AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20523

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INPUT SHEET

FOR AID USE ONLY
Batch 67

1. SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION
A. PRIMARY
TEMPORARY
B. SECONDARY

2. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Life in a Vietnamese quarter

3. AUTHOR(S)
Hoskins,M.W.; Shepherd,E.M.

4. DOCUMENT DATE
1969

5. NUMBER OF PAGES
363p.

6. ARC NUMBER
ARC

7. REFERENCE ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS
SIU

8. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES *(Sponsoring Organization, Publishers, Availability)*
(Rev.ed.)

9. ABSTRACT
(SOCIAL SCIENCES R&D)

10. CONTROL NUMBER
PN-AAE-133

11. PRICE OF DOCUMENT

12. DESCRIPTORS

13. PROJECT NUMBER

14. CONTRACT NUMBER
CSD-2514 211(d)

15. TYPE OF DOCUMENT

AID 590-1 (4-74)

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN EVALUATED AS SUBSTANDARD COPY FOR ROUTINE REPRODUCTION. EFFORTS IN AID/W TO OBTAIN A MORE ACCEPTABLE COPY OF THE DOCUMENT HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. DESPITE THIS DISADVANTAGE, WE HAVE CHOSEN TO REPRODUCE THE DOCUMENT BECAUSE OF THE SUBJECT TREATED AND TO MAKE THE DISCERNIBLE INFORMATION AVAILABLE.

CSD-2514 2 1/1(d)

LIFE IN A VIETNAMESE URBAN QUARTER

Marilyn W. Hoskins
and
Eleanor Shepherd

Center for Vietnamese Studies

Southern Illinois University

at Carbondale

Monograph Series I

This is an expanded and revised version

of a study originally sponsored by

Office of Research and Projects
The Graduate School
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois

Copyright © 1965

Revised Edition
Copyright Pending

Observe the sweetness, warmth, and strength
of the river current;

It is the habitat that makes the fish.

Vietnamese Proverb

This is dedicated to those who are searching to understand and help a proud, individualistic, and courageous people who resisted foreign domination for over one thousand years, defeated Genghis Khan and remain today struggling for peace in which to live, work, and raise their children.

FOREWORD

There has been very little research directed toward identifying the problems and understanding the social and family structure of urban Viet Nam. This study takes one small typical section of an urban area and analyzes not only the events and conditions separately but searches for their meanings in the existence of the individual family.

The site chosen for study, Xom Chua Van Tho, is located in Saigon, and contains approximately eight hundred households and an estimated four thousand people. It is a "village type unit" in that it contains most of the facilities and services needed for everyday life and has political organization. It has the following characteristics:

1. There are distinct boundaries.

2. There is a mixture of people from different origins, religions, and economic levels.

3. There have been attempts by the government, outside groups and residents to improve conditions in the area. These attempts were studied.

4. There is a significant amount of commerce and home industry within the area.

5. There are available contacts which make informal entrance into the area possible.

There are varieties of stores, schools, health centers, restaurants, small industries, and both Catholic and Buddhist centers of worship. The area is relatively isolated, having only one entrance from the city streets and surrounded for the most part by walls and water. There are neat stucco houses surrounded by gardens, as well as houses of dilapidated wood built over stagnant ponds. The area contains residents who have come from the North as well as the South, from urban and from rural communities, and there are newcomers here as well as long-time residents. Thus, this area was chosen for study as a unified community containing a cross-section

of the ideas and attitudes of the Vietnamese urban dweller.

In order to appear less threatening to area residents during tense political times, the researchers made use of numerous situations which brought them into the area frequently. They participated in a program sponsored by USIS to give English books to neighborhood schools, so that they would be identified with educators. They worked with the local social worker on several projects, taught English to student bonzes (Buddhist monks) in the local pagoda, had clothing made by local tailors, shopped regularly in stores and stands, took pictures, and returned copies to residents. The researchers were further identified as American teachers who were eager to practice Vietnamese conversation to learn more about Vietnamese customs and life.

On two occasions notes were taken in front of a resident. The practice was not repeated, however, because of a definitely negative reaction. At no time were residents informed that the researchers were making this study even though several officials were interviewed near the end of the study period. During much of the eight months in which this study was conducted, June 1964 through February 1965, the researchers maintained almost daily contact with the community; they received frequent invitations to numerous homes and had close contact with many residents.

The study contains two sections: the first presents a horizontal description of community conditions, services, and attitudes, and the second a vertical description of a number of residents and their families.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
FOREWORD		vii
	SECTION ONE	
Chapter		
I.	INTRODUCTION	3
	Saigon, an Island in a Red Sea	3
	Description of the Quarter	5
II.	ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	15
	Government	15
	Education	35
	Health	45
	Religion	61
	Recreation and Associations	77
	Social Welfare	83
III.	ECONOMICS	95
	Occupations	95
	Consumption Patterns	115
IV.	ROUND OF LIFE	129
	Pregnancy and Birth	129
	Child Rearing	135
	Marriage	143
	Death	151
V.	OBSERVATIONS	159
	SECTION TWO	
	INTRODUCTION	169
I.	SETTLER FAMILY	171
II.	BA COMPOSED	183
III.	FIRST WIFE	187

IV. BA STORE 195

V. ONG CHA 201

VI. BA PAPER 205

VII. ALTAR HOUSE 213

VIII. CYCLO FAMILIES--INTRODUCTION 221

Water-House Family 223
Cyclo Family 227

IX. SWEET-FACED WOMAN 231

X. CRÈCHE FAMILY 237

XI. THE WEAVERS 243

XII. BA HEMSTITCHER 251

XIII. ONG SOLDIER 261

XIV. BA TU SAT 267

XV. BA CUSTARD 275

XVI. UNIVERSITY COUPLE 281

XVII. ONG SAGE 287

LIFE IN A VIETNAMESE URBAN QUARTER--
Reviewed November 1966 293

APPENDIX--Demographic Information 325

SECTION ONE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Saigon: An Island in a Red Sea

Saigon, the present capital of the Republic of Viet Nam, is an old city. Prior to the Vietnamese and Chinese migrations into the area in the late 1400's, the Khmers had a small hamlet located on the site of Saigon. After considerable changing of rulers during the period of conquest and migration by the Vietnamese, in 1790 the French helped the Vietnamese Nguyen rulers erect a wooden walled citadel at this site. At this date one estimate of the population of the citadel and its suburbs was 180,000 Vietnamese and 10,000 Chinese. By a treaty of 1862, the southern third of Viet Nam became a French colony, Cochinchina, with Saigon the capital and home of the Governor General. While Hanoi was the political and cultural capital of Indochina during French rule, Saigon became the economic capital. During the Second World War, Saigon was controlled by Japanese, Allied and Viet Minh forces at various times, and only in 1954 did it become the political capital as well as the commercial center of the newly-formed Republic of Viet Nam.

Throughout most Asian countries, this century has brought new pressures to the urban areas; these have been greatly intensified in Viet Nam, especially in the city of Saigon, because of its particular political problems. In 1954, when the country was divided, 24,925 refugees from the North came directly to Saigon, and subsequently many more came south to settle in Saigon. Also, because the partitioning left most of the nation's industries in the North, and trade with France was slowed and finally almost severed, Viet Nam has found it necessary to develop quickly many new industries in Saigon and its environs. The large number of foreign residents in Saigon at the present time who assist with economic and military programs has contributed considerably to inflated wages in the capital. The search for physical and financial security that is becoming more and more difficult to find in the war-torn

countryside has lured into the city hordes of Vietnamese who would normally resist moving from their ancestral lands.

Although fear of taxes and the military draft has made the securing of accurate statistics on population difficult, the National Institute of Statistics of Viet Nam reported that Saigon and its Chinese twin city Cholon comprised approximately two per cent of the total population of Viet Nam in 1943 and approximately ten per cent in 1959. This same Institute also gives the following figures for 1959:

Republic of Viet Nam	
Population	13,789,000
Area	171,655 sq. km.
Density	80 per sq. km.
Saigon	
Population	1,282,100
Area	51 sq. km.
Density	26,000 per sq. km.

New programs of health, education, economic aid, and social welfare in Viet Nam, aimed in part at helping stabilize the political situation, have placed special emphasis on the rural areas. Recently, however, there has been a growing awareness of the problems of urban communities and their political importance. Also, with the war situation as it is, many of the projects in the countryside have proved to be unworkable, as successful teachers and leaders become targets for "Viet Cong" agents, and many projects are sabotaged or taken over and used by the enemy.

The urban areas of Viet Nam, especially Saigon, have thus become islands of comparative security and promise in a "red" sea. The health and welfare problems, however, created by the rush of people and industry into Saigon, formerly chiefly a commercial center, can readily be seen as a threat to its stability. Since Saigon's stability is in large part the key to the stability and future hopes of the Republic, the understanding of present attitudes, living patterns and conditions in this urban center can be a guide for future successful planning in this country.

Description of the Quarter

The area studied, Xom Chua Van Tho, is named for the pagoda found there. The area is a peninsula carved by the Cau Bang River into the shape of a thumb jutting out from the northeast corner of Saigon. The eight hundred households are divided into three political units called khoms (a term which will be described in more detail later in the chapter). Leading from a busy city street to the area is a wide plaza-like road, referred to as The Plaza. It contains several mobile drink stands, two city water pumps, and a few stores and stands. The official city street map shows this wide road going completely to the end of the peninsula, but in reality the road ceases to exist where a store has planted itself firmly in its course at the very beginning of the three khom area. The quarter's only cement path, called Main Street, starts beside this store and moves in a fairly straight line down the eastern side of the land to the door of the pagoda about two-thirds of the length of the area. Half-way down Main Street is a major path which branches off across the central area, past the Catholic Church, to the western section of the peninsula. This path is designated as Church Street. This area is all within the city designated section of Khom 14. Khom 15 lies around and beyond the pagoda to the tip, and Khom 13 is located in the front section on the western side. In between houses along major walls a labyrinth of tiny paths leads to other houses, until there seems to be no vacant pocket of space. The size and shape of the area indicated on the city map is narrow and square, whereas the actual, present shape is larger and rounder. This is caused by the continual building of stilt houses and the creation of new land by the packing of mud into swampy areas. The shape of the area itself is at the mercy of the floods and tides which may cause the water to rise as much as ten feet, flooding most of this low land and making some houses accessible only by wading and by boat.

The area is not an old quarter of Saigon. Three sisters presently residing in the locale claim to have lived here for over fifty years. They describe the surroundings which existed in their youth as rice land swamp with "very few houses anywhere around." They and their neighbors agree that they are the only people alive today who know about these times in this particular locality. They tell that on the site of the present pagoda was a mud hut owned by a wealthy medium

who had visitors from miles around come to seek her aid with the spirits, and that this woman left the hut to be used as a pagoda. It was only twenty years ago, however, that construction began on the present pagoda, the first permanent larger building in the area.

A few other residents say they have lived in the quarter for about twenty years. These residents also describe the area as a vast swamp in which they had to fill in enough land to construct homes. One man who lived in a more built-up section of Saigon chose to move to his present location about twenty years ago: he wanted to retire as a monk, and he chose this spot as a place of retreat where he could build his home into a private pagoda and live in a quiet life of contemplation, study, and prayer. His home-pagoda is now wedged in between many dwellings, but under one section of his home he lifts boards to show where the swamp still lies, as he has never had enough money to complete the filling in of his land.

Approximately fifteen years ago, a number of residents from North, South, and Central Viet Nam began arriving from both rural and city areas. Most of these people report they chose this locale because it was close to Saigon, where they hoped to find jobs. Those who have come within the last ten years often consider themselves refugees--those from the North coming south when the country was divided, and those from the Central and South coming to Saigon when war came too close to their homes for them to be safe. Many add that their traditional family land is now gone, and they have no plans or hopes of returning to their villages or "homeland."

With the influx of these settlers, the area has become continually more crowded. Along Main Street the houses practically touch, and any space of more than two feet between houses is usually a path to other houses. Many newer houses are at the water's edge. At low tide one can frequently see men carrying cubic-foot chunks of black sticky mud from the river bottom to fill in new areas. If the site for the house is in an area washed by the river or frequently under water, the mud is packed into a large woven bamboo framework, creating an island frequently reached by boardwalks built on piles. Some houses are built on stilts, with loose boards for the floor, which are moved aside to permit the addition of mud fill from time to time.

Between the very crowded front area of the quarter and the stilt houses on the water's edge, is a small area built at a time when the peninsula was not so crowded. This central location has more resemblance to a rural village; the houses have small fenced yards with trees, and palms shade the houses and foot paths. But not even here is there enough space to allow for strict adherence to geomancy patterns described in the village studied by Hickey.[1] Crowding has caused buildings to face in varying directions and to take varied shapes. A number of houses originally built with a more traditional arrangement have been divided to hold two or more families. A large number of these houses are rental property, and many more were erected by squatters who have no "legal" assurance that houses they improve will remain in their possession.

There seems to be no firm pattern of housing types in any area. Although many stucco-fronted and two-story houses are located on Main Street, interspersed are also dilapidated, low, wooden houses; in fact, throughout the area thatch, wood, stucco and metal houses with thatch, tile or metal roofs in various states of repair are found side by side. There are stilt houses of thatch in poor repair as well as well-made ones with wooden sides that seem to hover over the water. Stilt houses all have wooden floors. Houses built on the soil have packed dirt, wood, cement, or ceramic tile floors. There are, however, no mud huts or brick houses, and almost all of the stucco-fronted houses are wood on three sides.

Many houses have electric lights, but none have phones, running water, or sewage pipes. Some of the houses over the water use holes in the floor as toilets, but none have toilet rooms as such, nor are there toilets built on the land. Most houses in the community rely on communal toilets scattered along the river's edge which were built cooperatively a few years ago.

The complaint most frequently voiced about the area by its residents is the problem of flooding. During more than half the year the majority of houses have problems of flooding with garbage and sewage-filled water at each high tide. Many well-built stucco homes with ceramic tile floors show water marks on the walls four to six inches high. Although some of the stilt homes can be raised, the stucco homes can be helped only by quick and

---

[1]Gerald Cannon Hickey, Village in Vietnam (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 20, 38-41, 65.

effective draining when ever the water level lowers. For those in the center of the peninsula this has grown into an increasingly difficult problem, as the houses at the edge are being built on higher and higher packed mud areas. Low spots between houses in the central area frequently become mosquito-filled marshes for the entire rainy season. Only recently has there been any attempt to build drainage for rain or river water.

None of the "streets" of the area can actually be considered streets; even though motorized cyclos can come with difficulty down Main Street as far as the pagoda, not even Main Street is adequate for cars. Most of the illogical, disconnected paths have difficulty handling the bicycle-driven carts and cyclos that frequently struggle with their loads long distances into the area. The carts have to be pulled and pushed around temporary stands, through crowds, over holes, through mud, around tiny corners, and sometimes even over the better-constructed boardwalks. During the dry season the mud is gone, but the holes and bumpy rocks remain, and the area is filled with dust from the paths. Some homes are reached by rickety and dangerous boardwalks or dangerously narrow footpaths which slant dangerously toward unfilled marsh. Transportation for those living further within the area is, therefore, quite a problem, especially to those who have produce to carry home, run a home industry, or for other reasons have unusual transportation requirements.

Transportation from other places in the city to the edge of the quarter is quite good. Buses run every twenty minutes and cost two VN$.[2] They run to and from downtown Saigon stopping about two blocks from the edge of the area. When taxis are not available inside the plaza, they can almost always be found within a two minute walk. By taxi, even far corners of Saigon can be reached for twenty VN$ or less for the entire family. Motor cyclos are frequently available to the plaza, and they can carry an amazing amount of produce. They are cheaper than taxis and faster than the peddled cyclos. Bicycle-driven carts wait at the markets for customers, and often one sees them piled high with produce a local women has purchased to sell in the area, with the woman herself riding on top of the merchandise. Many families, whose men or older children need transportation for work or school outside

---

[2]The official rate at that time 73 VN$ or piasters to a U.S. dollar, but the actual value varies; for convenience, one may assume 100 VN$ to the dollar.

the area, own bicycles, motor bicycles, motor scooters, or possibly even a motorcycle. A few families living on the river use boats, but the seasonal changes of the river, and even the daily tides, make the use of boats impracticable.

The need for transportation outside the area is also affected by the fact that many facilities are found within the area--churches, primary and private schools, tea houses, medical practitioners, barbers, tailors, and the like. Apparently, many people do not leave the area for days on end. A larger Catholic Church, public and private schools, the second-largest Saigon market, movies, doctors, and a public health hospital are only a few minutes' walk away.

The fact that the area is so accessible from the outside does not eliminate the great fear of fire. With so many wooden structures so close together, and with cooking usually done on clay portable burners set on wooden floors or tables next to thatch walls or partitions, fires are frequent. Fire trucks would be difficult to call because there are no phones in the area. Upon arrival they would find the water supply inadequate and the available spigots not suitable for hose attachments. The major use of the "civil guard," the neighbors report, is stopping "the Viet Cong or others who start fires" and helping to fight fires, especially in the dry season.

A fear of thievery is also often expressed by residents. During the period of the study, one woman complained of the loss of a radio from her house. The khom leader says, however, that the problem of purse or jewelry-snatching from people in the plaza or along the walks during the evening is greater than the actual entering of houses. He claims that a large number of boys from the area are in jail from time to time for attacking women or for thievery, but these boys usually cause trouble in areas where they have no relatives or friends. Problems in the area are most often caused by strangers to the area.

Although one long-time resident store owner said that this neighborhood was particularly safe and free from thieves, it was noted that every home, from the nicest house to the poorest thatch shack, seems to be watched or locked at all times. Most houses have bars on the windows with wooden shutters or boards that fit over the windows and doors. When the residents of the area are seen wearing valuable jewelry, it is the kind that cannot be removed without breaking: jade bracelets put on when the women were young, a gold chain worn under a blouse,

or gold earrings worn in pierced ears. Money carried by the women vendors or shoppers is not carried in snatchable purses but rather in bags hung on a belt inside baggy trousers.

Several residents mentioned that getting aid from police is a problem. During the times of school riots, frequently there are police in the plaza near the large boys' school, and during quiet periods they can occasionally be seen there. Several times police were noted talking with residents, but this seemed to be related to locating men for the draft. Once a group of eight police, outfitted with tommy guns and carbines with bayonets, arrived in a jeep and went through some stores looking at the papers of residents in the Plaza. One observer said it had to do with a domestic quarrel. The woman who lost her radio said it is of no value to contact the police, anyway, as they are never interested or helpful to robbery victims.

During these restless times, there are also groups of four to eight neighborhood boys who appear to be twelve to eighteen years of age playing cards or gambling, reading comics, entering houses univited, shouting rude things at passers-by, swaggering, smoking, leaning against walls, talking, and roaming in a bored manner. There seems to be no attempt to deal with these youngsters, and adults seem to ignore them. Occasional comments were made which indicate a general fear of these "cowboys." There is no area for these or younger children to play in except along the paths or in the plaza. Even schools have no playgrounds or organized sports, and the nearest parks are many blocks away.

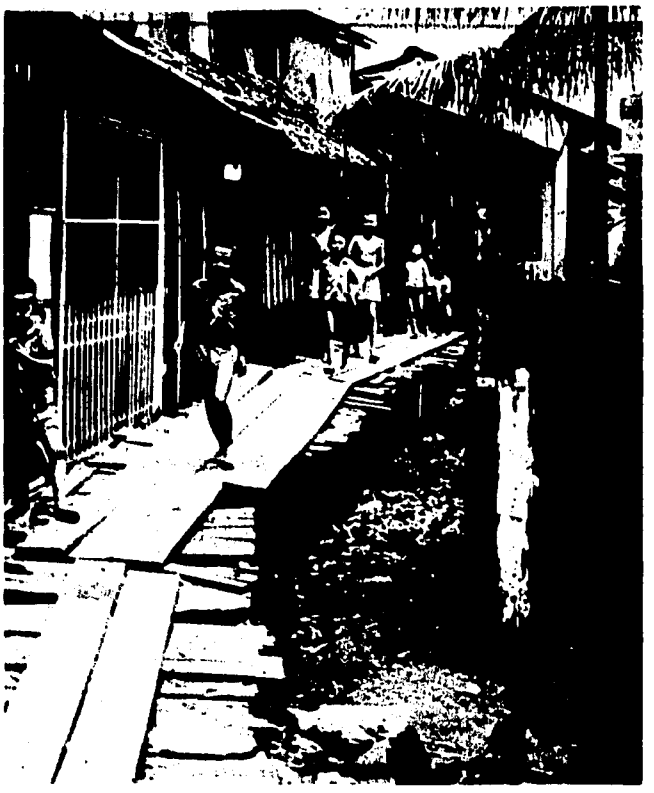
This is, however, in many ways an "up-and-coming" neighborhood. It has a friendly appearance. Even though the families live in close proximity, a factor frequently cited by residents as a cause for difficulties, there appear to be few quarrels. There appears to be a smooth blending of Northern, Southern, and Central Vietnamese, Chinese, Catholics, and Buddhists which one does not find in many areas of Saigon. Even during recent bloody riots between Buddhists and Catholics, this neighborhood remained relatively calm and unscathed. Monks from the pagoda report the local Catholic families are kind and good. "It is only those from outside who cause the trouble"; many Catholics made similar comments about their Buddhist neighbors. During the period of the study there were a number of coups and attempted coups, riots and demonstrations, including anti-American demonstrations and the bombing of American buildings. Although tensions could be felt, and during certain periods some people were

reserved and a few loud and antagonistic, the usual response was to keep children out of school, to stay away from the market, and to retire within the home.

There is an overall optimistic atmosphere found in the area, with many people rebuilding and improving their houses, and a general attempt to keep the houses and walks neat.

Above: Main Street at siesta; Area entrance.

Below: Church Street; Boardwalk, Center area.



CHAPTER II

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Government

During the period of the study the Government made many changes, and several governmental reforms were discussed. The official governmental structure, at least on the books, on the local level remained the same as the 1959 decree.

A translation of the description of this structure follows:[3]

1. Districts (Boroughs)

Saigon is now divided into nine districts. Boundaries of the administrative districts are identical to those of the police districts, although policemen can perform their duties across district lines.[4] District chiefs (quan truong) are career civil servants, appointed by presidential decree, and continue to maintain their civil servant status after their appointment.

Responsibilities of the district chiefs are listed in the 1959 decree. They act somewhat as would mayors of small towns in America. In addition to acting as the representative of the Prefect (Mayor) of Saigon in the district, a district chief:

---

[3]Charles A. Joiner, Public Administration in the Saigon Metropolitan Area, Study of the Evolution and Development of a Southeast Asian Urban Community and its Problems, Michigan State University, Viet Nam Advisory Group, National Institute of Administration (Saigon, Viet Nam, June 1962), pp. 132-139.

[4](Joiner's note) The number of districts was changed from eight to nine in April 1962. Because current data relate to the old eight district system, the descriptions provided below concerning specific districts relate to the former arrangements.

assists in taking the census, performs certain law enforcement functions (e.g., he reports gambling within the district to the police, and is responsible for security maintenance); issues certificates, such as identity papers, voters' cards, and certificates of birth, death, residence and good behavior (morality); authorizes meetings; and performs judiciary functions, such as processing civil status papers and marriage applications. Nearly all of these activities are record-keeping functions.

He frequently cooperates with the district police chief in matters related to his responsibilities. For example, the two officials may consult on applications for meetings and issuance of good behavior certificates. The district chief also cooperates with agencies of the central government: e.g., one copy of all civil status papers which are processed may be sent to the Department of Justice.

Each of the district offices has staffs to assist the chief. This staff is headed by the senior clerk, who is the primary record keeper and supervisor of the chief's assistants. Technicians are assigned (temporarily detached) by their prefectural service to work in the Districts and are paid by their own agencies.

However, most of the employees of a district work on a daily wage basis, receiving their salaries from the prefectural budget. Among other things, this means that their salaries and terms of employment are not fixed by civil service standards. Generally, they receive 2000 VN$ to 5000 VN$ per month, can be released without notice, and do not participate in retirement funds or receive other fringe benefits.

2. Phuongs

Phuongs comprise districts; there are from five to six such divisions within each district. The phuong chief is salaried and appointed by the Prefect. He may or may not be a civil servant. Although he disseminates instructions and information received from the district chief, he does not assume all of the basic responsibilities of the latter. His role is rather that of an assistant and an intermediate agent between the district chief and lower tiers of the subdivisions system. . . .

3. Khoms

Khoms constitute phuong; there are about forty khoms in each phuong. Each khom has a chief. This official is formally elected by the following procedures: lien gia chiefs are elected by residents

and household heads in their area, and they in turn elect the khom chief. A khom chief is not a civil servant and receives no salary for his services. However, he receives an allowance to cover his expenses (office, travel, etc.) and sometimes has one or two clerks who serve as assistants.

The principal function of a khom chief is to receive and distribute instructions from the district and phuong chiefs and to execute orders issued by the district chief. Officially, he is supposed to act as an intermediary between the government and the population; he is what is referred to as a benevolent agent. In addition, he performs such sundry functions as census taking, establishing lists of persons who need identity cards and voters' cards, and soliciting funds for those who have suffered calamities.

The khom chief operates as an integral part of the subdivisions' hierarchy in order to carry out programs adopted by the Prefecture. For example, if the Prefect orders that a census be taken, instructions go first to the district chiefs, and from there the instructions are disseminated down through the four lower tiers. At each stage of dissemination the instructions become more specific concerning implementation of the census order. Data are then gathered at each tier and transmitted to the next higher tier.

Fingerprinting presents another example of the cooperative role of the several tiers in implementing a Prefecture program. A mobile unit moves into an area for one or two weeks and assists the population, in cooperation with the khom chief, to fill out cards and place their prints on the cards. The khom chief or phuong chief attests to a person's residence and distributes the cards. Finally, the cards are signed by the district chief.

4. Interfamily Groups (Lien Gia)

The interfamily groups are just below the phuong level in the tier subdivisions system. They are composed of neighboring families. In principle, five families are to constitute a group, but in practice this number is flexible (five to twenty families inclusive). They are to serve as a liaison between the population and the Prefecture hierarchy. Each interfamily group has a chief selected for his "esteem" in the neighborhood and who receives no salary.

The major function of the interfamily group chief is to inform the group concerning policies and instructions from the Prefecture hierarchy. He prepares family census books (leaflets including

the names of all household members), informs residents of data to acquire identity and voter cards, conducts fund drives (for flood relief, etc.), asks residents to participate in demonstrations, distributes literature concerning topics of current importance (e.g., the significance and methods of construction of strategic hamlets), checks to determine whether persons who are required to do so report for military mobilization and (as a security measure) attempts to discover the presence of strangers and activities of newcomers who fail to report their residence.

He also has a number of social functions, including promoting assistance among neighbors, asking residents to participate in communal work (alley cleaning, draining water, etc.), and promoting mutual aid, such as moral and physical assistance to the sick.

In order to perform his function of informing the members of his group, the chief will hold group meetings. They usually are held in his home, although they are held rather infrequently in the city. Frequently the meetings are poorly attended; many of those who attend do so only perfunctorily. The agenda involves discussions of such topics as: health, social and security problems in the group's area; where to get aid, facilities and financial assistance to facilitate projects undertaken by the group; and current national developments of importance.

Within the core of the city, the role of the lien gia is not particularly significant. To a great extent this can be explained by typical urban patterns such as lack of knowledge about one's neighbors. However, other factors also enter, including wide differences in socio-economic level of neighbors. In addition, the adeptness of the chief in handling human relations almost invariably is an important factor in determining his success.

As a generalization it may be said that the lien gia scheme is more successful in the rural levels where the chief is usually an economic and social leader whose advice is highly respected. The city itself can be broken down along socio-economic lines in evaluating the lien gia effectiveness. In the middle and higher income areas in the core of the city, frequently the status of the chief is less than other members of the group, and, consequently, his prestige is not high enough to command the respect essential for carrying out his duties. He frequently does command this respect, however, in the outskirts of the city, in workers' areas, and in the slum areas.

5. Households

Since the creation of the lien gia system, each household has had to designate a "legal" head. This need not be the person who exerts the most authority in a particular family, although usually the husband or principal wage earner obtains the distinction.

The main duties of the household head are: to report to the interfamily group chief, and on occasion to the police, all changes in the numbers of members of his household, including all changes of addresses; to fill out infrequent questionnaires distributed for various census purposes; and, to receive instructions concerning participation in community development projects and other information pertaining to government projects of nationwide or Prefecture interest.

The family census sheets are almost invariably filled out, because this is necessary before receiving a certificate of residence. This certificate is required in order to purchase a bicycle, motor-scooter, etc., and in order to obtain a certificate of morality.

Household heads also on occasion participate and represent their household at meetings with the interfamily group chief to discuss community development projects in their area, e.g., sewage and drainage, as well as to discuss any number of problems involving block or street residents.

At the beginning of the study, the actual working of the system, however, did not appear to follow exactly the plan which was set forth by the Diem Government, and it actually appeared to deteriorate during the period of the study. It also seemed that the local residents have very little feeling of participation in, identification with, or help from the Government.

Central Government

There are various outside governmental services which are visible in or near the quarter. There is a postal delivery which is on no time schedule, but comes into the area one or two times a day. The postman wears a khaki uniform and rides a bicycle and frequently is seen greeting people with a smile or exchanging brief pleasantries. In contrast, two real estate tax assessors dressed in suits and white shirts, followed by a woman with a bright ao dai and carrying a pink parasol, wearing locks of condescending superiority are frequent visitors. Public water does not enter the area but is available at two locations in the plaza or may be purchased at two private pumps in the area. The public spigots run constantly, and in the day during the rainy season, there

is a line of those awaiting water. During the dry season, however, water carriers tell of waiting until after midnight to fill the buckets necessary to finish their work. The city garbage collectors do not enter the area, and residents are assessed by the local officials for their own street cleaner and garbage man. Refuse which the garbage man leaves in a pile outside the area is picked up by a city truck. Although there are no sewers or telephones, there is electricity available throughout the area, and the majority of the homes avail themselves of this utility, though they feel it is very expensive and usually also have oil lamps and transistor battery radios in their homes.

The Vietnamese Government sponsors public schools and health facilities, which are located outside the area. (These are discussed later in this chapter.) The welfare department brought rice into the area once during the last three years and is not responsible for the presence or the activities of the privately sponsored social worker. It did, however, send moon lanterns and cake to the moon festival party at the social center's nursery school. This fact was not even mentioned, however, by the social worker a few weeks later when she was asked if the welfare department ever helped people in the area, and this gift was totally unknown to other members of the community. When asked about government help in job placement, several people mentioned that once, "a long time ago," there was an announcement by the Government asking men to register if they were unemployed and were seeking employment. None of the men of the area who were job hunting mentioned this, however, and no one asked had ever heard of anyone who did fill out a form receiving any work from that source. A Saigon truck was once seen in the vicinity picking up stray dogs, and Saigon police are available at the request of a khom leader. Government soldiers are seen in the area as residents, unofficial guests, or in connection with filling the draft quota which is a most unpopular function at present.

Of more interest, perhaps, than the actual service itself, is the view of the residents toward the Government and its services. Although during these tense times politically grounded questions were never asked, many comments were made to the researchers which helped paint a picture of general attitudes toward the Government and its demands and services. Since houses of tile or tin roofs are the only type taxable, a large majority of residents are completely unaffected by property taxes. Several of those paying taxes complained that the taxes are very high and, since for improvements in the area it is necessary to pay assessments, house ownership seems

expensive indeed. One lady who is owner of a large store-house combination said her "very high" taxes are 1000 VN$ for three years. Another lady with a large house next to the Catholic Church complained her house was taxed at 400 VN$ a year. Although these ladies could not think of anything that tax money paid for, and made remarks about its being a complete loss to them, they both happened to be at least partially supported by a husband or a son-in-law who were career military men.

The police appear several times in stories reported by residents. One mother and her son tell of the time during the Diem regime when the son was falsely accused and tortured following a school riot. Another woman and some of her neighbors reported how they tried to avoid the police while selling wares along the street. They told stories that did not show personal antagonism toward the individual policeman, as much as they pictured the women themselves finding it necessary to outwit the system for their own economic survival. The places where one can find customers, such as the exits of busy markets, are prohibited to peddlers. However, they also remarked that the police usually leave them alone in the equally prohibited park along the river. Twice during the study, policemen were observed helping themselves to products for which they did not pay; one man ate some slices of squid from a peddler's stand while he winked at the policeman across the street; the woman vendor, whose head was only a few inches from his hand, pretended not to notice. Another time during a police examination of a restaurant owner's papers, several others helped themselves to small snacks and several handfuls of toothpicks.

Toward the national army, the attitude is somewhat mixed; several residents serve in the military by choice, and many more are drafted against their will. Several men who were drafted asked if there was a way to get out of the service or change their jobs, for they felt they were unable to help their families adequately. They felt they had served a sufficient length of time and were discouraged by the war's becoming more dangerous and the army losing more and more ground. On days when recruiting officers are present, the number of young men seen on the streets seems to diminish visibly. Several men--or more commonly their mothers--asked about finding jobs. Factories and other employers are restricted from hiring men of draft age. One young woman who has relatives in the army said, "It is sad that the only effect of the Vietnamese army is to kill the buffalo boys. The army always arrives after the Viet Cong has taken or burned everything and has disappeared, and only the buffalo boys

are still there when the army comes." Many spoke of the growing insecurity in the rural areas of their homelands.

In other words, the attitude of the residents toward the central government and its functions seems to be one of uninvolvement, and there is a lack of any discernable feeling of a positive relationship. People seem to hope to avoid "useless" taxes, the police, and the draft. They also seem to feel that any visible improvement in the area has to come from the local level.

Phuong

The phuong leader or chief is the only paid official in the hierarchy who is found near the neighborhood and whose presence is known to some of the residents. He is the lowest official to have an office and paid staff and is supposed to do full-time work. Although several residents mentioned that the phuong keeps records of households, and they seem to know roughly where his office is, only the khom leader or chief mentioned any other function he performs. The phuong office is located some five or six blocks from the quarter and is used solely as an office (his house being some blocks further away). The building is well marked with a large sign. It is a one-floor structure approximately twelve feet wide. The front office is full of light coming from the open doors and windows; a huge gold and red Vietnamese flag covers one wall. In this room there are three tables at which sit one uniformed policeman and two young civilian men, one typing on a new typewriter, while the other examines papers and forms. At the back of this room, a doorway leads to a more private but much smaller and darker office containing no windows. This is the personal office of the phuong leader. The phuong leader himself is a short, pleasant-faced older gentleman with short-cropped graying hair who wears slacks and colored shirts which he leaves open at the neck. He also wears a pen in his pocket, a large wristwatch, a gold wedding band, and metal and plastic-rimmed glasses. He conducts his business with an air of interested efficiency. He sits behind a large desk covered with neat piles of papers and a daily newspaper; the surrounding walls contain files of papers many of which are labeled by khom numbers, posters dealing with the Viet Cong, a chart showing the name of each khom and lien gia leader, and maps of the khoms. The two large colored maps of the khoms, however, show the areas so differently as to indicate that at least one of the maps is quite inaccurate.

Although the official chart shows he is the link from the khom leader to the quan chief, one khom leader showed copies of requests for aid in his area which by-passed the phuong leader and were sent to the quan chief. This khom leader feels the phuong leader used to have some power but at present has no authority over what takes place in the khoms, except in granting permission for people to change locations when the khom leader recommends it, and in granting permission for khom leaders to take employment which does not interfere with their khom duties. During the study, however, there were two other times when it was noted that the phuong was contacted without going through the khom. Upon one occasion the use of an empty government building was requested for an area medical center by the social worker. The phuong leader was asked to intercede on behalf of the area with the quan chief. He reported a delay due to lack of response from the quan chief, but came to the area to see the building and offered another building a number of blocks outside the area as a possible site for another nursery school. A second time the phuong leader was contacted was when a very poor lady requested financial aid for her husband who had undergone emergency surgery. Although the phuong chief had files of records, he reported that his lists of householders was so out-of-date that it was almost useless.

The phuong leader himself says of his job that "it is merely that of a liaison between the people and the quan chief in whatever matter arises."

Khom

The next lower government official is the khom leader who receives no salary and has no office except for the front room of his home. He resides in the area in which he functions. Residents seem to be aware of their own khom leader and know who he is and where he lives. Upon questioning, however, the people show no clear picture of the function of the khom leader and no particular respect for the job as such. Several men mentioned either that they had been asked to perform as khom leaders and had refused, or that they would not accept the job if asked. There is a vague feeling among the people who speak on political subjects that khom leaders are chosen by residents (which did not prove to be true). Other opinions about khom leaders are: that if one wanted a project done it was best not to go to the khom but to do it himself; that the khom leader has no salary and, therefore, little time left to devote to the community from his occupation; that khom leadership involves much paper work; that one can only contact the police through the khom leader which often leads to delays.

One khom leader himself responds in a hazy manner about some of the functions of his job, saying that with changes continually taking place on the upper governmental level, he is often given contradictory orders by differing upper echelon officials or is given jobs to do without the necessary authority to enforce compliance.

This khom leader is a short man with wavy black hair, a tense mouth and quick step. He blends into the neighborhood, appearing to be about average socio-economically. For instance, he usually wears slacks with a white shirt open at the collar and long rolled-up sleeves outside his home, and traditional "pajama" type clothing at home. He smokes Vietnamese cigarettes, lighting them with a mechanical lighter (with pictures of nude girls on each side), wears a working watch and puts on glasses when posing for pictures. He rides a well-used bicycle to and from his job with the electric company. His home, which is a long, narrow, wooden structure, shares a common wall with a neighboring house. This makes privacy in his "office" impossible, as people are seen peeking and listening through cracks and knotholes. In two ways he is of minority groups: he is from Central Viet Nam, and he is an active Catholic, attends services, supervises decorations for church celebrations, and has a large altar in his office-home. He has lived in the area for twenty years and knows his neighbors well. He says that in this neighborhood there are people from all areas and of all religions, and they judge each other by their "goodness or badness" and not by their origin or religion.

Before the establishment of lien gias, khoms and the other government units in 1959, the leader reports that this area has no formal or informal government such as was present in many rural communities. The man chosen in 1959 for this area served until his death in 1961. At that time, the present leader was chosen by the phuong from among the lien gia leaders. He expects to remain in the job indefinitely or until he is no longer able.

In his living room-office is a large white first aid chest marked with a red cross and a U.S.A.I.D. handshake. He reports that when he became a khom leader, both he and his daughter were given the first aid course for village health workers; one of his functions at present is to give out medicine. When supplies come, he puts a sign outside the house, and people come to him mostly with headaches, rheumatism and coughs, but there is never enough medicine. He has the authority to refer very ill people to the clinic outside the area.

He is also in charge of a male defense corps which is supposed to practice weekly and whose membership is at his discretion. If a person is in the military service, works far away, or is ill, the khom leader excuses him from the requirements. The defense corps has a building in the area containing a rack with clubs for the defense of the area. The group is responsible for fire and theft prevention and control. It is charged with maintaining a night watch each evening. The leader finds increasing difficulty, however, in forcing men to attend practice and night watch. He is not responsible for family records which he says the lien gia leader must keep up-to-date for the quan chief. He must approve a family before they may move into the area, however, and write comments on their identification cards for other khom leaders if they hope to move. He has about fifteen families move in from outside a year, as well as relatives who join established families.

In the past he was responsible for helping to organize classes for illiterate adults. These classes were popular but are no longer offered by the Central Government. He feels that any free educational opportunity would be eagerly attended by residents.

Many people come to him asking for help in finding jobs. At one time he appointed a man to keep lists of the men who came asking for employment. This man was contracted by prospective employers, and salary and work were negotiated through him for many types of construction work and other employment. The khom leader says, however, that the man is no longer active, and no replacement has been found.

Another of his duties deals with problems brought to him from the lien gia leaders. Formerly there were required monthly meetings of all the lien gia leaders in his khom, and reports were required of these meetings. Now he finds it difficult to get all the men together, and reports are required only when problems arise. Impersonal problems, such as sidewalks, are discussed in lien gia leaders' meetings. Family problems such as those between husband and wife, parent and "cowboy" son, and between families are brought privately to him to be settled. Only when his advice is not followed, and the problem continues, does he allow the police to be called.

When a lien gia leader wants to start a project in his neighborhood not involving a request for money from outside or from the khom area as a whole, the lien gia leader must plan the project and collect the money for it; then he

submits the plan to the khom leader for approval. If it involves a large amount of money, it is then submitted to the quan for his approval, which may take a long period of time. "If it is for a very small amount of money," the khom leader laughs "a project will also have problems. If it is big, people can agree, but if it costs less than 150 VN$ all the people argue."

Some projects also are designed in the form of a request to the quan for city help. The khom leader has carbon copies of some neatly typed several-page requests for bridge repairs, drainage ditch construction, improved sidewalks, and similar projects. He says that it takes such a long time to learn if a request is granted, that emergency repairs cannot be handled in this way. Even if help is given, it is often in inadequate amounts. He feels any problem that is considered a serious one has to be handled by the residents themselves if at all possible. When asked if the lien gia leaders often organize projects, the khom leader remarked that they almost never do anything of this type, nor do they consider this as part of their job. He feels most of the lien gia leaders with whom he works are not particulary interested in their position or in community improvement.

In the past the khom leader has been responsible for collecting money and organizing festivals in his neighborhood for special holidays or for the visit of a governmental official. He says both he and the community members are glad that this is no longer required because they all feel themselves too poor to plan such community festivities. In addition, he no longer collects money for neighborhood funerals or family emergencies.

During the September interview the khom leader reported that though there was much work involved, and his job was not a paying one, he did not want to give it up. In January, however, he complained that he was given orders to have the same jobs carried out, but he no longer has authority. For instance, in the past if he ordered a man to come to a meeting, to make up with his wife, or to stop beating her, or to take charge of organizing a labor team, the khom leader could force him to stand watch at night or do something equally unpleasant as punishment if he disobeyed. Everyone understood he had the authority at that time, but now that the central government "is trying to please everyone, it cannot be counted on to back up orders, and residents realize this." Unless he has authority to order his work done, he would rather be relieved of the total responsibility.

In studies of rural village governmental structure made during the period when officials had authority, it still appeared that participation in traditional celebrations came from a sense of village loyalty. Most leaders were respected, and although their positions involved personal expense, there was the prestige to be considered.

It is interesting to note that in this area, where there is an outward appearance of co-operative friendliness between individuals and within the community as a whole, participation in community projects was obtained only when punishment for non-participation was implied. For instance, even though many communities of this type do have serious fires every dry season, and residents seem aware of the problem, they are unwilling to take their turns in the fire watch. Since it is no longer required, the community no longer plans neighborhood celebrations and fetes.

Lien Gia

On each person's house throughout the quarter is a sign showing the house number and the lien gia and khom to which the residents belong. The lien gia is a group of five to twenty neighboring families, and their leader (or chief) is supposed to know them intimately and be able to give the khom leader or police information about them upon request. The lien gia leaders themselves, as well as the people, view the leaders' job as primarily one of keeping track of the comings and goings of people within the quarter. If, for instance, a friend comes to spend the night who is not registered as a member of the family, this must be reported to the lien gia leader.

These officials are supposedly chosen by the heads of the families. One woman reports, however, that she and some of her widowed friends are not informed when these elections are held, because, although they are family heads, there is no male to send as representative of their households.

For a complete picture of the organization, both formal and informal, it is necessary to consider some of the projects suggested or completed which show the success or failure of the system as a whole. The neighborhood has a clean appearance. Although no one seems to remember how it started, the khom leader charges a graduated assessment of all residents depending upon their incomes to hire a man to sweep the sidewalks and empty garbage. A number of years ago the decision was also made that

there was a need for toilets. Although repeated questioning could not discover the instigators of the plan, each khom, by a combination of assessments and local help, constructed at least one latrine over the river. These consist of six or more partitions two feet high containing a framework over which a person squats. The largest one built in Khom 14 has a roof and sides with separate entrances for men and women.

Several months before the study began, the Catholics finished building a church in the area with an attached nursery school. Prior to that time, the large church several blocks away from the quarter was used, and this local church is still considered a "mission"; it still borrows priests from the larger church for early Sunday services. Again, this new church was at the "instigation of community members" with the help of contributions from both within and outside of the area.

During the period of the study, four community improvements were completed. One was the building of a new nursery school at the social center. Land and money were contributed almost solely through the Catholic Relief Agency, with the running expenses paid for by the American Women's Association. There was interest among some resident mothers whose children had been unable to attend the nursery in its former smaller location, and the Vietnamese social worker felt more projects could be carried out with a more adequate building. However, the organization of the idea, the requests for money, and a great deal of the work in starting the project was done by interested American women. The plans were suggested by an outside architect friend of the social worker, and laborers were hired from among the unemployed of the area to build the new structure.

Another community improvement was the laying of several new boards on a particularly rickety boardwalk, making it somewhat less dangerous but still inadequate for the many residents using it. This was done by the Saigon city government after many requests had been made by residents through their lien gia leaders to the khom leader and from him to the quan chief. After much paper work and extended waits, the boards were brought and laid in place but left unfastened by the city workmen. The khom leader said if anything more adequate were to be done the residents would have to work it out themselves.

A third project was the widening of a short dirt pathway along a dike which rain had washed dangerously narrow. The project was organized by the lien gia

leader who lived along the path. Several residents said that they did not know who made the original suggestion, and even though the assessment seemed high to them for their low incomes, they said it was graduated and wealthier people were assessed more. Everyone felt the arrangement was fair and pointed out that only those who used the path to reach their homes were assessed; to them the path repair was essential. People said it was the first such project their lien gia leader had attempted, and they were glad to have him make the arrangements. Again, a local unemployed man was hired to do the actual work.

A final project completed during that time was a drain built by a small group of more well-to-do families. Several older ladies were concerned about filthy water flooding their homes. They had no way to drain it out after the tides had gone down. They joined with several neighbors in asking a retired barber, who also lived in this small flooded area, to organize the building of a drain. They felt that he had time to supervise the project and was an honest, good man. He contacted some workmen to find out the cost of the project, reported the needed assessments which were promptly donated, and the drain was started and completed very quickly. Before this time the neighbors report they had made numerous requests to the lien gia leader who reported he had contacted the khom leader. He reported he had "sent into the government" a request for help and had received no reply. The lien gia leader is said to have then told these residents that if it was a problem to them they would have to solve it themselves. The result was a drain that not only drained the water from this area when the tides ran out but also drained a mosquito-filled swamp. This group of residents was so pleased with their project that they discussed the possibility of repairing a small stretch of sidewalk leading from Main Street to their houses. The informal leader of the successful drain project said upon questioning that he had no interest in being a leader in the area but would help when neighbors asked for his help. Residents of one bordering area whose property was not drained by this project discussed a similar drain arrangement, but, as one retired gentleman with education and governmental experience said, "We can find no one who is willing to lead the project." He reported that he had been asked to be a khom leader, but said he had refused because such official jobs required much paper work and were ineffective. He also said he wanted to exercise no informal leadership as that shown by the leader of the project in the adjoining area because he just wanted to

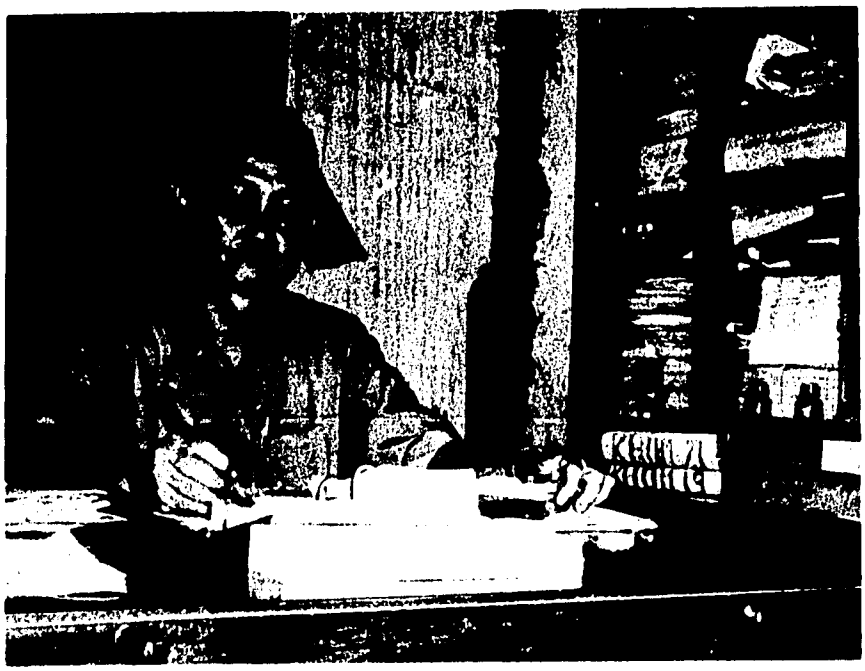
live quietly. He said if a project were organized by outsiders, the wealthy owner of the wire factory in the neighborhood would be a trusted leader to supervise the work. This man was accepted as a leader, for he was not only wealthy but was known to give more than the minimum assessment to community projects. The factory owner was a leader in the movement for the new Catholic Church and was given the job of handling the money for the church. It was not discovered, however, that he had proposed the building of the church or any community project nor had he shown leadership at any other time. Reportedly, he too, had been asked to be a khom leader and had refused any leadership role in the government.

During the period there were two unsuccessful projects which were suggested but not carried out. The first was the medical clinic, described in the chapter on health. This was suggested by outsiders but died because of a lack of interest. Another project was also suggested by members of the American Women's Club after hearing complaints about poor walks in the area. At this time the social worker was informed of the possibility of a self-help project, in which people of the area would supply the labor and the U.S.A.I.D. Program would supply the materials for the walk. An A.I.D. representative and the social worker called on the khom leader whose version of events was that the American left forms to be filled out, but he never came back. The leader filed out the forms but complained that the Americans or social worker had never come back to his home to get them. He made no effort to drop them off at the neighboring social center. He spoke as though he felt that the Americans had promised great things and had not followed through.

As far as other potential leadership in the area is concerned, the Buddhist monks appear to take little interest in the affairs of the community. Even monks who study "nursing" say they frequently can do nothing to help the poor, as they have no transportation to go to an outside hospital. They acted as a temporary clearing house for clothing for the flood victims in the northern provinces of South Viet Nam but show no activity of this kind in relation to the poor of the area. The Buddhist youth organization, (See Associations) at one period, worked on the construction of a new building at the Buddhist Center in another part of town but apparently have made no changes in the neighborhood. The Catholic priests who come from the larger neighboring church change from week to week and spend little time in this small area. There seems to be no one source to which people turn for guidance or leadership. Local money lenders are frequently reported to have

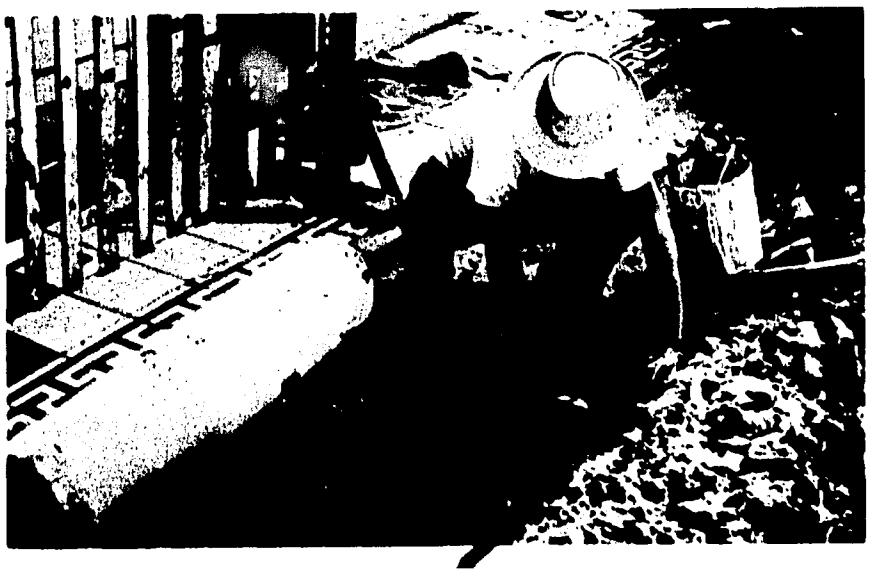
great power, but the social worker who described them, stated they required large interest rates and were universally disliked. No long-time successful leader could be identified, and many said there were none in the area.

Perhaps this area is too new and too much of a composite of differing types to permit agreement about leaders. One woman names as a leader a lien gia, one person names a retired barber, and one person names a rich man who donates more than the required amount to community funds. No two people name the same man. Although two of these leaders and a number of potential leaders have been asked to take political jobs, all say that they refused because of the "distaste for 'official' leadership roles," or "paperwork," or "desire to lead quiet lives," or belief in the ineffectiveness of the positions. Most people have also refused to assume unofficial leadership. The social worker appears to have identified herself with only a few families. It is also significant that there was no remark made about the possibility of getting better leaders; present official leaders were excused from not functioning well by the fact they had no time. The lady who claimed to be deprived of her voice in government because she had no male representative in the house seemed to feel that it was not very important anyway. There is, however, general agreement that poor sidewalks and lack of drainage are the two most important area problems requiring some leadership and cooperation for resolution. The few projects that were finished appear to enhance the prestige of the leader in the eyes of those assessed or participating, for they were projects important to those involved and were successfully concluded.



Above: Phuong Leader; Khom Leader.

Below: Walk project; Drain projects; Small latrine.



Education

Academic institutions in Saigon are based primarily upon the French system of education, and failure in examinations at the close of the year ends the course of study for many youngsters. Many parents feel it is necessary to start their youngsters in school or with private tutors at the age of three or four for them to do well in grade school. Many private lower grade schools, which have established good reputations for producing successful candidates in the higher grade school entrance examinations, require children to pass an examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic before entering the first grade.

The only schools located directly inside the area are those training small children or primary children. The pagoda has one of these schools. The school room is a small, dark, almost windowless appendage of the pagoda. It is frequently closed without warning. The teacher of this one-room school is changed often and is usually one of several nuns, but occasionally he is a monk. Whoever the personality in charge, however, there is a stick in the hand of the teacher and confusion and lack of attention among the students. The desks are the height for adults and many of the forty-six children who crowd the benches kneel on their seats to see the top of the desks. Only occasionally does one hear the unison sing-song repetition typical of Vietnamese schools. The Catholic Church also has attached a school room to the new church for pre-school and lower elementary students. It claims to take children regardless of faith. The desks in this school are more nearly student size, the room is lighter, and cleaner, and one can usually notice a disciplined atmosphere or hear unison recitation. All of the thirty seats of this school are filled. In Khom 15 there is also a private school that handles eight to fifteen students in the living room of a home arranged with individual desks. Most of the students are nursery or lower elementary school age, but the woman teacher also accepts older students who want tutoring in mathematics or French.

Although the social center pre-school is located in Khom 13, many of its students come from Khom 14 and 15. The new school rooms are quite attractive, brightly furnished, light, and contain child-sized desks. The students are three or four years of age. The curriculum includes arithmetic with the use of counting sticks, word recognition from flash cards, spelling, dictation, and writing, even for the three-year olds. The lesson plans and

materials have been copied and translated into Vietnamese by the social worker from those of an expensive local French-Catholic nursery school at a center where the social worker received her training. The atmosphere in this school is relaxed, the children appear to enjoy the learning games, and the young attractive teachers always appear to be in control without the typical switch.

Physical punishment does not occur frequently at this school, but on one occasion two boys had been fighting and were sent upstairs to see the social worker. She talked with the two and then forced one boy to hold out the palms of his hands alternately a number of times as she hit them quite hard with a metal ruler. The older youngsters say she hits the ends of their fingers with the edge of a metal ruler when she is angry with them and "it hurts very much."

Now that the social center is enlarged, there are one hundred pre-school students in two rooms or classes in the morning and in one class in the afternoon. The older girls and adults use the second room in the afternoon. The social worker says, however, that there are fifty or more youngsters of this age whose parents are eager to get them into this school, but the students are taken from the most needy homes and there is just no more room. She states that parents are eager to have children of this age in school, especially if both of them work, not only for baby sitting purposes but so that the youngsters can learn something before they are of an age to apply for public school, to be needed at home, or to go to work themselves.

The public and private schools at the edge of the area have both morning and afternoon shifts. Several youngsters of the area now attend or have attended a private grade and high school not far from the area. This school was established years ago by its lady principal and has a reputation for fairly high academic standards and total school discipline. The appearance of some of the classrooms, however, is similar to the pagoda school: dirty, tall desks, poor lighting, teachers with switches in hand and a lack of attentiveness from the students. The principal complains that hers is a difficult job. She says she gets no cooperation on discipline from parents. She gets good cooperation from her teachers, however, many of whom are former students. She finds teacher stability is good, partly because so many teachers want positions in Saigon. She complains that finances for a school like hers are always a problem, as parents will refuse to pay the school fees if they are displeased, if

there are too many holidays in a month, or if the government closes the schools for a few days. Teachers, however, are paid by the month, no matter how many days they teach. She points to a number of private schools that have been started near the area during the year and which have failed because of inadequate financing.

In the plaza, there is a high school, attended by other residents, which contrasts with the other private school. It is not noted for high academic standards but has a reputation for past and present student demonstrations and for hoodlumism. One teacher of this school reports that his classes often contain seventy-five or more students, and he has to shout to be heard. A great deal of noise and confusion issues from the school any time it is in session. This teacher claims he cannot have a library in the school, as the youngsters have no respect for property, and absenteeism is high. In a different section of town, where he teaches in another school, he believes he might have a library if he limits its use to selected students.

Student population of Saigon schools is not limited to any particular area, and various youngsters of this locale attend private or public schools throughout the city. A few report attending expensive French Government or French-Catholic schools with very high standards and very high fees. Except for these French schools, public schools, especially in the higher grades, usually have higher standards and requirements than private schools. Private schools in the upper grades take the students unable to pass the rigid examinations required for public school attendance.

A teacher from a well-known public boys high school close to the area tells of his frustration after returning from two years training in education methods in the United States. Full of ideals, he came back to what is considered a choice teaching job in Saigon. He reports that even in public schools of good reputation, discipline is now such a problem that teachers act more like policemen than teachers. He claims that the whole atmosphere of the school depends upon the principal and his political ambitions and strengths. In his classes, absenteeism is high but is excused by the principal who is afraid of losing his job if he stands up against his students' wishes. This teacher then speaks of schools in which the principals have been removed after government officials received letters of complaint from parents, or after the students have put on a demonstration. His principal puts pressure on teachers to keep things calm, and teachers are also

afraid of losing their jobs if they resist student demands. They are afraid of hoodlums' injuring them or causing damage to the school. Recently, he points out, one large, new private school was closed permanently after striking students broke the desks, windows, and caused considerable destruction of property. He claims that personal grudges of students, other teachers or outsiders are frequently involved when the public, or sometimes even the strikers or complainers themselves, are led to believe it is a political or moral issue. He states that discipline was not always such a problem, but that now even parents complain of being afraid of their youngsters. Also, he goes on to say, that parents of most of his students either had very little or no formal education or were educated in different subject matters and do not understand and are unsympathetic with the present school curriculum. He says discipline in girls' schools is only a little better than in boys' schools, although in boys' schools there are young men who register in order to avoid the draft and have no interest in finishing or doing well in their studies. Some of these young men carry on jobs during school hours.

Beginning salaries for teachers are better in public schools than in ordinary private schools. A teacher who gains a reputation by his students passing the exams, however, may command an exceptionally large salary in a private school. Both of the young men teachers interviewed complained of being overloaded and of teaching classes that were much too large. They also claimed it was necessary that most teachers with a family to support take on outside tutoring, overloads for which they are paid extra, or teaching assignments in more than one school. One taught in two schools, and had a school of his own in his home across the street from the end of the plaza area. Outside his home was an advertisement that some family member planned and served weddings.

A number of parents complained that their youngsters could not get the specialized training to find good jobs. Within the area, the social center has a class teaching unemployed girls between nine and fourteen years of age. In this class there was supposed to be instruction in first aid, sanitation, cooking, nutrition, and sewing. Sewing was the only popular subject, and the social worker who taught these classes dropped the other subjects and hired a sewing teacher. The class started with four girls and grew to eight but still has vacancies. The girls are taught to cut garments without patterns and to sew boys' shorts out of flour sacks after they complete samples of stitches for their notebooks. They

then sew children's clothing which is sold by the center. Sewing and embroidery are the two most popularly mentioned trades for girls; secretarial jobs are in third place. Several mothers mentioned how pleased they are to have their daughters working for tailors not far from the area, where they can learn the trade even if the beginning salary is very small. Although there are a number of seamstresses in the area, there are apparently no youngsters being trained by them. One embroidery girl, however, stated that she trained young girls, teaching them simple stitches which they could do for her after learning them and be paid by the piece, or they could go on to learn the next more difficult stitch. One girl was an apprentice in a weaving factory. Several girls stated they hoped sometime in the future to attend secretarial schools. In a number of homes both girls and boys learn a craft by working with the family in a home industry. One young man learned from his father to make special lunch meat and another to cut hair. Several people stated that one had to be related to or know someone to get any apprenticeship position. Although a few stated that it was easy for boys to get jobs as apprentices in electrical shops or similar businesses, no young men were reported employed in this way. Some men who had training or experience in these skills reported difficulty finding jobs. Although many jobs require certain certificates or previous experience in a skill, these things along will not assure one of finding a position. The often expressed comment of residents is that any training or education that could be obtained free would be popular. The adult literacy classes formerly offered by the government were reported to be popular and well attended in the area.

To balance the picture of education, however, one must realize that although some training and classwork are either difficult to obtain or expensive, there are many signs of lack of utilization of existing opportunities. Although several girls at home claimed to want any type of paying job, the class in sewing at the social center was not full, and even those taking the course were somewhat irregular in their attendance. Public school education is available and free to students in the lower primary grades, but there are a number of youngsters of this age group who do not attend. Reasons given for this vary from poor health or need to help at home, to lack of interest. One mother appears to keep her bright daughter from school occasionally merely for companionship. There is evidence of books in few homes, and even the few school books are not safely out of reach of the tiny tot. Once a student was seen grabbing a school book from a baby brother, only

to give it back after being admonished by her mother for making the tiny child cry.

There was no apparent recognition of the need for a proper study environment. In one home while the mother told of the high academic record of her son with apparent pride, he lay on the floor in a dark, relatively quiet corner of the room while the younger children yelled and played, and the elders sat at the table under the light. Although a number of homes had blackboards which were described as useful for parents or older brothers and sisters training younger children, never was there a sign of their being used for this type of training. One girl, however, used her blackboard to teach herself English. One school-aged boy complained that he needed practice with his English, but when asked if his neighboring brother-in-law, who had been in the States and spoke English rather well, could help, the child looked surprised and answered that his brother-in-law would be much too busy. One retired, educated father whose daughter is having difficulty with school work was asked if he helps her. But he claims to be too busy. In only one case did a mother report that she helped her daughter who did not attend school learn to read and write.

Along the streets children occasionally play school among themselves, but adults are not seen helping children. Several parents, who speak highly of their children's scholastic achievements, seem to take absenteeism very lightly. One family who stated that they moved to Saigon partly to obtain better educational opportunities for their girls seems to be unconcerned that their two eldest daughters have quit school as they "just never liked it."

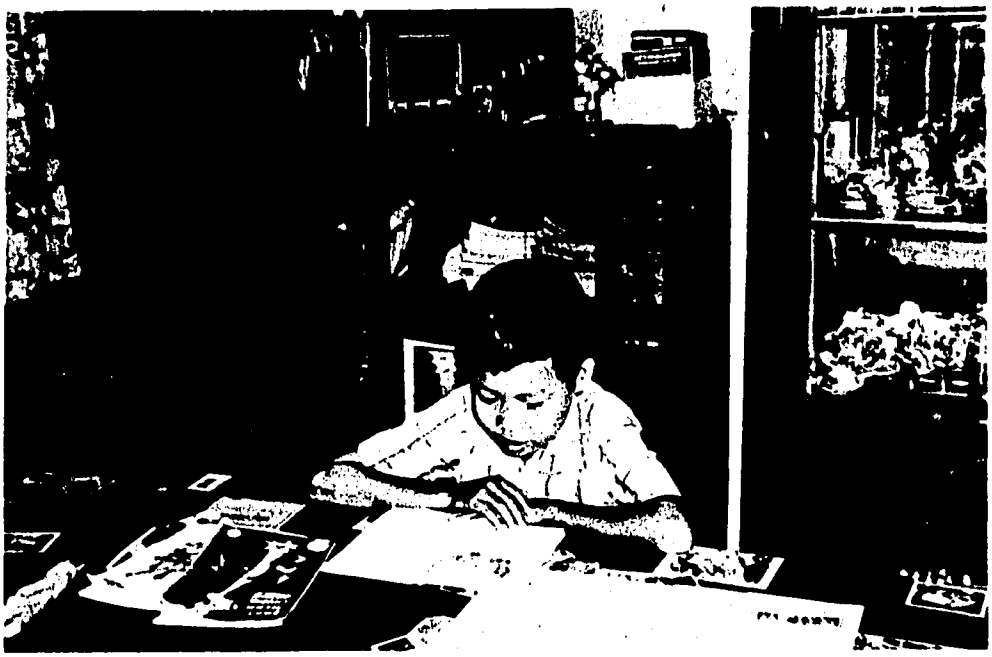
Another family who speaks with pride of their daughter's high grades in school seems to think that it is not a particularly serious matter if she continues into higher elementary classes. An active lady who is cared for by her eleven-year-old granddaughter says affectionately and proudly that her granddaughter has no need of going to school any more, as she learned to read and write at an early age.

When asked, only one parent mentioned any particular ambition for the future of a child--a father who had dedicated his only son to the Catholic priesthood. Many other parents answered such inquiries by stating that what, how much, and where their child studied was up to the child, and his career should depend on the child's own choice and ability, which would develop in time.

When asked about the present education offered in the schools, several residents who have school aged children seem to be puzzled by what their children are learning. One man, whose daughter is in the academic course at school, said he felt girls needed to learn only domestic subjects, and just boys should be taught academic subjects. One father from a rural area said that schools have improved a great deal since he was a boy, and that Saigon has better schools than other cities or the rural areas he has seen. One young grandmother laughs and says that in her day no girl would have been allowed to learn to read or write for fear that they would spend their time writing love letters. But she adds that she realizes that life changes, and she feels it is probably a good thing that her granddaughters are learning to read and write. It is evident from conversations and from the fact that the children are frequently called in to read or write something for an elder, that only a few men, but a large percentage of older women, are illiterate, and most youngsters between seven and sixteen are not.

In summarizing the attitude toward education shown by parents in this area, one might say that there is pride in the scholastic achievement of their children, but no pressure, help, or in some cases encouragement in school work. The youngsters are given a great deal of independence to achieve and are not interfered with unless the parent needs help at home. There is, perhaps, somewhat less concern for the education of girls, as they are more often required to help at home, and there is some feeling that education is not as necessary for girls. There does not seem to be much parental concern about absenteeism, lack of interest in school work, or lack of occupational training. A few showed training certificates from schools that were costly by the family standards but remarked it was still hard to get a job. The few parents who send their youngsters to expensive academic schools of high standards claim to have no desires for their youngsters to have higher education unless the youngster chooses to do this. Perhaps this is merely rationalization cultivated in fear of the difficulty of passing examinations for higher studies.

One Vietnamese said of education, however, "Girls don't need academics as it makes them worse instead of better homemakers. Boys get discouraged about education these days when the draft hangs over their heads. Besides, schools no longer train boys to be philosophers, and what good is job training if there aren't jobs to be had after it's all done."



Above: Student.

R.: Social Center Nursery School.

Below: Local Private Elementary School; Local high school students prepare to make political demonstration.

Health

Health problems are frequently mentioned among residents of the area. People can be seen with patches of tape filled with medicine pasted over temples and bruises made by pinching the bridge of the nose as two common home remedies for headaches, colds, dizziness, and the like. One grandmother proudly stated that her eleven-year-old granddaughter had cured herself of a bad cold by pinching her nose herself, and they showed the remaining pinch marks and how healthy the girl had become. Circular bruises, approximately two inches in diameter, are occasionally seen across the backs of men wearing no shirts. These are made by burning alcohol-filled cotton in a bottle, then placing it on the skin while it is hot enough to suck the skin into the bottle as it cools, thereby "sucking out the bad air that is causing the sickness." A common smell is camphor from the very popular Chinese Tiger Balm and its less popular Vietnamese and Malasian equivalents, favorite Oriental cure-alls. This medicine is seen used for such varied problems as a cold, a balm for the legs of an underdeveloped child, and as food for a very ill, poorly nourished infant. Movies and papers are filled with ads for these medicines, worm medicines, vitamins, and other strength-giving formulas.

One day a lady who frequently mentioned using Vietnamese medicine brought out three bottles of western medicine which she said she received as a gift from a traveling salesman. The descriptions on the bottles said they were for headaches, itchy skin, and for round worms. She had chosen these, as they were common problems in her family, and she knew the worms are from improperly washed green vegetables.

Vietnamese are known for acceptance of all types of Western and Eastern medicines--accepting the new without rejecting the old methods--a pattern habitually followed in the this neighborhood. This acceptance of medicine is, according to most authors and experts, partially due to the fact that many Vietnamese believe illness is caused by malicious, insulted or uncared-for spirits and medicine may drive them away, just as offerings may placate them, and other practices may confuse them. The latter belief is best illustrated in the quarter by a practice common throughout Viet Nam of changing a child to confuse the spirits. A family from outside the area who found its newborn baby becoming more and more ill, perhaps close to death, hired a local cyclo driver's wife to raise the child. They believed that either they or their child

were being punished by the spirits and that by moving the baby, the spirits would be confused and, therefore, the child would not be hurt. This belief is so strong that the cyclo driver's wife at first thought medicine was not necessary for the extremely ill infant. She remarked, "The child was with its parents until recently. It will get better now it's here." When its progress was poor, however, she turned to Vietnamese medicine. When the money was gone, she utilized the free clinic with western medicine, and she felt this helped. After getting money, however, she went back to the more familiar Vietnamese preparations. She remarked that she had raised another child who was so sick that "one could not tell if it was a girl or boy," which perhaps referred to the practice of fooling the angry spririts by changing a child's name and clothing to that of the opposite sex until the child is well and strong, and the spirit has forgotton its anger.

But since "Western" medical help is available at the free clinic, most residents say they use this often in addition to the traditional cures. The government has a series of "western" hospitals of a general and specialized nature throughout the city. These are so crowded that although a person is allowed to go to one on his own, he has a better chance of being taken care of if he has been referred by a clinic, mobile health unit, doctor, social worker, or government official.

There are maternity centers scattered throughout the city, and both public and private ones are located near the area and are used by its residents.

There is also a government clinic within several blocks of the edge of the area. It is a large yellow building clearly marked with a red cross. It is open every day, and there are nurses and doctors on its staff. Any day one can see lines of people on the porch of this building, waiting their turn. Although seriously ill people may be seen arriving in cyclos, there is an ambulance for transporting serious cases to hospitals from the clinic. A number of people from the area mentioned having been successfully treated there. Several, however, stated that the lines were so long it took an entire day from work, and there were no chairs or beds for the ill to use while waiting. The service is free, but one may have to buy prescribed medicine. This clinic, which does treat a large number of people daily, is under the direction of the Ministry of Health.

In order to service rural areas far from hospitals, the Rural Affairs Ministry of the Government has established mobile units to serve in the countryside. At present they

are experimenting with the use of two of these units in "popular" (working class) areas of Saigon. A mobile unit is scheduled to come to the edge of this area for one day every two weeks. In practice, it frequently stays only half a day and sometimes does not come at all. The unit itself is a large, white van, similar to those used to give X-rays in the United States. It is, however, fitted with various equipment and supplies, and the doors in the sides drop down forming a work space. The trailer is parked behind a walled area in the plaza. It is placed near a wooden framework covered with palms under which are put two tables, several stools and a coal oil sterilizer (the electric one in the mobile trailer does not work on the available electricity). There are seven nurses in white uniforms, a male medical technician who wears a sport shirt which he once covered with a white jacket to have his picture taken, a doctor and a dentist.

The doctor with this group is a military doctor who says he had six years of medical training in Paris. He reports he sees between one hundred and two hundred patients a day. The most common complaint he hears is that of rheumatism in older people; next in frequency are lung diseases, tiredness, headaches, and skin problems. He says his patients like medicine, though they like shots better, display no fear of doctors, and enjoy being referred to hospitals, provided they can afford the cost of transportation. He has an emergency radio-phone for calling ambulances if the case is serious enough.

This doctor acts in a supervisory capacity, while the medical technician, who had three years of training, gives the examinations, and the nurses, who had two to six months training, give shots, cleanse wounds, and distribute medicines. Never once was the doctor seen touching or consulting a patient, but he usually walks around and jokes about other topics with members of his staff. The staff carry on continuous conversations, appearing to take little notice of the patients whom they attend. Mobile units in villages are often staffed with a government official who has been given the training of a medical technician, and it is under discussion to take the doctor out of the unit, leaving it entirely in charge of a technician.

There are thirteen basic drugs in the mobile unit: aspirin tablets, aureomycin ophthalmic ointment, benzyl benzoate saponated, brown mixture compound (for coughs and lung infections), chloroquin diphosphate tablets,

deficiency tablets, dusting powder (5% DDT or Lindane), diarrhea tablets, petroleum or vaseline, piperazine tartrate tablets, potassium permanganate tablets, sulfa tablets and sulfa ointment. The doctor complains that there could never be enough medicine. A search of the unit one day disclosed that beyond the thirteen basic drugs it contained: clorophlomaizine, Thiamine, attrophine, emethine, camphor, Vitamin C, nivaquine, amenophiline, hardenal and menadiodine. A day's tally made by a Vietnamese public health specialist working for the United States Aid Mission found that this unit handled approximately one hundred cases in this community during the day, most of which dealt with headaches, stomach aches, eye infections, or symptoms of undernourishment. It is safe to say, however, from subsequent observation that this is a larger number than is often seen, especially on the days when the health unit is there for only a half a day. The public health official also commented that the people preferred shots to pills and the number of shots which are given are largely camphor which has little curative effect, but reacts like a shot of alcohol, giving the recipient a feeling of well-being.

Many people of the area use this unit and some of them go to it time and time again. There are lines of patients each time it comes. Only one man, who mentioned being concerned about a health problem, remarked that he had never heard of the unit, though he had lived in the area for a long time. Several people mentioned, however, that the previous doctor parked his car in plain sight so they could tell when the unit was there by looking in the plaza, and they were sorry this practice had stopped. Some mention that they never seem to catch the unit when it is there, and others state they have to go to outside doctors, since the unit is there so infrequently. A woman who has a tubercular husband worried about her sick, coughing son but said the unit doctor had given him cough medicine but had not given him a referral slip to get an X-ray. She would thus have to pay for an X-ray herself but could not afford it. Another woman, hired to raise a child, mistakenly believed she could not take the sick baby to the doctor because she was not its mother. One lady who complains of a temporary painful paralysis in different parts of her body says she is afraid to go to the unit for fear the doctor will put her in the hospital against her will. Several women do not use the unit as they never use western medicine, but the grandchild of one was referred to children's hospital and treated in a western manner. Two other families

who appear to be higher than the average economically never use the medical unit (or the clinic) as they "are not poor." These two couples take their families to private doctors who have offices within several blocks of the area. There is no identification or requirement, however, that one must be poor to use the mobile unit, and several women with higher standards of living were seen getting treatment there.

There is also a dentist with the medical mobile unit who works for the Ministry of Health and is newly assigned to this job. Previously there were no dentists in the units, but he is assigned to do minor dental work (referring major work to the hospital) while making a survey of dental problems. He complains, however, that the very complete looking set of tools he has been given is adequate for major surgery, which he is not to do, but he does not have a simple drill to do minor work. He says Vietnamese have many dental problems caused by not brushing their teeth, and he hopes to teach dental care to his patients. Even after saying this, he talks with the doctor and not with the people waiting in line, nor does he make his presence known. Residents are surprised when they are told there is a dentist in the unit. One morning, without previous publicity, he held a dental clinic, and word spread so quickly that there was a long line of patients all morning. The dentist claims that one serious problem for a dentist to combat is the ill effects left by traveling dentists who pull teeth for five or ten VN$ but frequently break off the roots or cause infection by poor sanitation.

During the survey, one such traveling dentist set up a table and stool "office" for a day in the plaza. On the table he put a collection of teeth, which he had supposedly pulled during his carrer and displayed to prove his experience. He did give his patients shots to deaden the gum before using a dentist's tool to pull the tooth. He had apparently only one tool which he used for teeth of all shapes and conditions, and he made no apparent attempt to sterilize his equipment. Neighbors were seen standing watching him work on a bleeding patient. These "dentists" are available at the same price in the Saigon central market when not in the area.

A large percentage of children have rotten baby teeth, but many adults show great concern about their own teeth. One particularly poor resident said she had paid a private dentist 150 VN$ to pull a tooth that was painful and causing her jaw to swell. But many people are concerned about their teeth for the sake of beauty.

One mother who complained that she did not have enough money to buy some inexpensive herbs she thought would make her daughter stronger, went to a dentist and had a missing front tooth replaced. A number of both men and women have gold teeth or gold in the shape of designs in their front teeth. Some elderly Vietnamese women from the North show great pride in the beauty of their blackened teeth. This traditional Northern practice, dyeing the teeth black, is not used in this area. Only one woman who appeared to be younger than forty had blackened teeth. If the process has been properly done, one treatment when a person is young should make the teeth black and shiny for a lifetime. One older woman remarked sadly that she had not one cavity in her blackened teeth, but her daughter already had many cavities because she had resisted the mother's suggestion to have her teeth treated in this way.

At the edge of the area, within several houses of each other, are two office-houses designated with a red cross and a Y Ta sign. Y Ta stands for a sort of "nurse" (usually male), who gives shots prescribed by doctors for approximately ten VN$ each and does some prescribing and treating with western medicines. (The doctor in the mobile unit said that though they [the Y Ta] have "very little training," they do not make problems for doctors through mal-practice.) He says these Y Ta help his patients by continuing shot series between visits of the unit. There appear to be very few visitors to these Y Ta office and only one person, a child, was actually seen being treated during the period of study, though the doors are always open. Since there are a number of sources which claim to give free shots, it would be puzzling if many poor residents went there to pay for shots. These men are also noted for the frequent use of camphor shots and medicines.

In the neighborhood there is one Chinese drug store. Although many of the residents use Chinese medicine, no one mentioned going to this attractive, large, well-arranged store in the quarter. Residents claim that another Chinese store just a few blocks away is much cheaper. Although this store does not appear to be doing a very active business, one occasionally notices customers coming from the more well-to-do area just outside the quarter. No one using Chinese medicine mentioned seeing an Oriental doctor (Dong Y Si), but they get advice mainly from the drug stores.

Many residents, when asked what kind of medicine they used, stated they used Vietnamese herb medicine. When asked who advises them in the use of these herbs, they say they

have long known about their use and make their own or have their neighbors and relatives advise them. No one mentioned going to a professional practitioner (Thay Lang) or any area resident specializing in these inexpensive herb remedies.

In the area one often sees children wearing magical charms that are of the type sometimes available at pagodas. The monk of the private pagoda mentioned that upon occasion he had prayed for and treated neighbors who were ill. He says he never charges a fee, and he did not mention the practice of giving or selling charms. The monks at the large pagoda of this area, however, swore that they never dealt in charms or non-western cures. A boy, wearing a small black stone with the geomancy spider web shape and Chinese characters, said it was from the pagoda and was to make him grow strong and be healthy. The local bonzes remarked that it must have been from a Chinese pagoda but at least it was not from the Vietnamese pagoda. Jewelry in the shape of Buddas and tiger teeth are also worn and residents remark they make the children grow well and healthy. Silver bands worn around the necks are not only for general good health, but "help the children keep safe from drowning in the river." Several residents say these charms can be obtained with a prayer from some pagodas or purchased in the downtown market. A couple of men have tattoos--several with Chinese characters and one with Cambodian symbols. These came from pagodas of those nationalities and reportedly have some strength-giving qualities.

Several youngsters have different charms which are not available at the market. These are one-inch square flat sacks held around their necks by white cotton string. One of the few women of the area who said she never used western medicine was a strong Buddhist and had these charms on herself and on her younger children. She said they came from a rich wise man who knew magic and never charged for his services. She complained that she and a son were still sick but that these charms had helped. She said there was no magic doctor in the area, but this man she knew had helped some other residents also. Her husband, who is a "lay Buddhist monk," practices healing through prayers. He says that charms are hard to make, and he does not know the secret. He feels, however, that it is the belief in them that cures. He himself has prayers and magical phrases in his religious books with which he claims to have cured people who have not been helped by years of western medicine. He says he never accepts fees, and many men in the neighborhood come to learn these and other prayers from him.

Several Buddhist families place cans of dried leaves above their doorways or make special offerings of fruit flowers and incense to improve the health of family members.

A majority of Catholic children wear religious medals made of inexpensive metal, picturing Mary, and tied on with string. The Catholic social worker and a Catholic mother reported that though these can be purchased in the market, residents usually get them from a church where the priest "makes them more effective by saying a prayer for the health and growth of the child as he puts them on."

The young monks from the pagoda stated that it was rude to ask if they use magical types of healing, as they know this is superstition and they practice only western medicine. They add that there are no Thay Chu, bonzes who traditionally give verbal or charm blessings to cure illness, connected with the pagoda. The monks themselves, however, sometimes have pinch marks left by the Vietnamese cure for headaches, showing they do upon occasion use traditional non-western cures themselves. They have a first aid kit which was once seen used by a monk putting merthiolate on the cut hand of a pre-school child. A large percentage of bonzes are reported to be taking a nursing course from a local doctor and were seen wearing white and on one occasion bandaging each other during their course work. On Sunday morning it was a monk who gave lessons to twenty monks and several nuns using modern sterilizing equipment. These bonzes go to a Buddhist hospital center "to help the poor," when there is available transportation. For a short time the young bonzes seemed enthusiastic about a suggested project to set up a medical center in the pagoda. They lost interest, however, before the project was put into effect.

The social worker and the khom leader were both given a class in first aid based on the "Health Worker's Handbook" and a first aid kit with the thirteen basic drugs. The daughter of the Khom 15 leader was also given a course, and she reports she now gives free shots which have been prescribed by a doctor. The social worker can give shots herself, but on occasion has a nurse available to render this service free of charge. None of those reporting taking shots named these as sources. One woman reports paying "a nurse" to come to her house from outside the area. Another has a syringe and serum of her own. Both the social worker and khom leaders have the right to refer ill people they cannot treat to a clinic or hospital. The social worker was seen giving vitamins and aspirin to

her older girl students for the use of their families and one other time she treated a boy for pink eye. Several women of the area, however, said that they had asked for help from the social worker and had been rudely refused.

Foster Parents Plan, a charitable organization active in the area, also has a social worker who can refer persons to a doctor working with that organization. One woman who worried about an ill son found that since another in their family was sponsored by Foster Parents, her son could receive necessary treatment through that organization.

The social worker reported that she had unsuccessfully tried to get the residents to boil their water, as health officials consider all city water to be contaminated. One woman said that though the rain water was not too clean, the water from the pump was very good and "no one boiled it." It was noted that many residents made no attempt to catch rain water. Although no one was seen boiling water for drinking, almost all the residents, including children, drink tea instead of water. At one time a boy who was carrying water spit into his bucket, much to the delight of his friends. No one was reported drinking river water, but a few children were seen swimming in it, and the monks state that they bathe there. River water is not only used to carry away sewage and trash but it is used to wash houses, clothing, eating utensils, and on one occasion was added to dough for steamed dumplings sold along the street. There are no toilets dug in the ground, and all sewage is dropped into this river.

The problem appears to be that doctors and hospitals are not in communication with poorer and less educated people. The patients are not given adequate information about what they can expect, or alternative cures. One man lived with tuberculosis over a year, because he said he was told it was necessary to stay in the hospital for a long time. Later he found there is another type of treatment he could have been given. People kept on medicine or in the hospitals are often given no information about the length of their treatment. On one occasion a poor woman who was about to have a baby and had two ill children at home was told in a round-about way that her husband had been taken for emergency surgery. She received no word for over a day as to when he would have the operation, what kind of operation it was, or its seriousness, or when it was thought he could come home. Some people visiting the hospital later were afraid to ask. Those who did inquire were not answered and were

not given information as to when he might be released. Perhaps this last problem in particular could be best handled by better use of the social workers at the hospital.

A health problem that is seen by the social worker to be serious among the local men is alcoholism. She says many young men go away from their families and spend all their money on alcohol. One old man in the area usually smells of alcohol, talks loudly, with exaggerated hand motions, frequently touching the people with whom he speaks. When drinking he exaggerates his importance. He says he is an important elder in the church, was an electrician, and is trying to sell his daughter's washing machine. His son-in-law says without any show of respect that the man is old and drinks too much shum shum (local rice alcohol), had only been a line repairman for the electric company, and has no right to sell his daughter's washing machine. A middle-aged cyclo driver acts in a similar manner, emphasizing his contention that he is a good man who is being ground down by impossibly bad luck. Another cyclo driver who is quite young but has T.B., a wife and six children, becomes quiet, withdrawn and sullen in public when he drinks. Another man exaggerates his already strongly poetic and romantic nature after too much shum shum. A very small and slightly deformed man who is never seen sober, on first acquaintance became oppressive and aggressive in urging an invitation to visit his home. Upon second contact he turned bitter because there had been no visit, shouting, "Am I not good enough for you to visit? Am I not rich enough? If you do not come now, I will never speak to you again." He never did speak after that but looks bitter, angry and vindictive as he hurries by. Neighborhood observers usually stand quietly watching such conversations. There appears to be a humor bordering on mockery toward a man who is very drunk. On two occasions two somewhat inebriated cyclo drivers waiting for customers at the edge of the quarter were separated by friends as they started to fight.

Alcohol is readily available in the local stores. Women are never seen drinking. They do chew betel which they do not swallow, but spit out on the street, and it appears that those chewing betel are for some reason especially calm, perhaps from the slightly narcotic effect of the betel.

A French doctor who has served for years at a local hospital stated that he frequently sees young men who,

having had no previous responsibility in their homes, are suddenly faced with the responsibility of a family, job, or draft. He says many of these young men start over-indulging in alcohol, but others become mentally ill. One young man of the quarter apparently fits the second category, as he alternates between making friendly overtures and seconds later suddenly jerks himself, contorting his face, and shouts, "No!" perhaps even at something he himself has said. It seems very important to him to gain attention and perhaps cause a disturbance. Neighbors say he is new in the quarter. They look tense when he starts his antagonistic and badgering conversations and relieved when they are over.

In summary, one could say that the majority of residents of the area use a variety of types of medicines, many stating that Western medicines are less familiar, perhaps stronger, but also more expensive than Chinese or Vietnamese cures. Health seems to be of great concern to these people, and charms are put on children as preventive medicine as well as cures for specific diseases. Both authorities working with mobile units and the people in the area agree that it would be better if there were some first aid unit in the area more frequently and regularly than the mobile unit. People complain of long waits at the clinic as well as a lack of information both to when the mobile unit will arrive and the length of time between visits. Authorities complain that the van itself is awkward, and the doctor states that sometimes the clinic is not held when the truck that pulls the heavy unit is broken down. Authorities are planning to experiment with small units and smaller staffs. Residents and the social worker state that a permanent clinic in the quarter would be best; however, no one has made the necessary effort to establish one. When American A.I.D. personnel volunteered medicine, and an English-trained Indian woman doctor with much experience in public health offered her services, it was at first delayed by the Vietnamese Government. It could not quickly agree to the use of its property for such a project, nor could it permit the Indian doctor to practice in Viet Nam, even without salary. Later, when the monks agreed to use part of the pagoda, and the doctor agreed to not practice but to act solely an advisor, the neighborhood, perhaps through lack of information or of interested leadership, never built the required shelves for the medicine, and the monks lost interest.

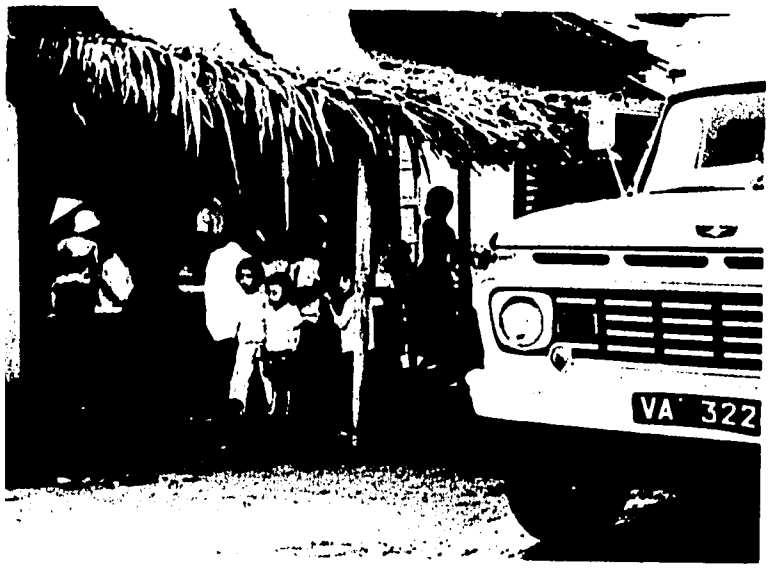
A permanent or more frequent and regular clinic for minor health problems would undoubtedly be of value to the quarter. There are communication and psychological

problems which should be studied also. A look at one woman's health problem from start to finish which was frustrating to her and undoubtedly to the professional health workers as well may help point up some of these problems. The woman, a bean curd vendor, sells her food product along the street, handing it to customers with the hand she had just used to wipe her infected eye. She stated that her husband had died last year and she already spent 5,000 VN$ going to a private western medicine eye doctor, but she felt she was going blind and wanted some medicine. Following the suggestion that she see the social worker, she reported that the social worker had said, "You are rich, why do you bother me? If you want to see a doctor, why do you not go to a doctor? If you want to beg, why not go to the clinic?" Women from the American Women's Club then accompanied her to see the social worker to get a referral slip for the eye hospital. The elderly seller made a deep bow, stood with her head lowered, and was visibly nervous, while the social worker let her welcoming smile die when she saw the lady again. The social worker sat down behind her desk and began to sew while she talked with the woman. She asked why the woman had not gone to the mobile unit (which had not been there for several weeks), but finally agreed to get necessary forms to be filled out before the referral slip could be issued. Several weeks later the bean curd lady received and filled out the forms but was given a referral slip to a general hospital. This was not where she belonged, so she was given another referral slip by that hospital to go to the eye hospital. Upon reaching the eye hospital, she was given a small amount of medicine and told to come back when it was gone. She went back several times and was given more but was told that there was not only an infection which the medicine should clear, but that there was something imbedded in the eye which would have to be removed by surgery. By this time the seller had lost several days of work and had spent a relatively large sum of money on taxis. She started to work to save enough to take off more days to have the surgery. The medicine did not seem to help the infection, and she became discouraged. In addition, the hospital had given her no information about how long she might expect to stay in the hospital, and she feared they would keep her there too long. She had been given no assurance that the operation would be simple or successful; she was told merely that she should have come sooner. When her son got his draft notice, she decided she could not leave home where she was raising his motherless children, since no one would be there to feed and take care of them if she stayed in the hospital. When last seen, the bean

curd vendor could hardly see from her bad eye, and her other eye had become infected. Her small grandson also had red, infected-looking eyes; he sat on her knee while she handed out pieces of bean cake to her customers.

The picture, however, is not all dark. The residents are taking advantage of much of the treatment and medicine available, and the sanitation and health standards of the area appear to be relatively high. According to an American doctor, the general level of health of this quarter is a great deal higher than he observed in many of the towns, villages, and rural centers from which many of the area residents had come.

Above: Y Ta (nurse) office on Main Street; Doctor (standing l.) and dentist (standing center) stand while medical technician examines child.
Center: Medical unit; nurses give shots.
Below: Nursing class at the Pagoda; Vendor of Chinese cures.



Religion

"Buddhism" is the most popular religion in Viet Nam. But this is not Buddhism as one finds it in the books of religious theory or in practice in countries such as Thailand or Japan. This is a purely Vietnamese mixture of folk religion, anamism, Confusionism, Taoism, and Buddhism. In recent years, however, some of the more intellectual monks have started the Buddhist Propogation Institute, a movement to organize for religious and political strength and to "purify" the religious practices in the pagodas. One could describe these changes as revolutionary, carrying with them all the confusion and contradictions that accompany any such change.

In this quarter there are two pagodas. The large pagoda for which the area is named has four superiors (Ty Kheo), fifty student monks (Sa Gia), four youngsters between six and nine years of age (Chu Tieu), and eight nuns. This is one of the largest groups of monks in a single pagoda in Saigon. The worship center itself is approximately twenty years old, although various other buildings in the compound are of newer vintage. The compound is surrounded by walls on three sides and the river on the fourth. As one enters the door, there is a shrine to Co Hon, daughter of the King of Heaven, followed by the school room used for the pre-school classes and for small meetings. The court yard is cluttered with wood, tiles, food being dried on trays, gravel, and an old boat which "was a gift of one of the faithful." There are also a few trees--some newly planted. The first main building is the worship center. It has a large floor area and three large altars along the far wall. The center altar contains seven large statues of Buddha, three of which have neon haloes. These statues show Buddha in various classic positions--teaching, blessing, calling forth the earth to witness his goodness, and reclining. There are also several small statues, candles and flowers. The altars on each side of this contain "heavenly beings" such as Ho Phap, Ong Tien, and the gods of heaven, as well as those of a number of Chinese generals. The young bonzes say these statues were given to the pagoda by members of "the Buddhist family" and the bonzes do not know their meaning. Also in the worship center are drums and gongs for worship and a desk at which the most honored superior monk usually sits, reads, prays, and meditates. There are frequent prayer services--a minimum of three a day--during which two or three older student monks read aloud in unison, clicking the crab-shaped instrument, and

ringing a small bell; a child bonze sits at the back singing a complicated chant while hitting a huge bell and small drum. Although people are occasionally seen praying in the center, they do not appear often when the bonzes are praying, but usually make an individual prayer later. They also sometimes bring fruits or other goods, flowers, and incense to place on the altars.

Outside the entrance to the main workshop center is a spirit altar with fresh rice, salt, and water, and sometimes flowers and incense. The bonzes explain that this is for lost souls who have no family altar and who will be refreshed by these offerings. They believe that a pagoda attracts many souls.

In a room in back of the altar is an area with numerous Buddha statues and a large picture of Dat Ma To Su (the Indian monk who spread Buddhism to China and Viet Nam). Around the room are pictures of old and young people who are "the deceased souls of the Buddhist family." Offerings of fruits and flowers are placed on the floor in front of the statues of Buddha while the worshiper kneels with his head on the floor to say a prayer; then they are put in front of the picture of the deceased. On one feast day, several pictures had before them small servings of the numerous dishes making up the feast.

The next room in the pagoda compound is a large class-lecture room containing eight long tables, nine rows of desks with benches, and a lecture platform with a blackboard. There are numerous religious pictures, some pictures of monks or important Buddhist laymen, a chart showing the make up of the "Buddhist family" and a shrine of a picture of Buddha teaching. In front of this shrine incense often burns. From this incense students light their cigarettes as they lounge between classes.

Next, there are a few shacks in differing states of repair. One of the better ones is used for some small classes. It contains two beds with mosquito nets, two trunks, a desk full of books, and a lamp. Next is a larger building where food is prepared. In the adjoining structure food is cooked, and the nuns sleep in its loft. Nuns serve as caretakers of the pagoda and as cooks. Monks are seen washing their own clothes in the river.

These monks observe the custom of never eating meat or eating anything at all after mid-day. Their two meals a day consist of vegetable stews, fruits, and rice. When the food is ready, young monks carry it into the

tables in the large class room, a bell is rung, all the monks assemble, recite a prayer in unison, and then eat informally while conversing freely. One special occasion, however, was a feast in which the more advanced young monks and the superior monks sat in two rows facing each other on the floor of the worship center. They then held an elaborate ritual of praying in unison, touching each bowl to their foreheads, and tasting each dish in unison. After this, the meal continued in silence. Nuns and women of the area cooperated in cooking for two days the fourteen meatless festive dishes. As each new bowl was brought in to the monks, the women would bow and wait until the monk accepted or refused the offering.

Most of the time the atmosphere is informal. A superior bonze consulted the student bonzes to see if they wanted an English language class, and the subject was freely discussed by the young men. One sees a variety of clothing on the different bonzes--orange, maroon and grey robes worn in different ways. The monks say that grey-clad bonzes are usually from the South, and the maroon-clad students come from the North of Viet Nam. Orange is used for more formal occasions, but there are no strict rules. Bonzes also put on white jackets for a nursing class, sweaters when it is cool, and several often wear towels draped over their heads. Many of these young men are from eighteen to twenty-five years of age and appear to be quite intelligent. Although the young bonzes state that they must get up at 4:00 A.M., and that their studies are difficult, one can usually see a number lounging, smoking, and talking. Although they seem to do a great deal of conversing, there appears to be little communication about the pagodas. For example, when one group agrees to begin studying English, their friends who come in on the class much later were surprised that it was going on. They seem to lack information concerning the whereabouts both of each other, and even of plans for future public feasts and celebrations in their pagoda. Several of the older bonzes are often seen meditating and do not communicate much with the student bonzes.

The students state that they are divided into two groups--a living language study group, some of whom are given free lessons at the Vietnamese-American Association and French Cultural Center, and a nursing study group. There is also at least one who spends his time painting oil color pictures. Besides serving the tables, several younger monks were seen stacking wood, repainting a cabinet for the worship center, and overseeing the women who brought in and packaged huge bundles of relief supplies for flood victims. One of these young

students decided he would become a chaplain in the army. One older monk was once seen teaching the pre-school class, and one student was observed teaching a group of young adults "about Buddhism." All of this activity, however, stops during summer vacation when for two months the bonzes are not allowed to leave the pagoda, as there are "too many insects that they might kill if they left the grounds." They have pictures of groups that have gathered at this pagoda from the provinces and smaller pagodas for these months in other years. They say it is a time of meditation and study.

In the area outside the pagoda one almost never sees a monk unless he is walking, riding a bicycle or in a cyclo, on his way to or from the pagoda. On occasion monks stop in a general store next to the pagoda to talk, but in none of the weddings, funerals or cases of illness was one of these monks present or even mentioned by the people. There are several memorial services for the dead at the pagoda, but most of these were for someone from outside the area. The monks did mention that they serve at these functions when asked, and one superior monk said once he was leaving to visit someone who was sick outside the area. They do, however, perform the function of accepting gifts which is important to those individuals wanting to make merit. Though they do not walk along the street with a bowl into which one can put donations as do monks of neighboring countries, many of the statues in the pagoda supposedly have been donated by residents. Once a man brought eels to be set free in the river bordering the pagoda to make merit. When asked about the pagoda, people of the neighborhood seem to feel it is a good pagoda, but since most of them have their own altars at home they say they "have no need" to visit the pagoda except during the few important religious holidays. No one in the neighborhood was able to identify any monk as particularly knowledgeable or someone to whom they would go for help or advice. The other function monks perform in the neighborhood is the organization of youth and adult study groups described later in this section.

When questioned about the pagoda's history, the workings of the Buddhist or the pagoda's organization, or the history of Buddhism, the monks seemed to have little information. One superior monk suggested if there were questions about Buddhism, they should be asked at another pagoda and that one could learn all about the subject by reading a particular book on Zen written by a Japanese. On another occasion, when they were passing out English language Buddhist literature printed in Ceylon, they were questioned about

similarities and differences between types of Buddhism. They appeared puzzled by the question, discussed it between themselves, and finally decided that there may once have been a difference, but that now all Buddhists were "all one happy Buddhist family." The young monks cannot name and explain the histories of the personages featured in the temple statues, nor can they list many of the regulations that superior bonzes must follow. The only Buddhist law about which they seem sure and about which they speak at great length is the necessity of preserving life of all creatures. However, it is not only Buddhism about which these young monks are unclear. After trying to explain the path taken by Buddhism from India to Viet Nam, several monks drew a map that showed that they were unfamiliar with even the relative size, shape and position of Viet Nam.

Subjects about which they talk almost never concern religions or philosophy. One superior monk gave an American lady a long talk about the color and styling of materials and clothing which would look good on her. He felt the orange of his robes brought out well the color of his skin but would look bad on her. Several young monks who had lived at the pagoda over ten years stated they had gardens, but it turned out that they were thinking of the gardens at their family homes where they make occasional visits. When asked to write a paper for an English lesson on a day in the life of a monk in the Pagoda, one wrote of the lack of movies and restaurants, and one who is often seen loafing complained how hard his studies were.

But it is politics that permeates most conversations. The Buddhist Propogation Institute issues announcements of political policy which are posted on the door of the classrooms and discussed from time to time. Comments are made frequently about the undemocratic dispersing of students who are demonstrating. During a very bad flood in the northern part of South Viet Nam, the monks used the class rooms as a collection post for clothes and utensils for flood relief, donated in Quan I. At that time the monks talked at great length about the urgent need which the government was "purposely disregarding" by not transporting their supplies when and where the monks felt they were needed. While discussing the problems of distribution with their American English teachers, a man in slacks and white shirt who had not been noted in the area before, announced in anger: "Don't talk to them. Can't you see, they are spies. . . . They just come here to learn what we are doing."

In August, 1963, when President Diem ordered most pagodas raided in the midst of the Buddhist crisis his special forces raided this pagoda, arresting all forty monks who lived there at that time, keeping them prisoners for thirteen days. Many of the same monks are still residing at the pagoda.

One of the most verbal young monks wrote a paper stating that in the past the monks had not dealt in business and politics, but that when the government was not giving people what they wanted, it was time for the monks to step in. He continued by saying that bonzes could not kill someone, but that they would be glad to give their own lives to get rid of a tyrant. An unexpected visit to the pagoda classroom soon after that found three phrases written on the blackboard in Vietnamese, French and English which they had evidently been learning: "to give a sour look," "to turn a cold shoulder," and "down with the tyrant."

One young monk, who is frequently in the neighborhood and at the pagoda, has his own private residence not far from the quarter. Although he takes some of the classes with the young students, he lives in a hut in a vacant space near another tiny pagoda. He says he teaches and studies languages and teaches judo. He continues by saying that it is his parents who support him, being delighted to do so since he began this life ten years ago at the age of fifteen. He reports that he chose this lonely spot near the tiny pagoda so that he would have atmosphere for meditation.

In the area there is also a private pagoda run by a man who retired thirty years ago to become a bonze. He studied in various pagodas and has five certificates on his wall saying that he is a "true" bonze, because he has no wife, eats no meat, and so on. He is frequently seen brushing calligraphy and believes the bonzes at the other pagoda, none of whom have studied calligraphy, are not very learned. His home has a spirit house and altars almost the size of those at the pagoda, perhaps even more elaborate, although his room is much smaller. He also has a small altar with burning candles and pictures "of the souls of some departed neighbors and friends." He claims to assist at funerals, weddings, and to heal people who come to his pagoda for help. He has an elaborate collection of satin robes in various vivid colors which he says are for some special celebrations, but he is not sure when he will wear one next. He complains that not many people come to his pagoda when it is not a holiday, and, since he does not charge for his services, he must live on

donations. He is very glad that there is one man who has been very generous with his contributions.

One married "lay monk" with robes and altars also claims to have people worship at his home-altar and come to him for learning and healing. They ask him to serve at funerals, but not at weddings since he is married. He also claims to make no charges and lives by doing odd jobs.

Almost every home in the quarter has an altar. Most family altars have no Buddha, but the residents feel that any ancestor altar is also an altar for Buddha. These altars vary considerably from a can with incense in front of a deceased relative's picture to altars containing elaborate brass spirit urns, candle sticks, and electric lights. There are various types of specialized altars, but the residents are often vague as to their significance, and many say they are just an altar for good luck. Sometimes, besides the main altar, there are special altars for the mother and father of the husband of the family, and in one home there were altars for the parents of the husband and of his wife. Many have spirit altars outside their houses similar to the one found at the pagoda, to feed the lost souls so they will not eat the food given to the family ancestors. Without the spirit altar, those spirits become angry, giving the family bad luck. Other outside altars are constructed for Ban Tien "to ask god to help everyone in the house." Chimes or paper trees can be seen, especially outside the Chinese homes, asking "Than Tai" for prosperity for those dwelling there.

The fat, laughing, Indian-looking image with a large mustache who is often seen on altars on the floors is "to help in finding something if it is lost, or to find customers if business is poor." Several families had pictures or statues of Ho Phap, who blesses those who worship and who guards the house. There are sometimes altars made of three stones in the cooking area dedicated to Ong Tao, god of the hearth. He is the messenger to the god of heaven reporting the activities of the family. At the New Year celebration, there are paper crowns and other symbols burnt to him as that is the time he leaves the hearth to make his annual report in heaven. The pictures and decorations found at the altars are so varied and the residents' ideas about them so different that it is quite evident this is an individualized and unorganized form of worship. When asked about one altar, a woman answered that she did not know its purpose, but she continued to maintain it as her family had done and hoped it brought her good luck.

Vietnamese frequently employ an eight-sided geomancy talisman to counteract the bad effect of not having the vital influences of the world--metal, earth, wood, fire, and water--in balance at the place where they build their homes. These are seen on a number of houses in the area. Most of these have been purchased without consultation with a geomancer on the theory it will keep bad spirits away "just in case." Only one household has a more elaborate, special and "effective" one designed for its special needs by a geomancer. It contains five round mirrors, each surrounded by eight nails and interwoven with string to look like a spider web. These, along with two straight narrow pieces of mirror, are all placed in a definite pattern. The family remarked that they think this has had a particularly strong effect in keeping away bad luck. Several people whose doorways face another doorway have placed red reflectors or mirrors above their doors to reflect away any bad luck coming from the other house. Occupants of many other houses, however, whose doorways face directly into the neighbor's door do not take this precaution.

Above the door of one house is a bunch of dead leaves said to make the children of the household grow strong and well. One woman has a tin can above her door in which she believes she will catch the devil when he comes down from heaven to cause her harm. One couple has a long, thin, red book written in black Chinese characters hung on the wall of the front room. This is supposed to make the couple stay happily united. With some people these things seem to be taken very seriously, while with others it is a case of "it cannot do any harm, and it might work, so why not." But the majority of people of the area seem to feel that some of these things are necessary to escape the consequences of possible bad luck that might be theirs at the whim of a spirit--perhaps even the spirit of their own ancestor.

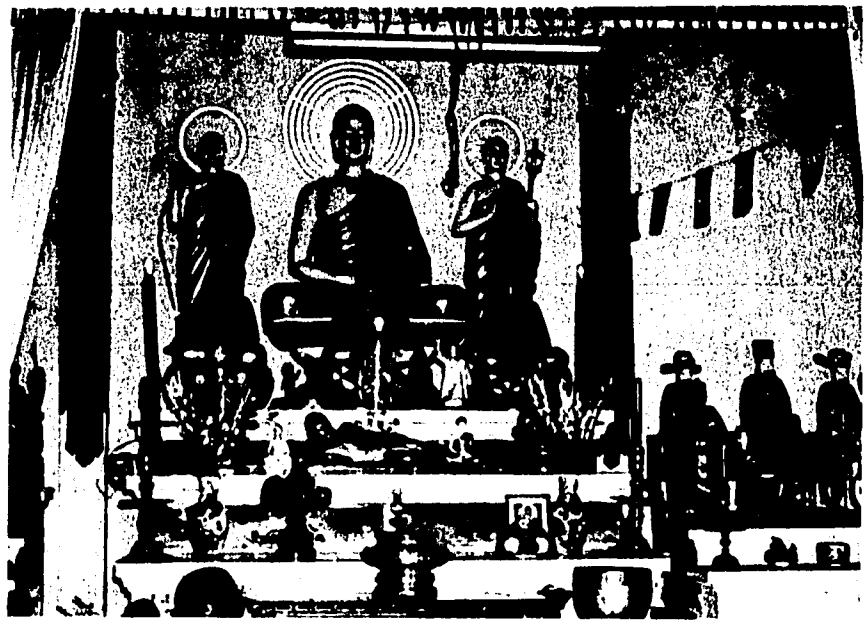
The world of the living and of the dead are very much interrelated, as the comfort of the living depends upon the good will of the dead, and vice versa. This can, perhaps, be best illustrated by the elderly lady who said that her daughter-in-law seemed to be solicitious of her welfare, but she would not really know how good she was until she was dead and then she could better judge the care this girl would take of her spirit. It is also a practice of families to burn paper images--houses, clothes, and so forth, as well as to offer food, flowers and incense to the spirits of the departed to make them happy in the other world.

According to the khom leader, there are not only Buddhists but Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Confucionists, and some professing no religion at all in this area. No separate evidence of the Cao Dai or Hoa Hao was seen, and the only man interviewed who said he had no religion also had an ancestor altar.

The Catholics, however, have their own church in the quarter and have their own type of altars. This church, which is newly built, is a modern-looking building with a bell tower topped with a cross. Its worship center contains benches and kneeling boards and there is a simple altar with a cross, candles, and flowers on a table in the chancel. On the wall above is a large statue of Mary and two smaller ones of Christ and Joseph. Attached to the worship center is a school room. The entire structure was built mainly through donations from people outside the area. Although a priest comes early on Sunday mornings, other hours when a priest will attend are irregular, and most of the functions are carried on by local lay members of the church. During the flood crisis in the northern provinces, the church collected money and posted a list of donations that showed gifts from a few piasters to several hundred piasters. None of the weddings or funerals noted took place in this chapel, but since it is very new it is expected that there will be such services. Local residents hope to reach a large enough membership soon to have a full-time priest.

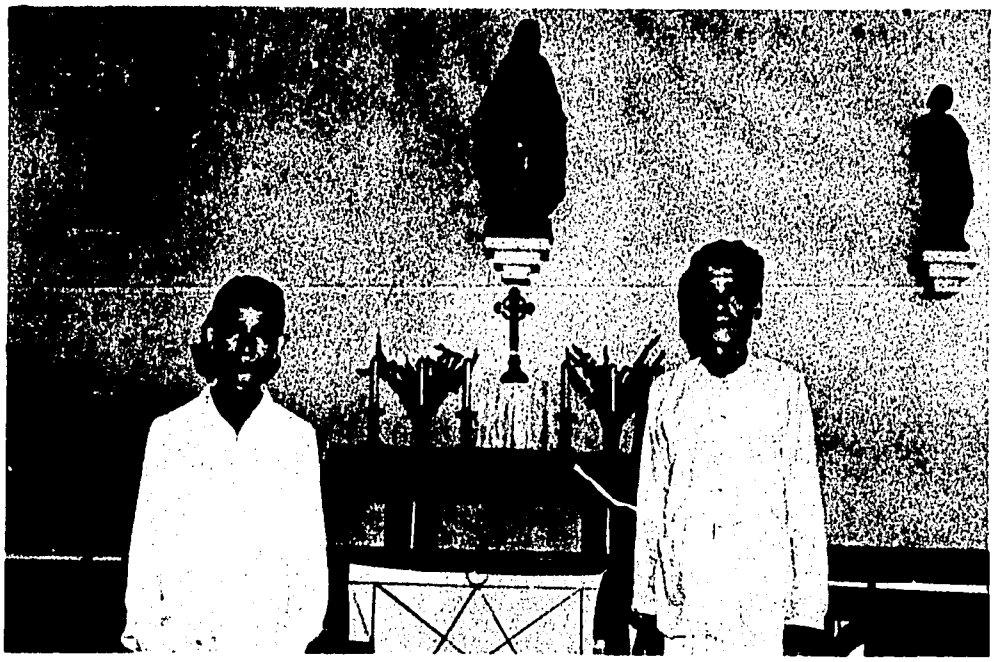
Catholic homes also have altars. Usually there is a picture of statue of Mother Mary. Sometimes Jesus or the saints are pictured. Often there are flowers, and, if the family is well off, there may be electric lights. On occasion there are also pictures of a deceased relative on or near the altar.

It is interesting that the home altars of Catholic and Buddhist alike feature most popularly a graceful statue of a gentlewoman, either Mary or Quan An, as the object they choose to symbolize their religions at home.



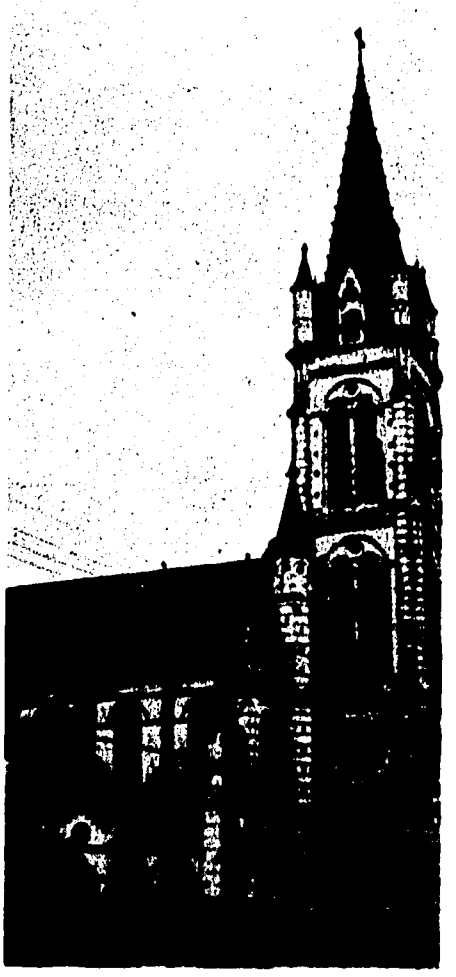
L.: Head Bonze at Pagoda; Bonze at private pagoda.

R.: Main Pagoda altar; student bonzes collect flood relief; Monks at religious celebration.



Above: Local Catholic Church

Below: Home altars and Tan Dinh Church



Above: Spirit altars

Below: Home altars above door and buffet; religious supplies; Hats to burn for God of the Hearth during Tet.

Recreation and Associations

It frequently appears that in this area many people use work as their most time-consuming form of recreation. Some residents even state that their reason for working is primarily that of diversion. Two owners of stores said they started stores after their husbands had died as a way to keep themselves from being "so sad." One young woman who makes straws said that her profit was so very small that she only made them for something to do, for she had family responsibilities and could not take a full-time job. An entire family chose to stop their usual work of weaving to make and sell artificial flowers for the new year celebration, even though they said it would be for less profit, because "it was more fun." Peddlers who state they sell only for the profit are often seen talking and laughing with the other vendors even after their products are all sold. Many times one sees these ladies returning to their vending spots or joining the vendors for a visit, while they prepare vegetables for dinner or do some other household chore at the same time. Others spend much time visiting as they walk or shop along the pathways. Some men get this same type of socializing in home industries. Cyclo drivers sit by the hour at the edge of the area conversing.

When men are not working, they are often seen sitting at a soup or tea house or in stores or homes talking over a cup of tea. One soup shop sometimes sells tea and coffee in the afternoon when enough men gather. Some men go to the shop of the most prosperous barber, where they borrow the newspaper and talk over its contents. Newspapers of various types are sold in the plaza area and approximately twenty copies of one paper were observed being distributed one day to homes in Khom 14 and 15. A few homes have musical instruments, some of which are played. Several homes have record players, and a large percentage of the homes have functioning radios--usually transistors. On the occasion of city-wide riots when announcements were made on the radio, small groups were observed gathered around several of the radios sharing the news. At other times one or another of the radios along the first part of Main Street where most of the vendors work would be turned up very loudly, usually to music, for everyone to hear. When there is a cai luong playing on the radio, large groups of children may be seen crowding near the home listening.

Small children themselves seem to absorb the interest of many men and women. People hold and carry their

children long after they can walk and take delight in watching what the child does. Children in general do not interest them, however, they are primarily interested in their own or perhaps those of close relatives or friends. It is also usually the smallest child in the family who is the center of this attention, although several mothers and daughters and at least one father and son were noted to have extremely close friendships, despite the presence of younger children in the family.

Games absorb the interest of many residents. Young and old enjoy gambling, and persons of all ages may be seen bidding on the stack of kitchen ware being raffled along the street or gambling with numbers, animals, pictures, or dice. Among older boys a type of poker is popular. With older ladies tu sat (a complicated card game with Chinese characters also called four colors) can occupy whole days. Men can be seen playing cards or Chinese-Vietnamese chess, which is somewhat similar to Western chess.

There are also recreational pastimes outside the area. A frequent topic of conversation among women is the very popular cai luong. This is the popular musical theater which combines melodrama with popular music in a cross between Western musical comedy and melodrama. Many women say they try to go to each new show at a favorite theater; others say when they have the money they go to different theaters perhaps once a week. Men often like this too, and families can take their children free of charge. Occasionally there are also performances of Hat Boi, a stylized musical theater much like Western opera in which the understanding of the plot is based on a knowledge of color, motion, and musical symbols. Several older women mention going to this type of theater, but younger people say it is too hard to understand, and they would rather go to the movies. Youngsters mention Indian, Western and Vietnamese pictures; Western pictures are the favorite. At the local movie theaters world and local news and advertisements accompany each film as well as usual "propaganda" films produced by the Government. All three of these forms of theaters are available just outside the neighborhood, and children who accompany adults may go to any of them free, making it not too expensive for family entertainment. Some of the local children are reported going to one of these three each Saturday, and it may well be that they are among the crowds of children who sneak into the theater when any adult goes in with a ticket.

Judo was mentioned by one resident as a form of recreation he enjoyed. He takes lessons and hopes soon to help teach at a nearby gym. He says many girls and women also take lessons and that, although his wife does not participate, his mother-in-law is very advanced.

Probably the most common form of recreation outside the area is walking and riding. Although there are no parks near this area, many people take walks through the market near the quarter or to the downtown market, zoo or park area along the river. Families who have motor scooters or bicycles use these for trips outside the area. It is common to see families leaving together on holidays by this means of transportation.

This area is quiet in the evenings with a few soft drink stands and tea houses open until perhaps 10:00 P.M., if they have customers. Even the stands and shops on the busy thoroughfare outside the quarter close at 8:00 P.M. or 9:00 P.M. As one resident stated, "The men and women who live here work hard all day, and in the evening they usually rest in their homes and go to bed early.

In this area there are a number of religious associations which include members from both inside and outside of the area. The Buddhists have several associations connected with the areas's large pagoda. Meetings are held by approximately one hundred fifty Buddhist youth and another group, a "young adult study group," comprising twenty boys and eight girls. The bonzes state that there is also an adult group that meets to "discuss religious subjects." The Buddhist Youth is much like Boy and Girl Scouts except that they have a considerable amount of religious study as well as the usual scout activities of bicycle trips and camping. This group meets on Sunday afternoons. After opening the meeting with a worship service they play games and divide into work-study groups. The youngest group wears white shirts and dark blue skirts or shorts while the older girls wear grey <u>ao dais</u> and the boys wear khaki shirts and shorts, bright neckerchieves and hats much like American Boy Scouts. On a holiday during the period of this study, the group of one hundred fifty youngsters spent a night camping at the pagoda, and at another time they prepared an exhibit and helped work on the construction of a new building at the Buddhist National Center some distance from the area.

The Catholics have similar groups. Their youth have no uniforms, although the older girls usually wear white <u>ao dais</u> to church and the boys wear dark western

trousers and white shirts. There are sixty girls and thirty boys of different age groups who meet on Sunday afternoon for prayer, study, and games. A Catholic women's group has organized local women to make calls on "people of the area who are having troubles." The only call actually noted was made by a young matron on a very poor Catholic lady who was about to have a baby and whose husband was seriously ill. One elderly Catholic lady of the neighborhood stated that she spent much of her time attending funerals and helping in time of illness, as part of her Catholic women's service. Another association connected with the Catholic church generally (not this small neighborhood church) is a burial association. One man has hung on his wall a certificate testifying to his membership, although he does not know of others in the area who belong to this or similar groups. He states that for 150 VN$ a year he is guaranteed a burial. This group meets once a year to discuss prices and fees.

There appears to be almost no successful non-religious association in the area. Although some individuals may be members of successful groups outside the area, none of these were mentioned in conversation. In other areas there are reported to be associations of laborers, water carriers, cyclo drivers, and similar groups of workers, but laborers of the area state that they have no such organizations. Formerly there was a work group similar to what is sometimes found in rural areas. The leader of this group registered laborers needing work, and employers bargained with this leader for the salaries and services of a certain number of men to do a particular job. But this group dissolved when the central government no longer required it to exist.

Hui, which is so well known in Viet Nam, is apparently not very common in this neighborhood. Though many people have heard of these groups, they say one must trust the leader, and the leader must trust the members; they themselves would not want to risk playing. Residents readily refer to examples of groups which have broken up because someone took his turn and refused to continue until others had received theirs. Only one lady stated she was in a group but it had dwindled and would soon have to be disbanded.

Hui is a kind of group in which members pool money each meeting, making closed bids to pay for its use. In order for everyone to borrow, the group must have a fixed membership until everyone has had one turn; at this time the group generally disolves. (A more detailed description is found in Chapter III.)

Men and women relaxing; gambling; play-vending.

Below: Catholic youth; Buddhist youth

Social Welfare

"Social work is an infant in Viet Nam--not understood and certainly not tested or put to work." This is the opinion of the head of the social workers' organization in Saigon. When asked if she could use help in training social workers, she said that lack of trained workers was not the basic problem. Although there are few trained people in the field, she says that frequently, even these are jobless or improperly used, and what is most needed is a greater understanding of their usefulness, especially at the top governmental level, and a better co-ordination of those in the field. The need for top-level appreciation of social work was also expressed by a prominent judge who handles juvenile cases but has no budget for a social worker and has to make the all-important home visitations by himself.

A few of the members of the social workers organization have been given advanced training in the United States or other foreign countries, but most of them have been trained by French nuns at a Catholic center in Saigon. This school gives a two year course which includes nutrition, sanitation, nursing, sewing, cooking, and supervised field experience. The training is quite intensive, and for this reason the social workers were upset by a recent two week course in social work offered by the Government to a large number of girls, as they thought it might lower the professional level and the reputation they were trying to maintain.

Most of the social workers in Saigon are hired by local firms to work with families of their employees, by private groups such as Foster Parents Plan or by hospitals. Since the Government did not sponsor any social workers in poor areas of Saigon, the Asia Foundation set up two social centers with nursery schools and hired two women, one trained in the United States and the other a graduate of the Saigon school. The Saigon school graduate, Miss Oanh, was assigned to work in this quarter in Khom 13. Before this time a very poor but quite active Buddhist lady reported that the neighborhood was visited from time to time by a Catholic nun who gave her money to repair her home but who stopped coming to the quarter when the social center was established. For several years the Asia Foundation sponsored these centers, but when, during a change of emphasis in their program, the project was dropped, the sponsorship was taken over by the American Women's Club of Saigon.

Miss Oanh herself is an attractive slim woman between thirty-five and forty, who wears her hair shoulder length, wears a traditional Vietnamese dress, an ao dai, sandals, and the traditional conical straw hat when she works in the area. Her expressive face easily changes from grim disapproval to cheerful friendliness and back again. She is an active Catholic and expresses disapproval of many traditional and Buddhist practices, although the people she helps seem to represent Buddhist as well as Catholic families. Her childhood was spent in an area similar to this one, but she now lives as a resident in the Catholic social welfare school some distance from her work. She speaks some faulty French and very little English. When the American women took over the project, Miss Oanh was receiving 8000 piasters a month (beginning teachers usually receive about 4000 a month), and the women decided to hire her for half-time, giving her one fund for lending money and another for giving to families in crisis or for using for small expenses made at her discretion. Miss Oanh complains that working only half-time cuts down her usefulness in the area.

The center is on a tiny path well inside Khom 13. Recently, with the aid of 25,000 piasters from the Catholic Relief Agency and urging from the American women, Miss Oanh realized the completion of a new center--a dream she has discussed for long time. A house next to the old center was purchased and with workers hired from among the unemployed men of the area, a two story structure, twice the size of the old one was built. The most obviously successful part of the center's work is a nursery school. Most of the youngsters pay 50 VN$ a month, although a few poorer ones are charged only about 25 VN$. This money pays the salaries of the very capable young teachers, while the rest of the school expenses are paid for by the American Women's Association. The free lunch of bread and butter and other side benefits (such as occasional gifts of cloth or other items) more than repays the family for this small financial output. Frequently there are crowds of children outside the center peeking in the windows while the students are at work.

Recently started at the center is a free class for older unemployed girls in sewing and one for adult women in making various things to be sold. The girls' class has grown constantly, and many women ask to join the crowded women's class in hopes of learning some trade at which they can work in their homes. Many women have asked for women's sewing classes. Miss Oanh arranged for some women to make children's clothing and traditional plaster animals to sell at an open house for the sponsoring American group. The women were to get several piasters

for each item they made and sold, and the rest of the profit was to go into some vague kind of "fund for the center."

Miss Oanh has several young women from the social workers school who work for her as part of their field experience as well as regular salaried teachers to help with the classes at the center. According to her sponsors, her job is to supervise this work, to get more projects started in helping the community as a whole, to distribute food and other necessary aid for families with acute problems, and to make house visits in order to become aware of the needs and problems of each resident. She has a fund of money, medical supplies, and some food stuffs, in addition to the power to refer ill people to hospitals; the interest of a number of outside groups helps her put across her projects. Miss Oanh is shy, however, and finds it almost impossible to call upon outside groups or to visit even low-ranking Vietnamese government officials when preliminary contacts are made for her, unless one of the American women goes with her. Under the direction of the Asia Foundation, the nursery school was stressed, and, though some home visits were made in those five years, she managed the nursery school quite skillfully but did not seem to get well acquainted with the people of the community or suggest any new classes or community improvements.

Miss Oanh herself says she is afraid to go into the areas at night and is also womewhat afraid in the day time as she has heard rumors of "coups, bombs, and other trouble." She, therefore, seems to make very few ventures outside the center and then only to homes she knows well. It is true that in a "personalized" society, such as the Vietnamese, a refusal to give aid may be taken as a personal insult, and, therefore, criticism of people with limited aid to give is sometimes exaggerated. There are, however, many complaints heard about Miss Oanh in the neighborhood. A number of people state that Miss Oanh helps only the few families with whom she is well-acquainted or those families who threaten to cause her trouble if she does not give what they ask. The distribution of food, for which she is responsible, appears to be done in a haphazard way, and residents complain it is given with favoritism. One day Miss Oanh was observed squatting on the seat of her car doling out quantites of cracked wheat into the upturned hats of girls in her sewing class, although these girls are not all from the poorest homes in the neighborhood. Another day one group of very poor women points out another group of ladies who were

walking by with powdered milk and flour given them by Miss Oanh, the first group said they had never received any food. Several people remark that Miss Oanh is rude to them and hurts their feelings when they ask for help. Her attitude toward requests from persons whom she did not want to help was observed to be abrupt, and she appeared to be uninterested in their situations. Some who have requested aid have been told to quit begging. One of the women who has been visited and helped regularly over the years stated that she had once been ill and received medicine from Miss Oanh, but would be "afraid to bother Miss Oanh" if she were ill again. However, one lady with several children and whose husband gave no financial aid to the family remarked that without the no-interest loans given her by Miss Oanh she does not know how her family could have managed or how she could have kept her business going. Another time when a woman with desperate problems was called to her attention, Miss Oanh was quick to help. It is of interest, however, that this same woman had lived in the area for several years, and, though she had heard of Foster Parents Plan, she did not know of Miss Oanh or the social center.

Frequently, Miss Oanh will run out of a certain medicine and yet fails to request more. Although a note from her will get medical attention for a resident, she appears to hesitate to use this power. None of the ladies asked knew what organization sponsored the center or donated aid products. One lady stated that Miss Oanh had said it was a poor organization, and the center, therefore, did not have funds enough to help her. It may well be that Miss Oanh's stated fear of being noticed in the quarter also affects her relations outside the area--she does not want to call attention to herself by requesting aid, nor does she want to be too closely identified with Americans. She is, however, very co-operative and friendly with the American women and seems to enjoy the school children with whom she works.

Miss Oanh was interviewed during the last of the period of this study on a wide variety of topics as they relate to social work and conditions needing improvement in the area. She feels alcoholism among men is a very common problem. She feels toilets should be built in the earth, as those over the water used by the entire neighborhood are unsanitary. Despite her efforts to teach people to boil drinking water, very few do this as yet. Though most men of the neighborhood can read and write, most poor older women cannot. She would like to start literacy classes and believes many would attend. She is not as concerned about teaching vocational classes, especially for boys, because there are "many jobs in Saigon which

offer apprenticeships in mechanics, electricity, and tailoring, but the youngsters are just too lazy." She states that some neighbors quarrel because they live too close together in crowded houses, but that the residents are co-operative on the whole "because they are poor" and are concerned about quarter improvement. She feels that the lien gia know the families well, and it is to them she goes with her proposed projects. She recommends that others should go to them if they wish to start community projects. One problem that is of most concern now to the people of the community she feels is the frequent incursions into the area at night by military personnel hunting for men of draft age. Another serious problem to the area is that about one third of the men are unemployed.

Miss Oanh is very concerned about the role of women in her area. She claims that most of the people of the area live together without benefit of formal marriage. Many men have two "wives" or more who are usually in separate households; but all too frequently they do not adequately support these several families. Though divorce and official desertion are not problems, some men only come to visit their families every few years and leave after the woman becomes pregnant. Although many men have no jobs, very few women who are heads of households are unemployed; a number of husbands stay home while their wives work. Some women are beaten, according to Miss Oanh, when they have no money to give drunken husbands for alcohol.

Money is always a problem in the area, and there are ten residents who will make loans charging high interest. Miss Oanh feels therefore that the money she loans interest free is very important in the area. She states that this money is spent on continuing business or improving food and living conditions. She states that her loans are usually 100 or 200 VN$ which is too small for starting a business, but she feels larger loans might be wasted on clothing, gambling, the theater or house improvements instead of beginning a business.

Miss Oanh would like to see her job expanded to full-time basis and her funds increased. In this area, she feels finding jobs for the men is the most urgent need, followed by help in rebuilding homes, making toilets, and building sidewalks. When the subject of possible co-operatives was mentioned, she was very enthusiastic, saying she had thought of using a room in the new center for a co-operative designed to aid the consumer in buying essential foods more cheaply. She did not understand and could not visualize the profit-increasing potential of

a vendor's co-operative comprising the large segment of women residents already separately engaged in this business.

Many in the sponsoring American women's group believe that although Miss Oanh had "humble beginnings" her fear of being noticed and her apparent lack of interest, empathy or sympathy with many of the local residents keeps her from being completely effective. Although the arrangement is less than perfect the school is very successful in preparing children for local public schools, and through the center some of the very poorest people are being given some help. Interviews with potential social workers and other Vietnamese who could help in the quarter strengthened the common belief that it is difficult to find educated Vietnamese who are willing to work with poorer people on an equal basis. These American women felt social work should involve the improvement of family and community conditions, and found it difficult to find energetic social workers with a sympathetic interest in the community and its residents who could successfully do this. The social worker who had been trained in America and worked in another area was reported by them to have had more success, and they believe that the different emphasis in the American and French training is responsible for some of the differences in the results of the two women.

In this area, which appears to be as obscure as any in Saigon, it is interesting to learn how much contact the residents have had with foreigners. A number of residents work, have worked, or have relatives who work for foreigners. Work as domestics in foreign homes is known to be better paying though less secure than similar jobs with Vietnamese. Many residents prominently display objects given to them by former American or French employers whom they speak of fondly. Some speak a smattering of a foreign language, usually French. A few have been abroad or have children who married foreigners and are now abroad. Men in the military service often state they have American friends. But despite these contacts there appears to be a complete lack of understanding of the help given them by outsiders with the exception of the Foster Parents Plan.

Foster Parents Plan, Inc., a private American organization, sponsors a number of children in this area, and next to requests for help finding employment, the request to have their children "adopted" in this manner was most frequent. In this plan the child lives with his own family but is sponsored by a particular American to

whom he or she must write once a month. Aid is given in such a way as to help the whole family and to enable the children to go to school. It was noted that the families chosen appeared to be especially worthwhile families who had lost the family head through death or desertion or whose family head was disabled. In each case noted, there were especially bright youngsters who were helped to continue their educations and in no case was drunkenness, gambling, or misuse of funds observed in these families. Aid given includes the equivalent of $8.00 a month, supplies such as material for clothing, and medical help for any member of the family who requires it. This amount of aid is not enough to support a family, and in every case observed, often the family works harder than its neighbors. The social workers stated that one family who needed aid was not receiving it, since the family head had not tried to better his situation by taking treatment for his T.B. But she believed families with small children who she felt were really "deserving" and referred to Foster Parents almost always received help. One lady whose daughter is sponsored by Foster Parents heard about the plan in the market from a friend who said: "You are poor like me, why don't you go to the Foster Parent office, they will help you." She went directly to the headquarters instead of through the local social worker, and after a year of surprise visits and investigation by the bureau, her family was accepted. Each family who discussed being helped this way appeared grateful and delighted. They are proud to show pictures or letters from the sponsoring American family. They appear to feel that fate has given them some wonderful gift, whereas those desirous of this aid who do not receive it give the appearance of feeling cheated. It was mentioned by one American working with a foster family that the aid sometimes seemed to cause hard feelings on the part of poor neighbors toward those who have been helped, but this was not observed in the quarter. Though this is a private organization, a khom leader who had been in contact with other aid projects, and had received medicines and supplies from other sources, stated (without mentioning these other things) "Foster Parents is the only aid the American Government gives the people in this area. It is very good."

There was a great deal of other aid, however, noted by the researchers. The Catholic Relief Service gave money for the new social center, offered a truck to help haul fill for the sidewalks, and channeled American donated cracked wheat, butter, powdered milk, and wheat flour through the social worker into the school and neighborhood.

Food for Millions gave a quantity of food supplement which was used by the social worker for students in the school and some other poorly nourished children.

The United States Operation Mission (USOM) overseas branch of the Agency for International Development, contacted local leaders to explain the possibility of self-help programs in which the American Government would supply materials for worthwhile community development projects if the local people would plan the project and supply the labor. USOM also gives medical supplies and food supplies indirectly through the Vietnamese Government and offers direct help in the form of medical training, scholarships, and jobs. Several local residents work directly for USOM, and several more residents and teachers have been sent to the United States for a period of training.

The United States Information Service has given books donated by American schools to the local schools, has given free English language lessons to several monks, and makes classes avilable to others.

The British Information Service has instituted a program to teach English on the radio, and at least two residents take advantage of this.

The French Cultural Center makes French language classes available at a small fee and gives free classes to several student bonzes. The French Government also subsidizes a system of schools and French language books which are used by a few residents.

Asia Foundation established the social center.

UNESCO sponsored the training of some of the teachers of local area children.

The American Women's Association of Saigon supports the upkeep of the social center and makes small no-interest loans and emergency funds available to the community through the social center.

One individual gave cloth to each youngster at the social center, and it was reported that individuals give toys and cakes through the center every year.

There are, of course, many projects by outside agencies or governments which are of indirect benefit to this area, such as: medical research, highways for

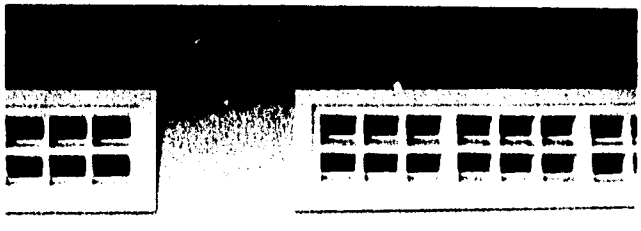
transporting food to this city surrounded by war, development of new industries which give the residents cheaper products and increase the labor market, police training, and payment of the salaries of the soldiers.

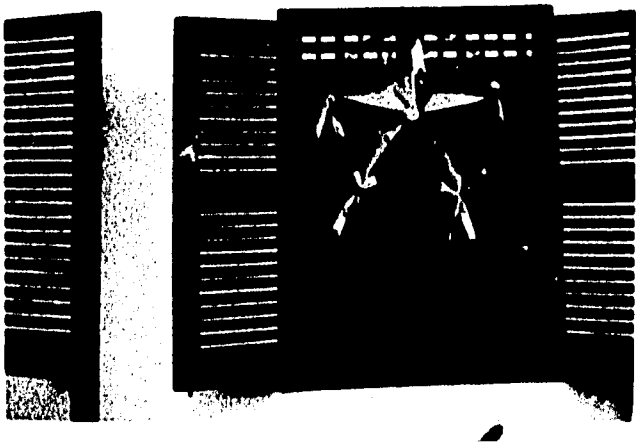
Although much assistance comes to this community, its source is seldom known. Only one woman stated that it was some organization which sponsored the money, gifts, and loans made by the social worker, but she did not know what organization. The khom leader did not appear to identify anything except Foster Parents as aid that reached the people in the area. He described the attempt by representatives of USOM to involve his area in the self-help program as "the only time the Americans were talking of giving help." Even though he stated he had been told to return a form required before any assistance could be given, he felt the fact that the men did not return themselves to pick it up showed a lack of sincerity. The social worker had also been involved with this possible self-help project for sidewalks said she had been afraid to encourage the project even though sidewalks were needed. She feared the neighbors would put the loose rocks and fill on the paths and the Americans would then not give the promised cement for the surface, with the result that everyone would accuse her of making the paths worse instead of better. Several people made comments that knowing the right people was the only way to get anything done.

Only one other resident discussed American aid. He had read in the paper about radios which the American government was selling at a very low price to people in rural areas. He tried to buy one, but was told he could not as he lived in the city. He stated he wanted it for his family who lived in rural Viet Nam but still was refused. He said he was sure that his family would not have a chance as Americans always let aid go through Vietnamese government officials who give advantages only to their relatives and friends. He said he knows that the United States government gives much to Viet Nam, but he feels none of it reaches the people. He adds that he likes Americans and is sorry Americans do not see that their aid is going only to make Vietnamese politicians and their families rich.

L.: Social Center in process; completed

R.: Miss Oanh; girls' sewing class, Women's class (women anxious to learn home industry.)





CHAPTER III

ECONOMICS

Occupations

Occupations are described in three parts, those of men, women, and children. The employment of men and women is analyzed by whether it contributes services for other people within the area--"taking in each other's washings;" or whether the employment is outside of the area, or done at home with the product taken elsewhere to be sold.

Men's Occupations

According to some residents, men of the area who are employed average about 2,000 VN$ per month, and men who offer services to people within the area operate shops such as barber shops, tailor shops, general stores, laundries, restaurants, water pump houses, and meat processing shops. Others hire out as carpenters, masons, and water carriers.

There are three barber shops in Khom 14. The largest one is located near the pagoda, on a corner of Main Street and a lane. This shop, about ten by twelve feet, is open to the street on two sides, but is under a roof. There are two chairs in the center and a row of seats along the inside wall for people who are waiting, reading the newspaper, or just visiting. On the back wall there is a door into the barber's house which is behind the shop. The barber says he came here with his twelve year old son from the country for employment, but his wife and daughters did not accompany them.

On the other wall of the shop there is a cardboard sign, hand-lettered, giving the charges for haircuts: 10 VN$ for men, 7 VN$ for boys, and 5 VN$ for small children. The barber gives between twenty-five and twenty-eight haircuts a day, more when Tet or other holidays are coming. He is a competent man, about fifty,

with strong, regular features, and a courteous manner. His son helps him, giving about twenty haircuts a day to children, when he is not in school. The boy has an engaging smile and modest manner, working earnestly when he gives haircuts. His father keeps him out of school when there are school demonstrations against the government. Men drop in to read the barbershop newspaper or to borrow it to read in their homes.

There is another barbershop about a block closer to the entrance of the khom. This barber has a smaller shop, but it is also an open room at the front of his house. He has only one chair, in which he often sits, for he does not have as much business as the other barber.

A traveling barber, recently from Danang, makes 20 to 30 VN$ a day on the first and fifteenth days of the month, but not so much the rest of the month. He often works outside the area, hangs his mirror and sets up his stool along a wall, or in a vacant lot, and cuts hair as long as there is some business. Then he picks up his outfit and carries it (stool and all), clicking his scissors as he walks, to attract new customers.

The largest restaurant on the main street of Khom 14 serves soup in the morning only. The specialty is "Hủ Tiếu," a noodle soup with meat and greens selling for 5 VN$ a bowl. Later in the morning tea is the only item for sale. The shop has several tables with little square stools for four to six people beyond the porch which are partly in the street. Soup is made at the side of the porch toward the street, in two big kettles with charcoal underneath; one is soup broth and the other hot water. Bowls for the cooked noodles, meat, green vegetables which are added to the broth, are on a table next to the kettles.

Typically, the restaurant is run by a man with the assistance of his wife. In this case it is a family project. The wife arises at 4:30 to make the broth. She starts selling around 6:00 A.M. when she combines ingredients for soup upon demand and collects the money for it. The soup is usually gone around 10:00 A.M. The daughters-in-law serve and clean up but call the mother-in-law to collect the money. The younger son was married in December in a big wedding held at the restaurant. The next morning, the bride was around in old clothes, eagerly helpful, washing dishes.

The youngest son, newly married, works in the background, wearing shorts with no shirt, assisting his father, who acts as manager.

There are other restaurants in the area, several on the plaza at the entrance to Khom 14. There is a good sized restaurant beside the pagoda, with six or eight tables in a courtyard. These are all managed by men whose wives do much of the work.

There are a number of general stores, run by a man and his wife, or by a woman alone. Even when a husband is manager, the wife, or a woman relative, will often do the selling, so stores are taken up under women's employment.

Tailor shops are primarily on Main Street. Furnishings for the shops usually consist of two sewing machines, a glass front wardrobe with new material folded in piles, and finished work folded up or hung on hangers. The shop is at the front of the house, with living quarters behind; dishes of soup are brought in for meals, which are often eaten at the machine. A baby lying in a hammock or bed or toddling around, seems to be standard equipment, as most of the husband and wife tailors are young people. Where both husband and wife work in the tailor shop, the husband usually talks to the customer, plans the work, and sets the price. One such shop specializes in shirts. One tailor works part time in a tailor shop in the big market. The shops that make women's and children's clothing are usually run by women.

There are two water pump houses in the quarter one of which was set up in the fall of 1964. Both are located near the center of Khoms 14 and 15 which makes them close for deliveries to the whole area. The pump takes up the downstairs of a house, and the operating family lives in the upstairs. The pumps are run by men.

Signs at several homes near the entrance to the khom indicate that they are office-homes of nurses. These men practice western medicine, giving shots and treating minor ailments. There is also a large Chinese pharmacy containing numerous shelves, herbs, and drugs run by a man with the help of his wife. Many residents claim this store is more expensive than the smaller shop a few blocks away, and it seldom has customers.

A busy laundry takes up the front part of a home on Main Street. A number of men work in the steamy dark room using professional equipment to turn out neat bundles of clean shirts and other items for people in the neighborhood and outside.

Shop Owner

The machine shop owner does various kinds of metal work, mostly the fabrication of brass wire for musical instrument strings. He has three big machines in a shop about twenty-five feet square, built at the back of his home, partly out over the water. Three or four men work for him.

Cha Lua Maker

A home owner on Main Street uses his front window to display several kinds of lunch meat which he makes and sells, but, local residents say his products are too expensive. His wife goes daily to sell the meats at a market far away. His equipment includes a refrigerator, mortars and pestles, a clock for timing, scales, and large pots.

Services and Work Outside the Area

White Collar and Professional

An elementary teacher in a government school lives with his wife and baby son, his mother-in-law and sister-in-law near the pagoda. His wife, a beautiful girl, works as a clerk in a business downtown. Her sister, about seventeen, takes care of the baby. Just before Tet he was busy painting the front room shutters on the inside of the house. He speaks English well, is competent and friendly.

An office worker comes from Hue where his father is "a rich and prominent man in his community." This young man issues half-price tickets to school children for the buses. He and his wife, who comes from a nearby province, have two small children. She does not work.

A young man is a special policeman patrolling the Bien Hoa highway. He is proud that his patrol car is a new Ford Galaxie. He gets to his office at Thu Duc, a town eight miles, away, on his motor scooter, leaving at six o'clock each morning. He speaks some English which he teaches himself from the radio. He attended a military school in Dalat. His wife attends the University of Saigon; they have a maid to look after the year old baby.

There are many men who are in the army, some living at home and working in Saigon, others are home only when on leave. One non-commissioned officer came to Saigon

from the provinces about twenty years ago and has been in the army since. He gets 7000 VN$ a month, of which he gives his wife and five children 3000 VN$ and his other "wife" 4000 VN$. The first wife bought their home with her own money by selling her jewelry when they moved to Saigon.

One non-commissioned officer gets home at irregular intervals to see his family who live with his mother. He is in a region where there is fighting, and his family say they do not get money from him until he comes home.

The retired civil servant, who is a refugee from the North, lives in comfort and dignity with his second wife and family on his annuity of 4000 VN$ a month. He often dresses up in a white shirt, khaki pants, watch chain, tie, white helmet, and cane, and goes for a walk around the area. His first wife and family came from the North also, and live somewhere in Saigon. The possessions in his home--camera, chess set, books, pictures, games for children, tropical fish, and the like--show cultivated tastes.

Skilled Workers

An electrician, who came from Hue, gets 4000 VN$ a month. He did not take training in Hue before he came here, but learned his trade on the job. He is in his forties, lives with his wife, children, and baby in "a medium good house."

A young man, about thirty, who started out to be a tailor, works in electronics for the army. He studied electronics in Texas for a year in a government sponsored course. He makes 4000 VN$ a month. He likes to take advantage of opportunities to speak English.

A photographer came here from Danang "because jobs were better in Saigon," but he has had no job since he arrived six years ago. He looks after the children while his wife works as a hawker of bread and sandwiches, making up to 30 VN$ a day by working from 4 A.M. to 3 P.M.

Carpenters and other workmen, do local work in the area as well as work for contractors. Wages are 120 to 140 VN$ a day. If a man is ill, he loses his job.

Unskilled Workers

A driver worked for a private family for 220 VN$ a month. He lost his job when he had an abdominal pain in

January and had to go to the hospital for an operation. He also lost his Tet bonus of 1100 VN$ which would have been paid to him the following week.

A cyclo driver rents his cyclo for 25 VN$ a day, hopes to make 30 VN$ profit after paying for the rent of the cyclo. He starts work at 5:30 A.M., and is home for lunch at 11:30 A.M. When he does not have money to rent the cyclo he does not work. One man who is taking treatments for T.B., plans on making 20 VN$ a day to add to his family's income which his wife makes from water carrying. A motor cyclo driver who owns his own machine says he makes 60 VN$ a day profit if he works long hours.

Self-Employed Seasonal Family Work

At least a dozen families in the area make their living by handmaking seasonal products sold in the market, such as Tet flowers, Christmas stars, and Moon Festival lanterns. The supplies for these are bought in the market, or "in Cholon" by a man in the family--the father, or an older brother--and the work is done in the home with everybody from elderly blind grandmothers, to little neighbor girls and boys who drop in for the afternoon to work at simple tasks. Families that make their living this way seem to be well integrated, with respect for the parents. A high percentage of youngsters from these families attend school helping after school hours.

Supplies are usually purchased in a very unfinished condition and if bought prefabricated the profits are smaller. Machines and modern technological gadgets are used; a rented cutting machine for flower petals, spray paint to give color and stiffness to the crumpled brown paper of the crèche "caves."

In one house where they make Tet flowers, the young son cuts out the white paper shapes with a cutting machine, the mother shapes dyed, pleated paper petals on a wire and turns the ends. The old blind grandmother makes the center of the flower by putting a piece of white around the end of the wire and clinching it with her teeth. The dyed pieces of paper in red and blue are laid out to dry all over the room. In January, a leftover Christmas star from their efforts in October through December, hangs lighted from the ceiling.

These Christmas stars are made in the same way with an incredible amount of hand work. The frames are made from pieces which are sliced off a length of bamboo. Tissue paper is stretched and glued over the frame. Tin can

lids are heated for welding at the center to hold the frame rigid. A few decorations and pictures are bought already prepared, but most are prepared at home, from colored paper. The completed star is sold wholesale for 30 VN$, but priced up to 100 VN$ in the market.

Some selling is done by consignment to buyers who sell at retail, but much of the selling is done by the family itself. The men manage getting the products to market each day, and the women help with the selling.

One family, calculated the unit profit on a spray of flowers when sold at 5 VN$ as 1/2 VN$ and the profit on the spray of plastic flowers as "less." The crèche making family has no idea how much they made on each crèche but considers the money they had left over after paying the cost of supplies and living expenses during the period of fabrication, as their "profit."

Household Production Contributions by Men

Some men contribute to their households by staying with children at home so their wives can earn money elsewhere. This would suggest there are no available female relatives to baby sit or that men have more difficulty finding employment.

In their off hours at home, men are often seen taking care of young children--and look as if they enjoy it. Fathers pick up their children to show them off. Little boys often take care of their small sisters and brothers, growing up with experience in child care.

Men do repairs around their homes. Some of the "white collar" workers were painting just before Tet in a do-it-yourself sort of way, in very old clothes. For bigger jobs, such as moving partitions, carpenters are called in.

Women's Employment

Services to Other Households in the Area

Many women in this area are employed, the majority of them selling or preparing things for sale. As will be noted in the chapter on Standards of Living, much of this processing and selling is for other households in the area, so it has some of the elements of cooperative living. Their services include the selection of food from one of

the big markets, transporting to the area, and selling it at a stall on the street. Processing the purchased food into soup, custard, candy, or selling it hot such as corn on the cob, or cooked eggs, or potatoes, adds value. It has been estimated that women earn 10 to 50 VN$ a day peddling, and 100 to 150 VN$ a day if they have a permanent stall in a large market and adequate supplies.

Food

Marketing of food in their own neighborhood creates jobs and income for women. This petty commerce is a cooperative effort in meal preparation, unorganized but efficient. The women who sell select a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, meat, and fish in the market, and bring it for sale on the street where other women can buy it within a short walk of their homes, in morning or afternoon (many city markets close at noon).

Selling is done on the street, by vendors who display their products on the cement which is in front of the house beside the street, or they set up small stands with small glass display cases for cookies, cut papaya pieces, and such. Selling is also done on the street by hawkers who carry their soup or custard or rice in baskets on a pole, setting their product down to sell wherever there are customers.

For the women who sell, the purchasing, processing and marketing of food products fills their days with work. Several women report getting up at 4:30 to start fixing their custard or sandwiches. Some are finished at noon "I sell out by noon because everyone knows my custard is good." Others, like the women selling meat, stay until perhaps 5:30 or later in the afternoon. If it rains, the meat sellers set up their stalls under the porch roof of the "Hu Tieu" restaurant in the afternoon, as the soup restaurant serves only in the morning.

The soy bean curd seller has spinach and soybean curd laid out to sell by the side of the street, near a soup kettle house.

A busy woman with the largest fresh vegetable and fruit stand, pays 300 VN$ a month for her advantageous space in the front of a house near the entrance to the area with a cupboard in which she locks up her leftovers such as carrots and pineapples, to be brought by motor cyclo from the big market. Her selling day starts at about 8:30 or 9:00 A.M., and she is usually still selling at 5:00 P.M.

She is always busy and often has a woman helper, and sometimes a child or two. She has four children, some of whom are in school, and they live in the area behind the pagoda. She works hard, and does not like visitors at her stall because they get in the way of her customers. Her husband left "with a lover" some years ago. She is thin and nervous and has a short temper.

The soybean custard seller is vague about whether her husband is living in the home or not, but she is not vague about the fact that she has to support the family, consisting of a daughter sixteen, three sons, ten, four, and two, and a young sister. The eldest daughter goes to an area near by on her bicycle where she earns 300 VN$ a month while learning to sew.

This vendor can give you the daily costs: 20 VN$ for soybeans, 30 VN$ for rennet, 3 VN$ for sticks and charcoal--all of which makes 100 or more dishes of custard sold for 1 VN$ a dish. She is unclear about her profit and mentions 30 to 50 VN$. She is still paying for the stone mill used for grinding, but she paid for her baskets, carriers, and pans more than five years ago.

She keeps a pig in a pen in the kitchen, feeding it the solid residue from the liquid used for soybean custard. She sells custard in the morning and in the afternoon carries ten trips of water, earning 20 VN$ a day, some of which she uses to repay a loan. This woman had been asking for medicine from the social worker who "was tired of it and loaned me 200 VN$." She repays her debt at 10 VN$ a day. She used some of the borrowed money to buy beans for her work, and after she repays this, she will perhaps borrow some more. The social worker gave her some clothes for the two small children who attend the nursery school.

The custard seller is in her late thirties. She has pretty, regular features and a gracious manner, and usually wears a pretty blouse; (dressed in expensive clothes, she would pass as a guest at almost any party). She speaks in a manner indicating that perhaps she was brought up in a higher type family. She is happy in making and selling something that is wanted and of good quality, and she takes the pain of a swollen tooth, the gash in her little boy's face, the failure of her sister to pass her baccalaureate, and unexpected visits with calm acceptance.

Most of the women sellers previously described are deserted wives. The woman who presides at the soup kettle in front of her house on Main Street a few doors from the entrance to the khom is actually a widow. She usually

wears a blank expression as she ladles out the soup, and has greetings only for those who are buying and eating her soup. The soup kettle is set on the ground a few steps in front of her house, which is open across the front, and customers sit at a table in the front room of the house, or squat beside her with their bowls.

A little further down Main Street, a meat seller sits on the front door step of one of the better masonry houses selling meat most of the day. She displays several three and four pound pieces of good quality meat on a wooden board; as she runs low, her sister hands out additional pieces that have been kept in the house. She sells meat smoothly and effortlessly, sometimes not weighing it, for she is so experienced that she can cut to the exact weight with her cleaver. These small chunks, usually sold for around 10 VN$; she wraps in banana paper leaves and hands to her customer. Her husband is not living, so she came from a distant province to live with her sister and brother-in-law; she has one daughter who lives elsewhere. She has many friends who like to sit beside her while she is selling, or visit with her after she is finished. She is always smiling, as if she were an onlooker of life.

Among those sellers who work to add to the family income, is the woman who sells papayas. She has a husband and a daughter, eleven, who is in school. She is in her early thirties, neatly dressed, with her hair in a bun, Southern style. She is always smiling when she greets people, as if she is happy to be out on the street selling. Her work begins with the purchasing of papayas early in the morning at the big market, and by 7:30 she has her stand set up on the street opposite the Hu Tieu soup kitchen. She keeps her supply of fruit in a basket behind her, displays two or three papaya in a small basket in front of her, which she sells whole for between 8 VN$ and 12 VN$ each. She keeps papaya slices iced in a glass cupboard, which she sells for a fraction of a piaster. By noon she has usually sold out the twelve or fifteen papayas she brought from the market, but she is often back on the street in the afternoon, sitting with her friends who are still selling, or else fixing greens for supper.

Her mother, a friendly, talkative woman with a towel around her head in a sloppy manner, sells bananas some of the time or is often on the street just visiting. Whether she is selling or not seems unimportant; the main thing is that she is out with her friends and with her daughter.

Two elderly women, sisters, carry on a stand that sells fruit, cookies, cooked yams, and other things. One seems

most responsible for the store and is helped by her sister. The store is a gathering place for the family, and a spot from which to survey the neighborhood, where she has lived for fifty years so that now she feels superior to the people there. The matter of costs and profits seems minor, now that they no longer have the power that the daughter had under the Diem government when she was in charge of organizing the women of the area. Now she is concerned about her son going into the army.

General stores are usually run by a man and his wife, with her doing most of the selling, or by a woman alone. Most of the larger stores are located on Main Street, but there are a number of smaller ones scattered along the tiny paths. Some are more "general" than others. In the first block of Main Street there are several stores with a wide selection of items: sandals, brooms, school supplies, household supplies, candles and items to take to the pagoda, play toys, etc. Most general stores are limited to the main items that families purchase often: rice, fish sauce, lamps, wood, kerosene, cookies and candy, cigarettes, and a few fresh fruits such as bananas. The smallest stores are the front rooms with a few jars of cookies on the counter, some dusty notebooks or spools of thread in the display case; on a shelf a few lamps and dishes; and on the floor bundles of wood and charcoal and several cartons of soft drinks.

One store sells only nuoc mam (fish sauce used as the Chinese use soy sauce) in large 60 VN$ jars. This fish sauce is also sold in small amounts from an open jar elsewhere.

One store that specializes in rice is run by a woman with three shy little boys. She has six open bags of different kinds of rice, and six unopened bags. She gets a new supply going by bus to the provinces every month. She has few other things to sell: wood, religious items for the pagoda, soft drinks, cigarettes, and stacks of comic books on a back table.

Rice is also sold by hawker, who carries it in a basket on a pole.

Store owners describe the area as saturated with stores. Ones with large shops say profits are ten per cent of the sale price but they are unclear as to how much investment there is in inventory. Owners mention daily profit ranging from 30 VN$ up to 100 VN$.

Non-Food Services for Each Other

There are other things besides food that the women sell to each other. Dishes and pots and pans are sold by the mother of one of the young women tailors. She does her selling during several months before Tet holidays in February and makes an entertainment out of it by raffling them off much like an American church fair. She has a spiel she shouts to waylay passersby as well as to entertain the circle of people around her pile of dishes, glasses, and aluminum. She has brown hair (possibly French ancestry) and a stern looking face which makes the hoarse spiel all the more arresting. She has sold without raffling but says it was much less profitable.

Numbers on cards from one to six are laid out on a saucer passed around by her assistant, for the sum of 1 VN$ a piece. When the cards are taken she shakes her dice and the person holding the number that comes up gets the article that she was singing the praises of a moment ago. She thus gets 6 VN$ for items worth 2 or 3. Occasionally a man (non-resident) turns up for a few days and sells dishes and glassware, but his wares are much less popular as he provides no entertainment. Cloth is also occasionally sold on the street by an outsider.

The ao dai tailor runs her own shop with occasional help of a young lady cousin or sister. She takes all the measurements of her customer and then writes them in her notebook, and gives her customer a little slip with the price and time of fitting, in a most businesslike manner. The cloth pieces are hung in order of arrival on the wire that reaches across the room above her head, and the progress of one's cloth to the other end and final sewing can be watched by the customer if she drops by. The dresses in process are laid out on the wooden bed on one side of the room, where the assistant sits and sews by hand or irons on a fold of cloth while the ao dai tailor sits at her sewing machine. Behind her is the wardrobe for the completed ao-dais.

Next door is a young wife who has just started sewing. One day a young man started to remodel the front of the house, putting in a big open window. Two days later it was completed and the young wife was sitting at her machine in front of the window with the wire for materials and the wardrobe for the completed garments, and a hammock for the baby that she could swing by a cord tied to her chair. She is the sister-in-law of the couple who run the shop on the other side of the ao dai maker. This is the frequent pattern of location

for shops in the Far East--similar products sold in neighboring stores. There are many shops like this where a woman or women sew in their front room.

The cyclo driver's wife takes care of sick babies for their mothers. She reports mothers pay her 500 VN$ a month and bring milk and medicine, although they do not always come. There is much interest and concern about the sick babies which makes this woman's home a center of interest.

Baby sitting is done by many young girls for relatives. An older woman does day time baby sitting for 300 VN$ a month. Some young girls work as live-in maids making up to 500 VN$ a month.

Some women add a little to their income by carrying water. It is hard work for a small amount of money, but it seems to be a service that is always needed, and it can be done at various times with low initial investment.

The young wife of a non-commissioned officer with three small children, carries water for income. She makes twenty trips a day carrying two pails, between 7 A.M. and 11 A.M. earning 40 VN$ a day, at 1 VN$ a can. Some people pay for their water by the month which makes the unit price lower but assures the carrier of a steady income.

The mother of a foster child who lives near the pagoda usually carried water, but has not felt strong since the birth of her last child and has had to give it up temporarily.

Service to each other extends to housing. Traditionally oriental families take in relatives, but there are several examples of non-relatives given room with or without pay.

A woman who is part Chinese and Vietnamese, who sells for a living, lives with another family where she pays for a room. One house is a rooming house for several young women.

An elderly lady who is poor and has no family is allowed to sell small items in front of one of the best masonry houses on Main Street. She also sleeps on the floor of the front room. The woman who owns the house said she felt sorry for the old woman and she gives her these privileges in exchange for light housekeeping services.

Selling Outside the Area

There are shops and homes in which things are made to be sold to individuals or stores downtown, or sold in markets by the maker.

The embroidery shop has no name over the door, but each day three or four young girls can be seen sitting on stools or on the wooden bed in the front room stitching bright colors on table mats or doilies stretched on frames. A pleasant young woman in her early twenties called a "sister" at one time by the head woman, and later a "relative," sits in the back corner, supervising as she works on a larger piece, a table cloth or an ao dai. She has a broad forehead and curving lips; she maintains her position over the other young girls, but is competent and friendly.

The boss of the shop is a woman about forty, the second wife of a man who works in a government office during the day. He helps with the management of the shop and does some drawing of designs on cloth--a sort of organdy bought by the bolt. He sells the embroidered things to "many shops on Tu Do," the street of best Western shops. Their children are a girl eleven, who lives "up North," a girl seven, and a boy five. The girl goes to school, but the boy does not.

The "boss" has done embroidery for many years, although she is rarely seen with a needle. Across the street is a young girl about twenty who does the same embroidery of dragons and fishes on table mats in their own homes. The boss says she pays them by the piece. The embroidery girl reports different monthly earnings; she gets from 150 VN$ to 300 VN$ a month. She has worked six months.

There are other girls in the area who do embroidery and sell it individually to shops or people. A pretty girl about twenty years old is doing more difficult "white on white" embroidery with drawn threads which she sells to a shop on Tu Do. Her price is 150 VN$ for one pattern for each side of a blouse, plus 50 for the thread, so that means 350 VN$ for a blouse. It takes her four or five days to do a pattern, but she has some other girls who also embroider, so she is able to do a blouse in about a week. She tests the material brought to her trying the threads carefully for strength. She prefers white material from the market that is 65% tetron. Her mother who lives with her shows the twenty or more patterns they choose from. Embroidery is mostly an accomplishment of girls and women from the North.

She has a younger sister, sixteen, who is in school, who already does some embroidery in the afternoon. Her mother says they have rich relatives in the area, but they do not see them.

Up in the second floor of one of the houses about six or eight doors from the embroidery shop is a shop where they do tailoring of dresses for a store on Tu Do. Six girls sew under the management of a man. There is no sign on the house. They charge more than most tailors 500 to 700 VN$ for a cotton dress and there are several identical dresses.

Two girls work together making drinking straws laying out their paper materials on the wooden bed in the front room of the house. Long strips of paper are prepared with mucilage along one side--about thirty pieces in a pile, spread out from the base like a fan. With a deft motion, the girl brushes the paper, winds it around a brass rod, and pulls it off. Straws are put in a pile, and later cut at the ends. The papers, in blue and white, are kept in piles around the bedroom, and under the bed in the front room. Other people in the area also make straws. One of the girls said she made straws mostly for the fun of it as the pay was very small--1 VN$ a hundred.

A woman making thin dried sheets of sliced bananas called banana paper supports her family of six children without the help of a husband. She claims to make 70 VN$ a day profit minus transportation as the whole family works, and everything works well. Several women who do not have 50 VN$ or more to buy bananas cut for others on a part time basis getting 1 VN$ for ten sheets 12 x 12 inches square.

Weaving on a treadle loom is traditionally a woman's occupation. One family with three grown daughters has two treadle looms and an electric loom, which is not used because the price of cloth is now too low to justify the expense of running the loom. Toweling in large black and white checks, often with a red border, is woven on the treadle looms. The hanks of black and red thread hanging to dry outside a house show weaving is done there. The thread is wound on spindles by a large wheel, in some cases a bicycle wheel is used. The click of the bobbin and the treadles can be heard in the street.

The looms are old, with the smoothness of use in their dark wood. The girls sit on a block of wood that balances on a rod and press the treadles with a little

bounce. The oldest sister can do ten pieces (a piece is a towel length, one meter and three inches) in a day, or as much as fifteen in a day as a record. The material is sold in ten piece bolts in the market for 140 VN$ giving them a profit of 50 VN$ over the cost of the thread, dye, and threading the loom done by the man who sells them the thread. The family owns the looms which cost 3000 VN$ and the large electric which cost 9000 VN$. On the latter they weave unbleached muslin. The young brother in his twenties seems to manage the marketing, and the girls do the weaving. The parents sit in the background, helping out when necessary.

The looms are idle in the month of January while they make flowers for Tet. The youngest daughter, seventeen, likes this better than weaving, for she is more free to get around and see people, and there is more variety in the work. The last of January, after the girls finish the flowers, the brother packs them in large hampers; two-thirds are sold retail by the girls; one-third are sold wholesale.

A project of making traditional small animals out of colored dough which hardens was encouraged by some American women and set up at the welfare nursery school building. A competent upper-class Vietnamese lady, sat on the floor, surrounded by twelve women who live in the area. She mixed the flour, sugar, and water, talking most of the time to the women. They watched her intently, with little ripples of good natured comments. She put color in four of her five balls of dough, took one-half of the white ball and by rolling with her fingers made a dog lying down, his tail curled around, in about fifteen minutes, and a fish with decorative fins along its back out of red dough in ten minutes. She then pressed dough in the hand of a woman next to her and encouraged the other to try.

Throughout, there was a pleasant atmosphere, as if the women enjoyed being together and enjoyed the project. Their span of interest was long, over an hour, and the women watched intently all the time. The teacher was quite professional in her presentation, informal, and not condescending. There were other work sessions, and some of the women became proficient in making the animals, but the problem of where to sell them was not solved.

In addition to people who work on projects that are sold outside the area, there are women employed downtown and in other parts of Saigon. A school teacher's wife is employed as a clerk in a business. The wife of a white

collar worker works as a tailor in the market during the day and brings home work to do in the evening at her sewing machine. She makes 3000 VN$ a month, which with his 4000 VN$ gives them a good income, according to her mother. Her mother is paid 2000 VN$ for taking care of the couple's two little boys during the day.

A woman in her forties works as a maid for an American home getting approximately 2000 VN$ a month. Her father, a retired electric lineman who considers himself one of the leaders of the Catholic Church, lives next door. He built this house for her and her family and one for his other married daughter on the other side.

Income

Women who sell can be considered according to the place of their income in the family budget. Is their income the main support of the family, or does it contribute additional money to the budget? There are, among those who work, women who support a family, wives who add money to their husband's income, and single girls or older women who are alone.

Many who are the main support of a family are deserted wives or widows. It is permitted in the Vietnamese culture for a man to take a second wife, which usually means the first wife gets little or no support for herself and her children. The phrase that is often used "her husband ran off with a lover," means that he has left for an indefinite period. Other women mention a husband but say he is not there, living somewhere else; they are generally vague about him. These women are all widows as far as supporting their families is concerned.

Some women sellers have husbands and are adding to the family income, or if he is unemployed, supporting the family, or work because they like to.

Most of the single girls working seem to be part of the family. The ao dai maker is an exception; she is set up independent of any family members. There are mutterings that she makes lots of money during the time around Tet when many people order new dresses from her.

The embroidery girl, who does work for the Embroidery Shop across the street says she spends her money on herself and does not give it to her mother. Although this may not be true she got a 100 VN$ permanent and some new clothes

before the Tet holidays. Some older women support themselves, some add to the income of their children's families and others live on the contributions from their children.

Household Production by Women

There is no high value placed on making things for the home; instead, the emphasis is on being able to produce some article that can be sold and thus have money to buy services or goods for use at home. Women do not spend long hours in their kitchens, nor do they sew much at home.

One husband says his wife can make cha gio (a roll of small bits of chopped food wrapped in rice paper and deep fat fried). She is seldom seen cooking it and frequently buys such items from hawkers on the street.

Women carry water for themselves and others if they are poor. Usually a housewife does not carry water for the family; the young girls and children do this, or people are hired to do it.

However, laundry is usually done in the home--there are no central spots for washing clothes. The Vietnamese style is to squat on the floor and wash in basins.

Child care is usually limited to care of babies. Young mothers, carrying their babies go out on the street to watch what is going on or to visit with friends who are selling or buying. Sellers often have babies or small children with them at their stalls. One hawker reports that she leaves her little two year old boy with a friend. Toddlers when watched at all are turned over to older brothers and sisters or to relatives. These older children carry the young child, usually on the hip, and are ready to go up and down the street to watch anything interesting that may happen.

Since homes have few things to occupy children's attention and the mother is often away selling, children learn by watching adult life on the street. Crowds of children are tolerated in most situations because it is the custom for children to learn by watching.

Children's Employment

There are not many jobs in the area for children, as the adults are busy taking up all opportunities to work

in order to support their families. Some young people, with or without the help of parents, become apprentices. An unemployed man in Khom 15 has an eighteen year old boy who is apprenticed to an electrician, and a younger girl who is learning to weave in a factory.

Most parents are raising their children in surroundings different from those of their own childhood. They do not seem to conceptualize goals for their children. When parents of the children who show promise and are doing well in school are asked what they think their children will be when they grow up, they are vague and say "What they wish." and "What they are fitted for."

Where children and young people work in family projects and seasonal production such as weaving or making Tet flowers--or in the soup kitchen or barber shop--the children, boys especially, seem busy and well adjusted. Their job future has been defined and worked out with the help of their parents.

The cha lua maker's son has been taught his trade by his father. They make a pair, sitting pounding in unison opposite each other.

The young son at the barber shop has also been taught a trade by his father.

A traditional way to teach children selling can be observed in the big markets, but it does not seem to be used in street selling. Often a young person of twelve years or older is in charge at a market stall. Only when some question comes up about the purchase, is the buyer aware that a parent has been watching near by, who now comes up and decides the price or makes change. The young person is learning by doing, under supervision.

Banana paper is made by girls and boys on several streets behind the pagoda. Water carrying is a way for eleven to fifteen year old girls to contribute to the family or to make money. Little boys up to about ten years of age carry water, but not after they get in their teens. One girl about thirteen years old, makes four trips a day for her family, and her friend makes five trips. One, twelve years old, makes eight or nine trips at a time for her family and then no more for a couple of days until they run out of water.

A quiet little girl who asks for a picture, works for her living in a store. The woman who runs the store does not approve of the attention given to the girl, or perhaps resents the time taken from her work.

The oldest daughter of the woman who has a stall next to the Catholic Church is supposed to tend her mother's stand in front of the house now that her mother has a stall in a big market. She says she does not like selling and would like to work in an office and learn English--but she is not studying anything.

Many children from the area are in school and work on weekends, holidays, or after school, for the school day is short.

Many older boys wait around for the army service to catch up with them.

There are young people who work in offices and jobs, apprenticeships and training courses, who are busy and out of sight; in the area during the day, however, one sees many young boys ("cowboys") standing or sitting in small groups, usually well dressed in white shirts and tight pants, with nothing to do but call vulgarities and throw occasional fruit peelings. The girls one sees, some bored, some happy and busy, helping with children or household tasks appear to be waiting to get married when they will probably work to support their family or their in-laws.

Consumption Patterns

Homes

Many people own their houses and have lived in the same house for a number of years. There are some "For Sale" signs, but rarely is a house empty. One owner reported that he had recently paid 60,000 VN$ for his house, a masonry house with a porch and tile floors on the main street near the entrance to the area. He bought this with one payment and said only a few government houses can be purchased in payments over ten years, in other parts of Saigon, if one works for the government. Others report paying 5000 VN$ for shacks on up to 7000 VN$ for better homes in the area.

Monthly rents vary from 300 to 500 VN$ for small or half-houses; to 700 to 1000 VN$ for better houses. In one case, the family paid 3000 VN$ for better houses. In one case, the family paid 3000 VN$ "key money" in order to be able to rent the house and felt they were lucky enough to be able to rent it at all only because the landlady was from their "home town." A deserted wife with a family pays 500 VN$ for one-half a house with flimsy matting walls and flimsy matting partitions between the rooms and the adjoining house. Another half-house of three rooms and a kitchen is shared by two families from Danang, each with three children. The partition between the two sides of the house is made from wooden boxes marked "shipped from Japan." This half-house rents for 400 VN$. Just about the poorest housing seen is the laundry room with no windows rented in exchange for five trips of water daily carrying two pails each time--the equivalent of 10 VN$ a day or 300 VN$ a month.

Much house repair is always in progress giving the community an air of optimism toward the future. People put in tile floors, build a new front to a house with windows and a door, paint wood trim and walls, or put in a new cement front door step. One family raised the floor in their home to avoid the floods and had purchased new tile for the roof. A store on the lane to the Catholic church moved in a new counter. More repairing occurs between September and January than during the rest of the year; traditionally houses are fixed up for Tet in February.

Some houses have a covered entrance (good protection for the rainy season), a porch with tiled floor, an enlarged doorstep with room for a bicycle at one side, or a small room at the front. One otherwise steps

directly into the house from the street. Several houses have expanding iron gates across the front like a store. These are pulled back part way during the day.

Most houses are divided into two rooms, a front room and a bedroom, plus a kitchen, or kitchen space at the back of the house. In some houses the second room or bedroom was quite private, with no glimpse of it possible from the front room through the door, curtain, or plastic strips; in other houses the entire living area is open to view.

At one home, the husband employed a man to come and move the wooden partition so the door to the kitchen would be at the other side of the room from the entrance door. "He doesn't like it that people can see right through to the kitchen when they enter the house," said the wife.

Rooms in a house are separated in a variety of ways. Sometimes there are masonry walls with a regular door, or just a curtain, or even just a piece of cloth on a wire stretched across the room; perhaps a wardrobe is set at right angles to the wall, there is a wooden wall with no door, or there is simply a curtain that can be pulled around a bed. Second story bedrooms give more privacy, but the same balcony bedrooms are open to view from below.

Most houses have one or two wooden beds in the first (living) room, which make good places to sit during the day. The mats and mosquito nets used for sleeping are usually rolled up neatly on the side of the bed near the wall, or piled in the bedroom. Several people use a soft mattress, and one old lady has a number of flannel blankets put together to make a soft bed.

A table with four straight backed chairs is found in all but the poorest homes. Often it has a flowered oil cloth cover. A small wardrobe is another common article of furniture in the main room.

Those who are better off have a glass front formica coffee table buffet, and armchairs, with plastic webbing. A ceramic tile floor is a mark of better living.

Hendry in his Economic study of a Vietnamese village put together a chart of "Ownership of Prestige Durables."[5] This is used with twenty-four of the families in this area.

---

[5] J. Hendry, The Study of a Vietnamese Rural Community: Economic Activities (Michigan State University, Viet Nam Advisory Group, Saigon, 1959).

OWNERSHIP OF PRESTIGE DURABLES[6]

	TOTAL	CLASS		
	(24)	Low (8)	Middle (8)	High (8)
Sewing machine	5	0	2	3
Photographs	16	3	5	8
Brass altar fixtures or Catholic altar	6	2	0	4
Armchairs	11	0	4	7
Center table	19	4	8	7
Potted plants	8	1	3	4
Wardrobe	18	4	6	8
Wrist watch	10	2	2	6
Wall clock	10	1	4	5
Formica table	4	0	0	4
Bicycle	5	3	0	2
Scooter or motor bicycle	3	0	1	2
Glass front cabinet	8	0	2	6
Radio	13	0	5	8
Electricity	19	3	8	8

[6] Ibid., p. 279 for table on which this was based.

Several items in Hendry's study were left out; these were pressure lamps and the Chinese character fresco, which did not appear in any of the area homes. Electricity was added and formica-top table was used instead of marble top table. Homes were observed and possessions noted during recurrent informal visits. In some families, their possessions indicated their progress in improving their economic and social status; other families had reduced their possessions in forced migrations, and their household belongings represented a selection from their former possessions. The twenty-four family group was divided into higher, middle, and lower classes in relationship to status in this area and not in Saigon.

Of the total number of families listed, three-fourths have electricity in their homes, center tables and wardrobes as shown in column 1. These items of furniture are simple in construction and go along with the wooden beds as minimum furnishings. Items in the list that are possessed by few families are scooter or motor bicycle, formica table, bicycle and sewing machine, all expensive and representing Western technology. In some cases, ownership of these represented a business investment, sewing machine for tailoring, or motor bike to get to a job far away.

Column 4 of higher class families shows that things people buy when they have more money are radios, glass front cabinets, formica top tables, sewing machines, arm chairs, wrist watch, frames for family pictures. The glass front cabinet usually holds some china cups and fancy glasses rarely used, and an assortment of knick-knacks or toys of small value. This cabinet or buffet, and the formica top table are the most frequent status symbol of the higher class families in the area.

Almost as many families in the middle group (column 3) as the higher group have potted plants, wardrobes, wall clocks and electricity. This middle group is distinguished from the poor families (column 3) by their electricity and center tables, also wall clocks, and radios.

Half of the poorest families visited manage to have a center table and a wardrobe, and some have family photographs on their walls. Even with small income, they show their special interests; two poor families have brass altar fixtures and three have bicycles, while no families in the middle group have either of these.

Altars are set up in almost all living rooms. They are often on a buffet, high up on a wardrobe or partition, or on a shelf especially built for an altar. The altar

may be simply a jar for incense, or it may have pictures of ancestors, parents, a deceased spouse, or conventional Buddhist or Catholic pictures and statues. Plastic or paper flowers in vases, electric lights such as strings of Christmas colored lights, fluorescent bulbs, blinking lights, and vines draped around the figures and pictures express the individuality of the home and the family's interest in the altar. At Tet time, in the home of a carpenter from North Viet Nam, an altar with beautiful brass fittings was revealed when a curtain of a faded print cotton at the rear of the room was drawn back so that these brasses could be polished.

There are pictures in most houses. These may be pictures of parents or ancestors in addition to the altar pictures. There are pictures of young people in glamorous-poses--either sons and daughters or sisters, or simply pictures from magazines. Family snapshots are gathered together and framed under glass in one frame, or put under a glass-topped table. Additional family pictures are often kept among the clothes in the wardrobe. Many houses have as many as six or eight religious pictures, either Catholic or Buddhist, of popes and prelates, or Buddhist monks, or saints or of goddesses. Certificates of membership in religious organizations or awards are framed and hung up. Travel posters of the United States and Europe, amateur oil paintings of scenes, and book illustrations (Kim Van Kieu) adorn some walls.

Cooking is done in a room used as a kitchen or in an open space at the back of the house. A small clay stove, which uses charcoal or sticks, is most commonly used, and some families have more than one. Several pans and stirring spoons represent the utensils, and are often hung on the wall; dishes are stacked in a wire drainer, are just laid out on a box, or put away between meals. There are few supplies around because these are purchased on the street just before they are used. While there are few possessions, they are usually kept neatly. The stove may be used on a table or on the floor.

Clothes are washed in a basin or large pan on the ground. The method is to rub the clothing between the hands. Sometimes children are bathed by mothers at the public hydrants, but no adults bathe there.

For ironing clothes metal irons with handles that hold burning charcoal are used. Ironing is done on a bed or on the floor, using a folded blanket.

Hot water is sometimes kept in thermos bottles, replenished when the stove is used. Hot tea can then be served anytime of day using this hot water.

No water is piped into the area, so all water is carried into homes in large square five gallon cans. These cans are emptied by the water carrier into large stone jars in the kitchen of the home.

One family reports paying 100 VN$ a month for four cans of water a day; another family with six children gets eight buckets a day for 150 VN$ a month. Still other families carry their own water.

Each family must also pay 10 VN$ to 15 VN$ monthly for garbage collection, street cleaning, and maintenance of the toilets.

Privacy is one of the elements of living. It is not often a direct goal, but an important consideration in decisions between alternatives.

Vietnamese people in this neighborhood live in small houses built close up against each other. In Khomn 14 and 15, they all must leave and enter the area by the same narrow street. The toilet house is in view of the street, and the sides extend up only hip high--in fact the first view of it at a distance, with men sitting reading, suggested a reading room.

Discipline of children, and the revolt of young people often take place in front of watching neighbors. Nevertheless, Vietnamese value the privacy of the family. Many of their houses have a second story bedroom, added by putting a low ceiling above the first floor. Windows are covered by shutters even during the day, if there are too many passers-by looking in. Houses are kept locked; curtains cover entrances to bedrooms.

Neatness is so often mentioned in describing or judging the way people live, that it is worthwhile mentioning here. Particularly if people are poor, one is likely to say with disapproval "Their house is messy and dirty," or with approval "Their yard and house are neat and clean." Perhaps neatness is a middle class virtue, and approval means that people have the beginning qualifications to move up to be middle class like others; or the judgment may be that they are in control of their environment when they can keep it in order and keep it clean.

One reason many of these people can manage to keep their clothes and their homes neat is that they have few possessions. Some blank spots exist such as dirt floors under beds, and some homes with tired working mothers are dusty and littered. But when visitors come in the morning by 9 o'clock, the table is cleared, the dishes are washed and drying in the rack, the bedding is rolled up and packed away, everyone is dressed for the day, and the floor and doorstep may already be swept.

Food

Food is an important concern of the women of the area. It is a large item in the budget of the poorer families, as one would expect. One mother with four children to support reported that she spent 50 VN$ a day for food. For breakfast she gives each of the four children 2 VN$ to buy soup at a stand, which is a fairly common practice. Another mother with three children said she spends 25 VN$ a day. A family with six children which has a higher income because the father is employed at the airport, said 100 VN$ a day is about what families spend for food. The social worker in the area estimated that 30 VN$ daily for food would be an average; in the poorest families, 10 or 20 VN$.

Food is also the major concern of those who are involved in selling and petty commerce. Nourishing cooked food is almost always available on the street, as well as fresh meat, fish and poultry, vegetables, and fruit. Some of the ready-to-eat items that are sold by women at stalls on the street, or in stores, or sold by hawkers with pole and baskets are:

fruit: papaya, bananas, pineapple, and others
soup
cooked food, such as cha gio
soy bean custard
roasted corn
juices
eggs (cooked)
cookies
candy and sweets
sugar cane
drinks
meat, prepared in the cha lua store

Other foods that are sold require cooking in the home or other preparation:

meat (fresh)
Poultry: chicken, duck, etc. (alive)
fish: eels, etc. (alive)
small pigs (alive)
dried fish and other dried food
vegetables and fruit
rice
soy bean curd
tea

Some families eat three meals a day at home; many families have lunch and dinner at home, but get breakfast at a counter or just a bowl of soup from a vendor. Some say they eat twice a day when profits are poor. At home a meal is set out at a table, or may be just a bowl of food eaten sitting on the floor; the whole family may eat on the front door step, or gather around the bowls set out on the wooden bed in the living room.

Hendry describes food consumption in a village in the country, which would seem to apply equally as well to this city "village" from the foods sold.

"In the typical or 'usual' standard of living in terms of daily diet, an adult will eat three times a day during the crop season, each meal built around the staple rice. The twelve or so bowls of rice a day, eaten with nuoc mam or soy sauce, will be accompanied by a vegetable soup or vegetables quick fried, and by either dried or fresh fish. The fish and vegetables will also be cooked and eaten with one of several sauces. At least one of the meals will be followed by some fruit, and tea will be drunk at all times during the day. At least once a week there will be small portions of meat of some kind, usually pork, although at the first and fifteenth of the month there will be a larger than usual meal at which chicken or duck may be served."[7]

There is much eating between meals by children. They come to the little stores with a piaster or less, for candy and cookies. A child comes up to the seller on the street with a small coin and gets a piece of papaya. In ten minutes during the mid-afternoon at a small store by the pagoda, three children came in for cookies. There are small stands beside the Catholic school and the pagoda school where children can get cooked food, different kinds of cookies in plastic bags, several kinds of candy, or pieces of fresh fruit.

---

[7]Hendry, op. cit., pp. 260-261.

The additional excitement of chance is added to the candy sold by a man who comes around with a cart, ringing a bell and singing children's rhymes. The child pays a piaster, spins a pointer that stops at a number between 1 and 4. This means that he gets this many pieces of taffy pulled off the long piece of candy lying at one side of the cart. He is sure to get one piece for his money, and he can hope to get four.

When visiting, it is not good form for a visitor to knock at the door, rather he calls, or asks someone nearby if the family is at home. A visitor is greeted by a smile and bow and is invited to sit down in a chair at the table, or on the wooden bed. Some sort of drink is brought; sometimes the hosts ask for a preference, but usually it is just brought in by some younger member of the family. The drink sits awhile before it is tasted, and then the guest is urged to drink. It is important for the guest to wait until the host indicated it is time to drink.

Hot tea is most often served, usually in glasses on plastic coasters, but occasionally in cups. It is brought in from the kitchen, between warm and hot, or made with hot water from a thermos in the living room. Sometimes bottled drinks--orange (Bireleys) or lemonade appear--a child has been sent out for them after the guests arrived. At one very poor home, the hostess was offended when her offer of bottled drinks that she would have sent out for was turned down. "You turn me down because I am poor."

A warmer welcome is shown when other food is served in addition to, or instead of tea: oranges peeled and sectioned, grapefruit in sections served with salt, cookies, or watermelon seeds. At Tet time, plates of special Tet candy and fruit confections are served along with tea.

Clothing

The accepted type of dress for women is a blouse of plain or figured material and black pants. The blouse is usually Vietnamese style, with the front closing, but some young women wear Western style blouses, plain or figured. An ao dai is slipped on over the blouse for a picture, or for dressing up to go out somewhere.

Men who go out on business wear white shirts, no tie, and plain trousers, and some teen age boys affect this dress. More frequently, however, men wear dark or figured shirts with trousers, and the minimum is shorts with undershirt or no top, often worn at home. If guests arrive, men slip on shirts and trousers over the shorts.

Children wear pajama outfits of figured cotton material, or they wear western clothes. Little boys wear shirts and shorts, and little girls wear blouses and long pants. Baby girls usually wear panties of some sort by the time they are a year old; some little boys run around naked, or with only a short top piece, until they are four or five.

Vietnamese straw hats are worn for protection against the sun, by both men and women. A few women carry parasols, but this is a noticeable elegance. More informally, towels or scarfs are wound around the head.

This standard type of dress makes any variation conspicuous, such as the party of three people who visited the area on some official calls connected with taxes. The men wore ties with their white shirts and dark trousers, and the woman wore a bright ao dai and carried a parasol. Wedding guests are also conspicuous--the women in bright colored ao dais, some with painted flowers, and the men in dark suits, carrying the pink and red gift boxes.

There are special dresses for religious services. Women and older girls at Buddhist meetings which are often held on Sunday, and at the Tet services at the pagoda, wear light grey ao dais. Older girls attending afternoon meetings at the Catholic church wear white ao dais.

Everyday clothes are almsot always neat and clean, though some men, such as cyclo drivers, may dress in tattered clothes.

Clothes are important, especially at the New Year. Planning for Tet includes a new outfit for each person in the family. The tailors are busy during the months of December and January. Gifts of clothing to relatives are common. A grandmother or aunt may give a new ao dai to a young girl, or a sister may send new white shoes to the little boys in her brother's family. A young wife gets a new ao dai with painted modernistic designs of faces and figures. There are fashions in ao dai materials; dark small polka dots on pastels were popular in 1965.

Clothes have high priority. "If people get extra money, they will not use it to pay back their debts, but buy clothes instead."

Economic Problems

People such as the weaving family often mention that they could do more work if they had more capital; their looms were sometimes not in operation because they had no

money for supplies. This family, however, describes the outlets for their goods as limited.

Family projects such as making Christmas stars or festival lanterns require capital to buy supplies; the father of the family usually searches the markets for the cheapest place to buy the various materials. In only one case did a family do work on consignment.

In stores certain goods are often sold out, and the shelves remain empty for many weeks before the inventory is built up, again indicating either lack of operating money, or access to goods.

Hui is an institution in Viet Nam on almost all economic levels. It is a way to get capital in a social framework, with a touch of gambling, which the Vietnamese enjoy. A group of people form a sort of club with a leader. Each person puts in a certain sum, perhaps 1000 VN$ (about $10), at each meeting for a limited number of meetings, as many as there are members. In the case of a Hui group of twelve persons, there would be 12,000 VN$ ($120) available each meeting. This goes to the leader at the first meeting, and to the highest bidder among those who have not already had money at the subsequent meetings. These members submit secret bids to the leader before the monthly meeting organized by the leader.

The honesty and financial responsibility of the Hui leader is recognized as the important thing about a Hui group. Women usually belong to groups made up of women only. Most of the women who were store owners or sellers said they did not have anything to do with Hui "as people run away after they get their money." One woman who is a Hui leader said her meeting would not be interesting to Western women as it is an old group, and only a few people come to it now.

Jewelry is a common way of keeping assets. Several families mentioned assets in the form of jewelry--in one case the jewelry was sold for money to buy a house. In another, a wife wanted to work so she could accumulate savings which she would invest in jewelry for herself, but little jewelry was observed in the area.

An elderly woman said that of whatever amount of monthly money one receives, one should save about a third put in a sock and hidden about the house. This money, she suggests, is for weddings of relatives and collections in the neighborhood when someone dies. The welfare worker said that if people had more income they would not save

it but put it into repairs on their house, new clothes, gambling or tickets to cai luong (traditional musical plays).

The amount of debt could not be estimated. There are about ten money lenders in the area according to the welfare worker, and one of these men is a big lender. The interest rate is 10 VN$ a week for a 100 VN$ loan. One woman reported borrowing 500 VN$ for 20 VN$ a day interest. At this rate, it is difficult for people with financial problems ever to get loans paid off.

Banks are not used much. A woman store owner said she would not go to a bank to borrow as they charged too much interest, but she said she could borrow in the area not realizing that she is paying a higher interest than she would at the bank.

The welfare worker has some funds available from the American Women's Club which she lends. A woman seller tells of a 200 VN$ loan to buy supplies which she is repaying at the rate of 10 VN$ a day by carrying water. There was no interest charge for this loan.

Gambling has a firm place in Vietnamese culture, absorbing some of the available funds, and affecting the operation of institutions such as hui. The amount of gambling increases toward the New Year (Tet): groups of men gather around games on the street. Most noticeable in this area are the groups of children. An adult or young person runs a game with six squares printed with fish or birds, and three dice with the same pictures. An intent circle of boys and girls with coins or 5 VN$ notes plays the game by putting money on the pictures. Younger boys play the game with stacks of comic books instead of money, and small children have crudely drawn pictures on an old piece of paper, a pile of bottle caps, or rubber bands for their betting.

Above: Store; Barbershop

Below: Fish seller; Straw maker; Home repair

CHAPTER IV

ROUND OF LIFE

Pregnancy and Birth

There are a number of pregnant women in the area. They work and go about their normal duties of shopping, cooking, and washing, as always. When their clothing becomes too tight, they wear loose blouses similar to their usual ones and loosened black trousers. The traditional formal wear, which was only seen once in this area, is a white low necked sleeveless smock which is worn over an unfastened ao dai.

Pregnancies are not always considered desirable. A number of women say they would like to be able to limit the number of children to two or three, giving as a reason their concern about "feeding another mouth." Several mothers whose daughters are pregnant are worried about their daughters having too many children. In one case a store owner stated that having too many children was the reason Vietnamese were poor. Later her pregnant daughter, who already had five living children, lost her unborn child in the early months of pregnancy under circumstances which lead the researchers to surmise that it was probably by an abortion. Although abortion was never mentioned (perhaps because the daughter is Catholic), the two women made no effort to hide the fact they had been frightened of this unwanted extra child and were delighted when their problem was solved. Another woman who is extremely poor and has two sub-normal infants was quite upset to be having another baby. She is Catholic and explained that she had been told by nuns that she had not caused the children to be abnormal, and the new one would have every chance of being healthy. She discussed with them the possibility of giving the child up for adoption and had agreed that if she were to do so it would be best never to see the child. She said she had discussed doing this when her last child was born but had decided against it. Although she treated the child with affection, she said it might have been best to have let him go, since now that he was obviously "sick," no one would take him. Her husband, however, said he wanted the unborn child and hoped it would be a girl. When later the child did prove

to be a beautiful, healthy little girl, the mother could not give it up at first, and at the end of the study period was still torn between the impossibility of raising all her children and her desire to keep this lovely child. Not only this husband but other men also seem to be quite proud of the number of children in their families and less concerned over the number of "mouths." A man describing his dozen children by two wives smiled with pride, saying it was not so many and that he had friends who had more. When the children are older, after the immediate problem of raising them is over, parents and grandparents are proud to state they have large numbers of children and grandchildren.

One practice noted in the area for dealing with the problem of their inability to raise children is to find other homes for them. Several young boys who serve at the pagoda were reported to have lived there for a number of years. Although none of the bonzes would state why the parents had left them, other than to do Buddha homage, it is well known that besides making merit, the parents give small children to monks to raise because the child is either a discipline problem or the family has too many children. Another practice noted in the area is the finding or hiring women to care for sick children, so that "the spirit who is causing the illness may be confused and unable to find the child to harm further and he may live." In many cases people are called parents of children to whom they are not actually related. Use of the terms "older" or "younger" brother and sister for acquaintances makes actual relationships difficult to distinguish.

According to professionals working on vital statistics in Viet Nam, it is difficult to find out the number of children lost before birth, at birth, or in the early years. This may be because of the fact that until a child is born, it is not considered a person; instead it is a free spirit who may stay with the family or not, as it chooses. They traditionally avoid mentioning the name of someone who has died, for the use of the name may call the spirit from the spirit world, and it may linger to haunt them. It is, therefore, difficult to know the exact infant mortality rate, but it is probably low compared to other areas of Viet Nam because maternity centers and medical care are readily available. Although several families mentioned losing young school aged children, only a few vague references were made to the loss of younger children.

The birth date itself was not predicted accurately in the case of the four women who were expecting to deliver during the period of the study. Two women said

the babies were over due weeks before the infant arrived, and two estimated the dates only within a two month period. One girl said she had a healthy big baby in six months for her first pregnancy and in ten months for her second. Young pregnant women are the source of much teasing by older women. The older woman seems to have earned the privilege to feel the pregnant abdomen and guess the age and sex of the baby. The expectant mother looks embarrassed, and the woman and audience of passing neighbors laugh uproariously.

Pregnant women state that they tire more easily during pregnancy, but they eat the same foods they always eat and in most instances live "normal" lives. Only one woman changed her job, quitting work in a downtown office when she estimated that she was to be entering her fourth month of pregnancy. Upon further investigation, however, it was determined that because the Vietnamese believe that the spirit is a free and knowing entity and the pregnant woman therefore "has four eyes--two in her head and two in her stomach," there are certain rules the expectant mother must follow. During the new year when the household spirit leaves its watch at the house to go to heaven, she must stay close to home. If she attends a wedding, the newly wedded couple may be unhappily married, have difficulty having children, or even die. For the sake of the child, pregnant women avoid going to the pagodas, for the spirits who frequent pagodas might cause harm to the unborn spirit. To see a funeral or attend any ceremony for the dead is to run the risk that the child will cry for 100 days or perhaps die, because it has seen the torments of hell in the land of spirits. Several women reported the belief that to have pictures taken during pregnancy would cause the child to be born ugly. But as several pregnant women asked to have their pictures taken, this may not be taken seriously. Several women said that visits from a pregnant woman during the New Year holidays would not really bring bad luck for the family, although many others said this would be very serious. It is traditional in Viet Nam for women to avoid giving birth near the family altar, and maternity centers are popular partly for that reason. Women of the area put their beds for the post-natal recovery far away from the family altar, regardless of whether they were Buddhist or Catholic.

Some Vietnamese report that pre-natal education and character formation is very important. Vietnamese women go through elaborate rituals during pregnancy, talking to the unborn spirit, avoiding sad or upsetting

thoughts, anger or other emotions disruptive to the development of the child. Although no woman of the area mentioned this pre-natal training specifically, several wondered what they had done before the birth to cause a child to be mentally deficient, inflicted with colic, or deformed. These practices are consistent also with the belief that the spirit is a knowing entity who can be frightened by funerals and influenced by many other forces.

Every women questioned, who had had babies in recent years or who were expecting babies, planned to use hospitals or maternity centers unless the baby arrived too quickly for them to get there. Several reported such short labor periods that they had to deliver their babies themselves, perhaps only with the help of friends or neighbors. One woman told that her mother-in-law insisted she save money by staying home to deliver her last baby; she allowed her to plan to use the free center for her next delivery, however. Maternity centers are available free of charge to those who do not pay to go to a private doctor and hospital. One woman who chose to go to a private doctor said that it cost her 150 VN$ for each visit to the doctor before the baby came. At the maternity hospital where she went, there were rooms costing between 500 and 3000 VN$ for medical care and a week's stay, including food. The room given to one young woman cost 1500 VN$. In these hospitals there is usually no nursing staff and an expectant mother must bring someone to help care for her. An extremely poor woman had chosen to go to a certain free maternity center, but it was a 20 VN$ ride from the area and required its patients to stay a week. She, therefore, changed to one to which she could walk from her home and had to stay only three days. Despite the fact that there are often two women and babies per bed in these centers, this woman had planned to take her helpless subnormal infant with her had she not been able to find adequate help for the child at home.

After giving birth it seems to be considered very important by all women that the mother rest, and, despite the hot climate, to stay bundled and eat a special diet. Even the poorest women said they had help and tried to rest in bed for at least three weeks to a month after delivery. After that, it is desirable that a woman do no heavy work for four or five months. Two poor women stated that they started carrying water within a month and a half after giving birth and that it had caused them to be ill and lose strength.

The diet which seems to be universally accepted for from three to five months after birth is rice and dried meat or fish cooked with concentrated nuoc mam and pepper. No water, soup, fruits, vegetables, or anything cold is to be eaten, but hot tea is encouraged. The foods which are forbidden, such as fruit, are generally classified as "cold" foods (whether they are served warm or not) which chill the stomach and make the mother ill. Women bundle themselves up in a corner away from doors and windows and for a month, if possible, have a fire burning under their beds. This is because of the belief that when a child is born it takes a great deal of warmth from the mother. The pores of her skin are also considered to be open and air could enter, to bloat her body or to give her aches immediately or in the future.

In the two homes which were visited soon after the mothers had given birth, the women were lying on newspapers spread on slat beds over charcoal or wood fires. Mosquito netting swathed the beds in both cases, and both the women and their babies were warmly bundled with clothing. Several women remarked that many rules were more laxly followed in the city because available medicines made women well sooner.

Child Rearing

During the time the mother stays in bed, the infant remains with her. After this period it is usually some time before the child is taken outside the house, as they feel the child also needs warmth and is threatened by air entering its body. The spot at which air enters an infant's body is believed to be the soft spot in the head. At maternity centers one occasionally sees babies with no clothing except a woolen cap to protect this spot. Usually, however, the infant is bundled not only in a cap but mittens, booties, tummy bands, perhaps diapers and wrapped in blankets and towels which sometimes even cover the face. When the tiny child is not nursing or out with his mother, he is often lying in a hammock and bundled so tightly he can hardly move. The hammock is swung quite vigorously for as long as the child is awake--often for hours. When an infant cries, someone stops all other activities to tend or comfort it. Men and women of all ages are seen walking small children by the hour.

No child was observed crawling, and several women stated that early walking was not encouraged as it made the children too independent and noisy. Even after children are able to walk quite well, they are frequently carried until the time another child enters the family or until the child is in school.

Children nurse upon demand until the mother is several months pregnant again or until the child is two or three years old, although a few older children were seen tugging at their mothers' breasts. Women appear to enjoy nursing and they are relieved of other tasks while performing this function. Women often nurse in public along the sidewalk or on hammocks by open windows, although a few were seen closing the doors or in other ways seeking privacy. One group of four women who were all nursing, sat and fed their children together as they talked. Several women said that younger women have more trouble nursing than did their mothers. Two young mothers said their children did not nurse, and another said her mother who recently quit nursing her own baby was acting as a wet nurse for her grandchild. They agreed that it is unfortunate when a woman cannot nurse a child; they gave lack of strength or ill health as the usual reason. One older woman stated she had not been able to nurse as she was poor and did not have proper food. In rural areas, women frequently feed infants only boiled rice water when there is no breast milk. Children of this area, however,

are usually fed canned sweetened condensed milk kept open and unrefrigerated for long periods of time and diluted with water usually unboiled. When a child is five or six months old, he is fed rice gruel and in the following months some pre-chewed rice. One woman fed a six or eight month old some ripe banana; she said, however, that most people would not think this was a good idea. Babies who are old enough to eat solids are often fed as they are carried along the sidewalks astride the hips of parents or older children. They are not encouraged to feed themselves in any way, and when they finally start they are often seen eating with fingers or spoons as they squat or walk along the sidewalk. Even though parents sometimes say that the family has two meals a day, children are frequently seen eating snacks during the day. Many times children are given a piaster or two to buy a snack for breakfast on the way to school. Children may be seen eating fruit, soups, a sweet coagulated gelatinized confection, candy, ice cream, boiled sweet potatoes, sugar cane, roasted corn, bean custard, or rolls at almost any time of the day. Adults, too, appear to eat snacks often and frequently eat at stands or shops instead of cooking at home. During the day food is frequently given to a child to keep him occupied or as a bribe to be quiet and not disturb the adults.

There is little pressure placed on children to go to bed at a certain time. All businesses in Saigon are closed from about 12 noon to 2 P.M. or longer, and during this time residents can be seen dozing on mats on the cool floors or in beds or hammocks. Sometimes children wander through the area as their parents rest. Youngsters stay out as late as their parents at night. The only parent who expressed concern over the sleep of her child was one young mother who asked if there was some medicine to give a healthy baby less than three months old who stayed awake and cried at night.

Toilet training is usually most relaxed. In fact, only a few times was an effort observed to train the children. One woman was seen holding a boy firmly under her arm at an angle where he had to struggle to keep his head from falling backwards. She was at the edge of the sidewalk a few steps from her door. She made a soft "ssss" sound, almost a whistle, and very soon the boy urinated. There was no visible reward other than being released from this obviously uncomfortable position. One other time a toddler was scolded by a neighbor woman for urinating on the sidewalk. In most cases, however, there seems to be little concern; children are simply held to one side as they urinate on the ground or floor.

One woman was urinated on by a neighbor's infant, and this incident produced much laughter from the woman herself and all observers with only a token of wiping of the chair she had been sitting in and her wet clothes. In one house a pie tin was placed under an infant's hammock to catch the urine falling on the wooden bed of the family below. Several times toddlers were seen having bowel movements at the doorway of houses or stores, and these were merely wiped up with paper by the mother. The child was not scolded. After girls are one and a half or two, and a boy is three or four, children usually wear long trousers with their shirts or blouses. About this age parents report that the child is "trained by himself." It is frequently observed on the streets of Saigon that older children and grown men (almost never women) urinate in public. This is not, however, a common practice in this community.

Children bathe nude at the public water fountains until girls are five or six, and boys are ten or twelve. Somewhat older boys were seen swimming nude in the river. On several occasions, masterbations of small boys by their mothers were noted and once a child suckled the organ of a tiny boy to silence or soothe him. On one occasion, a group of boys of ten to fourteen years old stood playing on a sand pile near the fountain in the plaza and vied with each other to see how far they could urinate, comparing also the length of their organs. No one appeared to take note of them. Vietnamese frequently state that there is no sex education given to Vietnamese children by their parents. However, in these small homes the only privacy usually available is a curtain which can be pulled around one bed in the house, and children never appear to be excluded from conversations about giving birth, pregnancy, or any other topic.

Some adults remarked that their parents had been stricter when they grew up. Several felt this is because times have changed; others said it is because they grew up in rural areas where things are stricter than in Saigon. Discipline for children in the quarter appears to be infrequent, erratic, but sometimes severe.

The youngest child in the family appears to have very little discipline, for he is constantly carried, fondled, and swung in the hammock. He loses this favored position abruptly, however, when there is a new child in the family; his loss of position may be more gradual when he reaches school age. Young children are often distracted by food, toys, or their whims are

indulged. One older child, who was eating a cherished apple, was forced to give the whole thing to a baby brother who demanded it, although everyone realized the younger child would not be able to eat it. Valued objects such as this are not often divided between the children but given entirely to the youngest. One boy, the youngest of two children in a family, pinched visitors, yelled when his parents were trying to talk, and pushed young and old alike. For such offenses there were sometimes smiles from the adults, occasional playful corrections, and once a strong slap on his face. The mother of this child dressed up one day, put a flower and tea pot on the table and asked to have her picture taken in a very "refined" pose. When this boy pushed his way into the picture, she tried to push him away, tried to talk him into leaving, but when he persisted, finally gave up and included him with a "long suffering" look. Often phrases such as "I'll give you to this lady if you don't stop that," and "Maybe she can teach you to behave," are jokingly used, but children do not seem to take them very seriously.

Seldom are youngsters scolded, yet one girl three or four years old was beaten with a stick until there were welts on her back, arms, and legs when she accidentally broke a 3 VN$ bowl. Another child spilled medicine worth about the same amount and was not reprimanded. One boy of about two years was switched a number of times when he did not want to leave his father and tried to follow him. One woman was seen running after her eight year old daughter, beating her with a switch, as the child ran to get away. The girl ran down a path to the toilet, and the woman waited around the corner until she appeared again. Catching the child unaware, the woman gave her several hard swats before they continued to run down the path. On two different occasions, a woman chased a nude boy about nine years old. She was hitting him with a four foot bamboo stick which left large welts as he ran sobbing and cursing her. Once a boy threw stones at a neighbor woman who had slapped him leaving a large red hand print across his face. They stood screaming and throwing things at each other along the path as neighbors watched and tried to separate them. This was reported to be a rude boy who was often in trouble, and who this time had said "bad and disrespectful" things to the lady. Neighbors added that his father was French which seemed to explain why this was a "bad boy."

Crowds of small uninvited children frequently enter houses. One man gently but firmly tells them to leave, another switches their legs, one puts up wooden shutters

and locks the door when he desires privacy. One family who has no young children had a group of boys, eight to twelve years old, enter their house, sit on the bed, play cards, and read comic books. When they left, the young woman of the house explained that they were "cowboys," and she was afraid to try to control them. A number of parents complain about their own or other young boys being uncontrollable. This, they explain, is caused by the difficult and unsettled conditions in their country.

A Catholic mother of five children said she took a class from a group of nuns on how to raise children, but that she had not learned anything useful. She was the only one to mention any education concerning child rearing.

Children do not have many toys. Usually they play games imitating adults. Small children were seen playing "school," "house" with dolls, and "doctor," pretending to sell candy, and pretending to carry water in the tin cans tied onto a stick. Often children can be seen toddling along, left to their own devices. Children were seen imitating parents--cutting with butcher knives, using a real butcher knife in their play, or toddling across unsafe boardwalks, apparently not discouraged from these pursuits. As children reach school age, their play is usually in sexually segregated groups. Girls play such things as jump-rope and pick-up-sticks with chop sticks. Boys pitch coins or bottle caps, kick feathers stuck in a cork (an object similar to a badminton bird) gamble with cards, play marbles, fight with crickets. One family had a ping-pong table set out in front of the house which was very popular with one group of boys.

Girls are seen playing together less often than boys. Boys appear to have fewer responsibilities and consequently more free time to roam in gangs about the neighborhood.

Both girls and boys may be given responsibilities in the home. Most jobs are done by boys, however, only if there is no girl to do them. Some boys baby-sit, a few carry water, but usually the girls do these jobs. Children help their mothers at the stand where she works, run errands, shop at the small neighborhood stores, or prepare their grandmother's betel. When girls of very poor families are approximately twelve years old, they sometimes get jobs carrying water or doing housework for another family. Some of the children help in weaving, making holiday decorations, or in other home industries. Families who have home projects in which the children have responsibilities, seem to have fewer problems with their youngsters.

Life for a Vietnamese is not consistent. When a child is tiny he receives constant attention, but when another baby comes along the child is expected to love the new baby immediately, give in to its every demand, and to cease to need much comfort and coddling from the family. This sudden change perhaps explains the fact that a child may hold and care for an infant and when the mother is not looking give it a pinch or kick. It is not uncommon to meet a sobbing child sitting alone beside the path as one walks in the quarter. Small children often give neighbor children pokes and then lock innocent. Some older boys encourage younger ones to throw rocks, shout vulgar or insulting things or fling fire crackers at adults and then point out the boy and act innocent themselves.

Life is inconsistent once again for the boy who has had no previous responsibilities when he is first required to assume some. When these young men take their first job, are married, or are drafted into the army, they frequently have break downs; doctors claim the hospitals are crowded with such youth. Young girls frequently have a more consistent development, for they have family responsibilities and duties at home similar to those they will have as adults. However, their lives change dramatically when they marry and must "exchange her duty towards her own family for duty toward her husband's family." Many teenage girls, both those in and out of school, appear sullen and somewhat lethargic. Although in many cases girls do not break ties with their own families when they get married, they theoretically may not even go to their own parents' funerals without the permission of their husband's mother.

On the other hand, children grow up in a very realistic world, not excluded from any situation or conversation. They grow up very much by themselves, with a great deal of freedom. They are not pushed to grow up or to be independent and are often given responsibilities only after they have taught themselves a particular skill by play and imitation. The only situation observed in which parents seem to push the unwilling child is in greeting strangers. If the youngster appears terrified, the adults do not usually comfort him but laugh and make fun when he runs off crying. Adults are considered fortunate when a shy child greets them. The only other case of encouragement noted was that of a child who was very late in talking and who was encouraged to do so by his mother and grandmother. Usually even education is left up to the whim of the child. Children are not taught to respect personal property, and several

times adults were anxious but silent while dirty children's hands fondled their treasured pictures or keepsakes.

Parents are, however, proud when their children say something witty or do something well. Upon being congratulated on a fine youngster, they will smile and look proud as they answer with the usual polite expression. "He has really done so little."

Marriage

Several marriages took place in the area during the period of the study. At the largest soup restaurant the family prepared for a wedding by entirely repainting the restaurant. On the fifteenth day of the lunar month at 9:00 A.M., the groom and his family went to the home of the bride carrying tea and cakes. Then the group was joined by the bride and her parents who went to the home-restaurant of the groom's father for the ceremony. On the floor in the center of the room there was a temporary altar built of three stones to the god of the hearth, an ancestor altar, incense, and wine. It was in front of this that the young people were married. The 200 guests came in shifts after the ceremony, all bringing gifts such as lamps, radios, and tea. Most of the guests were from Saigon, although a few of the bride's relatives were from the country. Guests were served an elaborate dinner catered by a Chinese chef. They drank thirty bottles of choice wine. The father stated that the wedding cost him 40,000 VN$. Several women discussing weddings in general said "nice" weddings cost this amount. The day following the wedding, the groom and his brother replaced the furniture in the restaurant; the bride and her husband's brother's wife washed huge piles of dishes. Immediately after the wedding, the bride must work very hard in order to show what a good wife and daughter-in-law she will be. This couple lived in a separate area of the groom's family home, helping in the soup restaurant. Although the family is Buddhist, there was no monk present at the ceremony.

Another home was painted and decorated with flags and paper flowers for another type of celebration connected with a wedding. This was the home of a groom who had been married some days before at the bride's home but had come to his own home for the first visit after the wedding. Downstairs in this small home were eight tables of men in suits and ties--the groom wearing a boutonniere. Upstairs the bride, the mother-in-law, several other women and children talked. The women all wore traditional Vietnamese clothing.

A woman described a small Catholic wedding of her daughter which had taken place in her home. The groom paid for the expenses of the wedding. After the ceremony the couple exchanged rings at the larger Catholic church, "because it costs too much to have the priest come to the home."

This Southern Catholic woman said she had arranged the marriages for all her children without their having seen their partner until the day of the ceremony. She believes that most weddings are handled in that way. A Catholic woman from Hue stated the same belief, adding it is best to "let fate take care of things." In this particular case, it is interesting that the daughter-in-law she chose had been working at the Indian Embassy, and their eldest child is obviously partly Indian.

A young woman, who had met and fallen in love with her husband when they were both in high school, states that their parents had not met until he requested they arrange the marriage. She and her friends agree that this is the way most marriages originate.

Neighbors sometimes tease an engaged couple. One woman said she was laughed at because her husband is a great deal older than she. People said she was marrying her own father. Someone else reported people laughing because the young man was shorter than she.

Several times people were seen getting ready to attend weddings outside the area. One woman bought tea wrapped in red paper for a wedding gift. Several times groups of people, often entire families, dress up to go outside the area for a wedding. Once it was the wedding of a boy of the area; several neighboring families were to attend the dinner at the bride's home. Frequently families have pictures of the weddings of family members which show that the guests are often from outside the area.

According to the social worker, a large percentage of families of the area live together without a formal wedding which leaves the woman and the children vulnerable to desertion. Usually men with two wives are not officially married to the second. Only two families, however, mentioned the lack of official ceremony as a problem to the individuals concerned. In one case a very young couple wanted to marry, and the mother of the boy refused to allow it. The couple lives with the "wife's" parents, and the young wife works for her "husband's" parents as though it were official. In the other case, the girl's parents refused because the man was not a hard-working Catholic. This couple has five children and the whole "family" lives in the back of the mother's store, but the girl's mother still refuses to allow a "wedding."

Mixed marriages are not always stopped, however. One Buddhist woman reported marrying a Catholic man, and all their children and grandchildren were raised as Catholics. Several women proudly display pictures of the weddings of their daughters with French or American men. A marriage is also considered a "mixed" one when it is between a North and South Vietnamese; in the few cases where this has occurred, people point it out as being unusual.

People seem to agree that at the present time in the city, the traditional rules about marriage being arranged as well as the formalities observed at weddings, are much less rigid than in rural areas than they were in the past. It is agreed also that young people have more freedom in the final decision of whom they will marry.

It is generally agreed that when the husband and wife live separately from their parents, it is the wife who rules life inside the home. In several cases of quiet women, it was observed that they also directed their husbands but with more finesse than others. The husband has a number of controls to balance and sometimes overbalances this feminine dominance, however. For instance, a man may take his recreation with other men or outside the family. Often men were seen sitting over tea or drinks, talking during the day and evening.

Men also often take second wives or live temporarily with different women. A Vietnamese proverb states it is better to have only a small part of an excellent man than to have an inferior one all to one's self. One family studied in the second section reported the feelings of various members when the husband took a second wife. His mother said he should have what he wanted and told his first wife that if she objected, the man would leave her and stop supporting her altogether. Both women stated that there have been no harsh words between the two wives (an ideal which seems to be expected in these cases), but the first wife added that it would be of no use anyway.

Two wives almost always live in separate homes. Only one family of the area was reported having two wives and their children under the same roof and this was a case of a man with a wife and children marrying a widow with children and moving them into his home. Neighbors say that these two women have "never let a harsh word pass between them" but the widow lost support for her children from Foster Parents because of this arrangement. Women say that when

two wives do live together, it is very difficult to keep from fighting and "throwing things at each other at the dinner table." But in such cases the first wife rules the home and may order the second to do various tasks. The first wife discussed above, stated that although she would not have to give up so much money, she would not like having the second wife live with them. The major complaint of this first wife was that although she still fed and housed herself and their five children the amount of money given her by her husband had been cut to less than half. She is very bitter and does not want the husband to come back to her.

The children of these two families appear to discuss the arrangement normally and the children of the first wife do not seem cool toward their father. In cases noted in which there were two households, the man lived with the second or "little wife" though some make occasional visits to the first family.

Possibilities of a second wife are occasionally mentioned in conversations. One lady stated that her daughter's husband did not make so much money, but they were still lucky as he had only the one wife and they did not have to split his salary. Another woman said she felt her very young "married" daughter had nothing to fear from the lack of a wedding insofar as being a second wife was concerned, for the young husband is very jealous of his wife.

Complete desertion is not as frequent as it might appear to be because of the number of women living alone with their children. The social worker states that the men come back now and then, often asking for money and staying until the woman is pregnant. (It has been reported that Vietnamese believe one should not have sexual relations during the entire pregnancy and for six months after the birth of the child.) Perhaps one reason men do not cut ties with these families is that the more children they have the better chance they have of getting food and gifts sent their spirits in order to lead a comfortable life after death. Some women state, however, that their husbands have run off with lovers and will not return. One woman said her husband left several years ago, and she does not know if he found a lover, was drafted, or caught in the war. She does not know whether he will return or not.

Some men living at home do not take responsibility for their families. One woman must completely support her family, as her husband spends his time drinking. The social

worker estimated that a third of the men have no jobs at all, and many others have irregular employment. Some of these men want work desperately, but others do not take employment because the available jobs do not appeal to them or, according to the social worker, they are alcoholics or just lazy. She points out that no woman who is head of the household is unemployed because she cannot allow her children to starve. An often quoted Vietnamese phrase is that women have minds for work and business and men should use their time in philosophy, politics, and poetry. It is interesting to note that there are a number of families in the community in which the man does not work but cares for the children while the wife works. Several men do cooking or other chores around the house, while their wives earn the living. In a few home industries most of the work is done by the women while the men smoke, talk, and supervise.

On the other hand, there are men who do not want their wives to work. One young woman stated she wanted to do some sewing to earn extra money and to give herself something else to do, but her husband did not want her to work. Another man was seeking desperately for work even though his wife had a job, as he wanted to work and have her stay home. One man stated several times that he was the sole support of the family; his father was retired, and his wife and mother stayed home to care for his children. Even though this did not prove to be true, it seemed very important to him that it be believed. In a number of families both husband and wife work and in many of these cases the children are left unattended.

In this politically divided and war torn country there are many cases of separation of nuclear families: husbands from wives, unmarried children from parents. Some men who cannot find work in the country, leave their families there and come to the city. Some young men come to the city to escape draft by the Viet Cong. Many families have men in the military forces, some stationed near Saigon, permitting frequent visits, while other families have their men gone for long periods. In these cases the wife and children are often left with the soldier's parents.

This problem is even more apparent when one looks at the extended family, for nuclear families are frequently separated from in-laws and the families of other relatives who traditionally would quite possibly have lived and worked in close proximity.

Vietnamese have a reputation for having strong ties with the extended family--a new family usually exists under

the domination of the parents of the husband. Although some community members state this is less true than in the past, there were numerous times when young couples appeared dependent upon the husband's or wife's parents. Parents and parents-in-law, for instance, determine if young people can be officially married. After the wedding a girl is expected to serve her mother-in-law. Although many extended families do not live together, in every case when mothers-in-law are present they appear to be treated with deference by young wives. The new bride at the soup restaurant appeared to "invent" work to do even when there was none in order to prove herself worthy. Her mother-in-law, however, seemed especially kind to her and one day poured and brought her a drink. A Vietnamese outside the family who observed this said it was the first time she had seen a woman serve her daughter-in-law. One young woman said that "mothers are temporary," because when a girl married she belongs to the groom's family. She then said if mothers-in-law are kind they can become closer to a girl than her real mother. But she said many were unkind. One said when she married her husband's mother was already dead which, she added, made her life much easier.

Several relationships between wives and their mothers-in-law were observed in which both seemed to be respectfully friendly to each other. One mother-in-law, however, answered questions for her son's wife, grabbed things from her hands, and told her to be quiet. The wife gave the appearance of being passive. One girl stated that the mothers of the wives are kind to grandchildren, but the mothers of the husbands are cruel and frighten the children. The fathers and fathers-in-law do not appear to relate as directly to young couples. However, once a father told a son and his wife that they could not have their pictures taken. The boy appeared to be disappointed, but the picture was not taken. In only one case was someone heard being rude to a parent. One young man who lived with his father-in-law told guests in front of the elderly man that he was old and drank and that, therefore, one should not pay attention to what he said.

Living with the parents of the wife is not the traditional pattern in Viet Nam, but it seems relatively frequent in this poor, crowded neighborhood. In several instances young families built houses next to parents or moved nearby.

Mothers of young married people also have responsibilities toward and needs to be filled by the young couple. One mother of daughters entering marriageable age said that women must be very watchful of children before they marry, and afterwards married children come to them frequently for advice or money. Older men and women depend upon their children. Poorer men and women usually depend on their sons' or daughters' families for financial support in their older years. They often live with the family and contribute to the family by baby sitting or doing other chores; they may have an occupation which adds money to the family till. And in this country where most people believe the spirits depend upon gifts and food from the living, older people feel a great concern about being well treated after death. The woman who was helped with her dress, given tea, and in other ways served with great deference by her daughter-in-law and who still said she was unsure of this daughter-in-law until she saw her faithfulness after death was verbalizing a common fear.

A number of older women said, however, that they do not want to live with their daughters-in-law but with the family of their own daughters. Several mother and daughter teams in the area are very close--one mother and daughter both have tiny tots whom they walk together. Many sell next to each other or are frequently seen conversing. One woman cried about her mother being in the central part of Viet Nam, too far away to visit, and she was sure the old lady was lonesome and missed her too. Another woman said that her daughter moved to France, and she would probably have been happier if she had moved with her.

Traditionally it is the mother of the husband of the family who decides who will eat, dress, go, or do anything. Further study of this relationship might prove that this is breaking down somewhat or is less true in poorer city families. But this personage is obviously still very important and would be a key person in the success of any educational program or any community change involving the family.

A number of families in the area had more distant relatives also living there. However, there does not appear to be as much interaction between these families, as might have been expected. Some cousins eat soup at a restaurant apparently without paying for the food. One western-oriented teacher said often relatives are sent to live with richer relatives, and the arrangement is

unfair. He has to support nephews who will not get jobs, and he would be considered unkind if he should make them work. One family from Central Viet Nam has a "long house" which contains separate residences for the families of two brothers and a nephew under the same roof. One very poor lady received a pair of shoes from each of her children at the New Years celebration (a time for gifts as it is considered the birthday of everyone), but this woman has rather well-to-do cousins in the neighborhood who do not appear to give her assistance. One refugee widow from the north and her daughter say that their "rich relatives in the area" do not see them. Many residents remarked that at New Years Day celebration they would see many relatives who live nearby but whom they do not see except at this time each year.

Death

When a death occurs in the area an ambulance may arrive and take the body away, but at this point many rituals begin which are not completed until the person's children and grandchildren and perhaps great-grandchildren have died. In all non-Catholic homes except one, ancestor altars were noted. They are usually for the parents and grandparents of the husband, but there may be one for the parents of the wife also. These show the spirit that it is remembered, and incense, food, and flowers are often placed on these altars. If a family can afford it, it may also put the picture of the deceased in the pagoda and make offerings to him there. People from outside of the area also come to the local pagoda frequently to have a memorial service; services in several pagodas enhance the memory of the dead.

On one occasion a family gathered in the yard of the pagoda the morning of the funeral to burn a paper house with furnishings, paper servants, paper money, and other representative items for the use of the soul in the spirit world. The Buddhist monks from the pagoda said it was not a Buddhist custom but "something Chinese--perhaps Confucian--that many traditional Vietnamese families practice." This family also gathered inside the pagoda to pray in front of the picture of the deceased young man; an older and a younger woman cried as they prayed, while other members of the family conversed and joked about other subjects, showing little involvement with the formalities. On several occasions women cried when mentioning recently deceased fathers or mothers. Two sisters were particularly concerned because their father had drowned in recent floods in Central Viet Nam. (Spirits of those dying violently or by drowning are supposed not to be able to rest but must roam, earthbound.)

When the monks have a special service for the soul of a deceased person, friends and relatives attend wearing traditional black or white mourning clothing. After they have made obeisance to the picture of the deceased placed upon the altar, and to Buddha, they may converse or serve tea to monks who are conducting the service. They make no attempt to attend or listen to the monks chanting the prayers.

Both Catholic and Buddhist families expend a great amount on the funeral. Homes often have pictures of funerals; the deceased lying in a coffin in a church

for Catholics and in front of household ancestor altars for Buddhists. The pictures may show different groups of mourners and large dinners following the service. Many residents state that they always make donations to friends when they have funerals in order to help cover the great expense. Relatives from outside the area come to pay respects to the bereaved families when a death occurs, and they are served tea, cigarettes, and betel, in addition to meals.

For at least 100 days after the death, a house contains items such as black drapes with silver trim or scrolls with Chinese characters that indicate the household is in the first stage of mourning. Traditional white mourning clothing is worn by the immediate family including coarse loose clothing for the funeral; more distant relatives wear black bands on their arms and later a one inch by two inch strip of black cloth usually fastened to the dress or shirt with a paper clip. For three years after the death of a husband some Northern women wear white bands around their head and most frequently black clothing. According to residents, the traditional rules of mourning clothing are tempered by the ability of the family to afford the clothing, the seriousness with which the particular family observes tradition, and the loyalty the members feel toward the deceased. Tradition requires women to observe mourning clothing and offerings longer for their mothers-in-law than for their mothers and for women to observe longer mourning rituals than men.

At the end of 100 days and again at the end of a year there are celebrations for the spirit. One woman had a large service of this type for her husband in her home during the period of the study. Her house was arranged for the service, the front draped with cloth, one wall and the front altar lined with black draped with cloth, one wall and the front altar lined with black drapes containing Chinese characters. The picture of her deceased husband was hung at the center of the main altar, in front of which was a platter of fruit. In front of this was a stack of the course funeral clothes of the family and a pile of painted paper items representing a suitcase, western clothing of slacks, shirt, sandals, and western hat (a type of hat never seen in Viet Nam). The paper items were burned at the end of the day for the comfort of the deceased and the mourning clothing was supposed to be burned to mark the end of a stricter period of mourning but as the family was poor they were actually saved for other funerals.

A lay Buddhist monk in robes who lived in another area had been hired to supervise the funeral. He chanted from time to time from a scroll written in Chinese characters and ticked a noisemaker. Four of the eight children and the widow knelt on the floor in their white clothing and white head bands. Guests were seated by a neighbor in chairs at the back. During the service from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. there were different rituals family members performed such as bowing, touching their heads to the floor, and burning incense and paper money. The lay monk directed these activities. There were tea, cigarettes, and betel available for guests during the day, and a dinner was served during the evening. During this service, as was true of all types of services, there appeared to be little attempt to control the numbers of curious children or to keep down noise or confusion. Members of the family were consulted on the preparation of the meal, and other informal conversations took place among the family and guests during the service. During part of the ritual, the older daughter and mother cried. The elder son looked serious as he helped perform the service, but the younger ones alternately took part and walked over to talk to friends. The woman reported that she went to the grave in an area nearby on the first and fifteenth of each month and to the pagoda to make offerings more frequently. One Vietnamese remarked that this showed that she was a very good wife and was more devoted than many women.

During the new year holidays most Vietnamese families clean the graves and re-mark the stones for deceased parents and sometimes grandparents but seldom care for the graves of more ancient ancestors. At this time household altars are polished and painted, and many special offerings are made to the spirits. During this period, also, food is frequently seen placed before the altar in as many courses as the family will have "so that the souls of the family may join the feast with the other family members."

R.: Wedding guest

L.and Bottom: Women mourners; Altar for departed spirits at pagoda; Burning paper home for use of spirit.

Above: Family meal in doorway; boy displaced by new baby.

Below: Vendor's children, Sisters, Young maid

CHAPTER V

OBSERVATIONS

In this area there is a surface tranquillity which is not always found in Saigon communities. There are friendly relationships between people of differing backgrounds: Vietnamese and Chinese, Northern and Southern, older and younger, and Catholic and Buddhist. When large loose groups conversing on the walkways divide into more intimate groups, however, they are usually very small and consist of people with similar backgrounds. Perhaps this tranquillity is related more to the leaving of one another alone than to successful community interaction. The social structure of this twenty year old community is not well developed, because people living close together do not know much about each other, and leaders as well as residents indicate that there is not much feeling of community membership. Neighbors and relatives outside the immediate family do not appear to tend to each others' business, nor do they frequently get involved in helping each other--even in times of emergency. Guests for New Year holidays, weddings, and funerals are often from outside the area. Originating from the same village was mentioned as one uniting factor on which invitations to parties may be based or favors done for others. The Catholic women attend ceremonies and make calls on some women in distress. It was not noted that either of these bonds helped people in difficult positions in more than superficial ways. Many residents would move if better housing or loans for house buying were available.

The men and women of the community do not show a feeling of responsibility toward the community as far as the assumption of leadership is concerned. There are occasional times, however, when a loose identification with neighbors is made for such things as a ditch building project. Leaders are chosen and plans are made in a most democratic manner, and the successful results have enhanced the prestige of the leader and strengthened community bonds in a very real way. Communication, however, is so poor in the community that many members do not recognize that there have been successful projects in other sections of the same community.

The governmental structure at the local level does not seem to function well and is disintegrating. There were some useful governmental services at the lower level that had apparently been performed successfully but which were not continued after the interest of higher governmental officials ceased. Now, no one wants to take governmental leadership positions. These positions carry with them paper work, red tape, and the frustration of being expected to accomplish certain things by the people and by the government without the power to do so. The position, therefore, carries no prestige. Residents often shy away from positions of informal leadership as well. Perhaps they feel it is dangerous during these tense times to be identified as leaders, but the most commonly mentioned reason is that there is not much a local leader can do.

Before the government could expect local leadership to improve it would be necessary to build up the prestige of local officials by making it easier for these leaders to accomplish community improvements. There are certain projects accepted as needed area improvements; new sidewalks, drains or water control, and better water supply. Requests for guidance and help on these matters have almost all been lost in red tape, and self-help projects which offer a great potential are not understood or trusted.

Another serious problem is the availability of jobs. If jobs could be made available by the government perhaps placement could be successfully handled at the khom level as in previous years. If this resulted in raising the success level and importance of the khom leaders' positions, perhaps it would be possible to interest more capable people of high standing in the community to accept such responsibility. It would be well to use the khom divisions, as they are the highest level of government clearly identified in the minds of residents. Khom leaders also know the problems of the area, and perhaps a revival of the previous closeness between them and active quan leaders would be valuable in co-ordinating local programs.

If the prestige of the political leaders at the khom level were raised and people reminded of the importance of their choice, the lien gia leaders' positions could also be strengthened, and the residents could find real leaders to fill these positions. This would provide a democratic choice based on traditional patterns and would appear also to have the advantage of giving the people a better understanding and trust in the democratic process.

In the meantime, if a person were looking for leaders, it would be wise to search out the informal leaders of successful projects, perhaps check with the khom leaders as to who is interested in the community, examine the powerful but disliked money lenders, and give special attention to men who have been chosen to handle the money at the church and in hui groups or who assume positions of similar trust. These latter are often the richer men who are also generous in making community contributions and thereby gain respect and prestige. Perhaps they have less temptation to pocket funds, as well as having more time to give to community activities. In addition, women often yeild great strength and would be valuable contacts, but they almost always work through men and probably would not be respected if they did not work behind the scenes.

Religious leaders are not now active in community improvements. During the flood crisis, however, both the Buddhist monks and Catholic priests collected money and clothing, and people seemed to respond to the traditional idea of merit making by working through the church. If it were not felt dangerous to strengthen religious identification and power, perhaps the politically oriented Buddhists would respond to taking leadership in some projects. If one religious group started, the other would probably also feel the need to accomplish something. But unless the religious leaders could work together, it would seem to have the disadvantage of dividing community members and would perhaps be useful only if some project were felt to be necessary and could not be handled in other ways. The youth groups of both religions are already organized and could perhaps be interested in projects with the social worker.

The educational system needs attention. Problems as varied as the lack of fairness in the draft, lack of available jobs, and lack of firm governmental control of mobs all affect this disintegrating system. Perhaps the first measure would be stronger support for discipline of unruly children from the government, the school superintendents, and finally the teachers. Then the problem of overcrowding, lack of facilities and teachers could be considered as well as the curriculum, the system of examinations, the problems of drop-outs, and the lack of parental sympathy and understanding of subject matter. Vocational training would be accepted eagerly but should be offered only where there are opportunities for employment or useful cottage industries. Neighbors would co-operate on home industries, and any help in this field would be most fruitful and highly appreciated. This too

might be handled through khom administrators or the social workers.

The health picture is brighter than it is in many other areas. There are a few complaints which could be easily corrected--information about the presence and regularity of the health unit, chairs and beds to use while in line at the clinic, more available medicine and a drill for the dentist. Health is a frequent topic of conversation among the people, who are receptive to western shots, medicine, and treatment. Many women state they want information on birth control which should be given by a female. More use could be made of social workers, and medical workers should be made to appreciate the importance of their attitude in dealing with the people. Clinics and hospitals are, however, crowded. This is a ripe field for the government activity which would receive quick appreciation by community members. The suggested plan of cutting the size of the medical unit to a less awkward and more frequently available unit would appear to be wise. These units are well used and as it was noted that they are not available in many areas of the city, their extension might be very worthwhile.

Religion in the area is full of devils, ghosts and spirits who live around and with the living. They are capricious and often malicious. The spirits of once living people, even those who were known to be kindly relatives, may cause bad luck for the area, the family, or the individual. This appears to be of considerable importance to the educated as well as the uneducated and for Catholics and Protestants as well as Buddhists. In villages where some of these residents grew up, men working with malaria programs who sprayed family altars were shot, maternity centers placed on lands "owned by the village guardian spirits" were never used, but ditches were dug (which incidentally brought water for irrigation) after it was discovered it helped the community take the lucky shape of a dragon. Geomancy principles should be considered in planning new communities as a way to help ensure acceptance of the project. Importance of these elements of folk religion should never be underestimated in working with even the most highly placed and educated Vietnamese who may be sophisticated enough to avoid the subject or make light of it when speaking with Westerners.

Social workers appear to hold sensitive positions of great potentiality for assisting in community improvement. In this society where the denial of a request may be taken as a personal insult, social workers will have to be well trained in handling people and will have to be

given adequate financial and material support. With well-trained, sympathetic social workers who are given responsibility and freedom of action, solutions could be sought for juvenile delinquency, misunderstanding of medical information, and lack of knowledge of where to turn for help in difficult times. Social workers could be encouraged to work with the khom and lien gia leaders in order to strengthen the position of these officials and to help social workers be more effective. In addition their area of responsibility might be more clearly established. Perhaps religious or independent youth groups such as boy or girl scouts could be detailed to work through the social workers to help individual families in communities. Perhaps, also social workers could encourage family co-operative projects which are too individually oriented to come under the khom leaders responsibilities.

The people are not aware of the existence of American aid in this community. If, however, the purpose of such aid is to strengthen the Vietnamese ability to work together under their own leadership, it would seem that aid channeled through the local Vietnamese governmental structure would help these ties in a more effective way than an emphasis on the American source of the contributions. Self-help projects appear to offer the best structure for direct aid with planning and co-operation at the local level. Attempts should be made to develop understanding among community members of the possibilities of this type of aid. Recreation is greatly needed in the area. For many people occasional trips to the theater offer the only recreational outlets, and youth seem to lack constructive means to utilize their energies. Perhaps availability of free judo or of other traditional sports as well as parks with sports equipment would help. It is suggested that mixing groups of men and boys might help build understanding between these groups but that anything involving boys' groups should be kept small enough to be manageable. If the government information were presented in an entertaining manner it would be gladly accepted. For instance, a box "peep show" with film strips of how to establish self-help projects, fire prevention, or other useful matters, if cushioned with drama or humor, would be widely viewed. Charge of a piaster admission with perhaps the option of gambling, flipping to pay double or nothing, would create the most interest. Musicals, or any type of shows would be popular at the pagoda or church, the social center, or in an open area such as that just off the plaza. Since there is some resistance to governmental propaganda, the idea of

presenting such information together with a cartoon or other entertaining attraction and charging perhaps a piaster for adult admission would give it the aura of entertainment rather than propaganda and still not keep people away.

If the government establishes the long discussed television stations, perhaps there would be some way to help khom leaders obtain sets to be used for community viewing. Community members presently share radios and there is not reason to doubt that television would be even more popular and widely viewed.

There are not many successful community associations. To form co-operatives or other such organizations would require very careful choice of leadership and the assurance of administrative follow-through. People would resist joining until they really felt that belonging would give them immediate financial improvement. In the recent past there were certain required governmental associations of a political nature which were very unpopular, and there is every reason to believe there would be distrust and resistance in forming new associations at present.

Economically, people of this area are near subsistence level. There is not much concern for saving, as most of them do not have enough left over or the opportunity to make advantageous investment of what they do have. The residents help each other by buying from local stands or peddler, articles which these merchants bought at the main market. In fact, some of the profits are so small as to indicate that some of the local occupations are conducted partly to give the person something to do as the residents appear to enjoy working. The fact that so many people work even with very small financial gain is perhaps the reason the residents appear optimistic about life. In new refugee communities, small loans for vending and household production would appear to be good for morale as well as of some economic benefit. However, in this community the vending and known production is at a saturation point, and women who buy extra often have some produce left over. The need for money, therefore, in these older communities would be for some low-interest loans to tide the family over during crises and times of seasonal unemployment or shortages of supplies, or to provide loans to buy homes, helping residents avoid high rents. Loans presently available are made only to those of higher economic standing and at very high rates of interest. There is a great need to create new home or neighborhood production and outlets. There appears to be evidence that community members would work together if they could increase

their personal economic gain. Co-operatives could be increased over those presently provided by individual workers. It should be emphasized again that although there is a serious problem of juvenile delinquency, this was less true in homes where the mothers could remain home even if they worked there and even less true where there was a family home industry in which the children could participate.

Family life seems to be disintegrating, and many people mention that discipline of youngsters is worse than in recent years and that long standing traditions are being forgotten. Many families are separated by the political and military conditions. There is some evidence to indicate that Vietnamese family ties have been loosely developed traditionally. When a young child is born, the next child, formerly the youngest, suddenly no longer occupies the prime position in the family which seems to lead to a distrust of others. This is easily seen in the treatment of younger children when parents are not looking and in frequent jealousy and lack of closeness between older siblings. Men have traditionally taken more than one wife or lover without necessarily expecting to support them. In this area it was frequently mentioned that cousins, uncles and aunts with nieces and nephews, and even parents and children did not have close relationships or help one another. In the few cases in which it was mentioned that help was given outside the nuclear family it was referred to as a loathsome duty. It is suggested that the role of the mother of the husband in the family be studied because in the past she has been the ruler of the family and is the key to successful change or education. Perhaps this is still true. Maybe the ability to plan families so there would not be more children than the family wants or can care for would also help strengthen the family. People frequently mention the desire for information about family planning, diet, health, and child rearing as well as education.

Several people mentioned that quarrels among residents were usually caused by living in crowded conditions. There is no privacy, and most arguments take place on the streets. The paths are so crowded that people are sometimes knocked down by bicycles or carts or blocked by small groups of people. Community planning should take into consideration the requirement for not only more living space in these areas but plenty of space for local women to vend and fix meals and men to sell soup, cut hair and carry produce to their homes in carts.

Problems tend to increase as more people crowd into the limited space and into limited jobs, schools, and facilities. However, the Vietnamese are a very practical people who willingly accept change when they can see it is to their advantage. Also community ties are loose; thus, if better housing were available many families would leave this area, making it less crowded. Although many of the suggestions made for strengthening the community would take time, there are many things--such as job placement, development of more home industries, developing new housing, and strengthening of local governmental officials--which could be done quickly. Vietnamese are a very independent people. Child training includes few compulsions but gives the child full freedom to observe all activities and develop at his individual speed and direction. Perhaps this individualism is partly responsible for the lack of organization or feeling of group membership or helpfulness among neighbors and the general lack of social consciousness. However, this is also the quality which makes these capable, proud people fight fiercely to defend something they cherish. It would appear essential to any successful government that it identifies quickly the needs and problems of these people. Such assistance would enhance their interest in the community and in supporting and defending it.

SECTION TWO

INTRODUCTION

The first section has emphasized the horizontal aspect of the community: the structure as it relates to the people. The second section will reverse the emphasis into a vertical study of some selected families: the lives of these people in the community. Since it is the people who make up the community it is worthwhile to re-examine the community through their eyes and comments.

The following families were selected from among those who issued frequent invitations, discussing their lives openly and at length with the researchers. An effort was made to describe families of differing backgrounds, interests, and problems. In order to respect the privacy of these people no real names were used although some Vietnamese names of address are used; Ba, meaning older married woman; Co, meaning young woman whether married or not; and, Ong, meaning Mister. The names given them were nicknames which seemed to describe some aspect of their appearance, personality, homes, or story.

CHAPTER I

SETTLER FAMILY

Ba Settler is a kindly looking, elderly lady with wrinkled skin, stark white hair combed straight back, no teeth, but with a lively twinkle in her eye. She has a cheerfulness about her as she does chores around the house--hanging out clothes, sweeping, and caring for small children.

Ba Settler claims to be 87 years old. Most of these years she has lived in this area. Her parents moved here from a farming community nearby when she was a young girl, and the area was then mostly flooded rice land. She and six brothers and sisters had lived in what she called a "large grand house" which her parents owned and managed together with nearby farm land. Ba Settler still has two sisters who live in the quarter across the street from her present house. The fact that this is the only family which can describe conditions in this area from its earliest stages--Ba Settler's great grandchildren being the fifth generation upon this land--makes their lives and fortunes especially interesting.

After the death of her father, Ba Settler's mother sold most of their land and spent the proceeds, thereby losing the family's status as "gentlemen farmers." Their brother worked for the Post Office Department and helped support the entire family. But some land was given to each of the three daughters, and even after they married white collar workers (one in the Post Office Department and two with the French colonial government in Saigon) they lived in separate homes in the same area. All three of the husbands died long ago. After the death of her husband, Ba Settler was very sad and lonely, so she found work as a cook with a French family who offered to take her with them when they went back to France. But she felt her family obligations too strongly and stayed; now the three living sisters live in the area in much reduced circumstances within yards of the site of their old family home.

Ba Settler has two children, a daughter who married a Frenchman and lives with her five children in France, and a son who lives in a nearby section of Saigon. One

day Ba Settler stood in the pathway surrounded by a group of friends happily holding a letter which her daughter had sent from France. Since she is illiterate she will have to wait until a friend can read it to her, but that does not appear to detract from the joy of receiving news from her only daughter. She stated that sometimes it is a long time between letters, and she gets very sad and lonely. She sleeps on the letters and pictures from her daughter which she keeps in a cloth bag under the pillow. When saying this, she hurries in to get the bag to show some well-worn letters and a picture of her daughter shown as a plump middle-aged woman wearing traditional Vietnamese garb surrounded by her five youngsters. Ba Settler also has a picture post card from Lourdes, France. She relates that the card was sent by her daughter, who when she had once broken her hand, went to Lourdes to pray and was immediately miraculously healed. For a number of years Ba Settler has been taking care of her son's children. At the present time one grandson is married and lives with Ba Settler with his wife and three children. Ba Settler wipes tears from her eyes and says that she was asked to go to France, but she felt that she was needed to help with her son's children who "loved her very much." She is no longer sure if this was the right choice. She reports that she is well treated, has a home, and is given food and clothing, but that she has no spending money and no independence. She feels that daughters in Vietnamese families are always close to their mothers and her daughter would give her spending money and more loving tenderness. Also, she worries about her daughter and her family and wishes she could be with them to help in times of crisis.

As she talked one day, a young woman stuck her head through the window and said, "Why don't you tell the story of the eggs." And Ba Settler laughingly related the time her grandson's wife "sent" her to the market for eggs. On her way home someone shouted, "Throw them away!" and, startled she threw away the basket breaking all the eggs. "Now," she laughs, "no one trusts me to do any more shopping." But, she adds in a matter-of-fact way, she forgets many things these days as she is getting very old.

The home which Ba Settler shares with her grandson and his family is along Main Street and contains some of the status symbols of the better homes of the area. It is stucco-fronted with a ceramic tile floor. The front room contains no bed but has a glass-fronted cabinet with a few knick-knacks in it, several plastic coated chairs,

a small table, and a sewing machine, as well as a Catholic altar. One day the grandson's wife, a young woman who appears calm and self-sufficient, was sewing on the machine. She remarked that she was going to have a baby in six months. She had quit her job with an American company and was pleased to have this time "to sew and catch up around the house" before the baby came. In a few days a metal baby crib appeared in the living room, and she announced that she was going to take care of a baby during the day while its mother and father were working and she hoped in this way to make up for some of the loss of her previous income. But it is Ba Settler who is continually seen carrying, holding, and feeding this intelligent and healthy-looking baby. Ba Settler appears to enjoy this child and feels as much affection toward him as she does toward her great grandchildren. She smiles proudly and says she knows all about taking care of babies. The child sits quietly as she holds and carries him, as Ba Settler states that it is important not to let babies try to stand up and one should pull in the feet of a small child, holding him so that he cannot push with his legs, lest he become noisy, active, and independent. She feels it is a mistake to help children stand and to encourage walking. One day Ba Settler was sitting at the fruit stand across the street from her house letting the baby suck the end of a fresh banana. She remarked in the tone of a confidential tipster that many younger women did not feed fruit to their babies, "but bananas are good for babies."

Only after several visits with Ba Settler during which she spoke of her loneliness, did she mention the fact that her two sisters live across the street and run the fruit and snack stand there. The three sisters are frequently seen talking together, and their conversations retain an air of refinement as they talk of their life in the grand old farm house where they used to live. The talk of their fascination as children with their first neighbor, Co Bai, who had a leaf hut which she ran rather in the manner of a pagoda. Co Bai held regular prayer services and many people came to visit her as she also cured illness, helped people find lost things, and foretold the future. She was a medium who spoke with a spirit through the use of bells which they could hear ringing many hours in the day and night. After Co Bai, who married a Frenchman and who was very rich "wearing gold bracelets from her wrists to her elbows," grew tired of her life there, she returned to her "homeland" leaving her hut for use as the local pagoda. It was a number of years before the hut was used again, and only twenty years ago was construction of the present pagoda building started

at this same site. When the remark was made that the local bonzes in the English class knew none of this part of the history of their pagoda, the sisters laughed and replied, "How could they? They are young and new. Only we know of the history of this area, we are the only ones still alive who lived anywhere near here then." They report that it has only been in the last twenty years that there has been a large influx of people to the area.

The three sisters seem to have a strong feeling of close family ties. One day they consulted Ba Settler before they agreed to have a picture of the three taken for she is the oldest. She agreed but said that she wanted to have her hair done and lipstick on her toothless mouth before the picture was taken. They all laughed and said they would wait until she was ready before any of them would be photographed.

The sister who is in charge of the fruit and snack stand, Ba Stand, claims to be 67. Her skin is much less wrinkled than that of Ba Settler and she still has a few scattered teeth. Her husband was a functionary in the French colonial government "and was in charge of all this area around here." When he was only forty years old and her youngest child was only five months, "he was assasinated and no one ever found who did it." She also said she suffered a great depression following his death and that it was to get over feeling this loneliness that she started the store, although she soon found there was not much profit in it. Even though it was the first stand in the neighborhood, it is presently one of the smallest and most dilapidated. The structure is about eight feet wide with a counter and three stools in front. There is a cloth draped over the front in the morning to keep out the sun, but it completely hides the merchandise from view unless one ducks under it to look. At the side there is an open window and people frequently find this an easier opening through which to do business. The stand contains a small variety of fruits and snacks which vary from day to day and may include watermelon slices, mandarin oranges, boiled sweet potatoes, peanuts, popcorn balls, and candied coconut or fruits. The quality is frequently poor, the items being too green, old, or full of bugs. Unlike many stores in the area, however, some of the snacks such as boiled sweet potatoes and manioc root are prepared at the store. The sisters complain that keeping a store is hard work, and even when Ba Stand has been quite ill she comes to sell her merchandise on hand as she is afraid it might spoil and be a total loss to her.

Ba Stand has three children, the eldest and youngest of whom live in the quarter. The middle child is a thirty year old daughter who was a favorite of her father. She received some education and has become a grade school teacher in Dalat. This daughter comes home several times a year. She was elected head of one of the lien gia in the area some time ago, and, although now she is absent most of the year, she says the people want her to continue and do not want to elect someone else. The khom leader fills in any necessary papers for her in her absence. This young woman, however, feels herself estranged from the local residents and states that she built and owns the house where her mother lives now, but she expects after her mother's death to give it to her brother (whom she does not like) as she never plans to live in the quarter again.

The brother to whom the house will go had been a high school student at Van Lang school at the edge of the quarter and lived with his mother. One day, however, Ba Stand reported with tears in her eyes that the boy had been drafted. She said he had wanted to be in the "volunteers" earlier, but when the Diem government was in power "he was falsely arrested for demonstrating." At the school there had been many students throwing rocks at policemen and two plain clothes men followed him home, broke into the living room, and arrested him. When the mother had asked what he was accused of, the men had not answered but had sworn to beat him so badly that if he lived he would always be sick. The mother said he was beaten and feels he "has been ill in the head from the day of his release onward." Ba Store relates, as if to bolster her story with positive support, that all the neighbors said he was innocent. In fact, she continues, the officials had come later to apologize and said it was a mistake. The son says that he was the only young man in the neighborhood who was falsely arrested at that time and beaten by Diem's men. The boy appears to be about twenty years old. He wears expensive-looking clothing: tight slacks, very pointed shoes and dacron shirts. He never stands still but constantly shifts his weight and swings his foot back and forth on his heel as he stands with his hands held low on his hips. His manner makes one feel that perhaps this is a young man with a great depth of frustration and restlessness. He is frequently seen standing with boys who throw fire-crackers, make rude remark, and are referred to as "cowboys" by their neighbors. Later Ba Stand said that her son, who had been seen in his uniform after his draft date, had run away from the army and she did not know what would become of him. She had no control over

him as he was a lazy, shiftless young man who "usually runs away, plays cards, has a bad temper, is a cowboy, and does not want to learn work but just wants to play." This is a special tragedy for the mother, as of her three sons only this one lived.

Her other child, the eldest, is a young woman whom Ba Stand also describes as being a disappointment. This girl went through the third year of elementary school, but her mother says she was too lazy and, therefore, stayed home rather than going farther. During the lifetime of Ba Stand's husband there were several men who wanted to marry the daughter including a Captain in the army. But all of them were Buddhist and the father refused to let his Catholic daughter marry any of them. Later, after the death of her father, she was older and not so many men were interested in marrying her. This girl asked for enough capital to become a merchandise seller. When her mother gave her enough money for a good start, the girl bought fruits and other items to sell in the market, but she took all the profit from them and bought cakes and other things. She spent the day "eating and being lazy" until all the money was gone. Later the girl found a man for herself. He was uneducated and jobless and, even though the girl was pregnant, Ba Stand and her son would not give their approval for a wedding or let them live in their house. According to Ba Stand she "could not receive them as he was jobless and the Catholic system is one that only receives people who will work, not lazy ones." Then the two ran away together. The young man got a job carrying produce from trucks at the market, but he was often drunk and lost this job. When the young couple came back they had two children, and the mother let them live in a tiny room in the back of the store. But since the daughter had not obeyed her, the mother has never recognized the union, and they have never been married.

The "house" of this daughter is the eight by seven foot area at the back of the stand. It has the same poorly constructed wooden walls and has so little room that it can hold only one very narrow wooden bed and two hammocks hanging diagonally in different directions above each other over the bed. This provides sleeping space for the two adults and their present family of five children. There is no other furniture. This is one of the poorest families in the neighborhood. The area social worker reported that this family had applied for aid from Foster Parents Plan, but since the father had T.B., the family could be considred for aid only if he took treatment for his illness. The young man complained,

however, that the doctors wanted him to stay in the hospital so long and that from there he could not help support his family, and he refused to continue treatment. Foster Parents, therefore, refused to aid them. The wife says that he has now started treatments of daily shots at the clinic and medicine at home and hopes to be given aid, for otherwise they are not sure how they will all eat. Since the husband has T.B., he reports that he cannot get a job driving a taxi, but he sometimes drives a cyclo, receiving 20 to 30 piasters a day profit. Quite often this slim, quiet, almost sullen looking young man can be seen around the house, cooking or doing other domestic tasks. Behind the house is a tiny space in which they put a charcoal cooking stove. On different days he was seen cooking fish, soup, and four nice pieces of steak--more expensive fare than usually consumed by poor families and, therefore, perhaps he was helping to cook for other families too. But other times it was evident that T.B. was not his only problem, as he often caroused with a group of young men obviously indulging in too much shum shum (local rice whiskey).

The daughter wears dirty torn clothing, pulls her hair tightly back behind her head, and often smiles with her lips closed to hide several gaps left by missing teeth. Less than a month after the birth of her last baby, she found it necessary to start carrying water as she had done before. She claims she earns about 20 piasters a day but finds that work is making her too tired and ill, and she wishes she could rest for a longer time to recover her strength. She also has developed deep cracks in the calluses on her feet which causes considerable pain as she makes her trips in her bare feet with her heavy load of water. She is nursing her baby and frequently stops during her rounds of water-carrying to sit on a stool in front of the store and nurse her plump and healthy-looking infant. She says she has never had trouble nursing and that except for one boy who is two and half years old and always seems to have colds, her children have all been healthy. Two of her children, sons, are old enough to be in grade school, and, although she states that they do go to school, they are quite frequently seen around the house during school hours. Another child, a daughter, attends the social center school. The welfare worker there has allowed them to pay only 1 VN$ a day for school, although it usually costs students 50 VN$ a month.

There is a great contrast between Ba Stand and her water-carrying daughter. Not only does Ba Stand show drive and persistence in taking care of her shop, but she

talks and moves with refinement. The daughter sometimes bathes her feet or washes clothing sitting in the middle of Main Street, talks in "a low-class uneducated manner" and in general shows no attempt to train her children to live up to the standards of the neighborhood. This is the only house where the older children were observed using the outside wall and walk for a toilet while the parents watched without comment, and this was the only house where the children were observed sitting holding out their hands to beg.

Ba Wrinkle lives with Ba Stand and her son in a stucco-fronted wooden house next to the store. Her two children live away and her husband is dead. Though she is younger than her sisters she is very wrinkled, has no teeth, and has receding white hair. The three sisters laugh over the fact that everyone thinks she is older than Ba Settler and is perhaps even the mother of Ba Stand. Although she reportedly helps in the stand, she is not often seen there. She says she usually helps people in the neighborhood as part of her duties for a Catholic woman's group. The sisters frequently repeat with great pride that she helps whenever there is a wedding, funeral, illness or other crisis and that everyone counts on her in time of need. They also point out that she does all this without receiving money. The fact that they are Catholic is often brought into conversations and they ask newcomers in a confidential tone if they are Catholic and it seems that people who stop to talk during the day are mostly Catholics. Ba Wrinkle has recently been treating Ba Stand with the pressure, suction, and herb treatments of traditional Vietnamese medicine, and all sisters say they never use western or Chinese cures. A grandchild of Ba Stand, however, was treated for burns at the free western Children's Hospital.

The history of this family seems to be one of social decline. The original wealthy land owner, whose wife sold the land, left very little to his children. The children who lived to maturity, a son and three daughters, married white collar workers, but the son and the three husbands died early in life, leaving the three women as the family heads. Ba Settler reports that her daughter who married a French businessman is doing well, but her son and grandchildren who live in Viet Nam are all poor. Ba Wrinkle remarks that her two children are too poor to help her in her old age. Ba Stand has one "successful" child who is a school teacher, and though she is apparently well liked by her family and neighbors, feels out of place in her old neighborhood and seldom visits it. Ba Stand describes her other two children, her daughter with the five illegitimate children and a drinking, jobless, tubercular

husband and her son, the uncontrollable cowboy evidently wanted for deserting the army, as not following her advice, not getting adequate education and being lazy failures. The great grandchildren of Ba Settler are going to school, and, although Ba Settler complains that they are poor, they seem to be well-mannered youngsters for whom the future is not yet set. Not only do grandchildren of Ba Stand, however, not attend school regularly, but according to Ba Stand, often go hungry or come with their bowls to her to beg rice and nuoc mam. They are not learning to live up to even the standard of the poor in their own neighborhood. It seems difficult to predict anything very positive in the future of these five youngsters.

The three sisters are often seen having conversations over the broken wooden counter of their stand. They all talk of the luxury they had in their youth in contrast to the severe financial problems they feel in their older years. They complain of lack of responsiveness and affection of some of their children as well as financial irresponsibility and lack of support. Ba Settler describes feeling depressed over the lack of individual income or spending money. Ba Stand complains of lack of profit and of the necessity of keeping her store open even when she is ill. And Ba Wrinkle stated a complaint common to them all: "I used to own a grand house with some property around it. But I am too poor and had to sell it. Now look at me! Someone enjoys my house and I must live here."

Above: Ba Settler; Sister's stand

Below: Ba Stand's daughter and family

CHAPTER II

BA COMPOSED

Grandparents often walk and play with children along Main Street, but none could be more proud than Ba Composed. She walks along serenely, her white hair smoothed in a knot at the back of her head, a calm radiance spread across her wrinkleless face. There is an elegance in the way she moves and talks. She explains that this child she carries on her hip is almost two years old and is her first and only grandson out of eleven grandchildren. She is only too quick to agree that he is undoubtedly very intelligent. One day she laughed and laughed telling her friends that when she picked him up and asked where he would like to go in the morning, he had pointed to the sky and had said he would like to see heaven.

The home where she has lived for the last ten years is one of the nicer homes of the area. It is directly on Main Street, is built high enough to avoid most flooding, has well made wooden walls with a stucco facade, a tin ceiling and tiled roof, a ceramic tiled floor extending out to a tiny front patio used for sitting and talking. Decorative plastic strips hang over the doorway and window for privacy when the door and shutters are opened. There is a frequently used ancestor altar at the center of the front room wall. There is a plastic-covered sofa, three chairs, a stool, a dish cupboard with glass front revealing decorative and unused china and knick-knacks, two plastic-topped tables covered with family pictures and topped with glass, and an electric fan. Everything is very neat and clean. The sleeping area and kitchen are divided and allow almost complete privacy between one area and the other. This is one of the few families who has enough space so that a bed does not have to be placed in the living room.

She keeps pictures of many views of Ba Composed's children on the tables and in a readily accessible tin box. Her eldest daughter is shown sitting with her five girls. She lives in another area of Saigon. There are also a number of views of the eldest son. He is very handsome, and some pictures show him in his uniform as a mature non-commissioned army officer. One large

picture on the wall shows him with his arms around two attractive women who stand smiling, close together in front of him. These women, Ba Composed readily explains with a tranquil smile, are his two wives. The first wife has five girls and lives in the area. The second, who has no children yet, lives in another part of Saigon. She remarks with obvious pride that there has "never been a harsh word between the two women." Ba Composed is occasionally seen visiting with her eldest son in front of her house, and there appears to be a close and affectionate bond between the mother and son. She also occasionally visits the woman who lives next to the Catholic Church on Church Street. These conversations seem to be those of casual friends, but the relationship proves to be more complicated than one would at first guess. Not only is this young woman the first wife of Ba Composed's eldest son, but as mother-in-law, Ba Composed supported the decision of her son when he married a second woman, telling the first wife to let him have what he wanted. (See First Wife.)

Pictures of a beautiful Vietnamese girl in traditional clothing standing with an American Army Major prove to be those of her third child. This young woman met the Major, who, she adds, is a trained architect, while he was serving in Viet Nam. They fell in love and were married. There are many pictures of the wedding held in this home and of the huge wedding dinner held in a Saigon restaurant with both Vietnamese and American guests present.

There are also many pictures of the wedding of Ba Composed's youngest son. His elaborate wedding, she proudly states, cost 40,000 VN$. This young man, who is in the armed forces stationed in Saigon, and his pretty and charming young wife live with Ba Composed. It is their child who is the cherished only grandson. The young wife runs errands for her mother-in-law, and they appear to the outsider to have established a comparatively smooth relationship between themselves. This wife, unlike many other young mothers, does not work outside the home and perhaps having given birth to a boy child gives her some increased status as well as a stronger bond with her mother-in-law. One sometimes sees both women together playing with the boy or sitting on the tiny patio next to the sidewalk watching him while they talk with their various friends.

Ba Composed tells her history in such a calm assured manner that it is difficult not to believe everything she says. The stories she first expressed however, were so dramatic and different from those she

and other relatives told after further acquaintance, that one is tempted to believe the first ones were developed to make her life a little more heroic and colorful. She was born and raised with a brother and sister in a family that owned rich Southern delta land in Bac Lieu. She married and had four children, but when they were tiny, her then forty year old farmer husband died. Up to this point the stories all agree. However, the first story then continued: "The war at that time made the area very dangerous, and I was forced to flee my home, and, hiding my small children and myself in the bottom of a boat, managed to escape. For years the children and I lived in the bottom of this boat, hiding when danger was near and buying and selling produce along the river to earn enough to eat."

The second story, which was confirmed by other family members, was that fourteen years ago her eldest son came to Saigon "to enjoy himself in the big city." After he had been gone for a couple of years, Ba Composed came to see him. Up until that time the countryside had been relatively safe and quiet, but while she was in Saigon the situation grew worse, and she decided she enjoyed the city and would stay. The first wife of her eldest son remarked once that Ba Composed had always had an easy life and knew nothing of work or selling. She said that when her mother-in-law helped out with the stand she had to be told everything to do as she had no knowledge or experience with that type of life.

One picture from the tin box is that of Ba Composed's sister, who is plump and is shown dressed in a dark ao dai, the Vietnamese national dress. She lives in what Ba Composed describes as a "grand house in a rich part of Saigon." Pictures of the sister's daughter reveal an attractive western-dressed girl who she says is going to school in France and in the picture is shown during her school vacation skiing in attractive ski pants and a bright heavy knitted sweater. There are no pictures of Ba Composed's brother. He is still living in the Mekong Delta, and in her first story Ba Composed said he did not want to leave, as then he would lose the family's rich lands. Later, however, she and her son discussed the fact that they no longer heard from him, and that he had undoubtedly lost everything as that area was so heavily infested with Viet Cong. He probably wished, they conjectured, that he had come to Saigon sooner.

One other story that Ba Composed told initially and which relatives later contradicted, dealt with the

daughter who had married the American. In her first story she said that the couple had gone to the United States and not only wrote her frequently but sent her 10,000 VN$ regularly each month. However, the First Wife stated that Ba Composed was now being sponsored by the combined efforts of most of her children. She added that the daughter married to the American lived in Saigon, and her husband was very kind to the mother giving her perhaps 400 VN$ a month and frequently giving her tickets to the Vietnamese theater.

In Ba Composed's home lives an elderly lady. She is no relative but "a poor woman who has no home or family." Ba Composed says she felt sorry for this woman and "offered to let her use the area in front of my house for selling food and other items without paying any rent." The woman appears to have trochoma in both eyes. Ba Composed seems unconcerned about this and remarks only that she does not know what is wrong or whether the woman has been to the clinic, but that it is a recent problem, and her eyes seem to be getting worse very fast. Then Ba Composed continues telling that she lets the woman sleep inside her house--and upon saying this she motions to the floor of the living room. However, the relationship does not seem to be completely charitable, as this woman is frequently seen sweeping and cleaning the house and doing other household chores.

Ba Composed has many friends from various parts of the country, of various ages and of various religions. She talks with the Northern women who peddles kitchen utensils along the street, the Southern woman who does hemstitching or perhaps she will set in the ao dai shop run by a young woman and finish some hand work for a dress she has ordered, while happily conversing. But usually she is seen walking along the pathways patting her grandson who sits like a tiny king on her hip or coming back to Main Street to chew betal and visit with those who pass by.

CHAPTER III

FIRST WIFE

First Wife is not at all similar to her calm betal chewing mother-in-law. She is wiry, spicy, and volatile to the point of moodiness. She is an openly friendly, attractive young woman who has an expressive face that already has some of the wrinkles Ba Composed has avoided so many years. She has five daughters. The eldest is a sullen, lethargic plump girl, aged sixteen, who failed her public school entrance exam, went for a time to Huyen Thi Nga private school but has quit and is hoping to study English and perhaps sometime get a job as a clerk. The vivacious, pretty twelve year old stays home from school also because she "just never liked it." She is helpful around the house but hopes to go into Cai Luong, the Vietnamese musical theater. They report she sings whenever she has a chance, but when asked to sing by her mother, she covered her face and stamped from the room. Her mother explained she was shy. The six and eight year olds have sparkling eyes and seem to be helpful around the house when home from school. The eight year old goes to public school. The six year old goes to the next door Catholic pre-school, and the mother says she prefers it to the Buddhist only because it is so close. The nursing baby is demanding and healthy-looking.

Their house, although on an unpaved path in a lower area that floods during the rainy season, is still very nice by area standards. It is stucco, has a wooden division between the front room and the sleeping and cooking area, has a tile roof and a decorative ceramic tile floor in the front room and cement in the back rooms. There is a western type eating table covered with a checked plastic cloth, wooden chairs and two plastic easy chairs. She has a glass-fronted buffet containing the typical fancy china, glasses and knick-knacks, and a plastic covered cabinet covered with pictures and topped with glass. A bead curtain gives limited privacy to the back room. There is also a sleeping loft where one can see mats and mosquito netting. The walls are covered with family pictures, including a large one of Ba Composed, a tennis pennant her husband won, several up-to-date calendars, one

containing a large picture of a voluptuous occidental nude. An ancestor altar with frequently changed flowers is on a shelf on the wall and is covered with a curtain. In the corner stand the tools of her living and trade. There are buckets for her and the eldest daughter to make afternoon trips to carry the family water. There are large baskets and carrying poles for fruits -and items for sale. There is also a treadle sewing machine with which she makesthe family's clothes, and the eldest daughter practices making her own blouses.

The First Wife is energetic and enterprising and has a tiny stand in front of her house consisting of a stool to sit on, a bench, and a glass-sided box. This contains an assortment of cookies, candy, and pieces of fruit for sale to passersby or the nursery school students at the Catholic school next door. First Wife says profits from her stand have never been much, but now there is another woman who carries similar items in her pole baskets and sits at the very gate of the Church School, so that the previously slim profits have dropped. At first it appeared for a time after this competition started that a better supply of fresher and more gaily colored cookies and fruit appeared on First Wife's stand. However, the quantity and appeal of her limited products vary greatly from day to day. She must get up at 5 A.M. to purchase these items from the market, since she gets up her display to catch children sent out with a piaster to buy something for breakfast.

Many of the neighbors remark, when one asks about the mutual aid organization of hui, that it is difficult to find a good leader and that it is better not to play and lose your money unless you are sure the leader is unusually trustworthy. First Wife says she has been the leader of a successful group for over a year. If this is true, she must be highly trusted and respected. She describes her group as composed of ten women. She screws up her face in disgust and shakes her head at the idea of having men in a group and says almost all of the groups are for women only. She remarks that the members have to be very trustworthy. She adds that many people think they would like to be a hui leader but they don't realize the work that goes into it; not only must she arrange monthly meetings in her home, keep track of the complicated financial transactions, but also be sure all members play their parts. One day, as she walked along Main Street carrying her baby, she said she had to take the day off to straighten up some problems with the hui. But in answer to a request to visit a meeting, she gave a date during Tet. Upon re-checking, she said the meeting had been changed to Ba Composed's house and would be the following day at 3:00 P.M.

At the appointed time, however, she reported it had taken place in the morning at 10:00 A.M., but that the group had now dropped to three and was not very interesting anyway.

One day, however, she announced that she had just purchased a booth in the local Tan Dinh market from her hui loan. Her eyes sparkled as she talked in a quick and animated way about her plans for this booth. It cost her 3000 VN$ but the profits could easily be 50 to 100 VN$ a day, she bubbled. She planned to leave her girls with the snack stand by her house in the morning, buy her fruits at 5:00 A.M. at a cheaper market further away, so that the Tan Dinh market booth would be open at 7:00 A.M. where she would work until 1:00 P.M. The cyclo to the market would only cost her 3 VN$ and 12 VN$ to return with her produce. This "booth" she purchased was a four by six foot portion of a crowded wooden platform in the open area around the market building. The paths between the rows of wooden platforms are narrow and often muddy but are crowded with morning customers.

A visit to the booth two weeks later found her sitting with her feet curled up under her, selling only two items, lotus seed pods, three for 2 VN$ and small tangerines for 1 VN$ each. When asked how her booth was doing she looked disappointed and said in a quiet confidential tone that she was making a daily average of only 30 VN$ profit. Then she smiled and showed a gay package of colored cookies she had just purchased for her stand at home. When asked why she felt the market profit was less than she had expected, she said people were now too sad with sons being drafted, and others being killed. Several weeks later after riots in some of the markets the government continued its policy of "business as usual," and, although there had been a riot at the Tan Dinh market the day before, she had gone to sell. She felt very lucky as the police came and took the numbers of the many booths that were closed and she wonders if those booth owners will be fined.

Upon initial contact with First Wife, a stranger is likely to be told nothing about the second wife. There is a copy of the picture of her husband with his arms around herself and another smiling woman that the mother-in-law identified as the second wife. Upon casually questioning her about the other attractive woman in the picture she answered sharply, "Pretty huh? You think she's pretty?" and then said it was her younger sister. She explained further that her husband, stationed near Saigon, comes home in the evenings and although he has to get up at 5:00 A.M. to get to work, she did not mind, as she had to

get up anyway. Upon further acquaintance she spontaneously said that her husband had a second wife. But this time she added that he was in the military, and she understood the problems of military men. She also quoted the phrase used by her mother-in-law that there "had never been any harsh words between the two" but added the soft comment, "What would be the use of it?"

A closer friendship, however, brought forth a flood of detailed information on the situation filled with bitter anger. "Three years ago my children and I were living with my husband at his post in Nha Trang, a seaside resort we all loved. My husband announced, however, that we must move to the area where mother lived in Saigon in order for the girls to have better schooling." In telling the story, she lowered her firey eyes and said with a calm bitterness, "When one's husband says one must go, what else is there to do? No sooner had we left than he moved into our house in Nha Trang a local bar girl he had known from nights out on the town with his army friends."

"I was instructed by my mother-in-law to rent a house in the area near her home, but I was afraid to rent, being unsure of a constant income. So I sold all my jewelry and some old possessions from my family and bought this present house near his mother. It cost me 25,000 VN$, but with the constant electric bills, assessments, repairs and the taxes which run 400 VN$ a year, the house is expensive even though I own it.

"Not long after his 'marriage' to the bar girl he was assigned to a post in Bien Hoa near Saigon. That girl then moved to Saigon and now works as a servant for a family that provide her living quarters. As a non-commissioned officer with almost twenty years military service he earns 7000 VN$ a month, but now he gives me only 3000 VN$ of that."

This is a comparable income to many of her neighbors, but it is such a come down from her earlier days when she got all his earnings, that she sighs with frustration and talks about how poor she is and how difficult it is to live, even with her small additional income. She also complains that the second wife has a good paying job, no housing expenses, and no children to support. It does not seem right to her that her husband gives the second wife more than half his income. She adds in a "can you believe it" tone of voice, "Sometimes he even comes home to visit at meal times and expects me to have enough money to feed him too."

When asked about another large picture on her wall she says it is of the daughter of Mme. Nhu (the almost universally hated, out-spoken sister-in-law of ex-President Diem who was anti-Buddhist but pro-women's rights). She has a relative whose picture is shown in the uniform of Mme. Nhu's women's corps. She comments that life was better when Mme. Nhu was "in power." Since Mme. Nhu had been outspokenly in favor of the arrest and ensuing cruel treatment of bonzes (including those from the local pagoda) and students, this appeared to be a most startling statement for a Buddhist mother of school-aged children. However, she goes on to say that during this period there had been a family law which forbade husbands to have more than one wife. It made husbands afraid of remarrying, she said, as the "legal" wife could report a new marriage and the husband would lose his job. (In actuality this often had the effect of creating a complete break between the husband and first wife, loss of all support, and made the children illegitimate, as husbands had to register which wife was "real," and they often chose the prettier, younger, or newer of the wives to claim as legitimate. Also, since the law was in effect until a year ago and the husband had reportedly been re-married for three years to the second wife, it is unclear as to exactly why she felt it made her position more secure.)

In recent weeks, the husband has been coming to First Wife's home once or twice almost every week. She says this is a new development, as before he hardly ever came. He looks old and tired compared to the huge picture of him in his uniform hanging on the front wall under the altar. First Wife seems to find things to do at the market or elsewhere during the days he is there, and one can see him holding and walking their small baby alone. One day she reported he decided to have the inside of "her" house remodeled. He called a house builder from the neighborhood to look over the possibilities of changing the partition between the first room and the sleeping and cooking area into cement and placing the door at another position making it impossible to stand at the outside door and see through to the back. First Wife let a disgusted look cross her expressive face and commented that these changes were unnecessary but shrugged her shoulders and said he could do it if he wanted to. Later visits found that the position of several boards had been changed giving the desired privacy at much less expense. On this day First Wife said she was pleased with the improvement.

The husband has also been painting and repairing the house for Tet. One Sunday when his wife was selling in the market, he stood in his shorts painting and talking with his mother. He smiled a greeting in a gentle, charming, relaxed way, while his mother and he talked of their past. They seem to have a comfortable relationship of mutual respect and friendly companionship. He said he was raised on a farm as a youth and feels this is a good place to grow up, although, he added smiling at his mother, he believes parents were stricter in those days. He feels, however, that schools have improved. Until 1947 he had expected to be a farmer, but now his family land is all Viet Cong controlled, and he would lose his head if he went back there. Instead, he has made the military his career. He remarks that since he is stationed outside Saigon he can only come in once or twice a week and makes no mention of his other wife. He also states that he has had many American friends in the military. He has a controlled manner which gives him the appearance of having a great deal of inner strength.

When talking about the subject of first and second wives, First Wife says she feels this is not very frequent in the area. Sometimes first and second wives live in the same house but this is very seldom and not satisfactory. "If they live together they will accuse each other, maybe at meal time, and then the husband will fling the meal on the floor." If they do live together, however, she feels the first wife has a better position in the household than the second. She adds that any time a woman lived without her husband, he would find another wife. She said one guest, who had grown children living away from her but lived with her husband, was very lucky, adding "In Viet Nam a mother always has to worry about her children. Before they marry she must watch their behavior and after they marry they will always come to her with their problems and are always asking for money." She feels that if mothers-in-law are kind in Viet Nam--"some are and some aren't"--they are more loved by a girl than her own mother, but she did not comment on her own situation.

When asked about the more frequent visits of her husband, First Wife says it is only because the other wife lives in the employer's home, and the husband feels uncomfortable there. In answer to the question does she think her husband will eventually return to her, however, she answered with more emotion than she had used before. Her eyes flashed in bitter anger and she said, "If he does, that will be a sad day. The day he comes back will be the day he is too old to work and take care of himself and he returns for me to take care of him. Yes! That will really be a bad day."

L.: Ba Compased and Elder Son

The Grandson

R.: First Wife and girls,

Tiny Stand

Market Stall

CHAPTER IV

BA STORE

On Main Street near the pagoda is the store owned by Ba Store. Perhaps its location or perhaps the extrovert personality of its owner has made this a place frequented by bonzes, children, and neighbors. One seldom passes the store to find it without a lady or two squatting on the floor, a child holding out a piaster, or someone leaning against the counter with Ba Store's voice booming or laughing above the others. If no one is there she often stands at the door in her black trousers and white blouse, giving a broad smile showing her expanse of blackened teeth and greeting passersby as she chews betel.

Ba Store says she was not a refugee but came to Saigon with her husband from the North long before the division of the country. She was then a bride of twenty but thereafter had six children; two boys and a girl died in infancy, leaving her with three daughters to raise. Her husband, she reports, worked for the French and she worked as an amah for a French family where she learned to speak French. She often comments that though she is poor the knowledge of French is a rich possession. Twelve years ago her husband died, and soon thereafter the French family for whom she had worked went back to France. She was then fifty-five and decided she was too old to work, so ten years ago she moved to this area, buying a house which she could use partly as a store. Her youngest daughter continued living with her even after she married, and she and her children now live in the back section of the store as does Ba Store. The other two girls live with their families near Saigon, but because of the war, they cannot visit their mother as often as she or they would like.

The store is the front twelve foot square section of the building. Products are few in variety, jumbled, and poorly displayed as is the case in most local stores. Her wares include gauze bandages, piggy banks, wooden shoes and rubber thongs in limited sizes, lamps, pacifiers, lamp wick and oil, string, rice bowls, chop sticks, joss sticks, candles, votive paper, fish sauce,

wire, paper and woven fans, hair oil, a few school supplies, combs, razors, wines and alcoholic beverages, thread, long bars of laundry soap, jars of cookies and candy, cigarettes and several Tet games. On the floor from time to time are displayed a few fresh food products such as tomatoes, greens, duck eggs, and supplies for betel chewing. There appeared to be more fresh items after the end of the rainy season when the floor of the store was no longer frequently flooded with several inches of backed-up sewage water. Her living area at the back of the house, however, is built over the water on stilts and is several inches higher than the rest of the building, so that it usually escapes the flooding which affects many houses.

Ba Store complains that business these days is poor. Ten years ago when she opened the store, the only competitor in the area was the first stand run by the sisters but now there are more than a dozen. Her sales have dropped from 3000 VN$ a day with a profit of 300 VN$ to a third of that. Although she describes selling 1000 VN$ worth of goods a day, it is difficult to believe there is that much trade done in the store. Although sales are not infrequent, the amounts are small. Typical transactions may include: one half VN$ of candy, one half VN$ of pepper (in two small paper envelopes), a VN$ of cookies, four to six VN$ of cigarettes, one half VN$ of roasted melon seeds (a small jar cap full), three and a half VN$ of lamp oil, a piaster for a lime, and two VN$ of black thread. Purchases seldom equal a dime, and Ba Store repeats what is commonly said in the neighborhood: when people have small purchases they come to the stands and little stores, but if they have more money they will go to the very close local market. Fish sauce (nuoc mam), without which it is impossible to imagine a Vietnamese meal, sits in jugs in the corner selling for 60 VN$, but almost all sales are from her bulk five gallon tin, a few piasters worth at a time. She remarks that duck eggs are another popular item, as when people have little money they eat them instead of meat--much more often, she adds, than the French families for whom she worked. Most of the daily sales in her store are made to children who may come several times a day for some item for the family. She believes that families pick one store and use it exclusively unless it is out of a product. She adds that her customers come to her, since she gives them fair deals, although she admits that a mother will often pick the closest store for her children's errands with the hope that the purchase will arrive home in good shape. From sampling prices in various stores, it appears that in

these stores where there is no bargaining, her prices are equivalent to or less than others in the neighborhood and very little above the bargained price in the neighboring large market.

Ba Store sighs and complains that the variety of products is now small, and this cuts down on business, but she is so poor she cannot afford to put too much stock on the shelves, even though she is stocking more items than usual for the coming Tet. She would guess that she had 20,000 VN$ in inventory now. When she runs out of a particular item, it is sometimes over a month before she re-fills the stock even if it is a frequently requested item. It may be months before a more specialized item, such as a particular size of wooden shoe, is replaced. But for Tet she will add many more products and great deal of beer. "No matter how much beer I buy before Tet, I can always sell that much or more," she comments. "However, I never buy Tet flowers or Christmas decorations or other strictly seasonal things as, boom, it's over and you look at your products all year. Besides everyone enjoys jostling in the crowds to look at the pretty things before holidays and who would come to my poor old store."

Ba Store claims to have stopped the practice of giving any kind of credit to her customers. "It used to be I'd let people take things and pay when they could. Then I found some owed me 1000 piasters and I went to ask about my money. They would look oh so sad and say, 'We've eaten all your food and we have no money left.' So then what's one to do, I ask you? Can you believe it, 60,000 VN$ has walked out of my store with people who get out of sight forever." At this point she gave a high punctuating "Ha." She claims there is no store in the neighborhood and also none of her suppliers who give credit.

Almost every day one can see her coming up the street with her basket or her own groceries and some items for the store. She often comments that the prices at the local Tan Dinh market where she has just been are going up. "And when prices go up the poor people here just buy and eat less." Although boats containing goods float along the river in back of her store she says they have nothing she ever buys. She does sometimes go to the Chinese Market in Cholon or to a larger Saigon market for special items or buys a few products from the "store to store" vendors carrying items on their backs or bicycles.

When two western dressed men carrying leather briefcases followed by a well but loudly dressed lady with a pink umbrella walk by making quite a contrast to the local inhabitants and appearing to feel very superior to the people of the area, Ba Store points with a slight sneer and says, "Tax assessors!" Then she goes on to complain that they have already been to her house to make a judgment on the tax she must pay for her house and that it is very high--1200 VN$ for three years. How is she to make a go of a store with taxes like that, she demands.

But Ba Store tells us that she is very fortunate in having a good reputation in the neighborhood and that people everywhere trust her. "I have friends I grew up with who have lots of money." She adds quickly, "They had few children and it's easy to get money that way. They will lend me 1000 VN$ any time I ask for it. Since they are friends I must pay only 120 VN$ a month for ten months at which time they will loan me another 1000 VN$." When asked if she borrows money from the bank she laughs uproariously and says, "Only rich people can do that!" "Besides don't you see how little my friends charge me? Even if I could get a bank loan why would I? It would cost more. Don't you see they charge me only 2%?" (In actuality she pays about 25% yearly interest on her own money, and banks claim to have loans at 8% annually for people who own their houses or have friends who will countersign notes). When asked if many people play hui in the neighborhood she says yes, but she never does. With a snort she adds, "mostly people organize it and then run with the money or go to the first dinner, eat and talk a lot then play till they get a loan but quit before they pay it back. Sure it's popular with some. The ones it's popular with are the ones who steal the money and run," and she chortles loudly at her witty comment.

In contrast with Ba Store is her soft-spoken youngest daughter. She reports her husband works at the Chief of Staff Headquarters as a non-commissioned officer in the military, and she points to the large picture of the uniformed young man on the wall. Ba Store adds that he earned 8000 VN$ a month because he has served over ten years, but that is not much. Then she adds, "But we are lucky. He is a good man. He has only this one wife. Some who earn 15,000 VN$ must divide it between two families and then neither gets as much as we do." They say they also feel lucky in that he is stationed in Saigon and is able to come home every night. His hobby is photography, and in the living

room one can see pictures on every table top, glass door and wall, especially pictures of their six children at different ages.

One of Ba Store's favorite topics of conversation is that French and American families seem to have only one, two or possibly three children, whereas Vietnamese have many children and will therefore always be poor. In November she patted her daughter on the tummy and remarked, "There's a baby in there! But six is already too many." However, in December the daughter claimed to have fallen (although there were no visible bruises or cuts) and accompanied by fever and chills she had a miscarriage. Both the mother and the daughter were quick to say that it was only one and a half months along so losing it was no serious thing. In answer to a comment made by a young Vietnamese girl, that she had heard if one were pregnant there were medicines one could take to precipitate an abortion, the daughter remarked quietly, "I was very afraid to have another baby. How could I feed seven children?" She lay under covers in a protected area and with a curtain drawn around the bed to "protect her from the wind" for about a week and then felt well enough to get up. She reported that she took daily shots of medicine from the Western doctor when she was very sick and shots of cheaper Chinese medicine when she began feeling better. Ba Store's daughter does not work but stays home taking care of her children with whom she is quite affectionate, and she occasionally watches the store for her mother. Her youngest child, a boy who continually sucks a pacifier, worries his mother because he has not learned to talk, even though he is three. He is the only child not in school, and during the day she or Ba Store are continually carrying the boy, talking to him and coaxing him to say something.

Although there is a bed, a storage cabinet with an altar, and a small table at the back of the store area, the main living area is a large separate room up a six inch step and through a door from the store. One can easily see the water below through the cracks in the floor. It contains two plank beds, one of which is curtained off for privacy, a glass fronted dish cabinet, a large glass-covered wooden table and six chairs, numerous knick-knacks, and a separated cooking area at the back. Here there is an elaborate Catholic altar. However, there is also an even more elaborate Buddhist altar at the back of the store. Ba Store explains this in that she is a Buddhist, but her husband was Catholic, so her three daughters and eighteen

grandchildren are Catholic. The five school-aged grandchildren living with her attend Catholic schools. However, a large framed picture of her Catholic husband is a prominent part of Ba Store's own Buddhist altar.

"This neighborhood is very poor," philosophizes Ba Store, "and that is why people of different religions and different parts of Viet Nam and even some Chinese live well together here." She claims she has never had a robbery and is never afraid, even at night. Although she had had no experience selling, Ba Store feels it was her native business ability that made her store a success, since many other beginners have failed in the same neighborhood. But when the comment is made that the business experience her daughter now has gained would be good background for becoming a successful saleswoman, Ba Store laughs loudly and says, "This is no job for her! Sometimes people come very late at night, one must be ready to sell all day long. She has a husband and children. How could she give so much time to a store? I am very strong and am never sick, but she is often sick. How could you run a store if you were sick? Besides she doesn't even like selling.

"I'm not sure I'm going to stay in the store business either. When the French family left, you know, the one I worked for so long, they wanted to take me with them. They would have taken the girls too, but the girls didn't want to go and talked me into staying with them. But sometimes I get the urge to sell all this stuff and go to France. I could get 22,000 VN$ or more if I sold the shelves and things. These days it would cost 50,000 VN$ to start a store like this, if you didn't even count the building. Maybe I could sell it to someone who would like to run a store." Upon questioning one finds that she has no idea how much it would cost to go to France or what she would do once she is there except find the family she knew but for whom she has no address. But she pauses, looks around her dingy store and says, "If money were no problem I would go this minute! In fact after Tet I could save enough and sell all the goods and go. I have always wanted to see France."

CHAPTER V

ONG CHA

Halfway down Main Street lives a thin, small, muscular man with deep burning eyes. His hair, though receding and somewhat sparse, is still quite black, long, and often falls over his face. His whiskers, also sparce and growing in different directions, are often left unshaven until they are half an inch long, giving him an unruly, almost wild look. He has a tenseness about his movements as if he were nervous or hurriedly trying to "keep up" with something. He is usually seen wearing only loose-legged Vietnamese cotton shorts, but when going on his bicycle to the market he may add a khaki shirt and yellow rubber sandals. His name is Ong Cha.

Ong Cha, on first acquaintance, starts speaking in French and says how pleased he is to find someone with whom he can talk French. But his French is very poor. He relates his history enthusiastically and even over tea has a breathlessness, as though he is afraid he will not be able to finish. He reports that he and "little wife" with their children were refugees from Hanoi where his first wife and the four children by that marriage still live. He takes a picture from the wall and points out a large building in the center of busy Hanoi which he identifies as his home where he believes his first family may be staying even now. For the last ten years, he and his second wife have lived in the same house. They now have six children all younger than those in Hanoi. He adds very proudly that his eldest son by this marriage is a pilot in the Vietnamese Air Force stationed in the mountainous central region. His next-to-eldest son lives with him and helps at home. This son appears to be about sixteen years old, is quiet and nice looking, with a mass of thick black hair that has been slightly waved. The other four children are small, down to a one and half year old boy; these four were born in the South. Ba Cha is a plump, drab-looking woman with a faint smile. She is seldom around the house during the day, and when she is, she is seen working diligently.

Ong Cha, unlike others in the area, talks at great length about what a fine, capable man he is and how, although he has slipped into unfortunate circumstances, he deserves a better life. He says that he was very rich in Hanoi where he lived a pleasant life of ease. But even in the midst of luxury he was busy, he says, as a very good khom leader taking care of the streets, drains, homeless children, and other problems of the area. He thinks the khom leaders here in this area are incapable, but when he was a khom leader, he did this important work very well and organized his area very thoroughly. He says he organizes his family in the same way, and he is like his father, a good worker and insists that his family members work well too. When given a compliment about how well his tiny, thin five year old daughter was doing as a baby sitter as she struggled to lug a hefty one and a half year old boy around, he commented it is because he has organized her well too.

The house where Ong Cha lives is not only a living area but also a work and sales area for a meat product of three varieties, Cha Lua and Cha Thit, and Cha Hue. Above the front of the store is a bright sign telling what is for sale and that orders can be filled for parties or weddings. The house which is directly on Main Street is made of wood with a cracked cement floor and tile roof. It is nine feet wide and two stories high. From Main Street one can see in the large screened display window packages of this meat wrapped in bright green leaves, hanging on strings or unwrapped and orange-colored, hanging on the curved section of a large tree limb. The front room contains a small refrigerator, a long narrow table with four plain wood chairs and a small wooden-slatted bed. When guests are expected the room contains pictures on the wall, including the one of the house in Hanoi, and the bed will hold a tray with ginseng tea and glasses. But the unexpected visitor will find a plastic woven tea caddy surrounded by several small handleless glass cups on the table and the bed and walls completely bare.

The second room is a work room with a hearth made of loose bricks, several storage units and tools of the trade. At the back of this space is a steep stairway which he says leads to the living area where he has "many lovely statues of Buddha and a beautiful view." During one visit children could be heard playing on the second floor, and at one point water began to run down between the large cracks in the floor-ceiling, leading one to wonder if the baby was sitting above that spot.

One day an investigation of rhythmic pounding noises in his shop found Ong Cha and his son in the work room making Cha Lua. They sat on small stools kept in place by a frame which also held a one foot diameter stone mortar in front of each of them. First they each put in the mortar an amount of pork about the size of a man's fist from a pile of carefully weighed meat and then slowly mashed it with small motions using one heavy wooden dumb-bell shaped pestle, and adding small quanities of water, nuoc mam and salt. Then with a heavy pestle in each hand they started beating alternately, lifting the pestles and beating rhythmically in well-synchronized motions. When the mixture was thoroughly mashed, they each added a piece of weighed fat of about the same size and began the process over again. The pounded product was a very soft, almost white, dough. The thin dough was then poured onto banana leaves that had been prepared and spread out carefully. These, when filled and weighed, were tied into a package with a fibrous string and put into the awaiting cauldron of boiling water. As soon as the water boiled again, the time on the clock was carefully noted on a small wall blackboard. Ong Cha reports the cooking takes one hour and ten minutes. When finished it is a four inch diameter sausage-shaped loaf with a leathery lunchmeat look which is packaged in bright green leaves. He sells Cha Lua for 12 VN$ per 100 grams, and he reports there is one kilo in each package. Cha Thit sells for 10 VN$ per gram and is similar to Cha Lua except that it contains pieces of gristly meat. These two products are a favorite in North Viet Nam. Cha Hue, a product from central Viet Nam, is slightly thicker and is molded about one-half inch deep around a tree limb instead of being cooked inside leaves. It is then covered with powdered cinnamon and smoked over charcoal.

Ong Cha says that his boy in the Air Force used to help him make Cha Lua in addition to this son who now helps him. His wife cannot help in the actual pounding or making of the product, but she gets up early every morning to go to a market further than the local one to sell what they have made. When she is home she washes dishes and does things to assist the men.

Several neighbors volunteered the information that the price of his product was much higher than in the local market. One lady, living in the neighborhood who sells snacks, including sandwiches of bread with slivers of Cha Lua, whispered that he did not even make some of the Cha Thit and Cha Hue but purchased it at the market

and then almost doubled the price. She never buys her meat from him. Customers in his store appear to be few and far between.

But Ong Cha does not like to talk about his work. He prefers to talk about himself. One of the talents of which he is most proud and which he is pleased to demonstrate is his ability to write Chinese-characters. He takes a calendar off the wall and with a huge brush which he dips in his tea cup writes on the back of the page the characters he says stand for "beautiful American woman with unsurpassable beauty, goodness and reputation." Another day when he was prepared for a visit, he had composed a poem in Chinese characters in chalk on the wall which he read aloud from left to right (not up and down) to say, "The American lady is like a cloud; heavenly, beautiful and helpful." He then explained that by helpful he had meant taking pictures in the neighborhood as it is a helpful, useful, skill, much to be admired. When it was mentioned perhaps he enjoyed talking with the monk who lives alone in his pagoda across the street and who also writes Chinese characters, Ong Cha said, "I am far more principled and more worthwhile than that bonze. But I realize how much less worthwhile I am than the wealthy American ladies. I am only a poor Vietnamese man."

And even though Ong Cha's family appears to be rather well-off according to neighborhood standards and he seems busy and capable in his trade, the picture he seems to wish to present, at least of his present condition, is of a man who has had a great come-down in life and is unhappy. He says he misses the life he led in Hanoi. He says he wonders if his house and property are still safe. He seems reluctant to be seen at his work and refuses to have his picture taken working or shown with his products. He complains that his job is hard. "But," he continues, "when men live in small houses and are poor like me, what else can they do but work, work, work."

CHAPTER VI

BA PAPER

Ba Paper is a friendly person. Although she speaks quietly and is not at all aggressive, she has an easy broad smile, which shows a large expanse of missing front teeth. She is slim, wears her hair combed straight back into a tight bun worn low on her head, and she usually wears a short-sleeved loose white blouse and black pants. To dress up, she puts a long-sleeved black blouse of a thin material over the white one.

Her home is located in a silt-filled area containing about ten homes. The front of the house is on the river, and it backs on a foul marsh. It is not far from the back of the pagoda. The houses in this area are of varying quality--from those made of stucco down to those of scrap and thatch.

Despite the fact Ba Paper lives with her six children in a small, poorly-constructed scrap house with a thatch roof and broken cement floor, she is quick to invite visitors, even strangers, into her home. Her children meet strangers with a polite bow and greeting. Many neighbors find their way to her relaxed, friendly home. A frequent visitor is a half-Chinese woman who has no family. She cleans house and works for one of her neighbors. She comments she and Ba Paper are such good friends because they are both so poor. The woman living in a much better constructed, neat, stucco house next door--only a few feet away--frequently comes to visit or holds conversations over their low broken fence. A young man, the same age of her son, and who is stationed here in the Army although his home is far away, sometimes walks in, changes his clothes, and picks up and eats a piece of bread from the kitchen. She comments that he beat up a superior officer and was jailed until recently. But, she continues, he is like her adopted son. He calls her "Mom" and visits frequently.

Ba Paper says she owns her house which she and her husband bought many years ago for 1500 piasters "when it was very tiny." They worked together, she reported, to make it much larger and improved. Above her door she has nailed

an empty beer can from which the white paint is now peeling. She says that this is to catch the devil when he descends to bring bad luck. She and her friends agree that they are not sure it will keep away all bad luck, but since she has children it is important "just in case."

Upon entering the house of Ba Paper, one may be asked to sit on the bed over which she quickly smooths a straw mat to cover the splintery slats. The two chairs in the front room are badly broken and she usually sits on an awkward stool. The only other furniture in this ten foot square room are two wooden dressers. The second room, of equal size, contains an iron bed with slats, a folded cot, a dish cabinet, a table with perhaps eighteen drying dishes, and a shelf containing clay stoves for charcoal and for wood. There are two lamps, as the house has no electricity. There is also a running, wind-up clock. All the beds have mosquito nets.

The large holes and cracks in the walls are covered with a wall-papering of newspaper, brightened by gay ads, a picture of Buddha from the local pagoda next to a Japanese calendar model, a picture of the two Trung Sisters (popular heroines similar to Joan of Arc), and scenes of the classical four seasons printing. On one wall Ba Paper points with pride to a framed certificate, testifying that her eldest son graduated from a mechanics course and a glass covered case showing pictures of the family, and movie stars. She is also quick to point out the picture above one dresser of a kindly, smiling, elderly Vietnamese in traditional garb. This was her father. Under his picture is a collection of inexpensive pottery items for honoring his spirit--an empty vase and bowl for offering flowers and fruit, and an incense burner containing a number of burned joss sticks. She identifies the picture above the other dresser showing a tense-looking mustached younger man as her husband. He "went away" four years ago, and she is not sure if he is dead or alive. A few sticks of incense have been burned below his picture "just in case."

Ba Paper has six children, but when asked their ages she figures, laughs, consults her eldest duaghter and a visiting neighbor, and finally states she believes they are eight, ten, thirteen, fifteen, eighteen, and twenty-one years old. Ba Paper and the group of six or eight visitors think her confusion is very funny, and they laugh together good naturedly. The twenty-one year old, who just finished the mechanics course, has been drafted and is stationed far from Saigon. The eighteen year old girl

stays home to help, as she has been unable to find employment elsewhere. She is a plump, serious girl, less attractive than her mother. She is sometimes sullen and sometimes friendly. The other youngsters are in various schools, and one is sponsored by Foster Parents, Inc. Previously they were sponsored by a nurse and son, whose pictures appear in the glass-covered case. The picture of the nurse's son shows him barefoot, a little disheveled, filling a bucket from a hand water pump. The family enjoy this picture especially. When this nurse discontinued support, a church group started but then quickly dropped the project. Although the family was still receiving allotments from Foster Parents while a new sponsoring family could be found, the mother was quite worried as to whether this aid would continue.

But the payments (equivalent to $8.00 a month) and a few supplies from Foster Parents, though helpful, are not enough to support the family, so Ba Paper is one of the many in the area who make banana paper. She and her children cut paper thin slices of a special banana, which when laid in an overlapping fashion on one foot square woven bamboo racks, dry into white sheets. These are sold to vendors who roast them over charcoal stoves along the streets or in parks, as inexpensive snacks. Her original investment in this business is small, Ba Paper states. She bought some large bamboo sheets to cut in squares and some sticks for frames when she started over two years ago. She tugs on a frame to show that it is still strong. They cost "almost nothing." Then one needs only knives, a pumice stone for frequent knife sharpening (although the bottom of a crockery bowl will do in a pinch) and a day's supplies of bananas. Ba Paper has space in her yard for drying racks, but those in more-crowded areas use their roofs for drying.

On a good day, Ba Paper relates, she gets up at 5:00 A.M. and goes to the local Tan Dinh market. If the choice of bananas there is not good, she must go to another market further away. But on a good day she is home with 60 VN$ worth of bananas, enough for a day's work, and is ready to start slicing by 7:00 A.M. It takes one and half bananas per double sheet, which takes four to six minutes to make. With this supply of bananas, the family working together until noon can make one hundred sheets. These are stretched out on racks to dry and in the afternoon she takes the sheets made the day before downtown to sell to vendors for 13 VN$ for ten double sheets. Selling one hundred such sheets she grosses 130 VN$ for a profit of 70 VN$ minus transportation. The

vendors cut the sheets in half making them six inches by twelve and sell them roasted for a piaster a piece.

After numerous visits, however, one is convinced that this "good day" of which she speaks may not be at all typical. On a cloudy or rainy day she may cut a few left over bananas to dry in protected areas, but they will dry slowly and rain would, of course, ruin them. Another day the buses from the area where these special bananas are grown might have difficulty getting through the countryside, and the market price would be too high for her to use them for paper. In bad weather or politically tense times with curfew and demonstrations, there are fewer people strolling leisurely and buying the paper, and Ba Paper cannot readily find vendors. She frequently has hundreds of sheets already dried, carefully wrapped in plastic and newspapers, for which there are no customers. Ba Paper adds cheerfully, however, that after they are dried they will not spoil easily and can be kept for long periods.

When Ba Paper gets a large supply of paper on hand, however, she often becomes a retailer. She can sometimes be seen at a downtown park along the river's edge. She is not an aggressive vendor but sits quietly with a burning charcoal hibachi waiting for a customer to approach her. Sometimes her daughter also sells but never at the same place. There does not seem to be the sociability among these competitive downtown vendors that there is along the street in the quarter.

One day Ba Paper related cheerfully to a small crowd of neighbors an adventure she considered a narrow escape in her selling the night before. She had gone to a market instead of the park and found many customers at the busy exit. A policeman asked her to move three times indicating a place she might sell, but where there were no customers. Upon finding her there a third time the policeman became very angry and arrested her. "He was about my son's age and he called me many bad angry things. I just couldn't stand it and I cried and cried," she reported. "After a long long time he let me go. That was really lucky for me as it could have cost me 20 VN$ and he had held me so long I hadn't made that much all evening." Usually, she reports, the police do not bother her when she sells at the park, but once when they surprised her she left her paper, picked up the pan and ran. "The paper," she laughs, "was worth more than the two or three piaster pan but I was too excited to think clearly."

Daily living expenses are a worry to Ba Paper. She reports it costs 30 piasters a day for meals. When prices rise, as they have in recent months, they eat less and less expensive items. She usually gets her food from the market when she shops for bananas or sometimes gets soup or other items from the boats that pass her house or from the neighborhood stands. She reports the prices are all the same. She states that they eat twice a day, but as is typical of children in the neighborhood, her children frequently appear munching bread, snacks or take bites of banana while working on the paper. For Tet she hopes to save 30 to 100 VN$ for extra fish and an especially good meal. If she were rich, she says, she would have new clothes, but the material sent by Foster Parents has been made into shirts the boys are already wearing to school. She does not feel so poor, however, that she has given up spending occasional piasters for cigarettes and is one of the few women who smoke instead of chewing betel.

Though she owns her home which has a thatch roof and is therefore not subject to land tax, there are assessments she must pay. One time she was told by the lien gia that she must contribute 100 VN$ to a neighborhood fund to rebuild the pathway through the swamp to this group of houses. She does not know who started or approved the plan but feels it is worthwhile improvement, and all the neighbors will approve. When the tide was high the pathway had been under water, washing it away until it was so narrow children sometimes slipped off into the swampy mud. Only those using the pathway to go to their homes were taxed, and those with better homes paid up to 300 VN$ per household. She had hoped to pay only 50 VN$ since she is poor but reports that the lien gia answered that many were poor, but she could make her 100 VN$ assessment in two payments with a week between.

Health expenses are also a grave concern to the family. One day she sat on her stool, exhausted. The day before her daughter had had such a toothache she had been unable to get out of bed. All but one of her younger children had been violently sick to their stomachs, and she herself had been forced to stay in bed having bad pains and paralysis of the muscles of her back and arms. They had waited for the one boy to return from school, and he had cooked 2 VN$ worth of spinach, a duck egg and rice for the family. When complimented on how well she had raised a son who was such help, she let a smile break across her tired face and with her typical light touch she added, "Well, yes, he was a help. But when the rice started to burn instead of taking it off the fire he

yelled and yelled until a neighbor came to do it for him." But she remarked very seriously, that when there was illness she did not know what to do. When asked if she had asked Miss Oanh, the social worker, for help, she answered that she had done so only once when her legs had been temporarily painfully paralyzed. But she said she was "afraid to bother Miss Oanh again." About the local Tan Dinh clinic, she explained, it took too long and cost too much. She then turned to her half-Chinese friend who described waiting almost all day to be given prescriptions she could not afford to have filled. About the mobile health unit, Ba Paper has even greater reservations. She fears if she goes there, the doctor will put her in a hospital even against her will. Then who would watch the children, she quietly demands. When her eldest daughter's tooth became too painful she went to a private dentist outside the area who pulled it and charged her 150 VN$.

Despite all these problems, fears and concerns, there is an ease of manner that one does not feel in many higher class homes. Ba Paper works and seems to enjoy a closeness with her children and friends. Perhaps it is true, as the one woman suggests, poverty has given them a common bond.

Above: Ba Store; Cha Lua Store

Below: Ba Paper and Family

CHAPTER VII

ALTAR HOUSE

Occasionally at the water fountain, one notices a slim, pleasant, gentle-looking woman who is beginning to show signs of pregnancy. She fills buckets of water for two youngsters to permit them to go more quickly without having to wait for water. They leave, carrying their heavy load with a labored swinging motion from one end of the area to the other.

One of the youngsters is a slim twelve year old girl. She has a charming, shy smile, a smooth, attractive face and seems to have a calm but pleasant view toward life. Usually she is dressed in an old black blouse and trousers, barefoot, with a woven scarf draped loosely over her long hair in Southern Vietnamese style. The child explains she has carried water since she quit school a year ago. She claims to make about thirteen trips every day earning only about 13 VN$. But now she is filling in with the help of her brother and her mother for another carrier who has twenty-five regular trips a day.

The boy has tiny squinting eyes and a protruding lower lip, giving him an almost deformed look. His mother says he does not carry water regularly, as he is ill, sometimes falling down "looking like he is dead."

A trip to their home takes one past the turn to Ba Paper's house, along a winding path between houses, over a rickety boardwalk into the area of stilt houses at the end of the peninsula. Their tiny thatched house was patched long ago with scraps but shows no sign of recent repair.

Altar Wife smiles an invitation to come up the plank-way past the tiny open kitchen area and into the seven foot square front room with a dangerously rickety floor and large holes in the walls and ceiling. She talks freely about her life. Her first husband and two of the three children she had with him have died. When her remaining girl was four years old, she remarried and has four more children ranging in ages from twelve to three. She expects a baby in a few months. Since she

has heart trouble and cannot even walk far without becoming faint and having to be helped home, she does not often do any kind of work. She sometimes, however, slices bananas for a neighbor for which she receives two piasters for ten sheets. She feels she could earn more on her own but lacks capital to buy a day's supply of bananas. She only helps at the fountain now and then, as the daughter usually finds only a few customers for her daily services.

She describes her present husband as a good, hard-working man who is much older than she. She even commented that the neighbors had laughed at her when she married him, saying she was marrying a man who looked old enough to be her father. But she says again what a hard working man he is. He gets up at 5 A.M. and says prayers and carries water until 7 A.M. Then he goes out looking for odd jobs, such as cutting trees, making small repairs, and carrying materials at construction sites. At 5 P.M. he again carries water, and then the two of them have evening prayers before going to bed. About several attractive water color pictures painted on the cardboard patches in the living room, she says that her husband studied as a youth with an artist and that he has recently done these for his pleasure. At one time when he was young he started to work painting scenery for a theater company, but his parents had stopped him saying this was not a "fit kind of job."

She continues to describe her husband as a very devout man. One day she said sadly that he might have been a great monk, seeing the future clearly, as several monks she mentions can. But since he married her and has a family which is against rules for monks, she does not believe he knows the future well. She says, however, that a number of men in the neighborhood come to study how to pray from him and to learn about the sayings of Buddha, and he helps them without charging them anything. Also, any money he earns, she says proudly, goes toward buying religious statues, and all his free time is given to their care. But he is so generous that he gives them freely to anyone who wants one. He does not have much time left over to teach his children, and, since she can read, she has taught her eldest daughter to read and write and tries to help the others learn from Buddhist books. All her children, Altar Wife says, except the daughter by her first husband, have had some schooling at the pagoda school.

Several different neighbors, some of whom identify him by his squint, remark that he is a very devout man

who knows very much about praying, although they seem to know nothing more about the family than that they are very poor.

It is quite a surprise to meet this "learned" husband of whom the wife speaks. He not only appears to be much older, but his eyes droop like his son's until he appears to not see very well. When he smiles, he shows only several scattered teeth. He moves slowly and is told by his wife how to act and what to do, and one wonders by his looks and conversation if he is completely bright. He shaves his head as a monk and wears monk's robes when he prays. When having his picture taken he was told by his wife to put on his robes, stand in front of his altar and hold his hands as in prayer and to "look proud of our religion." Then he was instructed to change his shirt for a family picture. Later he changed clothes again and left to carry water. One frequently sees him carrying water in the late evening hours.

The oldest girl is now sixteen and has a husband. The mother reports that even at the age of four the girl hardly spoke to her father and that to this day there has been no understanding between the two. She says that this explains, perhaps, why the girl got married so young. She fell in love at the age of fourteen with a young man from the area and pulls out of a suitcase a picture of the girl at that age with a cut-out of the boy pasted in one corner. Although the mother does not approve of early marriages, she gave her consent when the girl was fifteen "fearing pregnancy and how the neighbors would laugh if something like that would happen." Another day she reported that sometime during the first year of marriage the daughter had a miscarriage. The mother says the boy wanted an official wedding as did the girl and her family. However, although the boy's father would probably have asked for the girl's hand for his son and have gone through the proper form, the boy's mother refused. She had said there was "Something wrong if a girl wanted to get married so early and if there was something wrong it was the girl's fault." But even without a wedding the young couple sleep at the altar house, as, the mother explained, the daughter did not want to sleep far from her mother. Both the girl and her mother describe the mother-in-law as unkind. The youngster must work at the in-laws' flavored ice and drink stand during the day and until 10:00 P.M. but receives nothing except some clothing if hers is quite torn. She used to carry water on a subscription basis, but reports she has been too weak since the miscarriage.

When asked about fear of second marriages when married so young, the mother reported the young husband is wildly jealous and she does not think he would be interested in other women. The young man works for a sign painting company, she says, earning as much as 300 VN$ a day but sometimes is out of work for weeks at a time. She feels if he owned his own sign shop, the financial problems of the young couple would be solved.

When meeting this young wife, one is immediately struck with her beauty and apparent charm. She seems to have all the poise of the mother. One can frequently see her at the in-laws' stand working quietly beside a tense and unyielding looking mother-in-law who is apt to answer questions for the girl. The father-in-law is also sometimes at the stand, and he too gives the appearance of looking shy. One late Sunday afternoon visit to the Altar House found the girl sitting on the floor, slicing bananas for making paper and leaning firmly against her husband. He was stretched on the floor at the very edge of the room wearing black cotton shorts and partially covered with his shirt, sleeping despite the movements and conversation of the children and adults around him. At one point he opened his eyes to discover visitors, gave a grunt, and turned, facing the wall to continue his nap. He is a handsome but very young looking man who appears to lack some of the polish that seems so natural in his wife. A sign in the house is pointed out as his work and is very professional-looking.

The life of the Altar family appears to center around a form of Buddhism. The first room contains only a small table under which there are suitcases for storage and a stool. The rest of the floor is needed for sleeping space. The second room of equal size is devoted to altars. The main altar contains statues typical of a pagoda including several of Buddha, Chinese Generals, the god with eighteen arms, who the wife explains can give people power to tell the future, and pictures of Ong Tien and Quan Am, the goddess of mercy. There are gongs, ticking noisemakers, incense burners, and some books kept under an orange cloth. On the floor is an altar to the fat, laughing Indian-looking god, who Altar Wife explains will help if a person has lost something or if business is poor. On the other side is a large crudely carved and painted statue of Ho Phap, who, she explains, guards the house. In the only empty corner is a shelf containing many Buddhist books. Some of these deal with the sayings of Buddha, while others deal with healing the sick or foretelling the future.

Ong Altar describes himself as being very devout. He thinks, he says, only of the statues and never of himself or his family. When it rains, the roof which is full of holes throughout the house leaks and they take their clothing to wrap the statues to keep them dry. He claims that he heals the sick with prayer and not with medicine. Some people he describes as having taken western medicine for years without improvement come to him and are cured. Among his books is one that gives a phrase, which if repeated 12,000 times, is purported to be able to save someone who is almost dead. He also describes men coming to him for instruction in Buddhism and prayer. Although he has a family, he claims to serve as a monk at funerals, though not at weddings. Never, he says, will he take money for his services.

Around the necks of his wife and young children are strings holding one inch square flat sacks. The mother says these were given them by a rich man who is a Buddhist magic healer. The mother says they help. They have never been to the mobile health unit of local clinic, as the mother claims it is too far and unnecessary, as she has help from the magic doctor. She is, however, worried about the boy "who falls down dead" sometimes. The father remarks that he did not give these to the children; he does not know how to make them. However, he believes they or any other charm will help only if someone believes in them, but it is "the faith that cures."

The Altar husband and wife say they have both lived in this area about seventeen years. The wife describes her only living relatives as a brother and sister who live far away. The couple, however, identify as the husband's elderly mother, the woman who lives two doors away. They say she owns her own home, although someone lives with her "to keep her company." The husband matter-of-factly states that, though she is old, she must watch children for about 300 VN$ a month, as he is her only child, and he spends his money on statues having nothing left to give her.

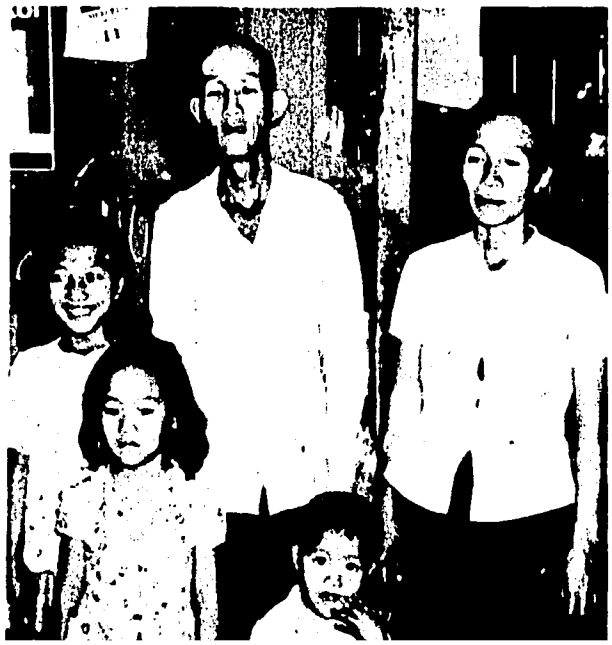
Ong Altar says he wishes he had more money, but not for himself or even his family, who, he says, he realizes needs many things. What he says he would like is to take better care of his statues. Both he and his wife agree that if they had money, the first thing they would do would be to make the altar room weather-proof filling in the open spaces in the walls and ceiling and, if possible, enlarge the altar room to give a better view of the all-important statues. The father adds that he would like his children to follow him in the religious way, especially

his eldest son, but he feels they are still too young to understand the purpose and value of such a life.

The family works constantly, living cramped in half of their tiny shack, trying to keep up with daily food and living expenses. The older youngsters miss school to carry water, the tiny children play in tattered clothes, and the new baby growing inside the mother means soon there will be another mouth to feed. Although there are numerous statues in the altar room, they are not of expensive quality, and it is doubtful if their total value would change greatly the standard of living of the household. Perhaps having an altar room which neighbors come to admire is itself worth the discomfort of sleeping a little more closely together. Perhaps, also, the dream of a larger, grander altar room is more interesting to think about while carrying water and slicing bananas than other aspects of their daily life.

Above: Altar Wife and Husband

Below: Family; daughter works at parents-in-law's stand; Alter Husband's mother.



CHAPTER VIII

CYCLO FAMILIES

Introduction

Many men in the area are cyclo drivers. Cyclos are three wheeled vehicles in which the passenger sits in a shaded seat in front while the driver sits on a high seat in back, peddling as on a bicycle. In Saigon there are many cyclo drivers who peddle around the streets day and night looking for customers.

During the day one frequently sees cyclo drivers sitting and talking at the entrance of the area while waiting for work. One sees them carrying passengers or loads down the paths where taxis or even motor cyclos cannot go. They are probably the most popular form of transportation with people living in areas such as this, particularly because their rates are low.

Daily profit for such work is not high. Following are descriptions of two extremely different families of cyclo drivers living in the quarter and how they live.

Water-House Family

In a house just off Main Street and next to the pagoda, but completely hidden from view by the house in front, lives the Water-House family. Their house is entered at low tide by balancing carefully on a long narrow plank over soft mud, past a neighbor's toilet, much garbage and occasional rats, up another plank and into their one room house. During high tide, however, one must push a boat across a space of water up to forty feet long and crawl out upon their plank. But at high or low tide one is always greeted with a warm smile if Ba Water House is at home.

She is a large-boned, plumpish, friendly woman, who has a pleasant way of talking and smiling, showing a bit of gold repair in her front teeth. But when seen unaware, she looks like a person tired from years of overwork. She and her husband are from Saigon and have lived in this house for ten years.

The house has a wooden floor and the walls and roof, originally of neat thatch, are full of large holes. The family complain that their house, built with a four inch step down in the center was damaged by the constant flooding this year especially in the lower half.

The room has one small-sized slat bed with mosquito netting. Over this bed hangs a hammock in which one of the tiny youngsters sleeps and can be given a rocking push in the night should he awaken. Another hammock hangs over an area of the floor where a mat in the corner indicates the other youngsters sleep and are able to take care of the other small child in the night. There is one small table with school books on it. Such things as knives, kettles, and men's clothes are hung on the wall. Wood is neatly stacked in a wood box next to the clay cooking stove. There is a feeling of a constant attempt to keep the few possessions in place in this seven by twelve foot room in which the parents and seven children live. There is no altar, and the only visible indication of religious practices is a half used package of joss sticks on the table.

The mother has a two and a half month old baby, making the eighth child she has had. One died several years ago at the age of four from "a high fever." Unlike Vietnamese tradition suggests, this mother got up quickly after giving birth, and, when the youngest baby was about a month old, she started carrying water. After a couple

of weeks of this, she found her strength gone and she no longer felt well enough to continue this very heavy work. After that she tried selling pop corn, short pieces of peeled sugar cane and other snacks at the door of the pagoda school, just outside her house. She reports that she could earn 20 VN$ a day carrying water when she felt well, but she had never made that much selling snacks, but prefers selling snacks, as it is much lighter work and she does not have to worry about going far away and leaving her small children.

Ong Water is a thin, nervous man, who sits with a sad absent look on his face. He wears clothes typical of his occupation as a cyclo driver--a khaki long sleeved shirt and hat for sun protection and shorts to give him freedom for leg action. He clutches his hat, clears his voice frequently, speaking nervously to strangers. He reports he starts early each morning. Taking time off during noon and the slow siesta hours, he continues this strenuous work again in the mid-afternoon until 8:00 P.M. It costs 20 VN$ each day to rent a cyclo, and he reports that he earns 60 to 75 VN$ a day beyond this. Ong Water has T.B. and must take a shot at the neighboring Tan Dinh clinic every day, but despite his handicap he reports a larger income and longer hours than many cyclo drivers.

This large family does not, however, have to live only on the income from water carrying and cyclo earnings from the sick husband. One day eight years ago Ba Water was talking to a friend in the market who said, "You are poor. Why not go to Foster Parents Plan, Inc. like I did. They will help you." After making a report at Foster Parents, Ba Water says it took about a year of unexpected visits from the social worker and investigation of their story before the family was put on the rolls. The "Foster Child" is the oldest girl and she radiates charm, optimism and intelligence that far outshines any other member of the household. She likes school and does well, her mother reports. This year she is to graduate from grade school, but the mother has some doubt as to what is next for the youngster. Even if it means loss of Foster Parent aid she is not sure they can spare the girl to continue schooling. One boy also goes to public school and another is at Miss Oanh's school at the Social Welfare center. The others are too young. On occasion the mother says she must leave the children to fend for themselves, and, when the older boys are all in school, she sometimes finds it necessary to keep the girl home to baby sit. However, recently she has been taking the girl with her to the market. The mother and daughter appear to offer each other close companionship and to enjoy each others' company, but the

smaller children must remain at home alone with a two foot high solid gate over the doorway. The family has just received a piece of cloth from Foster Parents which the mother used a friend's sewing machine to make into a new blouse for herself. She is very proud of her new clothing as she makes her market trips.

The mother is concerned about the eldest boy, as he is very thin, sickly, and has a cough. When asked if she had been to the mobile health unit, she says they had gone but the medicine given him had not helped. She does not know if the boy has T.B. like the father but wonders how to find out, as she cannot afford to get X-rays. She listened intently to the suggestion that the social worker at Foster Parents would help them, but several weeks later she replied she had decided to wait until her regular day to report there as she was afraid to go "out of turn." However, she had purchased some pills of "western medicine" a store had recommended which cost her about 11 piasters a day but seemed to be helping.

When the family assembles in the house it seems to completely fill the room. One day a tiny tot was seen swinging the baby as it slept soundly in the hammock. This tot and the two on the floor were eating bananas, peanuts and a potato-like vegetable, fighting between themselves over the snacks. The older (Foster) girl, who has taken a decoration from package wrapping and fastened it into her hair to add a touch of beauty, tried to keep order. The husband sat in the corner, as though the whole thing were too much for him. One had been left with a neighbor. The eldest boy, who looked very sick, clutched at his mother's clothing and then stood touching his father while he sucked his fingers. The mother worked calmly among her brood. When she picked up the pantless baby and it started urinating, she simply held it to one side and continued her conversation letting the water trickle onto the floor and down through the cracks into the water below.

"We need more money," the mother sighs. "We need to repair the damage to the house caused by this year's floodings. Also, with more money," she looks at the children and considers carefully before continuing, "we would keep the youngsters in school longer. Perhaps with the aid from Foster Parents we can anyway."

Cyclo Family

A second cyclo family offers quite a contrast to the Water-House family. They live in a six by fifteen foot house that is directly on Main Street. It is wide enough to allow for a table by the door and a slat bed with a hammock above. There is also a partial bamboo partition behind which are water storage jars and the kitchen area. Above the front table is a spirit-ancestor altar with frequently burning incense and a statue of the fat, laughing, Indian-looking Buddhist diety who brings all sorts of good luck.

The husband of this family is not shy at all. He is slim, has unruly hair and an unkempt look. On different days he is bolstered up with quantities of alcohol (as the smell, flushed face, lack of coordination, loudness of conversation and exaggeration of hand motions including frequent touching of the person to whom he is speaking testified). He complains bitterly about what bad times these are for cyclo drivers. Although he says his eyes are bad and he, therefore, cannot drive at night, he stated a recent 10:00 P.M. curfew was making him lose much money. During "normal" times, after paying the 25 VN$ a day rent and driving from 8-11 A.M. and 2-5 P.M., he only makes, he states, an average of 30 VN$ a day profit. He thinks people have stopped using cyclos as much as they used to and predicts the situation is going to get worse. He is often seen walking in the area wearing only checked Vietnamese cotton shorts, he may visit with Ba French where he has gone to buy cigarettes or he may just stand watching people go by. Another afternoon he sits snoozing in the passenger seat of his cyclo parked in the shade outside his door long past the hour he claims to start work. One hopes on these days he has earned enough in the morning to at least pay the rent for the cyclo.

On the contrary Ba Cyclo appears to have a great distrust of "foreigners" and is reserved and reluctant to have any conversation about their living conditions. She parts her black hair in the middle, pulling it down across her ears to a low bun in the back, but it is usually in disorder. She is plump with large features, including a very large mouth which she herself describes as "awkward" in pictures. Her wide smile with thick lips stained from frequent use of betel shows not only a set of blackened teeth but a huge wad of tabacco which she continuously chews requiring frequent spitting outside or in a nearby can.

Many of the things she says are improbable. For instance, she says both she and her husband were born in Saigon. When asked about her blackened teeth typical of Northerners she says she worked for a while as a maid in the North, and her employer loved her so much, she gave her money to have her teeth treated. However, both she and her husband have very strong northern accents, and her clothing and hair style also indicate a Northern background. It is necessary, therefore, to be cautious in evaluating the things she reports.

They have a ten year old girl they say is their only child. She is slim, plain and quiet. She seems frequently to lose herself in a crowd of girls her age. She has, however, a new frizzy permanent for Tet which she is very proud of. Sometimes she is seen helping her mother.

Meeting Ba Cyclo on one occasion, she was standing at the door of their narrow house holding a baby she had not had before which she claimed was two months old, but which appeared so starved with thin legs and bulging stomach that it looked thinner and weaker than most new-born babies. The wife explained that it was not her own baby but belonged to a woman who had found she could not raise the child and had given it to the cyclo wife to raise. She said the mother was no relative or friend but had heard she had done this successfully with a baby before and had asked for her help. "The other baby is now visiting his parents but you will see!" she said. "Soon he will be back and you will see how healthy he is now. When he came to me he was worse off than this youngster. In fact he was so sick that at first no one could even tell if he were a girl or a boy."

She sat down on the bed near her door and uncovered this tiny new baby to show it was a girl. (Many Vietnamese seem to need to "prove" the sex of a baby this way when responding to the simple question of whether the child is a girl or a boy.) She sat stroking the baby's tiny legs and arms and fed her some milk from a bottle. When asked if she had taken the child to a doctor, she said no and went on to explain that since she had just started with her and she had only been away from her mother a few days, she was sure her fortune would soon change.

After a week the baby showed some improvement. Ba Cyclo was, however, unhappy. She said the real mother had made an arrangement to pay 500 piasters a month for the tiny girl's care and also to bring her milk and medicine, but the mother had not come, and supplies and money were gone. She said she had asked the neighbors

for donations. At first the neighbors felt this new baby would not live, but everyone is encouraged at the progress she has made.

Neighbors do frequently stop in to look at the baby. She sits holding and stroking the baby as she is seen doing almost every time one passes her home. She says she does not get much sleep as the baby drinks sixty grams of canned sweetened milk each two hours--day or night. But she says proudly that the baby is stronger and has started looking around and making noises if she is late with the milk. The tiny baby is dressed warmly including booties and bonnet, but when Ba Cyclo places her in the hammock, she wraps her in a blanket and covers her completely, face and all, with a towel. She starts swinging the hammock, but as the baby starts urinating, she stops swinging to let the water run into a pie pan she has placed on the bed below, but she does not bother to wipe up the water that spilled. She says she needs Vietnamese herb medicine. When asked if she had seen Miss Oanh she gave a bored sigh, looked away, tapped her foot on the edge of the bed, and played with a scrap of paper giving a feeling of disgust with he very question. She does not answer. When asked about the mobile health unit and hospital, she responds that she has not the "right" to go to them as she is not the mother of the baby--but that Vietnamese medicine would cure the child anyway.

Ten days later Ba Cyclo stood on the street outside the door proudly holding the bundled up baby. She said she had been to the mobile clinic and the doctor had told her "You are very clever to raise such a tiny child." He did not even ask if I were the mother," she continued, "but gave the baby a shot which seemed to help a great deal. I am to go back to see him each two weeks when the unit is there. Also, the mother of the child came and brought milk and money." She unwrapped the baby to show her improvement, and the baby had truly improved, although she still looked pitiful. She put on a gauze diaper in such a way as to have several thickness over the middle and only one thick layer between its legs. (Vietnamese mothers of the area frequently use tummy bands, even on healthy children well over two months of age when the child is not wearing this type of diaper.) Later visits found that she had ceased going to the mobile clinic but continued to give a camphor smelling Vietnamese medicine to the baby to drink--much to the baby's distaste.

On one visit she pointed to the hammock in which there was a rotund baby boy she said was eighteen months of age. "This is the first child I raised who was sicker

than this one. See what a healthy baby he is now!" she exclaimed with pride. Her story became confused, however, as to who this child was when one day a sweet-faced woman with an expensive blouse and some jewelry was sitting in the house and started nursing the boy. The woman said she was his mother. Ba Cyclo laughed loudly and said, "See! She is rich and has a good diet and can nurse her baby. I am poor and have never been able to nurse a child." The previous story was that the mother lived in the country. Now Ba Cyclo said she lived in the Neighborhood, but a number of neighbors could not identify the picture of the woman, indicating that the woman did not even come often for visits. A frequent visitor asked Ba Cyclo who the lady was, and she identified her as the mother of the boy.

But despite the origin of the second child, it has been living with Ba Cyclo for at least a month. If she received 500 piasters for the care of the second child as well as the food as she claims to receive for the first (and this is not an unreasonable amount and could perhaps be low) she earns about 1000 piasters monthly profit. This is equivalent to the income of many street vendors with much larger families. Ba Cyclo seems to enjoy children and is constantly playing with her two and having her daughter carry the boy when she must feed the baby or care for it. She strokes the baby's tiny curved legs and arms and talks to her or swings her in the hammock much of the day. The fact that people exclaim over the fact that she has kept the baby alive when "no one thought it possible" is a never ending topic of conversation and source of pride to her.

Ba Cyclo reports her husband has always been a cyclo driver but is now getting older and therefore unable to work long hours. Her discouraged, alcohol-filled husband himself says the cyclo business is getting worse, as he thought it would, and seems to be staying home more and more.

CHAPTER IX

SWEET-FACED WOMAN

Almost any day at the Nursery School one can see the Sweet-Faced Woman. She is sewing on a small suit, helping get out supplies, making flowers for decoration, or just standing back as part of the institution. Her hair shines, neatly pulled back in a bun in the southern Vietnamese style. Her clothes are old and faded, but clean. She has brown eyes and regular features and an expectant smile as if something good is going to happen since she can be here. She is retiring but with a hidden persistance.

We gave her the name of the Sweet-Faced Woman-who-is-always-at-the-nursery-school. She was so much a part of the scene, it was many weeks before it was learned that she is not part of the staff, or even a volunteer worker. "Oh no, she doesn't work here, she just comes over because she likes to come. She has a boy in the nursery school class, but she has two other boys. She lives just off the main street."

Leaving the bright nursery school to go home, she goes halfway down Main Street and turns in a narrow entrance about one and one half feet wide. She lives in a dark house five feet wide and twenty feet deep reached by a fifteen foot narrow passageway between two other houses. The house is really the laundry room for a family who live across the street, but they let her use it for a payment she makes by carrying water for them.

The room is lighted by an opening under the roof and it has no windows. The first part of the room is the laundry room for the owners, and has a number of basins and pans for laundering, piles of old wood, jars, and such, with a few kitchen things for the Sweet-Faced family in one part. The far half of the room has a floor raised a foot or so, as it is built out over the river. In the semi-darkness--such a contrast with the bright nursery school--a wooden bed, a wardrobe, and several stacked up suitcases can be made out. The floor is only a few feet above the river. During the rainy season the water is sometimes four inches deep on the floor and they put

several planks on bricks to walk from the door to their beds and work space.

This is the room where they live. When she returns from the nursery school the three boys are playing here alone. The older boy, ten, is not bright, she says, so he stays home and takes care of the brothers, six and four. The brother, six, attends the nursery school in the mornings and the public school in the afternoon. The older brother and the little boy do not attend school because she would have to pay for it.

Today they are playing with what is left of a Christmas star, peeling the paper off the wooden frame. One boy got something out of one of the suitcases, and later got a drink of water out of a bottle (she boils their water, as the welfare worker advises). Later they come out with their mother to have their picture taken beside the entrance to their house.

She carries water (five trips a day) to pay people for the house, then makes about ten trips getting one or two piasters a trip so that she has in all ten piasters for food. Miss Oanh, the welfare worker, gives her red rice some of the time, and has given her a blouse. She spends 15 piasters on food a day, 2 piasters on wood, and if she buys rice, it costs her 9 piasters more a day which makes 25 VN$ for the day's expenses. It is not clear where all this money comes from.

When she brings home a large flat basket of corn meal, given her at the nursery school as part of the U.S. food allotment, she has to tip the basket to get it through her narrow entrance.

Her husband deserted her and the three children three years ago. She is one of a number of such families in which the mother is the only parent for the children and continues in a difficult situation, keeping up her contact with the neighborhood people, by work or selling. In her case, her contact is the nursery school.

On a weekend day when the nursery school is closed, she is out walking with her middle boy; her hair is bedraggled, and she is carelessly dressed, contrasting with her neat appearance at the school.

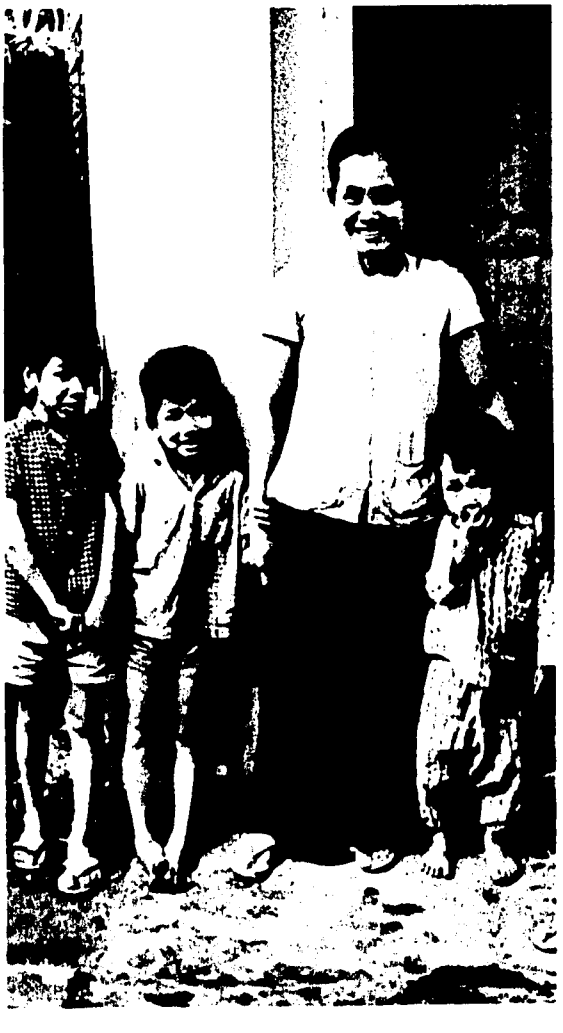
She occasionally wears white square patched of tape on her temples for headache (usually these patches are black and round); there is one occasion when she is obviously ill, or at least energy-less.

Another time, in front of her house, she is crying as she uses great effort and nearly falls lifting her son's notebook from the mud at the edge of the sidewalk. The six year old son has just finished crying and walks into the house. Someone says a young lady on a bike knocked down her son and made his notebook muddy. She continues sniffing and with a few tears, nods slightly at her friends in the crowd, and shuffles back into her house. The surrounding twenty people are staring in wonder, no one moves to help her or comfort her, but they do not giggle.

The next day she is at the nursery school in a clean blouse, using the sewing maching to put together a pajama suit for a small boy. Here she is competent, solving problems that can be solved, surrounded by beauty and sunshine.

Above: Water family, home entrance

Below: Cycle driver; cyclo wife with daughter and foster children; Sweet-faced Woman (narrow entrance to home at l.)



CHAPTER X

CRÈCHE FAMILY

Up high on the walls in the home of this family are two Catholic altars, and there are a half dozen religious pictures higher up, just below the ceiling, but below, in the room, there is time and space for little but work. There is a driving force to survive and to be prepared for adversity that is already here. It is early December and the family has been making crèches for two months to be sold the week before Christmas.

The father does not even stop working while his picture is being taken. He keeps right on chopping wooden blocks to be used as bases for artificial Christmas trees. He cuts the corners off to give them a better shape. Just outside the door is a pile of these same blocks painted red, ready for the wire Christmas tree branches to be added.

The father is not the only one of the family working hard. The mother and six children, not all of them members of the family, are working. The boy about nine is busy winding wire with green plastic to make the simulated pine branches that will go in the wooden blocks, while others are shaping wires into conical Christmas trees which will be placed at each side of the front opening of the crèche. Someone is cutting the green plastic, so the fringe will look like pine needles when wound around the wire.

These crèches literally fill their small wooden house; they are piled on the tables, hang from the rafters, and fill the bedroom from floor to ceiling. These bulky forms made to look like grottos have been completed. Crushed manila paper is molded on a form, covered with spray paint which gives it a strong rigid form as well as a silvery color to the "rocks."

Now the family is working on the decorations to dress up the crèche. Each crèche has several artificial Christmas trees, and sprigs of pine made with plastic

green wound around brown covered wire. Weeds sprayed with green and gold paint are used liberally. A large crèche has been completed to be given to the Church, and this has green vines draped among the weeds and plastic branches. These vines come from the garden of potted plants outside the house, across the walk, next to an additional workshop where the spray painting is done. Even their gardening is part of their work effort. Plaster figures representing the holy family and four animals, complete the church crèche. These crudely painted figures are bought in sets of four animals and five people already completed.

They tell us the father has shopped for the materials in Cholon, Saigon, and in the country. While most of the crèche and decorations are made "from scratch" from raw materials such as rough wood, wire, sheets of plastic, brown paper, they take advantage of any technology they can afford, such as fly sprayers for painting to get a speckled effect, rocks for the grotto look, and weeds.

The work force is the whole family. The father has a "cough" and must go for shots for T.B. to a clinic twice a week. He is thin but strong and quick in his movements. He looks at whomever he is speaking to directly, then turns back to his work. He is dressed in an old tee shirt and short pants.

The mother's teeth are blackened and her hair, bound in a white band, is wound around her head in the style of the north Vietnamese. Her blouse is of dark cheap cotton, with the usual black silk pants. She has a gracious manner and unhurried speech. She does not chew betel. She sits on the wooden bed, twisting paper on wire, talking in a low gentle and uncomplaining voice about their family and their problems.

Life has been hard since they left the North and came to Vinh Long province. Later they came to Saigon because there are more opportunities to sell in Saigon, but this is not always so. For selling Tet flowers in January, they close their house here and go back to Vinh Long.

The father used to dye cloth, a job that paid more, but such work was too hard for him when he developed T.B. Clothes dyers usually walk along the street carrying two heavy cans filled with water and dye on a pole, calling their trade by thumping a drum. They do the dyeing in front of the customer's house.

The father and mother have no parents living. Their marriage was arranged by their parents, and they look forward to doing the same for their children. They have three children and had a baby who died last year. This accounts for the white band in her hair, as white is a color of mourning for the Vietnamese.

School is important, as well as work, in this family. They spend 200 piasters a month for school tuition. There are notebooks on the table under the biggest crèche which is to be for the church. The daughter, twelve years old, is a Foster child which the family considers a distinction. They are pleased to have a picture of the daughter to send to the foster parents in America. She slips her ao dai of white cotton on over her ordinary blouse and stands in front of the large crèche to have her picture taken. Her little brother stands beside her as she lets him share in the pleasure of the picture.

A week before Christmas, they are selling their crèches among two or three other sellers, along the sidewalk outside the Tan Dinh Catholic church opposite the market on Hai Ba Trung Street. By December 22, there are many stands with crèches of different sizes, a box of animals and figures for the crèches and Christmas stars for sale. The wife and Foster daughter and elderly relative sometimes in the Crèche homes are selling. Their stand has poles with plastic over the top. On the frame are stars, and on the sidewalk and on the framework stand about thirty crèches of different sizes, a box of animals and figures for the crèches. The wife says the father and son bring these things over on their bicycles in the morning and take them home at night.

She says the market is higher for crèches than last year. She sells about 500 VN$ a day but she cannot tell what the profit is on each, as, if there are some left over, there will be a loss. She will only find out how they did after all the selling is finished.

There are twelve other sellers of crèches along the walk, each booth with slightly different designs, color, and decorations. There does not seem to be any pressure to buy from a stand as the seller sits or stands quietly until someone stops at his booth. Usually there is more than one person at each booth, but there seems to be little talking between people working in the different booths.

The day after Christmas, they are home already busy working on "Tet" flowers, to be sold for the holiday of

the Vietnamese-Chinese lunar calendar New Year, which falls in the first week in February this year. From their sale of the 80 to 100 crèches which took their time from September to December 25, they have 500 or 600 VN$ left, after they paid suppliers of materials and took out what they spend for "food and everything." This is their "profit" which is used to buy their supplies for Tet flowers: the white paper that they cut with the special machine they rent, the wire, and plastic to wind around it for stems. They paint the cut paper with water colors, shape it into petals, and put the petals together with wire stamens and stems. They also make plastic flowers, with sheets of plastic that are already colored.

Now that the house is no longer filled with crèches, it can be seen to be about fifteen feet square, built of wood, with a thatch roof. A third of the house is partitioned off at one end as a bedroom, with a wood partition going up part way, and a curtain across the doorway. There are poles across one side of the main living room which hold up large pieces of plywood, making a sort of attic for overhead storage. This is where they were able to store many crèches before Christmas.

In the living room, clothes hang on four or five hangers on a wire across one corner, and clothes hang on several nails in the wall. A mosquito net hangs on one wall. Other mosquito nets and pillows (round small bolsters in floral design) are piled up casually on the two wooden beds along the outside wall. The cement floor extends only to the edge of the beds; underneath the beds is rough dirt floor, with an accumulation of broken sandals, pieces of wood, and other debris. These do not show as the beds come within four or five inches above the floor. There is a calendar on the wall, with the pages torn off to the right date.

But the room is dominated by the two high altars. One altar, on the inside partition wall, has a crucifix, some pictures of saints, the pope, a rosary, and two new bouquets of flowers covered with a plastic cover. On a lower shelf below the altar, is a clock and some papers. Up high on the opposite side, on the shelf overhead, is a new altar of gnarled silvered wood, with a statue of Mary with a rosary. This they got recently for 50 VN$; they did not make it themselves. There are also four or five large religious pictures--inexpensive color prints of the Sacred Heart and such--mounted on brown paper hung up close to the ceiling.

The house is located on the river bank, at the end of an extension of Church Street. After turning several corners, the visitor must turn off the last street and walk for 200 feet on a board walk above water from the river (or mud at low tide).

The house has a small yard, with a fence and small gate, all of which is unusual in this section where most houses are built up against each other, and many houses are divided to shelter two families. A cement walk about ten feet long leads to the door of the house which is on the side, and opposite is the shed, open to the walk, which is used as a work shop and kitchen. It is piled with debris from previous projects, and the floor is now covered with colored scraps from Christmas trees. At one end is the charcoal cooking stove and a few pans and dishes in no particular order.

The house is built on the edge of the river, on a bank of mud, now hardened, shored up by some previous owner. On the river side of the house, opening out of the far end of the living room, there is a narrow porch, with the river sweeping by underneath. Here there is a crate with a dozen yellow ducks, busy growing for someone's future meals. Alongside the porch railing, there is a small cross, between two blue traditional Vietnamese vases holding green vines that are draped above the cross. This is a touch of beauty where the porch is so insecure that the floor boards are hardly strong enough to hold a person. The water sometimes rises high; it is only a foot below the porch today. It has been, on occasion, several inches deep on their floors, and then they have to rescue their materials from damage.

By the middle of January, they cannot get the materials they want to make plastic flowers, so they go to the town of Vinh Long two weeks before Tet where they rent a house for 250 VN$ for half a month. They sell their flowers during the day in the market and work until midnight making more. The price this year is not as good as last year. This year they get 2 VN$ for two branches of flowers, and last year they got 2 1/2 VN$ for the same thing. After money for food and living and "everything" is taken out, they have 1000 VN$ left, which is what they count as profit.

They return back to their home in Saigon the evening before Tet. On the holiday morning, the couple receives their relatives and neighbors, the father dressed in his traditional black silk long coat, the mother in her ao dai,

with her hair dressed in a black velvet headband, no mourning white band now.

Before Tet week is over, the father is downtown to see if he can get some work to do, perhaps making accordion type paper lanterns, which pack flat, such as they made on consignment last year. Then someone ordered 60,000 of them, supplied all the materials, and took them away after they had put the lanterns together. They did not make much money in this work, they said.

Now the mother is catching up on washing and other tasks, but the children are enjoying the holiday with no work or school. They lounge on the bed while listening to their mother talk with visitors. A little three year old girl comes in the gate. The nine year old boy greets her, then just beyond his mother's sight around the corner of the house, he slaps her cheeks just hard enough to annoy her, but not so hard that she cried out. This goes on for five or ten minutes until someone walks out there and he loses interest.

Now that there is no work project in the house, there is more room in the living room, and there is a large altar with a cricifix and candles set up on tables. It is surrounded by many potted plants on two tables and on the floor. There is a carafe of wine and cups on a table in front of the altar. The artificial flowers have gone from the high up altars, probably sold.

Outside on the porch, the crate is empty, the ducks are gone. She sold them for 30 VN$ each. They had been bought as tiny ducklings for 3 VN$ each and fed on rice. The money went for supplies and expenses. The blue vases and cross are still there, with the green vines draped across the cross.

CHAPTER XI

THE WEAVERS

A dozen hanks of black and white yarn, washed and dyed, hang on wires strung to a long one storied house built on the river bank. These skeins of yarn drying indicate that this is a home of weavers, and the click of the loom can often be heard outside the house, but there are few passers-by, for this house is near the end of the path. From the street a rickety boardwalk leads about twenty feet over a back water pond from the river to this house, and on to two houses just beyond. When the river is low, the black mud, with various residue, lies six feet or so below the boardwalk. This house and its neighbors, lie at the very end of the lane starting from a turn off near the pagoda, past the Catholic church, and around the corner on the street of the machine shop and a row of houses with different roofs up to the fence across the street which marks the end of Khom 14 and the beginning of Khom 15. It is here the boardwalk leads off at right angles with the street, across the water or mud, to the river bank and the weavers.

The house seems dark at first when the flimsy cotton curtain at the door in the middle of the long side of the house is pulled aside, but there is light enough from two small windows and a side door to reveal three looms inside. There is a large loom at the left as one enters and two smaller looms against the opposite wall, at the same end of the house. At the other end of this large room, about twenty feet by fifteen feet, are two wooden beds, against each wall, two chests and several trunks, mosquito nets and clothes hung on hooks on the wall, and a small shelf with several bottles of medicine. The floors are of rough cement that reach to the edge of the beds and up to the looms; and rough dirt under the beds and behind the looms, with various accumulated debris.

The only other noticeable furnishing in this work room is the large Catholic altar up high, with a figure of Christ and two pictures of women saints. A silk

embroidered apron around the wooden altar shelf is a touch of beauty in the room, the fluorescent light at the altar adds a touch of modern technology.

On one of the wooden beds are several piles of woven cloth, some wide lengths of white muslin from previous running of the big loom, and eight or ten bolts of the black and white towelling, ready to be sold. There are also large bundles of yarn to be dyed and wound on the bobbins.

The business of living, especially cooking, is carried on in a small shed with no roof, which is built across the path, a few steps from the front door, on the bank of the inlet. Pans of food are carried in and out, a duck is plucked by the door to this kitchen, but the walls are built so the inside is screened from view.

This is the home and workshop for a family of six, the father and mother, a son and three daughters; the youngest of them is seventeen years old. These young people, all unmarried, are attractive and competent. They can run the looms, take care of the operations involved in weaving such as winding bobbins, and they also know costs and profits. The oldest daughter is dressed in a plain cotton blouse, with her hair drawn back in a casual bun at the back of her neck. She talks about how much she can weave and the prices they get, while her next younger sister is shy about talking. Their youngest sister, who is seventeen, is away on vacation for two months and will be back at Christmas time. The brother who works with his father on winding yarn from hanks to bobbins, using homemade wooden wheels, is also manager for selling. He sits quietly reading a newspaper while his sisters talk about the weaving business. Later he says he understands English but does not want to speak it, as he cannot do it very well.

The parents in this famiy are reserved and seem to prefer to stay in the background. The father leaves the managing of the actual work to the young people, particularly the son, and sits back with his water pipe on Sunday afternoon, or works along on winding thread on a week day. The mother is out of sight, or visiting with friends over tea.

The family came here from North Viet Nam twelve years ago. They bought this house and have lived here ever since. They have relatives, whom they plan to visit at Tet time, who live in the country nearby, have looms in

their homes--big looms--and make much more money than this family makes, they say.

The large electric loom is used for weaving plain unbleached muslin and it is used only when the price of cloth is high as it is more expensive to operate than the smaller looms. Now they are not using it as the price of cloth is lower in the market where they sell.

On the two smaller looms, the girls weave towelling in a traditional Vietnamese design of large black and white checks, with a different cross bar design (sometimes with an additional red stripe) a few inches from the end of each towel. A double white thread shows the cutting line between towels.

The towelling is sold in ten piece lengths, or "bolts" (one piece is one towel, one meter, three centimeters long and sixty centimeters wide). The oldest girl says she can weave ten pieces a day, or as many as fifteen upon occasion. She can make sixty bolts in one and one half months with one threading of the loom.

The bolts are sold in the market for 140 VN$ a towel. They make 50 VN$ profit on each bolt. She says these towels are sold for 15 VN$ in the market, giving the market sellers a profit of 1 VN$ a towel but towels have been noted in nearby markets marked 20 VN$.

The man who sells them the yarn threads the loom at the cost of 300 VN$ a time, and 125 VN$ a kilo for yarn. It takes twenty days to prepare the yarn for threading.

The smaller looms were purchased for 3000 VN$ each; they are well used and the wood has the soft finish of old wood. The electric loom cost 9000 VN$.

With this family, as with many people in this area, lack of money inhibits their working. To the question, what would they do if they had a sum like 5000 VN$ given them (or won in a lottery), they answer they would get materials in advance so they could keep working. Many times they are idle because they cannot afford to buy supplies. When asked what they would do with 1000 VN$, their answer is that it would not be enough to make much difference.

During the fall months, the family keeps the two hand looms busy. After Christmas, they turn to making Tet flowers to be sold the last week of January. A visit

on January 18 finds them using the house next door to the Crèche family who have gone back to their province to sell their flowers. The weaving family have lots of finished flowers hanging from the roof, ready to sell. The second sister is washing her hair on the porch by the river, and the father is winding white thread on a spool by turning the wheel by hand. The youngest daughter, now home from vacation, graduated from elementary school but does not go to school now.

Back in their own house, a group is busy making carnations out of paper. The mother is sitting on the floor with two neighbor children (about seven and nine years old) who are helping for experience and not for pay. The oldest daughter turns the edges of a one-fourth inch thick pack of round flower petals of tissue paper that has already been cut and dyed. These pieces are taken separately by the girls who wet their fingers in paste and pick up one round paper petal at a time, push it on a wire stem and deftly turn it so it is fluffed out. They put on eight pieces this way to make the carnation. The second daughter wraps the stems of these finished flowers with strips of green paper, adding a few leaves; the brother assembles them into a finished spray by taking a prepared long wire stem with a bud at the top, adding three flowers' stems midway, and two lower down, and wrapping the stem with the same green tissue paper. They are now ready to be tied in large bunches and packed for sale.

There is a pleasant exchange of conversation among the family members while the work goes on. The youngest daughter says she likes making flowers better than weaving as she is more free to get around and see people. She says it would take her so long to learn to speak English that the Americans would be gone home by that time and there would be no one to talk to, which caused much laughter.

They have made some plastic flowers, but these come in prepared pieces which they assemble with much less work. The plastic flowers cost 4.80 VN$ for supplies, the sale price is 5 VN$, profit .20 VN$. Paper flowers cost 4.50 for supplies, sell for 5 VN$ giving a profit of .50 VN$. The profit is small for the amount of handwork. They shop for their supplies in Cholon and indicate that they believe careful shopping for supplies is important for profits. The family will retail some of the flowers themselves on the street, beginning their selling on January 24 (Tet is February 2).

Now there are no piles of towels or muslin on the beds; the cloth has all been sold. Many hanks of black and white yarn are hanging up in the house, getting ready for weaving again. A new wooden single bed, well made of light colored wood, is in the corner. Some beautiful new flowers are in a vase on the altar.

By January 22 the brother is packing up the flowers in large basket hampers for sale wholesale at a distance. On January 31, two girls and the brother are sitting in the house, their flowers are all sold; many customers this year, but fewer flowers. Two-thirds were sold at retail; they did not pay for a place to sell, but sold "away off."

February 5, three days after Tet, while many people are still celebrating or away visiting, the older sisters are back at their looms, weaving black and white towels. There are bottles and cups sitting on one of the ledges of the electric loom, and the mother and another lady get up from the wooden bed and bow to visitors. The new flowers are gone from the altar. There are no flowers there now.

Left: Towel weaving.

Right above: Winding yarn on bobbins; note wheels and bundle of yarn in background.

Right below: "Weaver" now making Christmas stars.

CHAPTER XII

BA HEMSTITCHER

She sits beside the front door, partly for the light on her sewing, and partly to be close to what is going on in the street. Members of the family come and go; the baby is fretful and is lifted by the Ba from the swinging hammock over the wooden bed, held for awhile as Ba Hemstitcher takes a rest from the close work. Later the baby is sitting on the doorstep watching her brother and sister playing in the street, and Ba Hemstitcher is back at her hemstitching.

There is a steady stream of pillowcases, table mats, towels, centerpieces that come into the plastic bag in her box that serves as a sewing box, and go out as finished work for 20 piasters a meter. The articles and the materials are different, but the hemstitching is all the same: each group of cross threads is evenly wrapped with thread all the way across, giving a ladder effect.

Her hair is nearly white, pulled back smoothly, and always neat. Her features are regular, and her skin has fewer wrinkles than her difficult life might be expected to give her. Her teeth are stained by the betel that she chews constantly. She manages it gracefully in her mouth with the lower teeth missing. She greets her visitors with friendliness and no apology for the litter of a busy household, and her own weariness.

The family who live in this house, about nine by twenty-four feet, consists of her sons, twelve and fourteen, her older son and daughter-in-law Van and their three children, a boy, six, and girls, four and one and one-half.

She likes to tell any guest who is interested about her oldest son in France. Just the other day she got a letter from him, and here is a photograph of his family on a holiday at a beach, a tall well-dressed man with his dark complexioned Vietnamese wife and three children.

She is also proud of her younger daughter, looking beautiful in her photographs last June when she was married. The wedding was arranged in the house, and then they all went to Tan Dinh Catholic Church to exchange rings. She did not invite the priest to the house because it would mean more money. The wedding did not mean a big expense for them because the boy's family gave them most of the necessary money. Now the young couple live in another part of Saigon. This marriage was arranged by the young couple's parents.

There is another older daughter who comes home with her three children, two, four, and six, at Tet time to visit her mother for a week. This daughter's husband is a tailor, in a town at a distance from Saigon, and she helps him in the shop. The children are well dressed, but she is poorly dressed.

Ba Hemstitcher does not talk about herself, but this daughter tells that Ba Hem used to live in another town in South Viet Nam when she was married to her first husband. He worked in a restaurant, and his picture shows him well set up and competent. He got consumption and died about 1947. She was so sad afterwards she came to Saigon.

These youngest sons are sons of a different father who "is poor and does not live here." He does something about making out papers for those who die. Another of Ba Hem's sons (Van's husband) who is in the army, helps with the expenses for his two younger brothers.

Ba Hem is glad to do hemstitching for private customers, as she earns more money than through the store. She can make 32 VN$ a day working form 7 A.M. to noon, taking an hour off, and then sometimes working until late at night. She works regularly for a downtown store and does not get as much as she charges a private customer. Whenever she does this work, she must still finish the store's work. She uses a certain number and brand of embroidery thread (DC 30) which she knows how to get, and purchases for us at 40 VN$ a ball. She is pleased when a customer leaves the thread with her after a job is finished, either because it is a trust, or maybe a security that the customer is pleased and will come back.

Are there other women who do this type of embroidery, or has anyone asked to be taught? She says no one is learning it because it would take too much time to learn. (It is actually a very simple type of stitch which could

be easily learned and perfected in a day or two by someone accustomed to using a needle.)

The house of Ba Hem is in the second section of the main street of Khom 14, near the pagoda. There are some scattered street sellers sitting on the street selling sweets, soup, and cakes, but the most of the selling is done on the first section of the street, before the bend, where a restaurant is situated. There are some small stores in this second section.

The first room of the house, as one enters from the street, is like a porch; it is small, about five feet square, with windows on each side. There is a folding canvas chair as well as a table with the sewing box with materials and a chair where Ba Hemstitcher usually sits. Guests sit in the canvas chair, or on the corner of the wooden bed in the second room. There is a curtain that can be pulled out between the porch and the second room, but it is kept back during the day so that one can see through to the back of the house. The floor is tile.

Inside, the house is only one side of a double house. A wood partition goes up about ten feet, and leaves about three or four feet more open to the roof; another family lives on the other side of the partition. Opposite this partition in her house is the outside wall of wood and hooks and shelves in between the several windows. This narrow space is divided into three rooms, one behind the other.

The first room inside the house has a wooden bed lengthwise alongside the inside wall. This bed is often used by the family for sitting or resting, or sleeping. Ba Hem may be sitting there to sew, or to take a nap when she is tired in the afternoon. Her daughter-in-law sits down to rest after carrying water pails, the big boys come in from school and play with the little girl there.

The woven hammock for the baby hangs diagonally over the bed. It is attached at the front inside partition wall corner, and high up diagonally across on the outside wall. Some covers are used to line the hammock to keep the baby warm. There is room between the bed and the outside wall for a passageway, but not for any more furniture. The division between this room and the next room behind is made by a wardrobe with a cracked mirror, and a small bureau beside it. The second bedroom holds a bed, and behind this room is the kitchen. The floors in the house are cement, cracked and broken in some places.

The Catholic altar on the top of the wardrobe has a figure of Christ, and a picture of the Virgin with flowers in front. There is a Christmas star from the past season still hanging up, just about the only touch of beauty. Several family photographs are framed and hanging on the wall; one is a group of photographs arranged in one frame, another a family group, ten or more years ago.

There is a bicycle leaning against the wall opposite the bed in the second bedroom. This is about the only object in sight which represents Western technology. There are no books out anywhere, and the briefcases the boys bring home from school and drop on the front bed or grandmother's table are the only evidence of school children in the house.

Ba Hem and her baby granddaughter are the only ones of the family that are home in the little house most of the time. The son, fourteen, is in Pasteur Public High School. When his school closed for awhile in January he spent some of his time learning to make Tet flowers at a neighbor's house. He earned 5 or 10 VN$ a day working on the flowers. The other son, twelve, goes to a public grade school. The daughter who recently was married also went to school in Saigon. When these boys are home after school they often play with the little children out in front of the porch so they seem all one family rather than sons and grandchildren.

Ba Hem and her daughter-in-law, Van, seem to live together without friction, each absorbed in her own efforts to make money to support the household of children. Ba Hem arranged the marriage of her son eight years ago. Van and her friend, San, who carry water together, pause to visit by the front porch. Both girls say their marriages were arranged by their parents. They agree with Ba Hem that most marriages they know of are arranged by the parents. Before her marriage, San lived in a province far from Saigon and worked with rice and made more money, but since her husband lives here, she must work here now.

Van's husband, Ba Hem's son, is a non-commissioned officer in the army of Viet Nam. His family tell of his training in Dalat where he "learned to fly through the life road," meaning he mastered an obstacle course, "straight from this side to another of the river. They learn to be patient and careful to get through; not to lose patience and hope or they may fall in the river, very dangerous. They must go through the river, with

some friends to find the enemy. This training makes them brave."

His unit has been in some of the battles which are in the headlines, but life goes on with the daily work keeping the adults busy. He usually gets home once every two weeks. When he does not get home, they do not get money from him.

The boy, six, attends the Nursery School and is in the front row with his broad grin showing his missing teeth. He is eager for all knowledge and is often on the front row of the crowds of children in the neighborhood which gather when anything unusual is happening.

The little girl, four, Phuong, seems the healthiest of the children. She dances about with pleasure, loves the baby sister, snuggles up to her grandmother, or is off playing in the street.

The baby sleeps in her hammock, or is picked up and held by her mother or grandmother, when they leave their work. There are frequent sick spells when she is fretful, her eyes look bigger than ever, and the sores at the corners of her mouth are bigger. New or old medicine is tried, according to how much money is available, and after while she is better and one of her boy uncles, or her older brother carries her on his hip so that she joins the crowd of children out in the street waiting for something interesting to happen.

This household is limited in space and money, but this does not mean that the interests or activities of the family are restricted. One day there is a mother hen and a baby chick and soon the six or eight eggs that had been put to set hatch, and there are five or six chickens, which are shown off and played with until only the four strongest survive. They are kept under a basket.

When a hairdresser set up shop for a day down the street, and offered permanents for 30 piasters, the little four year old girl had her soft brown hair put up in curlers and now her hair is kinky all over her head.

The daughter-in-law could be recognized as much by her clean blouse and neatly waved hair as by the missing front tooth in her pleasant smile. But recently this gap was filled in by a new tooth. This happened just the week after the baby had been sick and complaining, and had been taken to get Chinese medicine because there was no money for Western medicine.

She wants us to take a picture. When the day comes her children are all dressed and ready and her friend, San, is also prepared with her children. They pull the curtain which goes around the first bed as a back drop and have a chair ready for the children to stand on.

Sickness is a large problem for these families--where to get help, whether to have Chinese or Western medicine, and how to pay for the medicine. The baby is often fussy, and has sore areas at the corners of her mouth that may indicate a vitamin deficiency. The week before Christmas the baby is better, but Ba Hem must get Chinese medicine at 50 to 60 VN$ and must work hard for that amount--it means many hours of hemstitching. But the medicine works very well she says. She buys it at a store further away than the one in this area, as the nearby store is very expensive.

In January, Van takes the baby to the dentist. She went to the Tan Dinh clinic, about four blocks away, and they both had their teeth fixed at no charge.

Another time Ba Hem displays couple of small bottles of medicine she says had been given to her by a man who came by. She indicates by scratching her arm that the liquid in "Anacin" bottles is for itchy skin, and a round bottle is for worms. We ask about worms and she points to her tummy.

Ba Hem says they are poor. She tells that once she was <u>very</u> poor, "and my grandchild was sick. We are lacking of everything and I have not enough money for their stomachs, so I don't have medicine. I asked Miss Oanh for help, speaking very friendly, but she shouted 'You are rich and I have no medicine.'"

"Some people less poor get help. One couple where they both work asked for money, and since the man got mean and threatened Miss Oanh, she gave them money, rice, and other things. Miss Oanh is not liked because of her 'manner' which is not friendly."

Van is away parts of each day while she carries water. She uses a wooden yoke across her shoulder to balance the square tin pails holding about five gallons. This is a heavy load, and the carrier needs skill to manuever her load through the busy street, and balance it so that not much is spilled by the time she arrives.

Usually, Van gets a rest in between trips as she waits for her turn at the faucet on the street. At busy times

such as the morning, this may mean a long wait; in the summer time, dry season, when pressure is low and water demand is high, she sometimes stands in line until 1 A.M. or later to get water.

There is a certain amount of sociability that goes along with water carrying. She and her friend, San, usually carry together, following one after another down the street. They do twenty trips between 7 A.M. and 11 A.M. Van used to do forty trips but does not feel so well. She and San are young and vigorous looking and dress in clean blouses, so that they stand out in the motley group of water carriers made up of frail or bedraggled older women and little girls. They carry to the same house on each trip, usually. They have carried water for five years.

To be fixed up for Tet, they have new plastic streamers at the door, and a new curtain in front of the first bedroom. Ba Hem is at her doorway in a new white silk blouse. The daughter, who lives at a distance, is visiting with her three children.

The evening before Tet, Van is walking on Main Street with her husband, the non-commissioned officer, though he does not have his uniform on. He is tall, with strong, regular features like his mother. He declined to let their picture be taken. Later his mother said he did not want a picture then because he wanted his wife in her ao dai. She also said that he could not get leave, so he came anyway for the day.

Above: Crèche family

Below: Ba Hemstitcher

San and Van

Van and children

CHAPTER XIII

ONG SOLDIER

Ong Soldier is a pleasant, strong, intelligent looking, young Corporal in the Vietnamese army. Like several people in the area he speaks some English and is delighted to meet and talk with Americans. Ong Soldier has known Americans before, and all his contacts have been pleasant. He keeps a box of pictures of himself with American soldiers with whom he says he has enjoyed working. He also reports a friend of his knew Tom Dooley who, he says, is the greatest man who ever lived. Ong Soldier also has a copy of a USIS magazine that contains an article in Vietnamese on Popular (Public) Hospitals. The magazine shows his wife's sister in a U.S.-donated iron lung. He also has pictures of himself with his high school class and one showing him with a class of grade school boys, as he states he was a teacher until he was drafted two years ago.

Ong Soldier complains that the war is discouraging. He is stationed in a rural area near Saigon that is frequently mentioned in the newspapers because of Viet Cong raids on outposts and villages. He describes the situation as the army troops constantly going out to look for the raiders and being shot at by people no one ever sees. He feels it is getting worse each month.

Although he is stationed near Saigon and gets home frequently, he says he is trying to get transferred to Saigon "to be with the family more and to be more help to them."

Ong Soldier's family report they moved to their house as refugees from the North ten years ago. They say the people in this neighborhood get along well, are friendly and cooperate with each other whether they are from the North or South. As an example Ong Soldier cites an incident that happened during the recent city-wide religious riots between Buddhists and Catholics in which he helped organize the Catholic youth to protect the newly built neighborhood church. "They all got sticks and clubs and spent the night in the church to defend it. All the young men went," he said proudly, "whether they were Northern or Southern." No attack was made and the

group dispersed the following day. Upon being asked if he had feared Buddhists of the neighborhood he answered quickly that it was not they but "those from outside:" he had felt might threaten their church.

Much of Ong Soldier's conversation and household revolves around the Catholic Church. He asked if most Americans were Catholic and upon being told they were Protestant said that he believed the two groups would join together for the "common fight" as they were so much alike. He says his father is a leader in the community, helped organize the movement to get the new church, and leads many activities there. One day as his mother sat on the bed mending a hammock suspended between her toes and her arms, she kept whispering to her son that if it were possible he should ask for a picture to be taken of the family altar. She refused pictures of herself, Ong Soldier, and the grandchildren until one was taken of the altar alone "in case there was not enough film." Ong Soldier's only son's name is a Vietnamese word meaning "to give all." Ong Soldier explains that he has been given to God and will grow up to be a priest.

The house where he lives with his mother, father, wife and two children is set a short way off Main Street. It is surrounded by a low picket fence with a gate covered by an archway adorned with a cross. The small yard gives the house a feeling of a little privacy which seldom is found along Main Street. The house is well constructed of wood with a tile roof and ceramic tile floor. In the living room there is a bed, a table and chairs, a bookcase containing a dozen or so books in Vietnamese plus several English language text books, and a large mirror fronted wardrobe-storage cabinet. The kitchen is through a curtained doorway at the back. There is a sleeping loft above which extends over half of the living room to form an open balcony. Ong Soldier has a transistor radio with an attached speaker on which he often plays western music. The altar, of which the family seem so proud, is quite elaborate, and hangs on the edge of the sleeping loft in the center of the room. It contains a large statue of Christ with open arms (usually kept covered with plastic), a large picture of Christ as a young boy with Mary spinning and Joseph cutting wood and a small picture of Mary and one of Joseph holding baby Jesus. This can be lighted and is adorned by well tended growing plants. (Pictured in Chapter on Religion.)

Ong Soldier's father is seldom home during the day. Ong Soldier explains that he goes downtown to "visit" and

spends many hours and all day Sunday in church praying. Ong Soldier's mother, a plumpish pleasant older lady with black enameled teeth (common with Northern ladies of traditional background) is usually seen playing with her grandchildren or doing small chores around the house. Ong Soldier's wife is very shy and refuses to come in to meet strangers. He has pictures of his wedding in which she appears very attractive. The next pictures show her with a baby followed by pictures with the second baby. She appeared to have aged a great deal between pictures. Having also lost some front teeth, she looks quite different from the bride of five years before. She is presently expecting another baby. Ong Soldier proudly introduces his two children, a boy four and a girl two. He shows a great affection for them both and frequently pats and holds them.

Ong Soldier is not only gentle appearing but has a relaxed friendly manner. He frequently walks around the neighborhood carrying one or the other of his children and visiting young men friends. He visits most often several neighboring families who were also Northern refugees and who have established home industries such as making paper or plastic lanterns at moon festival time, stars at Christmas, flowers at Tet, and so on. It is not at all uncommon to see him squatting with the family helping them construct their products as he talks. At his home the most frequent visitors appear to be friends of his father who are described as "other church elders."

It seems very important to Ong Soldier that others believe he is completely supporting his family. There is a sign attached to the picket fence that says clothes are dyed here. A friend said that his father does the actual dying and Ong Soldier's wife is frequently seen washing large quantities of clothing in the yard. He, however, claims to be the sole support of the family. He says his wife and mother do not work as "he has" his mother and his wife stay home during the day to take care of "his" children. He also says his father does not work but is living the life of "a retired man as he should at his age."

Ong Soldier has a more informed and verbal idea about the government of the area than many neighbors. He says each khom or "hamlet" in the city has a leader who is chosen yearly, he believes, by consensus of "everybody." When asked who is "everybody" he stops to think and says, "well the men and leaders and everybody." He says since it is not a paying job the khom leader must

work and does not have much time to devote to business of the area. Ong Soldier is unsure of details but believes the khom leader has meetings of "other leaders" and perhaps listens to disputes between neighbors, but he is sure that when one wants to call the police one must clear it with the khom leader first even though it means a long wait until the leader comes home from work.

Very suddenly, one day, Ong Soldier announced that he and his family were moving to another district of Saigon. He said about the move only that it was a nicer home and all the family was pleased, but he promised that he would come back often to visit. Since the family have not only friends of long standing but some relatives living in the area one can imagine they will miss and be missed in the neighborhood.

Ong Soldier

Mother with grand children

Visiting with friends

CHAPTER XIV

BA TU SAT

Ba Tu Sat is a lively, gay, toothless sixty-five year old lady who gives the impression of thoroughly enjoying what she considers to be a leisurely old age. She laughs heartily at a good joke and enjoys the dramatic enough that she sometimes dramatizes the same story, piece of history, or fact about her life in startlingly different ways at different times or moods. It also appears that she sometimes uses this method to conceal facts she wishes to keep to herself or which she feels might sound strange to a foreign ear.

She is frequently surrounded by aging women, who like herself, are financially secure to have free days to spend playing Tu Sat, a complicated Chinese card game also sometimes called Four Colors. Except for the fact the ladies prefer to sit on a mat on the floor instead of at her table and chairs, have betel supplies instead of cigarettes, and wear Vietnamese clothes, one might imagine they had stumbled on a particularly lively group of older American women spending the day gossiping and laughing over bridge. They always play for piasters and sometimes there is a sizeable pile on the mat--usually in front of Ba Tu Sat. She gets an almost wicked-looking sparkle in her eyes and jingles the coins in her blouse pockets at the very mention of playing cards and the hope of beating someone new.

When Ba Tu Sat has not just come from the barber, one can see her hair is receding and white. But she usually has it completely shaved and during the day she throws a towel or scarf loosely around her head in the style of Southern Vietnamese women. When asked why she shaved her head she laughed and answered, "It's easier this way, and with no teeth who needs hair?" Then, rubbing her hand over her bare head she added in a careful and studied way, "and besides, it is a way of praying. It is a way of asking Buddha for health and prosperity for my children." Later the same morning she remarked, "About my hair, I've kept it this way for twenty-five years. When I was forty I was very sick and I promised Buddha that if I got well, I would keep my head shaved the rest of my life."

Ba Tu Sat says she came from a rural area near the neighboring town of Bien Hoa about twenty-five kilometers north of Saigon. Ten years ago, the war had made that area very insecure and since her husband was dead, she and her school-aged son fled to Saigon. The first time she described her past it was in her usual lively dramatic way, "I lost everything when I fled. When I arrived in Saigon with my son, I knew no one and had only five piasters in my pocket. I earned enough for food by vending fruit along the streets. Sometimes, also, I carried hod at construction sites where I earned more as there were no transportation or spoilage costs as there is with fruit." But at another less dramatic moment when discussing her house she said, "When I came to Saigon I found and bought this house, having only enough money left over to start a vending business."

A philosophy Ba Tu Sat enthusiastically endorses is that one should save part of one's income no matter how small the amount. In an earnest, serious voice she says, "If I earned only 20 VN$ I would save 10 VN$, hiding it somewhere in a box. I always save half of anything my son gives me and I never risk my money playing hui." But even if this philosophy were scrupulously followed, it is difficult to see how an elderly woman, without considerable aid from other sources, could have raised a son and put aside savings by carrying hod and vending fruit during a period of less than ten years. She has one of the better houses in the neighborhood and appears in every way to be more financially secure than most of her neighbors.

Ba Tu Sat's house has wooden walls, brick tile floors, a tile roof and a cemented area in front of the house. Her home contains all the prestige items commonly found in this area and more. Her three altars are elaborate. On the top of the buffet is a two and one half foot high brass ancestor urn and huge brass candle sticks without candles. Behind the urn is a large red light reflector from the back of the car. To the left of this altar and along the wall is another altar which can be illuminated and contains a picture of a goddess and two servants, which, Ba Tu Sat explains, is an altar to one's heavenly or spirit mother which each of us has in addition to an earthly mother. To the right of the ancestor altar and on the floor is a small altar to Ong Dia, the god of the hearth, to ask for blessings on the house. All of her altars contain joss sticks, fruit and flowers, which are frequently changed but Buddha appears only once, in the form of a two and one half inch statue sitting on a plastic lotus flower on the main altar.

The bed in the front room is of heavy wooden plank. Her apparently new buffet of gaudily grained veneer has glass doors showing a large number of matching wine, champagne, and water glasses which are reflected by mirrors across the back of the cabinet. (She and her guests drink from inexpensive, heavy, unmatching glass tumblers kept in the kitchen.) She seats guests at the table in straight chairs while she sits on the bed with her feet curled under her as she prepares and chews betel. She has an electric fan which she plugs in and points directly at the guests and a treadle sewing machine which she says her daughter-in-law knows how to use. An electric food blender sits in the living room and was, she explains, a gift from her son. She uses this to liquify her food, for she is toothless. Her walls contain framed paintings and photographs, and in the corner is a brightly colored Buddhist lantern. She once had a transistor radio that her granddaughter frequently turned to Vietnamese music for guests. But one day Ba Tu Sat pulled out the auxiliary battery case and with her wry humor, said "Look, a thief just stole my radio, but he has been so kind as to leave this behind for me."

She adds seriously, however, that thievery is a problem in her neighborhood, and there is no help from the police or anyone else. On other aspects of politics in the area she only says that when they have a problem there is no use going to the lien gia (lowest unit of local government) for help. She cites the example of removing the flood water. After several requests and ensuing long waits while the requests went from the lien gia up through channels, the lien gia told her if this was a serious problem they should get together and do something about it. Ba Tu Sat and her friends then turned to a neighbor who has extra time, for he stays at home to watch the children while his wife works. Since he is considered a good, honest man, he was entrusted with the task of collecting money from the neighbors and hiring local men to lay a tile drain. The work was actually done in less than two weeks time and not only helped drain the flood water but it drained two mosquito-infested swamp areas as well. The leader of this project said the people were so pleased that they began discussing cementing the paths of that section which are usually either very muddy or very dusty. Ba Tu Sat adds, "Lien gia and khom leaders are elected every year by male representatives of each household. Since a number of neighbor ladies, like myself, have no permanent male in their households, we have no say in the government and are not even informed when elections take place." She does not say this, however, as though it was very important one way or the other.

Although Ba Tu Sat does not freely discuss her children, one son remarks that she had eight sons and "many" grandchildren. Several sons are seen coming and going from her house. Ba Tu Sat stated once that her youngest son was the only one she claims. This young man roars up the paths on his motorscooter, his hair combed in a slicked duck cut and wearing bright shirts, very tight slacks and suede shoes, generally giving the impression of being a "cowboy." At home, however, he appears to be shy, gentle and considerate with his mother. He has a violin which he says he plays for a hobby as he enjoys western music of all types. His mother pats him and says, "He's a good boy! He's the only one who has not forgotten me." He blushes and looks at the floor. Then Ba Tu Sat says she would like to know if there is any available employment, especially for a mechanic. Her son explains that companies can get into trouble if they hire men of draft age, and men aged 20 to 30 (which appeared to be his age group) have a particularly hard time finding jobs. The police have visited her house to look at her papers and ask about her son. This coupled with other bits of conversation and the fact that the whole neighborhood has been searched for men of draft age is a possible reason for her evasiveness about the members of her family.

An attractive Southern girl, who is described as being a daughter-in-law, stayed for a while with Ba Tu Sat, quietly helping her make and serve tea, fastening her clothing and acting concerned for her welfare. When the girl, who was pregnant, came close to her delivery date she went back to the country to have what was reported to be a healthy boy. Ba Tu Sat explained that since she was too old to care for the new mother and baby, the girl had gone to her own family home to give birth. When she left she took a copy of Ba Tu Sat's picture saying she wanted to have it near her when she was far away. Although her mother-in-law quoted this statement several times with a look of considerable pride, she also added, "But I don't know yet if she is really a good daughter-in-law or not. One never knows until one is dead. When I am dead I will truly know." (In Vietnamese tradition the comfort of departed spirits depends on constant food and gifts from earth which is in large part the duty of the daughter-in-law to provide.) Saying this she picked up a poorly made nude plaster statue, which she said her daughter-in-law had brought her from Hue, and chortled at the choice of gifts. She, nevertheless, put it back in the front of the buffet.

An energetic, gay, direct, but likeable eleven year old girl, who identifies herself as the daughter of the second son, also lives with Ba Tu Sat. She is always busy carrying water, fixing vegetables, preparing the betel tray or finding other ways in which to be useful to her kindly grandmother. Though she does not now go to school, Ba Tu Sat says with pride that she can already read newspapers and write. There appears to be a deep bond of affection between the two, and the girl seems to feel responsible for the household in a way that sometimes borders on officiousness.

One day the usual game of Tu Sat with three visiting cronies was interrupted by Ba Tu Sat's request for a new photograph to replace the one her daughter-in-law had taken. There followed a scene so funny as to keep everyone in the room howling. First Ba Tu Sat put on an ao dai with much fuss and then sat on a stool in front of her altar with her feet curled under her to give her an "at home" look. The eleven year old firmly pulled her feet out, saying that it looked very ugly that way. Then the girl handed her a glass tumbler to give her an "at ease" look. The neighbor ladies were not sure about the glass, but one who had gotten into the spirit of the day roared with laughter and stuck a pile of cards in her hand saying, if she wanted to have her children remember her as she really was, she should hold these. The granddaughter was obviously upset though amused and pulled them away and straightened the skirt of the ao dai for the picture. By this time everyone was simultaneously making suggestions about the sitting position, the glass, the cards, whether the skirt should be pulled up enough to let the pantaloons show, whether it should be a full length picture or close up and whether she should wear shoes. One lady sat on the end of the bed getting up to hand her cards or take away the glass, another lay on the bed laughing until tears rolled down her cheeks and the third leaned against the door weakened by laughter. Ba Tu Sat sat thoroughly confused, sometimes refolding her legs, holding what had been handed to her, pulling her skirt up or down, but, nevertheless thoroughly enjoyed the drama. Her granddaughter was trying so hard to make things "proper" and yet she too was doubled up with the humor of the situation as she kept pulling down her grandmother's skirt, putting on her shoes and giving back the glass. In about twenty minutes the picture was taken and everyone felt they had spent a delightful morning.

Another day over a glass of hot lotus seed tea several women were discussing whether a pregnant woman

visiting during Tet was bad luck. Ba Tu Sat remarked she believed it would cause very bad luck for the whole year, after which an American lady guest said that since she was pregnant, she would not pay a call at Tet. Ba Tu Sat jumped up in surprise letting some betel supplies slip to the floor and began feeling the woman's stomach through her dress. But Ba Tu Sat was not as interested in the tummy as in the breasts and between fits of laughter felt them both several times and managed to choke out, while laughing, that she had thought this American guest was a young girl who wore false breasts to attract a handsome husband. She ruffled her granddaughter's hair and slapped her back saying "wasn't that a good joke on us?" and felt her guests breasts once again to be sure. When asked if that was the way Vietnamese girls got their husbands she said, "Of course! We have such little breasts." And upon saying this she pulled up her loose blouse and gave a flip to her very small bare breast. The granddaughter hurriedly tugged down the blouse so the grandmother would be more "proper," but even when the guests had to leave, laughter floated down the path after them.

Ba Tu Sat says this is a friendly neighborhood. When families are in trouble, for example, they help each other. She states that costs for a funeral for a family are from 9000 VN$ to 30,000 VN$ and for this great expense each neighbor contributes a gift and at least 50 VN$ in cash. Neighbors also contribute to the costs of weddings. She feels gifts of this sort are one of the important uses of a person's savings.

She reports that her neighbors respect and trust her, and she believes they like her very much. She remarks that she has little desire to go back to her "homeland" now, even if the area were safe, as none of her relatives and few friends still live there. She looks forward, however, to Tet when scattered friends outside this area come to visit her, and she always expects quite a few visitors. She likes her home and says if there were only some way to control the flood waters that intrude frequently from August through February, she would be perfectly content living out her days here among her friends.

Both she and her youngest son are fond of saying, "We may be poor but our spirits are not poor." And after a morning spent in her home, one is convinced this is true.

Ba Tu Sat with glass, playing Tu Sat, with granddaughter.

Ong Sage with family.

CHAPTER XV

BA BEAN CUSTARD

She sells bean custard on the street, carrying the two pans in baskets balanced on a pole over her shoulder. At one end of her pole she carries the custard in a large pot surrounded by towels to keep in the heat at the other end, the syrup boils on top of a burning clay stove. The white pudding looks like an American type of custard, but its flavor is different--bland and tasteless. For her customers, she dips out a small bowl of the white custard and adds several spoonsful of hot brown syrup made from sugar cane. Her custard pot holds about 100 to 130 small cups, which she sells for 1 VN$ each. She moves up and down the side of Main Street in the area, stopping when she finds a customer, then waiting for other customers to come up.

She gets up at 4:30 in the morning to make the custard, and starts to sell as early as 5:30 A.M. Usually she has sold all her custard by 11 A.M. since it is known to be good. She says she never has any left.

She has a pretty face and gracious manner. She is very poor, but wears gold earrings with a small jade setting in her pierced ears, and she is always dressed in an attractive clean Vietnamese blouse and black pants.

She was born in a southern town close by but does not go there any more, for she has not enough money. She has lived here for twelve years and has sold custard for five years. Her family is made up of five children, a daughter sixteen, sons ten, four, and two, a baby, and her sister. She mentions her husband "who goes out every day and contributes nothing," so it is difficult to know whether he is there at all.

Her house, which is all thatch with a loosely jointed floor, is on stilts above the river. It is on a boardwalk, reached from a narrow path between a house and the machine shop near the river. Partitions between the rooms are loosely woven thatch and only go up five feet or so. There is a board gate across the front door about two feet high to keep small children in, as the house is close to the pond, an inlet from the river.

Actually their house is half of a house which is divided down the center by a loose thatch partition six or seven feet high; another family, neither relatives nor friends, lives on the other side. The rent for her half is 500 VN$ a month.

In the first room there is a folding canvas bed, a small chair, and some small pictures. A picture of the Virgin Mary with a rosary draped over it hangs on the wall, but there is no altar. A wooden bed, a stack of cardboard boxes, and a leather suitcase fill the small second room. Clothes hang in disorder on strings above the bed. A bicycle belonging to the daughter leans against the partition between the homes. Kerosene lamps are used for lighting. There is disorder, but floors are clean and clothes attractive.

A pig is kept in a large pen in one corner of the kitchen. River water, which flows by just outside the kitchen door, is used to keep the pig and the floor clean--she bathes the pig every day--but they use pump water to drink and wash clothes. In the kitchen is a cabinet with a few dishes, two traditional clay stoves sitting on a heavy table, several pans hanging on the wall, and her work baskets, water cans, and jugs in the other corner.

Making the custard begins with buying soy beans from a neighborhood store, five kilos at a time. These beans are dried in a basket in front of the house, then one kilo for a day's custard is ground with water in a mill of heavy granite base with a granite top that turns with a handle. It sits on a tree stump in the kitchen just high enough for the juice to flow out of the spout into a dishpan with a straining cloth. This juice is poured off into a square water bucket, water is washed through the cloth again, and the bean residue in the cloth is fed to the pig. All the juice is set on the top of the clay stove to cook with a thickener.

Her expenses come to 55 VN$ a day according to her reckoning: beans 20 VN$ per kilo, sugar cane for syrup 30 VN$, rennet or thickener 2 VN$, sticks for a fire 1 VN$, and charcoal 2 VN$. This amount pays for 100 to 110 (another day she says 130) dishes. She mentions that she earns 30 VN$ a day, but by her own figures, at 105 dishes per day, there is 50 VN$ a day profit. She is unclear as if she is unsure of herself or does not want to be more accurate.

This Sunday she is making a half kilo of beans that has been ordered by a family. She will sell this total pot for 30 VN$. Her mill for grinding is five years old and cost 800 VN$. She borrowed money to pay for it and does not say if she is still in debt for it. Her baskets, carriers and pans she has had for five years or more.

Each afternoon she makes ten trips delivering water, two buckets a trip at 1 VN$ a bucket earns 20 VN$ a day for her. She uses this money to repay 10 VN$ a day the social worker whom she had been asking for medicine and other things "until she was tired of it and loaned her 200 VN$." With the loan she bought beans for her work and after she repays this loan, perhaps she will borrow more. The social worker gives her clothes for two of her children.

Breakfast costs 2 VN$ per child; she gives them this amount and they buy a bowl of soup along the street. All other meals they eat at home, and she estimates that it costs 50 VN$ a day for rice, nuoc mam, fish and other foods. She usually shops along the main street in the area, unless she has an extra amount of money or much to buy, in which case she goes to Tan Dinh market.

The two small boys go to Miss Oanh's nursery school in the area in the afternoon. In the morning a neighbor watches the children for her when the oldest girl is sewing and the mother is selling. This friend does this for nothing. Ba Bean Custard is glad that she also can help her friends. Last week she went to help a woman she has known from selling custard, who is building a house, spending the morning carrying things and cooking for the men who are building. This woman gives her things now and then.

The eldest daughter goes to an area near by on her bicycle where a friend teaches her to sew and also earns 300 to 400 VN$ for her work which she gives to her mother. Ba Custard's sister, who lives with them, has just failed her first baccalaureate examination, "is very sad and has been resting" but has no job.

Sickness is a problem in this family, as in many. In December Ba Bean Custard was missed from the street where she usually sells, because of a swollen face around a bad tooth. She was so weak she could not stand long to visit someone who came to her house, but had to squat. Before she recovered, her son four years old fell, cut his cheek badly on some glass, and had to be taken to the children's hospital for stitches in his face. By

Christmas time, however, she was almost well, and her son had the stitches out. She was thankful that they are well and she is back on the street selling bean custard and seeing her friends again.

Above left: Ba Custard and family.
Right: Ba Custard in kitchen. Note pig-pen in right corner.
Below left: Note grinding mill beside bicycle.
Below right: Ba Custard and vending equipment.

CHAPTER XVI

UNIVERSITY COUPLE

In the house across the street from the retired civil servant, near the Catholic Church, lives a young man who speaks English, has an energetic baby who is bright eyed and healthy, and a wife who is a student in the College of Humanities of the University of Saigon. This young man is in the police force as a special policeman patrolling the roads between Bien Hoa and Saigon in a new Ford car provided for this department by the Americans. He rides his motor-bike to his office in Thu Duc, leaving at 6 A.M. to get to work on time. Each evening he and his wife study English on the radio. They have not studied English in school, yet are on the second book, and do very well. They welcome a chance to speak English with Americans.

She is majoring in geography at the University and has classes in geography, geology, and mathematics this year. She wants to be a professor. There are no other university students in this area. She says she is not unusual among women students, as many of them are married and have babies.

He is slight in stature as are many Vietnamese men, with regular features, even teeth, and a ready smile. She has high cheek bones, slanted eyebrows, and an expressive mouth. They both have a poise and gracious manner that can come from an appreciation of advantages of their education. They are young but are working to improve themselves.

The husband is interested in having pictures taken of his family. He invites friends to his home and then goes on ahead to tell his wife they are coming. They pose for pictures in their home with the baby, but the husband says his mother, who lives with them, would not like to have her picture taken. Bottled lemonade is served, and a large book of wedding pictures is brought out and small books of their pictures before they were married--his in military school in Dalat in 1963, and hers with her sister and nieces at school.

Their families, who were friends in the north, came here from the same area in the north ten years ago. His mother lives with them but his father is dead. Most of their relatives now live in Tan Dinh, that is, in this section of Saigon. Their wedding was held in Tan Dinh Catholic Church.

Their house is cement, painted, with a porch which gives them privacy because it has a four foot wall around it and a gate that can be locked. The husband keeps his motor-bike here when he is home.

Inside the house has one main room used by the young couple; the other rooms are curtained off for his mother, the maid and the kitchen. On the walls there is a picture of his father, some Catholic pictures, several outdoor scenes, and a picture of their wedding with the tiara she wore mounted above the picture. There are several green plants and a crucifix, but no altar. They have a formica topped table, a buffet holding china cups and dishes, and three woven plastic arm chairs, all of which are typical of Vietnamese furnishings of better class homes in this area. These things blend with the furnishings which are peculiarly their own choice from Western things available. A modern bed with a rubber mattress with figured cotton cover is in the front corner of the room with a mosquito net and a curtain that can be drawn around it, and a hammock over it for the baby. There are several leather suitcases covered with a figured cotton cloth, under the table by the bed. On the table is a short-wave radio, a clock, an electric fan, and a pile of books. Meals are served at a table with chairs opposite the entrance, near the door to the kitchen. This room brings the comment from a Vietnamese girl of "not very rich" perhaps because things have been bought for use and comfort and not for show.

They have a maid, a young girl, fourteen, who lives with them and is not much seen, except when she takes care of the baby while the mother is gone to her classes. They have their water delivered for 100 VN$ a month for four buckets a day.

The baby boy, about a year old, is vigorous and energetic while many Vietnamese babies are thin, sickly and droopy. He has good color, and is usually bouncing and pushing his legs while he is being held. His parents speak of feeding him vitamins and recommended foods, and he comes out after lunch with spinach on his chin. For several weeks, he had purple medicine on his head; he had

been to the "Western doctor." When the weather is cold, he is dressed in a jacket type coat over his blouse and shorts, like most Vietnamese children, except that he wears pants, and they have their bare bottoms covered with blankets when they are carried. His father often carries him or holds him, or sits the baby on his motorbike. His mother sits with him while visiting at the neighbors, or carries him back and forth, but he is too bouncy and heavy for her to hold him long.

The wife dresses in Western blouse and slacks much of the time, other times in Vietnamese blouse and pants. She wears an ao dai when she is dressed up, as when she and her husband are going to a wedding one morning and pause for a picture along the street. Sometimes her hair is carefully combed and tied behind, or in braids, or it may look quite casually fixed, or rumpled as if she is too tired to comb it again. Like their house furnishings, they are not maintaining any status, and are interested in comfort and utility, and what appeals to them personally as beautiful.

There appears to be a deep and satisfying close friendship between the University wife and the wife of the retired civil servant who lives across the street, despite the fact that the latter is much older and has little education. They are often together visiting when they have their babies outdoors, or on either of their porches. The University wife frequently drops in at several other homes in this neighborhood where there are babies. Her husband and the baby are often outdoors visiting with neighbors or stopping in at a neighbors to sit and talk. He has two days off each week, which come at different times each week, so he seems to be home a great deal.

Above and Center: University Couple at home.
Lower left: University Couple on their way to a wedding.

CHAPTER XVII

ONG SAGE

At first and lasting impression of Ong Sage is that he is a distinguished gentleman. When he leans through a neighbor's door to inquire what is going on or asks a bevy of uninvited children to leave his house, he does so in a kind gentle way, but he appears to command respect and always gets a response.

Ong Sage is not a man typical of the neighborhood and the home where he, his second wife, and their five children live shows values and interests different from many in the area.

The background of this family was that of a financially secure life as a government official for the French Government in the Northern city of Hanoi. Ong Sage cuts his white hair short and combs it straight back. He has a small rather sparse mustache and wears western style clothes, including a hat and cane when he goes for walks. His clothing and his excellent command of French make his past work with the French Government evident. His wife appears to be a great deal younger and much less sophisticated than he. She combs her black hair severely back into a tight bun. She has a stern, almost unfriendly look, but when one watches her talk and smile with her baby or gets to know her better, one can see a great deal of gentle warmth in her character. She has blackened teeth and always wears colored traditional Vietnamese clothing of loose pants and blouse for everyday and an ao dai for outings. She moves quietly in the background and seldom speaks when they have company. When her husband leaves the room, however, she proves to be a friendly conversationalist.

Ten years ago when Viet Nam was partitioned, Ong Sage states he was strongly against living under Communism, and he (and evidently both wives and their twelve children) caught the first ship--an American one, he adds--carrying refugees to the South. His second wife tells of bringing her two year old girl and sick baby on the ship, arriving during Tet and having to spend several days with the baby

in a strange hospital. They describe going without any food for two days and suffering from the lack of adequate housing. The wife also explains that they lost everything in the move, as they could bring almost nothing with them and no one in Hanoi would buy houses or furnishing at that time.

The first wife's picture appears only a few times in the family picture album and never in the same picture as the second wife. The only comment about her was that she lives in Saigon on Le Van Duyet Street a long way from the area. Her picture, taken before the trip South ten years ago, shows her to be plump and much older than the second wife is now. When the remark was made that twelve was a large number of children, Ong Sage smiled proudly and said, "Oh I don't think that's so many. I have friends who have many more."

Ong Sage has a positive outlook on life and, though his picture album is filled with lovely pictures of a busy life in Hanoi, he says only that in Hanoi many friends played Chinese Chess and here most people, except his children, are too busy to play with him. He says he is retired and lives on a pension from a retirement fund which pays him 4000 VN$ a month, which, he comments without complaint, is not much. (One cannot help but wonder who supports the household of the first wife in her older years, but since she has seven grown children, she may have support from them. It would be difficult to imagine both households could be supported by Ong Sage's income.)

Ong Sage's house has wooden walls, a tile roof and a ceramic tile floor. Although it is on a corner of Church Street and a path, there is a high fence, covered with a blooming vine with a high solid gate which he closes at will. There is a sense of calm and privacy within. Outside the front door is a covered porch containing a bird cage, an elaborate fish bowl and many potted plants. Walking past his house, one frequently sees Ong Sage quietly trimming and working with the plants or making some household improvement.

At the end of this porch is a small area used for a wash room. It contains two large jars of stored water, a shelf with a wash pan, hooks with wash cloths and towels and a mirror on the wall. It closes with a sliding screen giving complete privacy.

Although Ong Sage has never left Viet Nam, his walls contain pictures of Washington, D. C., San Francisco and several Chateau scenes from Europe and he knows flight

times to each of these places. There is also a series of four attractive prints of traditional characters from Vietnamese literature. His books show a welding of Vietnamese and foreign influences, for he has many French, as well as Vietnamese volumes. In his front room is a table containing a thermos of hot tea, a slat bed, two easy chairs and several straight chairs. All of these are of simple wood. There is no glass-fronted buffet with un-used china and fluffy dogs, the typical prestige item for many homes with even less income. The kitchen area is through a wooden door at the rear of the main room. Up a steep stairway one sees an open sleeping loft containing a hammock, a table and many more books. Although there is a Buddhist swastika made of tiny electric light bulbs on the front table, Ong Sage claims he is neither Buddhist nor Catholic. There is a simple ancestor altar in the sleeping loft.

One marvels at the neatness of this house filled with five children ranging from a sullen thirteen year old girl down to an active, noisy two year old boy. This is partly due to well-planned storage. The bed has the unusual feature of having slats that fold back to reveal storage underneath. The shelves along the wall not only hold the many books but other items such as matching cans with covers labeled to show they contain flour, sugar, tea, and other staples. Another difference in this household is that the mother and father are home during the day and apparently practice a gentle but continual firm discipline. When the comment was made that even his children's shoes were stacked neatly outside the door he replied quietly, "The house is small so I have to make some rules if we are all to live in it." When visitors are present the small children are entertained quietly by the older ones, given snacks to eat, or when their exuberance becomes too great are sent out to play. The smaller ones, however, are never sent outside without someone to supervise their play.

Ong Sage comments that many small children in the area are left alone or are left caring for babies all day while both their parents work. "Most of the neighboring men," he says, "work as laborers, mechanics, or electricians earning an average of perhaps 2000 VN$ a month. The women are engaged in selling for perhaps 50 VN$ a day. Most of them sell along the streets, as booths in the markets cost 20,000 VN$ or more and can be afforded only by the rich." He comments that the area is very quiet at night, as the men and women have worked all day and usually rest in their homes in the evening and go to bed early.

When asked about the problems of retirement, Ong Sage says, "In Viet Nam many men find it possible to work several hours a day. Some of my friends continue to go to their offices for a while almost every day. It all depends on one's health, but mine is not good enough to permit this." Although Ong Sage is occasionally seen walking in the neighborhood he says other than a weekly trip into Saigon and more frequent walks to Tan Dinh market, he usually stays home and finds enough to keep him busy. Although all his school aged children go to school, he says he has little time to help them with their homework.

One hobby he enjoys is that of photography. He has an old Kodak with which he has taken many pictures of Hanoi and of his children as they are growing up. He talks of buying a new camera and asks many questions about cameras, their cost, the cost of film, etc. His wife listens but gently discouraged the project. One finds, after getting to know the family, that this quiet appearing wife seems to direct the actions of the family (whether there is a mat on the bed or not for a picture, or what he shall wear). One would guess that there will be no new camera.

Ong Sage also enjoys asking questions about Americans. "Do they always serve beer to their guests? Would they like, for instance, this lotus scented Chinese tea?" He laughs and, chucking a child under the chin, reports that until this recent contact two of his younger children had been afraid of Americans.

Ong Sage does not want strangers to get a poor impression of his area and often goes out of his way to paint a rosy picture in the face of grim details. When asked by an American man studying the flooding of the area how high the water comes into his home, he grudgingly pointed to a mark about four inches off the floor but hastily added that he understands that the lovely city of Venice floods just like this area.

Ong Sage has always lived in a different environment than most of his neighbors. Since he is seldom seen "gossiping" with neighbors and walks in apparent isolation as he goes down the street, perhaps he has not identified existing problems in his environment. He has, however, been in government and seems to enjoy answering questions about local needs as he sees them.

"The ditches are quite a problem. But since everyone is poor it will take a long time to collect the money and

no one has agreed to be the leader to get it started. Also the sidewalks are badly in need of repair. As far as money is concerned, small loans with low interest would be of little value as the people here have no special businesses and the money would just get lost. Besides, the person handling the loans would have to know each neighbor well or they would lend to those who would never pay back. Co-operatives would be of no help to the petty vendors as people only make small purchases there, going for the bulk of their supplies to the nearby big market. Therefore, larger stands just could not sell their produce. Schools, however, would always be popular, if they were free. For girls, classes in sewing and embroidery would give them a good vocation but boys need general education. Older people would like reading classes but most adults already have a vocation and vocational education for them. But any type of free classes would be well attended. There is not much problem of unemployment. The health problems are taken care of for some types of things, but at the clinic there is no place to lie down. But, if you would like to do something the neighbors would appreciate, help fix the ditches and sidewalks."

When asked if there were any trusted men in the neighborhood who could handle money and see a project was carried out, he said, "Yes, there is one, the man who has the music wire factory. He is rich and people trust him to handle the money at the church. When contributions must be made for something, for instance 500 piasters, he always contributes 700 VN$ and everyone knows he is a good man." When asked if this man had ever led any neighborhood projects, he said, "No, he just works quietly at his own business. But he is trusted and looked up to." About the khom and lien gia leaders, Ong Sage laughed and commented that they were not doing anything for the area, and if a project were to get done it could not go through them, or it would just get bogged down. He adds that they all work and do not have much time. In answer to the comment that it was too bad that men like the factory owner and Ong Sage did not take active leadership in improving the area, he gave a smile and said they had both been asked to be khom leaders but had both refused as they just wanted to live a quiet life with their families, and starting un-official projects was a job neither would particularly enjoy. "However, you might know someone who knows the mayor. One word to the mayor and the ditches and walks could be fixed in a wink. Or maybe there is another way, but it would certainly be appreciated. And that man at the wire factory could be trusted to handle the money and supervise the project if you could get one started."

The house of Ong Sage does not seem to be frequented by neighborhood visitors with the exception of the young Northern University couple who live across the street. Although there is a great difference in their ages, their attitudes toward education and material items are remarkably similar. The wife of Ong Sage sometimes shops for the University Wife at the market or cares for her baby for brief times. The University couple also are frequently seen playing with their baby and talking with the Ong Sage family.

Although Ong Sage is an optimistic, positive gentleman about most topics, he puts special emphasis on how contented he is with his present life. "I'm a retired man living on a pension and I try to live a simple style of life. I enjoy," he explains, "this quiet life with my family retired here where I can be free from the problems of Communism."

LIFE IN A VIETNAMESE URBAN QUARTER

Reviewed November 1966

GENERAL AREA DESCRIPTION

Xom Chua area has had several noticeable changes during the year and a half period between the end of the first study and the re-visiting July through October 1966. The area appears to be more crowded and, indeed, a khom leader estimated a 30% increase in population which seemed to be generally agreed as a reasonable figure. Some reasons for the increase given were: Persons coming from rural areas to look for work, moving in with relatives because of the general inflation, and the increased costs of rent. The newcomers appear to come from varied backgrounds and from both the Buddhist and Catholic groups thereby not changing the overall makeup of the area. A number of new houses have been built over the river, some have added upper floors and some have moved walls in order to increase the living space available. There were also reported to be several new cases of husbands moving second wives into the homes of first wives, which is considered unusual and undesirable. Several cases were noted of new young couples living in the already crowded one or two room houses of one of their parents.

There was also a large turnover of the people who had been living in the area. Reasons given for this were: moving near work, moving to a rural area with relatives due to the high cost of living in Saigon or to a less expensive house in Saigon, or the total breakdown of a family group.

At the edge of the area a hotel has been built and a new apartment is unfinished but is rumored to be "for a large number of Americans."

Another immediately noticeable change was the improvement of the surface and drainage on Main Street and the newly built sidewalk on Church Street. The residents are very proud of these newly improved walkways, but it is difficult to discover just how they were developed.

It seems that a man named Pham Manh Quat, who had been an Assemblyman from the area, had, before his death, donated a sum of money to the Pagoda for the purpose of building a sidewalk. The residents speak his name quietly and say that no one is to know he gave the money, but they know and everyone is grateful to him. Several add that this money was not enough and that residents contributed to both the work and the money to accomplish the result. The Khom leader said the Department of Welfare also donated some cement, but other residents deny this. In speaking of the sidewalk on Church Street, which was built after the Pagoda street was repaired, some residents say that people contributed to that regardless of faith, others simply say "the Church" built it. After many many inquiries it was found that a lantern-making Catholic layman collected money for the building of the sidewalk, having first obtained a letter from the Bishop, to show residents, saying this was a good idea. This leader said it was not difficult to get the donations from Catholics but that only two Buddhist families donated and then not more than 50 VN$ each. Also, it appears that a sizeable donation was given by the Bishop to get the project started. There is a bag of cement marked as a gift from the United States at the Church, but no one seems to know if any cement was donated.

These cemented pathways have been raised from the original continually flooding level as much as 50 centimeters in the lowest spots and residents say they have not flooded. This has had the added effect of making most of the householders along the walks build up their "yard space" (if any) and the level of their floors. Only a few of the previously flooded homes bordering these paths have not been built up and in these most of the floors are in the process of being redone.

As far as the stores, shops, and peddlers are concerned, there are just about the same items available along the streets as before. However, there are days when there is a shortage of goods followed by days when there is a great variety of items available. (A further description follows in the discussion on economics). There has, however, been a change in personnel. Several stores have closed, a new one has been opened, one family which sewed for a living has moved but new resident of the house also sews, a barber shop is closed but two new ones have opened in the Plaza. The only new type of store seen is the ban banh game parlor (sometimes called table football). Three places in the Plaza and two along Main Street have moved in from four to nine

game tables each. A number of boys who used to pester passersby are now seen any hour of the day or evening playing at these games. The absence of "cowboys" is also a startling change and is basically due to the fact that the tougher boys of the area joined the riots of May and June and many were arrested. Those of draft age were taken into the military, the others were beaten, some released in ten days, some later and some are reported by residents to still be in jail. But everyone seems relieved that the "cowboys" are no longer threatening them. Since that time there have been fewer cases of thievery and some residents say they seldom lock their doors now.

One more noticeable change is that there are no longer long lines waiting at the water fountains. There have been three new private wells with pumps built in the area which added to the two already there have greatly helped the water distribution.

A number of people speak with pride of the area and tell of the improvements that have been made in the last five, seven, ten, or so years, since the times when their particular houses were surrounded by swamp, there were no sidewalks, water was hard to get, etc. But when asked who helped make the improvements, they stoutly say they did, and laugh, saying that had they waited on the government to make improvements they would still have no sidewalks, drainage or water.

But many of the conversations about the area include comments about the difficulties they have. Many point out that there are only 20 electric meters in the area and the approximately 400 families who tap into these twenty meters must pay 12 VN$ per kilowatt hour instead of the city wide rate of 9 VN$. A factory owner reports needing 220 Volts to run his machines, but no one in the electric company answers his written requests. A number of residents are concerned that there is no sewage system; others are most concerned that the city bus system has stopped and transportation is now difficult to get; still others discuss the problems they have getting medicine and treatment from the health clinic or money for loans. Some families with young children complain that public school classes are held only two hours per day, which they feel is not long enough, or that they work and must leave their tiny children unattended as there is no day care center and not enough space at the nursery schools. They suggest that with a little outside help they could solve some of these problems.

But the most common topic of conversation is economics: The rising cost of living, shortages, and lack of available funds to borrow.

ECONOMICS

Summary

Inflation has affected the people in the area in different ways. Although people with steady incomes and those caught between job changes are suffering with the inflation, the majority of families in this area have a much greater income due to higher paying jobs or more members of the family being employed. When higher paying jobs are available to one member of the family, those working at lower paying or lower status jobs, especially if they are men, tend to give them up rather than continue to supplement the family income. An example of this is a man who drives his cyclo very few hours, although the pay now is very good, since his wife has a job cooking for an American. Although rents, food and clothing prices as well as school fees and supplies have gone up, the rising pay scale has usually more than made up for this increase. However, the psychological problem of paying double or more the usual cost of a common product or service results in residents lacking appreciation for the improvement of conditions.

There does not seem to be much change in saving patterns. There do not, on the whole, seem to be more funds put into increasing earning power (such as saving to buy a cyclo, raising piglets longer so as to breed them). However, several people stated that they had purchased their homes or greatly enlarged or improved them in the last two years, which, perhaps, is felt to be a more secure type of investment during insecure times. Most of the increase goes into consumable items. A change of status symbol was noticed also, as the stuffed toy animals and matched glassware in the glass-fronted cabinets are giving way to collections of variously shaped unopened liquor bottles.

Although several people made comments blaming their government for shortages and economic problems, there was apparently no feeling among local residents, many of whom have or would like to have employment with Americans. This might change, however, at a point when many Vietnamese who have been employed by Americans find

themselves without employment through fewer American-sponsored projects or in case of a general depression. It may become an especially acute problem then to those who have quit school to work for Americans and who then find themselves untrained for other jobs.

There is no feeling that they are receiving aid from Americans. Rice, milk, and other subsidized products appear to be accepted as the Vietnamese government's attempt to give the people what is due them; an attempt on the government's part to handle "its" economic problems which up to date "it has been unable to solve."

In order to see more closely the changes that have taken place, the more detailed list of occupations and consumption patterns from the original study is reviewed with the changes that have taken place noted.

Men's Occupations

The estimate for average incomes of males made by the social workers and other residents has risen from 2,000 VN$ to 4,000 VN$-5,000 VN$ per month. The estimate of those unemployed which was 33% before changed to 5%. A French Catholic priest, who has been living in the area several months, stated that this estimate was too low. He felt one should include those hiding from the draft or who have deserted the military as well as those who have only periodic employment or marginal jobs such as making moon lanterns which they would give up if they could find other employment. However, there is no doubt that the employment situation is much better; in fact, some residents complain about not being able to find help for their stores, child care or in their factory. Some of the jobs held now by people who were previously unemployed include: hod carrier, electrician, mason, carpenter, embroidery design maker, tailor, driver, and cook. Several of these jobs are with Americans.

Men who work in the area are also charging more for their services and prices have gone up in the locally run shops. One barber shop which seldom had customers before has closed. The popular barber shop, however, is still busy and the barber now charges 20 VN$, 15 VN$ and 10 VN$ for different types of haircuts which were just half that price before. The Hu Tieu soup shop, where soup cost 5 VN$ before, now has soup for 15 VN$. The shop is often crowded especially in the early morning and on holidays though perhaps fewer men stop during the day for tea.

This soup shop owner says that the supplies they need have more than doubled in price and they sometimes have problems of shortages of meat and sweetened condensed milk used in coffee. Many of the local tailor shops have more work to do than they have ever had. One says that they sew pre-cut pants for a tailor shop downtown for 10 VN$ each and that they sew as many as they can and always have more orders. One shirt shop making shirts for downtown stores refused extra work, which they used to be eager to get, as they were too busy. For shops which have good quality workmanship and have contracts with downtown shops, especially for men's clothing, "business is better than ever."

The business of running water pump houses has expanded and is the only example ever noted in the area where competition caused a price to be lowered. Water at the only two pump houses formerly in the area then cost 2 VN$ for two pails. Now that there are five pump houses, scattered throughout the area at least one of these older houses has lowered its rate to that which was established by the three new ones of 1 VN$ per pail. At least three of these pumps are owned by men outside the area who must find that selling water is a good business. However, the owner of the brasswire factory has recently built a well for 50,000 VN$ and he says the income does not much more than pay for the running of the pump. But he also says that he has a large family and they all need a great deal of water which he is glad to be able to give them.

The factory owner goes on to say that his factory business is having difficulty due to shortage of manpower, the rising costs of materials and frequent shortages. He uses only his relatives in the factory and he complains that the cost of feeding them has trippled. Also, the raw materials he uses in making his brass items is 280 VN$ per kilo, double the former price. He reports that there is now less demand for music wire but that there is demand for purse hardware which he also makes. He used one type of fastener for purses for 60 VN$ each but the price will now be 120 VN$ each. Toward Christmas the downtown shops will buy many from him. In order to run his machinery more effectively he says that he needs 220 V. current but although he has sent in numerous requests he has never received an answer. He is required to fill in a request in order to get the quantity of fuel he needs to run his equipment but he has never had trouble in obtaining enough.

One of the two Y Ta's (nurses) has left the area. A young man who moved into the area a year ago works for a downtown pharmacy. He has turned his front room into a miniature pharmacy which his wife runs during the day. It contains numerous compounds of western patent medicine including many vitamins. It also sells shoe polish, tooth paste, thread, and school copy books.

The Chinese pharmacy was seen working with larger quantities of herbs and has several additional members of the family working in the store. On two occasions herbs were seen being taken form the store in large enough bulk packages to be possibly wholesale transactions with other stores.

One older man who is a small store owner says business is poor and he can only make ends meet by sending his children out to sell snacks. He worked for a downtown tea and pastry shop ten years ago and wonders if I know of a job for him, perhaps as a night watchman for Americans since he is too old to do heavy work.

The Cha Lua maker is still seen busy at his job. His product is double the old price of 120P per KG. and is selling for 240 outside the area but is still considered too expensive for purchase by the residents.

White Collar and Professional

The elementary teacher who was drafted almost 5 years ago is still in the infantry. The elementary teacher who lives in the area still lives in the home of his parents. Though his wife now stays home to take care of their child, his sister who used to care for the child has a job and he is working at teaching even on the weekends. Teachers who work for the government have recently been given a 30% raise and a local private school reports that private schools had to raise their salaries an equivalent amount. A local high school teacher reports that his private English classes are all filled and that his wife who earned 7,000 as an IBM machine key puncher and was recently offered twice that much by a foreign firm is to quit to help him with his extra business. He has trained some relatives and former students to help with his private class work and he is helping run a judo school on the side. A government office worker states he is delighted with the 30% increase the government gave him. He says other governments talked about raises, but this one gave more than they had been promised by the

others. His wife does not work, but she complains that the raise cannot come close to the rise in the cost of living, and his "foster-mother" sells snacks but talks of getting a job to make ends meet. The special policeman has moved from the area as he has been assigned work further away. His wife now works for an American firm instead of taking University courses. A military officer who previously reported earnings of 7000 VN$ which he had to split between two families has also received his 30% raise and this has caused his wife to give up vending. His daughter is now helping the family with the 5000 VN$ a month she earns as a beauty operator. This man spends his spare time gambling with young men of the area, but he is also slowly doing repairs on his own house-that he had earlier talked of hiring someone to do. The retired civil servant receiving 4000 VN$ a month has been making moon lanterns on a consignment basis and his wife has been selling snacks to supplement the family income although he does not speak of these income supplements.

Skilled Workers

Electricians who used to get 4000 VN$ a month can get much more than that now. In fact, an apprentice 14 year old boy is reported to receive more than that these days. A sign painter who had difficulty in 1964 getting enough employment to support his family is now in the military. As a "favor" he painted four signs on scrap lumber 4" by 7" with seven letters each. For this he charged 1000 VN$. A neighboring sign painting company for which he used to work complains of the desperate manpower shortage and says they would have to charge more than that for the same signs as they cannot find painters even on a part time basis. The wife of this painter says he has a great deal of free time in the evenings and on weekends but that he spends his time "drinking with the boys" and going to movies and does not bring home enough of his pay to support them without the aid of his parents. Carpenters and workmen who used to earn 120 VN$ a day now earn 200 VN$ or more and they can work more days each month.

Unskilled Workers

Those who work in construction received around 50 to 60 VN$ a day before but now they earn 100 VN$ or more. The wages are less standard than before due to the rapid changes in the labor market. Those who can work for international construction firms can earn overtime and

other secondary benefits. However, a number of men complained that Vietnamese at RMK and some other contracting firms made the applicants pay bribes to accept their application for jobs.

The number of cyclo drivers in the area is reported to be 30 to 40. These men who before reported 20 to 30 VN$ for part time work and 60 VN$ for all day driving are reporting from 100 VN$ to 400 VN$ da day. The rental for cyclos has only gone from 25 VN$ to 28 VN$ or 30 VN$ a day, but the deposit has gone from 500 VN$ to 1000 VN$. The increase in deposit is the reason given by some for sharing cyclos. One family reported that three men shared a cyclo and another reported that two men shared. However, one man said more might share their cyclos except that there is a new ruling that one must have an identity card which will enable only one man to drive a particular cyclo, and cyclo sharing will practically stop if the rule is enforced. Although none of the drivers stated that their income was high enough they did not need to drive all day, many cyclos are seen during the daytime parked in front of houses, some drivers were unwilling to take passengers near lunch time or for longer distances, and some pass up fares if the passenger is not willing to pay three to seven times the former prices for the same distance. There is one resident in the area who reports he purchased his cyclo several years ago for 35,000 VN$ but it would now cost 45,000 VN$. He says money is no longer available for loans if someone wants to purchase his own cyclo. He says, "very few others own cyclos--maybe one or two others from the area." Of the cost of the cyclo 18,000 VN$ is for the license, so residents could not profitably make their own cyclos even if they could get them licensed.

There are several taxi drivers from the area. One man states that it is hard to find taxis to rent as people from the rural areas come to Saigon and try to drive. He reported his rent for a taxi is 300 VN$ for daytime, 350 VN$ at night with a 2,000 VN$ deposit (it was 1,000 VN$ before). After paying rent and gasoline for the day he can make 400 VN$ if he drives from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. with one or two hours off during lunch time.

During the later part of the present study more moon lantern makers were observed. Several families reported that they did not start making them as early as usual due to the scarcity of materials, particularly transparent colored paper. However, one man reported he and his three sons started in January when the selling of Christmas stars had been completed and will make

150,000 lanterns costing him 2 VN$ each to make. During the nine month period in which he is working on these he has no income, but he hopes to make 50,000 VN$ to 100,000 VN$ profit, depending on the market. He will then invest in supplies for making Christmas stars. One family who had never been seen making lanterns before was making them to supplement a fixed income. One family who finds it less profitable to sell on consignment found it necessary to do so this year due to lack of funds. Another family was making lanterns for an assured market for the Ministry of Social Welfare for use in orphanages, etc. They chose this as a safer plan even though it is now necessary to purchase an inexpensive license to sell to the government and that the profits would probably be smaller, depending again on this year's market. Two families reported they would not make lanterns as usual this year due to the uncertainties of the time; one family said they would continue their usual weaving although the profits were small rather than risk making lanterns this year, and one family who had a member find more lucrative outside employment reported that they "would not be able to afford lantern making this year."

Women's Employment

Women in 1964 reported earnings of 10 VN$ to 50 VN$ a day for selling food stuffs along Main Street in the quarter and 50 VN$ a day if they sold in neighboring markets. Many sellers say business is better than ever and profits in 1966 were reported to be 20 to 80 VN$ in the local street and 100 VN$, 200 VN$, or more selling black market sugar or selling flowers in a neighboring market on holy days (neither of which would be consistent daily incomes). Though these profits are still small, selling is frequently done for the sociability. There is no large investment and one can work when there is free time. One woman was told by her husband to give up selling because her daughter now made enough to help the family income and she should stay home to take care of her children. She cried when she told of this and explained that though she did not make large profits she had lots of friends when she was out selling, but while at home she was bored and lonesome. The woman who formerly made and sold soybean custard has children who have found employment. She says she has given up her trade to stay with her new baby but she is frequently seen spending long periods of time talking at the market while her child is left at home. The papaya seller became a cook for a Vietnamese family outside the area when her husband was killed in the service and she

became the sole provider for the family. Her mother who before sold only occasionally and other days sat talking to the daughter and her daughter's customers is now seen selling regularly.

Several former sellers have given up selling, but others have started selling and about the same products are seen in the stands. Some ladies change from selling one item to another. For instance, an older woman who used to raffle items near Tet and sell fruit during other seasons said she could no longer afford to sell as she had no capital. A few days later she had found enough money to purchase some ice cream snacks and was subsequently seen selling as she walked along at the larger market and along the streets in the area.

The social worker says that many women these days who do not have enough money to invest in supplies for sale have to give up selling as there is no place where they can now make small loans. She believes that this is a serious problem.

The only remark that would relate to attitudes toward Americans made by the sellers was one woman who said her profits were low. She starts selling at 4:00 A.M. in order to get a head start of some of the other women who sell cigarettes but get their supplies from someone having access to P.X. goods. She did not say this in a bitter way but very matter-of-factly.

Some store owners have given up their stores. Ba French has given up one of the largest stores in the area which she has run for years in order to live with a daughter in Bien Hoa and sell "GI supplies" on the black market. Her daughter reports that her profits are a great deal more than they were when she ran the store. The elderly woman who owned the oldest stand in the area, has found it possible to give up her store because her "cowboy" son is now in the military (and presumably self-supporting), her teacher daughter has a job as a secretary for an American military office "from which she brings home her total salary and gifts" and her married daughter with five children and an "ill and lazy husband" has quit carrying water to become a cook for Americans and is no longer partially dependent. This woman says that her daughter's job as cook is so high paying and easy she herself has wondered about going to work for Americans.

Another family has opened up a food stand in their living room as their eldest daughter who lives only a few

doors away and used to work as a tailor downtown now wishes to stay home with her new baby and can help run the store.

Store owners say it is difficult to find help. They explain the fact that there are fewer non-food products in the stores as being due to the smaller number of mobile vendors coming to stores in the area; selling such supplies as lamps; and difficulties in transportation to Cholon and further markets. The belief that a possible political crisis could make them lose everything is also offered as a reason, as is lack of available money for loans they could use to invest in inventory. The exception to the trend of smaller inventories in stores is the rice store which has large quantities of rice. It sells regular rice slightly higher than the local market, glutinous rice for much less than the market price, and a great quantity of brown rice for pig food.

The women who sew for a living are not doing as well as the men who run establishments with contacts with downtown stores. The ao dai maker has very little business and her store is sometimes closed. However, this was usually true in the past except near Tet time. One woman who sewed such items as ladies blouses in her front room has moved from the area. The woman now in the house claims to sew and has a machine but was not seen making any clothing during the study.

The job of water-carrying has greatly changed. There are new pumps in the area making it unnecessary to wait so long for water. Many families buy their water and have their own family members carry it the new shorter distances to their homes. One former water carrier is the seller of sugar on the black market, one is a cook, one was deserted by her husband and has gone to live in a Church. She sells corn along a highway. One girl who still carries water says the pumps are a help because she does not have to wait so many hours in line and can finish her job more quickly. She says fewer people carry water for a living but she does not seem to consider the new pumps a threat to her occupation. She now reports 1000 VN$ a month income, not much more than the 800 VN$ she reported two years ago. One family where the husband is an aging unskilled laborer and funds are more difficult to obtain reports that the two children have been taken out of school. The mother who previously stated she had serious heart trouble and could not work carries, together with her family, 15-20 trips daily earning 1500 VN$ a month.

The maker of drinking straws has given up this job which was always a low income producer but she says she would like to find another job. One maker of banana paper has given up her job to care for the baby of her eldest married daughter who earns 100 VN$ a day at a construction site. She also reports her young school-age sons are able to earn 30-40 VN$ every now and then sweeping or doing odd jobs for someone.

Both weaver families complain that there is a shortage of supplies, an increase in cost of supplies, and less profit in their business. The government price control does not really control the price they must pay and they frequently pay 200 VN$ per kilo which is enough yarn to make a 13 meter long fabric, on which there is a profit of only 125 VN$. They can no longer find men to thread machines and must spend many hours threading as well as slightly more than a day on the actual weaving of this length piece. The dying and winding of the thread is usually done by other members of the family so that the looms may be kept operating during the day. Several weavers said they are looking for other jobs.

Average wages for household servants and baby sitters have risen. Only one elderly great-grandmother who had worked for years for one family and who received cloth and food as secondary profits reported still making 500 VN$ a month for cleaning and taking care of a baby. The almost universally accepted price for such positions is 1000 VN$ a month plus food. Several families, one in which the woman was about to have a baby and needed temporary help, said finding servants was also a problem. When the girl had the baby her husband was seen home from work taking care of the other child and no help was hired.

Embroidery is now a booming business. One sees eight and ten year old girls embroidering sheets of military patches for which they are paid 5 VN$ per patch. These same patches sell for 35 VN$ to 90 VN$ each in the downtown stores where they are featured as "hand embroidered." Several young girls report they average five patches a day after school and that this is clear profit as supplies are furnished. Some other children are seen embroidering designs on purses for which they make 25 to 35 VN$. The styles are now such that even the cloth strip on traditional Vietnamese shoes are embroidered. In 1964 ao dais often had painted trim, but now embroidery is more popular. One embroiderer who did espcially nice and elaborate work and used to embroider material for blouses now cannot accept outside work as she has more orders for ao dais from a downtown store than she can fill. She is

paid 1000 VN$ per ao dai and can make a monthly profit of 10,000 VN$. A local shop which used to employ eight or ten girls outside the shop is now training girls and has trained a number within the last year. One girl working there with a year's experience is being paid 1300 VN$ a month for eight hours a day, six days a week. This shop employs 30 or 40 women outside the shop when they have enough orders. Several girls embroidering for shops outside the area report being paid 5,000 VN$ a month. However, this should be considered temporary employment because when styles change a number of these women will have to find other uses for these skills or another kind of employment.

More women and children are employed than before. This is partly due to inflation and partly due to the current manpower shortage. This has, however, somewhat changed the household pattern of baby sitting. Some older women are now freed from low income jobs to care for children, but in many more cases it has taken the wives and older children away from home, leaving more tiny tots unattended.

Consumption Patterns

Rents for houses are reported to have increased approximately 25 to 30%. Several report rents increasing from 500 VN$ a month to 700 VN$; from 450 VN$ to 600 VN$, etc. A great deal of questioning appeared to produce the consistent answer that improved sidewalks had not caused the rents to be raised as rents were raised rather consistently throughout the areas with and without sidewalks. The price of land has gone up many times its former value. A woman who had purchased a home for 7,000 VN$ a year ago was reportedly offered 30,000 VN$ in 1966. This sounds like a high offer, however, since a large wooden house along Main Street was on the market for two months before it reportedly sold for 47,000 VN$. The land tax (which is paid by the house owner) for the largest section of the land in the area is controlled by a French company which leases the land to an Indian who comes to collect the rents. Rents vary but the amount charged the social welfare center is 85 VN$ a month. Before the riots in May the man reportedly tried to double the former rents. Tensions were high at that time and residents "gave the man a hard time." He not only was unable to collect many of the rents but had still some four months later not returned to collect further rents. One piece of land off the plaza was sold to a man to build an apartment house. The social worker stated that the land reportedly

sold for 3,000,000 VN$. Housing is more crowded and people reported moving relatives in with them due to the high cost of housing elsewhere in Saigon.

Food costs were also up. The present estimates were consistently about triple the former cost. Estimates which ranged from 10 to 100 VN$ formerly are 30 to 300 VN$ now. Almost everyone talked about the high price of meat, how they eat duck eggs, spinach, and bean curd instead of their former "better diets." (Although these foods are nutritious they are not considered by the residents to be as healthy as, for instance, a meat based dish.) One woman said when things were really bad at her home they ate rice seasoned with salt and pepper. However, the sale of meat is up in the area and the sale of bean curd and spinach was apparently about the same as before. There were more duck eggs in evidence and several families were seen eating them with rice and fish sauce for lunch. One family claimed they did not have enough money to get clothing to send their children to the free public school or have meat in their diet. In actuality they did not send their youngsters to school but were reported by the social worker and observed once during the study to be eating lunches including several more expensive meat and fish dishes. The costs of individual food items were noted to be doubled in price but the consistent reporting of tripling of food costs might lead one to speculate that, as the social worker suggested, there was more purchasing of higher priced foods as incomes increased. A list of some comparative specific prices charged by vendors and shopkeepers in the area on November 13, 1964, and during the week of July 25, 1966, is attached.

Clothing costs have approximately doubled. Cloth priced in nearby markets and from a traveling saleslady on Main Street was about twice the price of the same type of cloth in 1964. The amount of very poor quality cotton material necessary to make traditional pajama-style clothing for a ten year old child is now 135 piasters when the same quantity was 65 VN$ to 70 VN$ before. The price of sewing these in the quarter is now 60 VN$ whereas before it was 25 VN$ to 30 VN$. The woman's dress, the ao dai now costs 150 VN$ to make in the quarter when before the same dress cost 90 VN$.

Hui is still reported to be popular in the area. One woman who had complained for years that her roof leaked (which it obviously did) had received a loan of 6000 VN$ which she paid off at 500 VN$ a month. She had enlarged her very crowded house (even though her family was in fact smaller than before) and now the larger house

still leaked badly. A number of people referred to the very large amount of gambling in the area. Some stated that it is worse than before because of the draft dodgers and military deserters who spend their days this way. During the period of the study a number of Tu Sat card parties were observed but they were run by community members, not outsiders. There was only one woman who mentioned savings and she was a woman who raised two pigs before and was at the present time raising two pigs. She reported the piglets cost 2000 VN$ and in six months of feeding them at 10 VN$ per day she had hopes of selling them for 15,0000 VN$ or more. There was some evidence that she underestimated the cost of the food, however the price for pork is very high and raising pigs is quite profitable. She claimed that she raised pigs as a form of savings more-than for profit. Many other families raising pigs now were not raising them in 1964 and vice versa. There did seem to be considerable improvement and enlarging of houses as a possible form of investment. There was not any noticeable increase in wearing jewelry.

One interesting change occured in status symbols appearing in many homes. The many fancy glasses or toys formerly collected and displayed in the glass-fronted cabinets have been replaced by bottles of various alcoholic drinks. One man who had various whiskey, gin, rum, etc. bottles said he had been offered 10,000 VN$ for his collection but he had refused to part with any part of it. Most of the bottles look unopened.

One neighborhood leader said the neighbors were more organized in helping collect money for people who had deaths or marriages in their families. Three people reported that they got money from their neighbors because of dire needs--one a young deserted girl with a new baby and another whose mentally ill husband had destroyed part of their home. The first beggar from outside the area was noted going from house to house.

A number of people said they had a problem because loans were difficult to obtain. One man stated that he was lucky because he could get loans "for only 3% a month interest" from his relatives (36% a year) to complete his house building. However, he and others said if one did not have relatives to help they had almost no chance to borrow money. The social worker reported that a number of people selling or producing things for marginal profits had used their capital and had to give up their occupations.

Shortages are said by some to be more of a problem than the higher prices. Many people who have small children

complained that there was not enough sweetened condensed milk available, even at the black market rate of 34 VN$ per can (instead of the government rate of 24 VN$).

The availability of the less expensive American rice is not known by most of the families, and the facts about its distribution are certainly not agreed upon. The frequency of and the place to which the rice-selling van comes are variously reported, even by people with shops in the plaza area where it supposedly stops. Some people report that they cannot buy rice from the van since it is sold only in large quantities and they do not have enough money for more than a day's supply at a time. Others say, however, it is sold in small quantities. Some say they have seen the van but there are so many people trying to buy they did not have a chance to buy while others say the van does not always sell all its rice as American rice is not popular. During the period of the study it was available not only on the vans which were observed several times in the neighborhood but was also found at a rice store at the Tan Dinh market and even at one of the stores in the area. Perhaps the disagreement about the popularity of the rice could be explained by the fact that there are two qualities of American rice available, one long and one shorter grain. The longer grain which sells for 12 VN$ per kilo and was not seen for sale during the study period is greatly perferred over the shorter more glutenous variety which sells for 9 VN$ per kilo. It is generally agreed that the American rice is becoming more popular as people get used to it and a number of people state they now use the shorter grained rice and like it when it is mixed with the local Saigon rice.

One woman reported that the government also sends sugar and once sent cloth on vans but these were so popular she could not get close enough to buy any. One local woman makes her living by buying government sugar from the crowded van lines and reselling it in the quarter at a large profit.

A doctor who does not live in the quarter but has an office just outside the area and treats many area residents reported that the country indeed had an inflation but it was due to the fact that the Minister of Economy was a Communist and was trying to ruin the country. Even though he rents a house in another locality to Americans he personally likes, and he is looking for a scholarship to the U.S. for his daughter, he complains life is hard due to the presence of Americans. The Americans have caused such shortages in the labor market that his family cannot

find maids, repairmen, etc. and have made transportation difficult. With the residents in the quarter, however, I did not hear this complaint. At the present, many, many people have jobs due to the American presence and they do not seem to attribute high prices to the Americans. One Northern man who makes moon lanterns, in fact, explained that the inflation was due to shortages, lack of security in the rural areas and the difficulty of getting products into the city. His solution was to make the rural areas more secure.

However, one situation which did arise during the period of the study suggests a problem that may develop. The R.M.K. construction company has employed many Vietnamese as well as third country nationals. However, they reportedly have finished much of the building they were contracted to do and are planning to close out much of their employment. The rumor in the area was that Americans were firing all the Vietnamese and keeping the third country nationals. At least one man in the area had lost his job and many area residents were angry about this "new policy" of the Americans. Awareness that the construction work is always of a temporary nature did not seem part of the consideration. When, however, the residents were informed where they could go to get more work as there was a need for construction workers both skilled and unskilled with several different American projects, they were delighted with the information. Those having paid bribes to the Vietnamese who hired workers to obtain their jobs were particularly upset. There was perhaps a feeling that the Americans had hired people and owed these people continuous work. In a situation such as this every effort should be made to make job information available.

COST OF VARIOUS ITEMS SOLD IN THE QUARTER

Item	Unit	Quality	Piaster Price	
			Nov. 1964	July 1966
Pork	Kilo	Best	100	250-220
		Good	40	170
		Fat	30	130
Beef	Kilo	Best	80	180
Fresh Water Fish	Kilo		60	90
Shrimp	Kilo	Dried	100	150
Duck Eggs	each		2.5	5
Chicken Eggs	each		3.5	9-11
Cucumbers	Kilo		5	16
Tomatoes	Kilo		15	30
Spinach	Bunch		1	3
Nuoc Mam	Large Jug		65	120
Rice	Liter	Saigon 1st	11	18
		Saigon 2nd	7	16
Charcoal	Kilo		6	11
Wood	Bunch		2	9

GOVERNMENT

The study in 1966 was made during the weeks prior to the national election for the Constituent Assembly and, therefore, politics was a frequent topic of conversation. The V.C. were determined that the election would not be a success and put up a flag, passed out handbills and posted a banner in the area saying that Ky must be done away with and that people should not vote. The police came the following morning and took away these things. Residents had different reactions to this pressure from V.C. Some smiled and said that it was probably someone from across the river but everyone in the area knew each other and nothing would happen to them. Others said that the V.C. had been there before, that the residents were no longer united and that there was more need for security in the area. Several remarked that they were afraid to pick up the notices and read them for fear that the police would see them and throw them into jail. One made a child who had collected some throw them away before they could be seen for fear of the police. A boy who suggested that the persons scattering these notices had been a girl driven by a man on a motor cycle was quickly stopped by his mother who hurriedly said the child really knew nothing about it.

During this time the residents also felt pressure from the government about the election. Not only were there loud speakers and billboards throughout the city telling of the importance of voting, but people remembered elections in the Diem days when police stopped to check each person's papers to see if he had voted. The social worker said when she went to register to vote the police did not have her name listed so she could not register. They gave her a paper to show that "though she did not vote, it was not her fault."

There was also some pressure from the Buddhists. During a feast at the local pagoda, the monks discussed the election and said it was "the baby of the government not the baby of the people" and they would, therefore, not vote. Later they appeared to be less united and one monk explained that some monks would fast to show protest of the government, some would vote, and some would do neither. Two of the candidates from the "First Party" attended the festival lunch, handed out handbills stating that they were "for the people and against corruption." Some of the very devout who were guests for this lunch, when asked if they would vote, answered, "Yes, why not?" which was a common response throughout the area. Candidates were seen at the market, using loud speakers and

sound wagons along the streets in the area, and visiting various local leaders. The purpose of the election was not entirely clear in the posters nor in the minds of many people. Some typical comments about the election were: "It's all words, words, words," "It all depends on how much money is available as to whether any candidate who wins will be able to help the area," and "If Ky doesn't run, it doesn't matter who wins."

Two interesting incidents happened which may give some insights into area attitudes toward the V.C. Upon one occasion a very large American Negro soldier in uniform who was somewhat drunk came into a tea house on the plaza. He was angered by the children staring and several high school boys made rude comments in Vietnamese which he could feel were unpleasant though he could not understand the words. When he stepped out for a minute, it was explained to these children that he had come from a nice home in America and had been fighting for seven months in the mud in Viet-Nam against the V.C. The attitudes of these boys changed at once and one pulled out the chair for him when he came back. When the boys did not realize they were being overheard they discussed between themselves how cruel the V.C. are to American and Vietnamese soldiers' bodies breaking out the teeth to get gold and stripping them. The boys seriously discussed these things for a number of minutes. They discussed how close the V.C. are now to Saigon and how they are just realizing how serious the situation is. Several mentioned that they were considering joining the military when they graduated from high school.

Another day a very aggressive Vietnamese man who had been drinking came to Miss Cam and myself and shoved pin-up pictures of western nudes in our faces asking us to buy them. Then shoving us, he said we were rude, unmannered, too proud to answer him when he spoke, Miss Cam was a lackey for the Americans, I was an imperialist and we were both women with bad morals. He said he would beat us up. Although at the time it seemed residents were slow to come to our defence, not only did several women join and walk with us but one man sent children to watch us as we walked on to let him know if we needed police. Later many people sent their children to throw rocks at the man who had accosted us. The Public Safety Division of USAID investigated what happened to the man, and they reported he was not arrested by police but was for a time detained by local residents. He was an outsider and several people said they found him "strange" and were sorry we had been rudely treated.

There were several new attitudes toward the police and its role. It appeared that the police gained status in their handling of the May riots. Despite the fact that there was tear gas used which frightened many residents and reportedly made some children ill, the riots were successfully concluded with a minimum of bloodshed and with public opinion directed against the agitators, not the police. As police are seen in the area children no longer seem to make fun of them. One man said of the election that there were rumors of violence before election time, but he felt that Ky and the police would be strong enough to handle the situation. Thursday before the Sunday election about eight police with tommy guns walked through the area past the center of Main Street. The locals whispered that the monks had started a hunger strike. However, in ten minutes the police came back out of the area, made a few pleasant remarks to some people along the paths, who responded pleasantly. The police had also been responsible for a recent campaign to clean up the path ways and they put up posters urging residents to help in the cleanup drive. However, when a man in the area went mad, his wife and neighbors were rather contemptuous toward the police as he had "escaped" from the police and mental hospitals each time he was apprehended. Also there were some comments that the police did not contact the local Khom leader when they were hunting certain people despite the fact that the Khom leader could more easily identify them than the police. Some commented that police and military are unable to catch the draft dodgers who hide themselves in the mud when the police come near. However, one man who was the most verbal about the problem of lack of success in catching draft dodgers had a young man of that age peeking out from a hiding place in the loft of his own house. Usually the attitude toward draft dodgers appeared to be one of protection of one's relatives and neighbor's boys from outsiders, or desire to be uninvolved. However, the police are more in evidence in the area than they were two years ago.

The Khom leaders say they now meet regularly to discuss problems of the area. One Khom leader stresses that the most serious problem of the area is security. He feels that all security measures (except possibly "secret searches") must come under control by the Khom leaders as they know the area well and that it is necessary for police to cooperate with the Khom leaders. He would like to see the city-owned house across from the Pagoda turned into a security station which as Khom leader he could use with trained guards. He said that Ministry of Education representatives had come to look at the house

to see if it could not be used as a library, but they have done nothing further and he feels a library at this time would not be useful. His biggest problem at the present is that he has much paper work to do. "And if anyone would like to help, they could help do some of the paper work." He went on to admit that he was not up-to-date on his records of residents as now he has "much to do for the election" (which he refused to explain) and also had to continue working at his normal job. When asked if he thought the Khom leaders would be able to organize neighborhood improvements if they were paid, he said very emphatically that they should be paid if they are expected to do this kind of thing as it takes a large amount of time. He said he did not know how much salary would be necessary, but that he now gets 7,000 VN$ from the electric company where he works.

Not only the Khom leaders but practically all of the "leaders" in the area have ideas about what should be done in the neighborhood. The Catholic leader who organized the building of the sidewalk to the Church described a local attempt at organization. The neighbors decided that the three Khom areas needed a committee to collect money for families who had to provide a wedding or funeral or had a serious problem of poverty. A number of men of the area got together to choose a Buddhist, a Catholic and three other representatives from the community. He said they had a great deal of discussion but could not choose leaders. However, now when a need for such money arises the neighbors collect it anyway. When asked about Catholic leaders, he feels he is the one to handle problems for the Catholics. However, he too says that the police should go through the Khom leaders, that these leaders should be paid and that plans for any project should include them.

Another old time resident from an area deeper in the quarter with more problems and fewer "well to do" families says there is a functioning committee of 5 men, or at least sufficient understanding among them, to permit speedy organization for community projects if financial aid could be obtained. This gentleman and his "cousin" were in agreement that it would be a fine idea to have better communications. A centrally located telephone which could be used to call the fire company would be a good idea but it should not be at the Khom leader's house. These men resisted all suggestions that the Khom leaders should be used in planning projects. They felt there was no security problem. They continued to describe the problems of V.C. in the area. They say that this area is similar to a rural area in that residents are workers and the area needs government help to improve

it. One of them said there were V.C. working in the area, but all the neighbors knew each other and he did not feel anyone in the area would get hurt. "However, the Communists thrive on social injustices and in order to keep their organization from thriving it would be necessary for the government to help do away with social injustices."

Residents have a very clear picture of what the government should do for the area. Almost everyone agrees that the most urgent needs are for sewage, sanitation, electricity, more schools, longer hours in school for the youngsters, day care centers for children of working mothers, and better communication for fire and police protection. There is a frequently stated need for a dispensary, perhaps to be built in the vacant city-owned house. Many others who lived in the further reaches of the area stated that there was still not enough water and no sidewalks. Many wanted materials with which they could repair their homes, but they did not imply that this should be a gift but rather that the government should solve the problem of scarcity of materials and they wished more money were available for loans.

The leading monk at the Pagoda said he was hoping to build a school at the Pagoda, but he was sure residents would contribute neither money nor time to the project. A Buddhist resident who was complaining of the lack of schools was asked if he felt the neighbors would construct a school at the Pagoda if materials were made available. He said no, because the location was bad; the Pagoda property was along the river and there was no fence so people would be afraid their children would be drowned. When asked if they might not, then, construct a fence first, he thought, smiled, and gave the considered but enthusiastic answer that if a fence were first built the idea was fine and the neighbors would help. But he and his friends suggested that if the Khom leaders asked for money or labor, people would "have to" give it. They said all projects to be successful should go through the Khom leaders, however, several others suggested that Americans were giving a great deal of aid which gets lost in the pockets of Vietnamese officials. Several went so far as to suggest that at least as long as the war was going on, Americans should run all projects in which their money was used.

Government Summary

The residents are proud of the sidewalk they helped build, and some suggest they could do more to improve their area if there were help in getting materials. The social worker and the monks, as well as the doctors and teachers living just outside the area but dealing with these people, have no confidence that residents could improve their area or should otherwise be trusted. Many make comments that the area is especially dangerous and one should just stay out. Only those in the area who have some position of authority (social worker and Khom leader) feel there is a personal security problem from the V.C. Several others stated that the V.C. were active in the area (as the presence of leaflets and flags would testify) but as yet they posed no danger.

Although the residents can verbalize clearly what they would like the government to do, they do not usually feel a personal need to help. If a family lives near a water fountain, it almost always says there is no water shortage. If it has a sidewalk, it never mentions problems of walkways. In other words, there does not seem to be a feeling of social consciousness except about problems directly involved with the family's personal living. This was also the reason given by a resident for the fact that the Khom leader in her section took no part or interest in getting drainage even though the residents asked for his help. His house did not flood. The Khom leaders have not seen their responsibilities as including the initiation of community improvements and many residents seem to feel that they should not be expected to as they are not even paid. When a man takes it upon himself, is given, or otherwise considers it his duty, to get something done it appears that residents watch "his" progress with interest but with no feeling of the need for active participation of their own. If a project is not successful, they may start one of their own later but will not see it a civic duty to help on the project of someone else unless that person directly involves them. For example, it would be quite difficult to get people interested in building sidewalks beyond their homes. It would appear that in getting any project started in the area a major problem is getting the leadership assumed by someone or some small group. The expectation of community participation will depend upon the identification of that project with the person's own interest and, if broad community support is desired, it might be wise to get a number of different interrelated projects going with many different men or small groups responsible for the different projects. On the other hand several leaders suggest that

if the City Government directed certain projects, the Khom leaders would oversee the projects and that the people would cooperate because they would have to cooperate. A number of people state that the Khom leaders now have that much power.

MEDICINE

Since the period of the 1964 study the medical unit has quit coming into the area. For a short period several times a week there was a small unit that drove up to the city-owned house used as an office at Khom 15 across from the Pagoda to bring medicines. Some medicine was left with the Khom leader but the supply of medicines, frequency and regularity of visits soon dwindled. The social worker said that the problem the area had in getting a regular unit was that it was too close to the Tan Dinh clinic. Most residents said they would not go to that clinic because the nurses there were rude. "It takes all day in line to see a nurse or doctor and once you get there you are given neither treatment nor medicines but prescriptions you cannot afford to have filled." The social worker said that this was true, but that when people were very ill and poor she sometimes helps them pay for the medicines. A Vietnamese doctor working with the clinics was extremely defensive when asked about this and said, "Sure, it's true. Doctors and nurses hate working with the clinics. On paper they are promised a good salary but due to 'this and that', even though they must sign that they get this much, they never do. And as to medicines, sometimes they are in such short supply that during campaigns for giving shots there is not even enough cotton or alcohol."

There were a larger number of cases of mental illness reported than before. The reason given was that the people had probably been disrespectful near a holy place. Most cases of mental illness appeared to receive no help. Skin diseases were more apparent than before. Many children had measles but it was believed this was caused by the wind and heat and the children were not kept isolated.

Several residents have suggested that they could rebuild the city's house across from the Pagoda for a dispensary if they were given building materials. Later, if they were given medicines they could pay for the services of a full time nurse. This idea seems to be interesting for if a nurse could be found who would be paid by the residents, perhaps the problem of nurses not interested

in the patients or being rude would be solved. However, this might create a larger problem in control of medicine distribution.

EDUCATION

Several changes have taken place in the field of education. First, the governmental changes appear to have strengthened the authority of school principals and teachers, and the pure bedlam apparent in previous times of frequent riots seems to have lessened. Of the local schools only Van Lang was involved in the May riots and even it seems now to be more disciplined as one walks by. Schools have recently been allowed to dismiss students. The principal of one school said that she felt the Ministers of Education, who have been changed numerous times, had ignored the principals too much. The teachers say that they must still have more than one teaching job to make a living, although their salaries seem to have gone up about 30% in all schools. The lowest pay of 1300 VN$ a month was reported by a teacher of a half-day nursery school class at the social center. One of the teachers in the quarter who had taught outside of Saigon has recently quit teaching to become a secretary in Saigon for an American Military office. A principal remarked that it was more difficult to get teachers even in Saigon and that many youngsters who speak a little English quit school to get jobs with Americans. She feels that more scholarships for grade and high school youngsters are necessary.

As public school lasts only two hours a day (for the limited number of bright students who can pass tests to get into school), many families feel it necessary to send their children to a private school also. If they are not in public school, they may be sent for two half-day periods to private schools. Fees at the private schools have gone up 20% and are now 120 VN$, 180 VN$ or more for half-day sessions. The cost of supplies, such as copy books, has gone from about 2 VN$ to 10 VN$ each and a number of parents complain about the extra cost of school supplies.

The principal also commented that none of her students wanted to take French any more, but that as soon as they learned English they wanted to quit to go to work. However, her school is more crowded than ever, as are Van Lang and other private schools in the area.

RELIGION

The Catholics have had three priests come in the last two years--two Frenchmen and one Vietnamese. The Vietnamese has just been assigned to another area. The priests say that they are mostly interested in religious matters rather than community affairs. However, they have been asking people to clean up their walkways to improve sanitation and are considering setting up a clinic. The Catholic Church is also expanding its school so that it can have another class in the afternoons. The idea of using the church center for part of the classwork was received with a shocked look by residents who explained that that was where people worshipped on Sundays. The Catholic priests say they had a camp for young men of the area--both Catholic and Buddhist--this past summer and that many young men went. They hope that "since all religions should work for the betterment of mankind," they and the Buddhists could cooperate. They were completely unfriendly to the point of rudeness and it is questionable if they would cooperate with an American sponsored program.

The Buddhist monk in the private pagoda explains that times are getting tougher, not as many people come as before. He is in meditation for the summer months and cannot leave his pagoda. He and his group of monks are not interested in politics and he believes that the monks at the larger pagoda are lost from the "pure path" because the date of Buddha's birthday has been changed. He contributed to the building of the walk. He also explained, however, that he wrote to the Welfare Department of the government to ask if they would give some money for the repair of his pagoda. The Welfare Department answered his letter saying they had food and clothing and things like that but that they could not give money for his repair work. He describes this as a matter of fact, but he is sorry that the government does not help pagodas as he understands it does in Thailand.

The large pagoda has increased in size in the last two years. There are now many new monks and nuns seen walking in and out. One of the new programs is a "crash" program for training first aid workers. The Venerable monk says, "During these times of political crisis, when bloodshed comes, we want people to be ready to take care of the wounded." Most of the individual monks were friendly and those who had been students gave fruit, an invitation to lunch for a festival, a statue of a Vietnamese girl, and some shells from Nha Trang. One of them is now an Army chaplain and he explains that he sometimes

wears a uniform and other times monks robes. He remarked there are only 100 Vietnamese chaplains. When he joined the chaplain service, he had the expectation of having American friends in the army who could help him with his English, but after military operations they are all so tired that he has met no one who can help him. He asks for addresses of American civilians in his area.

During the study a young, ten-year old monk was drowned. Neighbors said the youth went out to the bathroom very early in the morning and fell into the water below. One lady explained that the monks heard him call but thought it was a ghost. They went to the door and were so sure it was a ghost they locked the door. She and her friends agreed that, had the monks gone out to help the boy it would have made no difference, as another man had drowned in the river a year ago and his soul was waiting either for a duck releasing ceremony or a soul to replace him. Since neither these monks nor anyone else had performed the duck ceremony, he entered this monk's body and the sound they heard was probably the ghost being released. Several neighbors speculate as to whether the monks will now perform the duck ceremony to release this new young soul. The monks, when asked, scoff but refuse to discuss the subject. During the day everyone was talking about the episode, but everyone had a different version of when the monk left the pagoda, when the body was found, etc.

RECREATION

There have been several new developments in recreational activities. On occasion newsreels are shown in the Plaza area. The movies are about the war, visits of chiefs of state, etc. Several people said they had seen them, but many said they were so crowded they seldom went. Usually it was the children who knew of the films. A child remarked that on occasion the Khom leader borrowed a television set and some of the neighbors got to watch it. Television programs were considered much more interesting than movies as they included Vietnamese plays. Many people stated that they would like more chances to see movies and T.V.

The other innovation is the Ban Bang, or table football, which has become so popular with many of the young men. The games are always surrounded by intent followers, and it seems to be a calming outlet for them.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Miss Oanh, the social worker, was still at the center, but she stated that she was looking for other work as she was not being paid and was not free to carry out the program she wanted. When questioned about the program she wanted, she said she needed to have a full-time salary and enough money to hire two full-time teachers (as two of the three she has now are students from the social worker's training center and will be leaving with the beginning of the university term). She would like to have a program for mothers and daughters training them in cooking, sewing, sanitation, and other things. When asked how many youngsters would go to her school if it continued to have low fees and had enough space for them all, she stated about 200. There are currently 85 youngsters in her morning nursery school. She wants enough money to make some small loans also. She believes that the greatest need in the area is help for improved housing, sanitation, water supply, health facilities and income for women. She thinks that the ideal thing would be for her to have a community center where women could find work to do in rattan or other marketable handicrafts. Parents could come, bring their children to a day care center or nursery school to be near them while they work. This idea of a community center where the mothers can come would fulfill several of the goals many of the women have; an opportunity to earn a little money, have companionship, and be close to their children. Miss Oanh believes this center would be very popular, but the major obstacle of available land upon which to build the center.

One interesting item about her inter-personal relationships was noted during the study. One woman, who is quite poor, had a sick child. When asked why she did not ask Miss Oanh for medicine the woman answered that she could not as Miss Oanh had "hurt her face before." A few months before when she herself had been ill, the woman had sent her daughter for medicines and Miss Oanh had said the family had plenty of money from carrying water and they should not beg for medicines. When questioned about this particular family, Miss Oanh said the woman used to gamble but that she had given it up and was doing better. After learning, however, that her school expansion might be financed by a group of American women who wanted her to help all those who requested aid in order to keep their self-respect, Miss Oanh rushed to this home to ask about the child who had since recovered.

Miss Oanh gave the family 1000 VN$ to repair the leaky roof. The family spoke of how nice Miss Oanh had become and several others also commented she had become "more friendly."

FAMILY LIFE

Family life is probably just about the same as before. There have been a number of cases of broken homes during the last two years but the typical pattern of a man having several "wives" and returning until the wife gets pregnant is still common. The improved financial situation for these families, since employment is now easier to obtain and more lucrative, has not seemingly changed the pattern of the absent father. One young man was "married" in 1963 and at that time his "wife" said he was very jealous and since they had found each other through love and he had "married" her despite his mother's wish, the young "wife" knew she would have no problem of his going astray. At that time she lived with her mother but helped her mother-in-law run a business. When she became pregnant her parents-in-law asked her to move into their home. She now reports that they are very nice to her, but the young "husband" spends all his income on drink, going to plays and has given up caring for her. One older lady says it has always been this way, but the problem is emphasized when the young men go away from home into the military and must find recreation at the bars where they meet and fall in love with bar girls. This old resident says very few of the families in the area have more than one wife living in the same house. As an example of a common pattern of living in separate houses, she cites a man who sells ice cream. He brought a 30-odd year old woman who had worked in a bar and had a child to the home of his 50-odd year old first wife. The first wife took her own child and left. The neighbor women did not like this new "bar girl" and discussed the belief that her child was probably not this man's child. During the period of the study this second "wife" was killed in a truck accident, and the first wife returned and was seen doing the laundry on the day of the funeral. She will now stay in her husband's home and raise the infant of the second wife.

APPENDIX

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

List of Tables

TABLE 1 Age Distribution of Population of Khoms 14 and 15, Quan I, Saigon, According to Sex, Compared with Corresponding Percentages of United States Population.

TABLE 2 Heads of Households Classified by Age and Sex

TABLE 3 Heads of Households and Other Members in Households Classified by District Where Born

TABLE 4 Distribution of Households by Number of Persons in Household

TABLE 5 Number of Children under Twenty Years of Age Present in Households

TABLE 6 Occupation of Heads of Households

TABLE 7 Males: Jobs for Heads of Household and Members of Households

TABLE 8 Females: Number Engaged in Housekeeping, Employment, Attending School by Family Relationship

TABLE 9 Family Type by Area Where Head of Household Born

TABLE 10 Stage of Family Cycle by Age of Children Belonging to Head of the Household by General Area of Birth of the Head of the Household

TABLE 11 Number of Children Living with Head of Household

TABLE 12 Second Family by Household

TABLE 13 Mobility of Families by Birthplaces of Parents (Same, Different, In or Outside Saigon) and Birthplaces of Children in Family Showing Movement of Family to Different Places and Saigon

List of Figures

FIGURE 1 Map--Customary Geographic Zones of South Viet Nam

FIGURE 2 Occupation List--With Codes Assigned--Used in Study

APPENDIX

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Basically the information for this Appendix was taken from cards which each family fills out every two years or more often. As these cards are made out by the family head, not by a census taker, they provide information as the family head sees it. Three copies are prepared; one is filed with the Quan district headquarters, another copy is filed with the police, and the third copy is retained by the family head. These data were obtained during April and May 1965, by a trained Vietnamese interpreter, from the family records at the Quan headquarters and were supplemented by some personal interviewing.

Each card lists the family head by name and other members of the family by name and relationship to the family head. Birth dates and places, occupations, identification card numbers, with year and place where obtained, and the addresses are given. If the family is living at the employer's home the card is signed by him.

The records of almost 600 families, residents of the two Khoms (districts) of the low income area studied in this report, were used for the tables in this Appendix. The information covers all the families in each Khom. Accordingly, subjects of the study constitute a universe, not a sample.

Sex is not given on the family card, but it could usually be determined by family relationship, as wife, husband, son-in-law, or sister. For other relatives (such as a cousin) and for children, the name was used as the determinant; most Vietnamese girls have "Thi" as a second name, and many Vietnamese boys have "Van."

Year of birth was used to establish age. Vietnamese people count their ages from New Year's Day (Tet) which comes about the end of January. Everyone is a year older after this day.

From these data, using automatic data processing methods, tables were prepared on the distribution of the population by age, sex, and birthplace; on families by

family type, family cycle, and number of children; on mobility of families by birthplaces of children as related to birthplaces of parents; on households by numbers of persons and by numbers of children; and on occupations by sex, status category, position in family, and occupations frequently mentioned.

In Table 1, the population by sex of the two Khoms is shown by ten-year intervals, except for the oldest and youngest groups; for comparison the United States percentage distribution for 1960 is included.

Table 3 shows origin of family by birthplace of the head of the household and other household members. The coding key is shown on the accompanying map (Figure 1) on which South Viet Nam is divided into eight sections, and North Viet Nam into two. In Table 4 and 5, households are shown by size and by number of children.

Tables 6 to 8, on occupations, show the relationship of heads of families to status groupings of occupations, of males to most frequently mentioned occupations, and of females to occupations by family position. Occupation categories used in preparing these tables are shown in Figure 2.

The 597 households are analyzed in Table 9 to show composition and origin. Table 10 is set up according to stage in family cycle as indicated by the ages of children present. Table 11 is a distribution of households by number of children of the head of the household. Table 12 gives the size and frequency of additional families in households. Table 13 establishes categories of mobile parents (born in different places) and non-mobile parents (born in the same place) and relates to them their mobility since marriage, as shown by the birthplaces of their children.

Tests of significance are not used with the table results, because as noted above, the data reflect the population, not a sample of the population. The results shown here cannot be extrapolated to other populations or areas, because the data here used are not representative samples. The tables are of interest as examples of a specific community, giving various numerical counts, and supplement the verbal descriptions of the people found in other portions of the report.

TABLE 1

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION OF KHOMS 14 AND 15, QUAN I, SAIGON, ACCORDING TO SEX*, COMPARED WITH CORRESPONDING PERCENTAGES OF UNITED STATES POPULATION

Year of Birth	SAIGON SAMPLE								U. S. POPULATION		
	Male		Female		Sex Unknown		Total		Male	Female	Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%	%	%
1875 - 1899 (66-90)	22	1.7	34	2.1	2	1.1	58	1.9	8.3	9.8	9.0
1900 - 1909 (56-65)	66	5.0	70	4.4			136	4.4	8.6	8.9	8.8
1910 - 1919 (46-55)	146	11.1	134	8.4	2	1.1	282	9.1	11.5	11.5	11.5
1920 - 1929 (36-45)	156	11.8	168	10.6	2	1.1	326	10.5	13.3	13.6	13.4
1930 - 1939 (26-35)	196	14.8	252	15.8	8	4.3	456	14.7	12.6	12.8	12.7
1940 - 1949 (16-25)	217	16.4	286	18.0	39	21.1	542	17.5	13.6	13.3	13.5
1950 - 1959 (6-15)	379	28.6	475	29.8	91	49.1	945	30.5	20.4	19.1	19.8
1960 - 1965 (0-5)	131	9.9	158	9.9	37	20.0	326	10.5	11.7	11.0	11.3
UNKNOWN	9	.7	16	1.0	4	2.2	29	.9			
TOTAL	1,322	100.0	1,593	100.0	185	100.0	3,100	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Sex which was not given directly on cards, was determined by family relationship and name.

See following pages for notes on Table 1.

The largest age group in this table is that of the six to fifteen year olds; with the sixteen to twenty-five year old group, they make up nearly fifty percent of the population.

Men 35 years and older make up almost thirty percent of the population, while women in the same age group make up only about twenty-five percent. This difference may be influenced by migration as well as by survival. Mothers and older women relatives of the families may prefer to stay with other branches of the family in the provinces rather than move to Saigon.

The percentages of Vietnamese in all age groups from 5 to 35 are each higher than the comparable United States percentages, and the percentages in the older age groups, particularly for those over 65, are much lower.

TABLE 2

HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS CLASSIFIED BY AGE AND SEX

Year of Birth	Male		Female		Sex Unknown		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1875 - 1899 (over 65)	15	3.2	11	8.8			26	4.4
1900 - 1909 (56-65)	58	12.4	28	22.4			86	14.4
1910 - 1919 (46-55)	134	28.5	37	29.6			171	28.6
1920 - 1929 (36-45)	132	28.1	21	16.8	1	50.0	154	25.8
1930 - 1939 (26-35)	112	23.8	22	17.6	1	50.0	135	22.6
1940 & After (25 & Under)	17	3.6	6	4.8			23	3.9
Unknown	2	.4					2	.3
TOTAL	470	100.0	125	100.0	2	100.0	597	100.0

TABLE 3

HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLDS CLASSIFIED BY DISTRICT WHERE BORN

BIRTHPLACE	HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS		OTHER MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLDS		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0. Saigon (Including Quans 1-8)	73	12.2	1178	47.0	1251	40.4
1. Area Around Saigon	61	10.2	226	9.0	287	9.3
2. North Delta	59	9.9	194	7.8	253	8.2
3. South Delta	25	4.2	87	3.5	112	3.6
4. South Lowlands	8	1.3	29	1.2	37	1.2
5. Central Lowlands	13	2.2	38	1.5	51	1.6
6. Central Highlands (North & South)	11	1.8	29	1.2	40	1.3
7. North Lowlands	30	5.0	115	4.6	145	4.6
TOTAL SOUTH VIET NAM	280	46.8	1896	75.8	2176	70.2
8. North Viet Nam, to Hanoi	195	32.7	333	13.3	528	17.0
9. North Viet Nam, Hanoi & North	60	10.1	91	3.6	151	4.9
TOTAL NORTH VIET NAM	255	42.8	424	16.9	679	21.9
10. Unknown & Foreign	62	10.4	183	7.3	245	7.9
TOTAL	597	100.0	2503	100.0	3100	100.0

See following page for notes on Table 3.

Map (Figure 1) shows customary geographic zones of Viet Nam.

The birthplace given in the family records are located on a map divided into sections by customary geographical zones, arranged according to distance from Saigon, to give a pattern of the migration of families. The people who do not specify a place but give "Bac Viet" (North Viet Nam) are put in Group 8.

More than 40 percent of the families in this study come from North Viet Nam, according to the birthplace of the family head, but only about 17 percent of the family members were born in North Viet Nam. Most of the North Vietnamese families have come to Saigon since 1945, so many of their children have been born in or around Saigon. Therefore, a count of the birthplaces of the total number of people would not reveal the number of families who came from the North.

The Delta regions have contributed more than 14 percent of the family heads. Of the regions north from Saigon, within South Viet Nam, the North Lowlands area around Hue is the birthplace of almost as many family heads as all the intervening zones together.

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY NUMBER OF PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLD

No. of Persons in Household	No. of Households	Percent
1	19	3.2
2	65	10.9
3	83	13.9
4	93	15.6
5	89	14.9
6	85	14.2
7	57	9.6
8	41	6.9
9	36	6.0
10	15	2.5
11 - 15	14	2.3
	597	100.0

See following page for notes on Table 4.

This table shows that most households fall in the middle area of from 3 to 6 members; there are few large households of 8 or more. The mean household size is 5.2 persons; the median size is 6 persons. The number of people in the household covers relatives or friends or lodgers living with he family as well as children.

TABLE 5

NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 20 YEARS OF AGE PRESENT IN HOUSEHOLD*

Number of Children in Household	Number of Households	Percent
	No.	%
0	103	17.3
1	107	17.9
2	100	16.7
3	105	17.6
4	76	12.7
5	49	8.2
6	32	5.4
7	20	3.4
8	2	.3
9	1	.2
Unknown	2	.3
TOTAL	597	100.0

*All children in household were counted, regardless of relationship to head of household.

See following page for notes on Table 5.

The number of households having no children is shown, together with the distribution of families with different numbers of children present, whether sons or daughters, grandchildren, or other relatives of the head of the household. The average number of children in a household considering only households having at least one child, is 3.1. Just over 17 percent of the households have no children present, and almost the same percent have 5 or more children present. Children in this study are defined as those persons born in 1945 and after.

TABLE 6

OCCUPATION OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS BY BROAD CATEGORIES

	MEN		WOMEN		TOTALS	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Professional Clerical	55	11.7	0	0	55	9.2
Military	23	4.9	0	0	23	3.9
Skilled	189	40.2	9	7.2	198	33.3
Unskilled	181	38.5	59	47.2	240	40.3
Housekeeping	4	.9	50	40.0	54	9.1
Student	2	.4	3	2.4	5	.8
Unknown	16	3.4	4	3.2	20	3.4
TOTAL	470	100.0%	125	100.0%	595	100.0%

See following page for notes on Table 6.

See Figure 2 for occupation categories.

This table lists the number of heads of households, by sex, in occupations grouped in descending order of status. The code of occupations developed from the jobs listed by persons in this study was divided into upper status jobs above military (16), skilled jobs next below military and unskilled beginning with fishermen (50). These groupings are obviously arbitrary, with the skilled group including semi-skilled. (See Figure 2.) The small number in the upper group is not surprising in view of the type of housing available in the area.

TABLE 7

OCCUPATIONS OF MALES

Occupation	Heads of Households		Others		Totals
	No.	%	No.	%	
Laborer	69	14.7	22	2.6	91
Seller	47	10.0	13	1.5	60
Carpenter	36	7.7	4	.5	40
Electrician	31	6.6	9	1.1	40
Driver (cyclo)	37	7.9	7	.8	44
Mechanic	15	3.2	24	2.8	39
Military	23	4.9	11	1.3	34
Tailor	26	5.5	8	.9	34
Coolie	18	3.8	9	1.1	27
Official	18	3.8	3	.4	21
Clerk	14	3.0	4	.5	18
Adjustor	9	1.9	6	.7	15
Painter	11	2.3	3	.4	14
Mason	10	2.1	2	.2	12
Fisherman	10	2.1	1	.1	11
Barber	7	1.5	2	.2	9
Student	2	.4	306	35.8	308
Housekeeper	4	.9	7	.8	11
Other	67	14.3	79	9.3	146
Under five years			149	17.5	149
No information	16	3.4	183	21.5	199
TOTALS	470	100.0	852	100.0	1322

See following page for notes on Table 7.

The most frequently held jobs in the area are listed in this table along with the number of heads of households and other household members who work in these occupations. Laborer and seller (both unskilled) are the most common jobs for men who are heads of households. Mechanic is the most widely held position for other members of households, especially for younger men such as sons or nephews.

TABLE 8

OCCUPATIONS OF FEMALES

Position	Head of Household		Wife		Daughter		Mother		Other Relative		Not Related		Total
Housekeeper	50	40.0	263	61.7	24	3.1	15	44.1	31	20.1	1	6.7	3
Gainfully Employed													
Seller	51	40.8	106	24.9	21	2.7	10	29.4	16	10.4	3	20.0	2
Tailor	4	3.2	15	3.5	20	2.6			8	5.2	1	6.7	
Laborer	5	4.0	6	1.4	9	1.2	1	2.9	15	9.7			
Other	8	6.4	13	3.1	5	.6	3	8.9	7	4.5	3	20.0	1
Sub-Total	68	54.4	140	32.9	55	7.1	14	41.2	46	29.8	7	46.7	3
Student	3	2.4	8	1.9	299	38.9			35	22.8	6	40.0	3
Under Five Years Old					163	21.2			24	15.7			1
No Information	4	3.2	15	3.5	229	29.7	5	14.7	18	11.6	1	6.6	2
Total	125	100.0	426	100.0	770	100.0	34	100.0	154	100.0	15	100.0	15

See following page for notes on Table 8.

This table shows the job and employment status of females by family membership. For women, three kinds of jobs are most often listed: seller, tailor, and laborer ("worker").

There are 384 women listed as housekeepers, but these are not necessarily in 384 different families. Often an additional relative makes a second housekeeper in the family. Many poor families have no member who is exclusively a housekeeper and with the mother having outside employment.

TABLE 9

FAMILY TYPE BY AREA WHERE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD BORN

FAMILY TYPE	South Viet Nam		North Viet Nam		Unknown		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Conjugal Family	139	49.7	151	59.2	42	67.7	332	55.6
Broken Home, Father or Mother Present	39	13.9	37	14.5	6	9.7	82	13.7
Conjugal Family, Relative or Non-Relative Present	54	19.3	35	13.7	5	8.1	94	15.7
Broken Family, Relative or Non-Relative Present	8	2.8	4	1.6	1	1.6	13	2.2
Older Conjugal Family Plus Younger Family	8	2.8	9	3.5	2	3.2	19	3.2
Older Broken Family with Own Children & Younger Family	9	3.2	8	3.1	0	.0	17	2.9
Household of Adults, related or unrelated	22	7.9	7	2.8	5	8.1	34	5.7
Unknown	1	.4	4	1.6	1	1.6	6	1.0
TOTAL	280	100.0	255	100.0	62	100.0	597	100.0

See following page for notes on Table 9.

The conjugal family of father, mother and children is the most frequent type of family in this area (55.6 percent). Other types of conjugal families with relatives or non-relatives present, or with a younger family (son or daughter with spouse and children) make up almost 20 percent of the families. Various types of broken families (one parent present) make up approximately 19 percent.

This table is arranged by birthplace of the head of the family, whether in North or in South Viet Nam, and shows the difference between the family types who come from different areas.

TABLE 10

HOUSEHOLDS GROUPED BY AGES OF CHILDREN OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS

Ages of Children	Households	
	No.	%
No children	53	8.9
Birth to 5	70	11.7
Birth to 15	134	22.4
6 to 15	62	10.4
6 to 20	59	9.9
16 to 20	10	1.7
Birth to 20	41	6.9
6 to over 20	58	9.7
15 to over 20	55	9.2
Birth to 5 and over 20	10	1.7
No information	9	1.7
Not applicable	36	6.0
TOTAL	597	100.0%

See following page for notes on Table 10.

This table shows the distribution of families according to the stage in the family cycle as measured by the ages of the youngest and oldest child in the family. The most common family (the modal family) is that of children from birth to 15, a rather wide spread in ages. More than 20 percent of the families have children over 20 years of age living at home, which may mean that the parents followed the children to the city. The first category of no children in the family includes both prechild families and those whose children have left.

TABLE 11

NUMBER OF CHILDREN*
LIVING WITH HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

No. of Children Per Family	Households	
	No.	%
0 - None	94	15.7
1 - One	106	17.8
2 - Two	100	16.8
3 - Three	101	16.9
4 - Four	69	11.6
5 - Five	54	9.0
6 - Six	35	5.9
7 - Seven	21	3.5
8 - Eight	8	1.3
9 - Nine	1	0.2
Unknown	8	1.3
TOTAL	597	100.0

*All children counted regardless of age.

See following page for notes on Table 11.

This table shows the number of children, regardless of age, living in the household of the head of the family. It differs from Table 5 which shows the number of children (under 20) regardless of relationship to the head of the family, who live in each household. This table is a count of the sons and daughters present in the household; there are no data on children who might be living elsewhere.

TABLE 12

DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN BY SECOND FAMILIES HAVING CHILDREN IN MULTIPLE FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS*

No. of Children Per Second Family	Household with Second Families Having Children	
	No.	%
One	16	37.2
Two	11	25.6
Three	9	20.9
Four	3	7.0
Five	0	0.0
Six	1	2.3
Seven	1	2.3
Eight	2	4.7
TOTAL	43	100.0

*Only second families known to have children included.

See following page for notes on Table 12.

This table indicates that there is not much doubling up of families in which the second family has children. The "additional" families are married sons and daughters with children who are living either with parents or other relatives. According to this count, there are only 43 such families. There are 549 households which have no second families, or which have second families with no children. Five households, the status of which could not be identified, along with the 549 referred to above, have been eliminated from the table.

In these data there was no way to check on whether several households listed as families, lived physically in the same house. Often there are several separate households listed at the same address, but there can be several houses built behind or near, using the same address. The pattern of living most often observed by the authors, is that families who are related live in separate houses within a few blocks of each other, or in the same area.

TABLE 13

MOBILITY OF FAMILIES AS INDICATED BY BIRTHPLACES OF PARENTS AND BIRTHPLACES OF CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

Birthplaces of Children	BIRTHPLACES OF PARENTS													
	TWO PARENT FAMILIES								ONE PARENT FAMILIES					
	Both Saigon		One Saigon		(Same Place) Both Outside Saigon		(Different Places) Both Outside Saigon		Saigon		Outside Saigon			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Total	%
All Saigon	16	89.0	39	76.5	53	36.3	77	48.7	6	54.5	26	27.5	217	36.4
All Outside Saigon Same as Both Parents					43	29.5	3	1.9					46	7.7
Outside Saigon, At Least One Same as Father					2	1.4	7	4.4			8	8.4	17	2.8
Outside Saigon, At Least One Same as Mother			3	5.9			9	5.7	1	9.1	23	24.2	36	6.0
Outside Saigon, Different from Parents	1	5.5	1	1.9	5	3.4	14	8.9	1	9.1	10	10.5	32	5.4
Saigon and One or More Places Outside Saigon	1	5.5	6	11.8	32	21.9	34	21.5	2	18.2	16	16.8	91	15.2
Two or More Places Outside Saigon			2	3.9	11	7.5	14	8.9	1	9.1	12	12.6	40	6.7
No Children													84	14.1
No Information													34	5.7
TOTAL	18	100.0	51	100.0	146	100.0	158	100.0	11	100.0	95	100.0	597	100.0

See following page for notes on Table 13.

In Table 13, the mobility of a family is first measured by whether the two parents were born in the same place, or born in different places. Both parents born in Saigon is the least mobile of all categories.

The mobility of each couple after marriage is then measured by the birthplaces of their children.

The most mobile parents, born in different places outside Saigon (indicating at least two moves) constitute the largest group--158. There are only 80 families with one or both parents born in Saigon.

The least mobile families are those with parents born in Saigon or the same place anywhere else, and with children born in the same place as the parents. There are 104 of these families out of the total of 597.

The most mobile families are those with different birthplaces for parents and children outside Saigon.

The two largest categories of families are those with all children both in Saigon of parents in different places outside Saigon and those with children born in Saigon of parents born the same place outside Saigon. In more than one-third of the families (36.4 percent) the children are all born in Saigon.

FIGURE 1

CUSTOMARY GEOGRAPHIC ZONES OF SOUTH VIET NAM

0 Saigon (Including Quans 1-8)

1 Area around Saigon

2 North Delta

3 South Delta

4 South Lowlands

5 Central Lowlands

6 Central Highlands

7 North Lowlands

8 North Viet Nam to Hanoi

9 North Viet Nam Hanoi & North

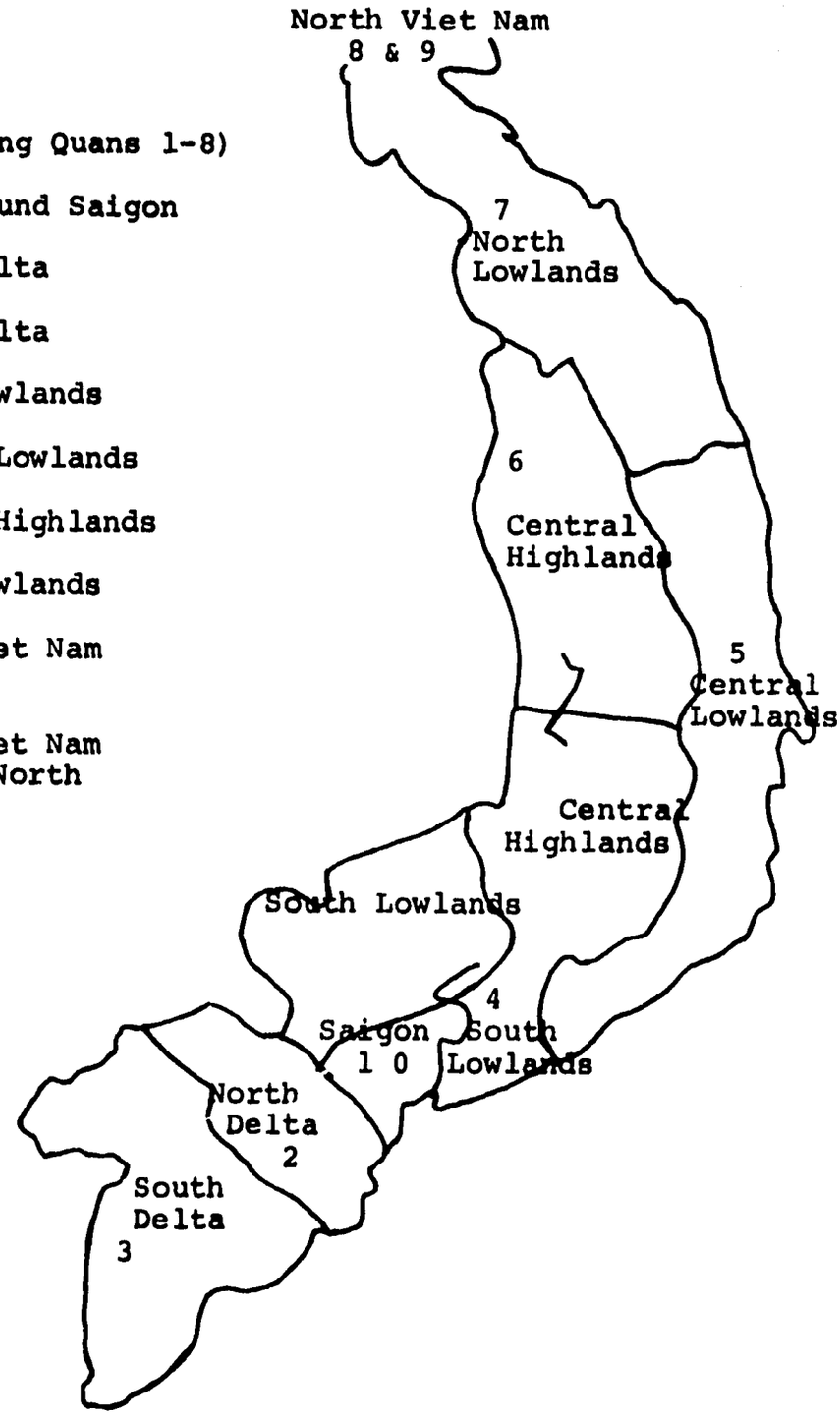


FIGURE 2

OCCUPATION CATEGORIES USED IN STUDY

01	Monk	37	Shoemaker
02	Minister	38	Baker
03	Professor	39	Fireman
04	Official	40	Cake maker
05	Teacher	41	Meat pie maker
06	Supervisor	42	Brick layer
07	Adjustor	43	Mason
08	Public safety (security)	44	Boat maker
		45	Embroiderer
09	Musician	46	Flower maker
10	Writer	47	Handicraft
11	Customs duty	48	Iron worker
12	Secretary	49	Farmer
13	Bookkeeper	50	Fisherman - sailor
14	Clerk	51	Driver
15	Actress	52	Cyclo driver
16	Military - soldier	53	Seller
17	Electrician	54	Trader
18	Carpenter	55	Worker - laborer
19	Mechanic	56	Coolie
20	Nurse	57	Employee
21	Policeman	58	Assistance
22	Telephoner (telegrapher)	59	Maid
		60	Boy
23	Silversmith (plater)	61	Boyess
24	Copper worker	62	Laundry
25	Blacksmith	63	Taking care of children
26	Lampsmith (maker)	64	Just help
27	Locksmith	70	Retired
28	Printer	71	Civilian
29	Weaver - dyer	72	Jobless
30	Photographer	90	Housekeeping
31	Technician	91	Student - pupil
32	Tailor		
33	Painter	xx	No Information
34	Cook		
35	Barber (ladies')		
36	Barber (men's)		