

VIETNAM

Magazine

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FROM OUR READERS

I had an excellent visit to Vietnam during August, 1970.

Since my return, I have briefed persons in high places, and I have said substantially the following, an abbreviated version of which I have also included in letters to prominent people :

The most important thing I can say as a result of this trip is that President Nixon has within his grasp a military victory in South Vietnam for the South Vietnamese, the United States, and our allies fighting with us there. I do not say this lightly, nor out of any partisanship, for as you may recall I served in Burma for President Truman; I have had temporary duty assignments under Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson; and I have visited Southeast Asia as a member of the faculty of the National War College when Mr. Kennedy was President. I probably also have met and interviewed the top civilian and military leadership (Ambassadors and Generals) that we have assigned to Vietnam, at least since 1956. In my judgment, the present team of Ambassadors Bunker and Berger and Generals Abrams and Rosson were clearly the best that I have yet encountered. We can be proud of them and what they have been doing. Much thought will have to be given to Ambassador Bunker's replacement, if indeed it is true that he is soon to retire; and to that of General Abrams if his health gives way (as it appears at present).

I also had occasion this time to see President Thieu as I did in 1968. This time he used the word 'confidence' as something intangible but nonetheless real and to me obviously growing in the countryside. Let me illustrate this issue of 'confidence' by my experience this summer in Vietnam. I traveled by unescorted automobile to Tay Ninh and crossed the Cambodian border of Route 1, an impossible performance in previous years. I had never quite seen so much of the countryside peacefully at work, and as you readily recognize, I was traveling in what had been only recently Viet Cong-Cao Dai hostile territory. That intangible factor of morale was indeed high.

Since on this visit I spent time in the III and IV Corps areas — that is, I did not visit I and II Corps areas — I cannot at firsthand speak of the latter. However, I have the firsthand reports of two men on those areas whose judgments I find wholly reliable. The first was Mr. Sol Sanders, Chief Asian Correspondent with twenty years' experience in Asia, for *U.S. News and World Report*. The other was General F. P. Serong (Australian Army, ret.) who has spent eight consecutive years in Vietnam. If anything, their judgments on military questions were even more optimistic than mine.

This is not to say that there aren't remaining military problems. The South Vietnamese Government has at least three quarters of a million men in the regular military and provincial forces. These are supplemented by the so-called local militia, un

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**New Board of
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Editorial Address:

P. O. Box 932

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Cover: Miss Pham Thi Hieu, well-known singer, relaxes among flowers at Saigon zoo. (See story on page 17).

paid, working by day and policing their own areas at night. Herein is a formidable task of both making a better army and a smaller one; also absorbing in a proper way those who re-enter civilian life. I think too, the problem of working with the newly elected half of the Senate including the most popular slate headed by Buddhist Professor Vu Van Mau (with whom I met), will challenge the skills of President Thieu. But in all this, one word « confidence » is justified.

I need not repeat that the Government will require significant amounts of economic assistance and military supplies — not man power — while attempting to restore the country to a relatively peaceful society. Such problems, though difficult, are manageable.

FRANK N. TRAGER
Professor of International Affairs
Director, National Security
Program
New York University
Graduate School of Public
Administration
New York, U.S.A.

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Like the Vietnamese people, we too in Malaysia are facing the Communist threat, and I do pray that never will be massacres in Vietnam like that which happened in Dak Son.

Please send me your **Vietnam Magazine** which I thoroughly enjoy reading and your subscription rates.

AUGUSTINE KIJUN
P. O. Coy Across River
Kuching, Sarawak
Malaysia

I read, in a recent publication, that you are distributing the book *Doing Business In Vietnam* which was written by American and South Vietnamese attorneys. Since it appears that this would be of interest to Monsanto, I am attaching a check for US\$2.50 so that you can forward a copy of the book to me.

E. J. GOEDEKER
Manager, Treasury Operations
Monsanto
Far East Limited
New Henry House
Hong Kong

I would be most grateful if you would let me know if you publish any books or periodicals in English. If you do, please send me a catalogue or a list of publications.

Here at Aberystwyth, I teach a course on the International politics of Southeast Asia since 1945, and any literature giving the Vietnamese point of view would be most useful.

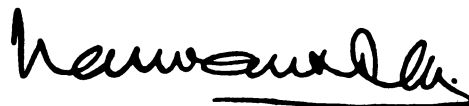
D. STEEDS
The University College of Wales
Wales, Great Britain

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

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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

Please send me **Vietnam Magazine** and your subscription rates. I am very interested in the conflict in your country and would be very pleased if I could have some more information about this. If you have some other magazine I would be very grateful if I could have some of them too.

Considering my interest in the conflict in your land I will say that I quite agree with the policies of your country.

ATLE GANDRUBAKKEN
Ovre Bergveg 49
5063 Krakenes
Norway

I would appreciate your Council sending me materials and information from your beautiful country such as stamps, magazines, catalogues, films relating to cultural activities and progress for pedagogical purposes and my library.

NILTON SAMUEL RONCADA
2468 Rua 20 de Setembro
Caxias del Sul, Brazil

Thank you for sending me the publications about Vietnam. I am reading them with great interest and profit.

MICHAEL DAVIS
Associate Editor
and News Editor
The Observer
London, England



Actresses from the East-West Classical Music Association in Cholon prepare to present Canton opera scenes.



From the Rhade ethnic group, these young Montagnard girls present a Central Highlands dance, clacking wooden sticks.

Arts Week : A Salute to Culture

Ethnic minorities present songs, dances

The Republic of Vietnam recently sponsored a «Performance Week of Arts» devoted to the songs and dances of its two million citizens of non-Vietnamese origin — the Chinese, the Cambodians, the Chams and the mountain tribes people.

A Ministry of Culture-sponsored activity, the special week featured six different programs at the National Conservatory of Music and Drama in Saigon. Officials said the series demonstrated the government's interest in preserving a richness of cultural diversity while continuing its program of integrating the ethnic minorities — many of them long isolated in the highlands — into national social, economic and political life.

Representing South Vietnam's largest minority group, some one million Chinese, was a presentation by the East-West Classical Music Association of Cholon, Saigon's twin city and the commercial center of the Chinese colony in South Vietnam. This Chinese group performed a classical Cantonese opera, «The Heroine's Faithfulness.»

Folk artists from the Central Highlands provinces of Kontum, Phu Bon, Darlac and Tuyen Duc

presented two concerts, playing traditional tribal instruments and performing dances of Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian origins.

Refugees from North Vietnam donned costumes of the Thai, Nung, Man, and Nhang minorities to add further variety to the program with music of their native regions.

From the Central Coastal province of Ninh Thuan came a troupe to perform traditional music of the Chams, a minority group of 35,000 whose ancestors once ruled a powerful kingdom in what later became Central Vietnam. Cham traditions were influenced by the Brahman and Moslem religions.

Singers, dancers and instrumentalists from Ba Xuyen, a Mekong Delta province, represented the 560,000 ethnic Cambodians who live in Vietnam. The Vietnamese-Cambodians wore colorful costumes and classical dance masks and headdresses brought from Phnom Penh and lent the troupe by the Cambodian Embassy in Saigon.



Two Vietnamese women of Cambodian descent perform ancient classical Khmer dance, wearing costumes lent by the Cambodian government. At right, youngsters from Ba Xuyen province in the Mekong Delta perform the music of a «phleng xiem,» a folk orchestra familiar to Cambodia and Thailand.

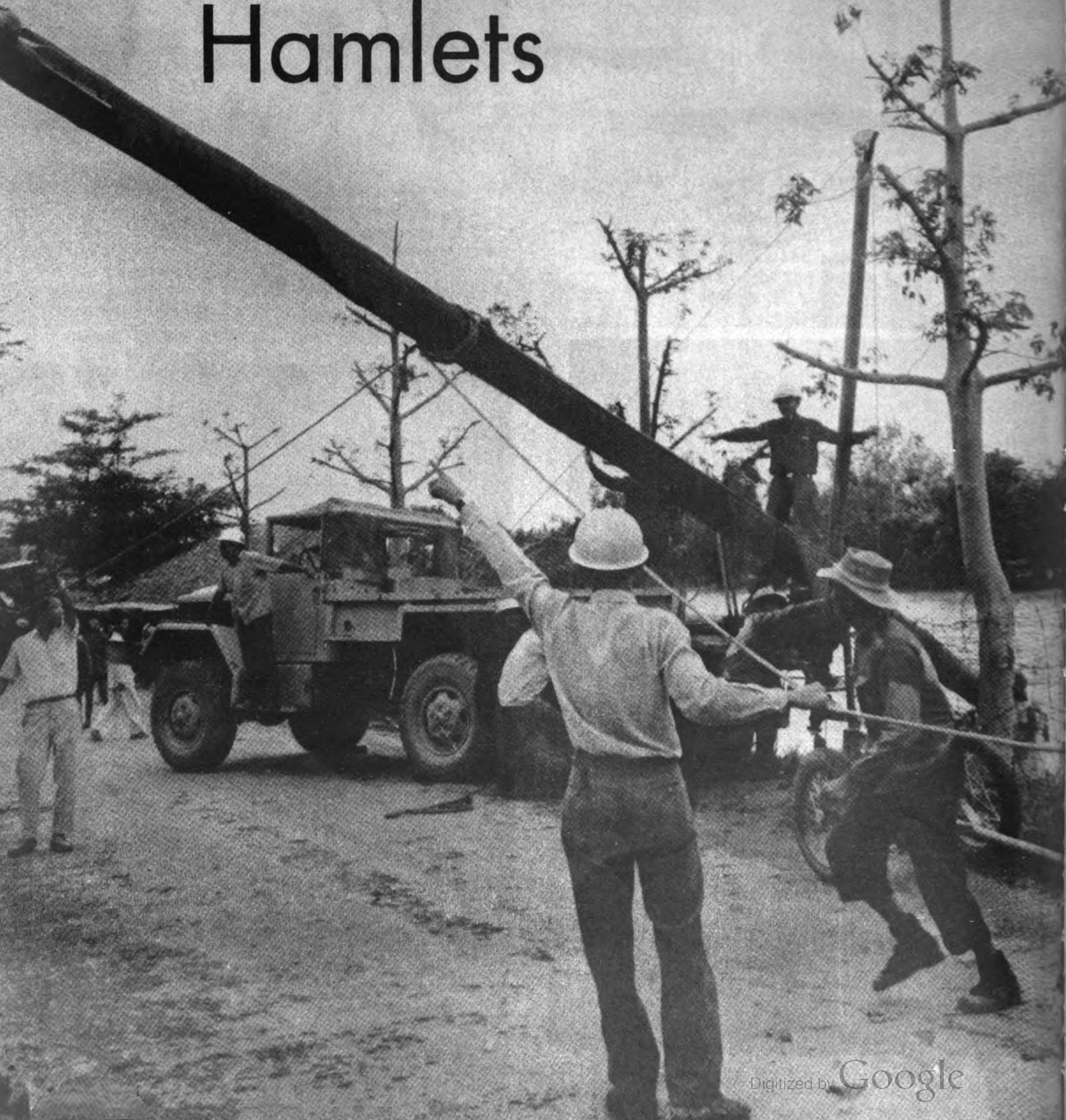




Descendants of the once-powerful Kingdom of Champa, these young girls (above) twirl fans in dance of Brahmic influence. Boy and girl (below) represent « White Thai » ethnic minority refugees who fled North Vietnam in the 1950's to resettle in South Vietnam's Tuyen Duc province. At right, girls with bells on feet and hands perform a « welcome to spring » dance of the Nhang ethnic group of North Vietnam.



Lights in the Hamlets



Rural electrification project expansion plans mapped out

To many who look at Vietnam from afar, imagining it to be a ravaged land populated by maimed and impoverished peasants subsisting in ruined hamlets, it may come as a surprise to learn that as rural security and agricultural production continue to grow, modern cooperatives today are selling electricity to more and more satisfied customers in three lush, green areas of South Vietnam's countryside.

The pilot phase ended in mid-1970 and expansion plans are being mapped. Now the rural electric cooperative project, under full Vietnamese staffing and direction, provides power connections for more than 19,400 consumers. From these connections some 116,400 persons previously dependent on oil lamps and manual power are deriving the benefits of inexpensive electrical power. Electricity from this co-op project is brightening the homes and lanes and easing the work load in hamlets of three provinces, selected as pilot sites because together they provide environments typical of most of the land area in the Republic of Vietnam.

The pilot program, launched in 1965 with an agreement between the Vietnamese government and the Agency for International Development (U.S. AID), set up the nation's first electric co-ops to supplement the power provided by village generators, plants of the government-subsidized Vietnam Power Company and other utilities' facilities in rural areas. Initial financing came from U.S. AID in the form of currency and commodities totaling US\$5,800,000. Between 1966 and 1968 co-ops were established at Long Xuyen, 144 kilometers southwest of Saigon, serving peaceful An Giang province in the flat, watery Mekong Delta; at Duc Tu, 25 kilometers north of Saigon, serving the in-

dustrially developing plain of Bien Hoa province, and at the resort city of Dalat, in the Central Highlands 214 kilometers northeast of Saigon, serving lofty, forested Tuyen Duc province. In addition, a wood pole treatment plant at Phan Rang and an electric power plant at Long Xuyen were built under the agreement, and the Vietnamese National Union of Elec-

trical Cooperatives (NUEC) was formed as a service organization for the three co-ops. The union was patterned after the National Rural Electrical Cooperative Association (NRECA) in the United States, which initially provided the services of training counselors, technicians and advisers to help get Vietnam's electric co-op project off the ground.



More than 19,000 individual connections like this have been made by South Vietnam's three rural electric co-ops to brighten homes and shops and improve living conditions in An Giang, Bien Hoa, and Tuyen Duc provinces.



This wire is bringing electricity to an An Giang home that was lighted by oil lamps before the province's rural electric cooperative was formed.

Progress has been significant, but much remains to be accomplished if the program now is to move steadily from the pilot phase into a period of co-op expansion throughout the country's 44 provinces. «A cooperative is never really finished,» says NUEC's general manager, Phan Van Tri. «It is a growing thing.» Of the three pioneer co-ops, one already is serving more consumers than the original goal had called for, another should reach its goal soon, and the third — hampered by Viet Cong sabotage that curtailed power supplies — should move into accelerated operations within two months. But the main intent of the program — encouraging the formation of other co-ops — has not been achieved. Experts believe this objective will be attained in the new phase of the effort if two major steps are taken: creation of

an adequate, continuing funding program at the national level for the expansion of co-ops in addition to local revolving funds for the financing of operational costs, and establishment of a central government institution to supervise and to help service the co-ops, similar to the Rural Electrification Administration in the United States.

Hamlet Security

Even more than most developing countries, Vietnam has a special role for the electric co-op to play. The main business of the Republic of Vietnam today is pacification — extending security to its citizens throughout the country so they can establish local self-government and help themselves to higher living standards. «Electricity and pacification go together,» says a co-op adviser, the project representative

in Saigon. «Where there is ample electric power, progress in the pacification campaign generally has been excellent. A little old electric light bulb on a street or over a doorway has a great effect on the thinking of a man walking past it at night.»

Aside from the obvious deterrent effect of street lighting in areas once vulnerable to marauders' attacks, there is the psychological effect. The Vietnamese, like many peoples of the world, have always thought of darkness as being associated with insecurity or evil. The dark of the moon, that period before the slim sliver of the new moon appears in the sky, traditionally has been regarded as a time of lurking dangers — physical dangers — physical dangers, obviously, and by extension even social, economic and political dangers. This ancient belief was reinforced in modern times when the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army massed for their 1968 Tet offensive during the dark of the moon. «To a villager,» says an An Giang co-op supervisor, «a bulb burning in a lane, helping to push back the perimeter of darkness, is as reassuring as the watchman's cry that all is well.»

Electricity and pacification go together, and so do co-ops and pacification. Getting the people of rural communities to work together on improving their own security and living standards is a major part of the pacification campaign, and the establishment and operation of co-ops requires this sort of community action. Each electric co-op is run by 15 elected board members and six elected supervisors, including the general manager. The Co-op association administered by the elected officers is responsible for signing up members — i.e., the electricity consumers in the community — and this requires the type of interaction that helps build a self-governing village. «The initial number of consumers in a system,» says the Saigon co-op adviser, «is limited by the desire, understanding of benefits and the ability to pay power bills of the potential consumers. This involves an educational process.»

Financing also may involve community action. «Sometimes,» says

A boost for security in hamlets

the adviser, « cooperative financing includes provisions where the co-op can re-lend money on easy terms to its members to finance house wiring, water installations and appliances to assure the economic load growth of the system. Load growth is important. If full benefits to the community are to be achieved, a co-op must adopt the philosophy of area coverage. This means it must aim at serving

Co-ops Start

An Giang, long known as one of the nation's most pacified provinces, has one of these essential ingredients — a knowledgeable public. An Giang has people accustomed to working together in community enterprises, people whose income from some of the world's best rice fields gives them a good

use. Thirteen An Giang villages having a total of 65 hamlets are receiving electricity from the Long Xuyen co-op system. When the project was started the engineers set a goal of 13,100 An Giang consumers to be receiving electricity by mid-1970. By that time 9,500 members were enrolled, and since then the figure has climbed to 10,010. The ultimate feasible membership for this co-op is estimated at 24,000.

The An Giang co-ops buys all its power from the Vietnam Power Company (VPC) at a cost of 8.5 piasters per kilowatt hour, as do the other two co-ops. The co-op then re-sells the power to its members at 15 piasters per kilowatt hour (about three and a half U.S. cents). Members furnish the internal wiring of their houses and their own fittings, just as rural co-op members do in the United States. After paying its bill to the VPC, which averages about 1.750,000 piasters a month, the An Giang co-op clears about 250,000 piasters.

The rural electric cooperative program built a new power plant in Long Xuyen but turned it over to the VPC to operate. The VPC will repay the 45 million piasters spent on construction of the plant and on purchase of four generators to be installed for the Tuyen Duc co-op. The turnover of the Long Xuyen plant was made with the provision that the VPC must supply the co-op with all the power it needs; any additional power generated may be fed into the VPC system.

« We feel a co-op has no business in the field of power generation, » says a Ministry of Public Works official. « However, a successful co-op must have an assured, economical power supply to meet its ever-growing requirements, so sometimes co-ops must get into the generating business. »

The old French-built generating plant in Long Xuyen had been barely able to service the people



Poles arrive in An Giang from Phan Rang pole treatment plant to enable one of south Vietnam's three rural cooperatives to light up the hamlets.

everyone in the area who wants electric power at a price they can afford to pay. A cooperative must be supported by a knowledgeable membership — consumers who will elect an enthusiastic board of directors willing to give freely of their time and who will hire a qualified and experienced management staff. » The ingredients that go into building a pacified community are the ingredients that go into building a viable co-op, and the social processes are much the same.

standard of living as well as a desire for more services. An Giang thus was a logical place to establish one of the pioneer electric co-ops, and the provincial capital at Long Xuyen was chosen as the site. The system was ready to start operations two years ago.

By June 1970, the end of the pilot phase, 1,292 primary poles and 3,930 secondary poles were in place to hold An Giang's 461 kilometers of primary, secondary and service wire, of which 423 kilometers now are energized and in

within the city's limits, and even in the heart of Long Xuyen there were «brownouts» and fluctuating power supplies. But with the addition of the pilot project's two 1500-kilowatt diesel generators, the city now is being better served while the rural areas enjoy co-op servicing. While city residents may not join a rural cooperative, Long Xuyen's new generators have stabilized the power supply for city residents as well as rural members.

Small businesses as well as individual householders have benefited from the new power supply. In An Giang's hamlets, as in hamlets served by the other two co-ops, woodworking shops, charcoal kilns, small weaving mills and barkery shops have modernized their operations and villagers are purchasing such electrical appliances as fans, irons and television sets. Children study after sunset. With streets and shops lighted, shops stay open later and serve more customers. Tailors and craftsmen work into the evening and small workshops are producing more. The co-ops are providing power for new enterprises, and providing cheaper power to plants that previously had to rely on gasoline-driven generators.

The An Giang co-op has the largest staff — three office workers and 15 who maintain the power lines and do some construction. The Tuyen Duc co-op has eight men, five of them in the line crew, and Duc Tu has a staff of the same size. With basic construction work completed, these staffs are considerably smaller than at the start of the project but wages have not been cut. A lineman earns 11,000 piasters a month and ground and service men make 9,500 piasters.

Other Systems

In Duc Tu, success in lining up co-op members was even more marked than in An Giang. By mid-1970 it had been hoped that 7,400 members would be enrolled, but at that time 8,100 homes and shops were receiving co-op electricity and now just over 9,000 are customers. This co-op's ultimate feasible membership originally was estimated at 9,000, but sights are now being raised.



Members of rural electric co-ops provide their own internal wiring and fittings after house connections have been made by linesmen of co-ops.

Duc Tu's two co-op member villages contain 21 hamlets. The 2,818 poles now in place include 1,068 of aluminum — military surplus adapted for powerline use. The 200 kilometers of primary, secondary and service wire in place include 197.6 kilometers energized.

For the Tuyen Duc cooperative farther north, the mid-1970 goal had been 5,200 consumers. Tuyen Duc is an ideal province for rural electrification; potential consumers are spread over a wide area but there is a high density per square kilometer, promising economic power distribution. Thanks to Viet Cong sabotage, however, this co-op now is serving only 393 members.

Power for the Tuyen Duc co-op is provided mainly by a line running down from Lake Ankroet hydroelectric plant north of Dalat and on to the Danhim dam 37 kilometers southeast of the resort city. In 1967 the Viet Cong blew up the penstocks at the dam and put the power plant out of operation. The city of Dalat is taking most of the power still available to the area, drastically restricting the co-op's recruitment of rural consumers. Only 12.5 kilometers of wire could be energized to light two hamlets.

The Japanese government originally built the power plant as war reparations, and has agreed to rebuild it by June 1971. In the meantime four 300-kilowatt generators

erators have been ordered to supply power for the co-op system, and they are expected to be in operation by January 1971. «If we get them by that time,» says a Dalat co-op director, «we can immediately connect 1,000 to 1,500 customers because the poles and lines are already in place.» (Some 26 kilometers of wire are in place on 1,925 poles.) Ultimately Tuyen hopes to enroll 9,250 co-op members.

The NUEC

The pilot phase of the rural electric cooperative project involved the creation of the Vietnamese National Union Electrical Cooperatives. With Phan Tri as general manager, the NUEC is administered by a nine-member board of directors, three from each co-op. Conceived as a service organization for the three co-ops, the NUEC today is principally concerned with managing the Phan Rang pole treatment plant. It also handles the importation of commodities needed by the co-ops, and does some lobbying. «We get in touch with government agencies and lobby for money and services,» says Tri. «But we are proud of having the ability to survive through our own efforts.»

Tri's duties as adviser to the co-ops include supervising and teaching accounting procedures and general policy. He is now involved in translating into Vietnamese an English-language training manual, modifying the legal text and procedures to conform to Vietnamese law. And he is thinking of new services the NUEC can offer the co-ops.

«One thing we can do if we manage to get an importer's license,» he says, «is to offer members of the co-ops such electrical appliances as television sets, radios and refrigerators at low cost.»

The NUEC has been solely responsible for the Phan Rang pole treatment plant for the past year. It is the only one in South Vietnam. It is situated on the Ninh Thuan coast 264 kilometers northeast of Saigon. It treats poles, cross arms, flings and fence posts cut from all, yellow pine trees grown on a 5,000-hectare site near Dalat.

Co-ops proud of surviving as result of own efforts

The plant was built and equipped with a fund of 49,816,000 piasters plus commodities valued at US\$20,889. Pentachlorophenol, the chemical used to treat the poles so they can withstand weather, ground decay and insect damage for up to 35 years, is imported from the United States, as are spare parts for the main boiler and other plant equipment.

The plant is turning out 800 to 1,000 poles a month, or about 30 per cent of capacity. One administrative problem is obtaining sufficient stocks of wood to enable the plant to operate at higher capacity.

Tree cutting is now on a permit basis, but efforts are being made to work out a contract between the NUEC and the Vietnamese government that would assure long-term supplies and would eliminate some taxes presently charged against the wood being cut.

In addition to the three co-ops, the plant's customers include the Vietnam Power Company, the post office (Poste-Telegrams-Telegraphes) and provincial public works services. Consumer demand for poles is estimated at 3,000 a month, but operating the Phan



Since the An Giang rural electric co-op brought electricity to this brick and tile plant near Thot Not, an electrically operated clay-molding machine and other power devices are increasing efficiency and speeding production.



This furniture factory in Thot Not district has increased production since rural co-op brought in electricity.

Rang plant at full capacity — even if stocks of wood, chemicals and spare parts were in good supply — would depreciate equipment at a rapid rate. «What we need is more pole plants,» says Tri. «We are looking for private investment — foreign or Vietnamese investors who would like to act as shareholders in such a project.»

The plant sells its treated poles for 528 piasters per cubic foot; a normal 35-foot pole costs 10,000 piasters. This includes a profit markup of 15 per cent which is building up a working fund for salaries and plant maintenance; it also is hoped that it will cover repayment of the initial 81-million-piaster loan.

Tri says the plant has made 10 million piasters in profits within the past year. «Since our selling price is far lower than interna-

tional market prices,» he says, «NUEC is planning, after satisfying local needs, to export poles to neighboring countries in the future. This would help earn a sizeable amount of foreign currencies.»

Forty-one workers are employed at the Phan Rang plant, six at the Saigon offices of the NUC and three dealing with wood-cutting contractors in Dalat. Salaries range from 8,000 to 30,000 piasters, averaging 15,000 piasters a month.

Financing Co-ops

The original US\$ 5,800,000 in cash and commodities provided by U.S. AID under the 1965 agreement was funneled out to the pilot projects — the three co-ops, the Long Xuyen power plant and the pole treatment plant — by the

Ministry of Public Works in the form of loans. To be repaid over a 35-year period, the principal plus per cent interest are designed to build a revolving fund to help finance future co-ops. The Vietnam Power Company has contracted to repay the 45-million-piaster loan for construction of the Long Xuyen power plant and installation of Tuyen Duc generators. The Phan Rang plant's 15-per cent markup is hopefully expected to cover repayment of its 81-million-piaster start-up loan. For the three co-ops, an unofficial total of 207,984,000 piasters must be repaid to the Vietnamese government.¹ Of that amount, An Giang's co-op received 41.09 per cent, Tuyen Duc 29.8 per cent and Duc Tu 29.11 per cent. So far loan agreements between the government and the pilot projects have not been signed; when

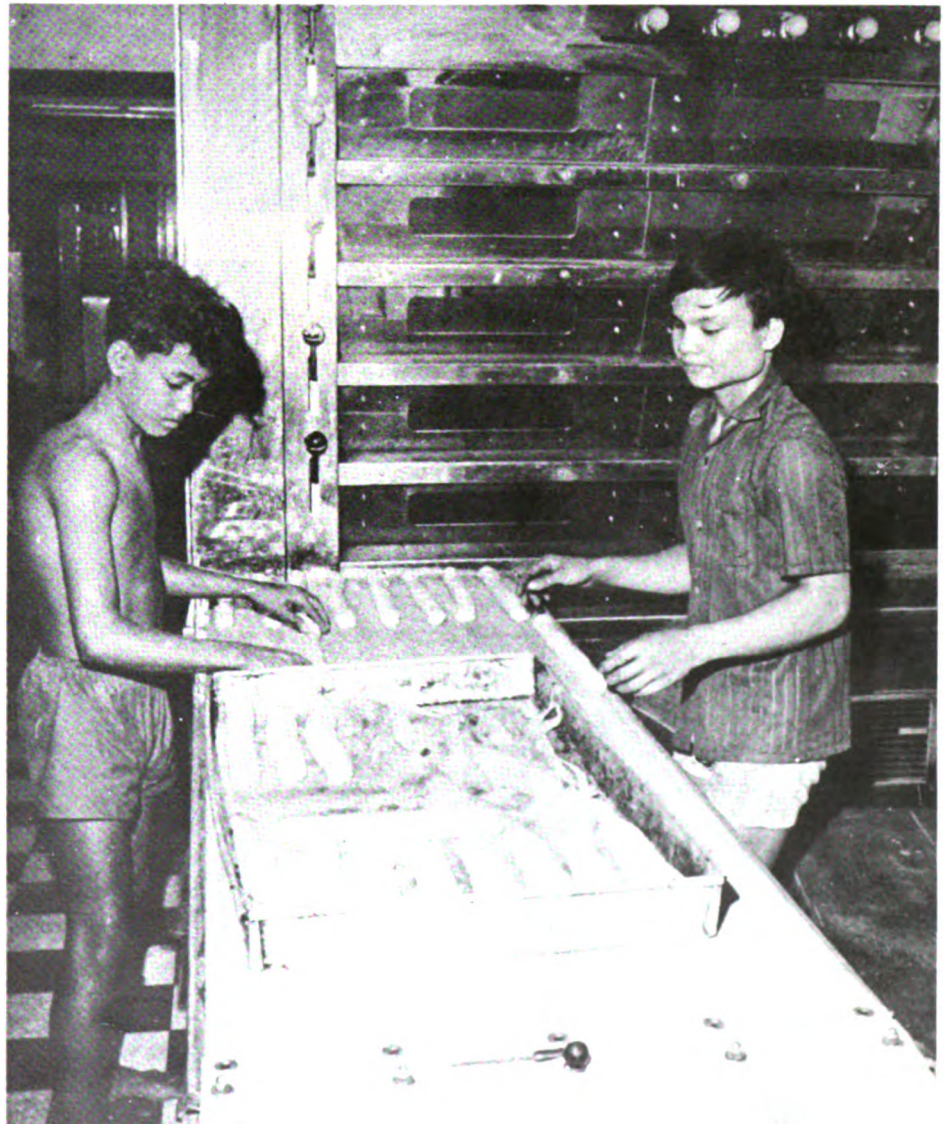
Perimeters of darkness turned back

they are, the government plans to make another 45 million piasters available to the co-ops to pay outstanding bills. Grace periods before repayment must start on the initial loans have been extended to all projects, but it is expected that the revolving fund for building other co-ops should be established within five years after the loan agreements are signed.

«The revolving fund,» says the Saigon co-op adviser, «would not be a total solution to the problem of encouraging the building of new electric co-ops. There would have to be a government loan fund set up to provide piasters for local costs and hard currency or credit outside Vietnam to purchase new equipment and supplies necessary for future construction. Only with this combination of a revolving fund supplied by the co-ops themselves plus a healthy block of money set aside by the Vietnamese government can the expansion of rural electric cooperative be really assured. New cooperatives cannot be expected to be immediately self-sustaining. Grace periods on debt service and low-cost credit are essential. Often operating costs must initially be financed to get the co-ops off the ground. And then they must grow; they must keep providing electricity to more and more people. An electric co-op, like any utility, must expand to supply the energy needs of the area of its responsibility. To become such a viable entity a co-op must be assured of a continuous

flow of resources — money, talent, equipment and material. That, coupled with the supervision and the services that only a central government agency can provide, should guarantee for the future a steadily growing electricity system in South Vietnam's countryside.»

Much remains to be accomplished, but much has been achieved. Already the bulbs burning in the hamlet lanes are helping to roll back the perimeters of darkness, and the perils of the dark of the moon do not loom so large anymore in South Vietnam's countryside.

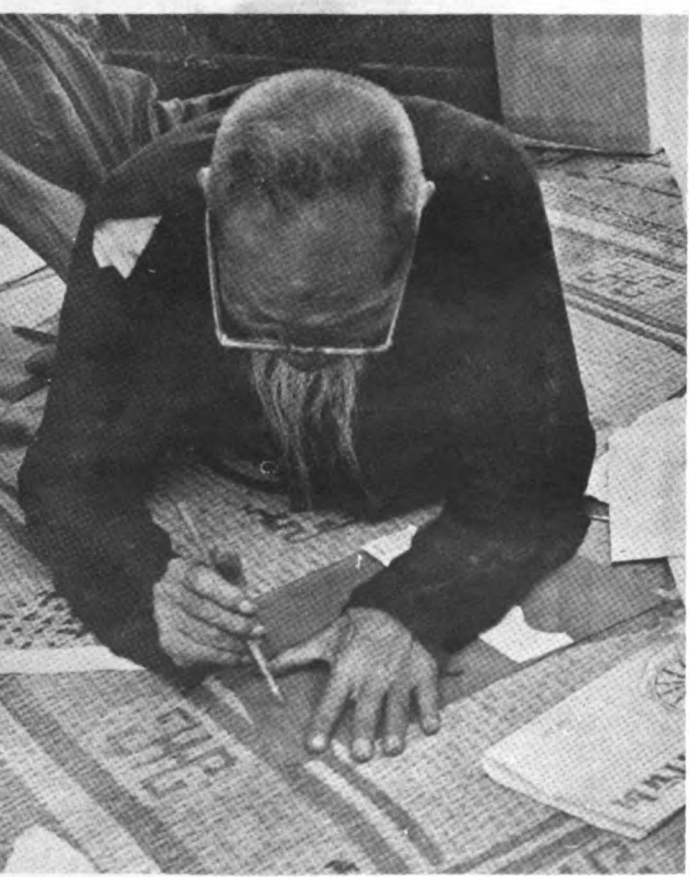


1. The total is calculated on the basis of repayments to be made at a rate of 60 piasters to each dollar loaned. Various exchange rates have applied through the years to various transactions, ranging from 60 piasters per US\$1 for government-to-government transactions up to 275 piasters per US\$1 or conversion of currency held by non-resident foreigners in Vietnam and for exports. This latter «accommodation» rate is a more meaningful figure than the still «official» rate of 118 piasters per US\$1 applying to most other transactions. The international rate for the piaster on the Hong Kong open market currently is about 410 per US\$1. But since the October 1970 establishment of the «accommodation» rate, the black market rate in Saigon for a US\$1 bill has dropped from a high of 450 piasters to less than 395 piasters, and continues to drop by the week.

«Electric Baked Bread» is advertised by this An Giang bakery now that the rural electric co-op is providing electricity. Before, the old wood-fired oven produced 2,000 loaves a day; now the electric oven turns out 6,000.



The faithful flock to a pagoda and burn incense and make offerings of food (above) in celebration of Tet. Writing of ideographs expressing luck and good wishes (below) is old Tet custom. Performers regale crowds, balancing atop poles (right), one of many features of happy celebration.



Exit the Year of the Dog, Enter the Year of the Hog

By Phu Si

When the clock strikes midnight on January 25, the first day of the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, millions of Vietnamese will exchange toasts of good wishes for the coming year of the Hog.

The greetings are familiar and always concern the well-being of the family, the focal point of Vietnamese life. "May I wish you," so goes the toast to the head of the family, "nothing but prosperity in your endeavours. May you have a son at the beginning of this year and a daughter at the end. May your fortunes increase tenfold and may peace and happiness be with you and your family..."

"Tet Nguyen Dan" or the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, begins this year on midnight January 25 and the festivities will last three days. The traditional Vietnamese calendar runs in cycles of twelve years. A genie, in the form of an animal figure, dominates each year. They are, in the following order: Ty (mouse); Suu (buffalo); Dân (tiger); Mao (cat); Thin (dragon); Ty (snake); Ngo (horse); Mui (goat); Than (monkey); Dau (cock); Tuat (dog); and Hoi (hog): As the old year gives way to the new, the ruling genie quietly bows out to the next. This coming year will be the year of the Hog.

Welcoming The Genie

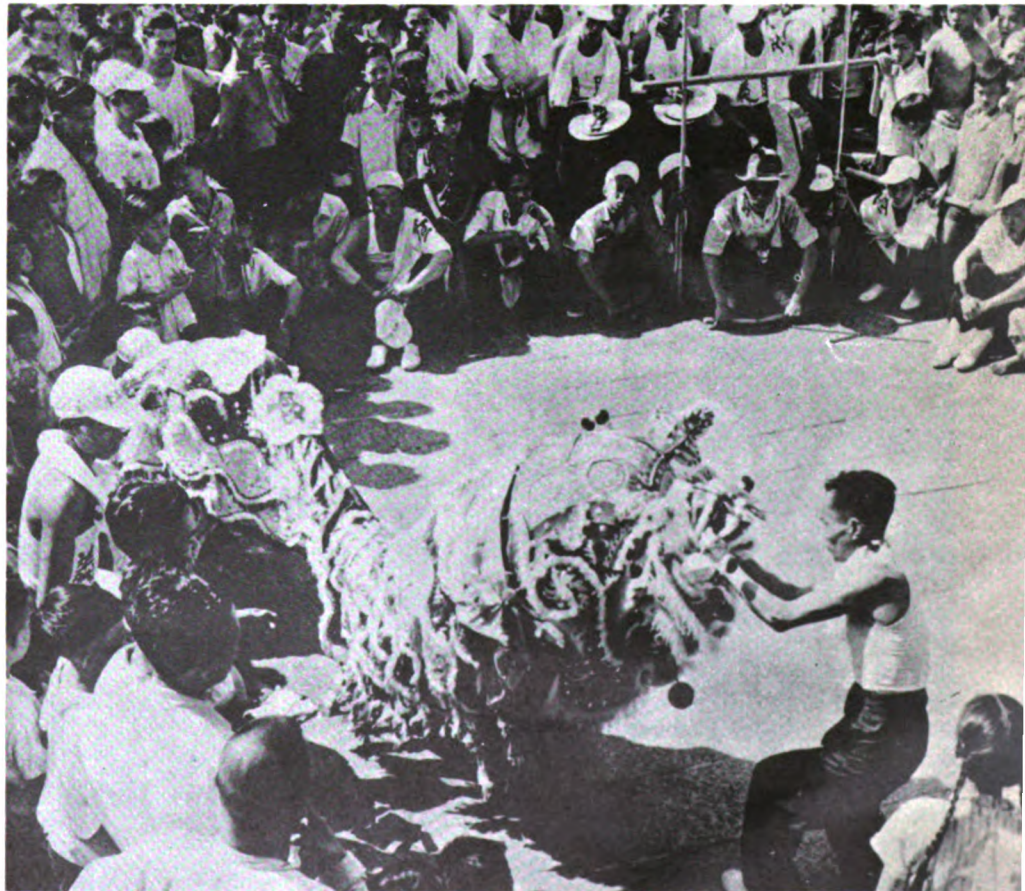
On Tet, the home is brightly lit and the family altar resplendent with flowers, fruits, cakes and sweets to welcome the new genie on this festive night. It used to be that firecrackers erupted on the exact moment of transition, as is the custom in many western countries. In Vietnam, they serve an additional purpose — to chase out the evil spirits — but since the

infamous Tet attack of 1968 the use of firecrackers was banned by the authorities.

At dawn, the family sits down to a banquet in honour of the ancestors to whom they pay their respects by ritual bows before the family shrine. When the meal is finished, it's time to dress in one's best fineries and meet parents and grand-parents to wish them luck and happiness in the coming year. The youngsters especially look forward to this ceremony as each one of them receives a small sum of money wrapped in the traditional "red envelope."

It is an ancient belief in Vietnam

that fortune or misfortune which occurs on New Year's Day sets the pattern for the rest of the year. The morning of Tet is of particular importance. The character of the first visitor to the home will leave his imprint on the family for the rest of the year. This ancient custom is called "Xong Nha." If the visitor is good, kind and honest, the family is in luck. But if he or she happens to be a rather shady type, the year is off to a bad start. It is not unusual in many homes to firmly lock the gates and wait until a few minutes after midnight to admit a favoured friend as the



To the sound of drums and gongs, a troupe performs dance of the dragon.

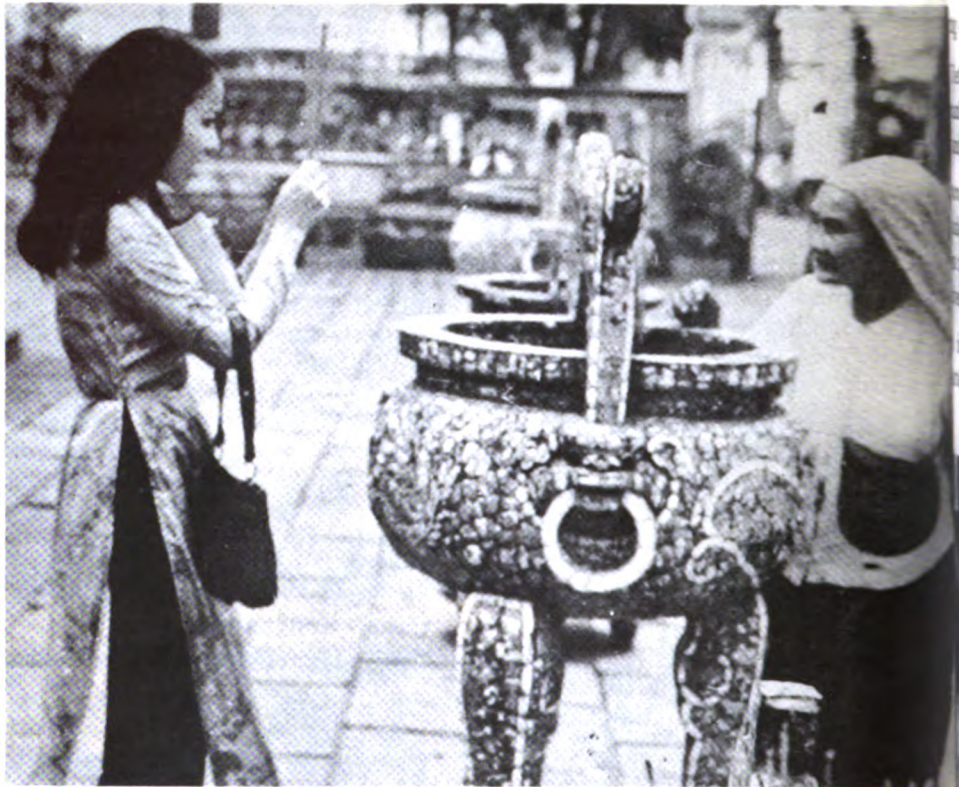
Communion

"first guest in the New Year" who, in the meantime, has been walking around the block, waiting for his cue to make his "guest appearance."

Another important aspect of Tet is the family visit to the Pagoda or Church to pray for good fortune and happiness. The remainder of the holidays is filled with visits to friends and relatives, family games and just relaxation. In the countryside the ceremonies include a tilling event to insure a plentiful harvest after the spring planting.

And so once again, as this Tet event is about to take place, the people of Vietnam hope and pray to see an early end to the enemy's activities in this unhappy land. Mothers pray that their sons will return safe and sound. Wives pray that their husbands will finally shed their uniforms and remain with the family at home. The people of our nation, tired and weary from incessant war, destruction and bloodshed, once again hope that this Tet may bring peace. They hope the invaders from the North will finally realize that guns, bullets and terror will never succeed in forcing upon the South Vietnamese an alien form or rule which rejects the culture, customs and traditions of our land. Cunning, treachery, deceit and violence marked Hanoi's role in the 1968 Tet offensive, a tragedy which will be long remembered, especially by the citizens of the city of Hue.

Our people deserve good fortune in the coming year of the Hog. Whether they will get it, depends to a large extent upon the actions of the Hanoi regime. If the enemy is willing to let the people of South Vietnam determine their own destiny — in peace — the coming year will, indeed, be a happy one. If not, our people will continue to resist, as they have been doing for more than a decade. For if nothing else, the past year of the Cock has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that the people of South Vietnam are willing, able and determined to keep on fighting for their freedom and independence until such time the enemy from the North withdraws and decides to leave South Vietnam alone.



with ancestors and nature

By the ancient lunar calendar, Tet is the budding year ushered in with the Spring Equinox, the annual reawakening of nature.

This Vietnamese holiday of holidays is occasion for communion with departed ancestors and the blessings and the bounty of nature.

Vietnam Magazine followed Miss Pham Thi Hieu as she made her way into a Buddhist pagoda and the Saigon zoo in religious and mundane observance of the advent of Tet.

With incense and prayer, she paid homage to the departed, and in the quiet, verdant confines of

the zoo she walked in silence along the paths, pausing to admire the flowers in bloom and stopping to view the birds and beasts.

The eldest child among five brothers and two sisters, Miss Hieu is 20, sings for stage, movies, radio, and television under the name Ngoc Hieu.

What moves her most during these days of war in Vietnam? «The plight of the poor,» she says, «I do wish I were rich, so I could do something to help them.»

Single, she hopes to meet someday «a tall and lanky man; I don't mind if he is poor, who will really and truly love me as his wife.»

She wishes *Vietnam Magazine* readers a very happy Tet and if they want to correspond with her, to write Ngoc Hieu, P.O. Box 101, Saigon.



Pham Thi Hieu burns joss sticks (top, left) before old urn. She prays for ancestors before altar with a couple (bottom, left). Wooden sticks she casts out of can will provide her with a fortune forecast (above). In Saigon zoo, she remembers reawakening of nature that is Tet.



Madame Ky, the wife of South Vietnam's Vice President, distributes to orphan children Spring tree gifts during Tet.



Orphans put on a show during festival, after which they will be given gifts, toys and fruits from many Spring trees.

Spring tree custom

By Van Ngân

Each year in Vietnam around the end of the Lunar Year, when the Kitchen Genie Tao Quan speeds along the Milky Way to Heaven to report to the Jade Emperor, the Spring trees blossom. Not unlike Christmas trees, which are the focal point in Christian homes during the festive season, Spring trees carry the spirit of giving, though without the religious significance.

The Spring tree custom in Vietnam is unique for it already is a tradition and may last for many years to come — yet, it was born in the turmoil of war during Vietnam's independence only 16 years ago. Today, it is one of the highlights of the Tet — Lunar New Year — festivities. This tree is usually a plum or peach tree, in full bloom and covered with gifts, decorations and candles. The "blessings" (Loc) of the Spring tree are gifts, cakes and toys of all colours and shape pinned among the branches. The gifts are of many different kinds and generally reflect the desires and needs of the recipients. For example, students usually receive gifts consisting of pens, paper, textbooks and the like.

For Writers' Children

Gifts for children of poor families may include such items as clothing, soap, towels, toys and candy. Tradition has it that for the children of journalists and writers, Spring tree gifts should include such items as tea pots and candied fruit because writers and artists are said to greet the New Year sipping perfumed tea and munching candy. With such gifts



Woman totes Spring tree bought at Nguyen Hue, the «Street of Flowers.»

the children are encouraged to follow the profession of their fathers.

The first Spring tree, decorated with cakes, candy and other gifts, appeared in 1954 and it was displayed on the presidential palace grounds in Saigon. Vietnam has just become independent. In the impressive surroundings of the presidential garden, profusely decorated with lamps and flowers, that Spring tree was a symbol of a new nation. School children received the gifts off the tree and the idea of the Spring tree took a hold and spread quickly in the city. The following year the tree was already accepted in many households, neighbourhoods and communities. Since then the custom has moved to the countryside all over the nation.

Funds for the Needy

At the time of Tet, Spring trees appear everywhere and the richness of their decorations depends on the affluence of the home or community. Funds are collected for the needy children with which to buy toys, cakes, candy, clothing, medicines and also a special New Year gifts, called "Mung Tuoi" which consists of cash, is distributed to the parents of these youngsters. To many, this is one of the highlights of the Tet festivities. As the gifts are distributed, the eyes of the children glow with happiness and delight and the parents share in the joy of the celebration.

Many groups sponsor their own Spring trees. Soldiers and policemen's families, schools and neighbourhood organizations and the time is already near that one can read in the local papers which business firms and companies will sponsor a Spring tree program of festivities.

As far as Tet customs in Vietnam are concerned, the Spring tree tradition is still a young one. It is still flexible with no definite formula or strict rules which usually develop slowly as time goes by. But it is a charming custom which sparks the gay atmosphere of the annual Tet holidays — the most important celebration of the year in Vietnam.



Whether in small stand (above) or Saigon Central Market stalls, fruits command high prices during Tet. Fruits are a must for spring tree rites.



Enter house, follow tradition

By Tran Long

Was Kipling right when he said « East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet ? » Or are the others correct who maintain that people are people the world over ? I believe that you will agree that both statements are extremes and that somewhere between lies the truth.

This is not to deny that all people have similar basic needs and drives. For example, we all wish to attain happiness. But the different routes we choose are not always the same. In choosing different routes, we vary our customs and practices. Actions considered perfectly correct in the East may be interpreted in the West as being in bad taste, or even as offensive. And the same is true of actions by Westerners in the East.

Before getting into specific customs and practices which cause trouble, it might be helpful to outline briefly a few basic contrasts between the East and the West.

The Westerner has a dynamic concept of life. He conceives of a life full of needs and desires which must be satisfied if one is to be happy. Consequently, he exerts effort to produce the kind of goods and services which satisfy his needs and desires. He will not hesitate to change his environment if he feels the need to do so. Frequently, the satisfying of a current need creates a new need which must also be satisfied. On and on goes the life of the Western man, ever broadening in scope, ever emphasizing speed.

The Easterner, on the other hand, views the physical world, the social order, and man's place and condition in both, as essentially preordained. He aims at a life free from desire, in which his inner self is in complete harmony with the outer world. He realizes that as a human being he has certain basic needs that must be fulfilled, but he regards all other needs and desires as secondary and he tries to subdue them. Rather than change the total environment to satisfy all his needs, he is inclined to adapt or reconcile himself to his situation. He views the business of creating new needs and habits as being very strange indeed.

A similar difference can be found in the Eastern and Western concepts of time and labor. In many Western countries we constantly hear : « Save time, »



« Has anybody entered the Rose Garden ? »

« Time is precious, » « Time is money. » There are target dates, labor-saving devices, time and motion studies. A man takes the 8:03 train, not the eight o'clock train.

In contrast, the Asian as a rule is not pressed for time. He gives the impression that he has a whole eternity to spare. Patience is a key word. He has a great knack of letting things simmer until the propitious moment. Labor is ample and, in the East, need not be spared. The amount of time and effort that goes into a delicacy, by Western standards, is out of all proportions. The Easterner strives more after perfection than getting a job done. If you ask an ordinary Vietnamese at what time such and such an event takes place, you would likely receive the following answer : « That happens when the sun is on top of the bamboo tree. » Few Vietnamese, even

Family ties immeasurably stronger

those who are city dwellers, care to check the exact time something occurs! Perhaps this contributes to the relatively low incidence of ulcers and nervous breakdowns in the East.

Family Relationships

In the West, the term family is usually limited to the immediate living family, i.e., one's wife and children. If family ties clash with the individual spouse's human rights, the family, generally speaking, recedes in order to respect the rights of the individual.

Now, Easterners (Vietnamese included) also have a great respect for the individual. However, the family enjoys a preeminent position in every level of society and cannot be subordinate to the individual. The individual's physical body is not respected *per se*, being rather something he owes to his parents and ancestors and of which the individual is only a safekeeper.

A Vietnamese will speak to you of his family, but be careful of exactly which family he means. He may mean his « lesser family » consisting of himself, his wife and their children or his « greater family » consisting of his wife, children, his parents, and his unmarried brothers and sisters. Family ties are immeasurably stronger. The family is the center of the universe, much more so than the nation. Anything the Vietnamese does, he does out of family considerations rather than for his own self as shown by the following saying: « A man becomes a mandarin, and all his relatives will share his good fortune. » The Easterner cannot act freely but in accord with his parents, with his distant relatives, and also with his fellow villagers who feel proud of his good deeds and ashamed of his bad ones. Also, his concern is not limited to the living. Ancestor worship (or veneration) prompts him to consider how the deceased would view a contemplated action.

Good social order as established by tradition demands that the ancestors are worshipped, the parents obeyed, the old respected, the women protected, and the children loved.

Further Contrasts

Further contrasts between the mentality of the East and West may be generalized in the comparisons :

- Active vs. passive
- Material vs. spiritual
- Logical vs. mystical



In Vietnam, it takes time to talk business

Before launching into specifics, a word of qualification. While, as you will appreciate, it is necessary to resort to generalities in speaking of any people, there are differences and exceptions in any society. Rural people usually vary from their urban counterparts in some respects — frequently it is only a matter of degree. When I use the term Vietnamese I refer to general urban population. I specifically exclude or hold reservations concerning Vietnamese who have been abroad, and your Vietnamese employee who work for you daily. The latter group will undoubtedly make greater allowances for your action than will the general urban population.

Taboo Western Practices

1. Westerners are prone to make comparisons, to argue the pros and cons of a subject, the weakness and strength of a proposition. Neighbors have no embarrassment in bragging about the relative merits of their car. There is little hesitation in pointing out to one's neighbor that he should be more progressive, keep up with the times.

This practice, if carried to the East, is fraught with danger even though no offense is intended. In the first place such practices — arguments, comparisons, boasting — are more conducive to controversy than to harmony. The Easterner prefers to avoid expression of disagreement. Secondly, the Easterner is proud of his heritage, his culture, his way of life, and to him international comparisons are particularly odious. He regards those who indulge in them as being arrogant and belittling. And here we have a key point : humility is a cardinal virtue in the

East. If you would be loved by Easterners, be careful not to convey a pronounced air of self-importance or arrogance.

2. Westerners favor the direct approach in conversation ; they don't like to « beat around the bush. » The Easterner indulges in more subtleties and insinuations. A direct question is considered impolite and usually is not given a straight answer. You will make more progress by avoiding a brash frontal approach in conversation. Let's look at this more closely :

A direct request to an individual is in poor taste. You will do much better by hinting around the favor desired and let the listener offer what you want. A direct request may be considered as underestimating the listener's intelligence. Take a boy-meets-girl example. A typical village Vietnamese will attempt to gain a girl's attention by singing a quest on :

At this chance meeting, Plum would like to ask Peach

Whether anybody has entered the Rose Garden.

In case she does not want to start conversation or is already married, she will keep quiet. Otherwise, she may reply as follows :

Now that Plum asks, Peach would like to answer ;

The Rose Garden has an entrance, but nobody has been admitted.

Fortunately, Vietnamese do not expect foreigners to go to such an extent. But I suggest you remember that you have better odds if you avoid blunt questions and requests for favors. An experienced foreigner will not launch immediately into the business at hand. He will inquire of the children or mention some subject of mutual interest.

3. Americans, particularly, like to get on a first name basis quickly. Such a practice is very effective in America : « The sweetest term in the language is the man's first name. » But in Vietnam, this is interpreted frequently as undesirable familiarity. The people of the East, like many Europeans are more reserved and prefer a warming-up or courting period. You won't lose anything by keeping things on a Mr. or Mrs. basis. Let your Vietnamese acquaintance advance to the first name level when he is ready.

While on the subject of names, the full name of the addressee should be spelled out in correspondence. For example, Tran Van Dong, not Mr. T. V. Dong. In addition to the etiquette aspect, there is considerable possibility for error if you resort to initials.

4. Similar remarks apply to the question of introducing strangers. The American is not shy about introducing himself. It is different in Vietnam. A man in a respected position will be more favorably disposed if you arrange to have a mutual acquaintance effect an introduction. Frequently, the arranger will attempt to make it appear as though it is a chance meeting, but this still does not lessen the fact that self-introductions normally are not favored.

5. A wise man in any country refrains from giving advice too freely and too frequently. He subtly lets the idea or the benefit to be derived from the idea springs from the listener. This is particularly true in Vietnam. To overcome a natural skepticism among Vietnamese towards untried ideas, a Westerner should not push his listeners into a new venture too rapidly. The Vietnamese like the Missourian, needs a bit of showing by concrete example or demonstration.

6. A Westerner in Vietnam does well to shy away from discussing local politics in company. Confidentially, don't discuss local politics with a Vietnamese until you know him quite well, and only if he is responsive. At cocktail parties, it is better to limit your conversation to pleasantries. The terms Asiatic, Annamite, native, Indochina and French Indochina should be avoided.

7. From early youth the East Asian is impressed with need for self-control. Angry comments, « letting off steam, » public display of affection are considered unmannerly and extremely coarse. So let us keep our voices down and avoid too great a display of emotion — both parties are likely to lose face.

8. The use of slang, and especially American slang, within a homogeneous group is quite acceptable



Be careful about how you use your hands

but would lead to misinterpretation and a possible inferiority complex when there are Vietnamese present whose mastery of the foreign language is still far from good.

9. If you want to summon someone, please do so with a soft voice and not by waving your index finger. If you beckon to someone with your finger, your gesture will be interpreted as a display of authority on your part and an indication of lack of esteem for your subordinate whose assigned work will probably suffer by being done half-heartedly.

Whatever you do, be careful about how you use

Some Western customs may offend

your hand in motioning someone toward you. You're sure to get a dirty look or worse if you hold your palm up and wriggle your fingers in signalling to someone. The sign is ordinarily used in Vietnam to attract the attention of dogs and children. However, if you make the same sign but hold your hand flat palm down nobody will take offense.

10. Never tap anyone on the head. Undoubtedly, it will be taken as a personal injury to the individual's human dignity, and possibly as a blow to his ancestor as well. Reserve any friendly pats on the back for intimate friends who have long been exposed to foreigners. Better still, keep hands off if you don't want to offend a Vietnamese.

11. You may be asked to a Vietnamese friend's house. When you enter, you may show your respect to his parents and wife by a silent nod. Don't offer to shake hands with a woman. Of course, if the woman takes the initiative, then promptly and lightly shake her hand (no crushing or pumping, please).

12. You may notice an ancestral shrine. It is perfectly all right to look at it and even to get close to it, but under no circumstances touch any part of the shrine. One further comment — if you sit down and cross your legs, be sure neither foot is pointed towards the shrine. Similarly, a foot pointed at an individual may be offensive.

13. If you are invited to eat at a friend's home, let the older people start to eat before you commence. Locally, this honor is given to the seniors rather than the guests. The common plate from which you take food to your personal plate should always have one or two things left and under no circumstances should you take the last bit of food from it. If you clean the common plate the hostess might feel embarrassed because she had not prepared enough food for her guest. However, once you take the food to your personal plate, it is expected that you clear your plate to show that you appreciate the hostess' good cooking and that you know what you want when you take the food.

15. It is bad taste to inquire about the cost or the purchase place of household articles. It is also considered bad taste in Vietnam to put one's feet on a desk, chair or table. This is considered haughty behavior.

16. If you want to return a friend's courtesy by inviting him out to a restaurant, be careful to select a fairly expensive restaurant even though the food may not be as good as at a cheaper restaurant. If you take him to a cheap restaurant, even to one serving good food, he may feel slighted.

On a chance meeting, if you are the senior, you

are expected to pick up the tab. The practice of «Dutch treat» in which each one pays for himself is not in vogue in Vietnam.

17. If you feel like sending a gift to a household, it is better to send something for the children rather than to the wife. An odd number of gifts is not well received. It is better to send two presents to a child even though the combined cost of the two presents is less than one. This aversion to odd numbers is particularly true for wedding gifts. If you send one present to a wedding couple, it might be interpreted as a prognostication that this marriage will not last.

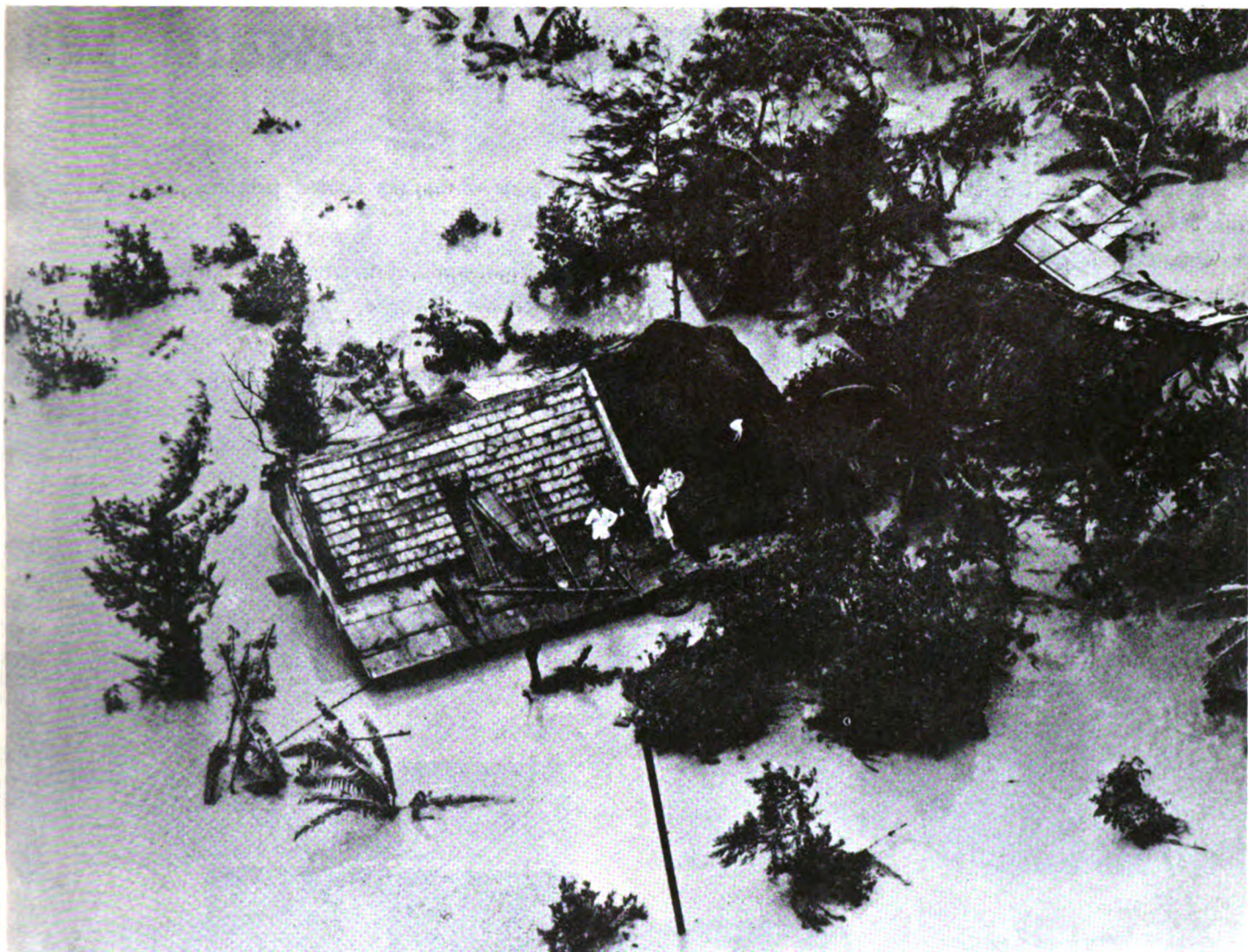
18. With Vietnamese, there is still a sharp distinction between manual labor and intellectual work. A man who styles himself an intellectual would rather do some clerical work at lower pay than work with his hands. So cafeterias and other notions of self-service and do-it-yourself are still very foreign to Vietnamese life. A Vietnamese of means and dignity pays servants to work for him. He does not move a heavy object and does not help his wife with the cooking. If you like to wash your car yourself, or to help around the house, it would be prudent to let your servants know that you do not mean to be a miser or to take work away from a laborer, but that you enjoy doing those things for physical exercise.

19. If you have picked up Vietnamese phrases from servants, it is wise to check them with a close friend before using them indiscriminately. In this connection, it would be very profitable to learn at least the rudiments of the Vietnamese language and a few common expressions. Vietnamese is admittedly a difficult language. However, you will receive considerable esteem and satisfaction from knowing and using the basic expressions of Vietnamese.

To Enjoy Your Stay

These are a few suggestions from your friends, the Vietnamese, to help you enjoy your stay with us and to permit you to be more effective in your social and business relationships.

It hope I haven't alarmed you. I believe you will find, if you haven't done so already, that Vietnamese are less sensitive than many people and that they are fairly tolerant. In your dealings with them, sincerity counts a great deal. However, we are only human and consequently it is best for you to know what customs and practices might cause offense. Through a frank and friendly sharing of knowledge, such as this, the peoples of the East and West will get to know each other, to respect each other and to live in peace and harmony together.



This aerial view shows stranded victims on rooftops awaiting a helicopter to carry them to safety.

FLOOD FURY

Inundations kill 159

In 5 RVN provinces

A combination of exceptionally heavy monsoon rains and the after-effects of Typhoon Kate which slammed ashore October 25 caused the worst flooding in six years in South Vietnam's five northernmost provinces.

The rains combined with already overflowing rivers and streams to inundate approximately 235 square kilometers (144 square miles) of countryside. An estimated 55 per cent of the region's crops were damaged.

One hundred fifty nine persons were killed and 204,996 victims were evacuated to the safety of higher ground. One thousand six hundred and sixty homes were completely destroyed.

Houses floated past city toward sea

More than 100 U.S. and Vietnamese helicopters plus 30 boats were used to evacuate 50,000 people. In Quang Nam province where flood waters were highest and 97 persons died, rescue helicopters landed and took off every 13 seconds for a period of six hours on October 31 at the village of Hoi An. Helicopters plucked victims off rooftops and directly out of the water in some instances.

In Da Nang, Vietnam's second-largest city, water overflowed the banks of the Da Nang River and spread water for a depth of five feet or more throughout the city. The swollen river was clogged with bodies of water buffalo, snakes and rats. The

remains of houses floated past the city and headed out to sea.

Thousands of the homeless victims were housed in schools, churches and pagodas. Vietnamese and American medical teams provided medical aid. Volunteer workers included Vietnamese boy scouts, allied soldiers and Hoi Chanh — former Communists who defected to the government's side. They helped unload emergency rations of dehydrated rice, canned meat, C-rations, and medical supplies. The National Government of Vietnam allocated 25 million piasters (about 211,000 \$ US) and 27,500 tons of food-stuffs to aid in relief operations.



A lone villager watches a rescue helicopter scanning flood waters of the Da Nang River. It was the worst flood since 1964. Rice is distributed to flood victims (right) at provisional relief center in Hoi An, Quang Nam, one of 5 provinces hit.





Homeless flood victims crowd a flooded street. Boy Scouts (left) distribute tea to youngsters. Vietnamese youths help unload supplies from a U.S. helicopter.



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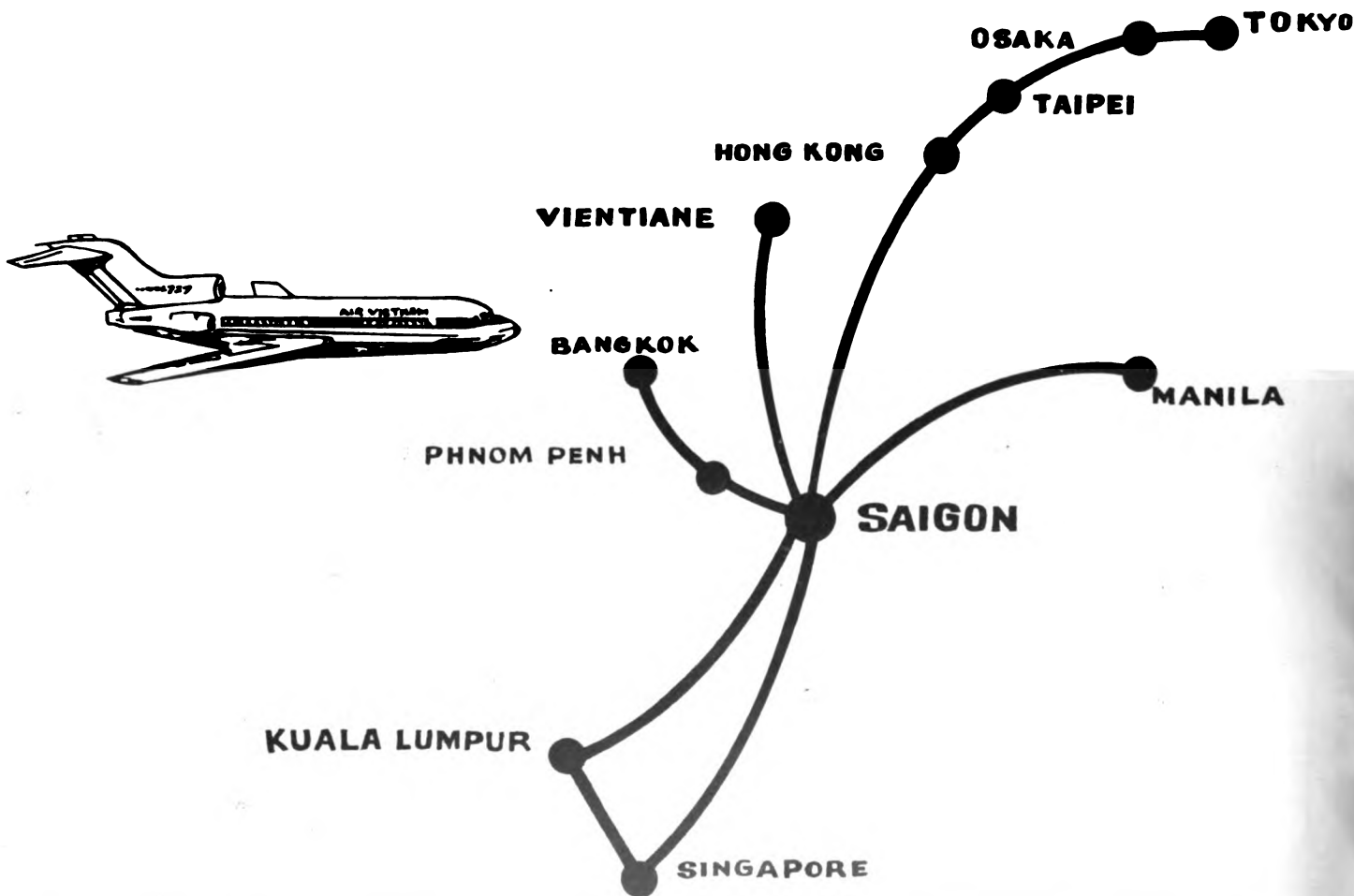
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