chinese Tang dynasty, Ly Tai Pe, who is considered the Spiritual Pope of the Cao Dai faith.

Birth of Caodaism

The founder of Caodaism was Ngo Minh Chieu, a clerk in the French colonial administration at Phu Quoc, an island famed for its *nuoc mam*, the Vietnamese national fish sauce.

A clerk listened to call of spirits

Ngo Minh Chieu was a believer in Taoism and its many gods and immortals. It is said that he often climbed Duong Dong mountain in the effort to commune with them and that he finally succeeded in meeting them and was advised to continue his religious activities, observe a vegetarian diet and learn supernatural powers through spiritism.

Spiritism is a doctrine affirming that the spirits of the dead communicate with the living through a medium, i.e. an individual considered as able to establish communication between this world and the world of spirits by means of physical phenomena as spirits tapping on tables or abnormal mental states such as trances.

Spiritism is founded on the principle that God, the Supreme Being, the eternal source of life, is power, intelligence and love. He is the creator of all things and all living beings. He is eternal, infinite, absolute. The divine force is the total sum of vibrations, necessary to the functioning of the universe. He is the intense source of heat and light, of the universal fluid. The human soul, a spark of the divine source, is composed of two parts: one is immaterial, the other semi-material, the source of which is the material fluid and called perispirit. These two inseparable elements have to go through many stages, including incarnation, growth and disincarnation, before attaining supreme incarnation.

Incarnation is the fact for the soul to be reborn in a material body. When death comes, it is disincarnation of the spirit that escapes from matter, but which is still wrapped up in its fluid body or perispirit. The latter keeps it imprisoned in the terrestrial zones. It is in this state that it still is capable of acting by its fluid body on living beings and material things, through mediums, till the day when it is reincarnated again.

It is in this way that spiritism establishes and justifies the communication between living beings and spirits who manifest their presence to them, guide and advise them. The spirits manifest themselves by uniting their spiritualized fluids with the vitalized fluids of the human body, and it is this fusion of fluids that creates the existence of mediums.

Origin of Spiritism

Spiritism is believed to date back to the year 1848 in the United States. Its first manifestations were produced in the Fox family of the Methodist religion at Hydesville and later at Rochester, New York. Two unmarried girls of the Fox family were mediums. Other manifestations were produced at Stratford, Connecticut, at the home of Dr. Phelps, a Presbyterian minister, about the year 1850. The findings of well-known physicians explained spiritism as due to natural causes. However, documents published later seemed to accuse the Fox family of fraud. The findings of the physicians did not satisfy public opinion and the phenomena were then studied

by many other scientists, among them Horan Greely, Guillaume Lloyd Garrison, and Robert Hare, professor of chemistry at Pennsylvania University.

Meanwhile, spirit manifestations were produced in many places in the U.S.A. and the number of convinced followers grew rapidly. Spiritism was then accepted by a great many American clergymen and politicians who wanted social reorganization.

In 1854, spiritism was developed enough to merit the holding of a congress of spiritualists. From the U.S., spiritism quickly spread to England and many European countries.

In 1857, a Frenchman, Allan Kardec (real name Denizart Rivail), published a sensational book on spiritism. Rivail was born in Lyon in 1803 and died in Paris in 1869. He was from a Catholic family, but studied at the Pestalozzi Protestant school in Switzerland. Upon his return to France, he became an accountant for Universe Magazine. For many years he had the ambition of unifying all beliefs. In 1854, he attended many meetings and seances that totally convinced him about spiritism. During one of those meetings where spirits were consulted, one of these called *Vérité* (Truth) gave him the mission of founding a religion "really great, beautiful, and deserving of the Creator." After that he consecrated all his life to his apostleship.

He was introduced by the French playwright Victorien Sardou to a seance held in Paris, Rue des Martyrs, attended by many European dignitaries of the time: Tiedmen Marthese, cousin to the Queen of Holland, Saint René Taillandier, professor at the Paris Faculty of Letters, Camille Flammarion, Sardou, etc.

At that time, two famous mediums, Mesdames Hayden and Roberts, attracted the attention of the scientific world. In England, the famous physicist Faraday asserted that the movement of tables, by which the spirits manifested their presence was due to muscular action. During this period, many famous mediums from the U.S. went to Europe among them Daniel Douglas Home (1855) and the Davenport brothers (1864). While in France, Home organized spiritism meetings at the Tuileries, with Emperor Napoleon III attending. He seemed to have been caught red-handed performing tricks.

In spite of its successes with the general public, spiritism was always opposed by the scientific world because it had its quacks; and in the hands of clever operators, it served to exploit the credulous, inclined to believe in supernatural phenomena. Nevertheless, little by little, outstanding scientists from all over the world took spiritism under consideration and studied the phenomena presented by it. Among them were William Crookes, Gurney, Myers O. Lodge, W. James, Charles Irchet, a famous physiologist and Nobel Prize winner (1913), Grasset, etc. Between 1900 and 1920, Professor Richet



A view of the interior of Cao Dai cathedral showing ornate decor with intricately carved columns.

coined the word "metapsychic" to be applied to a series of phenomena, including spiritism. Richet was a member of the French Academy of Medicine and of the French Academy of Sciences.

There have been little studies on how spiritism came to Vietnam although it is agreed that the French press and popular books had a role in it. In any case, it created a sensation among the intelligentsia in Vietnam in the late 20's and early 30's of this century. Functionaries and students during that period engaged in experiments with spiritism with much enthusiasm, experiments which continue on a sporadic basis today.

And now we advert to the question of how Caodaism was born, referring to a booklet, "The Outline of Caodaism," published in 1972 by the Holy See of Tay Ninh. This Holy See is to Caodaism what the Vatican is to Catholicism.

The booklet states that in the middle of 1925 a small group of Vietnamese scholars dabbling in spiritism received surprising answers to questions posed to spirits. Deceased parents manifested their presence, talked about family affairs and gave counsel. These sensational revelations, the booklet con-

tinues, taught the group the existence of an occult world.

"No doubts were raised concerning the nature of their conversations, first as it was equally new to all, it was impossible to suppose that there was a fraud. Then because certain communications from the medium were of so high a moral level, so profound a scientific knowledge, and so deep a philosophy that they were beyond the intellectual ability of any man present."

The Spirit A, Á, Â.

The booklet also says:

"One of the communicating spirits became particularly noticeable by the high level of morality and philosophy of his teachings. He gave his name as A, Á, Â (approximate pronunciation a, ah, euh), the first three vowels of the Vietnamese alphabet, and did not reveal his real name, in spite of the entreaties of his hearers.

"Only in a seance, on Christmas Eve, the 24th December of 1925, did this spirit A, Á, Â reveal himself at last as the "Supreme Being," coming

under the name of Cao Dai to teach the Truth to Vietnam."

At the seance he is reported to have said in substance: "This day rejoices me. It is the anniversary of my coming to Europe to teach my doctrine. I am happy to see you, o disciples full of respect and love for me! This house will have my blessings. Manifestations of my power will inspire you to even greater respect and love for me."

Following this message, there were a series of others during nearly the whole year of 1926 and of which are reproduced in a book published by the Holy See of Caodaism in Tay Ninh in 1969.

Inspired by these messages, a religion was created under the name of Cao Dai, limited in the beginning to a small circle of Ngo Minh Chieu's friends. Then on October 7, 1926, the religion publicly declared its existence after an official declaration to the government.

The head of the religion is the *Giao Tong* or Pope. The Spiritual Pope is the spirit of Ly Tai Pe who, as previously mentioned, was one of the greatest poets of China during the Tang dynasty. Appointed temporal Pope by Spiritual Pope Ly Tai Pe during a seance was Le Van Trung.

Since the creation of the new religion, the late Le Van Trung, disincarnated in 1934, had been the only living man to receive the title of *Quyên Giao Tong* (temporal Pope). To date he has no successor.

The late *Ho Phap* (Protector of the Law) Pham Cong Tac was elected Superior of Caodaism, serving as such until his death a few years ago. Today the highest dignitary of the religion is His Holiness *Hien Phap* (Guardian of the Constitution) Huynh Huu Duc.

Cao Dai Principles

As we have seen Cao Dai was the name that the "Supreme Being" of God gave himself in that seance of December 24, 1925. Cao means high and Dai, palace. Hence Cao Dai means high palace where God lives, ruling over the whole universe as the divine master or all.

The Cao Dai religion also has another name: *Dai Dao Tam Ky Pho Do*. Dai Dao means great religion; Tam Ky, the third time; Pho to show, and Do, to save. So Dai Dao Tam Ky Pho Do means great religion that for the third time shows itself to save all living beings.

Why the third time?

In a seance on April 7, 1926, according to the Caodaists, the spirit of God taught that since the creation of mankind, the great way of God was manifested in three different epochs.

The first time it was through Nhien Dang Co Phat, Thai Thuong Lao Quan Phuc Hy, and Moses. The second time it was through Sakyamuni, Laotseu, Confucius, Jesus Christ, and Mahomet. The third time, in 1926, under the name of Cao Dai, God united all these religions into one, Caodaism.

According to Caodaism, during the first two periods, the different peoples of the world did not know one another, because there were not enough means of communications. God founded his religions and adapted them to the ways and customs of the communities called upon to practice them.

With the development of communication enabling the different races to be in contact with one another, God united all the different religions into one, Caodaism. Moreover, the Caodaists say, human thought does change. Mankind aspires to have a universal concept of love and justice, i.e., in order to survive they need harmony among all peoples. None of us would say: "My religion is the only saviour of Mankind."

Concept of Universe

According to Cao Dai teachings, there is a Supreme Being, God, who created the whole universe, all living beings, including men, women and animals. God is perfectly good, almighty. He has no beginning and no end. He has created all Immortals, Buddhas, Saints, and Genies. He is known by men under different names: Emperor of Jade, King of the Heavens, Allah, Jehovah, etc.

Under his rule, there is the Immaterial World and the Material World.

The Immaterial World includes three classes:

- (a) The Upper Class composed of Immortals, Buddhas, and Saints.
- (b) The Middle Class composed of Genies.
- (c) The Lower Class composed of Ghosts and Devils.

The Material World is composed of the human race and animals.

Men and animals of the Material World can become Ghosts or Devils of the Lower Class; Genies of the Middle Class, or Immortals, Buddhas, and Saints of the Upper Class. This depends on their merits.

This concept would be a synthesis of all the concepts of other existing religions, but actually, it is more like the Buddhist and Taoist concept than that of Christianity.

On Human Beings

Caodaism teaches that human beings are made of two parts: the Body and the Soul. The Body is that part subject to decay. It is a kind of container that shelters the Soul. The Soul is immortal and indestructible. It is of the same divine substance as God.

As the Body decays and does not last long, the Caodaist gives it little importance. The Soul being immortal, it is given utmost care. It is the Soul that determines happiness of the Body in this world and the fate of the Soul in after life or in other incarnations.

World of the immortals man's reward



Cao Dai Pope Truong Huu Duc (center) and other members of hierarchy.

To enable his soul to enjoy bliss, man must lead a charitable life. He must love his fellowmen because all men belong to the same family created by God. Men must also love animals, his fellow creatures made by God. He must also love plants and vegetables because they never harm men and are useful to them.

Finally men must think of their other lives after death. Their situation in the future life depends on their behavior in this life. So they must be good and charitable. They must worship God, obey him, and practice his teachings.

In order to achieve all these aims, the Caodaist:

1. Shall not kill.
2. Shall not be greedy.
3. Shall not eat meat or drink alcohol.
4. Shall not be wasteful.
5. Shall not misuse his language.

In observing these commandments, the Caodaist is only a disciple of Man's religion. As in the Cao Dai concept, the human soul is of the same nature as God's, the soul of the good Caodaist is admitted, upon his death, to the Middle Class of the Immaterial world, the World of Genies. His life does not end

there. He has to go on observing many rules of good conduct and becomes the disciple of God's religion, acquiring the duty of spreading that religion to every corner of the universe. If he is perfect in his behavior, he is promoted to the Upper Class of the Immaterial World, the World of Immortals, Buddhas, and Saints.

How do the Caodaists represent God? They think that any human shape is unsuited for God's universality. They say that in a seance, God asked them to symbolize him with an eye representing universal and individual conscience. Thus, in Caodaist temples, God is always represented by an eye.

To sum up, here are the fundamental principles of Caodaism.

1. From the moral point of view: Men have duties toward themselves, their family, their society (that is a broadened family), and then toward humanity—the universal family.

2. From the philosophical point of view: Men must despise honor, riches, luxury; this means that men must emancipate themselves from material power; on the contrary they must reach, through spirituality, the full quietude of their soul.

3. Worship of God: The Caodaist must worship God, the Father of all, and all the superior spirits of the Immaterial World. The ancestor cult is tolerated, but there should be no offering of meat and votive paper (men, women, animals and furniture made of paper to be burned after being offered. They are believed to become real in the other world and be at the disposal of the spirits to whom they are offered).

4. Existence of the soul: the soul is immortal, it survives the material body and will be reincarnated to live again on earth as animals or humans whose fate is a consequence of past actions according to the Karma (law of cause and effect or natural causation: the merits or demerits of a being in past existences determine his condition in the present one, as a cause determines its effects, as inexorably as in any physical law). This concept or principle comes, as is easily recognized, from Hinduism and Buddhism.

Structure of Caodaism

The Caodaist religion is managed by two powers: the Celestial Power and the Earthly Power:

(a) Celestial Power:

The Celestial power, seated at the *Bát Quái Đài* (Octagonal Palace or Palace of the Creation), headed by God Himself, gives orders and messages to Earth. God is assisted by Divine Spirits.

(b) Earthly Power:

God, desiring that no man on earth should hold both Spiritual and Temporal Power, has these two powers separated, and entrusted each of them to a body:

1. The *Hiệp Thiên Đài* (Place of meeting between God and Mankind) or Legislative Body on Earth. Representing the Spiritual Power, it has the right of jurisdiction and control.

It is headed by the *Hô Pháp* (Hô: to protect; Pháp: Law) or Protector of the Law.

2. The *Cuu Trùng Đài* (Nine degrees of the Angelic Hierarchy) or Executive Body, headed by the *Giáo Tông* or Pope. Representing the Temporal Power, it is in charge of the administration of the religion.

Besides these two bodies, there is also the Charitable Body under the supervision of the Hiep Thien Dai or Legislative Body.

The Executive Body has actually three branches, corresponding to the three principal Asian religions:

(a) Buddhist Branch, (*Phái Thái*) whose dignitaries wear yellow robes, the yellow color symbolizing Virtue.

(b) Taoist Branch (*Phái Thượng*), whose dignitaries wear azure robes, the color of which represents tolerance and pacifism.

(c) Confucianist Branch (*Phái Ngọc*), whose dignitaries are dressed in red, symbol of authority.

These three branches, with their distinct colors, form the tri-colored banner of Caodaism.

Women may become dignitaries, but there is no special branch for them. They are all dressed in white.

The Holy See in Tay Ninh is the seat of the central administration of the religion. It is in a certain way like the Vatican. It is a city with a population of more than 100,000, and it is equipped with hospitals, markets and schools.

Three Councils govern the Holy See:

1. Popular Council (composed of student priests, sub-dignitaries and representatives of followers or adherents, in the ratio of one delegate for 500 followers). This council makes plans for the future.

2. Sacerdotal Council (composed of priests, bishops, archbishops and principal archbishops.) This council examines the plans made by the Popular Council.

3. High Council (made up of cardinals, censor cardinals and the Pope.) All plans made by the Popular Council and supported by the Sacerdotal Council are submitted to this council for approbation. If there is a disagreement between this council and the other two, the question is settled by God through a medium.

The Cardinals at the Executive Body control the administration of the religion. They are assisted by three principal archbishops in charge of nine ministries, according to their respective branches:

(a) The Principal Archbishop of the Buddhist Branch takes charge of *Hô-Viên* (finances), *Luong Viên* (supply), *Công Viên* (public works.)

(b) The Principal Archbishop of the Taoist Branch is in charge of *Học Viên* (education), *Y-Viên* (health), *Nông Viên* (agriculture.)

(c) The Principal Archbishop of the Confucianist Branch takes care of *Lai Viên* (interior), *Lê Viên* (rites), and *Hoà Viên* (justice.)

Provincial Administration

This administration includes the administration of:

(a) Region (consisting of several provinces), headed by the Chief of Region.

(b) Province, headed by the Chief of Province (of Cao Dai religion.)

(c) Delegation, controlled by the Chief of Province.

(d) Village, under the leadership of the Chief of Village (of Cao Dai religion). By what we have seen above, the Cao Dai religion is strongly organized. Nevertheless, a little after it was officially recognized (1926), there was disagreement among the founders, and a secession resulted. Other secessions followed:

1. In 1928, Ngô Minh Chiêu seceded and created a branch in Can Tho (Can Tho Cao Dai.)

2. In 1931, another leader, Nguyen Ngoc Tuong, disagreed with the *Hô Pháp* about the creation of an armed force, withdrew to Bèn Tre, and created what is called Bèn Tre Cao Dai.

3. In 1934, Nguyen Huu Chinh and 14 of his colleagues proclaimed themselves saints and wise-men, and went across the country preaching. They constitute what is called the *Tiên Thiên* Sect (Heavenly Immortals Sect.) In 1955, they built a temple at Soc Sai, near Truc Giang City, Kien Hoa province.

4. In 1932, the *Doc Phu* (high functionary in the Civilian Administration) Nguyen Hao Ca claimed to have received an order to found a separate branch. He then went to My Tho and created a Cao Dai sect called *Minh Chon Ly* (Luminous Truth.)

5. In 1933, a Cao Dai group from the precedent sect *Minh Chon Ly* seceded and, led by the *Doc Phu* Nguyen Van Kien, created a sect in Tan An, called *Chon Ly Tam Nguyen* (Looking for the Source of Truth) sect.

6. In 1931, another Cao Dai sect was created in Bac Lieu, called *Minh Chon Dao* (the True Luminous Religion) sect.

7. In Tay Ninh itself, another sect was created, called *Bach Y Liên Dân*.

All these subdivisions or sects follow the structure, organization, and rites of the Tay Ninh Cao Dai religion, with some minor variations.

During the years of the second World War, the Caodaists had a military force fighting the Communists till 1955, when it was disbanded by the late President Ngo Dinh Diem, after an armed conflict. The late Caodaist General Trinh Minh The was well known in South Vietnam as well as abroad as a great nationalist fighting both the French and the Communists. He joined the late President Ngo Dinh Diem's armed forces, and was killed in an expedition against the Binh Xuyên forces in 1955. A large thoroughfare in Saigon along Khanh Hoi Quay has been named after him. ●

IN VN CONTINENTAL SHELF

OIL SEARCH IN PROGRESS

By HOANG NGOC NGUYEN



Trade and Industry Minister Nguyen Duc Cuong reports on presence of oil in continental shelf of Vietnam.

His voice packed with emotion yet with face relaxed and jubilant, Minister of Trade and Industry Nguyen Duc Cuong told the press corp in Saigon something they had expected long before the news conference but wanted confirmed by the minister: oil exists in the continental shelf of this country.

It was Cuong's first televised press conference last August since he was promoted from Vice Minister to Minister. By the evening, three hours after the meeting, Vietnamese all over the country were aware of the good news, coming as it did in the midst of the long and shaky ceasefire and discouraging economic recession.

Happiest were government officials who while trying hard to avoid a possibly premature celebration, found in the news of discovery of oil in offshore Vietnam ground for optimism that problems

of this war-torn country could be solved with such an oil find.

In fact, if oil, traces of which were found last August 26, exists in commercial quantities economic planners feel they can evolve an "economic miracle" in quick time.

"As such," one official said in a jocular vein, there may come the time when we could close our door to the entry of foreign capitalists into our country."

And then he seriously commented on foreign investments and foreign aid not living up to expectations in the building of a viable economy.

Fairly Good Quality

The news conference was brief and the statement of Cuong simple.

After less than ten days of drilling some 4,500 feet deep in the bed of the sea, the Pecten oil company came across a layer of sedi-

ment. The sediment was subjected to tests and the following conclusions were reached:

— It is certain that oil exists in the continental shelf of Vietnam.

— The oil, light and brown, is of fairly good quality.

— The sediment is also of good quality and contains oil.

Yet to be determined is whether oil exists in commercial quantities, a question that may take oil experts two or three months to answer.

And it may take two years after oil is found to exist in commercial quantities before trade in the product becomes possible. In other words, the Vietnamese people will have to that long to earn profits from this God-given gift.

Petroleum exploration and discovery in this country dates back to 1966, when the war was at its peak. Various geological studies in offshore Vietnam were conducted by several groups, including experts from the United Nations, the United States, Japan and Vietnam.

The first of these studies was an arco magnetic survey undertaken by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East.

In 1968, a seismological survey was realized around Poulo Banzan island in the Gulf of Siam with the support of the British government.

Results of these surveys proved that the continental shelf of Vietnam is formed by thick layers of sedimentary rocks.

Successive tests conducted in 1969 confirmed that many of the layers of sedimentary rocks south of Vung Tau adjacent to Con Son island were 4,000 to 8,000 meters thick.

The fact that the Vietnamese continental shelf is composed of

these sedimentary layers prompted a conclusion that oil probably exists in the shelf.

Stretching over an area of more than 400,000 square kilometers the continental shelf is believed most "ideal" for an oil bed.

The prospects of oil in the continental shelf have been so bright that several international oil companies showed keen interest in further studies and urged the government to quickly draft a bill to grant concessions to explore and exploit oil to foreign firms.

The Vietnamese government's economic leadership, at the time under former Economy Minister Pham Kim Ngoc, quickly realized the problems confronting them at the time were the tremendous requirements asked of foreign capital for the postwar rehabilitation and economic recovery. None was certain at the time, and up to now, how hostilities in Vietnam can be concluded given the inflexible and aggressive attitude of the leaders of North Vietnam.

Even then few people expected much in financial support from foreign capitalists who nonetheless were lured to Vietnam by high profit motives.

A bill on the concession of oil exploration and exploitation rights was swiftly enacted by both Houses of the National Assembly in December 1970, paving the way for the government's official contacts with various international companies, inviting them to engage in the search for oil here. This oil law was drafted with the assistance of several experts from the United States and Iran, making it most attractive yet conscious of the national interest."

To entice the interest of foreign petroleum companies, the law has prescribed several privileges in the fields of taxation and repatriation of capital.

The government of Vietnam was aware of certain realities. First of all its shortage of technical skills and capital to carry out these exploratory tests itself. Secondly, the search and exploitation of this "black gold" require large expenditures no government in the world was able to afford by itself at the initial stage.

An oil strike would provide

Ten holes at least should be drilled to explore what is beneath the ocean, each hole at the cost of several million U.S. dollars, with the possibility that not a single drop of oil could be found.

That's why Law No. 11-70 dated Dec. 1, 1970 relative to exploration and exploitation of oil "should reconcile the interests of the nation with those of foreign companies which are ready to run the risks of a search for oil."

Meanwhile, the National Petroleum Board was set up and several steps were taken for the first oil bidding which was held in July 1973.

A Vietnamese delegation was sent to Iran in February 1971 to learn about oil production and look into the possibility of Iranian technical assistance to Vietnam in the future.

The National Petroleum Board is also responsible for drafting regulations to implement the oil law and setting criteria for negotiations with foreign companies for concession agreements. The board's job also includes supervision of foreign companies in their business and sketch plans to set up oil-based industries.

Oil Biddings

The continental shelf of Vietnam was divided into 40 blocs of 1,700 to 2,700 square miles; 18 were for international bidding, 10 reserved for government exploitation and 12 under dispute with neighboring countries like Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

In May 1973, the NPB announced the opening of the bidding and some 27 foreign companies, including American, Japanese, Canadian, British, Dutch and French, participated. Each company submitted offers for five blocs.

In July of the same year, four companies were announced as winners of the bidding, resulting in eight blocs being awarded to the Vietnamese Pecten Company (3 blocs), Mobil Oil (2), Sunningdale (Canadian) (2), and Esso (1).

These biddings, in the words of Tran Van Khoi, director of NPB, were of "international standard."

"They were held in a spirit of impartiality, fairness, and honest competition," he said, explaining that the winners had extended more attractive offers to the government than the losers.

One of the main issues of these competitions was the signature bonus, a payment at the time of the signing of the contract of concession of the rights of exploration and exploitation as a "token of appreciation and good will" to carry out the business pledged to the government.

Pecten, a subsidiary of Shell Oil Co., awarded three blocs (No. 3, No. 7 and No. 11), paid a signature bonus of US\$9,000,000, and is expected to spend US\$20,250,000 as the cost of prospecting oil for a period of five years. It has pledged to defray a yearly education fund of US\$150,000 and will pay to the government bonuses amounting to US\$35,000,000 whenever oil is found and proven existing in commercial quantities.

For Mobil Oil, awarded blocs No. 4 and No. 8, the signature bonus was US\$5,500,000, investment spending US\$15,000,000 educational fund US\$50,000, and oil discovery bonuses US\$34,000,000.

Sunningdale, winning concession rights on two blocs No. 21 and No. 22, offered a signature bonus of US\$100,000, prospecting expenditures of US\$12,000,000, two scholarships for petroleum education in Canada, and discovery bonuses of US\$14,000,000.

Esso, for bloc No. 10, offered a signature bonus of US\$12 million, investment spending of US\$12 million, educational fund of US\$100,000, and discovery bonuses of US\$11 million.

Other criteria in the consideration of these offerings included bonuses for any increases in the daily production surpassing the levels of 100,000, 150,000 and 200,000 barrels.

answer to Vietnamese hopes for future



Scene at "Ocean Prospector" drilling rig. Note helicopter in background.

The prospects of oil exploration in the continental shelf of Vietnam should be very bright. In the first bidding, the government collected US\$16,600,000 of signature bonuses for the concession of eight blocs. In the second bidding in May this year, the government gained 29,1 million dollars for the awarding rights of search and exploitation in five blocs. The winners this time were Mobil Kaiyo (blocs No. 9 and No. 3), the Marathon-Sun-Ameralda-Hess group (bloc No. 11), the Shell-Broken Hill Proprietary (Bloc No. 4) and the Union Texas (bloc No. 7).

Pecten Ahead

Pecten moved swiftly to realize its prospecting plan.

It started prospecting in bloc 11, described by geologists as the most "interesting" bloc. The company called the site where it set up the "Ocean Prospector" drilling rig

"Rose No. 9", 170 miles south southeast of Vung Tau and 100 miles southeast of scenic Con Son island. The rig was installed Aug. 15 and the operation started two days later.

It was expected that one month or so was needed to find if oil is existent beneath the sea bed, but the first indication came on Aug. 25 from a layer of sediment containing oil, some 1,500 meters below the sea.

Hope and Dream

There is no doubt that any conclusion on the prospects of oil in commercial quantities in offshore Vietnam can be premature.

As of now, Pecten has yet to determine the quality of the oil it has found and how large are the oil deposits it has found and will find in the future.

It is expected that Pecten and other companies will launch

several similar exploratory attempts before they can determine the extent of the presence of oil in offshore Vietnam.

But one thing is certain: oil is existent, and this fact not only renders brighter the hope of survival of a nation but the dream of peace and prosperity of a people who have only known war and poverty.

Despite the cease-fire agreement, the Communists are intensifying their war efforts obviously with a view to disrupting the economy.

Continued hostilities have also discouraged potential foreign aid and foreign investment, which this country badly needs to bolster its economy and progress to self-sufficiency.

Better Days

In the Vietnamese mind, an oil strike promises better days, better income and a better social welfare system.

They have heard of the per capita income of Arab countries like Kuwait and Lybia amounting to 2,000 dollars per year, and for them with an estimated income of 2,000 dollars annually, there is no more obsessing dream.

The aspirations of this government are no less ambitious.

Many anticipate that with a significant oil find Japanese and American capital may readily come in to share the benefits of an oil bonanza.

"The transformation of the economy of Vietnam into an oil-producing capitalistic country would enhance the necessity of keeping Vietnam in the Free World, and we expect the U.S. to feel more committed to helping Vietnam defend itself against Communist aggression," one observer said.

So, in addition to looking ahead to the day when economic ills can be remedied and the survival of the country is assured with capital inflow, the government is hopeful of gaining a more stable political status in the world arena. ●



The five-story, 250-bed Korean-Vietnamese Medical Center located in Saigon's suburb of Cholon.

KOREAN-VIETNAMESE EFFORT

A MODERN MEDICAL CENTER

By NGUYEN DUY LIEU

The modernistic, five-story Korean-Vietnamese Medical Center (KVMC) erects its white, smart architecture against a background of green foliage and a blue sky in the heart of Saigon's suburb of Cholon.

Built at a cost of US\$2,850,000 defrayed by the government of the Republic of Korea, the KVMC covers a 7,000 square meter site on the premises of the Cho Quan hospital. The 250-bed center which began operations last March 2 is equipped with US\$600,000 worth of up-to-date facilities provided for by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



Assistant Director Hoang Van Bien.

Its management is being handled by the RVN Ministry of Public Health while a 21-member medical team from the ROK is in charge of the center's technical aspects, in cooperation with a Vietnamese staff totalling 354 people, among them 16 doctors.

"I am glad that the RVN Ministry of Public Health is interested in the KVMC, and I've foreseen a bright future for this hospital," Dr. Ahn Byung Hoon, the Korean medical team leader told this reporter in an interview. He said the spirit of cooperation between his group and the Vietnamese staff at the center has

proven "fruitful," although the language barrier still hinders "our work, particularly in our communications with our patients."

Looking younger than his 52 years of age, the strongly-built Dr. Ahn said with a broad grin, there remain difficulties for him to try to keep up the "high standard" for the hospital and also for the teaching of medical students.

This high standard, according to Dr. Ahn, requires more sophisticated medical instruments and larger medicine supplies. He added, at the time being medicine supplies are enough, but since the number of patients has been increasing daily, more of these supplies are needed.

Of the ROK team, there are 10 doctors, seven nurses, two technicians and two administrators. They work alongside 16 doctors and 76 nurses of the Vietnamese staff in all the ten departments of the center, namely: Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, General Surgery, Orthopedics, Urology, E.N.T., Eye Care, Dentistry, Anesthesia and Cardiology.

The ROK team's term of duty is three years but may be longer, depending on the decision of Seoul, Dr. Ahn said. He said his govern-

ment had paid US\$855,000 for the group's salary.

He said the team had been carefully selected by the ROK government and many of its members had been abroad for several years, either on training or practicing for their own. They also made up the teaching staffs of the Seoul University, the Catholic University or the Yunsei University in South Korea.

He said the KVMC needs more Vietnamese doctors, and above all "I want more academic discussions with my Vietnamese colleagues."

Dr. Ahn is President of the Korean Orthopedic Association and had run the 500-bed National Medical Center in Seoul before coming over here as the leader of the ROK team.

Shortage

In a separate interview, Pharmacist Hoang Van Bien, Assistant Director of the center, said because of its rapid development the hospital needs more equipment and supplies of medicines, and such stuff like surgical dressings, gauze, etc...

"We are also short of personnel because the Ministry of Public

Health has been busy with staffing the newly built wards at the Cho Ray hospital and several other hospitals across the country," he said. He said, added up to the 300 beds of the Cho Quan hospital, the total number of in-patients that can be admitted at the twin hospitals will be 560. Cho Quan still cares principally for the mild mental patients and lepers, and epidemics as well.

The handsome 38-year-old pharmacist, graduating from the Trinity University, Texas in Health Care Administration in 1971, said the KVMC has received a daily average of 300 out-patients and 450 in-patients, compared to 100 and 300 last March, respectively—or a 300% increase.

Staffing

Besides the 16 doctors and 76 nurses provided by the Ministry of Public Health, the center is being staffed by ten medical professors from the Saigon and the Minh Duc Universities who are working on a full-time basis. Eight more professors, working part-time, also are included in the center's medical staff.

Bien said a budget of about VN\$90 million has been earmarked for the center for 1974 by the Ministry of Public Health.

Like other government hospitals in the Capital, the Korean-Vietnamese Medical Center provides training for medical students of the Saigon and Minh Duc medical schools, and for dental students, nurses and medical workers as well, according to Bien. The Ministry has newly opened a post-graduate course on health care administration at the center, making the hospital the first center ever chosen by the government to organize such a training, he said.

He said what has made him "proud" of is that, though equipped with sophisticated equipment and staffed by a qualified Vietnamese and Korean medical personnel, the center fees are within the reach of the needy.

"We have three daily free brackets—VN\$2,000, VN\$1,200 and VN\$700 (or US\$3.20, US\$1.80 and US\$1.10, respectively)," he said. ●



Korean and Vietnamese members of the nursing staff during a meeting.

VN'S BEST KNOWN WOMAN PAINTER

By DANIEL CAMERON

Critics have praised her work. Judges have bestowed awards. Rome and UNESCO have honored her. Paintings by her have appeared in galleries around the world. She's a *femme extraordinaire*, she's a dynamo—she's Mrs. Tran Thi Nhan, Vietnam's best known lady painter.

She's been all these things and commercially successful too, for people buy, buy and buy her work.

"Some of my artist friends are good painters, but have a problem trying to sell their work," she said, with her ebullient smile, "But I am lucky. I don't have this problem."

Despite her chores as a mother of three and a language student, this female powerhouse with the looks of a young dragon lady labors long and hard on her art. She works with furious energy for months at a time, creating a new batch of paintings for her next exhibit. When the exhibit opens, the demonic Mrs. Nhan suddenly

dresses up with gay chic, arrives at the gallery, and is metamorphosed into a charming hostess and excellent saleswoman. Result: the 35-60 paintings she shows at each exhibit are invariably sold out before the show is scheduled to end.

It's not a role that would fit the more reclusive, introverted artist (like Mrs. Nhan's husband, for example), but Mrs. Nhan plays it to the hilt, and very well. She plays a kind of female, protean Picasso to her husband's quiet, moody Van Gogh. Marriage-wise this seems to work too; they've been together for ten years in a wedded state.

Although some of her commercial success can be attributed to her dynamic, seductive personality, her work is grounded in sound artistry, hard-won technique and esthetic values. She's genuinely an artist rather than just a figment of public relations. Her esthetic values also exert an

immediate popular appeal. People happen to like her very personalized, very stylized views of Vietnamese folk: children, old peasants, musicians, card players, beggars, etc. Her draughtsmanship is fluid and strong, her use of color is outstanding, and her insight into her characters is witty, subtle, often humorous and always warm. She evokes the delight of superb puppet shows or clever folk tales.

Marc Planchon, the notorious French critic who has lashed out at the shortcomings of some young Saigon painters, said of Mrs. Nhan: "Her work expresses itself strongly... knows a real mastery of the language of color... knows how, when necessary to make color sing."

Vietnamese Flavor

Daniel Rodill, an American poet who writes on the philosophy of art, commented on Mrs. Nhan in the English-language Saigon Post in 1971:

"...the lady is artistically cunning. Her growing mastery of European techniques, instead of "Westernizing" her, is being used for deeply Vietnamese purposes. The ghosts of Modigliani, Picasso, Braque and others may hover close to her canvasses, but these seductive masters never dominate Mrs. Nhan. Her work continues to grow and exude an intensely Vietnamese character and flavor."

Mrs. Nhan, born in Gia Dinh in 1942, today lives with her three children and painter husband (he's known as D. Minh), at 261 Nguyen Huynh Duc Street in the Phu Nhuan section of Saigon. She graduated from the National Institute of Fine Arts in 1964 and was a special student of Professor Le Van De whose silk paintings are exhibited at the Louvre in Paris.

Of the artists in Vietnam, Mrs. Nhan is one the ten who have received the Vatican Gold Medal from the Apostolic Delegate in Rome. She won it for paintings exhibited in Rome in 1965. In that same year she won a gold medal and prize at the ESSO Saigon exhibit. In 1966 she won an award at the UNESCO exhibit in Tokyo. She's participated in art exhibits



Artist Tran Thi Nhan (second from right) and friends at VAA art show.



Mrs. Nhan's works exude an intensely Vietnamese flavor. Her very personalized and stylized views of Vietnamese folks is witty, subtle, often humorous and always warm as demonstrated in "The Dinner" (above) and "Musician."

in Thailand, Japan, West Germany, Paris and the U.S.A. She made her most recent trip in June 1974, visiting Tunisia for an exhibit.

When not travelling or exhibiting, Mrs. Nhan lives quietly at home, sharing the studio on the second floor with her husband. Her prodigious energy isn't used exclusively for art.

"In the morning I cook for my husband and children and go to the market," she says, switching freely from French to English.

Her husband, D. Minh, is a quiet wispy fellow who was born in North Vietnam, though he projects a Southern languor. His wife, paradoxically, seems far more "Northern" in drive, though she was born just outside of Saigon. In contrast to his extroverted wife, D. Minh appears to be a stereotype of the introspec-

tive artist who prefers to live with dignity and quiet inside his own shell. He paints "only when he feels like painting." It is difficult to imagine D. Minh ever gaining an ulcer.

"When I sell *plusieurs* paintings," Mrs. Nhan said, laughingly, "I buy him a bird. He likes birds."

Husband Prepares

D. Minh produces far less paintings than his wife does, but will soon have enough to give his first one-man show in Saigon. He is a fine artist in his own right, but not so commercially viable as his hyper-active wife.

While D. Minh calmly and contentedly smokes his cigarette, listens to his tapes of Vietnamese folk music, and contemplates his next brush stroke, his wife has finished the cooking, the shopping

and is ready for her long afternoon stretch of painting up in the second-floor studio. She paints until it's time for evening school where she goes to study the Japanese language. For many women this might complete the day's work. But Mrs. Nhan paints again from 9 P.M. till one o'clock in the morning.

"If I don't work I am tired, sick," she explains.

Pains around the heart have caused her to slow down a little sometimes, but not often.

Recently an American buyer took twenty of her paintings to exhibit in San Francisco. She is looking forward to having her works on display in a California gallery. Her next Saigon exhibit will be in November at the Alliance Française, where she expects to show about 35 new works.

Grandma's stories

The Man Who Sold His Wife

By NGHIEM XUAN THIEN

Tu Dat was a great scholar—and in old Vietnam, this meant everything. A native of the district of Khoai Chau, Hung Yen province, North Vietnam, he was appointed a mandarin in the province of Son Tay. This was by the end of the 14th century, under the reign of the last king of the Tran Dynasty. This was a very troubled time indeed. The last Tran king was a weakling, and the power was in the hands of Le Quy Ly, a favorite of the king's father, who finally usurped the throne and changed his name into Ho Quy Ly, claiming that he was a descendant of the great Ho family who lived centuries ago in China.

Ho Quy Ly's usurpation caused many revolts by princes of the Tran dynasty and mandarins loyal to the Tran. On the other hand, the Champa—a kingdom situated in what is now the provinces of Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, and most of the land that is the South Vietnam of today—well aware of the weakness of the Vietnamese Court—often sent troops to invade Vietnam, and sometimes succeeded in penetrating the capital, *Thang Long* (Hanoi).

This historical background is useful to understand this story, not mere fiction.

Tu Dat had a beautiful daughter named Nhi Khanh. He also had a friend, another mandarin, Phung Lap Ngon, a straightforward and outspoken man, who never hesitated to denounce the abuse and corruption of his colleagues, and even of his superiors. This certainly was very dangerous for him, at a time when most of key positions were given to intriguing, unqualified, inept and ignorant men.

Phung Lap Ngon had a handsome, talented son, older than Nhi Khanh by a few years. His name was Trong Qui.

In old Vietnam, it often happened that friends tried to strengthen their friendship by having

their children marry when they were about the same age. Marriages always were arranged by parents, and the children, whatever their age, were not consulted, and often did not know each other. But as parents were concerned and preoccupied with their children's happiness, generally such marriages had happy results and the young couples lived together all their life. Divorce was nearly unknown, and the women were entirely devoted to their husbands and loved them as though they themselves had made the choice. This was the consequence of Confucian ethics with which the whole nation was imbued, teaching the citizens to be loyal to the king, the wives to their husbands, and the children to their parents.

Trong Qui and Nhi Khanh, once married, loved each other and were very happy. Two boys were born to them a few years after their marriage. Then Trong Qui's father, who had made many enemies among the men in power and court favorites because of his straightforwardness was sent to administer the troubled province of Nghe An, infested by robbers, bandits, and sometimes by Champa soldiers. Realizing that the place was too dangerous for women and children to live in, Nhi Khanh's father-in-law ordered her to stay with her own parents and bring up her two young boys with their help. Trong Qui did not have the heart to leave her, and expressed the desire to stay with her. But she said: "Think of your duty towards your father first. He certainly needs you in his hard job in that distant place you can only reach after a trip of many months on land and rivers."

Journey to Nghe An

So after a heart-rending farewell, Trong Qui accompanied his father on the long journey to Nghe An, where they arrived three months later.

At that time, there was no post-office in the country. Official reports were carried by messengers on horse-back, and it took many days to run a distance of 100 miles. Almost no means existed for families to exchange news. Travelling merchants helped their friends as messengers when their itinerary allowed them. For this reason, Trong Qui and Nhi Khanh remained without any news from each other for years.

But news concerning them was very bad.

A few years after Trong Qui had left, Nhi Khanh's own parents died one after the other. Nhi Khanh and her two boys had to live with an aunt. Many years passed, and she still had no news from her husband and her father-in-law. As she was young and beautiful—in the fashion of what happened to Queen Penelope, when her husband King Odysseus (or Ulysses) was absent from home for a long time—many rich and young suitors tried to win Nhi Khanh's favor and even her hand.

But like Queen Penelope, she was faithful to her husband, and was determined to wait for his return, how long his absence might be, and skillfully she energetically rejected her suitors' propositions.

Finally, she became very uneasy about her husband's silence, wondering what had happened to him and his parents in that insecure place.

She knew quite well that in that faraway place, robbers, bandits and enemy soldiers were pillaging, killing, raping almost with impunity. Internal rivalry and civil war had weakened the king's government which was barely able to maintain peace and order in the capital and large towns.

She also knew that her father-in-law was sent to Nghe An to reestablish law and order on the suggestion of his bitter enemies in the Court, who wanted to get rid of him. "What can he do, when even the king's troops themselves were impotent for that dangerous and difficult job? I must know his fate and my husband's at all costs," she told herself.

Old Family Nurse

Living with her was an old nurse, who had served her family for nearly 40 years. It was that nurse who had fed her, taken care of her when she was a baby, and who loved her as though she were her own child. In old Vietnam, often male and female help stayed in a family's service from generation to generation, and most often were considered as members of the family. The nurse was now 60 years old, and it was not rare that she was able to help Nhi Khanh in difficult situations by her wisdom and experience. Thanks to her age, she was respected wherever she went and even robbers and bandits would not do her any harm. This was in the Vietnamese tradition.

So Nhi Khanh opened her heart to her, telling her of her anxiety about her husband's long silence, and about her own situation as a defenseless woman in such a time of insecurity and trouble.

The old nurse volunteered to undertake the perilous journey to Nghe An in order to obtain news about Trong Qui and his parents.

So she started on the long journey and arrived in Nghe An after three months. The town had the hideous marks of war, fire and plunder. Here and there, stood some wall-stumps of burned-down houses and of charred trees. But the streets were still alive with people, some of whom lived in brick houses and some in improvised huts. There was even a market where people could buy things needed for daily life.

She wandered through the narrow streets, making inquiries from house to house. She learned that mandarin Phung Lap Ngon and his wife had died a few years ago; as for their son Trong Qui, nobody knew where he lived. One day, as she was walking listlessly toward the market, a young man poorly dressed and emaciated by long privations passed by her, suddenly stopped, and stared at her. She stared back, hesitated while trying to place this bony face distorted by deepset eyes and a bristling beard. The young man, in a voice trembling with emotion, cried out: "Nurse Ba? Is it you? Why are you here in this terrible place?"

Family nurse traces long absent husband

Ba, overcome by excitement, stammered: "You! My master! You here! And in this unbelievable appearance!"

The man, his heart beating like a drum, blubbered: "Yes, it is me. I am Trong Qui!"

"And where are you living? Why haven't you sent word to my mistress, at least to let her know of your situation and your parents' death?" Ba asked.

"Then you know that my parents were dead! Who told you so?"

"I have been here for many days, and the only information I got from the people I met was that they had died a few years ago! Nobody could tell me of your whereabouts."

The man bowed his head and tears came to his eyes: "I have not what you can call a home. I live in a hovel on the bank of the river, just enough to shelter me from rain and sunshine."

The nurse said: "You, a mandarin's son, how is it that you are reduced to such dire circumstances?"

"You know, my father was a mandarin of perfect integrity, and because there are public disturbances everywhere, he was irregularly paid. So we remained poor, and the little money he left me, I had to spend first for his funeral and a few months later for my mother's."

"But why don't you return to your wife and children. They miss you very much, and for their morale's sake, they need you as well."

"I Have Nothing Left"

"You see, to make the long travel home, I need some money, and I have nothing left. It is true that I am trying to earn some by gambling."

"You gamble, what a shame! You, the son of a respectable family, you gamble! So you are mixed up with crooks, swindlers, and the misfits?"

"Don't blame me, Ba, I have to do something to while away the time and earn money for subsistence. You can trust me, I always have luck, and rarely lose."

Then, they walked to his home, a small straw hut, barely taller than him. A black hunting dog and fighting cock were all he had. Embarrassed, he explained, "You see, they are my only means of livelihood. My cock is a champion. He always win stakes put on him. And the dog sometimes brings me a hare or a rabbit that I sell at the market to keep me from starving."

The nurse, saddened by all this, wiped her tears. She repressed a sob and said: "Now, you must go

His wife had a premonition of evil

home. Your place is with your wife and children, not here where you have acquired bad habits, gambling, cock-fighting, rat-hunting, not befitting an honest mandarin's son. I still have enough money for us to return home. Your wife and children certainly will be very happy to see you again, and will welcome you back home.

Trong Qui interrupted: "But you have not yet given me news from home. How are my wife and children. And how about my parents-in-law."

"Your wife and children are all right. But your father and mother-in-law died a few years after you left. Now an aunt is taking care of your family."

A Worthy Wife

She paused a moment, then added: "You have a worthy wife. She lives for you and your children. She has sent them for education to Mr. Nam, the great scholar whom you have known. She is very thrifty, and can manage with the little money and a piece of land that she inherited from her parents. Your father-in-law, you know this too, was a mandarin of great integrity and was still poor to the end after so many years in office."

It must be said that in the olden times, mandarins were poorly paid, except those who were in Court, in the Emperor's entourage. Those who worked in faraway provinces often were ignored and left to fend for themselves. Mandarins and scholars formed the upper class of the Vietnamese society, and people from humble families—except actors and singers, considered as dissolute people—could take official examinations, and if successful could be appointed as mandarins and thus attained a high social standing overnight. In old Vietnam and China, there were virtually no social barriers. And when a mandarin was known for his integrity, he was highly respected by the population and by his peers. As integrity led to poverty, poverty for a mandarin was a sign of integrity, and inspired the respect of all.

The old nurse continued, "Your wife and children are in good health. They always think of you, and pray every day Buddha to help you return to them. Many suitors, young, rich and handsome, solicit her hand, but she is faithful to you and swears she will wait for you all her life."

Trong Qui was happy at the turn of events. He hurried to sell his fighting cock and hunting dog. A few days later, he left for home with the old nurse.

His wife and children were happy to have him back and they lived in harmony together.

But Trong Qui had acquired the habit of gambling, and this had become "second nature." He could not get rid of it.

In the beginning, in order not to make his wife unhappy, he gambled clandestinely, but little by

little he took the liberty of gambling openly in spite of her protests. It was true, that he was lucky and rarely lost. He was proud of it, and became bolder in playing for high stakes.

Among his gambling companions, there was a very rich merchant, whose name was Do Tam. He was about fifty and already had many wives. This did not prevent him from coveting Trong Qui's wife. He was among the many suitors who sought Nhi Khanh's hand during her husband's absence. He was determined to take her by all means, fair or foul. He succeeded in making Trong Qui believe that he was a good friend, and often invited him to sumptuous dinners and to games of cards or other games of chance. He was in fact a swindler, a crook, a cheat cunning like an old fox.

Trong Qui occasionally invited him to dinner at his home. Instinctively, Nhi Khanh abhorred Do Tam and could not bear his uncouth manners.

Often she advised her husband to avoid his company. She used to say: "This Do Tam you bring home now and then has all the appearance of a crook. Don't you notice that he never looks you straight in the face, but sometimes cast furtive glances at you, as though he is afraid that you can read in his eyes the dark thoughts he nurtures in his darker soul. If I were you I would drop him, and never go out with him, especially for gambling. God only knows what tricks he has up his sleeves."

But invariably, to her wise advice, Trong Qui answered angrily: "You'd better hold your tongue. You know nothing about what you say. Do Tam is my best friend. I do not want you to interfere in my relations with friends. I don't want it can be said that you are a termagant who spoils her husband's life."

At that she would keep silent, tears would come to her eyes, and she would feel that some impending catastrophe was in the air.

Dinner and Deceit

One day, Do Tam invited Trong Qui to a big dinner, during which he purposely had Trong Qui drink to excess an excellent liquor imported from China. When the dinner was over, Trong Qui was so drunk that he was unable to stand on his feet. Then Do Tam and his companions helped him to the gambling room, and they gambled all night. The half-conscious Trong Qui lost track of time, and when morning came he found he had lost a very large amount which he was unable to pay.

During those times people used to gamble away even their wives and children who then became near slaves to the winner.

A friend of Do Tam's, who was also his accomplice, made a proposal: "Trong Qui can play a last game, staking his wife for all his debts. If he

wins, good; if he loses, his wife becomes Do Tam's, and shall come to live with him within a full day at the latest."

Trong Qui, still half drunk, accepted the proposal and lost.

The gloating Do Tam pretended to be solicitous of his unlucky victim's plight. He said: "I am in no hurry to have you settle our problem at once. Nevertheless I want you to send your wife a letter telling her to come here about noontime to be informed of the situation. In the meantime, we must rest, and then have a little breakfast. We are very tired for being awake the whole night."

Trong Qui, overcome by his misfortune, finally recovered his senses, and realized that he had been drawn into a trap by the man he had considered his best friend. But it was too late. He had gambled away his wife before a dozen witnesses. Only one thing remained for him to do: give his wife to the winner.

So he wrote a short letter to his wife, asking her to come to Do Tam's house, "for an urgent business."

Expected Catastrophe

On receiving the letter, Nhi Khanh nearly collapsed. It was unusual, what her husband asked her to do. She said to herself: "This is the catastrophe I always feared. What has happened to my husband that made him send me this note? Why does he ask me to come to the house of that man I abhor and despise, who has grown rich by dishonest means, a notorious usurer, who is a dirty leech sucking needy people's blood? No I will not go there. My husband should come here and talk to me about this "urgent business."

So she refused to come, saying that she was unwell.

Trong Qui wrote back, saying that he must meet her at all costs before noon, and that it was a matter of life or death.

Nhi Khanh, frightened at the thought of lethal danger threatening her husband's life, overcame her disgust and fear, and hurried to Do Tam's house.

There she learned of the humiliating and painful truth. But she quickly pulled herself together and said to Do Tam: "Fate has wanted me to come here and live with you. You are a very rich man. Certainly my life will be much more pleasant here. But I have two children and I want to see them before leaving them for good. Besides I need to be dressed correctly and come with all the ceremony to become the wife of a man of your standing Give me till tomorrow morning, and I shall be ready for you."

Do Tam, sure of his victory over Nhi Khanh at the long last, agreed. Besides, according to the agreement before the last game was played, Trong Qui had a full day to turn over his wife.

So Do Tam allowed Nhi Khanh and her husband to return home. He would send for her the following day.

Rather than submit wife kills herself

On the way home, Nhi Khanh kept crying and lamenting. She bitterly reproached her husband for his lack of loyalty to her and lack of love for their children whom he would deprive of their mother.

Trong Qui, overcome by the feelings of guilt and shame, remained silent.

Once at home, Nhi Khanh rushed to her children's room. She hugged them tightly, crying and sobbing without being able to say a word. The frightened children cried louder than their mother. The old nurse who was in charge of them, guessing that something terrible had happened, was upset and cried as much as Nhi Khanh did.

When she was informed of the situation, she exploded in anger, and called Trong Qui all sorts of names. The children cried themselves hoarse and trampled the earth in despair and sorrow.

Finally, Nhi Khanh regained courage told the nurse: "Well! Let things be so! Fate decrees me to be a slave and an unhappy woman. I have been entirely devoted to my husband for more than fifteen years, and now he sells me like a dog! He doesn't even think of my children. What will become of them, when I'm gone? Please take care of them as though I am always here and play for them the role of a mother they need. I know that you are so good and will do it. I am an unhappy mother condemned to abandon her children, so you understand my distress and fears."

The old nurse, the eyes red with tears, promised to do what she could for the children. She believed that Nhi Khanh was resigned to her fate. What else could she do?

Nhi Khanh stopped crying. She seemed resigned to the brutal facts as something inevitable, against which she could do nothing. She fed her children, washed them, dressed them with unusual tenderness, told them old stories, and tried her best to make them happy. Sometimes she stopped her work, repressed a sob, then resumed working and went on so naturally that the old nurse was confused and wondered whether Nhi Khanh was taking the situation seriously.

The Last Night

The day wore on, then came the night. Nhi Khanh stayed in her children's room, dismissed the old nurse, saying the latter needed some rest before tacking all the household work alone the next day.

In the presence of their mother, the children slept soundly, happy to have her by their side.

Then morning came. A palanquin carried by four strong men arrived, accompanied by maidservants, to take Nhi Khanh to her new home.

Nhi Khanh returns to see Trong Qui

The nurse knocked at her door to announce their arrival. No answer. She knocked again and again, each time stronger than before. But she knocked in vain. Frightened by an uneasy presentiment, she pushed the door open. The children were still asleep, and Nhi Khanh was kneeling at the foot of their bed, with an arm on the chest of her youngest. She called Nhi Khanh by her name but there was no answer. She went in and gently shook the kneeling figure. Suddenly she let out a terrified scream. In the dim light of the room, she saw a large dark spot on the bed-mat and the handle of a knife thrust deeply in Nhi Khanh's breast.

A Repentant Husband

Years passed. Trong Qui, now fully conscious of his guilt, was deeply repentant. He realized that he was the cause of Nhi Khanh's suicide and of his two children being orphans. He gave up gambling and devoted all his efforts to the upbringing of his children. The old nurse, unable to endure the pain and anger caused by Nhi Khanh's tragic death, did not survive her long. At her request made on her death-bed, she was buried near the mistress she had loved and admired. Now mistress and servant, two friends in a troubled and unhappy life, slept side by side on a field of grass, two inseparable companions in death.

When Trong Qui's children were about fifteen years of age, they were entrusted to the care of a great scholar who had opened a private school in the district, five miles away from their home.

In old Vietnam, except in the capital, there were no public schools. Great scholars used to run private schools in their own homes. Children in the neighborhood were sent there after paying tuition. They lived in their masters' houses, did the menial household work, and learned the classics.

On festivals or the anniversary of the death of the master's parents or on the occasion of any happy or unhappy event in the master's family, the parents of the students had to pay a visit to the master and offer him gifts in money as well as in kind: rice, chickens, pigs, ducks and materials for clothes. Generally the students spent a great part of their life at their master's home, till they were successful at public examinations held once every three years.

Even after their graduation and appointment as mandarins, they still had the moral obligation of visiting their master from time to time and offering him gifts.

This moral obligation was justified by the fact that as no public school existed to prepare them for the official examinations, without the guidance of

their master, they would have remained ignorant all their lives and could have never attained an honorable status.

One day, Trong Qui was on the way to see his children at their master's house. He carried a bamboo-lattice coop, with two superb capons, gifts for the master.

It was a very hot summer day. The sun was shining on a steel blue and cloudless sky. He was to go across a bare rice-field. The harvest was just over. The ground dried up by a scorching sun was cracked in many places. Not a drop of water all around. Trong Qui clothed in a white vest, over which was a long tunique of black silk, was sweating profusely. His clothes were so wet that they stuck to his skin. He had an umbrella of black silk that hardly shielded his thin body from the rays of the sun.

He was panting, gasping, and puffing on a dried foot-path crossing the deserted rice-field. He was heading for one of those brick-stations scattered here and there in the Vietnamese countryside, allowing labourers or travellers to take a rest and get food and drink from a tea-seller who had installed a small shop there.

Suddenly the sky was darkened by an immense mass of thick clouds, projecting a cool shade around him. He raised his head, as a female voice addressed him from above: "My dear Trong Qui, I am happy to have an opportunity to see you. I am Nhi Khanh. The King of Heaven to whom my story was reported took pity on me and made me a goddess, in charge of making rain. Now I have been assigned to the west, where there is a drought. I must hurry to be in time. So I cannot talk to you for a long time. But I want to meet you this day next month, about midnight at the temple of the two Trung sisters located three miles north of your place. Try to be there at that time. I have something important to tell you."

Trong Qui recognized Nhi Khanh's voice, and saw a woman's figure on that immense mass of thick clouds moving to the west. He took note of all he had heard, and went on his weary way.

The Appointed Day

On the appointed day, after a quick dinner, when darkness began to spread over the small town in which he lived, Trong Qui set out on his little trip to the Trung temple. (The two sisters were the Vietnamese heroines who in the early years of the Christian era drove the Chinese invaders from Vietnam. Many temples were built in their honor, especially in Son Tay and Hanoi). The summer night was hot, though it had rained the day before. On the cloudless sky, a first-quarter moon was shining among bright stars. On the narrow path leading to the temple, puddles of rain-water reflected the light from the sky. On the trees, cicadas sang monotonously and continuously. From time to time, frogs startled by Trong Qui's steps jumped into nearby pools. The shrill love calls of crickets filled the

A month later, wife appears again

slightly misty air, interrupted now and then by the loud croaking of a bull-frog.

Fire-flies began to wander in the air, and with their blinking lights, seemed to mark their routes with ephemeral dotted lines. To his right, in a distance, level with the ground, a will-o'-the-wisp hovered playfully as though it wanted to draw his attention.

The temple gate was locked. He had to climb up the wall to get into the yard. The temple's front door was also locked, but he found the back door ajar. He entered the temple which was in darkness. He groped his way to the foot of the altar where there was a large reed mat. He sat down on it and waited. Through the interstices of the front door, moonlight filtered in and feebly illuminated the temple and allowed him, after his eyes became accustomed to darkness, to perceive the vague form of wooden figures of women-soldiers and horses in the temple.

Nocturnal noises from the outside weakened by the distance and muffled by the temple walls could be heard, dominated by the buzzing of mosquitoes all around him.

He waited and waited. Hours passed. Often he wondered whether he was foolish to believe in what he thought he heard a month ago from a thick mass of clouds above him. But he was convinced that he had recognized Nhi Khanh's voice and that he had not been a victim of hallucination. "Surely, it was her voice. And the dark clouds that appeared so suddenly, obscuring the sky, and heading toward the west with the speed of the wind, was not something usual. I had the clear impression of seeing a woman's figure on the mass of clouds looking very much like Nhi Khanh, and waving her hands to me. Unmistakably, I had not taken leave of my senses that day. This I strongly believe."

The sounds of a large drum, beaten by the night-watchers from a village nearby to mark the hours, came to his ears and told him it was midnight.

A Crying Voice

Then, a faint noise was heard. Trong Qui listened closely. The noise at first indistinct, grew stronger and stronger: somebody was crying, moaning and lamenting. It seemed to come from afar, but gradually it came nearer and nearer. Unmistakably, it

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Her advice brought reward from a king

was the voice of a woman crying. Judging from its direction and the way it grew in intensity, the woman must be approaching the temple by the front door. Suddenly the air became cool, cooler, and finally cold, as the moaning voice made itself clearer. And then the transparent figure of a woman dressed in white hovered in the air, went through the front door and stopped before him. Trong Qui sprang to his feet. His heart was beating like a drum. Now the figure was sobbing, crying, and after a while said: "Thank you, Trong Qui, for coming to meet me as I requested a month ago." It was Nhi Khanh's voice. "Thank you for taking good care of my two unhappy children whom I love so dearly. I always think of you three. But I am too busy with the job that the King of Heaven has entrusted to me and cannot see you as often as I wish. Besides we live in two different worlds, the world of *Yin* (the female principle, and the principle of immaterial things) and the world of *Yang* (the male principle and the principle of terrestrial life).

Important Information

A barrier separates the two, that you mortals, cross only after death, and that we immortals, are allowed to trespass only under exceptional circumstances. Now, as I told you a month ago, I have important information to impart to you. In the Court of the King of the Heaven where I must go nearly everyday to report on my activities, I have overheard the immortals in the King's entourage saying that the Ho dynasty in Vietnam will soon come to an end. The Chinese army will come, and try to conquer the country. But a man named Le Loi from Lam Son village, in the province of Thanh Hoa, will stir up a revolt and fight the Chinese. The ensuing war will last ten years and claim many hundred thousands of victims. Those who had a good moral conduct would be spared and could survive. Remember this well, and try your best to

educate our children in good moral principles in order to make very good men of them. When Le Loi recruits soldiers for his army, tell them to join him. He will know plenty of hardships and dangers, but finally he will be the victor and become King of Vietnam. This, the immortals often say among themselves, and I know that they are all well-informed. You must always remember what I tell you today and adopt a line of conduct that can save you and our children from all the dangers and sufferings about to befall this country."

Trong Qui listened intently to this voice from the other world that no doubt was Nhi Khanh's.

The white and transparent figure lingered in front of him for a while, talking with him about the day-to-day business of his own home, of the children's health and progress in their study.

Though the atmosphere around him was cold, Trong Qui felt happy to be able to have this unhopedor conversation with his wife's ghost. He was relieved from the painful remorse that had tortured his soul since the day he gambled away his wife.

The interest she still had in him and their children showed that she had forgiven him for being the cause of her tragic death. He was grateful to her for this. And he told her so.

Cock's Crow and Goodbye

Trong Qui was still enjoying his wife's presence, when suddenly a cock's crow was heard from the nearby village.

Nhi Khanh's ghost heaved a sigh, and said: "Trong Qui, my dear, I must go now. Take care of yourself and of the children, and above all remember what I told you." Then the figure, draped in a transparent and overflowing cloth soared and vanished in the air.

The atmosphere became warm again, and through the interstices of the front door, Trong Qui saw that the day was dawning. Slowly he got out of the temple and went home.

He did what Nhi Khanh told him, carefully brought up his two children, who a few years later joined Le Loi's army, fighting the Chinese invaders.

Reward from Le Loi

When after a ten-year war of independence ended by Le Loi's victory, thanks to their feats of arms, their loyalty and courage, they were rewarded by Le Loi, who ascended the throne under the title of Le Thai To, founder of the Le dynasty which ruled over Vietnam for about 400 years.

Their descendants are still to be found in Khoai Chau district, province of Hung Yen, North Vietnam.

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Tran Van Trach chatting with some members of Central Group of Artists.

Mr. Entertainment

By VU TRINH

Mr. Tran Van Trach, 51, one of Vietnam's most popular entertainers, is a widely traveled man of many talents and interests. Comedian, actor, songwriter (he has written and recorded two songs about Henry Kissinger), musical director, choreographer, puppeteer, mimic (his subjects include Pat Boone, Bing Crosby, Tino Rossi), he is also known to some friends and intimates as an inventor.

The son of a musician, Trach was born in the Mekong Delta province of My Tho and was orphaned at the age of 7. He grew up as a "Tommy Tucker," singing for his supper. That is, a series of foster parents looked after him, amused to have him entertain guests with his singing.

Life as an orphan left no discernible trace of bitterness in Trach. His gentle manners and disposition, together with his celebrity, tends to create a pleas-

ant atmosphere wherever he goes. The 60-watt smiles of friends and well-wishers seem to hit 100-watts when they meet him.

Besides numerous non-Government activities, Trach is now Director of the Government's Central Group of Artists. This group includes some of Vietnam's best known nightclub and cinema personalities who, since 1973, have spent some of their time in Government-sponsored "special" performances around the country. Trach says this is also helping to raise the social status of artists here.

"In Oriental society," he said, "traditionally there is no place for entertainers. But now the Government is giving recognition and rank to the entertainers. This is important for us. For this reason, the artists cooperate with the Government."

Another unique fact about the Central Group of Artists, he said,

has been the bringing together of star solo artists for group and choir performances. Leading nightclub songstresses like Khanh Ly, Le Thu and Mai Le Huyen sing patriotic songs in choir with the group.

"In other countries," Trach said, "it would be difficult to get such solo artists together."

The group's 80 members are evenly divided into male and female performers. One of the males is the composer of "Khong," (No), a big hit song with Vietnamese and foreigners here a few years ago. Twenty of the members are former Viet Cong who rallied to the Government under the Chieu Hoi program. These ex-VC include Doan Chinh, who is also a teacher of voice technique at the National School of Music.

"In the 1968 Tet Offensive," Trach said, "Doan Chinh was a Viet Cong fighting near my house in the attack on Saigon."

Show in Paris

In that same year Trach took a Vietnamese troupe to the Salle Pleyel in Paris for a memorable performance. Vietnamese Communists reacted by holding a musical performance on the same day and same hour in Paris. Some also stormed the Trach performance with propaganda placards and Viet Cong flags. The world-renowned magazine, *Paris Match*, in November 1968, carried elaborate color photographs of Trach's elegant troupe and called its performance "a complete success."

Despite the continued fighting in Vietnam today, Trach admires Henry Kissinger's peace-keeping efforts. The English lyrics to one of his recent songs, "Mr. Peace of 1972," goes:

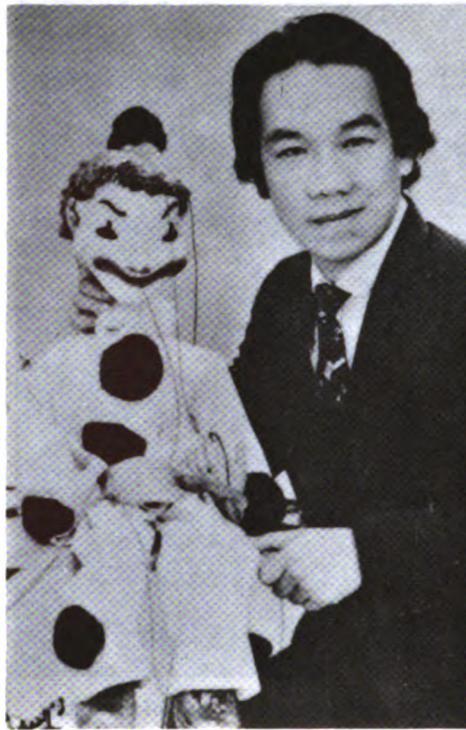
"He came from far away/He came from the people for peace/From California to Muscovy and was king, yes, in Peking/A cup for him, for us, for peace/Ah, good for us, for him, hello, Mr. Peace/Oh, dear Mother, we think of you/Now no more the time for tears/You have waited so long at home/With a laughing heart here we come."

Trach does two versions of his

other Kissinger opus, "The Kissinger Song." Friends at the National School of Music here have recorded it in traditional Vietnamese style, using the *dan co* (Vietnamese violin), the two-string *dan kiem* (Vietnamese guitar) and the 12-string *dan tranh* (Vietnamese harp). An English version was recorded by a 20-piece orchestra including violin, piano, bass, drum, accordion, flute and clarinet. The English lyrics:

*"Kiss and kiss, sing and sing/
All of the girls kiss the singer/
Because the singer sings well...and
very well/His smile, his hair and
his spectacles/Are well-known
around the world/And he sings
secretly, heartily and nicely."*

Trach choreographed a dance for the song in traditional Vietnamese style. That means no touching except palm against palm, and nose against nose, in a Vietnamese-



As Vietnam's first puppeteer in 1961.

style kiss. When the lyric reaches "kiss the singer," the girl leans forward and gives the man a Vietnamese-style kiss. If he likes it, he shouts, "More!" and the band begins again.

When not composing, directing or entertaining, Trach finds time for a pet hobby: inventing. His latest invention is a method of making old, worn-out musical tapes sound new—or better than new. Due to inflation, new tapes in Vietnam are now 500 per cent more expensive than they were a few years ago. He hopes to open up a shop and renovate old tapes for people who cannot afford new ones.

"I think that this invention is unique," he said.

Meanwhile, Trach is planning a weekly comedy-variety show for radio, geared to "people in the countryside."

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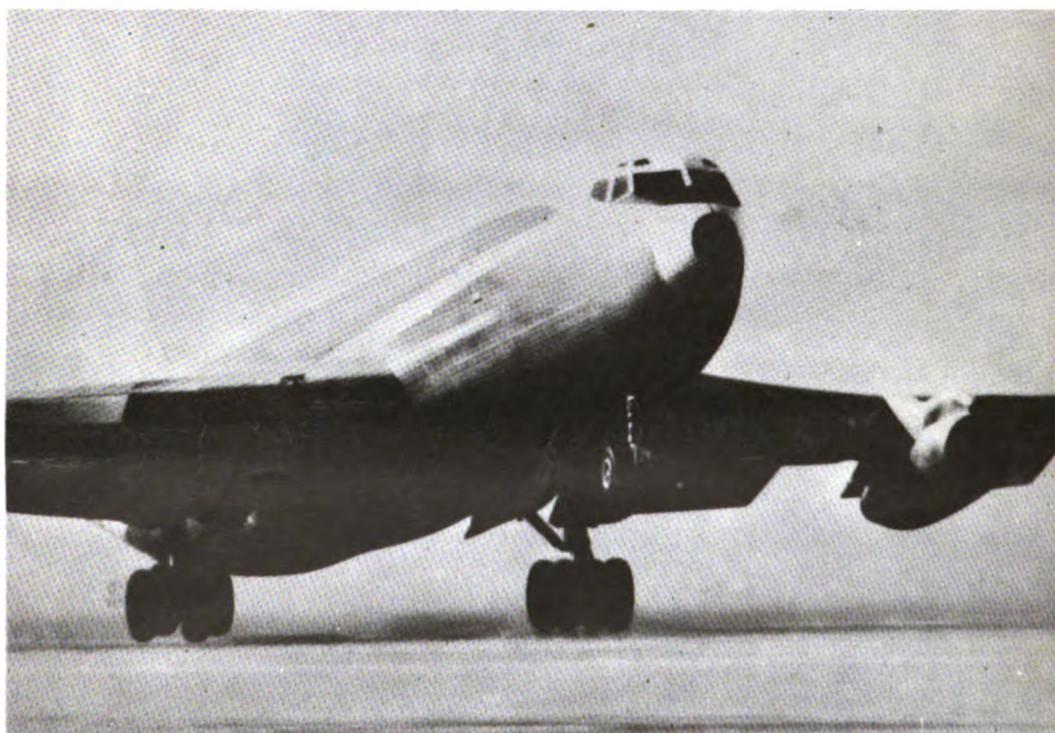


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