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FROM OUR READERS

Appeals to President Ford

As a missionary of the Church of Christ who has been closely associated with the people of Vietnam since 1966, I feel that I must write you concerning the present situation here in regard to the commitments of the United States, my home.

The present attacks in Phuoc Long Province are clearly indicative that the Paris Cease-fire Agreement is not being kept by North Vietnam nor do they have any intentions of keeping this agreement. It has been said before that the agreement should be called rather the "cease what" agreement as there has been continual fighting here since its beginning.

If the United States of America is to keep her head high and communicate to the entire world that we intend to keep out agreements with other nations, we need to supply the badly needed equipment and ammunition for the South Vietnamese people to be able to defend themselves. The cease-fire agreement is of no value, as is presently shown, and we need to revert to our agreements with Vietnam to assist her in defending herself.

America became great because Americans cared for more than just themselves. Americans made America great because they cared for what was right and just. America will cease to be great when we stop—only once—to do that which is good. I hope and pray that you will not let the free nations of this world down by letting Vietnam lose her freedom, even a little portion at a time.

JAMES I. RIDGEWAY
Missionary to Vietnam
Church of Christ
Box 1.119, Saigon

As an American businessman having long association with Vietnam and its people I believe I am qualified to state that the majority of Americans knowing Vietnam and its people feel more than ever the United States Government and fellow Americans must support Vietnam and its people.

The senseless enemy attacks on Phuoc Binh City and other populated areas reflect their utter disregard for human life, and in addition to countless military casualties there are thousands of civilian victims including many women and children who were either killed or badly wounded.

The enemy has no intention of abiding by the existing peace accord.

I urgently request you make maximum effort for U.S. Government aid to Vietnam which at this critical time is urgently needed.

Vietnamese soldiers are brave fighters but they are in dire need of the necessary equipment and ammunition. Support of Vietnam, its leaders and its people is justifiable no matter the considerations.

CLYDE W. BAUER
Saigon, Vietnam

VIETNAM *Magazine*

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Cover: *The Three Abundances — Happiness, Wealth, and Long Life — as depicted in a Vietnamese folk painting.*

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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

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President

TRAN VAN LAM



A TIME FOR JOY

HOW VIETNAM CELEBRATES 'TET' TIME

By NGHIEM XUAN THIEN

During the first three months of the Lunar New Year the Vietnamese enjoy themselves. They gradually resume their work in the fourth month. This is reflected in a popular Vietnamese song which begins:

The first month is for eating and rejoicing,

The second month is for gambling,

The third month is for drinking,

The fourth month is for buying peas and making compote...

In the lunar calendar, the first three months are springtime. They are not for work, but for rest and pleasure. And the commonest pleasures within the reach of the Vietnamese are eating, drinking, gambling (and, of course, love, but for reasons of decency, they do not mention this in their songs).

Three-Day Celebration

Their love of pleasure explains why the big festival of *Tet* is officially celebrated three days, without counting the last day of the preceding year that actually opens the *Tet* celebration.

One week before the end of the year, they celebrate the festival of the kitchen gods (an article on whom appears in this issue).

Preparations for the *Tet* begin by cleaning the house, repainting doors and windows, even the altar if necessary. Debts and payments must be paid before the year comes to an end, so that people can start the new year with a clean slate. New clothes are bought. Men and women have their hair cut: everything must be new when the new year comes.



A dragon or unicorn dance is a treat for the kids during *Tet*.

On the last day of the year everyone must take a bath to remove "the bad luck" of the past year.

The most important moment of the *Tet* is the hour of transition from the old to the new year, i.e. midnight of the last day of the old year and the beginning of the new one. Candles and joss-sticks are burned on the ancestral altar of the family, in the midst of joss-paper, flowers, fruit, and victuals consisting mostly of a whole stewed chicken, a few rice cakes (**Banh Chung**), and steam-cooked glutinous rice.

A temporary altar is set up in the yard or in the verandah in the honor of the God of the Heavens and the Genie of the Earth. Offerings similar to that on the ancestral altar are placed on this second altar.

In time of peace when there was no curfew, firecrackers were exploded after the midnight prayers were said before the two altars, producing an infernal din lasting for many hours. With the war, firecrackers have been banned and the first hours of the lunar year are celebrated in silence.

When the curfew is removed, many people will leave their houses after midnight of the last day of

First guest of year 'influences' family

the year to visit temples or pagodas, and return very early in the morning to be the first guests in their own houses. For many Vietnamese, the first guest to come to their houses on the first day of the new year is believed to have an influence on the their family for the whole year. If the first guest is a man of good moral qualities, the family will prosper in the new year. If he is a beggar or a man of doubtful morality, the family may suffer.

This belief often induces many Vietnamese to invite friends or mere acquaintances of good moral standing to be their first guests in the earliest hours of the first day of the lunar year.

During the three days of the Tet, everybody must avoid losing his temper and uttering unkind or rude words: life must be made pleasant to fellow men during Tet. It is believed that the year will pass and end well if it begins well.

New clothes are worn to begin the year, and children are given money, as well as grown-ups in certain cases. This is meant to bring them good luck for the year.

Then breakfast is taken during which rice-cakes or **banh chung**, chicken and many delicious dishes are eaten. After breakfast the whole family, except the mother, visit relatives and friends or pay homage to Buddha in a pagoda. The mother stays home to receive friends who call to express their good wishes for the new year.

Visits to close relatives and good friends are made during the two first days of Tet. The third day is for visits to mere acquaintances. Visits generally end at twilight of the third day.

People are allowed to play cards for the whole week during Tet. In the olden times, they played cards and dice actually for quite a long time.

In the countryside, Tet being the time when work in the fields comes to a standstill, people rejoice for months, eating, drinking, and gambling.

On the seventh day of the lunar year, there is a festival to "bring down the **Cay Neu**, or the **Neu Tree**."

As the festival of Tet dates back thousands of years ago, there are many legends about the practices in honor among the Vietnamese people.

Banh Chung Legend

In the time of the Hung Vuong kings (2879-258 B.C.), Hong Bang dynasty, the sixth king, after having driven out the Chinese, wanted to choose a successor among his 22 sons. He summoned them and said: "I shall give the crown to him among you who can offer me food that is not only good but with some significance."

The sons went to the forests or to the sea in the search for rare game or fish. Only the 18th,



Shopping for clothes for the New Year at Saigon open market

Lang Lèo, did not know what to do. His mother died when he was a baby, and he could turn to no one for advice. But he was a virtuous man, and was liked by men and genies. One of the latter appeared to him in a dream and said: "Nothing is more precious than rice, because nobody can do without it. So make rice cakes, one kind must be round to represent the Heavens, the second, square to represent the Earth. (The common belief in ancient China was that the Heavens were round, and the Earth square). In the square one, put meat and peas to represent the beneficent gifts from parents."

Lang Lèo did as told, and made round rice cakes or **Banh Day** and square rice cakes or **Banh Chung**. When he offered them to the King-Father and explained what they represented, the King was very pleased especially after tasting them. He gave the crown to Lang Lèo. Since then the Vietnamese make **Banh Chung** for Tet to offer them to their ancestors. The **Banh Day** are made for marriages and for celebrating parents' old age.

Cay Neu Legend

Buddha noted one day that the Vietnamese were very unhappy because they were harassed by devils. He came down to Earth, went to Vietnam, and summoned the devils. He told them all: "I like this country and want a piece of its land." Suspecting something unusual, the devils refused. Buddha opened then an outstretched hand and precious stones fell to the ground in one big shining heap. And he said: "All these gems are yours, if you grant my request."

Dazzled by the sparkling gems of superior quality, the devils expressed admiration and acceptance. They asked Buddha how big the piece of land he needed.

Buddha smiled and said: "Just wide enough to allow me to spread my robe on and dry it."

The devils smiled, thinking that Buddha had paid them too much for so small a piece of land. They agreed. Then the Buddha took off his yellow robe, spread it before the devils. The robe kept enlarging and spreading beyond the horizon, driving away the devils in its path, till it covered the whole of Vietnam.

Then Buddha sent for the terrified Vietnamese who were hiding in caves and crevices. He said to them: "I bless your land, and will protect it against any intruder who wants to harm you. At the end of every year, as you invite your ancestors to come and enjoy your offerings, the devils will take advantage of the opportunity to mix with them, go to your houses and do mischiefs. But if you take a live bamboo, put on its top a small bell either of stone or clay, bearing my mark, and plant it in the corner of your house yard, it will drive the devils away."

Down On The Seventh Day

Since then, a few days before Tet, the Vietnamese, particularly in the countryside, set up a tall bamboo in their yard. On top they tie up a few clay bells with the emblem of Buddha, a few pieces of joss-paper, and often Buddha's banner. The whole thing is called *Cây Nêu* or *Nêu Tree*. When the wind blows, the bells tinkle merrily, and Buddha's banner flutters in the breeze.

And on the 7th day of the new year, after a small ceremony offering incense, light, and food to ancestors and all the Genies of the Earth, the Vietnamese chop down the *Cây Nêu*, throw the bells into a nearby pond, burn the joss-paper, and Tet spiritually comes to an end (materially Tet ends after the third day). Normal life resumes and people may again swear or lose their temper.



Watermelons abound during Tet and is the must fruit of Tet.

Firecrackers

In ancient times, among the evil genies who used to harass the Vietnamese, was a married couple called Na-A. They liked to live in darkness and play mischievous tricks on the Vietnamese. But they were afraid of great noise and of brilliant light.

At the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one, as the good genies were busy going to the King of the Heavens' Court to pay homage, the evil genies took advantage of their absence to bully the Vietnamese. The latter finally were taught to burn candles, oil lamps on their ancestral altars and to explode firecrackers to drive the evil genies away.

In the long run, this became a widespread custom, and rich people use firecrackers not only at midnight of the last day of the year, but while offering meals to ancestors during three days of the Tet and upon welcoming highly regarded visitors.

Bows and Arrows

In the countryside, there is another custom which consists of drawing with lime powder bows and arrows on the yard leading from the house gate to the platform on which the house is built. This is designed to drive away devils. Such a custom seems to date back to the time of the Vietnamese hero,



Masks and paraphernalia for festival are sold on streets.



On Tet flowers and fortune tellers (at right) are in demand.

Dinh Bo Linh, who after putting an end to a civil war, ascended the throne under the title Dinh Tien Hoang (968-979).

The legend says that shortly after his victory, an epidemic spread all over the country, killing many people. Nothing could stop it. The new emperor then held a ceremony in honor of the King of the Heavens, asking for help. One night a messenger of the latter appeared in a dream, telling the emperor to order all his subjects to spread lime powder around their houses. The King did as told and the epidemic ended. Since then, every year, at Tet time, the Vietnamese spread lime powder around their houses, and sketch bows and arrows with the same powder on their yards to drive away evil spirits, especially those who cause epidemics such as cholera and plague.

Peach Tree Branches

In ancient times, on a mountain in North Vietnam, there was an enormous centenarian peach tree whose branches were so dense that they spread over a wide area. Two beneficent gods lived among those branches. They protected the people in the neighborhood from evil spirits.

But when the year came to an end, those two genies had to go to the King of the Heaven's Court as all others did, leaving their protegés at the mercy of the evil spirits. For protection, the Vietnamese put peach tree branches in their houses. At the sight of these branches, the devils fled, so great was their fear of the genies.

Since then, when Tet comes, the Vietnamese have peach tree branches in their living rooms. In South Vietnam, peach trees are substituted by a variety of plum trees whose flowers are yellow instead of dark pink or rosy as are peach flowers. In the Saigon market, one week or ten days before Tet, there may be some peach tree branches

from Dalat. But they are not much appreciated because their flowers are of a light pink color. In order to last long, they must have buds, and the denser these are, the higher value the branch has.

White Narcissus

Beautiful white narcissus flowers are grown during Tet in porcelain or glass bowls, full of pure water, and renewed every day. Generally, the bulbs are imported from China via Hong Kong. It seems that they grow easily in Yunnan, though there is a legend of Vietnam that says they were grown in Vietnam for quite a long time.

Once upon a time, there was a rich man who had four boys. One day, feeling that he was soon to depart from this world, he called his sons and said: "I love you all with the same and equal love. So when I die, divide my estates into four equal parts among yourselves. I want the youngest to have the same share as the eldest and the others."

When the old man died, the three elder boys, now young men, took the largest share. The youngest, still an adolescent, got a small piece of uncultivated land. Realizing his hopeless situation, he spent his days crying. One day, a lady Immortal (a fairy) emerged from a nearby pond and said to him: "Don't cry any more. I know that you are a victim of the injustice of your brothers. But the small piece of land they gave you will bring you a large income. I shall make narcissus grow on it. They will be of a special kind. They will grow only in winter, and produce beautiful white flowers during Tet. The flowers will exhale a suave perfume that no other flowers have. Thousands of people will come to you and buy them at any price. This will make you at least as rich as your greedy brothers."

Then the Immortal vanished.

All came true as she predicted. As the Immortal who gave the young man the marvelous flowers

came from the water, the flowers were called **Thuy Tien**, meaning "the Immortal from the Water" (Thuy means water, and Tien, Immortal).

Before the war, most of the rich families from Hanoi generally had half a dozen or even more bowls of Thuy Tien in their homes during Tet. Thuy Tien experts who know how to trim the bulbs keep the green leaves no taller than a few inches (without trimming the bulbs they may grow a few feet tall) and determine the time of their blooming, precisely on the last day of the old year or the first day of the new one. That is an art that requires much patience and money spent on Thuy Tien bulbs.

In Saigon, Thuy Tien is almost unknown. Only a few privileged people who have friends coming from Hong Kong during Tet can get Thuy Tien and peach tree branches through them. But the rich people of Saigon can have orchids instead, including many beautiful varieties.

Watermelon Legend

The Saigonese and generally people from the Mekong Delta have plenty of watermelons in the time of Tet. Watermelons are fruits of the hot season. In North Vietnam they are ripe on the 5th month of the lunar year, that is about the end of June. There Tet weather is cold, and it drizzles during winter and spring. So the people do not have watermelons for Tet.

In the South, Tet time is sunny and hot. Watermelons abound in the few months ending the lunar year and starting the new. The story of those watermelons goes back to the time of the last king of the Hong Bang dynasty (2879-258 B.C.), King Hung Vuong XVIII.

That king had adopted a son, a very brilliant young man. He gave him the name of An Tiem and had him married to a noble young lady. Both enjoyed great privileges at the Court. But the young man was overly proud of himself and boasted that his riches were won by his talents but not through the king's favors. On hearing that repeated many times, the king decided to teach him a lesson. He banished him and his wife to Nga Son, a deserted island off Thanh Hoa. He wanted to put An Tiem's talents to the test, and to find out how he would fare on his own. His wife, Ba, was terrified to see that the island to which they were exiled was uncultivated land thick with brushes. But An Tiem did not abandon his good humor and optimism. He comforted his wife by saying: "Don't be afraid. As long as there is a will there is a way. We want to live and shall live."

He set to cultivate the land that was in fact very fertile. The provisions given them were sufficient to keep them alive for six months. They had not exhausted them when harvest came. Fish and shells were abundant and easily caught. All this made life comfortable for An Tiem and his wife.

One summer day as they sat in front of their house, a small hut made of bamboo and coconut

leaves, they saw a bird, probably a crow, coming from the west drop some seeds on a nearby sandy hill. Soon they sprouted and then came flowers and finally fruits about the size of human heads. An Tiem told his wife: "It is the first time I have seen such fruits. I am sure that they are a gift from Heaven." He got one. Its skin was dark green and when he opened it, the inside was red and juicy. He ate a slice and found it delicious. He offered his wife slice after slice. They scattered the seeds around the island. One day, a Chinese merchant junk driven by a storm landed. The Chinese called on An Tiem and his wife and were offered watermelons which they found most delicious.

When they left, they bartered their goods, mostly food and cloth, for watermelons. That began An Tiem's wealth.

Since then, Chinese merchant junks often came to the island, each time bringing goods in exchange for An Tiem's watermelons. Sometimes they gave An Tiem gold and silver instead of goods.

At first An Tiem called the watermelons the **Tây Qua**, meaning a melon from the west, in memory of the bird that had come from the west and had dropped watermelon seeds. Then after the Chinese had exclaimed: "Hầu Hầu" (meaning very good), upon eating them, he called them **Dua Hầu** or good melons, and the name persists to this day.

After a few years of exile, An Tiem became very rich. King Hung Vuong sent a messenger to the island to know what had become of him. When the messenger prepared to leave, An Tiem gave him melons as a present to the king. The king listened with joy as the story of An Tiem's good fortune was related. He tasted the watermelons and praised them as the most delectable fruits he had ever eaten.

Then he ordered An Tiem recalled from exile and returned to the Court. The island on which An Tiem and his wife lived was converted into a district called An Tiem.

This story is mentioned in a famous Vietnamese novel by Nguyen Trong Thuat (1883-1940), under the title **Qua Dua Do** (The Red Melon) that has become a classic.

History In Legends

To sum up, Vietnamese Tet, or Lunar New Year, is not only a Festival, but has become, through many legends, a sort of brief history of Vietnamese civilization and culture.

Before closing, I have to mention that Tet for the Vietnamese is a brilliant historical period, in which the national hero, Emperor Quang Trung of the Tay Son dynasty (1788-1802) smashed the Chinese occupation army in Hanoi, and almost annihilated it. Every year, on the 5th of the first lunar month, that brilliant victory is celebrated in all the big towns of South Vietnam. This is a homage by the Vietnamese to their hero whose reign was not very long, but was nevertheless a very brilliant one. ●

TET IS NOT A LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

By NGO DINH BICH

Tết is commonly referred to as the "Lunar New Year Festival" not only by foreigners but by the Vietnamese as well. This is perhaps due to the fact that Tết celebrations usually take place every year by the end of January or the beginning of February, according to a kind of Chinese calendar we have followed for centuries.

As a matter of fact, this kind of calendar is not exclusively a lunar one, since it also refers to the solar calendar by adding seven leap months every 19 years to make it conform to the four seasons of the year.

Therefore, for the sake of accuracy, we should call Tết the **Lunar-Solar New Year Festival**.

Solar Year

According to the solar calendar, a year is reckoned by the movement of the earth around the sun, meaning that the time our globe completes a circle around the sun is exactly one year. This period counts 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. Therefore, when the sun comes back to its former position in the space, the days and months resume their course like in the past year.

Conversely, when the days and months restart their usual course, the sun must be at its former position in the space as one year before.

Another characteristic of the solar calendar is that the various positions of the sun decide the four seasons of the year which have their own particularities that everyone knows.

The first calendar based on the year was believed to be made by the Egyptians thousands of years ago. At that time, the Nile River overflowed the whole of Egyptian territory every year and left very fertile alluvions. When the flood

recessed, the Egyptians began crop cultivation.

After a long process passing through many phases—ploughing, sowing, harvesting—the cultivation was completed with the storage of dried grains at the very time the Nile River once again inundated the country. As the same course of events repeated itself every year, the Egyptians knew by experience that each year counted 365 days.

By the year 4236 B.C., Egyptian scholars invented a calendar with each year having 12 months, each month 30 days, plus five more days for national festivities. These five extra days did not belong to any month of the year.

Several centuries later, the Romans invented a similar calendar based on the movement of the earth around the sun, and progressively almost all countries in the world adopted this kind of calendar which proved to be very useful, thanks to its accurate indication of every season in a year.

However, as everyone knows, the solar calendar has an imperfection with an odd number that indicates the period in which the earth completes a tour around the sun. As a remedy, people usually count 365 days in a year and add another day to the year every four-year period. In these leap years, the month of February has 29 days, instead of the usual 28.

Lunar Calendar

Unlike the solar calendar, the lunar calendar is based on the age of the moon. At the middle of the month, the moon is round and there is no moon at the end of the month. Thus, a lunar month is the period the moon completes a tour around the earth.

According to the lunar calendar, a full month has 30 days, a short

month, 29 days, and a lunar year only counts 354 days.

As a result, at the end of the lunar year, the sun has not come back to its former position in the space as in the case of the solar calendar. Consequently, the lunar calendar cannot accurately indicate the four seasons of the year.

A lunar year usually ends about 11 days before the earth completes its tour around the sun. In two years, this period is 22 days, and in three years, it reaches a full month.

In order to remedy this deficiency, one must "retard" the lunar calendar to make it fit the characteristics of the four seasons of the year. To this end, a leap month must be added within a certain period to the lunar year which then counts 384 days, or 19 days longer than a solar year. An example of this appeared in 1974, when the **Giap Dan** lunar calendar counted two 4th months.

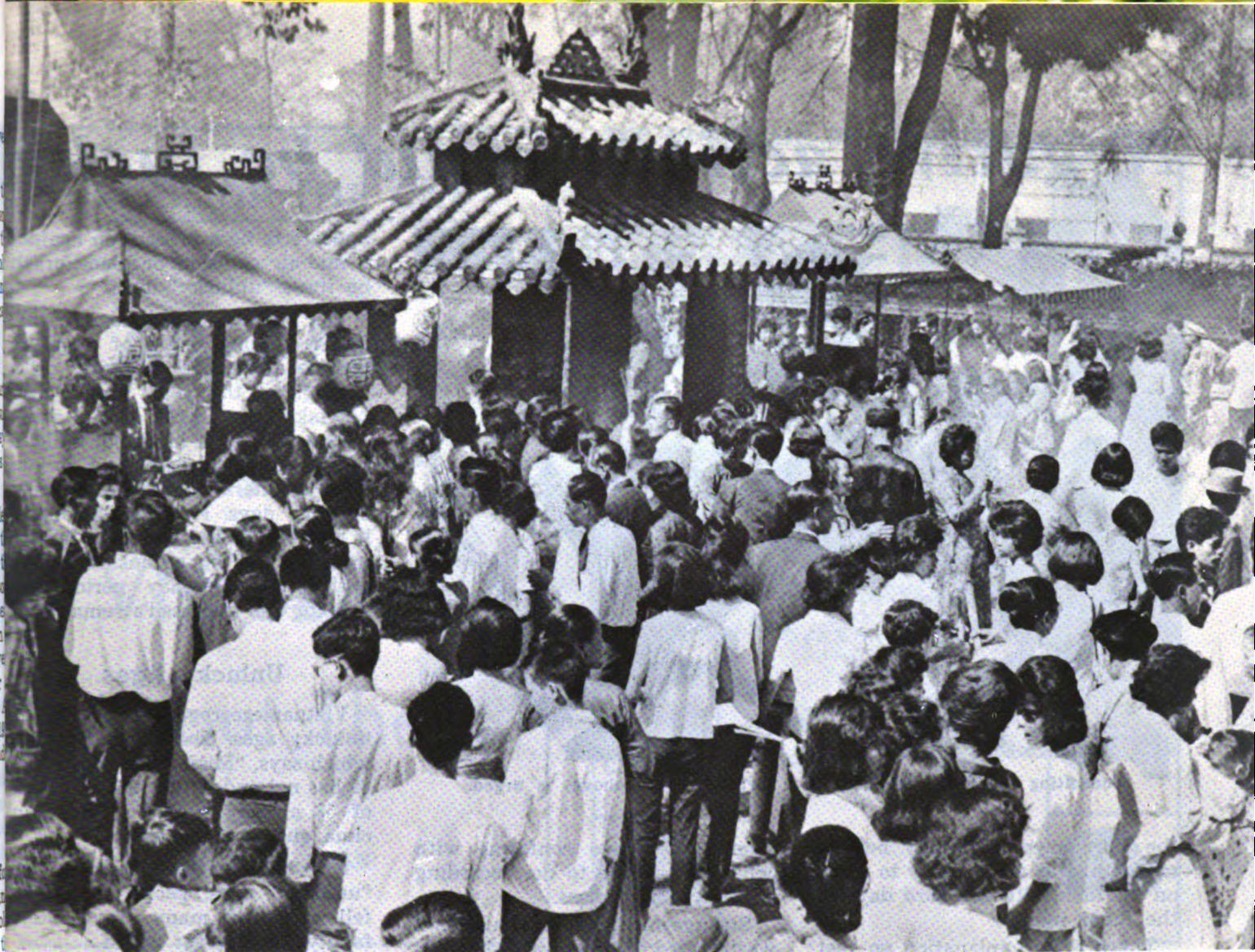
Movable Holiday

One may clearly see that before having a leap month, the lunar calendar runs faster than the solar one. With its 13th month, the lunar year progressively catches up with the solar year and returns to its former position after a certain period.

Calendar makers in the past had to add seven leap years to the lunar calendar to every 19-year period to make it fit the four seasons of the year. In order to do this, they had to calculate in such a way that the second month must be the center of spring, the fifth month the center of summer, the eighth month the center of autumn, and the 11th month the center of winter.

This explained why the first day of **Giap Dan Year** occurred on Feb. 22, 1974 and the first day of **At Mao Year** falls on Feb. 11, 1975.

In brief, the first day of our traditional year, or **Tet** does not coincide with any fixed position of the sun as in the case of the solar calendar. Moreover, there is a large interval between the two, and this period may reach one full month, since **Tet** may occur on any day from Jan. 21 to Feb. 20.



On the first day of the Lunar New Year, Vietnamese flock to pagodas to pay homage and pray for luck.

FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR

DATES, DIRECTIONS COUNT

Dates and directions always have a great significance for the Vietnamese. Ordinarily, weddings, funerals and any other big events are generally decided after consulting the lunar calendar.

This practice becomes more imperative on the occasion of Tet, that special period of the year when dates and directions are believed to exert their influence upon the 12 months ahead.

Therefore, the first trip of the year (*Xuat Hanh*) is regarded as one of the most important acts for

By DOAN BICH

everyone, especially for those who rely on public relations to make their living. It should be in the right direction where one may be greeted by good but not evil spirits.

During other times, the Vietnamese also believe in some superstitions about directions. It is unlucky to build the entrance to a home that faces the end of a road, since the latter may be considered a lance that could pene-

trate one's house. The result could be disastrous for the house owner: poor health, failure in business, and myriad of misfortunes.

Timing one's first trip of the year is deemed very important.

It is common belief that the first visitor of the year either brings good or bad luck to a family. If he is kind and honest, the family is believed destined for happiness and prosperity; if nasty or crooked, the year off to a bad start.

While Westerners consider Friday the 13th as an unlucky day,

Negative actions could be lucky



Consulting the lunar calendar or a fortune teller (above) is urged.

the Vietnamese generally believe misfortune as more likely to come on the fifth, 14th and 23rd days of the lunar month.

There is no explanation on just why and how these dates bring misfortune, but the one who is curious enough to check the registers of the City Hall's Civil Status Bureau will see that no weddings are held during these "unlucky" days.

An old Vietnamese saying goes: on the fifth, 14th and 23rd, one meets with misfortune even in the field of entertainment, let alone in business (*Mong nam, muoi bon, ham ba, Di choi cung thiet nua la di buon*).

Aside from the above dates, generally speaking, all uneven days are more or less unlucky while even days are "lucky" ones. In addition, people always avoid doing important things on the last day of the lunar month (the 29th or 30th) for the simple reason that it is the end of the month (*Nguyet tan*). The word "*Tan*" also means death in Vietnamese.

Anyhow, in order to be on the safe side, one should consult, with or without the help of a fortune teller, the lunar calendar to see

whether his age conforms with what he intends to do, according to the circumstances.

Strange enough, intellectuals and westernized Vietnamese believe in these superstitions as do the people from rural areas.

When the Paris peace talks on Vietnam appeared to drag on indefinitely in 1971, a Saigonese businessman noted that the very reason for the unsuccessful negotiations was that almost all the meetings were held on the fifth, 14th or 23rd day of the lunar month. Whether the current no-war, no-peace situation in Vietnam also stems from the bad influence of these unlucky dates, the businessman refused to comment.

Meanwhile, a journalist notes that no government decree or order has been signed on the "unlucky" days. Nobody can tell for sure, however, whether it is simply a coincidence or a matter of careful planning.

One stewardess of Air Vietnam says that most Vietnamese passengers going abroad usually insist on changing the date of their departure if given a reservation on a flight that falls on the fifth, 14th or 23rd of the month. This

appears to be a precaution against a mid-air collision or plane crash on these "unlucky" days.

The Vietnamese calendar recommends a long series of negative commandments on "unlucky" days throughout the year: one should not take over a post, open a shop, take a wife or a husband, build a house, till a ricefield, and so on. Even a funeral should not be held on such days. For the Saigonese, it means that the bereaved family must ask for an extension of the authorized three-day period for keeping the deceased's remains at home.

Unlucky Ages

Vietnamese regard 49 and 53 as unlucky ages. There is a proverb which says, "Misfortune of the age 49 has not ended that the bad luck of 53 already comes" (*Bon chin chua qua, nam ba da toi*).

It is believed that during these "unlucky" ages, people generally fell sick and many leave their family for a better world.

Others point to the age of 37 when people generally see many misfortunes as likely to befall on them: bankruptcy, law suits, serious illness, divorce, etc.

Some people blame their failure on their age and, in an effort to "neutralize" somewhat the misfortune, resort to such unusual decisions as changing their abodes or taking a concubine, and the like.

Whether one believes it or not, the fact remains that few Vietnamese dare undertake important businesses either on the so-called "unlucky days" or during their "unlucky ages." As for directions, people never fail to consult the calendar or fortune tellers before building their own homes or even tombs for their dependents.

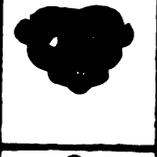
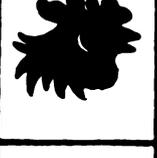
All these observances assume deeper significance on the occasion of Tet—an auspicious time when everyone hopes for the three traditional abundances in this world: happiness, wealth and long life (*Phuoc, Loc, Tho*).

YEAR OF THE CAT

All About Cats And VN Beliefs About Them

By MINH TOAN

THE 12 ANIMALS OF THE ORIENTAL ZODIAC

	TÌ' Rat	NGO Horse	
	SŪU Ox	MŪI Goat	
	DÂN Tiger	THÂN Monkey	
	MAO Cat	ĐAU Rooster	
	THÌN Dragon	TUẤT Dog	
	TỶ Snake	HỢI Pig	

Among the animals of the twelve-year zodiac, the cat is rarely mentioned in legends of Vietnam. Our literature has few stories on this animal, perhaps because the cat is gentle, peaceful and quite willing to accept a destiny largely shaped by his human protectors. But that does not mean that the cat is a vulgar animal. Although tracing its origin millions of years ago, it began to attract human attention only in the last 4,000 years since the dynasty of Ngu De in China.

The cat was included in the twelve-year animal cycle, behind the tiger but ahead of the dragon. Before that time, it is not known how many years of the cat passed on this earth before the Christian era.

There are many kinds of cat. Westerners list 50 different species of cat based on the color of their hair, their size and their domesticated or wild life. The most common types of cat are the Siamese

cat (chat Angora), stray cat (chat de gouttière), savage cat, Abyssin cat, Persan chinchilla cat, Persan cat, and blue Persan cat.

In Vietnam, people usually note only six simple kinds of cat based on the color of their hair: white, black, yellow, spotted, slight gray and "tricolored." The spotted cat has black and white hair; the black cat, entirely black hair; the gray cat, a light gray coat except for the belly and the flanks which have white hair. The yellow and the gray cat often have round stripes, and are usually called "striped cat."

All cats like to catch mice, birds or small reptiles. Cats also venture to catch fish in lakes or ponds. Cats eat whatever food given them by men. They serve as a kind of living decoration in the houses of rich people, who give flowery names, mostly those of flowers or fruits, to their pets. Cats who live with peasants become dedicated servants who stand a

24-hour vigil to guard rice, other grains and foodstuffs against such predators as rats and birds.

When the cat, who by nature is an independent animal, feels tired of living with human beings, he liberates himself and becomes wild. He then roams and plunders, eats stealthily, jumps from one wall to the other, runs or walks on roofs, penetrates at will all houses. Such cat is nicknamed "tile cat" by Westerners to show their worry over such a plundering animal who seems to take devilish pleasure in defecating anywhere, anytime.

The cat walks stealthily, jumps high, has keen hearing, shuns water and cold and likes above all to lie down on the roofs of houses, or in high, airy, clean places where he may stay hours on end, eyes half closed, like a meditating poet or a priest in contemplation.

Although the cat shuns water, it likes to keep tidy. Those who

want to keep their pets free of louses usually wash and clean them up with alkaline soap to give them a glossy coat. Cats become sick from time to time. One can either administer some medicine or see a veterinarian, but the troublesome problem for many people is how to give medicine to a cat. Knowledgeable persons resort to the following: wrap the animal in a piece of cloth or put it into a cloth bag, leaving its head protruding with its neck held by one hand. Then press a finger on one corner of the cat's mouth, forcing it to open wide its mouth, and one can then use a spoon to administer the prescribed medicine.

"Stubborn" Animal

Scientists consider the cat a "strongheaded" or "stubborn" animal. While dogs and other animals, even the ferocious tiger or lion, can be tamed and trained by resourceful animal tamers, no one has yet succeeded in taming the cat and training it for circus performances.

Popular prejudice considers the cat selfish, hypocritical, tricky, wicked, lacking in love and devotion. The cat actually is prudent, serious and well-behaved. The cat is very sensitive to praise or the caress of its master, but it keeps distance from humans. When aware that it is the object of praise, it slowly walks towards the person with praise for it and does not bother about any person or other member of the family.

The cat is an animal capable of great love and devotion. It can sacrifice for the persons it is fond of. A long separation from the person it loves makes it worried, anxious, lose appetite and refuse to eat. There is the story of a woman living at Aix La Chapelle, France, who went to Flensburg, Germany, for a vacation and who brought along her favorite cat. One day, urgent business compelled her to suddenly leave at night. In the flurry of emotion and events which ensued, she forgot about her pet. The next day, the cat felt so lonely that it decided to make the 700-kilometer long trek to find its beloved mistress.

In Vietnam, we used to blindfold the cat given by a friend or relative in the belief that the animal could not remember its way back to its original master. In reality, the cat can adjust very easily to the new house, and there is no need to blindfold it when taking it from his master's house. For if the cat finds a new patron who loves it, staying with him is assured.

The cat's faculty of going back to the place of departure can be attributed to its keen sense of direction and good memory. The labia's hair and the eyebrows of the cat are believed to be helpful to the animal as some sort of sophisticated radar. Thus, the cat's eyebrow and hair should be kept intact since trimming affects the health of the animal and reduces its natural vitality.

Like human beings, cats have such faults as jealousy, curiosity. But they also have many qualities, notably love of kind. There is the story of a blind cat who was abandoned in a forest near the resort Côte d'Azur of Southern France. The poor animal survived thanks to food stolen from their masters by dozens of domestic cats living nearby.

There is also another moving story about a pigeon and a cat. One pigeon was feeding a brood of young pigeons. A young stray cat watched with covetous eyes the mother pigeon and the young ones. The mother pigeon probably felt sorry for the hungry young cat and gave it some food. From that day on, the cat came to look for food whenever hungry and was always given a share of the meal normally reserved for the young pigeons. When the cat grew up, it felt so grateful to the pigeon that it stayed around the pigeon house to guard its benefactor's family against predators.

Popular Superstition

The following saying reflects popular superstition on the cat in Vietnam:

"When the cat comes to your house you shall become poor;

"When the dog comes to your home, you shall become rich."

Many Vietnamese believe in this popular saying. When a "strange" dog comes and lives in your home, this is an omen that you will become extremely prosperous whereas a stray cat's coming to one's house is misfortune, especially when it gives birth to half a dozen kittens. The cat, as popular belief goes, usually eats its placenta after giving birth. If it does not eat the placenta, this is a good omen and the house owner is believed headed for riches.

When a "strange" cat comes to your house and starts howling, this is considered a very bad sign and people usually chase the intruder by shouting and wielding a broom against it. A black cat could cast a spell on ghosts. A black cat with a white spot on its coat is anathema to the mice, one meow is sufficient to make a mouse scamper to its hole. One should not watch a cat giving birth nor touch the kittens lest the cat take them away or devour them. The most popular yet inconceivable belief is that a cat which is "covered" or has intercourse with a snake will produce very pretty kittens.

Westerners also have many sayings on cat such as: A Roland for an Oliver (*A bon chat bon rat*). When the cat's away the mice will play (*Quand le chat est parti les souris dansent*), Let sleeping dogs lie (*Ne réveillez pas le chat qui dort*), His writing is a regular scrawl (*Il écrit comme un chat*). To have a grog in the throat (*Avoir un chat dans la gorge*).

Cats are a favorite subject for legends and tales in Vietnam since time immemorial. Although there is nothing profound or significant about these folk tales, they have contributed to the national cultural heritage of Vietnam and delighted rural folks to these days.

During the reign of an unknown king of Vietnam, a serious and prolonged drought sowed misery, death and desolation in the forests and countryside. Wild beasts became so hungry and so emaciated that they emigrated North or South to look for food in order to survive. Thus, the leader of the tigers came out from its forest hideout and descended into a lowland village. As it was

prowling and looking for a dog who would be a good meal, it came across and bagged a cat. When it looked over the small victim, it realized that it was a cat and not a dog. In any case, the animal was killed by the tiger's rash action. The tiger felt so sorry for having killed one of its kind that it ran away hungry, rather than touch its prey. The next day, the tiger went into mourning, so popular belief goes.

Since that time, the people called the cat the "tiger's aunt."

Country folks believed firmly that totally black cats are "sacred" since they are believed endowed with the magical power to resurrect the dead, especially bodies still lying in coffins. There is a popular saying to this effect: When the cat jumps over, the ghost will rise. This makes Vietnamese families stand a 24-hour watch, especially during night time, near the coffin of the dead, for fear that the body may become a ghost and rise and cause more deaths particularly if the black cat leaps over the coffin.

Black Cats

Black cats play a major role in traditional Vietnamese pharmacology. It is believed by some that the powdered ashes from the head of a burned black cat have the power to heal lunatics.

In some parts of Vietnam, the placenta of black cats are used as a remedy against asthma. One is to take the placenta of a black cat who has just given birth, put it into an earthen cooking pot, seal it tightly with a lid covered with clay, then burn it until it becomes fine powder. It is believed that if one fourth of a coffee spoon of this powder is administered to the sick, this special medical formula will cure asthmatics after a relatively short treatment.

Some Vietnamese families persevere in breeding black cats with the old belief that these cats, when 30 years old and over, are endowed with gall as valuable as that of the bear. Both are considered as a cure-all in Oriental pharmacology.

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TAO QUAN OR THE KIT

Few Southerners have an idea of what a Northern peasant's kitchen looks like.

Well, it is a small hut with mud walls and a thatched roof, covering an area of generally about 8 yards long and 5 yards wide. Many apertures are made in the walls, from a height of 2 yards onwards till the level of the roof, to let out the smoke. In such a kitchen, there are generally 3 fire-places, each consisting of 3 fire-dogs made from clay, through which the cooking utensils are maintained about 10 inches above the level of the ground. The fuel used is paddy-straw.

Those fire-dogs, renewed every year exactly one week before the coming of the Têt or lunar New Year festivals. New clay fire-dogs are then taking the place of the old ones that are to be thrown into a nearby pond.

Those fire-dogs symbolize the Lares or Kitchen Gods, often called *Tao Quân* (pronunciation: *Tow-Ku-an*) or Kitchen Kings.

There is a story about them and here it is:

In a village, a very long time ago, lived a couple of young married people. They were so poor that it could be said of them as the French do: "They have not even radish" or "they are as poor as a church mouse."

Church mice still may have, at times, forgotten candles to eat, but these two poor people had nothing to appease their hunger.

The husband, a young man of 20, whose name was *Nhân*, made a living by catching frogs and selling them in the village market for a ridiculously low sum, not sufficient to buy their daily ration of rice. The wife was a girl of 18 called *Hông*. Her parents were so poor that they could not afford to make her learn a trade such as sewing or cooking. The only work she could do was to go to the field, and pick up some wild plants that could be eaten as vegetables.

A Decision To Part

One day, both were so desperate about their hopeless situation, that they decided to part and try their luck elsewhere. After a heart-rending farewell during which the girl wept so much that her eyes became red and swollen, they started in opposite directions. Repeatedly they looked back to catch a glimpse of each other, until they disappeared in the distance.

Years passed. The girl had met a charitable old woman on whom her beautiful face made a profound impression. The woman was a well-to-do widow and had no children. She adopted the girl to have company and someone who could take care of her in her old age and upon death worship her manes on the altar of her ancestors.

Once in the widow's home, the girl was given good clothes, and after a bath, she put them on, and lo! she appeared as a very beautiful young lady, though a little too slender through past privations and a miserable life.

The widow was happy and proud of her decision to adopt her and gave her the name of *Bich*, that means precious blue stone.

A few weeks later, *Bich* regained her normal shape, and looked more beautiful. She was introduced to members of the widow's family, brothers, sisters, cousins and relatives. She was welcomed by everybody who had great sympathy for her because of her charm. Nobody, even her adopted mother, asked about her past, and as she behaved well, she quickly integrated herself in the wide community not only of her adopted mother's family but also that of her village.

A happy life thus began for her. In her new favorable situation often she thought of her husband from whom she had no news.

Years passed. Still no word about her husband which finally induced her to believe that he might have died of cold and starvation.

A Second Marriage

In *Bich*'s new village, there was a rich childless widower. He was captivated by her beauty and good behaviour. After negotiations through professional go-betweens, he got the consent of her adopted mother to marry her on condition that he live in the adopted mother's house to take care of the old lady whom the girl had no heart to leave.

Bich's second marriage was a happy one, her second husband was a good man. Though rich, he liked to work, and was always busy with his rice-fields. He loved her and took good care of her adopted mother as though he were her own son, so that the family lived in harmony and felicity.

One day, *Bich*'s husband was away visiting his rice-fields where harvesting had begun. A beggar came to the house, asking for food and alms.

Bich let him enter the house yard, and offered him a meal. She had experienced starvation before and was always ready to help the poor with food and money. She often gave them jobs if such was their desire.

So was her wont, she talked to the beggar, trying to inquire into his intentions and needs. He told her his story: years ago, he lived with his wife in a village not very far from that place. But they were so poor that they parted, going in opposite directions, hoping for luck for a new and comfortable life. But luck never came to him, and now he was reduced to begging for survival.

Bich trembled and asked him his name.

TEN KINGS



Offerings to kitchen gods who report to King of Heavens.

"My name," the beggar said, "has been useless for years, nobody wants to know it. They call me beggar whenever they speak of me, either to drive me away or to give me something. But I have a name given me by my grand father, a respectable farmer and a literate man. I was called *Nhân*, meaning generosity. My wife's name was *Hong*."

Bich burst into tears. She caught the beggar's hand and cried: "It is you, my former husband. I am *Hong*, formerly your wife. Don't you recognize me? You have changed beyond recognition. Good Heavens! I have always thought of you and wondered what became of you. At times I told myself: Is he still alive or dead? It has been a long time since the day we separated. And I have had no news from you."

The beggar, or *Nhân* as he was called, said: "I am happy to see you again. It rejoices my heart to find you in a good situation. But you also have changed so much that I cannot say that you are the same woman whom I knew many years ago. Both of us have changed beyond recognition, you for the better and me for the worse."

He was interrupted by Bich's second husband's call: "Bich, open the gate. I bring you something that I have sought for many days in the markets. I want to surprise you. Guess what it is!"

Bich was frightened. She must give her second husband an explanation for which she was unprepared. She hesitated to introduce her former husband, having not made any mention of him to anyone.

The beggar was embarrassed by the unexpected return of Bich's husband. He did not want to jeo-

pardize his former wife's happiness through any misunderstanding over his presence. He looked round as though trying to find a way of escape. But the yard was surrounded by tall walls, and the gate now still closed was the only exit, and Bich's husband was in front of it, waiting her to open it to let him in.

In her distress, Bich could do nothing but ask the beggar to hide himself.

The beggar dove into a haystack in the middle of the yard. Quickly Bich covered him with straw. Then she opened the gate, saying she had been in the kitchen. Then she asked about the surprise her husband spoke about.

Her husband was in a very good humour. He suspected nothing, and told her about finding a gold necklace for her.

He handed her a beautiful wooden box covered with red silk. She uttered a cry of admiration and pleasure as she saw the necklace of small beads of pure gold. She tried it on, it was long enough to make three large turns around her neck.

She thanked him, then both crossed the wide, paved yard that served as a threshing floor in time of harvest and on which paddy was put to dry under the sun when the harvest was over. They ascended a flight of steps leading to a platform on which their house was built. Bich served tea to her husband and retired to her room to put the necklace in a trunk made of thick wood and closed by a strong iron lock.

A Fiery Death For Three

The husband went to the kitchen, where a fire was smouldering among embers. He took a wisp of straw, blew strongly at the embers and lighted the straw. He lit his pipe of strong tobacco, and threw the wisp of burning straw through one of those apertures in the mud walls of the kitchen. The wind blew the burning straw to the haystack that quickly caught fire. The beggar hidden in it was engulfed by flames. At his screams, Bich rushed to the blazing haystack and saw him squirming in his burning clothes and dying. She shrieked with horror and pain, and threw herself into the haystack. Her husband, affected by the strong tobacco, was dozing in the kitchen. He woke up at Bich's desperate screams and was terrified to see that the fire had spread to the kitchen. He rushed out and saw Bich's burning body. Crying, he ran to her side. His clothes caught fire and he perished beside Bich.

The deaths came to the attention of the King of the Heavens. Moved to pity by their tragic demise as well as their faithfulness to each other, he ordered their manes brought before him.

The trio humbly knelt before the nine golden steps leading to the platform on which the King sat on his throne, surrounded by his attendants and courtiers.

The King of the Heavens uttered words of comfort, saying that he was very sorry over what befell them. Then he congratulated them for being loyal and faithful one another as husbands and wife.

Finally he proclaimed that as a reward for their good behaviour in the earthly world, he was pleased to make them Genies of the Kitchen, or the household gods. Fire had united them in death, thus fire would unite them forever in the after-life. And to justify their presence in every human's abode, they were to keep a record of every family's acts, good or bad, and one week before the end of each year, they had to go to the King of the Heavens's Court and report on the behavior of human beings living on Earth. Then the King would decide whether a family was to be rewarded or punished. Consequently, in the ensuing year, happy or unhappy events would come to a family according to its merits.

Offerings To Kitchen Gods

Since then, the Vietnamese peasants have in their house a special altar set up in the honor of their kitchen gods, and on the 23rd day of the last month of the lunar year, they celebrate a festival during which the kitchen gods are offered hats, clothes, boots of paper to be burned later. Also offered are three live carps to be released later in a river or a pond. These carps are believed to be able to take the form of winged dragons on which three kitchen gods ride and fly to the King of the Heavens'

Court to make their report. The report done, they return to earth to enjoy the offerings of families during Tet or New Lunar Year.

Nowadays, in towns and in Southern villages, people do not cook their food with straw any more, hence the clay fire-dogs have disappeared from the kitchens. Nevertheless, Vietnamese generally celebrate the Festival of the Household Gods on the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month, by burning incense on the family altars and by offering to their Lares food, fruit and sometimes votive paper representing ingots of gold. They have also discontinued offering living carps to be released later in a river or a pond. But the latter practice still existed in North Vietnam and even in Hanoi some time before World War II. Now as food is expensive in the South and rare in the North, nobody wants to buy carps and release them later, except in the frying pans. The kitchen gods are supposed to have found other means to fly to the King of the Heavens' Court, up there in the sky, however, in the week preceding the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month.

Vietnamese writers and journalists usually write humorous poems or articles about the three kitchen gods going to the King of the Heavens' Court to render their report on humans.—N.X.T.

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PAST 'CAT' YEARS

As the Year of the Cat ushers in a new lunar year and incense curls ephemeral spirals before the altar, the Vietnamese remember after one year of hard work and tribulations past years of the cat.

The following are the most memorable years of the cat recorded in our annals:

— Tan Mao (1109 BC). King Hung Vuong sent emissaries to offer white pheasant to Emperor Thanh Vuong of the Chou dynasty. The Chinese Emperor had to use an interpreter to understand the message of King Hung Vuong. He also ordered Chau Cong Dam to construct a special vehicle to drive the emissaries back to Vietnam.

— Quy Mao (258 BC). The Hong Bang dynasty with its 18 kings had reigned until the Quy Mao year. It was overthrown by the Thuc who took over Vietnam.

— Quy Mao (43). Emperor Quang Vu of China assigned General Ma Vien, Luu Long and Doan Chi to command an expeditionary corps to conquer Viet Nam. The Trung Sisters could not fight off these strong invaders and jumped into the Hat Giang river to commit suicide rather than surrender to the enemy. This courageous act was performed on the 6th day, 2nd month of the Quy Mao year.

— Dinh Mao (187). China sent Governor Si Nhiep to rule in Vietnam.

— Dinh Mao (559). Facing the onslaught of the invading Chinese army under the command of Tran Ba Tien, Trieu Quang Phuc, a talented general of Vietnamese King Ly Nam De, withdrew to Da Trach swampy areas. The general used pirogues at night to launch lightning raids to harass enemy logistics service and to disrupt Chinese rear. Such a tactic earned him the nickname of "Da Trach King."

— Tan Mao (571). King Ly Phat Tu launched a sudden attack on Trieu Viet Vuong who fled to Dai Nha river (presently Dai An Dis-

trict, Nam Dinh Province, North Vietnam). The fugitive jumped into the Dai Nha river to commit suicide. Ly Phat Tu occupied Long Bien Citadel and became Emperor of Vietnam with the title of "Hau Ly Nam De."

— Ky Mao (679). Emperor Cao Tong of the Chinese Duong dynasty divided Giao Chau (old name of Vietnam) into 12 *chau* (regions), 59 districts and established the An Nam Do Ho Phu (Office of the Protectorate). Vietnam was called "An Nam" (Pacified South) since that period.

— Dinh Mao (909). Upon the death of Giao Chau Governor Khuc Thua Du, he was succeeded in the governorship of Giao Chau by his son Khuc Hao.

— Tan Mao (931). Duong Dien Nghe, former general of Khuc Hao, recruited troops to fight off Ly Khac Chinh and Ly Tien, then proclaimed himself governor of Giao Chau.

— At Mao (955). It was the most confused year in Vietnamese history because the country was torn up by 12 rival warlords.

— Dinh Mao (967). Dinh Bo Linh quelled the insurrection of the 12 warlords and pacified the nation.

— The Mao year of 979. King Dinh Tien Hoang and his eldest son, Nam Viet Vuong Dinh Lien, were assassinated by Do Thich. High mandarins of the Court condemned Do Thich and proclaimed Dinh Tue successor to Dinh Tien Hoang.

— Dinh Mao (1027). Buddhism became the prominent religion of Viet Nam. In this year King Ly Thai To compiled the Ngoc Diep Books.

— Ky Mao (1039). King Ly Thai Tong commanded an army to fight the Nung rebels and captured Nung Ton Phuc and his son Nung Tri Thong. A Nung and his son Nung Tri Cao escaped.

— At Mao (1075). King Ly Nhan Ton initiated the triennial examina-

tions to elect qualified men of letters and named them mandarins. The first examination was held on this year with Le Van Thinh, the well-known scholar, as the first laureate.

— At Mao year (1075), King Ly Nhan Ton sent General Ly Thuong Kiet and Ton Dan with 100,000 troops divided into one ground column and one naval column to march against troops of the Chinese emperor of Tong dynasty. Ly Thuong Kiet laid a prolonged siege against Kham Chau and Liem Chau, killed over 8,000 enemies, and beheaded Truong Thu Tiet, the commander of Quang Tay at Con Lon Quan. The army of Ton Dan surrounded Ung Chau Citadel for over 40 days. After the fall of the citadel, more than 58,000 persons were killed.

— Dinh Mao (1087). The Emperor of Tong dynasty from China bestowed the title of Nam Binh Vuong on King Ly Nhan Tong.

— Tan Mao (1171). King Ly Anh Tong ordered mandarins to compile a geographic book of Vietnam.

— At Mao (1195). King Ly Cao Tong laid down regulations for three religious (Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism) examinations. Candidates who passed were appointed government officials.

— Ky Mao (1279). As King Tran Nhan Ton ascended the throne, the powerful Mongols sent envoys to impose impossible demands to disgrace the royal Court. The Mongols coveted Vietnam, but the Vietnamese people were determined to fight off the invaders. Thanks to the wisdom of the king, the clear-sightedness and the determination of General Tran Hung Dao and the united will of resistance of the people, the Vietnamese were able to repulse two attacks of the most formidable invaders in world history from the year of 1281 to 1288.

— Quy Mao (1303). King Tran Anh Ton agreed reluctantly to marry Princess Huyen Tran to Che Man in exchange for Chau O and Chau Ri (Thuan Chau and Hoa Chau regions, Central Vietnam) that the Cham King offered to Anh Ton as dowry.

— Dinh Mao (1315). King Tran

Minh Tong issued a royal edict to forbid legal court action among members of the same family.

— Quy Mao (1327). Chu Van An, a famous scholar and mandarin of high integrity, compiled a series of books entitled "Tu Thu Thuyet Uoc."

— Ky Mao (1399). Ho Quy Ly, a high mandarin of the Ly Court, forced King Thuan Tong to abdicate to become a regent, but latter hired an assassin to kill the king and take over his throne.

— Tan Mao (1411). Tran Quy Khoach, a nephew of King Tran Nghe Ton, revolted against the Minh invaders at Hong Chau, scored a few preliminary victories, but was finally defeated by Chinese general Truong Phu, and had to withdraw his forces to Hoa Chau.

— Quy Mao (1423). Le Loi withdrew his troops to Chi Linh for the third time and had to make a temporary agreement with the Minh invaders for a short truce to build up the strength of his weakened army.

— At Mao (1435). King Le Thai Tong organized examinations at the Van Tap Duong of the Imperial University.

— Ky Mao (1459). Lang Son Vuong Nghi Dan, the condemned brother of King Le Nhan Tong, plotted with accomplices to assassinate his brother in his palace at night, proclaimed himself king and sent an envoy to request investiture from the Chinese Emperor.

— Quy Mao (1543). Le Trang Tong pacified Tay Do territory. Duong Chap Nhat, a high madarin of the rebel Mac dynasty surrendered to the king.

— At Mao (1555). Rebel troops of Mac Kinh Dien penetrated into Thanh Hoa coastal area to fight Trinh Kiem troops. Troops of both sides fought a prolonged war which ended with the death of Mac Kinh Dien in 1579.

— Tan Mao (1591). Lord Trinh Tung sent over 50,000 troops divided into five columns to fight Mac troops. Mac Kinh, Mac Mau Hop mustered a 100,000-man force to oppose to loyal troops of Lord Trinh, but was overrun and the

Trinh took over Thang Long (Hanoi).

— Quy Mao (1603). Lord Trinh Tung escorted King Le Kinh Tong in their flight to Thanh Hoa.

— At Mao (1615). Missionary P. Busomi came to preach the Christian gospel in South Vietnam, then under the rule of Lord Nguyen Phuc Nguyen.

— Dinh Mao (1627). Lord Trinh Trang invited King Than Tong to go south to fight Lord Sai, thus starting war between Trinh and Nguyen Lords.

— Ky Mao (1639). Mac Kinh Hoan proclaimed himself emperor of Cao Bang area, North Vietnam, plundered the adjacent areas and caused terror and desolation among the local population.

— Quy Mao (1663). Lord Trinh Tac decreed the expulsion of foreign missionaries and forbade Vietnamese to adopt the Christian faith.

— Dinh Mao (1687). Lord Nguyen Phuc Tan (Lord Hien) died at the age of 68. Lord Nghia succeeded him, ordered a census of the population in Central and South Vietnam and allowed people to emigrate and settle down in the newly-pacified territory.

— Ky Mao (1699). Cambodian King Nac Ong Thu sent troops to fight Lord Nguyen who ordered Nguyen Huu Kinh to rush troops and occupy the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. Nac Ong Thu surrendered and offered to resume paying tribute to Lord Nguyen.

— At Mao (1735). Lord Trinh ordered the printing of Four Books and Five Classics (Tu Thu and Ngu Kinh). King Le Thuan Tong died at the age of 37, was succeeded by King Le Y Tong.

— Dinh Mao (1747). Pham Dinh Trong suppressed the revolt of Nguyen Huu Cau.

— Ky Mao (1759). Death of King Le Y Tong. Lord Nguyen Phuc Khoat conquered South Vietnam (Cochinchina).

— Tan Mao (1771). The King of Siam sent troops to Hatien (South Vietnam) to capture Chieu Thuy, the son of the former Siamese King. Mac Thien Tu, the regional commander, fled from Hatien. Nguyen Nhap, after the uprising

at Phu Ly (Phu Cat, Binh Dinh), set up posts and ruled over a large territory extending from Quang Ngai to Binh Thuan, Central Vietnam.

— Quy Mao (1783). Tay Son King Nguyen Nhap ordered his brothers Nguyen Hue and Nguyen Lu to occupy Saigon. Lord Nguyen Phuc Anh fled to Phu Quoc and Con Lon Islands.

— At Mao (1795). Tay Son troops laid siege to Dien Khanh Citadel. Lord Nguyen Phuc Anh dispatched relief troops to Khanh Hoa.

— Dinh Mao (1807). Cambodian King Nac Ong Chan offered to pay tribute to Nguyen King.

— Ky Mao (1819). Two French merchant ships, **Rose** and **Le Henri**, cast anchor at Danang harbor. Chaigneau, a protege of Evêque d'Adran and a mandarin at the Gia Long Court, returned to France aboard **Le Henri**. Emperor Gia Long died in 1819 at the age of 59.

— At Mao (1855). Western ships were forbidden to enter Vietnamese ports for trade purpose.

— Dinh Mao (1867). French Admiral La Grandière sent 1,000 troops from My Tho to attack Vinh Long, An Giang and Ha Tien. Phan Thanh Gian ordered Vietnamese military authorities in Cochinchina to give up fighting superior forces to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, then took poison to commit suicide.

— Ky Mao (1879). Nguyen Hiep was sent as an envoy to Siam for diplomatic talks. The Nguyen authorities in North Vietnam captured a rebel named Ly Duong Tai. Le Myre de Vilers was appointed Governor of Saigon. Philastre was replaced by Rheinart as Resident Superieur at Hue.

— Tan Mao (1891). Phan Dinh Phung became leader of the Van Than patriotic Group loyal to King Ham Nghi. He stationed his men at Vu Quang stronghold to fight the French Colonialists.

Doc Nghi, De Kieu and De Tham commanded freedom fighters at Bac Giang, Thai Nguyen and Hung Hoa. Nguyen Thien Thuat led the uprising against the French at Bai Say.

— Quy Mao (1903). Revolutionary Phan Boi Chau and Dang Van Ba conducted revolutionary activities in Central Vietnam. They met Prince Cuong De at Hue and organized the Quang Phuc Hoi with Cuong De as leader.

— At Mao (1915). As the Franco-German war intensified, Pham Quynh, editor of Nam Phong trilingual review (Vietnamese-Chinese-French), called for the formation of an expeditionary corps to help metropolitan France. Nguyen Hai Than and Hoang Ngoc Long ordered Quang Phuc fighters stationed at Long Chau, southern China, to attack the French fort of Ta Lung, North Vietnam.

On 23 September 1915, the ill-famed Lao Bao penitentiary was destroyed by inmates. King Duy Tan was preparing to oppose French rule and stage a revolution with the assistance of many leading patriots and letters, but was detected by French colonial authorities and sent into exile at Reunion Island in 1916.

— Dinh Mao (1927). Pham Tuan Tai and Nhuong Tong established

the "Nam Dong Library" to publish revolutionary books. The nationalist Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang Party was established. Old revolutionary Nguyen Hai Than officially presented his Revolutionary Party at Quang Dong, China. The newspaper Tieng Dan (The Voice of the People) was published by the scholar-revolutionary Huynh Thuc Khang at Hue.

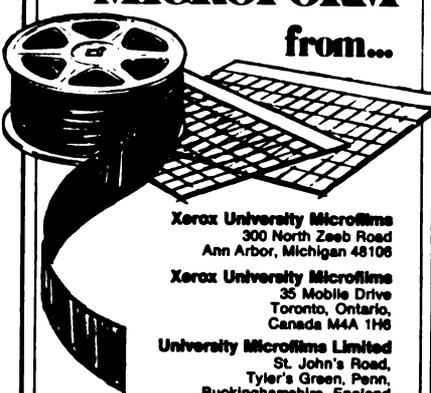
— Ky Mao (1939). World War Two broke out in Europe. The French were defeated by Nazi Germany. Japan entered Indochina. Many patriotic groups and revolutionary organizations were formed to topple colonial rule and restore independence and freedom to Vietnam. Well-known poet and writer Tan Da Nguyen Khac Hieu died at Hanoi.

— Tan Mao (1951). Chief of State Bao Dai set up the National Government of Vietnam. The first national army of Vietnam took shape. The Tran Van Huu Cabinet was formed in February 20, 1951. French colonial forces were defeated at China-North Vietnam border area of Dong Khe, Cao Bang, Lang Son and Hoa Binh.

Prince Cuong De died in Japan in 1951 at the age of 69.

— Quy Mao (1963). The Ngo Dinh Diem regime was toppled in a coup November 1, 1963, thus paving the way for the establishment of the 2nd Republic of South Vietnam.—Tran Viet & Tin Khanh.

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A VISITING PASTOR ON:

VIETNAM'S SMILE SYNDROME

By TRAN MY

Ernest John Campbell, 56-year-old American pastor who knew five U.S. Ambassadors in India, is amazed by Vietnam's "smile syndrome." It hit him when he began a 3-year social-service assignment here this summer after spending 38 years in India.

Campbell's first impressions of the Land of the Smaller Dragon:

"Saigon seems so much more Westernized than any Indian city, and everybody seems more affluent. I was impressed with how civilized the people are with their good manners. The smile here is so much a cultural characteristic and works well. One reason Westerners are attracted here is the smile syndrome."

The tall, handsome Presbyterian missionary, still a member of the Church of North India, finds Saigon streets revealing too.

There's Smoothness

"I still can't get over the traffic. There are more good mannered drivers than I've seen anywhere in my life. Hundreds of vehicles may be streaming down a street, yet there's a smoothness and tolerance about it."

North Indians are more aggressive, open and emotional. The British always said they are more like Westerners because "they'd punch you in the nose if incited."

Indians are very tolerant in a different way.

"In India, if you want to go around naked, you can go around naked."

Not so in Vietnam. Millenia of Confucian-mandarin influences still survive enough to make public nudity unthinkable, at least.

But Campbell fondly recalls the emotional exhibitionism of the Indians.

"I sometimes miss the élan, humor and gusto. In Saigon everything is more refined and sophisticated. I suppose it's a bit like the difference between a hot curry and *cha gio* (a deep-fried Vietnamese meat roll)."

Physically, Campbell somewhat resembles a dark-haired General Douglas MacArthur who opted for the Bible and sociology instead of the sword. He speaks softly and carries degrees from the Union Theological Seminary of New York City and the graduate sociology school of Cornell University. He smilingly recalls the liberal-activist tradition of his seminary.

"We had a hard time keeping track of the number of students in jail at any one particular time."

Born in India, he graduated from the Woodstock School north of Delhi. He married in 1942 (his oldest son is now Director of the U.S. Educational Foundation in Nepal) and was later a pastor at East Aurora, N.Y. and Ft. Pierce, Fla. He has spent most of his life in India which he knows "much better than I know the United States." He began his professional Indian work in 1946 as a rural missionary in the Punjab.

Award Recipient

In 1960 the Indian Government, which rarely gives awards to foreigners, presented Campbell with the Parman Pathra Award for his flood relief work in 1958-59. His background in working with refugees and flood relief led the Church World Service to assign him here as Director of VNCS (Vietnam Christian Service.)

VNCS is not a church. It emphasizes on social service and Christian motivation. There is no active evangelization.

"Our major emphasis is community development," Campbell said.

In the Saigon area VNCS operates four social-service centers active in literacy teaching, child care, physical therapy, etc. It also runs an agricultural development program for Montagnard tribesmen in the central highlands.

VNCS has five units working the highlands. Each is staffed with 2-4 personnel trying to help the Montagnards solve their agricultural problems. Campbell said that it's always been difficult for outsiders to motivate the tribesmen.

"The bleached bones of past programs clutter the hills up there. The difficulty, I think, is that the Montagnards were never really involved in past planning."

Wide Background

Campbell's extensive background provides him with many perspectives in this work. In 1960 he arranged the first Peace Corps gathering in northern India. U.S. Peace Corps volunteers in India eventually increased, he said, to a couple thousand. Today, because the Peace Corps became "a victim" of U.S.-India political squabbles, that figure is down to 24. Campbell admits that voluntary organizations cannot have much effect on a country's overall economic development, but he defends the approach.

"The Peace Corps' main achievement was the quality of its relationships with the people, and its demonstration of American idealism. It would be wrong to judge it by its effect on India's development."

Another surprise for Campbell in Vietnam has been the voluntary agencies' relative freedom from government control.



It's amazing how the smiles persist despite the stark realities of war.

"Voluntary agencies in India would never have the freedom they have here. I don't know how long this freedom will last, but it came as a shocker after my previous experiences."

Population Problem

As a pastor of International Churches in Delhi during the past ten years, Campbell has come to agree that Asia will face chaos if it does not solve its population problem.

"No question about it. The Indian sub-continent, for example, is increasing by 12 million yearly. By the turn of the century its population will reach 1.5 billion. Voluntary population control in India has been pretty much a failure. Right now it's almost at a standstill."

The problem is compounded by technical backwardness, shortage of fertilizers for crops, the deep Asian commitment to family continuity, and the 20th century medical revolution which has greatly extended life expectancy. But India, he said, is aware of the crisis.

"There is a growing consensus that only legislation will solve the problem. The Singapore example is significant. In Singapore a family's first two children are eligible for educational and housing as-

sistance. The family receives no assistance for more than two children."

Another aspect of the problem, Campbell said, was highlighted by Indian sociologist Das Gupta. Das Gupta said that the United States, which uses 70 to 80 per cent of world resources, has become an impossible economic model for developing countries.

"The unstated goal of Western-oriented development in poorer countries is to bring everyone up to the level of Japan and the U.S.A. But limited world resources obviously make this impossible. Das Gupta said that countries like India should opt for a genteel poverty."

Campbell, at the same time, agrees with experts who say that the comparative affluence of the West cannot continue without exacerbating economic and international tensions. He senses that the Madison Avenue syndrome, creating a hyper-active consumerism, is becoming a little dated in terms of today's reality. He also sees hope for India.

"Given a moderate population control, India can feed itself. With optimum yields on their arable land, they can feed a larger population than what they now have. As for Indian democracy, I expect

some form of it to survive for quite a while, thanks to their family life and diversity. Of course, it will be a democracy in which the State is the main source of capital."

The quality of poverty, Campbell has noticed, can vary from country to country.

"In Vietnam even the refugees look better than they do in India. A refugee in India with a house and furnishing would be considered fairly well off."

During his church work in India, Campbell got to know U.S. Ambassadors Bunker, Bowles, Galbraith, Moynihan and Keating. But he didn't always accept the policy made in Washington. When the U.S. Seventh Fleet came through the Straits of Singapore during the 1971 India-Pakistani War, he and others reacted.

"Quite a few of us, Americans in Delhi, even from the Embassy, sent protests to Washington."

U.S. Embassy officials who protested "the showing of the Fleet," he said, did so despite the harm it might do their careers in the State Department.

The U. S. Ambassador who Campbell knew best in India was his friend, Chester Bowles, during 1965-68. An Ambassador, Campbell said, is only "the tip of the iceberg" among the staff of career officers in an Embassy, but "Chet" Bowles still accomplished a lot himself.

Love for Chet

"The Indians love Chet, and he's still very attached to India. Today he lives in Connecticut and has Parkinson's Disease. He can hardly talk, but he still travels with his wife to spend a month or two in India every winter. In Delhi, the last time I saw him, he was reading David Halberstam's 'The Best and the Brightest.'"

The best-selling Halberstam book, about the formulation of Washington's Vietnam policy, was "very kind" to Bowles. In the early 1960's Bowles' prognostications on Vietnam were unpopular and unfashionable.

"But it's become evident," Campbell said, "that Bowles was right on Vietnam." ●



Performers and view of the crowd at Saigon's Fourth Rock Festival.



EXPERIENCE FOR OLD CONFUCIAN

ROCK FESTIVAL DAY

By NGUYEN PHUOC DIEM

as told to and translated by DANIEL CAMERON

Excuse me, but I am an old Confucian; my wispy beard grew white many lunar new years ago. I enjoy visits to the Saigon Zoo in these difficult times. To observe the natural dignity and honesty of birds and animals benefits my war-weary soul. But during my last visit an event having little in common with ordinary wildlife bewildered me.

It happened Sunday, December 29, last year as calculated on the Gregorian calendar of the Outer Barbarians. I arrived about 8 a.m., after tending the family altar in my home in Dakao. "The early bird," my Buddhist grandfather used to say, "chews his worm in peace."

Alas, venerated grandfather's wisdom did not avail me that morning. Massive flocks of youth, some resembling the variety called

"hippie," were already at the front gates. Even by holiday standards, their numbers were overwhelming. They seemed to outnumber the coconut trees on Phu Quoc Island.

Yet this pleased me. In all my days of seeking the cardinal virtues, I had never seen so many teenagers apparently so eager to admire the Animal Kingdom.

Disturbing Sights

Many wore the strange imported garment known as "blue jeans." Numerous girls were decked in figure-clinging attire or else flowing robes I thought more suitable for ancient Champa maidens. Boys' hair reached lengths unrecorded in the five canonical works. I observed strange medallions and necklaces. The designs, I suspect, were inspired by primitives in the

Cambodian highlands. Such sights disturbed me. But tolerance is a virtue, according to my eldest sister's husband, a man of the Cao Dai faith.

My serious misgivings began when a young man with hair resembling my favorite daughter-in-law's raven tresses shouted gaily at me.

"Careful, Grandpa! Today is open-air Rock Festival Day."

"Yeh, yeh!" his sandal-footed companion added.

I drew back from the front gates. Getting through was impossible anyway. Also, there was a large puddle left by the fringe of a recent typhoon. I took that as an omen. My long sheer black *ao dai* and my traditional white shirt and white pantaloons beneath it were in danger of being soiled. Secondly, I feared for my traditional black headpiece. In the jostling crowd of young animal lovers it might come loose.



Translator's Note: Translation being an art rather than an exact science, some of Mr. Diem's words and phrases have been rendered freely rather than literally. The confrontation of a Confucian consciousness with "Rock" music introduced additional difficulties. The translator wishes to thank the Vietnamese who helped him through the many linguistic problems. Errors of fact or nuance should be blamed on him, not on Mr. Diem who generously and patiently gave his impressions of the Rock Festival at the Saigon Zoo. "Willowy maiden" might have been, instead, "slender lass," and "lunatic canine that gives musical offerings" might have been "mad musical hound." Likewise, "state functionary during the second Chinese Domination" perhaps might have been written "mandarin of the third degree under the latter Han Oppression." But it is believed that this present version, in general, adheres faithfully to the spirit of Mr. Diem's account. At any rate the elderly gentleman read it and, looking up from his cup of aromatic Darlac tea, said "Duoc."

overbalanced his Yang? Was it a child's epithet used to summon some wandering genie from the mangrove swamp? Or was it perhaps a puzzling cry the boy once heard from a restless spirit who has departed this world without leaving a male heir?

Still perplexed, I hailed a pedicab and rode to the rear gate at Hong Thap Tu Street. Countless motorbikes were parked from the Thi Nghe Bridge on Hong Thap Tu Street all the way to the Thanh

Tin Housing Center near the TV station. These vehicles did not include the thousands of bicycles and motorbikes parked at the guard stations outside the front gates. Let me affirm by the ritual gold coin placed in the mouth of my brother prior to his proper burial: these sights were incredible for an early Sunday morning at the Saigon Zoo.

Thronged, too, was the rear gate. But patience, as my dear wet nurse used to say, is a golden key. By nine o'clock this key opened the rear gate for me.

The youth were streaming to a site below the orangutan cages. In the distance two boys were climbing a eucalyptus tree planted by our former French colonialists.

Near me a girl with exposed navel held a boy's slim waist. Conquering my embarrassment, I spoke to her.

A Fabled Unicorn?

"Daughter, where is everyone going? Enlighten this direct descendant of a state functionary during the second Chinese Domination. Has a fabled unicorn been captured, perhaps, and put on display?"

"Grandpop," she replied, "today is the Fourth Annual Rock Festival. Proceeds to benefit the soldiers in 1975, the Year of the Cool Cat. We're off to see The Peanuts and The Crazy Dog and others!"

The boy produced a roll of piasters and offered to buy my trusty dragon stick. I refused,



All dressed for the festival.

With cane and folded parasol I retreated further from the youth storm. A brass serpent entwines this cane, I might add. A well-molded dragon's head forms the handle. Two chips of jade represent the dragon's eyes. It is my favorite walking stick and aided me greatly that day.

Like Monsoon Waters

I surveyed the odd scene from the safety of an iced pineapple vendor's stand. Getting through the front gate still appeared impossible for this fifth-born son of a small but worthy mandarin. The youth kept coming. They poured in like the monsoon waters that flooded my uncle's fertile rice paddy before his Dinh Tuong properties were redistributed. Some policemen and red-bereted soldiers mingled with them.

Knowing not what to do, I leaned forward on my dragon stick and chewed a soothing betel nut mixture. I do not eat pineapple, preferring the softer papaya melon.

I pondered the meaning of "Rock Festival" and "Yeh, yeh!" It mystified me. "Yeh, yeh!" in particular seemed obscure. Could it be the outburst of a being whose Yin

naturally. He had much money. I wondered if his father practiced dishonorable arts.

The young couple disappeared, amidst shouts of "Yeh, yeh!"

I pondered peanuts and the crazy dog. I understood peanuts that one ate—the plant was introduced to our alluvial soil years ago. Was there another kind?

Crazy Dog?

And crazy dog—was it perhaps the mongrelization of a wolverine and pariah recently captured and caged?

I questioned a boy wearing a "baseball cap," as that foreign-devil headpieces is called.

"The Crazy Dog makes music!" he said.

Crazy dog? Makes music?

That was the moment I decided to observe the Rock Festival.

During my unworthy but pious days I have seen wonders: birds that talk, fish that fly, monkeys that wash dishes, but never a lunatic canine that gives musical offerings. The nurse who suckled me loyally predicted that I would live to see wondrous things and strange events. (May her ethereal form find peace in the Aquatic Region, or else return to the Terrestrial Zone and protect our household from the demons of inflation and the *ma quy*!)

Beyond the elephant pit we came to a large open space cordoned by barbed wire. Already it was densely crowded with young people facing a large stage. Most appeared guileless, despite attire unmentioned by Kungfutz, our all-encompassing supremely sagacious late master.

I addressed a girl who wore velvet trousers in the "bell-bottom" style, long leather boots and a coat hemmed with the fur of an unknown animal.

"Young damsel, kindly enlighten this white-haired student of the four classics. When shall we see the crazy dog that makes music?"

"Hold your horses, Uncle!" she replied. "First come The Dreamers, The Hammers, The Uptight, The Fantastics and The Shotguns."



The mini skirt and bell bottom trousers were favorite festival garb.

"Daughter," said I, "do not speak nonsense to an elder whose wives have always prepared the ritual offerings of pig's head roast, sugar cane, sweet pork and bowls of glutinous rice for worthy ancestors and peripatetic souls."

"What's that, Uncle?"

"My child, in plain Vietnamese—the tongue of our departed Emperors who withstood the Mongol

influence—I ask you: Who would want to listen to shotguns on a Sunday morning? Have not our people heard sufficiently the M-16 and AK-47 automatic firing rods?"

"Man, The Shotguns make music! Like the 12 other Vietnamese bands here today. They play Pop and Rock. What we like!"

I began to be enlightened. Thousands were gathering for a

Confusing: peanuts, crazy dog...

musical performance. The strange names had confused me.

The sun grew hot. I opened the parasol and finished the areca nut in my betel preparation. I also applied cooling tiger balm to my overheated nostrils.

As a music appreciator, I awaited the performances. I often attend *hat boi* opera in the dry season. I dote on the simple moon-shaped guitar and pear-shaped lute. Raucous horn and cymbal delight me. The pentatonic scale, you see, soothes my worthless joints.

Stupefaction

But as the performers followed one another on stage, stupefaction seized me. This was not ordinary stupefaction. This was classical stupefaction, such as Cuoi the Buffalo Boy must have felt when being dragged to the moon.

Nothing was familiar. None of the performers even wore a costume of mandarin, general, warlord, queen or court lady. Among the instruments were many wires and strange attachments. It involved electricity, I was told.

Sustained by my trusty cane, I looked around me. The youth seemed mesmerized by the hip-shaking singers and all-encompassing noises. On stage the Crazy Dog gyrated. The Peanuts were perhaps more salty than our national fish sauce. The Dreamers conjured figments unknown in my book of legends. The Shotguns pelted my well-worn ears. Why, there was never the trace of a Chinese gong. I tell you, it was like nothing conceived in the institutions of the Three Dynasties.

I addressed a youth whose shirt looked like a foreign newspaper printed on cotton fabric.

"Little Nephew," said I, "when will the vibrations cease? Uncle seeks a cool tile bench in the serpentarium."

He remained speechless. Perhaps he was a Lao student on vacation, without proper knowledge of our language.



View of the Rock Festival stage in the midst of trees in Saigon Zoo.

Beside him stood a willowy maiden in the blue jean garment. She also wore a yellow tunic with scarlet English lettering: KISS ME, LOVE ME, BABY. An American flag patch covered the central portion of her bosom. My knowledge of the difficult English tongue is limited. Yet I doubted that KISS ME, LOVE ME, BABY was a translation of the gold Chinese characters inscribed on our ceremonial *Hong Dieu* paper.

The girl, however, kindly noticed my desire to get through the sea of spectators.

"Try to cool your heels two more hours, Old Father," she said. "The sounds keep happening till 2 o'clock."

Again I applied cooling tiger balm and fixed my traditional headpiece. I began to regret the curiosity which had led me to seek a music-making crazy dog. But rather than complain, I recalled the words of one of the 72 sages which were recited at the Ministry of Public Works under the T'ang Domination: *No matter what the issue, do your best/And let the gods and fairies do the rest.*

When the Uptight completed its vibrations, a young man stepped

to the microphone. He identified himself as Nam Loc, student at the Law School and organizer of the powerful noises, that is, the Rock Festival. He thanked the crowd for its mild conduct which, he said, was an improvement over last year's behavior. He announced that 15,000 tickets were sold. The figure surpassed that of any *hat boi* attendance I have witnessed. The Army's Political Warfare Department had collected 9 million piasters for the soldiers' coming lunar New Year celebrations.

Later the great crowd finally dispersed. I made my way past the aviary and ape houses, thanks to cane and parasol.

I Burn Incense

The years eat away my gross substance. I remember fireflies and reed flutes under peaceful mid-Autumn moons in the countryside. I decided to burn incense, that night, for the spirits of pre-electrical dynasties.

But I looked back at the emptying stage by the barbed wire. I was gladdened to hear that the strange new ritual would be of benefit during these times when the war devils reign. ●

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(Continued from page 2)

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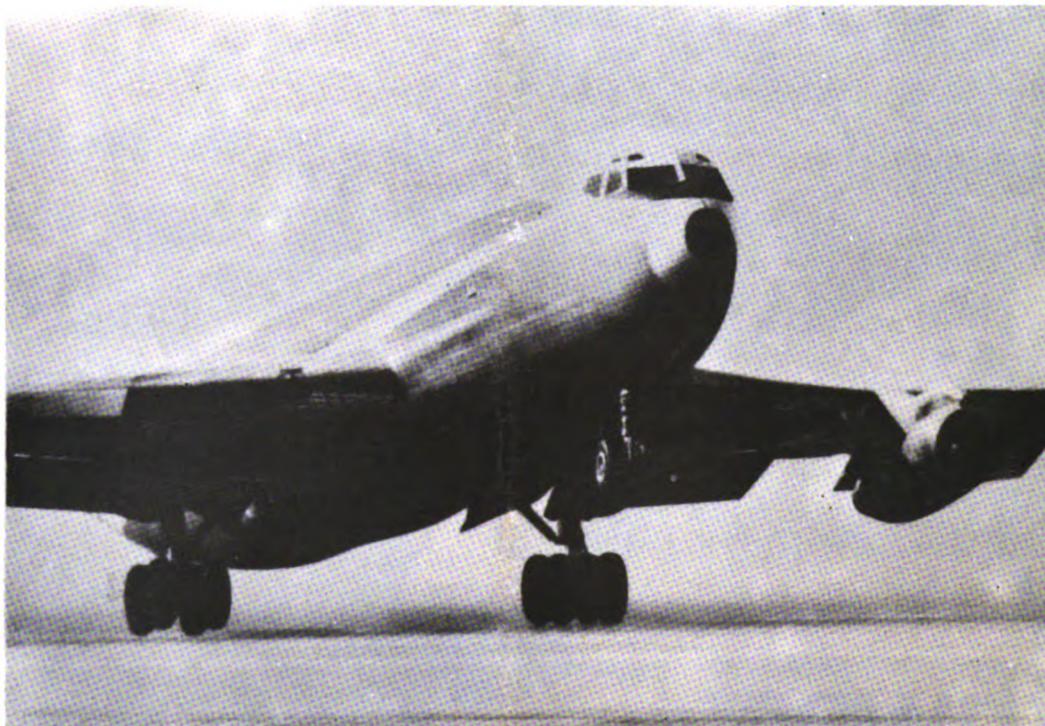


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