

# THE STUDY OF A VIETNAMESE RURAL COMMUNITY— ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITY

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ANNEX: VILLAGE GOVERNMENT IN VIET-NAM  
— A SURVEY OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

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VOLUME II Chapters VII—X and Annex

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## Chapter VII

### The Settling of Disputes

The settling of disputes, that is, serving as a court in the conduct of civil litigation, ranked among the more important services provided by the Village Council. As this examination will show, the Council became involved with many types of litigants--man and wife, brothers, children and parents of two or more families, landlords and tenants. Among the subjects it faced were marital relationships, physical injury, issues of property ownership, irrigation, collection and payment of rent, and land use. According to the Deputy Chief, most frequent were family quarrels such as marital relationships, use of family lands, and crop damage caused by the negligence of a neighbor. Though not overburdening the Council, some disputes consumed the equivalent of one to three full days of at least one Council Member. Over a period of 22 months from August, 1956, to the end of May, 1958, between 60 to 90 disputes, an average of three to four each month, were presented to the Council. (The distribution was not even - the actual dates of the cases on file showed a heavier concentration in 1957 and 1956, but this might have been caused by some change in the policy of the Council in processing disputes.) From the viewpoint of the villager hardly any other public service could be viewed as so vital since in these instances he was going to the Council for relief of some immediate, personal problem. This was an area of high tension in which the Village Council was called upon to serve in a key role--the making of judgments between two or more aggrieved parties.

In the process of these disputes, the Council or at least (and usually probably) one member performed various steps, ending normally with a decision. Without attempting to indicate their relative significance, the activities of the Council included the following: listening to complaints of one or more parties; questioning various persons involved; returning cases to hamlet chiefs for further investigations; delegating authority to hamlet chief or some other party for handling; forwarding unresolved cases to the district (in the absence of a canton chief) for further consideration; imposing financial charges and other sanctions; and making suggestions for conciliation.

With few exceptions, the administration of the disputes was almost entirely centered in the Village Council itself. The complaining party came to the Village Hall and began by informally discussing the problem with any council member

present--on one occasion the Police Chief tried to avoid civil disputes by telling the party, "Don't come to me unless it is 'bloody.'" But cases that presented a closely interwoven problem of civil and public law undoubtedly made it difficult for the Police Chief to avoid participating.

The exceptions to using the Village Council as the civil court seemed to have occurred more in the past than in recent months. Some of the 1956 cases indicated active roles being performed by the Heads of Five Families, Civic Action Cadre, and the executive committee of a former political party. In addition, though no evidence was found of actual usage, according to the Village Council Chief even "ex-notables", meaning probably former members of the Village Council, had been called upon to assist in adjudication of disputes.

Appealing outside the Village, the most common route led to the office of the District Chief who provided an informal court of appeals.<sup>1</sup> Residents not satisfied with the recommendations of the Council could--and did--appeal to the District Chief. With the establishment of specialized agencies, disputes involving land use, especially those concerning rental rates, had been transferred from the domain of the general line of administration, although at the village level, the Council on occasion continued to assist in this area. And presumably the enactment of the Family Act in 1958 will greatly alter the traditional role of the Council in the settling of marital issues, as already indicated in one observed dispute that will be reported in this examination.

From the viewpoint of the aggrieved party, the procedure for appealing to the Council provided no special problems --no "red tape" as such. The individual could follow the path from the Five Family Head to the Hamlet Chief to the Village Council, or he could go directly to the Council. There seemed to be no special criteria for selecting either the starting point or the procedure. A complaint could be lodged orally or in writing. If orally, it was likely that a Council member would ask for a written declaration but its absence did not delay the beginning of the wheels of justice.<sup>2</sup> An illustration

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<sup>1</sup>With the re-establishment of the cantonal office, it is likely that appeals will be expected to go first to the canton chief but it is only at the district level that a villager confronts a professional administrator.

<sup>2</sup>Formerly, in Khanh Hau villagers were expected to precede their testimony by going before the altar and swearing to tell the truth. The writer has heard that this practice still existed in some southern villages.

of a written complaint, one involving the interesting, financial institution of Hui, an informal group of several villagers to assist each other in financing self-selected projects, shows how villagers have used a more formalized procedure when seeking relief. The complaint as shown in Figure 23 states the problem and the assistance needed.

Even intra-family disputes became part of the adjudicatory process, although on one occasion the Civil Status Councillor attempted to get rid of a case by saying it was purely a family matter and should be resolved at home. In contrast to this attitude, the more prevalent was to hear any complaints that villagers wanted to submit: the Village Chief stated that the Council would listen to any complaint since it was the duty of the Council to keep informed on problems in the village.

It is fair to assume that the members of the Village Council viewed this function as one of its more important. Historically members of the notability and then of the colonial village council had been given responsibility for performing this service. Under the French, as has already been noted in an earlier chapter, this duty was assigned specifically to the huong chanh. Through the years going to the village council of notables established this as one of the traditional administrative mores of the village. The present Council was merely continuing that function.

The function of civil adjudication also would be viewed as important by the Village Council in that failure to perform it well meant, as they had pointed out to this observer, some loss of face in that dissatisfied villagers could appeal to higher authorities. On various occasions Council members mentioned their concern about this. Likewise, they viewed settling matters "at home" as a means for avoiding the formal procedure of the tribunals. And as noted above, participating in the resolving of disputes provided another means by which Council members could be kept informed of activities throughout the village.

The major source for the cases to be described in the following paragraphs was a file found in the Village Hall. This file, a manila folder, marked "DISPUTES", contained a variety of shapes and sizes of papers, some of which had little relevance to disputes as such. The relevant data were supplemented, as it will be noted, with some personal observations of activities occurring in the Village Hall. Since most of the records were incomplete no attempt was made to analyze fully the nature and administration of each case. For example, it was not possible to determine some of the actual decisions.

Figure 23

Illustration of Formal Complaints Filed by Villagers

Republic of Vietnam  
South Vietnam

To lodge a complaint:

Mu name is Vo-thi-Chinh, I submit this application to the Village Council to solve a problem of Hui in which Mrs. Huong Bo Dien has been involved with me.

The Hui will last for 500 days. So far there are in all six openings but she has contributed money only once, and missed the five others. I have asked her many times for money, but she has always promised to pay me later. I have no money to pay other participants; they are very dissatisfied. Mrs. Huong Bo Dien still refuses to pay me in order that I can pay others.

Now, I submit this application to request a solution from the Village Council. Thank you very much.

The applicant,  
Vo thi Chinh.

Called on Monday  
Khanh Hau 18-11-57

The major value of describing several cases in detail is to provide as many examples as possible of the types of problems presented to the Village Council. Although the classifications may lack some clarity, the cases have been grouped as follows: property damage, physical conflicts, marital problems, business problems, land disputes, ownership claims, and water use. These cover a period ranging from August, 1956, to June, 1958. Most of them were reported in the "dispute" file; two or three were obtained directly by the writer. They are not necessarily the total number decided by the Village Council and certainly not the total in which Hamlet Chiefs may have been involved even though the Hamlet Chiefs were expected to report all disputes they settled.

### Property Damage

Sufficient information was reported in two of three property damage cases to suggest that as a rule such problems created considerable friction and bitterness among villagers. These two cases occurred in the same month, February, 1957.

Case 1. The problem: some ducks wandered into a neighboring field and began eating rice. The owner of the ducks attempted to move them and offered to pay for any damage. The landowner refused the payment, contending she had allowed the ducks to do the damage since she was wealthy and could easily afford to pay. In anger he ordered members of his family to hit her. Being badly bruised, she went to the Hamlet Chief where she again offered to pay for the crop damage.

Action: the Hamlet Chief advised her to prepare a written declaration. He then attempted to make a settlement with the landowner but the landowner still refused. Hamlet Chief then forwarded the declaration to the Village Council. (No additional information in the file.)

Case 2. The problem: some ducks wandered into a neighboring field. But even though, according to a Five Family head, the ducks caused no damage, the landowner killed several. The Hamlet Chief reported the incident to the Village Council. Defending his action, the landowner stated he had asked the head of the Five Family group to prevent ducks from coming into his field; that is, to talk with the neighbors, but the group head refused

saying it was his own affair. Landowner further stated he had asked the owner of the ducks to take necessary action.

Action: Village Council on February 11 ordered the landowner to apologize. Since by February 15 no apology had been made, Village Council and secretary-general of the Tap Doan Cong Dan (People's Union Party) conferred and agreed to impose a fine of 40\$ and to post the penalty in the Village Hall since the villager had been charged with disrespect for administrative orders.

The other property damage case reported in the file occurred in August, 1956. However, the file contained only a limited reference. Apparently a runaway buffalo had damaged some property of a neighbor. The hamlet chief had requested the Village Council to settle the case.

### Physical Conflicts

Fistfights between children of different families, or between adults, brought the Village Council into the midst of inter-family and sometimes intra-family affairs. Altogether nine different cases were recorded in the disputes file. It is likely, as already indicated, that the actual number of cases during the 22 months probably was somewhat larger. These reports ranged in detail, from short statements of results to extended narratives regarding the sequence of actions.

Case 3. This was merely a statement signed by a man and his nephew to stop quarreling. The pledge was made before a member of the Civic Action Cadre in December, 1956.

A matter of error in determining what had actually happened brought one villager before the Village Council to complain about the actions of his Hamlet Chief:

Case 4. The problem: complaint of villager was that Hamlet Chief had injured his father in a fight. The two had met at a funeral and had started arguing on the way home. The son had no funds for medical aid.

Action: two days later the son changed his declaration admitting that his father had been drunk and the Hamlet Chief had tried to help him home.

This change was made on the basis of testimony of the general-secretary of the Tap Doan Cong Dan, Village Council members and two other villagers. (September, 1957)

Although details were omitted, notes about two cases showed the intra-village transferability of cases. After failing to obtain action from the head of the Five Family group, one woman appealed directly to the Village Council regarding a fight she had had with a neighboring couple. A case involving a dispute between two men, in which blows apparently were exchanged, was sent back to the Hamlet Chief for further investigation and settlement.

In various cases the Council imposed fines or awarded damages to the injured party. The largest amount noted was 2,500\$ assessed against one of the Hamlet Chiefs, as reported in Case 7.

Case 5. The problem: young woman and her mother-in-law got into a heated argument during which the daughter slapped the latter.

Action: a member of the Self-Guard took the daughter to the control post and then to the Village Council. Council fined her eight piasters and demanded that she apologize to her mother-in-law. (December, 1956)

Case 6. The problem: two children were found fighting by one of the mothers who slapped the face of the other child and caused a nose bleed. Mother of the injured child appealed to the Hamlet Chief.

Action: the Hamlet Chief suggested that an apology should be sufficient to settle the case, but the mother disagreed. Case was referred to Village Council which imposed a "fine" of 100\$ to be given for medical expenses. (April, 1957)

Case 7. The problem: a Hamlet Chief with an accomplice became involved in a fight with a man and wife. The wife was seriously injured.

Action: Village Council got the agreement of the Hamlet Chief to pay 2,500\$ for medical expenses. (August, 1957)

In one of the few cases noted in which the Village Council transferred the problem to the District Chief, the following action had occurred:

Case 8. The problem: two families had become involved in a dispute over a debt of 28\$. One of the wives suffered an injured jaw. A demand for a payment of 1,000\$ was made.

Action: Village Council offered a compromise settlement of 700\$. Proposal was acceptable to the husband but not to the wife. Case was then transferred to the district chief for settlement. (October, 1957)

### Marital Problems

Going into a more personal realm than even physical conflicts, it became apparent that the Village Council during recent years had been confronted with various types of marital cases. The cases fall into the categories of charges of adultery, desertion, and incompatibility, with desertion being the most common.

Case 9. The problem: the husband in a statement to the Village Council charged his wife with adultery (three occasions with one other man) and his intent to divorce her. The Village Council had invited the woman to present her defense before the Council, but she had failed to appear.

Action: Council prepared a statement showing its actions and enclosed the original copy of the statement received from the husband. (Purpose of statement was not indicated other than a declaration that Council was required to prepare it in triplicate.) (1956 ?)

Case 10. The problem: young bride had deserted her husband and moved to Saigon with another man. Village Council had advised her to return to her husband and she had refused.

Action: Council was forwarding the case to the District Chief for his decision. (March, 1958)

Case 11. The problem: wife stole 6,000\$ from family funds and deserted husband. As reported by husband to Village Council, they had lived together as a happily married couple for ten years. If she is found, he will bring her to the Council.

Action: statement filed. (September, 1957)

Case 12. The problem: wife deserted husband, taking children with her. Husband invited wife and her parents to come to Village Hall to determine whether she wants to return to him or to return just his children.

Action: the family of the wife agreed to settle the dispute within ten days. (January, 1957)

The following case centered on a mutual agreement to separate also included some by-play touching on criminal law.

Case 12. The problem: (some gaps in the data on file) declaration of wife was to the effect that she desired to separate from her husband since her husband did not work and he had no interest in working although she had hesitated to tell this to him; that they had lived together for three years without being officially married; and that she had purchased three heads of cattle and two pigs.

Action: Police Chief at first asked Deputy Chief of Village Council and Hamlet Chief to settle. Hamlet chief apparently took over case. He recommended a fine of 40\$ because the woman had threatened to kill her husband; also, he had recommended two days labor. The woman ran away. Hamlet chief transferred the case to the Village Council with the advice to have her arrested by the Five Family head or the self guard if she was returned. (Apparently the woman did return, was seized by the guard, and taken to the control post.) Final result was an agreement to separate and a request from the wife for a property settlement.

Case 14. The problem: man and wife requested permission to separate.

Action: Hamlet Chief and Five Family head held meetings with parents and neighbors. The husband then prepared a statement authorizing wife to remarry. (November, 1956) (Police Chief informed the writer

in 1957 that, of course, to obtain a legal separation court action would be needed. In this particular case the couple decided to rejoin--that they had been angry with each other so had agreed to seek authorization to separate.)

### Business Problems

Under the category of "business" six of eight cases concerned the collection of loans, the other two the payment of land rentals. In two of the six loan cases, the Village Council was, in effect, asked to bring pressure on the borrower: a woman in the village had loaned another resident 500\$. The council already had become involved in the collection; as the record indicated, the borrower had agreed to pay by a named date but had not. Hence, in January, 1957, both the Civic Action Cadre and the Village Council instructed him to make the payment. In the other case the only action reported was the filing of a complaint regarding the failure of one villager to pay a debt of 4,000\$ resulting from the purchase of some fertilizer. (June, 1957)

In the other loan cases the Village Council confronted various types of problems. The amount of the debt (somewhere around 300\$) was the heart of one dispute first heard by a Hamlet Chief and then submitted to the Village Council. (September, 1957) In another, partners in a rice brokerage business arrangement disagreed over the responsibility of one concerning the amount of debt for which he was responsible. The declaration indicated the defendant was willing to contend that the accounting practices were improper. No final action was indicated in the report other than that the Village Council was asked to settle the dispute. (October, 1957) (The Chief of the Village Council was the creditor.)

Along with these was a case of more direct concern to the Village Council, since one of its members was involved and the subject concerned funds for use in constructing a school building. According to the information in the file, a former chief of the Village Council, three other former council members, and the present Deputy Chief had borrowed 10,000\$ from one of the more wealthier residents. The money had, however, remained in the hands of the ex-chief. All involved had been invited to convene in February, 1958, but the ex-chief failed to appear. Shortly thereafter a letter was written by the Police Chief and Village Council Chief asking the ex-chief for advice on how to settle the matter. No reply being received, the problem in another month or so was turned over to the District Chief.

Two other "business" disputes concerned rental for the use of agricultural land. Unfortunately, in neither case was the problem adequately explained. In one, the Village Council was asked by a tenant to make the landowner accept the rental payment in paddy (unhusked rice) who had previously refused this type of payment. Agreeing to do this, the Village Council wrote a letter to the landowner notifying him to come to the Village Hall to receive his payment in paddy. (January, 1958). It also notified the District Chief of its actions. In the other rental case, a complaint as to the complete lack of rental payments for several years was submitted to the Village Council and then forwarded to the District Chief. (April, 1957). According to the statement, the land had been held jointly by his deceased father and two other men. The complainant demanded return of his share of the land.

One dispute concerning hiring of day laborers was also reported to the Village Council. It had been settled, however, by a Hamlet Chief who was merely informing the Council of his action. The problem resulted from failure of the two hired women who had been paid in advance to begin transplanting rice. Since no deadline had been set they had been working elsewhere. The settlement obtained by the Hamlet Chief was not reported. (November, 1956).

In two cases the Village Council was expected to serve as a mediator between a parent and a school teacher after the latter had struck a child. In one instance the teacher submitted a statement contending she was innocent. (November, 1956). In the other, charged with injuring the child by striking with a ruler, the teacher agreed to pay for medical care. In this case the parent lived in an adjacent village. (December, 1956).

#### Land Disputes

One of the four land disputes noted during this study will be reported at length later on since some of the actual discussion was observed. These cases stemmed from intra-family as much as from inter-family conflicts, at least as measured by the number of cases. In one case, a man submitted a written complaint to the Village Council regarding the use of the family's ancestral land. Though lacking detail, the complaint indicated the complainant thought his uncle had unfairly assumed control of the land while he himself was in the army. Final action was not indicated in the record. (April, 1957) The other intra-family case was forwarded to the District Chief for settlement. According to the forwarding letter, this

involved a father, son, and nephew. The Village Council described the case as being very "tough" but it did not state any proposed solution. (March, 1958) The inter-family dispute, a landowner-tenant problem, also was forwarded to the District Chief for settlement. In this instance the landowner had asked the Council to notify the tenants of the termination of their leases and of his desire to take back the land. In response, the tenants refused to return the land and asked for a two-year extension. (January, 1958)

### Ownership Claims

Issues concerning ownership have also been presented to the Council. To settle a dispute over the ownership of a dog the Council asked the Executive Committee of the Tap Doan Cong. Dān to investigate and make the decision. (January, 1957) Ownership claims over two houses evoked a dispute between a man and his brother-in-law. The former claimed that he had left his brother-in-law in charge of them. The Hamlet Chief decided in favor of the complainant but the judgment was not accepted by the other parts. No record was made of the Council's action. (March, 1957)

### Water Use

According to the Deputy Chief water disputes have been the basis of many conflicts between villagers; however, most have been settled by the Village Council. Perhaps because being fairly common, these disputes were not recorded in the "disputes" file. One of the more difficult cases reported to the writer was settled during the closing period of the field research. In this case the Village Council, as the Deputy Chief pointed out, lost "face" because the case had to be referred to the District Chief. It appeared that Farmer "A" tricked Farmer "B" into paying for the costs of irrigating his field. Farmer "B" had asked him for permission to pump water through his field to a field of "B's." After one day of pumping--when the field of "A" had apparently been well flooded--"A" refused to allow "B" to continue pumping, contending that he had agreed for only one day. The Village Council attempted to compromise the dispute by having "A" pay for the pumping--"B" would still not get the much desired water. "A" refused; hence, the case was sent to the district chief. As the ending was explained to the writer, the district chief ordered "A" to pay 1,000\$ to "B" for the water; however, since "A" refused to make this payment, "B" was forced to drop the case since he could not afford to go to court.

## Observed Cases

On three occasions it was possible to observe firsthand the actions of the council members while participating in discussions concerning disputes. These will be quoted at length to illustrate the actions of the councillors.

### Marital Problem

This concerned a young married girl, age about 18 years old, who though recently married refused to live any longer with her husband. (March, 1959) As indicated in the text to follow, the case was brought by the boy's father first to the attention of the Hamlet Chief and then to the Village Council. The discussion before the Council probably began about 0730 since it was coming to a close at 0830, when the writer and his assistant arrived. Whether customary or not, the seating arrangement was interesting to note. The Deputy Chief who served as the judge in this dispute was seated--it is fair to say "happened to be seated"--at the long table with the two opposing groups at some distance on opposite sides. The young bride stood near her mother who sat in a chair at the side of the clerk's desk. On the opposite side of the Deputy were the father and mother of the bridegroom sitting together while their son was off by himself, some five feet away from both his parents and the deputy chief.

During the discussion it is apparent that the Deputy Chief was attempting merely to encourage the two parties to reach some agreement, preferably a reconciliation, on their own. The discussion proceeded as follows:

Deputy Chief. I'll give you ten days to reach a reconciliation. The main responsibility rests with the mother of the girl.

Father of  
Bridegroom      What is your thinking?

Mother of  
bride            I was not able to force her to go back to your son. It's primarily because of your son. He made things worse. You are unaware of the facts. She ran away from home for three days. Her father said it was a shame to bring this quarrel before the Village Council. I will go anywhere --even to court--to settle this.

Mother of  
bridegroom

But parents have authority over their  
children.

Father of  
bridegroom

He was sick so she left him.

Mother of  
bride

I could not force her to go back. Her  
father was treating me very badly because  
of her running away.

Father of  
bridegroom

The deputy chief wants to assure them of a  
future. In the next ten days... we need  
a solution now. But... (strong doubt  
seemed to be implied in his speech)...

Mother of  
bride

It is up to your parents.

Father of  
bridegroom

No! Not up to me. You must give her your  
advice.

Deputy Chief

Remember, it's hard. (That is, to come to  
a separation, the interpreter concluded was  
the implication.)

Mother of  
bride

Her father has been tough on me because of  
her. Education (persuading the girl to go  
back to her husband) doesn't mean beating  
her all the time and making much noise.

Father of  
bridegroom

I went up there to take her back, but she  
told me to ask my wife to come and take her.

Mother of  
bride

It is up to you. It will be all right with  
me.

Bridegroom

My parents went to see the hamlet chief to  
report on the affair. She ran off from  
home but it was not because of my parents.

Deputy Chief

I accept the request (for settlement - a  
written statement). Now, if in the next  
ten days the problem is settled, don't  
fail to organize a feast.

Bride I will not come back, no matter what the consequences might be. If my parents don't admit me into the family, I'll leave.

Mother of bride I will not admit her.

Deputy Chief It is your responsibility to reach a compromise. I request that both sides reach a compromise. I give you ten days.

After the bride and mother left the hall, the Deputy Chief commented that in Asian culture the responsibility rested with the mother of the girl. But he added that the father of the girl had some responsibility--that he should not have permitted the girl after the marriage to engage in "private talk" with her mother. If her mother expressed sympathy for what she called "hardships," separation is bound to come about, the deputy chief added.

Shortly afterwards, either the same day or a following day (dates on the field notes were not clear on this point) an additional conversation took place between the father of the bridegroom and the Deputy Chief.

Father of bridegroom I doubt very much that a final separation can be avoided; she (the bride) has consistently refused to rejoin her husband. I want it to be definitely settled so that my son can think of re-marriage.

Deputy Chief Do you want to get the wedding gifts back?

Father of bridegroom That does not matter much to me. There is a long standing tradition that the bride must return the gifts if she wants to break with the bridegroom but in our case, we don't mind if she doesn't.

Deputy Chief I will call them here before the Council to settle definitely the problem.

At this point the Police Chief, who as "process server" for the formal courts indicated that he would also assume such a role in this instance, "Yes, I will have them 'invited' when I am free." A closing comment about the dispute was made by an old man sitting nearby:

Better seek final settlement. Definitely, or harm might be done when the boy remarries. She might stop the procession, claiming she was legally married to her husband who is still alive or she might invade the house and seize the bride.

### Land Dispute

In a dispute over use of land, the Village Chief displayed considerable adeptness in posing a moral versus mundane choice for one aged villager. Like the Deputy Chief in the preceding example, he attempted to facilitate decision-making rather than assume complete control over the issue.

This case was centered on the refusal of "A" (a hamlet chief) to continue his verbal agreement allowing the daughter of "B" to rent about one hectare of rice land from him. The verbal agreement had been made shortly after the two men had joined up to buy one large field of seven plus hectares. Farmer "A" had divided his half into four portions for rental purposes; one of these was rented to the daughter of "B". Just at the time plowing was to begin--that is, after all arrangements had been settled for the use of rice fields during the coming season--Farmer "A" asked for the return of the portion rented to the daughter. Her refusal was apparently the factor bringing this before the Village Council. The following discussion, overheard by the writer and his assistant, occurred in the village hall.

Farmer "A"            The contract supposedly had expired even before last year. Also, you pledged to return that portion of the field to me. You are cultivating the whole of your field, and I have rented all mine to tenants. My income is actually insufficient.

Farmer "B"            Never in the past did I undertake such a pledge. But you did pledge to permit my daughter to cultivate it. You had better keep your word.

Daughter of  
"B"                    I was not only unaware of such a pledge being made by my father, I also expected to continue making a normal living by working in your field.

Farmer "A" That sounds unreasonable since I can do what I want to with my field. I am quite determined to claim it for my own use.

Farmer "B" I am no less determined to retain it and make you keep your pledge. Why claim it just before the rainy season? It is but sheer unscrupulousness to do so when plenty of rain has poured down and it is time to cultivate. It is my unchanged determination to go ahead, at least for one more year, whatever the consequences.

During this discussion the Village Chief had been listening and apparently formulating his proposals. His suggestions as shown below favored Farmer "A"; yet he was careful to present a plausible rationale to Farmer "B." And perhaps to clinch the argument he endeavored to present the problem in the context of a moral judgment--in essence that Farmer "B" had a moral obligation to allow Farmer "A" obtain more revenue by cultivating the land rather than renting it.<sup>3</sup>

The Village Chief began his commentary with the observation that a verbal pledge was more imposing than a signed contract. That and the following was addressed to Farmer "A":

Before the partition of the field, you did promise to allow his daughter to cultivate a portion? And you did keep your word, didn't you? Now it's your duty to continue to honor it, at least for one more year. Furthermore, it is unjust, unkind to claim the land when cultivation is about to start. Next year, we (the Village Council) will take steps to assure that your land will be under your own cultivation.

And then to Farmer "B" the Chief said:

I appreciate the fact that our agricultural products cannot provide much income when the fields are rented

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<sup>3</sup>The Chief seems to be inclined to use such a technique --that is, to pose a decision in a way that would appeal to the moral side, if one other illustration is sufficient to offer this generalization. This was discussed in the "Village Justice" section. The Chief appealed to Ke Hien to be lenient toward the defendant who had cut down a banana tree, pointing out that since the Ke Hien had all necessary worldly goods, now he needed to develop his character to prepare for the future.

to tenants. I am certain you realize that. The proof is that no portion of your field was rented to any tenant. Then, would it seem reasonable if I suggested that you have your daughter work on your own field and give Farmer "A" his claimed portion? It is my belief that your "yes" would in no way damage you as much financially as your "no" would morally.

To both farmers he said, "Now it is up to you to make up your minds." (This discussion occurred on June 10, 1958.)

### Ownership Claims

The third and final example provides a different view of the Village Council in its role as an adjudicating agency. This, in effect, points to a type of problem that can be expected to occur when a politico-administrative agency such as the Village Council is also endowed with a judicial function. In a technical sense, this was not a case as such since the Council made no effort to hear both sides nor to take any action in resolving the dispute. It illustrates, perhaps too clearly, the informal way in which the Council may be called upon to assist in the settlement of disputes.

The incident occurred one morning when the writer was sipping tea in the Village Hall with the Chief and Deputy Chief. Conversation was interrupted by a loud voice coming from an entrance corner of the building. Leaning against the wall was a man in his twenties; nearby was another villager, about ten years older. The entire discussion was conducted in pitched voices to carry across the hall above the general noise and hum. At the beginning it was interwoven with a general social conversation directed to the writer; shortly, however, it became apparent that the Council members were concentrating on the other visitors and were, in fact, becoming quite agitated. As the assistant of the writer later reported, the background of the subject and the conversation --to the extent he was able to record it--were as follows.

This was a dispute over the ownership of a parrot. A younger brother of the Chief of the Village Council had recently found his lost parrot in the possession of some children in another hamlet. He immediately charged the children with having stolen the parrot, and demanded its return. The father of the children refused to consider returning the parrot before the charge of stealing was withdrawn. Apparently the two men to talk to the Village Council; however, only the younger

brother spoke to the Council. The closing phase of the discussion went as follows:

Brother of  
the chief

Can't you settle this for me?

Chief

(More aroused than ever noted before)  
Complaint... Why should your complaint be brought to me? You are getting tough. Who inspired you to be like this? Don't you realize that the outcome of any settlement would not be in your favor? Why label people as "thief" when the fact was that your parrot had flown away from the cage?

Brother of  
the chief

But what are you here for?

The Deputy Chief, then, attempted to take over in order to relieve the Chief of what was becoming an embarrassing situation especially since an American and two provincial or district fonctionnaires were present.

Deputy Chief

Let me tell you own thing: the Chief is your brother at home. Here in this village hall he is the Chief of Khanh Hau. If you want the dispute settled in your favor, take him home and talk with him there. If you want to complain to the Council, go ahead and send your official complaint.

Charge for settlement: 60 piasters.  
(Since no charges are made any more for filing complaints, this statement seemed to have been intended to deter filing the complaint.) Then I will settle it for you.

Your claim: the parrot was "stolen."  
Where is your proof? When, what date, and who was the thief?

Addressing the Chief, he then added: "Let me handle this for you."

Brother of  
the chief

I am not making any complaint. I just want to get my parrot back.

Chief                    You seem to disrespect the Council.  
I do not like to see you set your feet  
here. Today you have under-rated Khanh  
Hau. Why not quit it and find a better  
place?

Adding some fuel to the flame was the shouted request of the brother, as he was departing, to use the bicycle of the chief. The strongly negative reply was "No. Don't call me, brother, either. Just walk home." And the Deputy Chief sealed the incident, "He did that in the presence of the two agricultural cadres who were here."

x   x   x

Given the limited information obtained about most of these cases it would not be feasible to evaluate the role of the Council itself as a civil court. What the cases do point up, even given the limited data, is that the Council, although it was technically an "administrative council" or one closely controlled by the central government in terms of its membership as well as its operations, had continued serving the community in this vital aspect of rural society. The Council, in effect, had continued providing what appears to be a fairly sound method of adjudication at no expense whatsoever to the villager.

## Chapter VIII

### Ceremonies and Celebrations

In this examination the writer attempted to look at some of the ceremonies and celebrations largely from the viewpoint of the Village Council. In essence, he was interested in determining to what extent the Council was involved and the nature of the involvement. Did it assume full responsibility or did it share the burden with other organizations? Altogether the writer was able to base his observations on four ceremonies that he personally attended. Fortunately these four fairly well covered the range from "traditional" to "modern." Thus, it was possible to see if the Council's role varied depending upon the nature of the ceremony and when it did vary to note the differences.

It so happened that during the period of this study the Council became exceptionally involved in a problem related to the conduct of a special ceremony--the Death Anniversary of the famous native son, the Marshal Nguyen Huynh Duc, who is buried in the Village. As explained by the Village Chief, the Council had decided to begin a drive to raise funds for reconstructing and improving the tomb. This had been discussed with the Chief of Province who had offered his assistance. Furthermore the Village Chief anticipated involving the District Chief by making him chairman of the special drive committee. Thus, this activity seemed like an excellent opportunity to gain some additional knowledge about the Village Council and its relationships with other levels of administration and possibly with other aspects of the community. The writer, therefore, attempted to follow its processes. As a result the second half of this chapter concerns the development of this special community project.

#### Selected Ceremonies and Celebrations<sup>1</sup>

##### Traditional Ceremony: Request for Peace

As to its role in this ceremony the basic question resulted from an appreciation of the historical evolution of the Village Council, since in the post-Geneva period the Village Council

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<sup>1</sup>For a far more comprehensive and thorough treatment of the village ceremonies the reader should examine the pertinent matters in the parallel study prepared by Gerald Hickey.

reached a highpoint of its departure from the traditional council when it was made not only an appointive body of the central government but also its title of "council" was changed to "committee." To be sure, a few months later the former was restored; nevertheless it remained an appointive body distinctly separated from any locally rooted organizations. Thus, observations in Khanh Hau of the Village Council's role in this traditional ceremony should offer some appreciation of the extent to which the impact of the central government on local administrative organization had an effect on the existing socio-administrative structure. In short, regardless of the changes in village council organization had the Council continued participating in traditional ceremonies? If so, what was its role?

The "Request for Peace Ceremony" was the most elaborate and longest ceremony of those observed during the year and a half of fairly continuing contact with the village. As its title states, this was a ceremony whose objective was to seek peace for the coming year, that is, peace from attacks of the various spirits in which the people believed. Obtaining peace also meant helping to assure a prosperous year since one of the most vengeful attacks was any upset in climatic conditions so vital to the growth of the rice crop. Actually within the village area two "Peace" ceremonies were held, since as it has already been noted, for traditional ceremonial purposes there were still two villages. Thus, in 1958 the Hamlets of Nhon Hau and Cau held their celebration in March and the other group, in June.

As illustrated in the following letter of invitation, the conduct of the "Peace" ceremony held in March was somewhat under the guidance of the two Hamlet Chiefs, rather than the Village Council. These Hamlet Chiefs by their invitation showed that they considered the Village Council as a "non-operating agency" relative to the "Peace" ceremony in their own Dinh. However, they wanted the Council members as well as the other Hamlet Chiefs (who it is interesting to note were not invited directly but instead were left to be invited by the Village Council). Thus, the Village Council, it is fair to say, had no role whatsoever in the conduct of the ceremony in the Dinh of those two hamlets. It was with regard to the ceremony in the Dinh located adjacent to the Village Hall that the Council became somewhat involved.

The Program. The ceremony itself consisted of several parts as shown in the following schedule. It began shortly after noon on June 2 and ended 27 hours later. Of course, ceremonial activity was not occurring during the entire period, and by no standard was this a test of physical endurance.

Figure 24

Request for Peace Ceremony in Dinh of Hamlets Nhon Hau and Cau:  
Letter of Invitation to Village Council of Khanh Hau

Long An Province  
Thu Thua District  
Hưng Long Canton  
Khanh Hau Village  
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REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM  
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No. 09-NH-KH

To the Village Council  
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We the hamlet chiefs and all the notables in the two hamlets Nhon Hau and Cau, have the honor to bring to your knowledge that:

On the days 15th, 16th, 17th of the second month of the lunar year (Đinh Dậu) that is on 16, 17 and 18 of March, 1957, we will celebrate at Nhon Hau Communal House the Peace-Request ceremony and the Inauguration of our newly built Communal House.

So we respectfully report to and invite all the village council members and the Hamlet Chiefs of Ấp Mới, Ấp Dinh and Ấp Thu-Tức to honor our ceremony by their presence. Moreover, we beg their permission to insure our ceremony.

We think that even though this Communal House belongs to one hamlet, it still is under your leadership, so we propose to the village authorities that they order all the above cited hamlets notables to come here on the 16th of the Second Month of the Lunar Year. They will come here, firstly to attend the ceremony in order to share the common worship, then, secondly to drink wine and see the theater with us in order to show our village solidarity in this time of Freedom of Worship.

Please accept our respect, our need and our gratitude.

Sincerely yours

Nhân Hậu Hamlet Chief

Khanh Hau 3/12/1957

Câu Hamlet Chief

We all invite you  
Nguyễn Văn Giỏi  
Lê Văn Lương

Program of the Request for Peace Ceremony

June 2, 1958

12:30 to 13:30      Tien Hien Celebration: Celebration  
of the former wise men of the  
village

18:40 to 19:30      Thin Sac: Procession to bring the  
titles of the Guardian Spirits to  
the dinh

19:35 to 20:35      Thay Phap Vao Dam: Ceremony of the  
Sorcerer to rid village of evil  
spirits

June 3, 1958

00:30 to 01:30      Chuc Kien: Introduction of notables  
to the guardian spirit

13:00 to 14:30      Dan Ca: Welcome to the guardian  
spirit

14:30 to 15:35      Gia Sac: Procession to return the  
titles of the Guardian Spirit to  
the shrine of the marshall.

Involved in these ceremonies were such activities as the offering of food and fruit placed at the alter; kowtowing by the notables; carrying a small, four-foot paper boat to a stream leading to the sea as a means of eliminating evil spirits from the village; the beating of a drum and other instruments; the slaughtering of pigs and cows for offerings (and eating); and the reading aloud of lists of notables. Along with these official acts were the almost continuous periods of feasting, in part continuous because of the shortage of tables, the greeting of visitors coming for a "friendly drink" and to eat, and the conduct of community business, some of which was related to ceremonies--especially the receiving of donations in kind or in money--and some unrelated such as the distribution of the first land titles under the Agrarian Reform program. Though not observed, it was also claimed by the Village Chief that the monthly anti-communist denunciation meeting had also been held. With a "protocol" list of about 160 notables from the four "west-side" hamlets of Ap Moi, Aps Dinh A and B, and Ap Thu-Thua, average attendance during the ceremonies ranged from thirty to about 100.

The Village Council. What, then, were the activities of the Village Council for this ceremony?

In a formal sense, there was no function for the Village Council as such. Responsibility for conducting the ceremony was officially centered in the "ceremonial staff" of the traditional council of notables. This staff of five members contained the following positions:

- Ke Hien: "Ke"--to succeed; "Hien"--wise.  
The wisest and most respected man in the village.
- Tien Bai: "Tien"--first; "bai"--to bow.  
The notable who bows first--after the Ke Hien.
- Chanh Bai: "Chanh"--principal; "bai"--to bow.  
The conductor of the ceremonies.

In addition there were two assistants; the Boi Bai and Pho Bai. At this point it is worth noting the general organization of the council of notables so as to appreciate more fully the relationship of the Village Council to it as well as its ceremonies.

First, it should be said that this council of notables included only the hamlets of the former Village of Tuong Khanh --the "west" village. This council functioned separately from the other with the exception that the two shared the Ke Hien. According to a "protocol list," that is, a list showing the titles and ranks of the notables, a total of 163 male villagers in the four western hamlets were eligible to participate in the ceremonies.

As diagrammed in a report on file in the Village Hall, the council contained three sub-groups: the "ceremonial staff," which was discussed above; the former members of the village council; and other persons having honorary titles. The former members of the Village Council were awarded the highest title received during their period of active service--this was, of course, the pre-World War II Council as described in an earlier chapter. According to the "protocol" list for the western hamlets, the frequency of the various titles of the old council was as follows:

(Rank on 1957 council)	Number of "west side" villager <u>having title</u>
1. <u>Huong Ca</u> (chief of council)	5
2. <u>Huong Chu</u> (deputy chief)	0
3. <u>Huong Su</u> (education)	2
4. <u>Huong Truong</u> (judicial affairs)	7
5. <u>Huong Chanh</u> (assistant to Huong Su)	24
6. <u>Huong Giao</u> (assistant to Huong Truong)	21
7. <u>Huong Quan</u> (chief of police)	2
8. <u>Huong Bo</u> (archivist for education records)	10
9. <u>Huong Than</u> (first assistant to truong)	17
10. <u>Xa Truong</u> (finance)	0
11. <u>Huong Hao</u> (second assistant to xa truong)	17
12. <u>Chanh Luc Bo</u> (civil status)	0

It is apparent that most of the notables in this category of former council members held the titles of assistant, either to the judicial, education, or finance councillor. Probably the explanation for this was that more than one assistant could be appointed to one councillor--a means by which access to this system of obtaining personal status could be broadened. However, discrepancies between information as to actual duties of these positions and the data presented in the earlier discussion of the 1904 and 1927 laws demand leaving the final analysis pending further research.

The other large bloc of notables was found in the category of "honorary titles" or "secondary titles", both terms being used in the village records. It is interesting to note the nature of these titles as well as the frequency of their assignment to the villagers:

	Number of "West" side villagers <u>having title</u>
<u>Giao Su</u> (teacher or scholar, usually having considerable knowledge of Chinese characters)	1
<u>Huong Ho</u> (title granted to wealthy villagers)	0
<u>Thu Bo</u> (supervisor of ceremonial gifts)	17
<u>Ca Truong</u> (the most honored man in the hamlet)	4
<u>Chu Truong</u> (second most honored man in the hamlet)	4
<u>Huong Nghi</u> (first advisor to the village council)	1
<u>Huong Luan</u> (second advisor to the village council)	4
<u>Pho Huong Hao</u> (assistant to the huong hao)	0
<u>Pho Huong Quan</u> (police chief assistant)	6
<u>Pho Luc Bo</u> (civil status assistant)	1
<u>Chanh Te</u> (supervisor of details in ceremonies)	1

The remaining members of the notability could be classified in two groups: present or former hamlet chiefs and deputy hamlet and chiefs, eight altogether; and present members of the Village Council. For whatever the reason might have been, neither was shown in the organization chart of the council of notables found in the Village Hall, since the chart merely included the major blocs already explored--the ceremonial staff, the former members of the pre-war village council, and others with honorary or secondary titles.

According to the Village Chief, the Village Council had the key role in the formal appointment and promotion procedure as he illustrated by showing the writer the large certificate given each notable. As stated on the certificate, the Village Council (Hoi Dong Xa) approved the appointment to a specific position "... to share with us the ceremonial workload." This certificate, a standardized form of "Notable's Certificate" obtained from a printer in a large community south of Khanh Hau, was to be signed by three members of the Village Council (Village Chief, Police Councillor, and Civil Status Councillor), the Canton Chief ("for approval"), and the District Chief ("for information").<sup>2</sup>

With this background of the council of notables as such, it is now feasible to turn to the function of the Village Council in the ceremonies.

During the various rituals of the "Request for Peace Ceremony" the Village Council performed no task as a body nor did any of the members except the Financial Councillor appear to have any special duties. He participated in the transporting of the title box of the village guardian spirits; however, this ritual did not seem to have any direct relation to his administrative position as such.

Although not performing any special ceremonial tasks, members of the Village Council were ranked together for kowtowing.

It is interesting to note their relationship in the ranks to the other notables. For example, the Village Chief ranked 18 on the list of 163 notables. He was preceded by the members of the ceremonial staff, the "chanh te" or supervisor of details in ceremonies, a former "huong quan," the former village council chiefs, and the four most honored men in the hamlets. The council members themselves were ranked as follows: Chief, Deputy Chief, Finance Councillor, Police Chief and Civil Status Councillor. And, they were immediately followed by the four second most honored men in the hamlets. Far down in the list, beginning at rank 82, were grouped the current hamlet chiefs.

In the planning stage the members of the Village Council took a relatively active role in the administration of the ceremony. Several incidents of its participation were observed by the writer. The first, a meeting of some of the notables,

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<sup>2</sup>The Village Council also prepared these certificates for the "East" dinh.

is interesting to note since it also illustrates a pattern of community discussion about a major proposal. According to the Village Chief who was on the point of departing for another district in order to solicit funds for the tomb drive, this meeting would be of no importance but yet as it turned out it made a major decision--to eliminate the traditional theatrical performance in order to save money for use in the reconstruction of the Marshall's tomb. He did, however, say that the Police Chief would represent the Village Council.

The meeting proved to be one of the most informal the writer had ever observed in the village. Scheduled to begin at 0730, it apparently began about two hours later although from just watching the actions of the participant the specific starting time could not have been determined--rather the conversation just seemed to become focused on the ceremony. Rather than looking like a "meeting" as such, this bore a resemblance to an "open-house" with people moving leisurely in and out and with some small pockets of discussion spotted around the room, the village hall. Highlights of the actual discussion reported by the interpreter gave the following picture of the meeting:

The notables did not come on time to the Council office; moreover, there were some who quit during the meeting time and some present were engaged in gossiping about last year's crop and a certain family's quarrel.

Suddenly a notable said jokingly, "Am I so free as to say that those who are present here do like the theater?"

A huong truong stood up and angrily said, "Well, do you mean that the absentees don't like the theater?" He received no answer other than a laugh. He quit the meeting soon afterwards.

The meeting went on. At last a huong giao said, "Let's have a decision. Shall we concentrate our efforts and money on the Marshal's tomb or shall we have the theater?"

Police Chief said, "My father has told me that the 'Request for Peace' consists only of the ceremony --the theater is not important. It is additional entertainment."

The huong giao again spoke "Well, let's abandon the theater," and then quickly added, "I have to go home now--I'm getting hungry."

Another notable spoke up, "May I suggest that we should have movie pictures that night by requesting them from Long An Province."

Police Chief concluded, "So, we will abandon the theater and will have movies for the children. Is that our decision?"

All participants agreed.

During the time the decision to abandon the theatrical entertainment was being formulated there were hardly more than six to eight villagers present in the Village Hall. The decision, in other words, was made by a small fraction of the notability. This would not have been surprising, of course, if this had been the "ceremonial staff," the agency formally in charge of preparation as well as of the conduct of the ceremony. But as the interpreter reported, the vocal members in this discussion were not members of the ceremonial staff. In fact it appeared that only one official member of the ceremonial staff was present, although the specific positions of each person were not identified.

In a matter of less importance, the Village Council assumed the authority to make the decision by himself. This concerned the expenditure of ceremonial funds--the issue itself was a matter of some 400\$. As the following discussion indicates, it is apparent that the Village Chief felt he had complete authority to conduct the financial negotiations for the notables. This concerned the fee demanded by a sorcerer from an adjacent village who apparently had been employed in previous years for this ceremony. As reported by the interpreter the discussion after it reached the issue of the fee proceeded as follows:

Village Chief: How much would you like to have?

Sorcerer: For the night in the Nhan Hau communal house I received 700\$.

The village chief poured tea for us--the sorcerer not being included since he was standing by the entranceway--and invited us to sit down. Then he turned to the sorcerer "We are not able to pay you more than 300\$."

Sorcerer: I would like very much to share with you the joy of the Peace Request feast but for me 300\$ is not enough so I retire.

The other interpreter who could not refrain said: It is the worship of the village guardian spirit, so you accept, don't you?

Sorcerer: The Police Chief knows that I have to do everything, from writing the Lien to reading the Van-te.

Village Chief: No, here, you will not have to write the Lien nor to read the Van-te.

Sorcerer: Then, I don't know what to say, for there are two more in our group. If I were by myself, I could decide. Moreover, village authorities customarily have to equip the sorcerer with a Khan An (red turban) but I already have it. I am able to diminish the amount by only 100\$.

Village Chief: Well, we will leave the problem there.

Sorcerer: Yes, I know, everything should be settled by the whole council.

(A final settlement of 400\$ was made, the Chief reported sometime later.)

In addition to participating in ways such as those described above, the Village Council also assisted the notables by handling some of the clerical tasks such as recording the financial contributions and inviting various "friends" of the Council, such as the higher administrative authorities up to the Province Chief level, members of the Fundamental School, and even the writer and his colleagues. In 1959 the letter of invitation, apparently a standardized form since the one sent to the writer was a carbon copy, read as follows:

On the 17th of April (lunar calendar), 1959, that is Sunday, the 24th of May, 1959, a ceremony will be organized to make offerings to the "Guardian Spirit" and to pray for peace for the people. You are invited to come on that date to the Dinh of Khanh Hau first to pay respect to the "Guardian Spirit" and attend the theatrical performance; and to have a friendly drink with us.

While the invitation was signed only by the Village Chief in his dual capacity at that time of Chief and Finance Councillor, he signed as the representative of the "Committee for the Organization of the "Peace Ceremony" as well as for the Village Council.

Traditional Ceremony: The Death Anniversary of the Marshal

An important part of social behavior in Viet-Nam is paying respect to one's ancestors at the time of the anniversary of their death. For a family this involves a ceremony before the family altar and perhaps the preparation of a special dinner to which would be invited friends of the family. The writer attended, for example, a death anniversary dinner at noontime for the father of the Village Chief. For a famous personage a similar pattern might be followed on a community-wide scale; thus, each year a village ceremony was held for the famous native son, Marshal Nguyen Huynh Duc.

From the viewpoint of this immediate study, the most interesting feature of this ceremony was the major role taken by the Village Council. In contrast to its largely informal function in the "Request for Peace" ceremony, here the Village Council assumed almost complete charge. Neither the council of notables nor the still present members of the Marshal's family (including the Civil Status Councillor) appeared to even approximate the leadership position of the Village Chief and Deputy Chief. Yet as the writer has been told by those familiar with customs in Viet-Nam the Village Council in theory had no "moral obligation" regarding this celebration. Instead it was part of the functioning of the immediate family.

Why the Village Council assumed a major role in this ceremony might be explained on the basis of at least two observations. According to Professor Hickey, it seemed that more and more the Marshal himself was being viewed as the guardian spirit of the village. Thus, it would be logical to anticipate that the Village Council acting for the council of notables would begin taking an increasing interest. And second, as observations of two death anniversary celebrations showed, this was one village event that attracted the Province Chief who customarily addressed the villagers on this occasion. Thus, it would be logical to assume that the Village Council would serve as the local host for the visit of that distinguished guest.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Assuming these explanations are valid, still not clearly understood is the relationship of this trend to the "east" dinh and to the notables of that dinh. Perhaps this trend, that is, the tendency toward viewing the Marshal as a guardian spirit would be welcomed since, insofar as Professor Hickey could determine, there was even less certainty as to the identification of the guardian spirit (s) for that dinh. But if the Marshal should become the guardian spirit of the Village of Khanh Hau, would that bring about the final consolidation of the two dinhs and their organizations of notables?

The Formal Ceremony. From the viewpoint of a layman, the ceremony seemed to follow the same general pattern as that for the "Request for Peace"; there were the altar boys in their special garb, the offerings of fruit before the altar, the beating of the drum and gong, the playing of traditional music, and the kowtowing of the notables beginning with the highest ranking, the Ke Hien. However, in comparison with the other ceremony observed, it was apparent that this differed on at least two grounds. The Chanh Bai, or conductor of ceremonies, did not assume responsibility for the kowtowing; instead either the Village Chief or Deputy Chief stood by the altar and by pointing to notables standing nearby indicated the sequence. As a result, from what the writer could determine, no special effort was made to maintain the traditional pattern of ranks for this particular ceremony. Second, women as well as men participated, in contrast to the strictly male participation in the other ceremony.

The Criticism of the Province Chief. It was on the occasion of the 1958 celebration that the Province Chief saw fit to reprimand the villagers and in particular the ones he considered responsible for the ceremony because, in his opinion, the preparations had not been sufficient. He was, in fact, so perturbed by the negligence that after making a general reprimand he took advantage of an ensuing reception to make his criticisms more specific.

Before introducing the Province Chief to the villagers (who did not exceed forty in number, a rather small gathering), the Village Chief made a brief speech thanking all who had contributed to the fund drive and the MSUG professors for use of their vehicle in traveling to other communities, and promising to strive more in the months ahead to bring the drive to a successful completion.

According to the interpreter, the Province Chief went almost directly to the major point of his remarks--the failure of the Village Council and members of the Marshal's family to collect sufficient funds. The Province Chief expressed his disappointment in seeing that the monument to such a great hero of the nation was still in poor condition--the altar located under a worn-out roof, and the site of the tomb and the pagoda being too small. Although he laid the heaviest criticism on the two parties--the Village Council and the members of the Marshal's family, he also proclaimed that it was the duty of every citizen to participate in this work--to contribute either money or labor in order to demonstrate his gratitude to the great military chief. In his opinion the monument should be as large as that of Marshal Le van Duyet located in a suburban area of Saigon.

As the interpreter reported, at one point the Province Chief "while digressing praised the former director of the Fundamental School and suggested that everyone should follow the example of that diligent man." And in closing the Province Chief "released the crowd from the critical atmosphere in a more or less smooth way."

However, as soon as the elite--largely the honored guests, members of the Council, and relatives of the Marshal's family --had assembled in a small pavilion nearby for refreshments, the Chief resumed his pattern of criticism, maintaining an outwardly-appearing smiling and satisfied countenance so well that when the interpreter afterwards explained the content of the discussion, this observer was completely surprised. (He had overlooked the only warning sign--the attentiveness, the stand-at-attention behavior of the two members of the Marshal's family.)

In this discussion--rather a monologue since no defense was offered by the villagers--the Chief again complained about the condition of the monument, the lack of flowers on the tomb and altar, and the apparent indifference of the villagers to the celebration. Participation in the celebration must be a duty of all citizens, he stated. In the next celebration he did not want to see the same conditions.

And he would not have but he did not attend. Instead the Provincial Deputy Chief came. He apparently was satisfied with the preparations. The altar was heavily laden with offerings. The hamlet chief had prepared a large wreath of flowers placed on a stand by the side of the altar. The writer observed the village Deputy Chief (then in the new role of Deputy Canton Chief) ordering the Hamlet Chief to put more flowers on the wreath. And more importantly already over half completed was the new shrine--a building that would be the most impressive in the entire village.

### Modern Ceremonies

In contrast to the traditional ceremonies deeply rooted in the social fabric of the community, the modern ceremonies seemed to be identified much more closely with the central government itself coming into the village either to direct the program or, at least, to set its major patterns by outlining the program and then allowing village administrators to participate in the preparations. While these generalizations were based largely on two ad hoc ceremonies, ceremonies that were held for special events, it is fair to say they apply fairly well to those that were becoming part of the political fabric of the new nation of Viet-Nam. For example, since the

establishment of the Republic one of the popular celebrations had become known as the "Double Seven Day," the seventh day of the seventh month which is the anniversary date of the national referendum held in 1954 placing President Diem in power and abolishing the control exercised (at least in theory) by Emperor Bao Dai. As the report of the Village Chief to a superior, probably the Province Chief, showed, the major speech was given by the village Information Agent, a position established, of course, in recent times and certainly not part of the traditional council. The report in its entirety is shown in Figure 25.

Similar reports were sent for other ceremonies and celebrations including some that were purely local such as the opening of the new dinh in the "east" village. Some were prepared in compliance with a specific request contained in instructions received as to how the council should conduct certain ceremonies. In short, village ceremonies in the modern setting were much more closely interwoven with administrative interests of the central authorities.

The two modern ceremonies noted were also in contrast with the traditional ceremonies in that they were of a non-recurring type. One was held in honor of the departing director of the Fundamental School who was greatly admired by the Village Council and the Province Chief. The other was for the visit of President Diem who had been devoting considerable time to visiting villages throughout the southern as well as other sectors of Viet-Nam. Both provided opportunities for gaining additional observations about the functioning of the Village Council.

The Farewell Ceremony. This was an extremely simple, non-ritualistic ceremony consisting merely of a series of short speeches by the key leaders--the Province Chief, the Village Chief, the departing director of the Fundamental School and the new director. It was apparently--and correctly-- anticipated that few villagers would appear since the ceremony was held in the Dinh adjacent to the Village Hall. In the Hall itself was placed several tables for the refreshments to be served following the ceremony.

Perhaps with the exception of the refreshments, the modest farewell ceremony was organized and directed not by the Village Council but by a member of the provincial information service. Yet, with the exception of a small entourage accompanying the Provincial Chief--consisting of the provincial veterinarian who seemed to be a permanent member and the District Chief and the former and new directors, only Khanh

Figure 25

Village Council Report on Double Seven Anniversary  
July, 1957

Republic of Vietnam

Minutes: Of the meeting on the Double Seven day to celebrate the third anniversary of President Diem's government.

At 8 a.m. on July 7, 1957, there was a meeting in the Khanh Hau village office to celebrate the third anniversary of President Diem's government.

The meeting started with the salute to the flag, one minute of silence, and the anthem for President Ngo. The village Chief presided over the meeting. Present were the council members and representatives of all village organizations (such as the Elders and the Republican Young Men and Women) and political units (such as: N. R. M. Citizens' Collectivity, Struggle for Freedom Movement). There were more than 400 attendants. The Citizens' Rally sent only one advisor.

After stating the reasons for the meeting, the village Information Agent presented a report on the history of President Ngo's struggle. During the last three years, our country fellows have enjoyed Freedom and well-being under the Republican regime.

Then on behalf of the President of the meeting, the Chief of the Village Council rose up to thank all the attendants and closed the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:30 a.m. All came back cherishing the victories brought to them by President Ngo during the past three years.

All representatives of various organizations signed the minutes. These minutes have been made in two originals and many copies. All were typed in the Khanh Hau office on July 8, 1957.

[Signed by Village Council Chief as president of the meeting, other members of the village council, and representatives of the groups mentioned in the report plus the young women's group.]

Hau villagers were present--about 40 notables dressed in their traditional, black robes and headwear.<sup>4</sup>

For this program the province information officer had brought a portable public address system powered by a generator located in the information van parked adjacent to the village dinh. In sharp contrast to all other "outsiders" present, the information officer even though serving as master of ceremonies was carelessly dressed, lacking a tie and coat.

To receive the Province Chief the Village had decorated the little street in front of the dinh with flags and two archways covered with straw and palm leaves. Also village school children in their special uniforms of blue shorts and white shirts lined both sides of the village street the last 20 meters. As the Chief walked in, having left his car just short of the residential area, the children came to attention and saluted--in a sharp, militaristic manner, giving evidence of thorough training. At the same time two local musicians began playing traditional music. Beyond the rows of children was the village Self-Guard standing at attention. After "reviewing the squad," the Province Chief marched toward the dinh, with the village and other officials along with the notables tagging behind.

As soon as everyone was seated--with the honored guests in the front row--the master of ceremonies announced the program. It was to be divided into two parts. The first would consist of the national anthem, one minute of silence to dead national heroes, and the veneration song of the President. It would then be followed by the farewell addresses of the Village Chief, the former director, the Province Chief and the new director.

Since on this occasion the Village Chief made what amounted to a major speech--having written it in long hand prior to the meeting, his entire speech has been included as Appendix "E". The theme was praise--first for the new

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<sup>4</sup>Depending upon the nature of the ceremony, the members of the Village Council alternated their dress from the traditional gown to western clothing. During other days either the loose fitting white pyjamas or western shirts and trousers were worn.

province chief and second for the departing director.<sup>5</sup> A few words of welcome for the new director were added at the close.

Following the Village Chief, the departing director limited his speech to an expression of gratitude for the praise given him and thanked all present for the cooperation he had received during his stay in the village. Unlike the Chief he had no prepared speech to offer.

The Province Chief, after mentioning briefly the objective of the ceremony and expressing his appreciation for the services of the director, centered his speech on three major points, all of which concerned the Village and the Province. He reminded the villagers to work hard on the fund drive for the reconstruction of the Marshal's tomb. Second, he promised to punish all corrupt officials in order to clear Long An provincial administration from all of its parasites. And third, he emphasized that unless the plague of corruption along with that of communist subversion would be removed, there would never be freedom and democracy in Viet-Nam.

The ceremony then closed with a few words from the new director: that he admired the high spirit of reconstruction in Long An province; that he regretted not being able to devote full time to the School; and that he would try to continue the work of his predecessor.

After refreshments in the Village Hall, the Province Chief motored to the newly constructed kindergarten and then on to the Fundamental School. Included in the inspection tour were the village officials and honored guests.

From the viewpoint of the writer, interested in the implications of the ceremony for a study of village administration, what was most interesting was the overwhelming predominance of the outside, superior authorities. Here was a quite simple ceremony that was intended, the writer assumes, as an opportunity for the Village Officials and the villagers to express their appreciation for the exceptionally deep interest

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<sup>5</sup>In this study the impact of this director on the Village has not been discussed. But there was no doubting the sincerity of the praise bestowed on him by the Village Chief. He had worked hard to assist the villagers. Unfortunately --from the viewpoint of the villagers--his replacement, who only devoted part-time to the School since he was stationed in Saigon, failed to maintain the service role and good rapport, at least as observed up to the closing days of this study.

this Director had taken in the community and in the welfare of the people. Yet the ceremony itself became enclosed in the "information service" package of the higher authorities--the loudspeaker system with its microphones and noisy power generator near by, the control of the ceremony by the slovenly dressed master of ceremonies brought in from the "outside" and the likewise overwhelming attention given to the Province Chief rather than to the departing Director. In short, what the ceremony appeared to have become was merely an excuse for the Province Chief to give a political speech in the Village of Khanh Hau.

The Visit of the President. It had been customary for the President to make relatively frequent tours and visits throughout the rural areas in the lowlands as well as in the highlands. In part, of course, these were security motivated --to show the rural residents that the President takes a direct, personal interest in their affairs. On such tours a popular routine was to inspect any new community development projects--in the summer of 1958 Khanh Hau became scheduled for a visit.

Local preparations for this visit involved primarily dressing up the Village--preparing a path from the Village Hall to the canal, cleaning and polishing the village altar, constructing the large speaker's stand, decorating the school courtyard--the site of the speech--, designing and constructing archways, implanting flag posts along the village road, and purchasing a gift. Without doubt higher level preparations also involved various aspects such as arranging transportation for villagers from about nine other villages, coordination of visits with others, and security and traffic clearance, as well as supervision of local arrangements in Khanh Hau.

As it turned out, the visit included a short speech, the presentation of a gift to the President, and the "inspection" of the canal constructed in 1957. All told, the President remained in the Village about one hour.

From the viewpoint of activities in the Village, the visit pointed up several features of administrative operations involving largely the Village Council, the Hamlet Chiefs, the Canton Chief, and the District Chief. The most interesting aspect was the broad grant of authority bestowed by the District Chief on the Village Council.

According to the village Deputy Chief, the Village Council had been authorized by the District Chief to spend what he thought was essential to prepare a proper reception since being visited by the President was a great honor for the village.

Afterwards, the Village was to submit its statement of costs to the Province for reimbursement.

And the preparations were financed in that way with the exception that the expenditures were made out of the personal funds of the Deputy Chief rather than the Village Council treasury since the latter was insufficient. Two months later, the Province made the full reimbursement. According to the Deputy Chief the final costs was about 55,000\$--a considerable increase over the original estimate of the Village Council of 20,000\$.

In addition to the responsibility for financial matters, the Deputy Chief also assumed operating responsibility for all local preparations. According to him in principle the Village Chief was the responsible officer but he himself was actually in charge of the ceremony--presumably because, as the social and economics officer, such duties fell within his area of council affairs.

In turn he enjoyed a well-organized "staff" consisting of the six Hamlet Chiefs. As projects developed, Hamlet Chiefs would be put in charge. One, for example, supervised the polishing of the various altar pieces, and another the purchasing of supplies. Both volunteers and paid workers were grouped to assist the Hamlet Chiefs in their duties.

Whether part of the official project staff, the Canton Chief (who stayed in office for less than one year) made one of his rare visits to the village on the day the mobile platform, obtained from another village, was to be set up. During that day much of his time was devoted to supervising that particular task.

The villagers in general were brought into the preparations in at least two other ways. Every Hamlet, the National Revolutionary Movement, the People's Union Party, and the Youth Group were expected to construct and decorate one archway each for the village road. Second (a matter that evoked some complaints mentioned at least to the MBUG staff members) each household was expected to purchase a small flag for waving as the President proceeded along the roadway. The flags cost about 10\$ each.

In a sense the actual day of the visit was an anti-climax, for the visit had been delayed considerably beyond the time when the Council members thought the President would arrive. As a result by the time of arrival--about six weeks after the guessed date--many of the preparations had begun to deteriorate. (As explained at one time, the delay was due to the desire of

the President to wait until another village on the scheduled tour had completed construction of a canal that was to be inaugurated by him.)

The visit of the President went off smoothly, in accordance with the anticipated schedule. A good half-hour before the opening of the ceremony, the crowd was well assembled. Trucks and buses had brought villagers from the surrounding communities. Upon his arrival in the Village, the President was escorted to the platform in the school yard by the Chief of Province and other administrators. The District Chief--in military uniform --served as chairman of the program. Following the Presidential address, the Village Chief, the Deputy Chief and the village scholar (the Giau Su) presented a lacquer painting to the President. A brief inspection of the canal completed the visit.

The role of the Village Council during the visit merits noting for the symbolism it suggested relative to the current pattern of relationships between the central government and village councils. In the opinion of the writer, during the visit the Council was more closely identified with the traditional council of notables than with the government of Vietnam. All five members wore the traditional garb rather than western clothing as worn by the President, and, too, all were grouped with the other notables of the village rather than with the administrators sitting on the platform. Insofar as the writer could determine, the only function of the Village Council during the program was to assist in the presentation of the gift--and in that instance the key role was assumed not by the Chief of the Council but by the village scholar; the Chief and Deputy Chief served merely as porters.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>At one time the Village Chief indicated his assumption that the council members and some other notables would be sitting on the platform. Also at that time the writer and other members of the MSUG study team were invited to wear the traditional robes, for as the Chief explained, this would identify the groups with the villagers. The French, he added, had never put on the robes. His suggestion, he also added, had received the approval of the District Chief. However, counsel obtained from the central government through other channels recommended that the MSUG visitors wear Western clothing.

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The writer hesitates to call the following comments "conclusions" for such a term implies a more systematic and comprehensive analysis and evaluation. Instead, the writer wants to describe some impressions he developed on the basis of observing these ceremonies. These impressions, to be sure, were reenforced somewhat by his general contact with the Council and its administrative activities.

What did these ceremonies point up about the role of the Village Council or about its operations? This is the question to which the following observations are directed.

It was apparent that in all four ceremonies the Village Council did have some role, that is, it became involved in some way. But what also became apparent was that with the exception of the very traditional "Peace" ceremony, its role was greatly overshadowed by the activities of outside agencies. To wit, in the Death Anniversary ceremony, the highlight was the action of the Province Chief--not only the fact that he was going to participate but also the way in which he did. In short, he took advantage of the occasion to reprimand the local leaders, including the Village Council, for their failure to put on a better show. In the Farewell Ceremony, the entire program including the preparations was dominated by the outsiders in the form of the Information Service making the arrangements and the Province Chief in effect commanding the group. And in the reception for the President, the Village Council almost disappeared from the scene. Rather than identifying itself with the "government" by wearing western clothing it reverted to the traditional garb, the dress of the notables. During the ceremony its only function was to carry the lacquer painting when the Giau Su made the presentation.

Second, to the extent that these limited contacts with the village organization of notables enabled the writer to make any judgments, it is his view that the Village Council, even though having become separated from the notability as a result of the actions of the central government was a vital factor in the functioning of the notables. This was logical in part because it had useful resources--such as clerical assistance for handling correspondence and collecting financial contributions. But also because the Village Council members were more often than other notables to be found in the Village Hall and as a result became the operating headquarters for various matters, such as negotiations with the sorcerer, concerned with ceremonial activities. The decision of the central government to establish the council as an appointive agency had not seemed to remove it from the realm of local social affairs.

## The Fund Drive for the Marshal's Tomb

In the preceding discussion of the "Death Anniversary" some references were made to the concern of the Province Chief about the condition of the Tomb. During the speech in which he reprimanded the local leaders for their failure to have better arrangements--more flowers, more people attending, etc.--he also expressed the wish for a new Tomb equal in size and grandeur to that of another famous marshal, Le van Duyet, located in the suburban area of Saigon. Actually it had been the hope of the Village Chief that by the time for this celebration such a tomb would have been constructed for during the preceding months he had been working (it would not be any more fair to say "working hard" than to say "working only a little" since the writer did not observe his activities that closely) as a member of a fund drive campaign committee to obtain money needed for such a major project--a project whose estimated cost was over four times as large as the current village budget. Yet although his goal was not reached for the 1958 celebration, the Chief was still optimistic and his optimism paid off--by the time of the celebration in the following year adjoining the tomb stood a fairly majestic shrine. Furthermore, plans were in the offing for other buildings as well as for repairs to the original Tomb. It was apparent the goal had been attained.

### Origin of the Plan and the Campaign Committee

According to the Village Chief and Deputy Chief, the idea to make some improvements in the Tomb originated with them. After some discussion, they called a meeting of Hamlet Chiefs and village elders for the purpose of getting the reactions of the villagers. About 50 persons attended. The decision was to ask the Province Chief for the funds.<sup>7</sup> In sympathy with the proposal the Province Chief offered 10,000\$ and suggested that the Village should organize a fund drive to cover the Province.

Shortly afterwards the fund drive committee was organized during a special meeting called by the Village Council. Invited were various "respectable" persons from within the Village as well as from other locations, such as the District office. After the District Chief declined to serve as chairman, the village Ke Hien was chosen. The local representative of the NRM volunteered to serve in an official capacity since he

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<sup>7</sup>According to the Village Chief, the family records of the Marshal show that in 1927 the French government authorized the Village to repair the tomb and paid the costs.

viewed this as an important community project. In addition, the committee included the Village Chief and Deputy Chief, the Director of the primary school, a teacher from the Fundamental School, an ex-director of the primary school residing in the province town, and a province town businessman--a jeweler--who was, according to the Village Chief, well-known in business circles. Apparently also at this meeting a goal of 300,000\$ was set for the campaign (raised later to 400,000\$ to include road improvements); and a target date for completion of actual construction was also chosen. When the writer asked if they thought the goal could be achieved, the Village Chief (with what the writer took to be a wry grin) replied "If we can build a canal, we can build a Tomb."<sup>8</sup>

Seen from the viewpoint of the Village, the most active members of the campaign committee were the Chief and Deputy Chief of the Village Council. Although it had been anticipated that the District Chief would accompany the committee to the other districts, most visits were made without his participation. This might have been caused in part by one fortuitous circumstance--the Village Chief discovered he could obtain the use of the MSU vehicle; hence without going first to the District Office, it became customary for the Chief and Deputy Chief, and at times for other committee members, accompanied by the writer or his observer, to head directly for other localities. The Province Chief might have had a more active role than appeared. He had notified all district chiefs and provincial services of the proposed campaign and, as will be explained shortly, he made a major decision toward the close of the drive. However, the bulk of the direct solicitations were made by the village leaders.

#### Activities of the Campaign Committee

Although no complete record was maintained, the writer was able to follow the work of the committee-- (in effect, as it proved, of the Village Chief and Deputy Chief rather than of a committee as such)-- by going along on trips and by periodically inquiring as to the progress. When accompanying the committee, the writer attempted to prepare some verbatim reports in order to illustrate the committee "at work."

The First Meeting With a District Chief. Early in the campaign, the Village Chief planned a major drive including visits to the chief of the district in which was located the

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<sup>8</sup>The canal project is briefly explained in the "Public Works" section of the next chapter.

provincial headquarters and to one remote district. For this he requested the writer to make available both of the MSUG vehicles. This turned out to be the only time when such a large group was organized. Ordinarily, campaign trips were made whenever a MSUG car might be available--a matter not necessarily known far in advance--and by whomever was available, which usually were the two leading officials of the Council and sometimes the former school director. For most of this day the group included seven persons; one more, the head of provincial agricultural extension services, might have been included but he was absent from the office when the others called upon him.<sup>9</sup> This group consisted of the Village Chief and Deputy Chief, the director of the primary school, a teacher at the Fundamental School, a former director of the primary school living in the province town, the Ke Hien of Khanh Hau, and the merchant in the province town who, according to the Chief, would be handling the campaign in that area.

As explained by the district chief below, this visit showed that the Village Chief had prepared a recording and receipt system but that it proved unacceptable to the district chiefs on whom most dependence was to be placed for organizing the local drives. According to the plan, a series of receipts were to be issued each district chief who in turn would use them for controlling the collection of donations. Major contributions, which in practice were those amounting to 1,000\$ or above, merited a special procedure: the contributor could write his own statement on a page of a bound, red leather covered book. The first contributor was the Province Chief.

Especially in view of later collection activities, what was interesting during this early meeting was that the main speaker for the committee was neither the Chief nor Deputy Chief but the former director of primary school. Roughly 80 percent of the committee side of the discussion could be attributed to this one member, and most of the remainder to the other members on an equal basis except for the Ke Hien who said little if anything at all. Although a verbatim report was not made, the discussion followed fairly closely this pattern:

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<sup>9</sup>Perhaps the main reason for including the Extension Service Director was to strengthen the committee for this particular trip which was to include a visit to a district chief who was his close friend.

Committee member: We have come to solicit your help in order to obtain successful results in handling the drive in your district. We would like to have you bring this drive to the knowledge of the people and distinguished persons in your district.

District Chief: (After reading the letter of the Province Chief authorizing the drive.)

On behalf of the district of Tan An I offer 3,000\$ to the drive. I am ready to help you. I will establish a sub-committee for the drive in my district. It will be in charge of inviting the people to contribute to the drive. Collected money will be centralized in the district headquarters.

Committee member: We would like you to notify all the village councils and cantons in your district that there is such a benevolent work. As to organizing the drive in Tan An town, we would like to present to you the former secretary of Binh Lap village who is known in the business circle. For the collection we have prepared stubbed receipts.

District Chief: I am not a cashier; therefore, I am not authorized to issue receipts. You will issue the receipts based on a list that will be sent to you... How will the repair of the tomb be carried out? How much do you expect to raise?

Committee member: We are planning on rebuilding the tomb, constructing a new temple, and repairing the road leading to the tomb. We hope to raise 400,000\$. In addition man-power will be offered by volunteers.

In essence the reactions of this district chief were repeated by other district chiefs, that is, after reading the letter of the Chief of Province, the district chief would make an offer--usually only 1,000\$ rather than 3,000\$--and would then discuss briefly the setting up of the local committee. However, a meeting with another district chief five months later, September, 1958, showed a different attitude toward the receipt procedure. The report on this meeting also showed that the

chiefs apparently had moved forward in organizing the local campaign without waiting for the village committee, an action indicating support being given by the Province Chief.

Village Chief: Our committee has been ordered by the Province chief to report to him every month. Here is our report for the past month.

District Chief: I have ordered all villages to try their best to help you. They have formed their own committees and will send lists of donators as well as the money to me when they are ready. What would you suggest for me to do in order to accelerate the affair?

Former director of primary school now identified as treasurer of committee: Well, is it too much that we beg you to call here all rich merchants and land-owners someday. You can tell them to help us. You see, your words weigh well.

District Chief: All right. I will invite them to help you... May I suggest that you send me some scores of receipts that bear the signature of the committee.

(Having a supply with them, the committee gave him a set of 50.)

Village Chief: We will come back in two weeks.

District Chief: Oh no. Needless to come back here. When all will be ready I will send the money and the lists to the Province. So please get in touch with the Province Chief. Don't bother to come back here.

Cooperation of Thu Thua District Chief. The tactic of holding a special meeting in each district to which would be invited the "wealthy and the landowners" originated in a discussion at the Thu Thua District Chief's office. En route to this meeting, the Village Council Chief stopped to pick up the district representative of the National Revolutionary Movement who as quoted below made the specific proposal almost at the beginning of the conference--and, insofar as the writer was aware, at the beginning of his participation in this drive.

NRM District Representative: We suggest an abnormal solution for collecting money. We suggest contacting directly every rich person in the villages instead of trusting this work to the village councils.

District Chief: Yes, we should contact every rich person in the village.

NRM District Representative: It is better if in each village the people are notified in advance about the aim of the campaign and the date of our arrival, so please favor us by sending a circular to every village.

District Chief: I have already sent a circular to every village in the district already. I believe the delegation should choose someone to follow closely this work in every village; for example, you, deputy chief, you are not as busy as the chief--I think you can do that work.

Deputy Chief: (Smiling but not enthusiastic) Yes

The discussion went into other aspects of the drive and of other matters. Gradually it returned to the problem of contacting the rich villagers.

NRM District Representative: As to getting money from the rich, here is what I am thinking: that if we go as a group to make the requests, the work is more effective for the miser can't refuse.

Village chief of the district town: I suggest that the District Chief invite every rich man to attend a general meeting here. In front of the District Chief and the other honorable men, the miser could not refuse.

NRM Representative: Yes, you are right; we should invite the rich mill owners, the rich merchants, the rich Chinese, etc.

District Chief: That's right. I'll call them here, some day. I will let you know the date.

The Meeting with Second Richest Resident of Khanh Hau. It so happened that on the preceding day some of the Khanh Hau members of the campaign committee did attempt to "shame" or at least bring social pressure to bear on one rich, in fact, the "second richest," villager. Perhaps it was their failure that led them to favor having the district chief in the future participate in such encounters.

For this meeting the Village Chief brought along three other key villagers--Ke Hien, the most honorable and the richest villager; the director of the Fundamental School; and the deputy chief of the Village Council. It was not until after the meeting--and perhaps in order to save face--that the Village Chief described the character of this particular villager: according to the Chief, this "second richest man" was one of the most disliked men in the entire village--he did not belong to any organizations and he was not generous. Months later, it became known to another member of the study group that this individual was viewed also as a leader of the major opposition faction to the Village Council. The petitioning proceeded as follows.

School Director: How much rain water have you now?

Solicitee: Not much thank you.

Village Chief: (Pointing to Ke Hien who had just entered) The richest man comes here to see the second richest. Mr. Long, you certainly know the purpose of this delegation. We have come here to request money for the reconstruction of the Marshal's tomb. It's the common affair of Long An province and particularly that of our own Village. We have brought here the record of donors. We hope you will give us some money. It is up to you to decide how much.

School Director: After giving money, we hope that you will join us in the campaign drive.

Solicitee: I am too old; my blood is bad. (After reading the names of the donators) Nobody yet in the village?

Deputy Chief: Some days before, we talked with the Can Giuoc district chief. He has nine children so he could give us only a small sum of money but he has promised to support us. How good he is!

Ke Hien: Mr. , how much will you give the delegation now? 5,000\$, 3,000\$, or 2,000\$?

Solicitee: I am able to give 1,000\$.

Chief: The delegation has assumed that you would give 3,000\$.

Solicitee: You see, we should gather wind to make a storm.

All others: ...please add some more thousands.  
(But Mr. remained silent and sighed.)

Chief: Now, Mr. , you sign here, on this page.

Other Collection Efforts. A few observations can be made about other solicitations made by the committee, namely, by the Chief and Deputy Chief when they had the opportunity to borrow a MSUG vehicle.

In contrast to the minimum of 1,000\$ struck at the district level, heads of the various provincial services were less inclined to contribute. In a sense apologizing by using the now familiar adage "Let's gather wind to make a storm," the head of the Tax Service donated 300\$; later the same day the head of Reconstruction Service donated 500\$ while employees gave an additional 500\$, and the Agrarian Reform, 370\$.

The efforts of the Chief and Deputy also extended to non-governmental agencies as well as to non-residents of Long An province. In Long An province town, on one occasion the two visited first the office of the political party, Tap Doan Cong Dan, where after merely reading the provincial letter of authorization the President made a donation of 1,000\$ and, second, the head of the President of the League of Women of Long An Province who apologetically offered 200\$ and upon being asked prepared a list of the members of the League. The morning drive ended with an unsuccessful visit to the office of the provincial inspector of primary schools. The inspector apologetically explained;

I have already received the note of the Province Chief, I have sent a copy of that note with mine attached to the teachers, but you see that we are poor school teachers. At the end of the month, we do not have money to contribute. I promise you that on the beginning of the next month, I will collect money for the fund drive delegation.

I am very glad to be able to participate in this affair. I have known that we should prove our gratitude to passed heroes. I remember the first day I came here. I went to Khanh Hau to visit the Marshal's tomb. But I went there incognito, because I didn't want to disturb you.

On another day visits were made to the adjoining province of Dinh Truong province to solicit funds from the former district chief of Thu Thua and from absentee landowners. The Chief, who proved to be a close friend of the Village Chief, enthusiastically donated 1,000\$; but one landowner refused--saying he could not read and must wait for the advice of his son who was away--and the other somewhat begrudgingly offered 100\$, saying it was useless to put his name in the record of donors.

### Results of the Drive

By September, 1959, some 16 to 18 months after the beginning of the fund drive, it was evident that the goal had not only been achieved, but surpassed, since the contributions amounted to 600,000\$ or 200,000\$ in excess of the estimate. However most of the money did not come from the network of voluntary committees in the various districts: according to the Civil Status Councillor, the fund included three major sources: 100,000\$ raised locally by the committee; 240,000\$ offered by the National Institute of Archeology; and 250,000\$ to be obtained in 1960 from the Mutual Assistance Fund of Long An province as authorized by the Province Chief. Thus it is evident that much of the success of the drive was due to agencies outside the Village Council. By summer, 1959, in fact, the Village Council Chief, who had been strongly optimistic prior to that time, was willing to lower his sights to about one-half the original goal, that is, to a sum of 200,000\$. Whether the solicitation from the national agency was initiated by the Province Chief or some one else was not determined.

x x x

Perhaps the most valuable part of this description of the Tomb drive are the various conversations. For anyone interested in noting how the council members would discuss a problem with such persons as one of the richest village notables or a district chief of another district, and confer with his own district chief, these provide some indication of the pattern. However, there are a few additional observations that are worth offering.

If, as the Village Chief claimed, he and the Deputy Chief were the first to think of this project--or at least to believe in the possibility of carrying it out--it shows that at least some local officials possess considerable initiative and willingness to undertake a major community project. This project, it was noted, equaled in cost the total Village Council expenditures for a period of four years. In part they got this faith in themselves from their experience in constructing the canal "If we can build a canal, we can build a tomb."

In the opinion of the writer this adventure also confirms the generally typical character of a committee. Here was a case in which the village went through the procedure of creating a special committee, yet the work itself was done by one or two men. In this project, it was the Village Chief who at least at the village level "carried the ball" (to be sure more than likely the Province Chief and District Chief also helped). In short, while a committee existed, it functioned no more in this rural community setting than the writer believes they do in most. Its main value was helping to give the drive an aura of responsibility.

This aura of responsibility was dependent, however, largely on the role of the Province Chief. It was, in fact, the Province Chief that opened up the doors of other districts and, thus, other villages to the drive. This was achieved partly by his making the first donation and writing his own statement in the contribution register, but largely because he communicated his interest in the drive to the administrators under his authority. Without this the Village Council probably would have failed.

It was interesting that the method for contacting other villages was through the district offices. The Village Chief depended entirely upon the district chiefs as the leaders of the communities. In part this was perhaps a practical solution since the Village Chief could not visit all of the other 100 villages. But it also points up the key role that the district chief had vis a vis community life. He appeared as the highest administrator who had continuing working relationships with the village leaders.

## Chapter IX

### Other Activities of the Village Council

In essence, this chapter represents the completion of the survey of activities being performed, or more accurately expressed, that the writer found being performed, by the Village Council. It is fairly certain that these complete the gamut of Village Council activities, at least of those recognized as part of their official and customary responsibilities.

#### Agriculture

It would not be fair to say that the Village Council looked upon "agriculture" as a clearly defined function, as it did, for example, upon law enforcement or even upon the settling of disputes. Yet because the major industry of the village was agriculture, the Village Council could not keep from becoming involved in some aspects of it. In brief, what the writer noted was (1) the information role of the Village Council; (2) the handling of the agriculture credit program; (3) "on the spot" adjustments on rental agreements; (4) the interest of the Council in meeting the water crisis; and (5) the general attitude of the Council toward provincial technical assistance in agriculture.

#### The Information Role of the Village Council

From the examination of the general correspondence files, that is, the "incoming" and "outgoing" files, it became apparent that the Village Council played a fairly significant role in both the collection of information for the central government and in the distribution of it to the farmers and other residents of the community. Some appreciation of the overall pattern that might be found throughout a year can be obtained from the first three months of 1958.

Collection of Information for the Central Government. Based on the experiences of these three months, it would be fair to say that during one year the Village Council would probably receive from 50 to 70 requests from higher administrative offices for information about agricultural activities in the Village. As the following run-down will show, these requests varied considerably in nature, from statistics about production to estimates of anticipated loans to the functional use of all

lands within the village. While most of the requests came from the District office, a few came from other agencies such as the Civic Action agency and an interprovincial office of tax inspection.

In January, 1958, the Village Council received the following requests for data about agricultural activities. On the 16th the District Chief wrote a general letter to all villages about the administration of the agricultural credit program for the coming year. While the purpose of his letter was to obtain estimates as to the amount of money needed, he added a few comments about the past year's program: that it had been administered too late and too haphazardly, and that for the coming year the Councils should make a better effort to determine actual needs. The following day the District forwarded copies of the standardized form to be used in submitting the estimates. Also during the same month the District Chief sought information about prices of agricultural products and data about the production of fish. For the latter another standardized report form was included in the request. Also during January, 1958, the interprovincial inspector of taxes requested all villages to submit certain specified information about business activities in the villages, which for Khanh Hau probably was limited largely to the rice mills.

In February the District Chief, marking his correspondence "urgent" and giving a deadline of three days after the date of the letter, sought data about the area of communal fields and lands, waste land, and idle land, and the number of uninhabited houses. Obviously the information was sought by agencies concerned with resettlement of refugees or other groups. Likewise seeking "immediate" responses, later on in the same month the District Chief asked for reports on the amount of the last paddy harvest and certain additional data, including the estimated amount marked for export or for sale outside the village. Near the end of the month came a request for the names of all landowners having over 100 hectares.

Early in March came a follow-up letter concerning the information about the landowners, this being marked "confidential." A few days later the District submitted a reporting form on which information about horses between ages of five and six was to be recorded. The following day came a request for information concerning the number of rice mills and sawmills and the number of building permits issued by provincial authorities. A deadline eight days later was set. Three days later the Village received a form in which to report its census of licenses for 1958. A week later came another form regarding the real estate in the village. And on the following day a general census report was sent by the Civic Action agency

requesting certain data in order to build a program of development. The Council was expected to report such complex data as: the relative importance of agriculture, commerce, and industry as sources for family income; the standards of living (proportion in "better off," "sufficient," and "insufficient") and the availability of educational facilities and the number of illiterates. On the same day was sent a general letter by the District Chief criticizing all villages for reporting "imaginary" data as to crop production and stressing the importance of obtaining correct figures for studies of the nation's economy and foreign trade. The letter closed with a request for accurate information in one week.

Most of the requests probably could have been answered without too much research; yet occasionally a request such as the living standards of all the villagers or the amount of illiteracy or the estimates of crop production for the coming year, if conscientiously handled, would have required several days of painstaking collection and tabulation of data. As indicated by the criticism of the District Chief some villages attempted to avoid such labor by pulling figures "out of the sky."

#### Distribution of Information from the Central Government.

Especially with the scarcity of mass communications, it was not surprising to find that the government depended heavily on administrative channels and in particular on the village councils for the distribution of information (as well as of propaganda). During the three months, January through March, 1958, it in fact submitted at least 17 different items to the village councils for what it usually tagged "universalization." Although most of these were identified as originating with the District Chief more than likely he was functioning merely as a forwarding agent.

Early in January, 1958, the village councils received an announcement to be posted regarding some aspect of the Agrarian Reform program. Two weeks later came an "urgent" request to "universalize and broadcast" the new exchange rates for piasters and various foreign currencies. This was identified as having originated in the Office of the Presidency. Two days later came an announcement from the District Chief, also for universalization, stating that the three major oil companies were beginning to distribute a new highpowered gas that would sell for 6.30\$ per liter. A day later the District Chief forwarded an announcement from the Secretary of Land and Agricultural Reform explaining the procedures to be used in obtaining public lands from the Government. (The announcement had actually been issued five weeks prior to the date of the endorsement made by the District Chief.)

After an elapse of two weeks, another announcement came from a central government agency, the General Commissariat for Agricultural Extension, containing a warning for villagers who had purchased animals from the government that any attempts to resell would be considered violations of the contract and the seller would be subject to imprisonment as had occurred to sellers in Ban Me Thuot. The village councils were asked to "universalize" the warning. About the same time an announcement regarding the intent of the Government to survey all lands was received from the Department of Land and Agrarian Reform. Copies had been sent to all district chiefs and the provincial Cadastral Service while the original was submitted to the Province Chief. Village councils were expected to post the announcement. And shortly thereafter came a circular letter from the same national department on the subject of the Agrarian Reform program. Village councils were again asked to "universalize." Close to the end of February the District Chief requested the village councils to notify all residents that the fish hatchery had a supply of "fast growing" fish for sale. Another announcement regarding the procedure for applying for national public lands and a request to avoid cutting timber since the forests must be preserved ended the flow for February.

Requests in March began with a letter concerning the need for developing counter-propaganda about agrarian reform. Village councils were asked by the District Chief to develop the necessary explanations and to forward all questions asked by the farmers to the District. A few days later came another request from the District Chief: the councils were asked to explain the policy of the government regarding the determination of rental rates on multicrop land and the procedure for referring any disagreement between landlord and tenant to the district and provincial committees on agricultural affairs. Somewhat unusual, since it amounted to free advertisement for a particular business, was the request of the District Chief to universalize an announcement regarding a fertilizer offered for sale by a named business in Saigon. The Chief stated that the Pasteur Institute in Saigon had recognized the fertilizer manufactured by the business as the best available in the market. Included in the announcement was the Saigon price for the fertilizer. In contrast to the general pattern of communications, that is, central government-to-village council with the endorsement of the district chief and oftentimes the province chief, was an announcement from the chief of Agricultural Credit Service in the neighboring province of Dinh Tuong. How this announcement got to the Thu Thua District Chief was not explained; it consisted of a copy of a letter written by the agricultural service in My Tho to a village council in My Tho province. However, the Thu Thua District

Chief endorsed a copy with the statement "for necessary explanations to the farmers." The letter explained why the village council should refuse to exempt debtors from paying interest on agricultural loans. Two other announcements ended the March group: one coming from the District Chief concerned the reclamation of private forests; and the other originating in the Department of Economy discussed the transportation of cinammon.

### The Agricultural Credit Program

During the period of this study the agricultural credit program made a tremendous impact on the village. For 1957 the total amount of loans for Khanh Hau farmers was not more than 150,000\$; but by 1959 the amount was about 600,000\$. While most of the controls over the program were located in higher offices, the village councils nevertheless participated in the administration, serving largely as the agents with which the original applications were filed. The major functions of the council in processing the loans were to certify as to the character of the individual and to make the initial judgment whether the applicant qualified, that is, whether he was either a landowner or held a rental agreement for the coming year. According to the Khanh Hau Village Chief, neither of these steps caused the Village Council any problems.

Although the writer did not attempt to study this activity in any detail, there are two observations that can be offered on the basis of practices noted in Khanh Hau. The first concerns the highly informal procedure of processing the loans and second the problem of making reasonably accurate estimates about the number of loan applications to be expected.

From correspondence found in the village files, it was apparent that a fairly formalistic and systematized plan had been established for the functioning of the village council during the loan application phase. A copy of a letter from the central government office of the Director General of Agricultural Credit to province chiefs and provincial chiefs of agricultural councils carefully explained the objective of the loans--to aid the farmers lacking funds of their own. The letter in fact stated this objective in terms of a motto "Loans to be given to the right person for the right purpose at the right time." Two months afterwards another letter came to the Village Council. In this the District Chief described the timing of the loan procedure: in March and April the applications for loans were to be received and considered; and in May and June the loans were to be distributed and necessary contracts completed. The letter also pointed out that at the village level the loans were to be administered by a committee

consisting of the Village Council and two other villagers, one representing the tenants and one the landowners. Thus, it is fair to assume that an effort had been made to provide for a process by which loan applications would be carefully evaluated and screened by the village representatives as well as by higher authorities. However, the practices in Khanh Hau in 1958 seemed to vary considerably from the spirit of these instructions. Three observations can be offered in support of this "impression."

First, while the instructions indicated that a special committee should be created, according to the Deputy Chief, the committee consisted only of the members of the Village Council.

The second variation was the processing of the loans. No evidence was given that the committee such as it was ever functioned. Instead individual members of the council sat at the application desk and signed the loans as they were being made. In short no plan existed for obtaining all applications and then submitting them to the committee for its review.

And finally, and perhaps the most serious (at the time at least) was the "first come, first served" spirit displayed by the Council. According to the Village Chief, there was no value in making a general announcement about the day for filing loans to the entire village since only a limited number of applications could be received--the village had been given a quota of 50 loans, a limitation that was reenforced by the fact that only 50 application forms had been sent to the village. Hence, instead of "universalizing" the loan application date, the announcement had been made by "rumor," the Village Chief explained.

The other observation about the loan procedure throws a better light on the probable results. As explained by the Deputy Chief, the Council had submitted an estimate of 50 as the number of loans that would be needed. Hence, it had been given a maximum of 100,000\$ for use in the village. However, this did not prove to be the actual limit. Instead, additional loan forms were obtained--the Deputy Chief obtained 50 and later on the Finance Councillor another 50. These were sought after it became apparent that a great number of requests would be made.

Thus, any potential criticism of the Council for its variation from a regularized process for considering loans was apparently avoided by obtaining enough forms for all who were interested. The higher authorities, in effect, probably saved the Council from being sharply criticized by the villagers.

The other point about this observation concerns the apparent misjudgment of the Council in making the original estimate. Although it is difficult to make exact estimates, given the relatively small size of Khanh Hau village, it would not have been too difficult to have made almost a house-to-house inquiry about the desire for loans. Instead, it appears that the Council was guilty of submitting some unsound data.

To these observations should be added a note about the change made in the following year. Perhaps because higher authorities were unhappy with inaccurate estimates, this change was made: the hamlet chiefs in all villages were asked to prepare lists of farmers interested in obtaining loans and to distribute the application forms.

Hardly any observations were made of the final step in the credit program, that is, the collection of the loans. The correspondence files indicated that the higher authorities were at times considerably concerned over the delinquencies--at one time central or provincial authorities offered a one per cent commission to governmental employees who collected loans; village officials were apparently to benefit from this plan either directly or by giving assistance to the district and other administrators who normally fall within the definition of regular employees. At another time Khanh Hau along with all other villages was asked to speed up collections and to submit a special list of farmers who refused to pay even though possessing the funds. It is also evident that some confusion had developed as to the interest charges. According to the message from the District Chief in January, 1958, some villages had failed to collect interest. Later, in March, Village Councils were authorized to accept applications for renewals of loans since crop damage had made payment difficult.

From what was observed little could be deduced about the collection process. The function of collecting seemed to rest largely on the Village Clerk who prepared the necessary receipts and then obtained the signature of the Village Chief, even when this required going to the home or somewhere else outside of the Village Hall. Occasionally, the Clerk admitted, he would issue the receipts without getting the signature of the Chief --presumably he would sign in the name of the Chief. Members of the Self-Guard had been used to notify residents that payment should be made. In 1959 payments were being collected as early as March for loans not due until June. Part of the local sales appeal to pay in advance was indicated by a comment made somewhat in jest by the Village Chief in March, 1959, at a time when several farmers were in the hall: "Anyone wants to get a new loans? Make repayments quick. Then you will get new loans early."

### "On-the-Spot" Adjustments in Rental Agreements

In 1958 because of the drouth, farmers in many sectors of the South faced a severe reduction in their income from the rice crop. In recognition of the coming crisis, the Thu Thua District Chief (and probably district chiefs in general) delegated authority to the village councils to make "on-the-spot" evaluations of crop damage and when possible the final adjustments in rental agreements as well. As stated by the District Chief in his general letter, this delegation of authority was made in order to speed up the program. If necessary, appeals still could be made to the District and Province--a special agricultural committee was to be established for that purpose.

In Khanh Hau according to the Village Chief this authorization was used to its fullest extent, that is, both evaluations and final judgment were made within the Village and without any appeals to higher authorities. All told about 100 claims were submitted to the Village Chief and 70 adjustments were actually made. (These figures were given about eight months later from memory.) To administer the program, a special meeting was first held for the purpose of appointing representatives of the tenants and landowners. As the Chief recalled, three representatives of each group were selected; however during the three days of claim adjustments in the fields not all members were always present, the Chief added. He also commented that the committee could have been larger but that a total of seven members including himself, was large enough.

### The Interest of the Village Council in Meeting the Water Crisis

What is interesting about this incident is that it was the Village Council rather than any other community organization that met this particularly important crisis. It is also interesting to note the organizational mechanism established for carrying out this program.

During the spring of 1958 members of the Village Council became increasingly concerned about the apparent delay in the coming of the wet season which meant at that the recently planted rice shoots might be heavily damaged. At the occasion of a death anniversary dinner the Chief and Deputy Chief decided that the council ought to take some remedial action, in short, to obtain a mechanical pump for improving the irrigation. The comments of the Deputy Chief went along the following line:

The rain came late last year and it is now coming even later. The weather is unusual. It is further proof that it was not God who should be expected to give us

water: arid land is certainly within his sight. Why still not rain at all? We had better revolt against nature: let us use pumps.

Within a week or so after this discussion the Deputy Chief had obtained a pump on loan from the Department of Agriculture, with some assistance in establishing the necessary contacts from the Fundamental School. This pump could irrigate about three hectares in one day.

For controlling the use of the pump, the Village Council called a meeting of the "poor" farmers, those having the greatest need for this additional equipment, in order to establish a special committee--"The committee for the maintenance of the pump." This committee chosen by the farmers present consisted of nine members, five representing the Hamlets, two council members and a chairman and vice chairman. Its major function was to determine the priority: preference was to be given to those who had already planted the seeds but also, the Chief explained, in order to avoid unnecessary movement of the large pump, location of fields would also be considered.

The rains came shortly after this program had got underway. It illustrated, however, how the Village Council could proceed with the meeting of a serious crisis. And the writer suggests that its use of the special committee composed of persons representing the Hamlets (perhaps these were the hamlet chiefs) offers some food for thought about future organizational patterns for village administrations.

#### Attitude of the Council Toward Provincial Technical Services

Although no attempt was made to sound out completely the thinking of the Village Councillors toward technical services, it is worth noting an attitude that, the writer suggests, impedes strengthening the working relationships between agencies having (or presumably having) the expertise and those presumably representing the villagers, to wit, the Village Councils.

From what the writer was able to observe, the predominant tone of the Village Councillors (and especially of the Deputy Chief who was in charge of "economic" activities and who is now, it should be added, Deputy Canton Chief) toward technical services in the provincial as well as in the national agricultural agencies was largely negative. As expressed by the Deputy Chief, "We do not request agricultural advice... we use traditional methods." The provincial personnel, he had concluded, lacked experience so the farmers would not consult them. Furthermore, the provincial offices lost "face" when

one of their experimental fields in the Village, prepared in conjunction with the Fundamental School, failed to demonstrate better results. "They showed us how to plow and spread rice and what level of water to use but their output was not as high as the villagers." To be sure, he was somewhat more favorably inclined toward the provincial veterinarian who had been in the village on various occasions, but in general there was no interest in seeking technical advice.<sup>1</sup>

### Public Works

Since Khanh Hau was an extremely small rural village, lacking even a central market, the amount of public works activity was severely limited, excepting, of course, the irrigation canals which have been tagged as a "public works," although the inclination in Viet-Nam was to view them as part of agricultural programs. Before turning to some specific aspects, a few observations can be offered about the more generalized, more comprehensive function known as "community development," a concept that has become of special importance in recent years in Viet-Nam as elsewhere. These observations will be centered on two events reported by an assistant of the writer--a hamlet chief study meeting conducted by a member of the Civic Action Agency and a "community development planning meeting" conducted by the Fundamental School.

#### Two Community Development Meetings

As explained by the Village Chief, prior to 1958 the Civic Action Agency had been more active in the Village. Members of the Agency had assisted in various "affairs" of the Village Council such as the illiteracy program, the election of a Hamlet Chief, and the development of the information programs. But with the establishment of the Fundamental School which was also interested in community development aspects of life in Khanh Hau, the interest of the Civic Action Agency seemed to have decreased. However, from time to time some visits were made. One such visit, which was a combination of a political study meeting preparing hamlet chiefs for serving as local discussions leaders as well as for participating in other aspects of

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<sup>1</sup>The writer had intended to discuss the relationship of the Village Council to the Farmers Association, organized in May, 1959, but it was still dormant as of September, 1959 when this section was completed.

community development, was closely observed by one assistant of the writer. This meeting will be reported, and then some comments will be made.

Civic Action Meeting. This meeting, held on May 23, 1958, in the Village Hall, was attended only by the Hamlet Chiefs and the Police Chief who was representing an absent Hamlet Chief. The leader of the discussion was a provincial administrator in the Civic Action Agency.

The first part of the conference was centered on a discussion-explanation of a pamphlet distributed to the Hamlet Chiefs. Its subject was the administrative organization of the government in Viet-Nam. It contained a series of questions and answers. From time to time when reading the pamphlet the Civic Action agent would invite questions but none were asked. Following the close of this review, the discussion about community projects began. The writer's interpreter, sitting with the Hamlet Chiefs, attempted to record verbatim the entire discussion.

Civic Action Agent      Well, the pamphlet is clear and you understand all of it; now, we come to the second part of the meeting. Please make a verbal report of your works. But, let's begin first by getting some necessary data. Please, Police Chief, how many hamlets are there in the village?

Police Chief              There are six hamlets.. Today two hamlet chiefs are absent.

Civic Action Agent      What is the population?

Police Chief              We have 3,140 people.

Civic Action Agent      How many five family groups? How many Roofs?

Police Chief              114 five family groups and 567 roofs.

Civic Action Agent      What about religions? There are three: Buddhism, Caodaism and Catholicism?

Civic Action Agent      (Looking at one of the Hamlet Chiefs) Please make a report of the works in your Hamlet.

Hamlet Moi Chief Well, we still have one or two illiterates but it is not a grave problem.

Civic Action Agent What about the promotion of the people's standard of living?

Hamlet Moi Chief Well, there is nothing in particular.

Civic Action Agent (To another Hamlet Chief) What about your Hamlet?

Hamlet Cau Chief We have to repair our guard post.

Civic Action Agent How about the anti-illiteracy campaign?

Hamlet Cau Chief Pupils regularly attend the classes.

Civic Action Agent (To another hamlet chief) What about you?

Hamlet Dinh A Chief We will put five sections of pipe under the village road connecting with the National Highway this month.

Civic Action Agent Are the illiteracy classes all right?

Hamlet Dinh A Chief We are near the school--the problem of illiteracy is not serious.

Civic Action Agent What about the works in Nhan Hau hamlet?

Police Chief (Representing Nhan Hau hamlet) We are planning to form a class; we already have benches and tables. Now we need to raise a wall in the communal house to have a separate class. The province will provide a school teacher.

Civic Action Agent (To Thu Tuu hamlet chief) What about the works in your Hamlet?

Hamlet Thu Tuu Chief The popular class had been dissolved. We are calling for a meeting of the support committee.

Civic Action Agent Please, how many illiterates... have you some works not yet finished?

Hamlet Thu Tuu Chief Well, nothing left; we have already dug the canal.

Civic Action Agent (To Hamlet Dinh B. Chief) What about your works?

Hamlet Dinh B Chief We are planning on repairing our well.

Civic Action Agent What about the activities of the political organizations?

? The People's Union Party and the National Rebolutionary Movement hold their regular study meetings.

Civic Action Agent What about handicraft? First-aid box? Maternity?

? Nothing. Oh, we have just built a kindergarten.

This discussion completed the reporting phase. It should be added that during this phase the agent was making notes about the various reports. He, then, went on to find out about what problems existed in the Village relative to community development.

Civic Action Agent Now, since you have finished your reports, do you have any particular problems?

Village Council Chief (Sitting nearby but not in the group) Well, we need a bridge across the Tuong Khanh canal.

Hamlet Moi Chief (Canal runs through his hamlet.) But the landowners do not like to have the bridge set on their land.

Village Council Chief Have it set on my land.

Hamlet Moi Chief So we have only one landing.

Civic Action Agent What about the other side? And what about money?

Police Chief We need timbers to cover an area two meters by four meters.

Village Council (Sitting nearby but not in the group  
Deputy Chief and speaking in a joking way)  
Getting the job done is the responsibility of the Hamlet Moi Chief.

Hamlet Moi Chief You see, we have very few rich men in the hamlet and almost all of them are misers.

At this point the reporter observed that all members began criticizing the misers of the village. Finally, that is, after ten minutes or so, the Civic Action Agent brought the meeting back to its subject.

Civic Action Agent Let's come back to our problem. If Hamlet Moi does not have the money, is the Village Council able to grant the money?

Village Council Our budget is very poor. We had 23  
Deputy Chief hectares of public land but five and one half hectares were taken by the Fundamental School.

Police Chief Well, we will request Ke Hien to help.

Civic Action Agent So, we will hope that he will help us. May we end our meeting. Have you any questions?

Police Chief By the way, could you intercede somewhere to have our village road oiled?

Civic Action Agent Is it possible to intercede in the Public Work Service of the Province?

Police Chief No, it is a village road. We should cover the expense.

Civic Action Agent So, it is difficult. I will make a note but I cannot guarantee any help. May I conclude the meeting now.

Although it would not be fair to pass any judgments on the basis of this one interview, it does seem to indicate that the Civic Action agent was far more interested in getting a "report" about what had been accomplished than in aiding with solving other problems. He quickly, for example, seemed to support the suggestion that the way to finance the small bridge, a foot-bridge needed especially because of the school children,

was to ask the Ke Hien for aid; and he had little to offer about the problem of oiling the village road.

The other aspect about the work of the Civic Action agent with the village suggested by this conference concerned the role of the Village Councillors themselves. Here was an example where the Civic Action agent was in effect by-passing the Council and working directly with the Hamlet Chiefs. (The Police Chief was sitting in, it should be recalled, for an absent hamlet chief.) Yet for both information-propaganda programs and social-economic functions such as the maternity, Village Council members should have been called upon, assuming the Civic Action agent was interested in getting the overall village view. Furthermore, it would seem that even when working directly with hamlet chiefs, possibly a questionable procedure, the outside agent should at least have invited the Village Council members to attend the meeting.

The Fundamental School Meeting. In November, 1958, the same year that the Civic Action meeting occurred, the Fundamental School held its annual meeting with the villagers for the joint purpose of giving its students, the future primary school teachers, an opportunity to participate in a community development venture and to aid the villagers of Khanh Hau. The holding of this meeting, it may be recalled, was mentioned in the earlier discussion about security--for the meeting took the place of the monthly anti-communist denunciation meeting. And the point was made in that discussion that probably most villagers who came to the meeting had no knowledge beforehand of the subject. The meeting was held in the courtyard of the primary school and was attended by a relatively large number of villagers, a guess of 200 might not be too far off. Hence, in contrast to the Civic Action meeting, this was an opportunity for villagers beyond the few key officials to participate. To be sure, it is likely that most of those attending were at least heads of Five Family groups; nevertheless it was a far more representative gathering.

The meeting consisted of two phases. Brief reports on progress during the past year consumed about one-half hour; and then identification of programs or projects for the coming year took about one hour. Some of the highlights rather than the complete discussion will be presented in the following paragraphs.

For this meeting the Village Council Chief served as the presiding officer; his activities were limited, however, to one general comment besides introducing the members of the Fundamental School Staff. He emphasized the fact that the Province Chief in his recent visit had praised the villagers

for their many outstanding achievements of the past year accomplished with the assistance of the Fundamental School, He closed with "We are looking forward to even greater achievements in the year ahead."

In the progress report phase, five different members of the Fundamental School addressed the villagers. Afterwards, the general assistant to the director served as the chairman for the remainder of the meeting.

Emphasizing, in effect, the basic philosophy of the Fundamental School--community development without outside assistance--the first speaker stressed the successful achievements of the past year: the completion of the first major canal and the organization of the classes for the illiterates. These were "great achievements" in that no financial assistance was sought from the Government: a new spirit of unanimous cooperation and unity had made them possible even though at first some had said they were unrealizable. Cooperation, human labor, and unity had brought them about. And now, once again, the speaker added, almost exactly on the same date, as if by God's will, a meeting was to be held to plan for further achievements.

Reporting on the maternity project, the first speaker stated it had been delayed because the agricultural work was still heavy and occupying almost all of the time and efforts of the villagers. But it would become a fact, he assured them, before the end of the dry season.

The agricultural specialist then reported. A three-point project had been laid out during the past year in line with what was considered as being the major needs of the villagers, a matter that should, of course, be determined in consultation with many of the farmers. This program was: an experimental garden; the selection of rice seeds to meet the specific needs of the villagers; and the use of fertilizer. While some projects were delayed because of the rains two major achievements were scored: the acute shortage of water for irrigation purposes had been resolved by the pump obtained on loan from the national Department of Agriculture; and "with the intercession of the Fundamental School" fertilizer had been purchased at a reduced price by the Khanh Hau Agricultural Cooperative. Also a spraying machine had been obtained on a loan basis for use in spraying DDT insecticide. "Those achievements were witnessed and evaluated by you yourselves," was his closing comment.

The head of the "Women's Affairs Office" was introduced with the observation that "In laying much emphasis on agriculture, we are not overlooking the important role of women." The major and almost the only offering of this speaker, a woman, was that the women of the Village should in the future tell her about their problems and "We will try to solve them ourselves." Lack of specific accomplishments was attributed to the unusual weather, the late rain. The other woman teacher, apparently a sanitarian, announced that the national health department had promised to equip the maternity with medical equipment and that the pressing need now was to "materialize" the project.

The fifth and final reporter was introduced as an "education specialist." His short speech was a defense of the "practical education" philosophy of the Fundamental School relative to the type of instruction that primary schools should adopt. Apparently some villagers had expressed their dislike of this development. "It has long been said that the Fundamental School will turn your primary school into a community primary school and 'community' in this sense means mutual cooperation in the improvement of the village. One (but not the only one) objective will be to give the child training in agriculture: in growing vegetables, and in planting and transplanting rice so that he may become a capable and useful person in his community. Practical methods must be applied and popularized." And with this the reporting phase ended; the assistant director then turned to the second phase --obtaining ideas about for the coming year. During this phase, a blackboard was used for listing the community development projects.

What was most interesting about the ensuing discussion was the great effort made to encourage the villagers to offer their own ideas about projects for the coming year. The discussion leader wanted the villagers to identify their own needs--what are your problems and what do you want to do? Even though he began this phase by stating that "The focus of our discussion today is on the long-shelved plan for the construction of a maternity," most of the actual discussion concerned the identification of other projects and the establishment of committees for each. The other introductory remarks of the discussion leader went along this theme "...speak up on the problems you have on your minds... Now, does Nhon Hau Hamlet have problems? I understand that you have this problem: primary classes are still held in the Dinh and have to be cancelled on ceremonial days."

This identification by the discussion leader than brought forth a response from one villager that a primary school should be set up for Nhon Hau. "More," insisted the discussion leader,

"I have seen your needs," and with that he turned to the Hamlet Chief of Ap Cau. "We need to dig a canal," the Hamlet Chief proposed.

Again since the villagers were for the most part remaining silent the discussion leader attempted to suggest "problems" to them. He stated that he had seen a desperate need go unfulfilled: the wiping out of illiteracy. A villager then suggested that evening classes be organized. Shortly thereafter several additional suggestions were offered by villagers and recorded on the blackboard.

After ending the search for "problems," the discussion leader invited the villagers to suggest the priority that should be given to each. This was achieved by a villager making the suggestion and the discussion leader asking if the others agreed. No objections were raised. As a result the villagers had, therefore, as the discussion leader would like to have had them believe, proposed the following projects and established their priority:

First, the construction of a small bridge over the Tuong Khanh Canal.

Second, the installation of an irrigation pipe under the national highway.

Third, the construction of a primary school for Nhon Hau hamlet.

Fourth, the organization of evening classes to wipe out illiteracy.

Fifth, the construction of a canal in Hamlets Cau, Nhon Hau, and Thu Tuu. (This was called the "most ambitious project.")

Committees, then, were organized to head each of these projects.

It is not clear as to the extent to which the discussion leader influenced the selection of the committee members but it was apparent that he strongly encouraged the appointment of Hamlet Chiefs and Village Councillors for the key positions. In fact, for two committees he specifically suggested that Village Council members should be designated as chairmen. Thus, Hamlet Chiefs became chairmen of the two less important projects--the construction of the bridge and the installation of their irrigation pipe--while the Village Chief and Deputy

Chief were designated to head the major projects--the primary school<sup>2</sup> and the canal. The Village Chief, the discussion leader added, would serve as a symbol of initiative. Except for the canal committee all contained only three members. That committee consisted of four "administrators" of the village: in addition to the Village Deputy Chief serving as head were the Police Chief and two of the Hamlet Chiefs through whose settlements the canal would be dug. Its project, the discussion leader added, is the boldest, demanding much ability and initiative. (As the writer understands, the other project, the illiteracy classes, became a joint project of the Hamlet Chiefs and the Fundamental School. This is briefly mentioned in the section on "Education." Apparently the reason for not discussing the maternity project was its recognized status as an already established project.)

There are two closing observations to offer about this community development meeting. First, it would be difficult for the writer to say that the discussion leader was successful or unsuccessful in getting group participation. It is fair to say that most of the talking was done by not more than five out of the 200 villagers present and of these five, two were by far the most active, one being the exceptionally extrovert villager who later became the Clerk of the Village Council the other, a middle-aged man who had not previously been noticed by the writer during his visits to the village. Yet there was some undertones of disagreement, according to one observer, especially regarding the construction of the canal, for that would reduce the amount of available land for some farmers. However, no dissents were voiced during the meeting, instead only proposals; and then silence was interpreted as approval.

Insofar as the writer could determine, none of the Village Council members attempted to become established as leaders. They did not "rise to the occasion"--they did not take advantage of this meeting as an opportunity for showing how much they knew about village problems and about problems of village administration nor of the thinking of higher authorities. Instead, with the exception of the few introductory remarks made by the Village Council Chief (and these were based on a list of names given to him shortly before the program began), nothing was heard from the Council. Yet rather than carrying

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<sup>2</sup>The reader may recall this was discussed six months earlier during the Civil Action meeting with hamlet chiefs, as reported in the preceding section.

the community development concept to the extreme, that is, by encouraging the appointment of non-administrative personnel, the speaker did turn about somewhat and look to the Village Council members and Hamlet Chiefs for leadership in key positions.<sup>3</sup>

It might have been highly profitable to have pursued the implementation of these projects as a means for examining the function of the Village Council in "public works." It can be said that during the ensuing year some progress was made toward accomplishing these five goals. The bridge and irrigation pipe projects were completed in a few months. However, the two major projects had not been completed by the end of 1959. And, it is the impression of the writer that the illiteracy program still had a considerable amount to accomplish, there being about 200 plus illiterates. But to have probed more fully into these activities would have involved changing the focus of this study--in short to have studied some aspects, at least, of the Fundamental School. Since this was not done, the preceding discussion should be viewed largely as part of the general context within which the following examination of the Village Council relative to some "public works" functions took place.

### Irrigation Canal Construction

Early in 1957 the villagers completed the construction of a two kilometer irrigation canal connecting with a river located south of the village. Since then, that had become a major showpiece almost rivaling the tomb of the Marshal Nguyen Huynh Duc. No visitor had truly completed his stay until walking over to the canal, which comes within 100 meters of the village hall, and expressing his admiration to the proud members of the Village Council.

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<sup>3</sup>A perplexing note that might suggest a focus for research in the area of attitudes of the villagers toward village councils was an observation made by one Hamlet Chief to the writer. In his opinion the responsibility for taking the initiative in any type of works leading to the improvement of living conditions such as road construction or repairing dikes rested with the Hamlet Chiefs since no special hamlet or village committee existed for that purpose. In other words individual villagers could not be expected to propose community development projects and in his view the Village Council was not to be concerned with community projects.

Without fully appreciating the history of the village, it is still fair to say that the completion of the canal did mark a major step forward in the attitudes of the villagers regarding their abilities to work together on community problems. Supporting this is the completion of a second though minor canal in the following year and a conviction of ultimate success for the drive to reconstruct the tomb of the Marshal. Quoted earlier it deserves repeating: "If we can build a canal, we can rebuild the Marshal's tomb."

The general historical development of the first canal is reasonably clear although a conflict of claims was noted in the explanations of the Village Council and one representative of the Fundamental School as to the location of the key point of leadership. Sometime shortly after the Fundamental School had been established, its representatives suggested to the Village Council and perhaps to other leaders in the village that a canal should be built. According to one source, the villagers accepted the proposal of the Fundamental School partly on the spiritual grounds that its construction would bring good fortune to the Village since it would counter-balance the damage done by the construction of the national highway. Formerly the village had had the shape of a dragon, the reporter stated, which was a sign of good fortune. After making the decision to proceed, the Village Council worked closely with leader of the Fundamental School.

Another source ignored the story about the dragon and stressed that the Fundamental School representative had proposed the digging but after noting no expressed interest among the villagers, had dropped the proposal. Afterwards, the Village Council called a meeting of the villagers, presented the proposal, and obtained volunteers. The point of this second version was that the success for obtaining the cooperation of the villagers should be credited to the Village Council.

A key feature of the operation was the assignment of work on the basis of benefits to be received. Villagers living closest to the canal generally were assigned the largest shares. This assignment task was performed by the Village Council, the writer understands.

Although only a few facts were obtained about the project itself, one report submitted by the Council to the district stated that a total of 187 persons worked on the canal. An inauguration ceremony was held on the 18th of February, 1957, and the canal was completed in about three months. As the Deputy Chief explained the council's role during the digging phase, "We ourselves carried drinking water to the villagers

and insisted on helping them dig but they said that was not our duty." One of the administrative duties was to keep the district informed of the progress--periodically items in the correspondence files showed data regarding the number of villagers at work on the canal. In addition lists of persons agreeing to work had been sent to the Department of Agriculture in Saigon.

The project produced an illustration of the pattern of relationships between "public" and private "interest." Discovery of this, it should be said, surprised the writer since he had been under the impression that the canal project had been completed.

As the story was finally explained, the original plan for the canal--and still the hope of the villagers--was to construct a connecting link between two parallel streams, a distance of some 3,500 meters. Actual digging requirements would not exceed 2,200 meters since a tie-in could be made with a small stream bed. Only some cleaning and minor straightening of the remaining 1,300 meters would have to be done. As of December, 1959,--over two years from the inauguration date--however, the digging had not gone beyond 1.9 kilometers and no connection had been made with the small stream bed, thus limiting the canal project's success to about one-half of the planned project.

The cause for stopping the construction at a mid-point was the refusal of one woman landowner who objected to the routing of the canal since by following the meandering stream bed it bordered on two sides of her home lot. Making the stream bed adequate for a larger flow, she contended, would result in loss of some of her land. As a counter-proposal, she had suggested digging an additional two hundred meters.

Requests by the Village Council and others had not budged this landowner. Finally, in June, 1959, villagers during a village wide anti-communist meeting asked the Council to seek assistance from the District Chief, the writer was told.

Digging this canal apparently stimulated the interest of the villagers in such projects. During the year following the first canal, residents of one Hamlet, Thu Tuu, agreed to combine their efforts and construct a canal within the hamlet area. This was achieved without any major assistance from outside agencies. Once the Hamlet had made the decision, the remaining steps were carried out without difficulty. First a request was sent to the Village Council to obtain its approval. This request carried with it a second to the effect that the Village Council should be the agency charged with getting the clearances

from the affected landowners, a task which apparently caused no problems. In due course, after obtaining the necessary approval from the landowners, the Village Council addressed a letter to the Hamlet of Thu Tuu authorizing it to begin digging. Thus, canal digging had become fairly well accepted as a customary activity of the village and hamlet administrative organizations.<sup>4</sup>

### Road Repair and Installation of Irrigation Pipes

Neither of these activities occupied much time of the Village Council; however, some observations about them help to illustrate administrative operations in the village.

With the exception of the inquiry made by the Police Chief during the civic action meeting discussed in the earlier section of this chapter, the question of road improvement did not come up during the period of this study. Thus, only inquiries about past experiences and possibly future could be pursued.

For the most part road repair would be viewed as a responsibility of the hamlets, the Village Chief explained. Each Hamlet Chief was expected to do what was necessary to keep the roads--and the footpaths--in good order. If the Village Council thought this activity was being neglected, it would call the matter to the attention of the Hamlet Chief. For a labor force, it was expected that the work would be done on a voluntary basis. If, however, some additional materials such as gravel might be needed the Village Council would assist. And it was at this point that one interesting attitude of the Village Chief about administrative channels was made known. Who would be contacted? This, he said somewhat with an understanding smile, would depend on whether at the time he had any "friend" in the Provincial Public Works Department. If so, he would go directly to him. On the other hand, if no personal contacts existed, he would, nevertheless, still go directly to the Province since he was a good friend of the Province Chief: "I would jump channels;" that is, he would skip the subordinate office of District Chief.

Of course, if not even the Province Chief was his friend, then, it is fair to assume he would fall back into the normal channel. This friendship line of communication, it should be

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<sup>4</sup>According to the Village Chief, most of the diggers were residents of the Hamlet and therefore would be the ones directly benefiting. Other volunteer laborers were to be rewarded by a feast that would be held afterward. During the construction period, hamlet leaders were collecting contributions to pay for their celebration.

noted, was not necessarily to be favored because of any dissatisfaction with the ordinary channels--at least the Chief offered no comment to this effect; he did not add, for example, that an application through channels for some travel would take an extraordinary amount of time.<sup>5</sup>

The project to install an irrigation pipe under the village road supports this "direct" approach of the Village Chief in addition to illustrating how a community project fully under the Council might be carried out. This was a modest venture, requiring not more than one day's effort of a group of eight to ten men. The task involved cutting a ditch through the road, laying five cement conduits, and then filling in the ditch. The cement conduits were obtained in an informal way from the province: as the Village Chief explained, one day, when the Province Public Works head was known to be heading toward a village beyond Khanh Hau, the village officials stopped him on the highway and merely asked for the materials. An "on the-spot" survey of the proposed ditch was sufficient to convince the provincial administrator. Soon thereafter, the conduits were brought to the Village.

Although in the meeting with the Civic Action agent the hamlet chief listed this as one of his projects for the coming months, according to the Village Chief it was the Village Council--in effect the Chief himself--who got the installation underway. Rather than depend upon the hamlet chief to obtain the labor force, the Village Chief "went out into the fields" and contacted the farmers, telling them the specific time set for the project. Some additional help, the Chief commented, was obtained from persons who came to the Village Hall and offered their services.

Beyond setting the date, and asking for volunteers, the Village Council took no direct interest in the project. In short, no council member supervised or directed the installation. In fact, according to the Village Chief, no one was "in charge." Instead those with experience advised the others. Except for the sake of avoiding arguments, the Council would not even have set the date, the Chief noted.

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<sup>5</sup>It should be noted that for the water pipe installation proposed during the community development meeting held by the Fundamental School that the Village Council submitted a formal request through the District Chief. Shortly, thereafter, the Council received a reply from the Province stating that the proposal had been approved and would be carried out under the supervision of the Provincial Public Works Service.

## Interest of the Council in Drinking Water Supply

Strange as it might seem to the city dweller, the Village Council displayed little interest in the matter of water supply for drinking purposes. This in their thinking was not a "problem." According to their attitude most of the villagers were able to store almost enough water for a normal dry season in their private storage jars. (These cost about 170 to 250\$ each and held close to 30 liters.) The Council recognized that the "poor" did suffer--that they had to use the ground reservoirs and that sometimes they drank unboiled water from those sources. These sources--there were from three to four in each hamlet plus two unproductive wells dug near the Village Hall--constituted the drinking water supply "system," but with the exception of one effort to obtain technical assistance from USOM in Saigon to improve the wells the Council indicated no interest in improving the "system" as such.

It was only in the drouth crisis of 1958 that the Council became involved in the water problem--and that instance was quickly terminated by the coming of the rains. Perhaps their interest was stimulated by a letter received from the District Chief in May as well as personal concern about the lack of water for the village. At that time the District Chief notified the Village Councils that he would hold them "partly responsible" for the water supply but he had no solution for the coming crisis--he merely recommended that storage facilities be prepared or wells dug for the future. Well-digging for Khanh Hau was, of course, not satisfactory unless an extremely deep hole, about 200 meters, could be dug. Finally when the crisis came (actually what determined this point was not explained) the Village Council sent the Civil Status Councillor to ask for four water trucks. However, by the time the trucks had arrived so had the rains. Insofar as the writer could determine, the water supply problem then disappeared from the minds of the council members.

It should be noted that this direct request was another example of "jumping" channels. The writer mentioned this to his colleague, Professor Truong Ngoc Giau as an illustration of village administrative practices. Shortly, thereafter, during a joint visit to the village the following conversation occurred between Professor Giau, the Village Chief and the writer.

The writer: Why didn't you submit the request to the District?

Village chief: The provincial authorities know us very well. So we can request directly from them. It is needless to go by the way of the hierarchy.

Professor      Should you make a report afterwards to the  
  Giau           District Chief?

Village         No, that is needless.  
  Chief

Professor      Nevertheless, you will make a verbal report  
  Giau           when you meet him, won't you?

Village         Well, it is not very important. He already  
  Chief          knows our problems here.

If anything could prove the willingness of the Council to use "informal channels," it should be this short cross-examination.

### Hamlet Projects

In addition to becoming directly involved in community projects, the Village Council also had varying roles to play in projects more closely identified as belonging to one or even to all hamlets. Two cases were noted during this study: the construction of the second canal; and the establishment of the hamlet information posts.

For the construction of a canal one of the preliminary steps was obtaining approval of the landowners; as indicated in the preceding explanation this sometimes proved to be extremely difficult. When the time approached for digging the second canal, the Village Council was asked to obtain the necessary clearances from the landowners, although the project itself was under the direction of the Hamlet Chief through whose area the canal would be dug. Why therefore did not the Hamlet Chief seek the necessary clearance. Primarily, as the Village Deputy Chief explained, because the Village Council had more prestige to bring to bear on the landowners. In addition it had communal lands that could be offered as off-sets.

The establishment of the information halls, which were used in most hamlets also as guard posts, was instigated by a request, or order, received from higher authorities. The first step was the construction of a model hall adjacent to the Village Hall. The next was the construction of hamlet halls. As already described in the discussion of information activities, some of the hamlet structures were far more modest in size and quality, tending to be more like lean-to's than even thatched huts. These were constructed by volunteers under the direction of the Hamlet Chiefs, who in order to purchase the necessary timbers, made a special collection from the hamlet residents. From the viewpoint of hamlet-village administrative relationships

it is interesting to note the "project report" that the Hamlet Chief submitted upon completion of the information post. (See Figure 26.)

## Health and Welfare

Village administrative activity in the fields of health and welfare were centered on (1) maintaining a first aid medical cabinet in the village, (2) making some efforts toward the eventual establishment of a maternity and (3) participating in the annual gift giving to the poor. While the "social and economic officer," that is, the Deputy Chief, assumed general responsibility for these activities, other council members, especially the Chief and the Civil Status Councillor, were also involved.

### First Aid

In the past two years responsibility for the medical aid cabinet and thus for medical aid was transferred from an untrained villager who resided close to the Village Hall and school--the cabinet was located in the office of the school director--to the Civil Status councillor, still untrained. It was not expected, however, that the Village would provide any major assistance for serious illnesses and injuries. Instead the facilities of governmental hospitals in the provincial towns of Tan An and My Tho and in the capitol, Saigon, were used. As the Village Chief explained, these hospital facilities were available without charge to the poor, but the rich were expected to pay.

The medical cabinet contained a great variety of medical supplies, about 25 different medicines and related items such as vaseline. Along with the supplies was a printed poster describing the contents of the cabinet and the application of several, such as, "Aspirine: medicament for headache, colds, rheumatism, dosage; eight tablets to be taken in two days; and "Sulfaduxidine: for dysentery; dosage, six tablets for the first day; and four for the following day." Relative to the usage of this cabinet, a questionable practice was allowing the Civil Status Councillor to retain possession of the cabinet key since, in his absence, any emergency need would require either breaking the cabinet door or searching for the Councillor. Whoever was in charge of the cabinet was expected to maintain a journal showing the name of the patient, his age, type of illness, and amount and type of medicine issued. Monthly reports to the district provided the means for obtaining needed supplies. According to the Civil Status Councillor between

Figure 26

Written Report of a Hamlet Chief to the Village Council

Long An Province  
Thu Thua District  
Khanh Hau Village

REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

Report

I am the chief of Ap Dinh "B" hamlet, making this report on our expenses on the remodeling of control posts just completed in Ap Dinh:

Cost of wooden pillars and rafters brought from Tan Hiep	195\$
Transportation	30
Squared timber and an Announcement board	140
Thatch	80
Nails	115
	460\$
Total:	460\$

Donated sum received      430\$

30\$ is needed and will be found later; This report is made at Ap Dinh on June 8, 1958.

Hamlet Chief  
Nguyen van Moc

600 and 700 "office calls" were made each month, a large proportion being school children wanting cough medicine and aspirin.

Additional health services were received from the District Health Office which distributed serums for small pox and cholera vaccinations given by members of the Fundamental School or by an agent from the District Health Office. In addition information about health practices, such as precautions to take against bubonic plague, came to the Village from the Department of Health in Saigon: on this particular item, the announcement as sent from Saigon was dated, 14 March 1958, and arrived in the village on 28 March--a fairly short time lapse--after being endorsed by the District Chief and sent to the village councils for "Large scale universalization and implementation." Correspondence files also contained announcements about scheduled visits of district health service personnel who would be giving vaccinations and inoculations.

The only feature of the medical aid program that seemed to bother the Village Council--and actually it was not greatly disturbed--was the failure of the higher authorities to forward the small monthly allowance of 300\$ for the medical aid man. As the data in Chapter IV indicated, a lump payment of 3,000\$ was finally made by authorizing Khanh Hau to borrow the necessary amount from a named village. Shortly, thereafter, the function was transferred to the Civil Status Councillor who absorbed it as part of his ordinary duties, thereby eliminating the need for the payment.

### The Maternity Project

The proposal to construct a maternity had been before the Village Council and the villagers for at least two to three years. This was one of the "community development" projects encouraged by the Fundamental School as well as by Civic Action cadre, as has already been noted. In addition Asia Foundation made available some funds. But the village seemed to be still far from accomplishing this objective.

A few of the activities related to "maternity project" help to give some insight as to the pattern of life in Khanh Hau. Two incidents in particular were noted: first, a questionable usage of the Asia Foundation funds; and second, the reactions of some villagers about the propaganda technique used by the Fundamental School.

With the permission of the Asia Foundation representative the Village Chief and Deputy Chief purchased a water pump (not to be confused with the pump borrowed from the Department of

Agriculture) with 30,000\$ that had been earmarked for use in construction of the maternity (Total estimated costs for the building ranged from 100,000\$ to 160,000, according to the Village Council). This diversion of the funds was justified by the argument that profits made from renting the pump would increase the fund. Regardless of what merits this might have had, some villagers viewed this as a means by which the Chief and Deputy Chief would obtain some personal benefit, either by not paying any fee for using the pump in their own fields or by pocketing some of the rental receipts.

The second incident--in their efforts to encourage the villagers to become interested in the construction of a maternity, administrators of the Fundamental School prepared and circulated some mimeographed leaflets containing propaganda-in-verse plus a few sketches of a woman, a child, and a maternity. The poem or song on one such leaflet bore the title "Victim of Poor Sanitation." The two verses were as follows:

In the village of Khanh Hau  
Ap Nhon Hau  
Lives a lady named Vang  
Having been pregnant for a long time  
And, on the day she's in labor  
Her husband, worried  
Searched for a nurse  
In the neighboring village.  
Three round hours elapsed  
The nurse just didn't show up  
Her neighbors were so embarrassed  
What's to be done?  
Half an hour later  
Mrs. Vang gave birth to a baby  
Every one is panic-stricken  
Some one seized a betel-knife  
To cut off the baby's cord  
The knife, not disinfected,  
Was not clean  
Few days later, the baby died  
Inquiry revealed the fact that  
The knife was infected with tetanus germs.  
If a nurse was found,  
The baby would not have suffered from tetanus  
Its mouth paralyzed  
Its eyes wide open; its temperature high  
He could not suck  
So he died--of tetanus, not by fate.

Some unfortunate repercussions apparently occurred as a result of this poem, for rather than accepting it for what it was, a rumor began about a death of a young baby in the Hamlet named in the poem. It was sufficiently effective to cause the Hamlet Chief to search, he stated, for three days to find out the truth, for he considered the rumor as a "defamation" against his Hamlet.<sup>6</sup>

When last discussed, the movement for constructing a maternity seemed dormant. In part the problem was one of a conflict between the Village Council and the Fundamental School, but basically it was probably one resulting from lack of a concerted effort by the Village Council itself.

Interest in regulating general living patterns as a means for protecting public health seemed almost non-existent in the village. There was no day-to-day program and once when it was "rumored" that one family had measles, the Village Council made no effort to quarantine the family nor to inform other villagers. Perhaps indicative of the lack of experience in regulating community health was an incident regarding the elimination of an unsanitary toilet.

This incident took focus when a group of citizens complained to the Village Council about the unsanitary condition of the recently dug canal at a point within sight of the Village Hall. The unsanitary condition had been caused by the installation of a "sewer" pipe connecting a small private fish pond with the canal. The pond in turn was the receptacle of a toilet that had been constructed extending out over one bank. Over the following three months a series of actions occurred in an effort to persuade the owner to eliminate the unsanitary condition. It is best to note these chronologically.

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<sup>6</sup>The bases for this observation are notes made of a discussion between the Village Chief and the Hamlet Chief. The notes even give this a further twist--suggesting that the Village Chief was aware of the source of the rumor but did not inform the Hamlet Chief. After the Hamlet Chief departed, the Village Chief said to the Civil Status Councillor, "The author of the news--the fundamental school. Better let the incident die off." Some additional statements were made but the translation was not clear. In the writer's mind it is still not clear whether the Village Chief understood the story was fictitious.

- (Prior to  
8 Jan. 1958) Village Council wrote to the owner asking him to remove the pipe.
- 8 Jan. 1958 A second letter was sent making the same request. (Signed by all members except the Civil Status Councillor.)
- 20 Jan. 1958 A third letter was sent warning the owner for the last time. If no action taken, the council itself would remove the pipe. (Signed only by Police Chief.)
- 22 Jan. 1958 Village Council sent a letter to the District Chief to report on the problem and failure of the owner to appear at the Village Hall so that the wishes of the residents could be conveyed to him. It also stated that the residents had asked a representative of UNESCO to have some sanitarians inspect the pond.
- 25 Feb. 1958 Letter received in village from Director General of Hospitals and Sanitary Services, Saigon, addressed to District Chief through Province Chief, subject "Sanitary Question in Khanh Hau," and copies were sent to provincial chief of health services, Chief of Village Council of Khanh Hau, and director of Fundamental School, Khanh Hau. Letter requested the District Chief to give the order to the Village Council to move the toilet located just one meter from the canal. Two sanitary engineers had noted this toilet during a visit in the village. In line with the general program of raising the standards of living and to obtain better health, the toilet should be removed.
- 4 Mar. 1958 A copy of the above letter from the Director General of Hospitals and Sanitary Services was sent to the owner of the toilet, endorsed by the Village Chief, Finance Councillor, and Police Chief.

6 Mar. 1958

Village Council received letter from the District Chief requesting immediate removal of the outhouse located near the canal and a report to him of final action.

25 Apr. 1958

Village Council wrote to District Chief asking for his help to force owner to remove pipe connecting pond with canal. The owner had moved the pipe but not from the canal--he had merely extended it so that the intake was 15 meters from the canal.

13 May 1958

The pipe had not yet been removed even though an order had been issued by the district; hence the Village Council once again asked the district for assistance.

31 Dec. 1959

□A last minute check indicated that the issue had been resolved by some villagers who removed the pipe. ]

This incident was discussed a few months later, the latter part of July, 1958, with the Village Chief in order to determine more clearly what the thinking of the local Village Council was about this problem of regulation. Could the Village Council have ordered the owner to remove the pipe? Yes, the Chief indicated, but the Council did not want to use power because of friendly relations with the owner; instead it had chosen to ask the District Chief to issue the order. And then the Chief threw some additional light on the incident by saying that (1) the owner was a former deputy chief of the Village Council and (2) as such perhaps he thought he had a right to disobey or ignore the request of the Council. After listening to an explanation by the writer about village powers in the United States, the Chief said that in Viet-Nam, in contrast, the District Chief determines the rules and Village Councils enforce them.

### "Spring Tree"

In the field of general welfare-relief for the needy, the blind, the crippled, etc.--there was very little in the way of local service--only an extremely critical case would be given some assistance and this would be offered in the form of a ~~special~~ special for contributions. For example, the Council asked one Hamlet Chief to start a drive to collect funds for a pregnant woman who had a child in a Saigon hospital with a severe case

of hepatitis. The husband apparently was not capable of supporting his family. In general, it is fair to say that even though the village recognized that several persons living in the village might properly be classified as "poor" there was no continuing effort to give them assistance; what did occur was more or less a token acknowledgment such as a gift at the time of the Spring Tree.

Spring Tree, which occurred at the time of Tet, was administered under the supervision of the District Chief.<sup>7</sup> In essence, the function of the Village Council was to establish the fund solicitation committee and to assist in sponsoring the ceremony during which the gifts were awarded. The amount of money obtained from the villagers varied considerably. In 1957 not more than 165\$ was obtained; in 1958, about 3,000\$. According to the Deputy Chief the reason for the small amount was that the Village had already contributed three times to fund drives --once for charity, once for construction of a new bridge cross the river in the district town; and once for rebuilding the information posts in the various hamlets.

At the village level the program was administered by a representative committee consisting of, for example, the Chief of the Council, the Director of the school, a representative of the youth group, a representative of the National Revolutionary Movement, and all of the Hamlet Chiefs. Correspondence files indicated that teachers in the primary school were also called upon to assist. These files also provided some illustrations.

On the fifth of February, 1958, the school director wrote a letter to the Village Council in which he listed the names of teachers who would assist with the drive. Then on the 7th the school director and four other teachers submitted a report to the district chief regarding a meeting of their committee. On the same day the Village Council received a letter from the District Chief in which he made a general appeal to the villagers of all villages in his district for contributions. Presumably the letter was to be "universalized." Also on the same day the Village Committee sent a letter to the District

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<sup>7</sup>For 1958, the District Chief also asked the Village Councils to set up a committee consisting of the Village Chief, information agent, and leaders of the youth groups to visit homes of families who had had members killed by the Communists. The visits were to be made during the first three days of Tet.

Chief in which were listed the names of 31 villagers and 14 pupils deserving donations. Five days later, the 12th of February, the District Chief notified the Council that the gifts would arrive the following day; that the Village Council should invite Hamlet Chiefs and ex-village notables to attend a ceremony; and that the Village Hall should be properly decorated. Two days later, after the ceremony had been held, the Village Council submitted its report to the District Chief: 34 persons had received gifts and "They seemed happy and grateful to the government."

There are a few observations to accompany this description of the Village Council's role in welfare activities. First, the campaign for contributions was aimed at the "wealthy landowners," the Deputy Chief said. These men were asked to give money to help the poor. Thus, to the extent that this may have become a standardized practice it might well be considered an informal part of the taxation system of the village. Second, since many of the villagers appeared to be living somewhat marginally, it was natural to ask the Deputy Chief to define his term "poor" villagers. In his view these were (1) the old villagers who did not have children to support them; (2) the young married men who lacked land and had to work as day laborers for 30\$ a day; (3) some with too many children; and (4) the sick. When explaining this, he added that the Village Council attempted to rent its public land to the poor but that it was difficult to obtain releases from the present tenants. Also it was customary for the Council to solicit funds to help finance funerals if the family of the deceased were too poor. In addition, members of poor families could be buried in the public lands of the villages, each Hamlet having a sector that was used for such burials. According to the Deputy Chief, no villager was living in a "poorhouse" as such or a home for the aged. As for the home for the aged in the province town, the Deputy Chief viewed that as a place in which beggars taken from the streets of Tan An were housed or persons who had no relatives. The Village Council of Khanh Hau, he added, had nothing to do with that home.

### Education

The main administrative stream of education bypassed the Village Council, going almost from the provincial service to the local director of the village school. The role of the Village Council, as the Chief explained, was limited largely to assisting with the maintenance and repair of the school property, in particular, of the school buildings. As the budget and expenditure statements showed, at least in recent years

this had not imposed any heavy burden on village administration. In fact, although appropriations were made for building repairs, no actual expenditures had been made.

But even though the Village Council was bypassed, there were several points found where it did become involved with the administration of educational services in the village. These aspects can be noted under the divisions of kindergarten, primary school, secondary school, and adult "popular classes" or classes for the illiterate.

### Kindergarten

During the period of this study the village had constructed and placed in operation its first kindergarten--a one room, wooden building with latticed walls and a tile floor, located most advantageously for residents of the two hamlets of Ap Dinh "A" and "B" (in which the Village Chief lived). In essence, this kindergarten was the adopted child of the Village Council. The original sponsor of the kindergarten project was the former director of the Fundamental School. It was his plan that with assistance from the Asia Foundation a kindergarten would be established. When his work in the Village was terminated, he chose to turn over the Asia Foundation fund to the Village Chief.

Without an unreasonable delay the Village Chief proceeded with the project. On one occasion the Village Chief, accompanied by the writer, inspected a newly constructed kindergarten in the district town at the invitation of the local village chief in order to gain some idea of school building construction. Almost as soon as the shell of the Khanh Hau building was completed, the Village Chief announced the appointment of the teacher selected by the Village Council. As explained to the writer, she was selected on the grounds of her "ability" and "character." A local resident, she had completed a total of seven years of school--the five years of the primary and two of the secondary school. Either on loan or by grant, a set of five tables and chairs were obtained from the district town kindergarten--when the interpreter inquired as to why he was permitted to take this equipment, the Village Chief smilingly replied, "The Canton Chief [that is, the village chief mentioned above who in the meanwhile had become Canton Chief] and I are close chums." At another point in the conversation

with the Canton Chief, he added "Maybe we will keep these tables and benches in our kindergarten for ever." The Canton Chief merely smiled.<sup>8</sup>

Once started, the Khanh Hau kindergarten seemed to be operating satisfactorily with classes being held from 0730 to 1030 and 1400 to 1600 hours. A total of 40 children were enrolled and the district chief had agreed to pay the 1,000\$ monthly salary of the teacher.<sup>9</sup>

### Primary School

From the administrative viewpoint, the Village Council came into contact with the primary school and the primary school service (to distinguish between the existing school plant and the educational function as such) in three ways. Aligned with the villagers, the Council functioned as a representative of the community in bringing about changes in some aspects of local school practices as well as in key personnel. Second, it cooperated with the school in the conduct of various activities. And, third, it assumed some responsibility for attempting to make a basic improvement in the local arrangements for primary education.

The activation of the Village Council as a voice of the community came about partly because of a recognized general community dissatisfaction with the school director and partly because of the lack of an active parent's teachers association. The general pattern of conflict between parents and the school director was succinctly described by the Village Chief:

Question: Is there a PTA in the village?

Village Chief: Yes, but there are no major activities because the school director is not in friendly ties with the parents. A former director was very popular and kept in contact with the parents--he is now with the Fundamental School.

In the last two years we have had four directors.

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<sup>8</sup>According to the Canton Chief that kindergarten had been constructed by funds contributed by the residents of the district town. The costs of operation were shared jointly by the village, the district, and the province. The canton chief, in addition to contributing, had loaned the kindergarten 20,000\$ to expedite its getting underway.

<sup>9</sup>As explained much later, the Village anticipated earmarking funds from a model garden started with assistance of the Asia Foundation to pay the costs of the kindergarten.

Question: Why such a turnover?

Village Chief: They worked unilaterally. The did not consult the people. The first following the popular director was too old--he found the work monotonous and asked for a transfer. The second was very young. He aroused the parents because of his abuse of the water supply--he gave the good water to some friends and not to the students whom he gave water from the canal. Some parents sent a petition to the Province Chief--in ten days he was removed.

The third was older. He organized the prize-giving ceremony. This ceremony used to be very successful--the notables were formerly invited but now only the teachers. The District Chief complained [to the province chief?] because the MSU professors were not invited.

As the correspondence files illustrated, one practice in bringing pressure on the director was for the Village Council itself to submit the complaint. In March, 1958, the Council wrote that many parents had asked to have the director forbade swimming in the canal and playing football at noon during the hot season. Earlier in the year the Village Chief signing also as secretary treasurer of the Parent's Association of Nguyen Huynh Duc school submitted two complaints to the director: the lack of facilities for drinking water; and the practice of giving water to persons other than students. The letter was apparently followed fairly shortly by a direct petition of the Association to the Province Chief--and, as the chief stated, in ten days the Director was removed.

What precipitated the removal of the third was not fully determined--dissatisfaction with his handling of the prize-giving ceremony was part of it. In addition, the Village Chief indicated that in general the people were dissatisfied with him--"He seemed interested only in his salary," the Chief said. After he was removed, the Village--either the people by means of a petition or through the Village Council--asked the Province Chief to reappoint their earlier, popular director. Again the Province quickly complied with their request. To complete the story--at the next annual ceremony village elders, including the Ke Hien, as well as MSU professors, were in attendance.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Within a half year, however, this director also vacated his post. According to the Village Chief since he was near retirement he wanted to be assigned to a school closer to his home in the province town.

It should be added that the willingness of the Province Chief to seek the removal of this director was probably encouraged by another incident. As reported by the Village Chief to the Province Chief, the school director had not been cooperating in the fund drive for the Marshal's tomb--the director claimed he had lost the letter from the Province Chief authorizing him to solicit funds from school directors throughout the province. Upon being informed of this, the Province Chief himself wrote the letters.

Regardless of the conflicts and dissatisfactions mentioned above, which perhaps can be discounted as being temporary especially in view of the more pleasant relationships that existed in years not too far in the past, the Village Council and the primary school administration on various occasions worked together or assisted each other. While the following list is not complete, it does illustrate instances of cooperation.

In the annual prize-giving ceremony held at the end of the school year, the council members, as observed in 1959, had no special role. Although attending, they did not participate in the program. Instead higher administrators--the District Chief and a representative of the Province Chief, an army captain serving as Deputy Province Chief, gave the only speeches. However, in spite of their lack of participation the Council jointly with the school director signed invitations sent to the honored guests.

In another fund raising venture the Financial Councillor of the Village Council served as chairman of a special committee --the "School Fund Management Committee of the Nguyen Huynh Duc Primary School," an officially established agency authorized, as cited in its letter of solicitation, by both an arrete (129 AD/ND, April, 1955) and a school fund regulation approved by the province chief on January 14, 1957, to "... procure money for any necessary school activities." The other two members of the committee were the director of the school and a teacher. This committee in compliance with the provincial regulation solicited three types of contributions: 500\$ from "supporting members;" 200\$ from "permanent members;" and 20\$ from "active members."

In still another cooperative but perhaps uncoordinated venture, the Village Council sought to aid the school in obtaining certain equipment promised by the Province Chief. In this the Council addressed a letter to the education inspector of the Province in which it mentioned the promise of the Province Chief and requested permission to pick up the equipment. A note scribbled on the file copy letter stated that the equipment had already been picked up by the school director.

Use of each other's buildings was not an uncommon practice in the village. Until the Fundamental School moved to its new quarters, the primary school held classes in the village dinh and in a small building adjacent to the village hall used as a kitchen during the time of major ceremonies. The Village Council in turn used school buildings for large meetings--the one example noted was the meeting for the formation of the Farmers' Association. Also for a year or more the Village Council kept the village first aid cabinet in the office of the director.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the Village Council received assistance from the primary school in various ways. One major example was the voluntary labor of three school teachers during the taking of the family census. This project involved obtaining the basic data from each household and then preparing three copies--most of the copying was done by these three. And when visiting officials were expected to attend some ceremony, such as the farewell ceremony for the director of the Fundamental School, the Village Council enjoyed the added color in its receiving line of the attractive array and excellent performance of the boys and girls marching groups, a select number of students from the school's section of the village youth organization.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>According to the teacher in charge of the marching groups, who was an ex-scout leader having obtained a diploma from the French for scout training, the entire primary school was organized into a youth group having the name of the school. The teacher held the title of "director." Each class was called a "Section" and consisted of several subsections of 10 to 12 members. Various teachers served as "Section Chiefs," and "Subsection Chiefs" were chosen from the students. The purpose of this organization was: (1) to instill a love for collective living; (2) to stimulate a spirit of mutual help and mutual control; and (3) to strengthen competitive spirit. For attaining the first objective, the students in their subsections were given the responsibility of cleaning and maintaining the classrooms and the schoolyard; related to the second was the requirement that the student chiefs of subsections were required to report to the teacher any misconduct of pupils within their units; and in part for the third, competition was encouraged between subsections and sections. For the marching groups, uniforms had been provided by the school. These consisted of blue shorts and a special, metallic badge approved by the national Department of Education. In addition to learning to march, the boys were taught to "present arms" with their sticks and the girls, the Olympic Salute.

Although the Village Council can not necessarily be viewed as the leading force in improvement of the educational system, it had at least ventured to assist by making use of its customary channel of communication to the higher authorities in order to bring village interests to their attention. The case in point concerned the need for establishing another primary school closer to the "east" hamlets. It is likely that considerable urging for this had come from the leadership group of the Fundamental School as part of its interest in community development. In April, 1958, however, the Village Council took it upon itself to present a request to the District Chief: the Council asked him to "intervene" at the province level on its behalf. Another school was needed, the Council wrote, since at present the distance from those hamlets was too great and the present school was becoming overcrowded. Within one week the District Chief had offered at least a compromise solution --if the people in the Village would build the school (apparently there was an understanding that this would be for only the first year students) he would provide the teacher. As a result, a class was organized with the dinh being used as the classroom.

### Secondary School

Like the kindergarten, the modest secondary school program was a new development for the village and one that followed a similar pattern of growth involving first the former director of the Fundamental School and then the Village Council. Both also, it should be noted, were started with outside financial assistance--the latter with some "foreign aid," for which the exact source was not determined and the former with, as has been mentioned, assistance from the Asia Foundation. Once the program had been started, there was no question, apparently, about the willingness of the Village Council to assume major responsibility for its continuation after the former director departed.

According to the Village Chief, before the local program was organized, only about 10 per cent of the primary graduates continued their schooling since in order to do so it had been necessary to go to the province town of Tan An, a distance of five kilometers. In 1957, only six of the 60 primary school graduates registered for the secondary school.

A modest beginning of a village secondary school was made by the former director. With an allowance of 2,000\$ a month obtained from the "foreign aid," the director organized a class and taught many of the courses himself. It was recognized that the aid would not be continued more than one year or so.

Following the departure of the director, the Village Chief turned to the ex-primary school director--the one who had been so popular--for assistance. As a result, the school was established on an even more ambitious basis with a staff of three, young, part-time teachers from Saigon. As of September, 1958--about one year after the first class had been established--the school contained two grades and a total of 41 students. Classes were held six hours a day and six days a week for a period of 10 months. Financed by a monthly tuition of 140¢ for the 7th grade and 160¢ for the 6th grade, the staff consisted of a director who was also teaching in another secondary school in Long An Province and five teachers who traveled daily as much 26 kilometers to and from their regular teaching posts. The classes had been housed in a quonset, adjacent to the Village Hall, that formerly had been used by members of the village Self-Defense Guard and before that by faculty members of the Fundamental School.

#### Language Classes for the Adult Illiterates

Establishing classes in basic language training for adults was one of the early major programs undertaken by the government of Viet Nam. This program was started as early as 1952 with the objective of teaching all adults between the ages of 13 and 50 to read and write their native language. The program received the title of "Popular Education." While as of 1957 administration for the program at the national level was in the Department of Education--in the "Bureau of Primary and Popular Education"--in Khanh Hau the job fell upon the Village Council working under the direction of the district chief, but also with the assistance of the Fundamental School which viewed this as one of the "community development" projects. According to the Village Chief, by December, 1959, the number of illiterates had been reduced from 300 plus to about 200 and plans were underway for reestablishing the classes after the harvest season. These classes, supervised by the hamlet chiefs who also selected the teachers, would be held daily for one and one-half hours, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Once started the main function of the Village Council would be to send members of the village Self-Defense Guard to the homes of those who were negligent in attending to advise them of the Council's interest in the program, the Village Chief explained.

#### Communal Rice Fields

Whenever provincial and district administrators described Khanh Hau for the writer, they invariably called it a "poor" village and then consistently went on to say in elaborating on

this that it was "poor" partly because its rice-field holdings were small. Similarly, Khanh Hau officials themselves viewed their financial inadequacies as being caused largely by the lack of public rice fields. (The other major reason they offered was the lack of a market which would have produced considerable revenue via the market tax.) In contrast to the "richest" village in the district--the village housing the district offices--, which had over 200 hectares of public rice fields, Khanh Hau at the time of this study had 17 hectares. This amount was not far below the average percentage for all southern villages, but it was low on the basis of actual hectarage. From the viewpoint of the Khanh Hau officials--and others--the holdings were inadequate since they failed to cover the operating costs of village administration.<sup>12</sup>

The origin of the public rice fields was not definitely determined. According to the Gittinger study, cited below, such holdings could have originated in one or more ways, including jurisdictional agreements between two villages over unsettled lands, and abandonment of mandarin lands at the time of death. Insofar as the Village Chief could recall, Khanh Hau lands were lands abandoned during the colonial period.

In recent years changes occurred in both the size of holdings and in the rental procedures and, apparently, even more changes should be made in the latter if the Village is to comply with a 1959 regulation of the Land Reform Council. Shortly before World War II, the Village gave up about two hectares so that the province could make an exchange for an equal amount of land in another village it wanted to use for a recreation field. Quite recently, again with the strong encouragement of the provincial administrators, the Village agreed to give five hectares to the national administration for use by the Fundamental School. Thus, its holdings, even small before, had been reduced by about 30 per cent. A change in rental procedures in 1958 also adversely affected the village. As a result of the decision of the Province to comply with the rental rates of the Agrarian Reform program, the estimates proposed in the village budget were reduced about 25 percent, from 27,000\$ to 20,000\$. However, for the following year,

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<sup>12</sup>According to a recent study, this attitude was in effect the antithesis of the view encouraged by the French, that is, to view the communal lands not as sources of village revenue but as a welfare measure. See Price Gittinger, "Communal Land Concepts in Recent Vietnamese Policy," 1959. In preparation for publication. Dr. Gittinger at the time was an Agricultural Economics Advisor for USOM in Vietnam.

the Province Chief changed his decision and allowed open bidding. Thus, the anticipated returns zoomed up to the high point of 35,000\$, based upon the actual contracted bids accepted in March, 1959. But, all of this important revenue source (which as the analysis of the village budget showed provided about 43 percent of village revenues) might be lost if the village complied with the July, 1959, decision of the Land Reform Council in the central government. According to an announcement published in the daily newspapers, henceforth one and one-half hectares of public-rice fields were to be given without charge to each qualified member of the Hamlet Self-Defense Corps.<sup>13</sup>

Although there was some indication that the Village Council was not fully complying with the traditional spirit of communal fields--that the poor should be given first priority--since in recent years the Village Police Chief and apparently the Village Clerk were rentors, it was apparent that no single rentor was obtaining any great portion. The largest lot contained 1.2 hectares and the total holdings consisted of 19 different lots. According to the Deputy Chief, a major factor preventing assignment to the poor was the refusal of some tenants to give up their three year contracts. Yet all in all there seemed to be relatively little interest or concern in the problem of communal field administration. (This was in contrast with the earlier days, according to the Chief and Deputy Chief, when French administrators sometimes used to connive with their village friends--they would tell the date of the bidding only to their friends so that few other villagers would be present.)

This apparent lack of interest was strongly confirmed by the public bidding procedure reestablished in March, 1959, which was observed by an assistant of the writer. At no time during the day were there more than 22 farmers present and that peak was reached three hours before the actual bidding was started. The time for the bidding had been set at 1400 hours; however, it was held up until the District Chief arrived at 1700 hours. Perhaps because of the limited attendance, not more than 10 of the 19 lots were rented on that day, but in part this lack of interest was probably caused by the willingness of the villagers to permit the poor farmers to rent the public fields--the Deputy Chief had forewarned the writer that even though a public bid would be held the lands would be rented to the "poor" farmers since the others would refrain from competing. And

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<sup>13</sup>"Land Reform Council Regulations," USOM Roundup, July 24, 1959 as translated from Saigon Moi.

competition was found on only three of the lots, resulting in raises above the minimum prices set by the district administrator from 15 to 25 percent. Most of the lots were rented for the officially established minimum price.

From observations in Khanh Hau it is fair to say that although public rice fields were part of the property of the Village and under the control of the Village Council that the higher level authorities actively participated in their management. For example, correspondence files showed that decisions to allow the Fundamental School to rent additional land were not made by the Council but by the Canton Chief or higher, with the Council merely expressing its opinion. Policies as to reduction in rental rates for the drouth period of 1958 came from the provincial headquarters. And, as another example, the District Chief advised on the renting of communal lands. And has been noted, after the change to the bidding procedure in 1959, the District Chief and his assistant came to the Village to direct the bidding operation.

#### Vital Statistics and Licenses

It was relatively convenient for villagers in Khanh Hau to perform such public responsibilities as registering births, deaths, and marriages, as well as to obtain various types of business licenses and permits, for they had to go only to their own Village Hall. There they could obtain the necessary assistance from the Civil Status councillor.

The Village Council provided several services relative to the administration of vital statistics and licenses. First, it maintained a dual set of vital statistic record books. At the end of the year, one set was forwarded to the court in Mytho and the other retained for future reference in the Village Hall. Second, it was authorized to issue some minor licenses and to assist villagers interested in obtaining other licenses. As an example of the latter, before a sale of cattle could be made, a license permit costing 20\$ had to be obtained from the Village Council. Licenses to operate businesses as such, however, had to be obtained from a higher authority; hence the Village Council merely served as a local agent ready to forward the necessary applications and transmit the licenses themselves to their owners. Third, relative to the vital statistics record function, the Civil Status Councillor and the Village Police Chief were expected to investigate all suspicious deaths and report their findings to the district chief. Although no charges were made for registrations, fees of ten piasters were asked for copies of birth and death certificates and 30 piasters for marriage certificates.

According to the Civil Status Councillor, "much" of his time (he was also the Information officer but he did not attempt to estimate amount of time given to these two separate jobs) was devoted to reviewing existing records in order to check for errors and to assisting applicants who had to apply to the courts for copies of records since the village copies had been destroyed during the period of Vietminh control. Another time-consuming task, he reported, was assisting the villagers who were poor to apply for free copies of vital statistics records. Such a procedure involved obtaining approval from the court. To prepare such an application, the service of the Police Chief was also required--it was his duty to certify that the applicant lacked financial resources.

Along with the maintenance of the vital statistics records the Village Council was called upon from time to time by the District Chief to furnish special census information. The two three-month periods in 1957 and 1958, January through March, showed correspondence concerning (1) the total number of young men (age 18 to 45) in the village, the number of French and Chinese, and the number of Vietnamese still having French citizenship. In addition to the various specifically requested items, in 1957 all councils were called upon to prepare census of foreigners, which for Khanh Hau was not a difficult task.

Another aspect of vital statistics administration was the preparation of the family declaration forms. This was not a continuing operation, however. It was performed once during the period 1957-1959. What was interesting about it from the viewpoint of administration was that the responsibility was not assigned to the "vital statistics" officer as such. Instead the Village Chief assumed the responsibility and the Deputy Chief supervised the program. Quite proud of their achievements, the Deputy Chief pointed out that the task had been finished two days before the deadline set by the District.

## Chapter X

### The Characteristics of Administration in Khanh Hau

The purpose of this final chapter is to attempt to generalize about the nature of administrative operations found in Khanh Hau. In short, it is to draw the essence from the preceding chapters and thereby to offer, perhaps, a basis on which might be constructed plans for further research and contemplation about the nature of administration in Khanh Hau and in other Vietnamese villages. By no means can this be considered a definitive study even of administration in Khanh Hau village. There is probably as much left out of the complete story as has been included in the preceding chapters. At the very most what the writer hopes has been accomplished is to depict accurately some aspects of administration in Khanh Hau. It is still hoped, however, as expressed at more length in Chapter I that this study will help to provide more information about the government of Viet-Nam and in particular about the administrative activities in and around one village hall. It may do this, the writer believes, partly by providing some details about the characteristics of this Village but also by helping to show a possible path for others to follow in research endeavors in Khanh Hau and in other communities throughout Viet-Nam.

#### In Review

Except for an explanation of the proposed study, the research procedures, and some of the limitations, the highlight of the first chapter was the discussion of the commentaries about village administration throughout Viet-Nam that had been written by the Secretary of the Department of Interior. It is worth stressing again that those are excellent statements about the characteristics of the villages; in addition, they offer considerable insight into the thinking of that key administrator. However, since they served only as background for this particular study, no attempt will be made to restate their points in this review.

Chapter II was, in effect, the writer's own introduction to the central government of Viet-Nam and to the field units above the Village of Khanh Hau. The writer visited almost all of the administrative offices of Long An province and the office of the District Chief of Thu Thua, the district in which Khanh Hau was located. The resulting interviews enabled the writer to meet the administrators charged with extending central govern-

mental programs--as well as provincial programs, if a distinction is needed--on out to the villages. The writer wanted to meet these people in order to get some "feel" for provincial administration as much as for obtaining at least a limited understanding of the various activities of the Province.

In retrospect the major impact of this chapter might be found in the fact that it shows the provincial administration to be a fairly well-rounded organization including in effect almost all aspects of a "government." On almost a moment's notice, the head of this organization could assemble an impressive array of administrative and technical talent, from 18 to 22 or so key administrators representing almost all aspects of functions performed by a government. This provincial level of administration was not, in other words, a limited housing agency for one or two or a few services. Instead it gave all the appearances of being a major unit of government --a seat, one might say, of governmental activity.

Other features also impressed the writer at the time the provincial interviews were being made. First, the severe shortage of transportation and other means of communication --this was noted in almost every agency and was mentioned several times in Chapter II. There was the extension service staff attempting to busy itself with programs in a great number of villages; but its whole program depended, however, on one vehicle; in similar straits were the Gendarmerie, the Agricultural and Rice Service, the Health Service, and others. (To be sure, perhaps this lack of equipment was stressed by the interviewees, given the tendency to identify the writer with foreign aid programs.) Second, the "problem" of field offices placed a seemingly unfair burden on Khanh Hau: as the sketch of the district (Figure 1) shows, Khanh Hau villagers had to go through the provincial town in order to go to this own district headquarters, which was located more than an equal distance on another tangent. Especially in view of limited transportation resources, this arrangement seemed to place an exceptionally undue burden on Khanh Hau as well as on the district headquarters. The third was the elimination or what appeared to be the elimination of the traditional office of canton chief as the intermediary between the district and the village levels. This was first mentioned to the writer by the District Chief who explained that both canton chiefs had resigned because of "old age." Thus, he was working directly with the villages. Since the writer understood that some thought was being given in Saigon to the abolishment of this office, the writer quickly assumed that this district had already begun to "modernize" its administration by permitting the office to wither, an interesting insight into local administrative "practices." Fourth, the smallness of the district headquarters--in contrast

to the provincial administration which was spread throughout much of the town the district headquarters consisted of one small building and one-half or so of the residence of the district chief, if one does not count the barracks for the military unit. Here was the seat of administration to which eight village chiefs were to turn for their guidance--the writer had anticipated a far more elaborate bureaucracy. In short, then, what the writer began to appreciate more clearly was the relative roles of the provincial and district units, the first being far more important not only because of its greater area of responsibility but also because of the greater volume of substance in its activities.

In the first part of Chapter III a review was presented of the growth of village organization in the southern provinces. A few observations merit further emphasis, in view of the still unsettled condition of village organization.

Three features of the village council under the French especially struck the interest of the writer, given his limited appreciation of colonial history. First, the apparent effort made by the French in 1903 to find out about the social patterns of the elite groups before designating the village council organization--to be sure, the writer did not conduct intensive research on this particular point, but it seems safe to infer this objective from what evidence was found and which was largely described in that chapter. In other words, while the French were willing to impose a fairly westernized central administration above the villages; nevertheless, they stopped short of extending their pattern into the communities themselves. Perhaps they stopped because of the lack of French trained administrators. As indicated in the same chapter, the present temporary arrangement sharply contrasts with the colonial form with the exception that the administrators still have their roots in the villages. Second, the French apparently made a major effort to consult with people throughout the countryside, or at least with some of their leaders, before drawing up the proposed organization. Regional meetings were held in order to allow local representatives to voice their views. And, third, if one dares generalize on the limited data obtained, it appears that the villages at that time wanted to assume more responsibility for maintaining law and order--through the power to inflict punishment, namely, with the whip--than the French were willing to grant. In other words, they were willing to assume more responsibility for "self-administration" in effect for functions that could make village leaders unpopular with their constituents. The writer does not wish to suggest what implications that attitude toward power has for present day issues yet it appeared in such contrast to the hesitancy of the Khanh Hau Village Council to use force on villagers that it merited inclusion in this review.

Apart from these special features, the major observation about the French period concerns the general organizational pattern of the village councils. In the opinion of the writer these were relatively complex agencies. To say the least, they were far from being simple governing bodies consisting merely of a chief and two assistants or so. Instead, over the years--and this included Khanh Hau--the villagers worked through and with a village administrative organization of not less than 11 to 12 members. And within this group, at least in theory, there were some sub-groups--the "executive council" and "executive notables"--that seemed to provide for an almost undue amount of internal checks and mutual supervision. Again this was a subject about which little knowledge could be obtained. It would be extremely interesting to find out how this large and seemingly cumbersome body actually operated--in short was most of the legal organizational web ignored and, instead, did one or two notables serve in effect as the key administrators?

The other major landmark of organizational development that stands out was the 1953 council established during the regime of Bao Dai. Here was a body that had its roots in the far past but yet had been greatly affected by the turbulent political period following on the heels of World War II. Without doubt actions of the Viet Minh era affected the thinking of those who designed the 1953 council. What, then, was the result? (Again, lacking authoritative sources by which to confirm these deductions, all the writer can say is "it appears that...") First, although a close examination of changes as discussed in Chapter III led to the conclusion that the 1953 council bore little resemblance to the traditional council, nevertheless one possible link--a common denominator--was forged--the modern village council, with permission, to be sure, of the higher authorities, could reestablish a council equal in size to the traditional council, since the 1953 law provided for a maximum membership of 12 councillors. While this may not seem significant by itself, if one thinks of the possible bearing this might have had on the relationship of the village council to the social organization of the village notability, in some villages it might have been a key to the acceptance of the newly established governing body. But at the same time that this return to the past was reintroduced, perhaps mindful of the propaganda value, the 1953 council picked up the Viet Minh provision authorizing popular elections for village council positions. And of less interest but still of importance in this review was the apparent improvement in the internal organization of the council--in particular the strengthening of the position of village chief and the elimination of the subgroups.

Especially in thinking about the future evolution of the village councils one other feature of the 1953 council merits underscoring--the deliberative powers bestowed on the council as a governing body. More than ever before, insofar as the writer could determine, the village council in 1953 was encouraged to function as a deliberating body. In the pre-war model, much less emphasis was placed on this role; instead, the administrative functions of the individual members had been stressed. Although the 1953 act did not go so far as bestowing any law-making authority, it did seem to take a major step in that direction.

All of this--the possible linkage with the past, the establishment of a popularly elected body, and the bestowment of self-government--was abruptly uprooted by the actions taken three years later, in 1956. At that time, in sharp contrast with the apparent trend, a small, not more than five-member centrally-appointed body was established with emphasis on its serving as an "administrative" agency. And it was the product of this change that was found in Khanh Hau.

The change in Khanh Hau was not as great as might have been anticipated on the basis of the general provisions applicable throughout Viet-Nam. Although under the 1953 plan Khanh Hau had a seven member council, by the time of the major change in 1956, that is, the establishment of an appointed, "administrative" council, Khanh Hau already was operating under an even smaller council of six members because of resignations. Furthermore, it had already changed from an elective to an appointive basis since in compliance with a provision in the 1953 statute the entire elected body had been abolished after three members had resigned, thereby bringing about the need for a new council. Apparently the interim council appointed by the Chief of Province remained in office until the official change to appointive councils occurred in 1956. Thus, the theoretically "abrupt" change created by Ordinance 57-A in 1956 could hardly be noticed in Khanh Hau. The major differences were some changes in personnel and the reduction in size from six to five caused by the elimination of the position of "public works" councillor. Insofar as the average villager was probably concerned, these changes made no difference in his attitude toward the council, although to be sure this is a matter of conjecture. Those who were more informed, as one former councillor who had held all positions other than chief on the pre-World War II council, probably viewed the present council as temporary--this former councillor, for example, in one conversation with the writer made the point that at present the Village Council did not have a chief, for the correct title of the present "chief" was "representative." It was the view of this ex-councillor that the powers of the "representative" ought to be increased so that he would in effect become a "chief."

In retrospect what appears most outstanding about this Council was its organizational instability. Early in the field research period, the writer was advised that the Deputy-Chief was applying for the position of Canton Chief. About mid-way, the Finance Councillor resigned and none of the other councillors in the village seemed certain whether his office would be filled or not. Two unsuccessful efforts to fill the position, (that is, the rejection of two candidates proposed by the Village Chief) led the Village Chief to conclude that the position would not be filled. However, by the end of the study, the position had been filled but the Chief had had to assume the duties of the Deputy Chief, and finally after the close of the field research, three additional "special commissioners" were added, all of whom were assigned duties closely relating to the general security problem prevailing throughout the southern provinces. At the same time came changes in other aspects of village organization. Outstanding was the establishment of the Farmers' Association, though not examined in this study, it should have considerable bearing on village council affairs. Also, the two political party organizations were merged and the Youth Group at the last, simultaneous with the establishment of the special commissioners, was coming to life because of an intensive training program conducted by military personnel.

Apart from the unstable pattern of village organization, the major feature--something that impressed the writer almost from the start of the field research--was that the organization of administrative life in Khanh Hau seemed exceptionally complex. For a small rural village in which relatively few services were being performed by the government, Khanh Hau seemed to be overflowing with organizations, the most outstanding of which were the Village Council, the Hamlet Chiefs, the Five Family groups, the militaristic village Self-Guard and the militia-like Hamlet Defense corps, the youth groups, the anti-communist denunciation committee, a 4-H club, the two political parties, special committees such as the "committee for the harvest," as well as committees established in compliance with central administrative regulations and laws, and later on, the highly elaborate Farmers Association consisting of hamlet and village organizations. And all of these had in their background, it is fair to say, the traditional council of notables. Again in retrospect one can see that much of the complexity was due to one condition--the problem of political security. It is fair to say that this single factor accounted for the Five Family system (although some would argue that the system had other objectives as well as security), the village and hamlet defense groups, the anti-communist committee, and in part for some of the remaining organizations.

The next step in the study was the examination of various aspects of village finance. The two major items were the analyses of the revenues and expenditures and the collection of rice field taxes. Partly in the development of these, various other features were also examined, including the budget process, the financial records, the use of subventions and mutual assistance funds, and the possibilities of altering the accounting forms in order to obtain more informative classifications of expenditures, both by rearranging the present accounts and by including some additional expenditures, mainly, those for the security force and the kindergarten. Since much of the data covered a three-year period, this examination gave a fairly comprehensive view of village financial activities.

As higher administrators had advised the writer, Khanh Hau was a "poor" village. For 1958, as the budget document showed, the Village expected to obtain slightly over one-half of its modest funds from outside sources, primarily subventions but also in part from loans. And for its locally raised revenues it anticipated receiving 40 percent from its small holdings of communal lands. Land taxes played an even more minor role.

Not necessarily outstanding as a feature but at least pointing to a problem to be faced by higher authorities was the attitude of the Village Chief and Deputy Chief toward the acceptance of the subventions, especially when one recalls the view of the Secretary of the Department of Interior mentioned in Chapter I about the temporary character of the mutual assistance funds. In short, a conflict existed between these two viewpoints. If the view of the village officials can be interpreted, they could see no reason for not continuing the mutual assistance procedure and the other inter-village financial assistance which, though technically classified as "loans," was at times actually subventions, since the creditor-village did not expect to be repaid. In contrast, the national Secretary identified this arrangement as an unfair burden on the more wealthy villages. What this suggests is that the Khanh Hau officials saw no real need for improving village financial conditions so as to remove this burden from the contributing villages. Although, to be sure, they apparently had made some suggestions about ways for increasing village revenue (obtaining a governmental loan to purchase more public lands was the key proposal), their thinking was probably more oriented to increasing the total amount of village revenue rather than to making the village more independent.

Something that the writer never fully comprehended was the assumption by the Village Council that taxes should be collected by going to the individual taxpayer at his home. To be sure the writer did not ascertain what proportion of the taxes had

to be collected in this way--he did observe some payments being made in the Village Hall. Yet direct solicitation was a procedure strongly endorsed by the higher authorities. Perhaps it was due to the security problem. What apparently developed in the Village was the tendency of the young Village Clerk to make the field trips as the representative of the Chief. Still, however, he turned over the four percent commission (almost equivalent to the village share of the property tax) to the authorized collector. To say the least, in view of these characteristics plus the data shown in the examination of timing of tax payments, there was much to be desired about the entire collection system.

It would not be fair to be too critical of the budget process. Although it lacked qualities of a more informative budget, the document itself still served sufficiently well the modest needs of the village. Likewise, the process of preparing and submitting first for review and then for final approval --while this appeared unnecessarily cumbersome and slow, no special problems seemed to have occurred. However, if the village had been much larger and more dynamic, then the system might have been viewed much more negatively. As the exercise in adjusting the expenditures illustrated, much could be done even in Khanh Hau to improve the value of the financial records as a basis for giving village officials--and others--a more realistic, comprehensive view of village finances.

If any one framework of governmental activity could be said to have dominated the village it was political security. It was within that context, the writer believes, that almost all aspects of village administration could be placed for purposes of searching for common denominators. It would have been extremely difficult to have found any action of the Village Council that at some phase in its cycle did not come into contact with the "security problem." Because this observation became so clear to the writer, the chapter on political security was given an unusual bent--a major portion dealt not with Village Council administration but with some activities of the central government, in particular its role in the Farmers' Association and School meetings, in order to illustrate how the subject of security was presented to the villagers through channels other than those directly related to village administration.

It was within those other activities that the most fuss was made about security, from what the writer could see. In contrast, the village-run system of propaganda, law enforcement and night guard was taken in stride, being neither ignored nor greatly courted. Security and its concomitants had become an accepted part of the routine of village administration.

To be sure, the writer never did obtain a firm grasp on security affairs, since much of it must have been hidden behind either the label of "secret" or the curtain of nightfall.

Even setting aside his duties in the field of security, the village Police Chief would have appeared as the busiest member of the Village Council. General law enforcement, processing of court correspondence, settlement of minor violations, and keeping abreast of new regulations issued by the higher authorities as well as developing some reasonable index for them represented a sufficient workload for any village level (and village caliber) police official. His task was aggravated, of course, not only by the security matters but also by the geographical dispersion of the settlements and the lack of communication and transportation.

From what the writer could observe, local justice seemed to be reasonable justice. No signs of arbitrary actions were displayed. To the contrary, the few cases observed in the Village Hall showed that the individuals seemed to be receiving almost more than the necessary amount of sympathy from the village officials. Again, of course, perhaps the writer saw only the "good" side of enforcement practices.

It was in the activity of civil adjudication, or settling disputes, that in retrospect one could note the greatest display of what might be called "local self-administration." For it was there that the Village Council without orders from above was attempting to administer a vital community service. For this function the Council was not being directed nor even really supervised from above. True, indirect supervision existed in the form of the right of the aggrieved to appeal. Yet on the day-to-day basis, here was an area within which the Village Council seemed to reign fairly supreme. Especially when one thinks of the fairly highly centralized, pattern of administrative behavior that pervaded village administration, this particular function stands out like a lone palm in a rice field.

From what the writer observed plus the information obtained from the "disputes" file it certainly is fair to conclude that the Council took this function seriously. It devoted considerable attention to any case brought before it, whether it involved an intra or inter-family problem. In part this might have been motivated by the desire to avoid having villagers appeal to administrative superiors, yet beyond that one could sense from the general pattern of discussions that in this role the council members (in particular the Chief and Deputy Chief) saw themselves carrying forward one of the important traditional functions of the former council of notables.

Also in the conduct of traditional ceremonies, the Village Council remained an active participant even though, in principle, it had moved farther and farther away from the traditional organization of the village notables and from a direct dependence upon the villagers themselves, that is, as symbolized by the change from an elective to an appointive basis. Not only did the council members maintain their participation as council members as such in the ceremonies by having a specified position in the ceremonial protocol but also--and perhaps more importantly--by being easily available for consultation on matters pertaining to the preparations of the ceremonies. And for the Death Anniversary ceremony, which was also viewed with considerable importance, it was the Village Council rather than the council of notables that assumed the representative role for the Village.

It was in the conduct of the modern ceremonies that the Village Council seemed to suffer--that is, to have to take an unnecessarily secondary, minor role. The gross example of this was the Farewell Ceremony for the departing director of the Fundamental School which was overly dominated (a subjective judgment of the writer to be sure) by outside administrators.

It would be extremely difficult to generalize about the entire array of activities described in the discussion of "other activities." There is an inclination to say that these point up the field office role of the Village Council for many examples of centrally-directed and village-administered activities were noted especially in agriculture, which after all was the key "problem" of the community, health and welfare, and vital statistics. But also interwoven with these were instances in which the preponderance of direction seemed to rest with the Council itself. These included the effort to solve the water shortage, the establishment of the kindergarten and secondary schools (after the departure of the Fundamental School director who gave these programs their initial start), and improvement in the irrigation system. Thus, while one would of course admit that the predominant feature of these activities was their direction from above, he should also appreciate that to some extent the Village Council itself partook of the leadership function.

From the viewpoint of the writer, one of the most interesting aspects of village administration shown in that final, catch-all chapter were the two illustrations of the Council failing to remove obstacles deterring the betterment of "public" interest. These were its fumbling with the toilet-fish pond issue and its failure to push for a solution to the problem created by the landowner who objected to having the canal routed across his land. For the first, the Council was

frank enough to admit that it did not want to force the issue because a "friend," a former council member, was the wrong-doer. Even when supported by experts of the central government and the authority of the general administrative hierarchy the Council apparently did not really attempt to force a change. As to the second, here was a case where one person was preventing the final step in the successful completion of the villages first major community development project, yet the Council and other villagers seemed unable to budge the hold-out. And this condition still existed a year and one-half after the major phase of the canal--the digging of the connecting link with the river below the village--had been completed. To be sure, this problem had not destroyed the usefulness of the canal but it had deterred taking full advantage of it. These two examples of stubborn opposition by villagers should, at least, make one hesitant about proffering any sweeping generalizations about the behavior of government in the rural communities.

### The Council

Some additional observations will bind more completely the various segments of village administration examined in the preceding chapters. In addition there are a few more facts that also might help to clarify this study of administrative activity. Beforehand, however, the writer wishes to comment about his own judgment regarding the operations of the Khanh Hau Village Council since in part one might be inclined to interpret some of the following observations as criticisms to be laid at the feet of the Council members or of the higher authorities rather than as efforts to simply portray more adequately the nature of this administrative agency.

Although many criticisms could be made of the Khanh Hau Village Council and of its members, nevertheless given all the environmental limitations within which it was operating it appeared to be performing reasonably well. Perhaps the writer is being overly sympathetic yet he viewed the Council from a background of several years of contact with rural officials in a midwestern state of the United States. To be sure, this is entirely a subjective judgment yet what it means is that the writer tended to develop an attitude more positive than negative, more sympathetic than unsympathetic, in spirit toward the Council.

This is not to say, of course, that the Village Council could not be improved nor that its members were of superior character. Far from that, what it does mean is the Council

appeared to be functioning reasonably satisfactory given such limitations that the writer recognized as coming from the lack of financial resources, the low level of formal education, the matter of political security, and probably the effects of years of colonial rule, to mention some of the more obvious. In certain respects, in fact, such as its interest in civil adjudication it gave signs of providing highly satisfactory service. To say the least, the Council was far above a level of inaction, ignorance, and indifference.

Now, as to the closing observations--first a matter of definition needs to be examined. It would have been more appropriate to have used the term "commission" rather than "council," when speaking of the village administrative agency. In part this is a problem of translation since the word "council" is deeply ingrained in Vietnamese usage. However the operational characteristics of the village officials more appropriately fit the concept of a "commission", at least, as employed in the vocabulary of the American student of governmental organization. Two patterns of behavior support this view: first, each village official had specific functions to perform, such as police, vital statistics, and tax collection; second, the Council seldom acted as a collective body; the writer, in fact, never observed the five (and later four) members sitting down together to hold a meeting of the council in order either to deliberate on some village question, to hear petitions of villagers, or to adopt or modify any regulations. In short, the Council did not appear to act as a body concerned with governing the village through the deliberative and formal process characteristic of a legislature or of a council. By far most of its actions were more characteristic of administrators than legislators.

While this point as to the distinction between "council" and "commission" may seem trivial, it nevertheless identifies a basic organizational problem found in Khanh Hau--and therefore probably to found in many other villages. And that is an unsatisfactory mixture of two competing interests: a desire on the one hand to have a village agency capable of providing leadership and representation on the one hand and of conducting operational services on the other--a problem which, the writer should add, has been a perennial issue in the evolution of local administration throughout much of the world.

It is fair to say that some of the Khanh Hau officials were affected by this conflict. They wanted to be members of the Village Council for the prestige it brought them yet, given the amount of time required to conduct village affairs, they became perturbed with their commitment. Early in the field research the Village Chief pointed out that he had a much

higher salary prior to joining the Village Council and that he had to sell his business (buying and transporting rice) in order to devote more time his village affairs. And at the close he indicated to the writer desire to resign in order to devote more time to affairs at home. Likewise, the Finance Councillor resigned. On the other hand the Deputy Chief remained until receiving another administrative appointment, canton deputy --yet during the time observed by the writer, he never attempted to act like an administrator; rather he enjoyed the prestige of that elite group, the Council, and avoided administrative responsibilities. He approached, in short, the "council" end of the council-administration continuum.

One result of this lack of adjustment to the demands of serving as a "commissioner" was that operating responsibility was gradually being shifted to the one full-time "employee" of the council involved in administration--the Village Clerk. With hardly any exceptions this young man, about 24 years old, was busily occupied with village affairs every time the writer visited the village hall.<sup>1</sup> Much of his work, to be sure, was purely clerical--typing letters, filing correspondence, and maintaining various records. Yet because of this work he became aware of what was involved in most aspects of village administrative life. In addition, as discussed in the chapter on tax collection, the Clerk acting for the Village Chief had begun serving as tax collector. Thus, one can easily envisage with the passing of time--and with the increase in social status of the clerk plus some change over in council personnel --that the clerk would move more and more, both by default of the others as well as by the weight of his own knowledge about administrative activities, into a more influential position in the totality of village administration. (Such a pattern has been well recognized as existing in American rural units for many years--county clerks have been identified as informal county managers in some instances.)

Second, a few observations need to be made about the relationships of the Village Council with the higher authorities, a subject which could, of course, be a central feature of a major study, given the highly centralized system and spirit of administration in Viet-Nam. Without doubt Khanh Hau must have been somewhat an exception to the general pattern of

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<sup>1</sup>Only the clerk was on duty during the entire working day. The Councillors followed their own rule requiring one member to be in or near the Village Hall during office hours, that is, from 0730-1100 and 1500 to 1700 except Sundays and holidays.

villages since the Fundamental School brought it into much more contact with higher level administrators and other "outsiders," including foreign dignitaries interested in this project of UNESCO. One reason for selecting Khanh Hau for this administrative study was the assumption, in effect, that the Village was different--that considerable rapport had already been established with the villagers by members of that "outside" group, the Fundamental School and, therefore, that one might capitalize on that social investment. In addition, straddling a main national highway and being relatively close to several urban centers gave Khanh Hau something far less than an air of a remote, isolated community. Thus, the following observation is offered with recognition of the possibly unique situation forward in Khanh Hau.

From what the writer could determine, the Khanh Hau Councillors appeared fairly sophisticated in their attitudes and thinking about the higher levels of administration. The strong preference of the Village Chief to approach directly and informally provincial administrators for assistance was one illustration of this fairly developed attitude about central administration. He was fully aware of his "jumping channels" and in American parlance of avoiding "red tape." And he seemed to get a personal delight out of telling how he had achieved his mission in that way whether it was to try to borrow a water pump or obtain some equipment for the kindergarten or cement conduits for laying under the road.

And even more illustrative was the explanation given by the Police Chief of the role played by the Civic Action agency in central governmental administration. It should be said, first of all, that this comment occurred during a conversation with the writer regarding the value of the Civic Action agents to the Village Of Khanh Hau--the writer was attempting to test his own tentative conclusion that in recent times that agency had been of little service to the Village. Strongly defending the Civic Action agents, the Police Chief pointed out to the writer that since in the central government it was located in the Presidency it was in a position to bring pressure to bear on the various departments, to wit, on the public works (the Department of Public Works and Communication) department. In other words if the provincial public works service was unsympathetic to a village request, the Police Chief argued the Village could in effect appeal to the President through this other channel. Likewise, he pointed out that pressure could also be brought to bear at other levels of administration--the district and the province--with the aid of the Civic Action agents. To be sure (and in support of the writer's view) the Police Chief admitted that his major proposal to the Civic Action agents in recent times--obtaining gravel for the whole village road and possibly macadamizing it--had not been acted upon.

It lies beyond the scope of this study to attempt to explain why these Council Members were as knowledgeable about the politics of administration as they were. Apart from the unique status of Khanh Hau, there are three observations about administrative actions that possibly were contributing factors. First, the Council members seemed fairly well informed about the central administration--not necessarily about the politics of the government but about many of its operating programs. In part this awareness (granted that the writer did not adequately test this as such) came from an opportunity to read the daily newspaper and informational bulletins brought to the Village Hall. But beyond that and into the more technical aspects of administration the Council was able to note first hand some of the administrative activities of the central government via its formal channel of communication--the official correspondence that came into the village hall, for at times this correspondence originated in the central government rather than at a lower level. The Province Chief and the District Chief in turn would merely add their endorsements, Thus, a more or less direct line existed at times between the village and a central governmental agency. To be sure this developed on the basis of general announcements, for seldom was the Village of Khanh Hau the sole recipient. Second, the Council had become aware of the value of expressing its dissatisfaction with "line" departments to the Province Chief, especially when it was supported by a group of villagers such as the Parents Teachers Association. On two or more occasions when it had communicated the village's dissatisfaction with the local school director it had received fast action--the Province Chief removed the director. Third, the Village Council was in fairly close, continuous contact with the District offices. In part this might have been one the positive values of the security problem which without doubt strongly stimulated district-level interest in village affairs and in building rapport with village officials. But also the more ordinary channels of communication were fairly open--the Village Chief felt free to visit the District Chief on any occasion; monthly meetings were held between the District Chief and all village leaders at the district headquarters; and correspondence on various matters was going back and forth on a daily basis.

The third broad observation about the Council concerns its role in the efforts being made by the Government of Viet-Nam to improve the general welfare of the people. To use a familiar expression the Council seemed to be "out of step with the Times." This became more and more obvious as the writer began appreciating the extent to which some of the Council members were far from being unaware of activities in and about the central government in Saigon. As one observed the Council members "in action" in the Village Hall no sense of urgency

nor of dynamic administrative strivings toward betterment in community life could be felt. In short the Councillors were not strongly "community development" oriented. They had not been caught up in the efforts of the central government. And this seemed an even more serious charge when one realized that the Village was being used as a laboratory and as pilot project in the community development of the Fundamental School.

The writer bases this judgment on several observations. Perhaps the strongest was the generally apathetic attitude toward village welfare displayed by the Deputy Chief (now the deputy canton chief and probably the next canton chief, a still vacant office). This Councillor was responsible for "Economic and Social" activities, which included the entire array from public works to family needs and on to agriculture and industry. Yet among the Councillors he was the most inactive, the most inclined to take a passive role. In contrast the Village Chief became "action oriented" but his greatest efforts were put into a project of questionable value to community development as such--the drive to obtain funds for improving the tomb of the Marshal.<sup>2</sup> Also like the Deputy Chief, the Civil Status Councillor (serving also as Information Agent and later, in addition, as the First-aid Agent) showed no strong drive or interest in his work. To be sure with the push of the Fundamental School and some outside financial assistance from the Asia Foundation and some "foreign aid" for the secondary school program, the Village Council had made some efforts in the community development field, but what impressed the writer was the general lack of orientation of the Council as such to thinking and acting as if they were attuned to this current critical era of social change facing Viet-Nam.

Again the writer can suggest some factors that might have contributed to this characteristic of the Council without attempting to go so far as to suggest which might have been the most crucial. First, the attitude of the Councillors themselves toward their duties as Village Councillors--were they there to serve primarily as honorable "councillors" or

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<sup>2</sup>A political value existed - the district chief in his speech given at the time of the transfer of the boxes containing the official documents and the other altar pieces from the old to the new temple pointed out how here the government was supporting religion in contrast to the communist who destroyed religious buildings and institutions. To be sure some economic gain might accrue to the Village since some increase in tourist trade should result from the construction of a new temple.

as working "administrators." Were they expected to be working for the Village or for the central administration? As the writer has already suggested, they were not strongly inclined to think of themselves as administrators, excepting the Police Councillor and in part the Civil Status Councillor. Second, they were not adequately integrated into the work programs of the central government; thus they at times stood apart from central governmental efforts to stimulate local interest in community development. In short, at times they seemed to lack acceptance by the central or higher authorities. The gross display of this was the ceremony for the President, a time when a great honor could have been bestowed on the Village Council members by permitting all or at least the Chief to join the dignitaries on the speaker's platform. Likewise on occasions when technical specialists, such as agricultural advisors came to the Village, except for paying a courtesy call, little seemed to develop in the way of close working relationships between the outside expert and the council members. And finally, a possible fear of personal safety might have existed. The most attractive community targets for the anti-governmental forces have been the community leaders; hence any villager in a leadership position such as a Councillor who devotes above average attention to his work tends to increase his potential as a future victim of the subversive movement.

## Appendix A

### The Khanh Hau Budget Document

(1)

#### Line Items of the Standardized Village Budget in Long An Province, 1958

Note: This list is based on the 1958 budget form which differed somewhat from the form for the two preceding years. The major difference was the addition of a column showing the actual expenditures for the preceding fiscal year. In contrast, the earlier form required only the estimated budget of the preceding year and a comparison of increases and decreases.

+ Items used in the Khanh Hau Village Budget Report

#### Receipts

##### I. Surcharges on following taxes

- +A. Rice fields
- +B. Garden plots
- C. Urban land
- +D. House sites
- E. Rubber fields
- F. Salt fields
- G. Pepper fields
- +H. License
- I. Boat
- +J. Cattle and Horse
- +K. Vehicle (ox cart, horse cart, motor tricycle, pedicab, tricucle)

##### II. Miscellaneous taxes

- A. Bridge and road tax
- B. Car station tax
- C. Berthage tax
- D. Home improvement tax
- E. Public land occupation tax
- F. Carts inspection tax
- G. Entertainment tax
- H. Public light tax
- I. Sweepings tax

- J. Animal detainment tax
- K. Advertisement Sign tax
- L. Tax on extension of hours for restaurants and amusement booths
- M. Soccer game and billiard table tax
- N. Embankment and occupation tax
- O. Nightwatching tax
- P. Use of unharvested crop tax

III. Village Revenues

- A. Interest from loans
- B. Interest from shares
- C. Rent of urban land
- +D. Rent of public fields
- +E. Rent of public land
- F. Rent of houses
- G. Rent of fields belong to village temple
- H. Rent of stone quarry, sand pit, etc.
- I. Sale of public property
- J. Miscellaneous (sale of bamboo, palm leaves, etc.)

IV. Revenues from bids

- A. Market
- B. Slaughter house
- C. Ferry boat site
- D. Fishery site
- E. Lakes and ponds
- F. Electricity consumption
- G. Running water
- H. Miscellaneous

V. Other Revenues

- +A. Fines paid to village council
- B. Fines by the court for petty offenses
- C. Sale of abandoned objects
- +D. Certification of documents
- E. Issuance of certified copies
- F. Collection of loans
- +G. Delinquent payments of preceding year taxes
- H. Loans
- +I. Subventions from other budgets
- J. Caution money of bidders
- K. Miscellaneous receipts

VI. Reserve funds and cash-on-hand

- A. Reserve fund
- B. Money on deposit in provincial treasury
- +C. Money in village office
- D. Money for loans not paid up

VII. Special receipts

- A. Special taxes
- B. Gifts and inheritances

Expenditures

I. Administrative Affairs

A. Personnel

- +1. Allowances for village council
- +2. Salaries and allowances for village council assistants
  - village clerk
  - hamlet chiefs
  - messenger
  - laborers (communal housekeeper, school orderly, public garden sweeper, permanent service, night watchman, etc.)
- 3. Allowance for self-defense personnel
- 4. Salaries and allowance for personnel of various tax offices (market, slaughter house, water service, etc.)

B. Materials

- +1. Village council stationery
- +2. Purchase and reparation of equipment and furniture
- 3. Postage fees, cablegrams and telephone
- +4. Illumination in street and village buildings
- +5. Ceremonies
- +6. Council members transportation
- 7. Meals for the detained
- +8. Village tax
- 9. Land registration and tax administration
- 10. Clothing for self-defense and village council personnel
- 11. Purchase and maintenance of equipment for the various tax offices (market, slaughterhouse, etc.)
- +12. Miscellaneous expenditures

## II. Social Affairs

### A. Personnel

- +1. Salaries and allowances for the village health service (hospital attendant, rural nurse, first aid man)
2. Salaries and allowance of village teacher
3. Laborers salaries (orderlies of school, dispensary, maternity)

### B. Materials

- +1. School equipment purchase and maintenance costs
- +2. Aid for the poor
- +3. Burial fees for the poor
4. Rubbish collection
5. Purchase and maintenance of fire equipment
6. Construction and maintenance of schools
7. Construction and maintenance of village maternity and dispensary
8. Construction and maintenance of village communal house.

## III. Economic Affairs

### A. Personnel

1. Salaries of laborers and public works crews

### B. Materials

1. Supplies for maintenance of water and electricity
2. Supplies for laying land-marks

### C. Public Works

1. Maintenance
  - Roads
  - Bridges
  - Canals
  - +-- Buildings (village office, market, etc.)
2. Construction of new works

IV. General public interest

- A. Fees for printing tax and vital statistics records
- B. Newspapers and magazines
- C. Stationery for canton office
- D. Salary for canton secretary

V. Other Expenditures

- A. Repayment of loans
- B. Return of caution money
- C. Unanticipated expenditures
- D. Contributions to the supplementary funds
- E. Money for reserve funds

+VI. Irregular expenditures

(2)

## Khanh Hau Budget Estimates for 1956, 1957, and 1958

Summary

	<u>Estimated Receipts</u>			
	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>o/o</u>
I. Surcharges on taxes	6,001\$	6,193\$	110,060\$	8.3
II. Village property	45,679	27,887	22,000	18.3
III. Other sources	16,743	28,443	87,300	72.5
IV. Reserved funds	<u>5,149</u>	<u>1,345</u>	<u>1,000</u>	0.9
	<u>73,572\$</u>	<u>63,868\$</u>	<u>120,360\$</u>	

	<u>Estimated Expenditures</u>			
	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>o/o</u>
I. General Administration				
A. Personnel	69,344\$	57,638\$	97,100\$	80.9
B. Materials and Activities	4,109	5,909	12,900	10.8
II. Social affairs				
A. Personnel	--	--	--	
B. Materials and Activities			3,000	2.5
III. Economic affairs				
A. Personnel	--	--	--	
B. Materials and Activities	--	--	--	
C. Public Works-Maintenance	--	--	2,000	1.7
IV. Unanticipated expenditures	<u>119</u>	<u>321</u>	<u>5,000</u>	4.1
	<u>73,527\$</u>	<u>63,868\$</u>	<u>120,000\$</u>	

Source: Village records

## COMPLETE BUDGETS

Estimated Receipts

	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>
I. Surcharges on Taxes			
A. Rice fields	2,683\$	2,683\$	2,860\$
B. Garden plots	1,024	1,024	1,040
C. Houses and House sites	376	376	650
D. Licenses	568	750	570
E. Animals	1,350	1,360	4,900
F. Vehicles	--	--	40
	<u>6,001\$</u>	<u>6,193\$</u>	<u>10,060\$</u>
	=====	=====	=====
II. Village property			
A. Public rice fields	45,000\$	27,158\$	20,000\$
B. Public land	679	729	2,000
	<u>45,679\$</u>	<u>27,887\$</u>	<u>22,000\$</u>
	=====	=====	=====
III. Other Sources			
A. Fines	200\$	1,000\$	800\$
B. Fees	3,000	12,000	10,000
C. Delinquent taxes	13,143	14,943	9,500
D. Subventions	--	--	67,000
E. Contributions for Ceremonies	400	500	--
	<u>16,743\$</u>	<u>28,443\$</u>	<u>87,300\$</u>
	=====	=====	=====
IV. Reserved funds			
A. Provincial treasury	400\$	6\$	-----\$
B. Village treasury	4,749	1,339	1,000
	<u>5,149\$</u>	<u>1,345\$</u>	<u>1,000\$</u>
	=====	=====	=====
Grand total of Estimated Receipts	<u>75,572\$</u>	<u>63,868\$</u>	<u>120,360\$</u>
	=====	=====	=====

Estimated Expenditures

	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>
I. General administration			
A. Personnel			
1. Village council	50,798\$	20,798\$	57,300\$
A. Assistants			
-- Clerk	--	--	11,000
-- Hamlet chiefs	--	--	21,600
-- Laborers	18,546	36,840	7,200
Total	<u>69,344\$</u>	<u>57,638\$</u>	<u>97,100\$</u>
B. Materials and Activities			
1. Stationery supplies	1,200\$	1,200\$	1,200\$
2. Purchase and maintenance of office equipment	--	--	3,500
3. Illumination fuel	1,320	1,320	1,500
4. Ceremonies	--	--	1,000
5. Travel	600	2,400	2,400
6. Village assessment for mutual assistance fund	989	989	
7. Miscellaneous	--	--	2,300
Total	<u>4,109\$</u>	<u>5,909\$</u>	<u>12,900\$</u>
	=====	=====	=====
II. Social affairs			
A. Personnel	--	--	--
B. Materials and Activities			
1. Purchase and repair of school equipment	--	--	2,000\$
2. Aid for the poor	--	--	700
3. Burial fees for the poor	--	--	300
Total	--	--	<u>3,000\$</u>
			=====

Estimated Expenditures (cont.)

	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>
III. Economic Affairs			
A. Personnel	--	--	--
B. Materials and Activities	--	--	--
C. Public Works			
-- Maintenance of village office	--	--	2,000 <sup>φ</sup>
Total	--	--	2,000 <sup>φ</sup>
IV. Unanticipated Expenditures	<u>119<sup>φ</sup></u>	<u>321<sup>φ</sup></u>	<u>5,000<sup>φ</sup></u>
Grand total of Estimated Expenditures	<u>73,572<sup>φ</sup></u>	<u>63,868<sup>φ</sup></u>	<u>120,000<sup>φ</sup></u>

Source: Village Records

Appendix B.

Khanh Hau Village Cash Revenues for 1956, 1957, and 1958

(Supporting data for figure 9)

Source	1956												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
<u>Tax Surcharges</u> (In piasters)													
Rice fields <sup>a</sup>	73	-	-	74	-	831	133	348	357	117	299	61	2,293
Garden plots <sup>a</sup>	16	-	-	-	-	103	31	48	13	8	131	56	406
House and Sites	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	27	-	-	14	-	48
Licenses	107	-	-	1532	-	-	-	296	162	211	139	-	2,447
Animals	30	5	5	-	20	20	-	75	-	10	25	-	190
Delinquent payment	32	29	16	22	-	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	125
<u>Village property</u>													
Rice fields	3270	3510	5700	2580	9390	3000	1290	6700	-	5960	1300	3405	46,105
Other land	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	286	-	306
<u>Other sources</u>													
Fines	5	8	48	-	40	-	-	-	-	-	88	20	209
Fees	46	140	106	154	324	366	176	134	80	125	510	820	2,981
Loans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subventions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	180	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80	-	260
	3759	3692	5875	4362	9794	4346	1637	7628	612	6431	2872	4362	55,370

Source: Village Cash Receipts Book for 1956.

Khanh Hau Village Cash Revenues

(Supporting data for Figure 9)

1957

Source	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
<u>Tax Surcharges</u> (In piasters)													
Rice fields <sup>a</sup>	-	250	178	83	94	145	130	241	113	142	182	158	1,716
Garden plots <sup>a</sup>	-	54	31	54	35	-	15	25	3	8	51	34	310
House and Sites	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	41	-	69
Licenses	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1019	272	168	-	1,459
Animals	-	360	770	200	280	40	25	60	50	-	60	210	2,055
<u>Village property</u>													
Rice fields	300	2070	-	-	200	16120	2287	-	-	290	148	-	21,415
Other land	-	212	-	210	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	422
<u>Other sources</u>													
Fines	-	40	110	30	-	-	90	-	-	-	130	-	400
Fees	50	780	1230	1040	460	430	690	330	2035	1290	1335	1135	10,805
Loans	-	-	1000	-	-	-	-	-	-	5000	-	3000	9,000
Subventions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17150	-	-	11400	-	28,550
Other	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
	350	3780	3319	1632	1069	16735	3237	17820	3220	7002	13515	4537	76,216

Source: Village Cash Receipts Book for 1957

Khanh Hau Village Cash Revenues

(Supporting data for Figure 9)

1958

Source	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
<u>Tax Surcharges</u> (In piasters)													
Rice fields <sup>a</sup>	264	208	491	439	281	87	131	255	364	298	503	862	4,183
Garden plots <sup>a</sup>	26	-	41	57	75	24	-	70	-	38	70	252	653
House and Sites	-	-	54	-	34	-	-	-	-	41	54	68	251
Licenses	-	431	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	125	182	-	738
Animals	30	-	1120	970	310	240	90	210	90	-	480	1605	5,145
<u>Village property</u>													
Rice fields	1125	647	338	-	5100	-	1250	975	1825	1500	-	1250	14,010
Other land	-	60	-	490	-	-	-	370	70	-	-	170	1,160
<u>Other Sources</u>													
Fines	-	60	-	60	80	-	-	-	-	30	30	-	260
Fees	-	180	140	140	220	40	-	10	-	-	-	300	1,030
Loans	1200	-	13000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,200
Subventions	-	-	-	-	-	20000	10000	-	-	-	-	17000	47,000
Other	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
	2695	1586	15184	2156	6100	20391	11471	1890	2349	2032	1319	21507	88,680

Source: Village Cash Receipts Book for 1958

Appendix C

Political Security: Self-Study Materials for Villages  
"The Public Opinion Letter Boxes"

(1)

THE COVER LETTER FROM  
LONG AN PROVINCE INFORMATION SERVICE

Republic of Vietnam  
South Vietnam

Long An Province

---

Information  
Service

Long An, Dec. 21, 1957

From: Chief of the Information  
Service

To : Chief of Elementary School  
Services Head of the Self  
Guard Office Chiefs of  
Informations Services, and  
All Chiefs of Village Infor-  
mation Hall  
(through the District Chief)

In implementation of Decree No. 3911/VP dated December 18, 1957 of the political office of the Regional Chief Residence I am enclosing some materials for study on the significance and objectives of the establishment of "Mail boxes for People's Opinions."

We would like to have it widely universalized by means of conducting study on the mentioned documents in all circles, teachers, pupils, self-guard groups, chiefly at control posts.

After classes, please ensure that reports be made on attendance and questions that may arise and difficulties encountered by all circles during discussion on the documents.

As for Information Chiefs and Chiefs of Information Halls, it is requested that District Cadres, all Commissioners in the Village Council and Hamlet Chiefs meet and make an

intensive study of the documents and that they have it universalized (house by house) for further study. Besides, the document should be read over weekly broadcasts to every Hamlet.

After the universalization, we request that Chiefs of Information Services and Information halls take swift steps to have questions, shortcomings and difficulties encountered in the universalization sent to the Province Information Service for a summary report to the Political office of the Regional Chief Residence.

Supplementary Copies sent to:

- Long An Province Chief (Political Office)  
"Report submitted"
- All organizations  
"for study and wide universalization  
to all members, assisting the authorities  
in facilitating the establishing of  
letterboxes for people's opinions."

(next page)

(2)

Materials to be Studied and "Universalized"

DOCUMENT FOR STUDY

Letterbox for people's opinions

I. Significance and aim

To build a strong democratic regime the government has to be on constant alert to the expectations of the people and their constructive opinions.

All democratic policies and recommendations (?) must aim at serving the people in all spheres. It goes without saying that local situations vary, particularly at this stage of our partitioned country, and needs of many localities could by no means be met all at a time... Thus, quite frequently, most recommendations or policies must be applied accordingly and flexibly carried out.

But, basically, the interests of the state and the people must be integrated.

Therefore, a citizen who wants to ensure that his just interests be respected and safeguarded must be fully conscious of his due part of duty in building common welfare, by means of expressing his ideas on every organization of all government activities. It is also the citizen's right to continuously observe and supervise the work of the Government, making criticisms and submit his wishes. All that aims at invigorating, developing and improving the social life.

On the other hand, the citizen must also be upright and unhesitating in expressing all his doubts, his worries in time to the Government, relentlessly unveil any form of injustice, oppression, exploitation, and corruption...of cadres of all branches, ranks, as well as any attempt and act of terror, pillage, rebellion by gangsteristic Communists living among the people..., and generally speaking, any attempt or act that possibly threatens the peaceful life of good citizens and social order. By so doing, the citizen informs his Government of the fact in good time, so that early measures can be taken to crush all depraved elements, potential troublemakers against the people and the state...

With that aim and significance in mind, the Provincial authorities have put forward the setting up of "Letterboxes for people's opinions" which will be hung all over localities, providing the citizens with a means of giving their opinions, thus helping to build a truly democratic and strong regime in effective service to the people.

## II. How to use them

In each hamlet two or three "letterboxes" will be hung on trees or at the Dinh, market place and away from government agencies, thus eliminating the citizen's hesitation to drop letters in.

All those compatriots who desire to give constructive opinions, or to express their aspirations, or uncover any attempt, any act of rebellions sabotage of the Communist gangsters, concretely describe all in ink, enclose your true names and addresses, use carefully glued envelopes and drop the letter into the letter boxes.

## III. Secrecy and security are safeguarded (guaranteed).

All letter boxes are securely locked by a special committee representing the Province Chief. They are marked with code signs and hung up by the self-guards.

Twice a month (on the 15th and 30th) the Village Council Representative should himself assign a confident to bring the still-locked boxes to the District Chief concerned. A committee representing the Province will unlock, unseal the boxes and make up reports on the total letters in each box and give the letters to Province Chief who will personally do the opening.

The Representative Council will promptly seal and lock up the letter boxes at the District's office and have them hung back all over the village.

By so doing, all matters would directly reach the Province Chief, and will not have gone through any mediator. The contents of the letters as well as names and addresses of the senders will be kept in walled secrecy, thus preventing any fear of possible reprisals.

The reason why names and addresses of senders are to be mentioned is that, if necessary, the Province Chief might secretly invite them to his office to collect more details on the matter, or to pay them tribute for their disclosures.

IV. The authorities' attitude toward the people's letters of opinions

The Province Chief will:

- Respect all constructive opinions and will consider sound steps to be taken in the localities within the power of the Province, or submit to the Superior any matter of major importance connected to the general policy...
- Have deep concern over all just aspirations and will meet them accordingly directly or indirectly.
- Put special emphasis on secret investigation of all letters of denunciation with concrete facts and with legible names and present addresses of the denouncers. Their names will be kept in top secrecy to deter any possible hatred...
- Absolutely consider no anonymous letters or any letter without a legible name and address of the denouncer, as well as all letters with false names which will be considered as anonymous.
- Reward (published or in secret, according to the case) any compatriot or cadre who has uncovered important and truthful matters.

By contrast, those potential slanderers who take advantage of the occasion to insult a certain person for personal hatred or revenge, or deliberately sow suspicion to disarray the people or the internal affairs of an organization or a group, the Province authorities will particularly stage investigations and severe disciplinary measures shall be taken.

The Province also pledges guarantees of total security to all compatriots who boldly make denunciations, with a clear concept of constructive opinions, of any act of corruption or gangsterism, once the secrecy of the denunciation has leaked out to the denounced by mishandling.

Appendix D

Excerpt from the "Declaration of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam Relative to the Problem of Unification." April 26, 1958.

(Editor's note: The following are the six points that Khanh Hau villages were told by a district information agent that they must be prepared to recite any of them whenever visiting the Village Hall. These have been widely publicized--sign boards even along the highways carry the six points))

"The contradictions between the propoganda and the actions of the Hanoi authorities are manifest. For years, their attitude has remained the same. They must now prove to what extent this attitude has changed. To that end:

1.- They must allow the departure of the 92,319 people and the 1,955 families who want to go to the South and whose applications are filed with International Control Commission so that they may join their families;

2.- They must reduce their military strength to the same level existing in the South; it is only after they have done this, and after it has been verified by an appropriate international organization, that the problems of reduction of military strength in the two zones can be usefully approached;

3.- They must renounce what they term "revolutionary acceleration of the liberation of the South" by renouncing their methods of terrorism and murder in remote villages, and their sabotage of the work undertaken by the Government to improve the living conditions of the people, particularly the land reform and agricultural development programs;

4.- They must put an end to the Communist Party's economic monopoly to enable the people in the North to work freely and thus improve their living standard, which has fallen to an unprecedented level;

5.- They must not force the people to praise their regime in post cards; they must disband their post card writing committees created for propaganda purposes; they must cease reprisals against people because of the substance of post cards written or received;

6.- They must assure the same democratic liberties in their zone as those existing in the South and raise the living standard of the people in the North, at least to the same level as that in the South; they must stop imposing an inhuman regime designed to enlarge the gap between the two zones.

Appendix E

The Address of the Village Chief During the Farewell Ceremony  
For the Departing Director of the Fundamental School,  
June, 1958.

To the Province Chief  
To the District Chief  
To the various organizational representatives of  
our province and especially to the Former  
Director Nguyen van Mung

Dear Sirs:

As representative of the Khanh Hau people, I would like to utter some simple words.

Today is the second time that we have had the honour to welcome the Major, Province chief, in our village. More than ever, we are feeling happy that the Major, Province Chief, has sacrificed his precious time, to come here and preside over this meeting on the occasion of the departure of the Former Director of the Fundamental Center, and we hope that we will benefit from his advice.

Dear Major, Province Chief

Although you have been in Long An only for 8 months, the Khanh Hau village people in particular, and the province people in general, have already begun to be grateful for your presence.

We have enjoyed more comforts, real freedom and democracy; security is guaranteed and public opinion letters boxes are everywhere.

Since your arrival, reactionary corrupt officials have been in fear.

Since your arrival, the image of a wise and virtuous man has become brighter.

It is you that encouraged patriotism, the worship for great men, for the dead heroes who had created this country. Because of your encouragement the Marshal's tomb is about to be reconstructed. Your arrival has been a great encouragement for all activities, economic, political, cultural as well as military.

We could not count all of your favours for us, since they are as great as Thai-Son mountain. We are very proud of being under your leadership. So all our villagers submit to you our warm gratitude.

Dear Major, Province Chief

Dear Sirs,

Besides o the talented leadership of the Major, Province Chief, we have been lucky to have had the former Director Mr. Nguyen van Mung who has helped us to promote the standard of living.

Dear Former Director,

We, the villagers, shall never be able to forget the young and popular intellectual who had a great love for the people and much enthusiasm.

Although you received an order to move to another place, you still continued to take care of the people. You gave us pills and copy-books. You organized to dig ponds, to clear the walls of the mud, to dig more ditches. You have taught us to spell at nights. You, the man who isn't afraid of the rich, who doesn't despise the poor, who shares the sadness of the poor people, you have made many efforts to bring to us a sound and brighter life. But alas! your ideal has not yet been realized. Since we heard of your removal we have been feeling a great emotion. The order has been decided--what could we do to keep you.

Dear Sir,

How can we forget you, whenever we go out for the field work, looking at the Tuong Khanh canal with its two green sides, or when we meet an old woman spelling the dear mother language, or when we look at the young peasant writing his name with his strong fingers in the village office.

The sight of little chickens, of maise grains, of little country lads sitting around the fire makes us sad because we miss you.

How can we forget your services and your morale when our kindergarten is full of strong and joyful kids, when our villagers pass over serious sickness and when the high school pupils return home.

Your departure will not rub out your services done to the village.

Dear Major, Province Chief

Dear Representatives

You will soon leave Khanh Hau. With some simple words, we express the gratitude towards you "an qua nho ke trong cay." (When we enjoy the fruits, we should think to the grower of the plant.)

As Representative of all villagers, I wish you and all the family a good trip. In spite of its poverty, Khanh Hau will follow your steps, and we will strive to realize what you have told us confidently.

Dear Mr. Do van Tran, New Director of the Center

We, Khanh Hau people, are happy to welcome you, we hope that you will continue the Former Director's Program to help promote our standard of living. We promise that under the Province Chief's leadership, we will be in solidarity around you.

We will stand up for the betterment of our lives and for the future society, so that we can be proud of the Province Chief's kindness and yours. It's also our humble part of the national reconstruction under the eminent leadership of President Ngo.

Before stopping, as Representative of Khanh Hau people, I would like to shout out the following slogans:

Long live the Republic of Viet Nam

Long live the President Ngo

Good bye, dear sirs.

VILLAGE GOVERNMENT IN

VIET NAM

A Survey of Historical Development

by

Nguyen Xuan Dao

Special Project Officer

Saigon, Viet Nam

September, 1958

## FOREWORD

The study presented here is designed to provide a summary picture of administrative change in the Vietnamese village from the earliest period to the present time. Its coverage is the geographical region of the present Republic of Viet Nam, and it attempts to relate administrative change to the major political events taking place throughout Vietnamese history. Written largely for a non-Vietnamese audience who may be unfamiliar with some of the background and some of the sources, it draws upon secondary sources, hitherto available only in French or Vietnamese, for most of the material used.

The author, Miss Nguyen Xuan Dao, began this survey as an introduction to one part of a larger interdisciplinary study of a Vietnamese village, currently being conducted by members of the Michigan State University Advisory Group in cooperation with faculty of the National Institute of Administration. When she had completed it, however, it seemed to provide the kind of historical review that would be extremely helpful to anyone interested in village government, and it was therefore decided to issue it separately at this time.

The most comprehensive work dealing with Vietnamese village government and administration is the thesis of Prof. Vu Quoc Thong, Rector of the National Institute of Administration in Saigon, which covers developments from the earliest independent period to 1952.<sup>1</sup> An important article on village government by Mr. Lam Le Trinh, Secretary of State for Interior of Viet Nam has also recently appeared in the Journal of the Association for Administrative Studies,<sup>2</sup> excerpts from which were translated into English for the June 1958 issue of the Journal of the Vietnamese-American Association.

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<sup>1</sup>Vu Quoc Thong, La Decentralization Administrative au Viet Nam (Hanoi: Les Presses Universitaires du Viet Nam, 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Lam Le Trinh, "Village Councils in the Administrative Organization of Viet Nam," Administrative Research, II, No. 1 (January, 1958), 9-46.

This article adds material for the period up to 1957. Other known and available sources consist largely of doctoral theses and the writings of early French administrators, most of which refer primarily to Tonkin and Annam. Miss Dao has based her survey on all these sources, but has tried to place a fresh interpretation on the basic facts by relating changes at the village level to the broad national framework in which they took place. She was considerably handicapped in fully realizing her objective by the fact that so little scholarly effort was devoted to the study of administration in Cochinchina, and the additional complication that many items which were published are unavailable in Saigon.

This survey should be of interest mainly to those who want to learn something about Vietnamese village administrative development, but who lack the time or language skills to acquire this background from the literature on the subject. However, even those looking for more intensive coverage should find the survey and bibliography an excellent starting point for any serious study of the administrative evolution of this all-important institution.

James B. Hendry, Head  
Research Section

Michigan State University Advisory Group  
Saigon, Viet Nam

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Land

Viet Nam is a stretch of land on the east side of the Indochinese peninsula. It extends some 1,200 miles in length from the China frontier to the Gulf of Thailand, and covers an area somewhat smaller than France, or twice as large as the state of Florida. A few years ago, Viet Nam was a part of French Indochina, together with Cambodia and Laos. Scholars have liked to point out this was the meeting place of the two great civilizations of China and India, where, by land as well as by water, they converged during the early centuries of our era.

The valleys and the littoral plain of the north, from Mong Cay to Kwang Tung, and the delta and the lengthy coastline of the south have contributed to make it the land of invasions, from the prehistoric migration and the first Chinese conquest in the 3rd century B.C. to the intervention of the West in the middle of the nineteenth century and the Japanese occupation in 1940. Although the geography of Viet Nam does not afford any defense against external aggression, it presents a strategic value which has proven important throughout the history of the country, particularly during the last war. The northern road leads to South China, while the south forms a stepping stone to raw materials and the goods of Southeast Asia.<sup>1</sup> The physical aspect of Viet Nam can be easily described as two rice-baskets hanging at the ends of a bamboo pole that the peasant carries on his shoulder--a familiar sight in the Vietnamese countryside. The two baskets are represented by the two deltas (Red River delta in the north and Mekong River delta in the south), and the Annamese Mountain Chain forms the pole supporting the rice-baskets. Thus, geographically, Viet Nam divides easily into three parts: north, center, and south. (See Map I)

The Northern part, called Tonkin (Capital of the East), is an alluvial plain of about 7,500 square miles, watered by the Red River, its tributaries, and thousands of small waterways. It is on this fertile land that the people can harvest two crops of rice each year, and where the density of the population reaches an average of about 1,600 inhabitants per square mile.

South of the Red River delta, from the Gate of Annam to the Mekong River delta, is Annam--a long stretch of some 750 miles

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<sup>1</sup>Le-thanh-Khoi, Le Viet Nam: histoire et civilization (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1955), pp. 15-16.

MAP I



VIETNAM DURING FRENCH DOMINATION

of coastline, bordered on the west by the Annamese Mountain Chain which extends from Yunnan. Toward the south, the mountains reach the sea. Covered with dense forests, they are the home of several ethnic minorities.

Finally, from the last cliffs of the mountain chain to the Gulf of Thailand lies the vast delta of the Mekong River--new and rich land, constituting the "Far West" for Vietnamese colonization. This is rich Cochinchina, the larger rice basket of Viet Nam with its green fields and with its innumerable waterways bordered with palm trees.

This has been the geographical and administrative division of Viet Nam from the arrival of the French to the Geneva Conference. Since Geneva, Viet Nam has been divided at the seventeenth parallel. Starting from the partition line and moving upward, the area that includes the northern part of Annam and Tonkin is called North Viet Nam, where the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam has been established. South of the parallel is the Republic of Viet Nam, or South Viet Nam, which includes the southern part of Annam and all of Cochinchina.

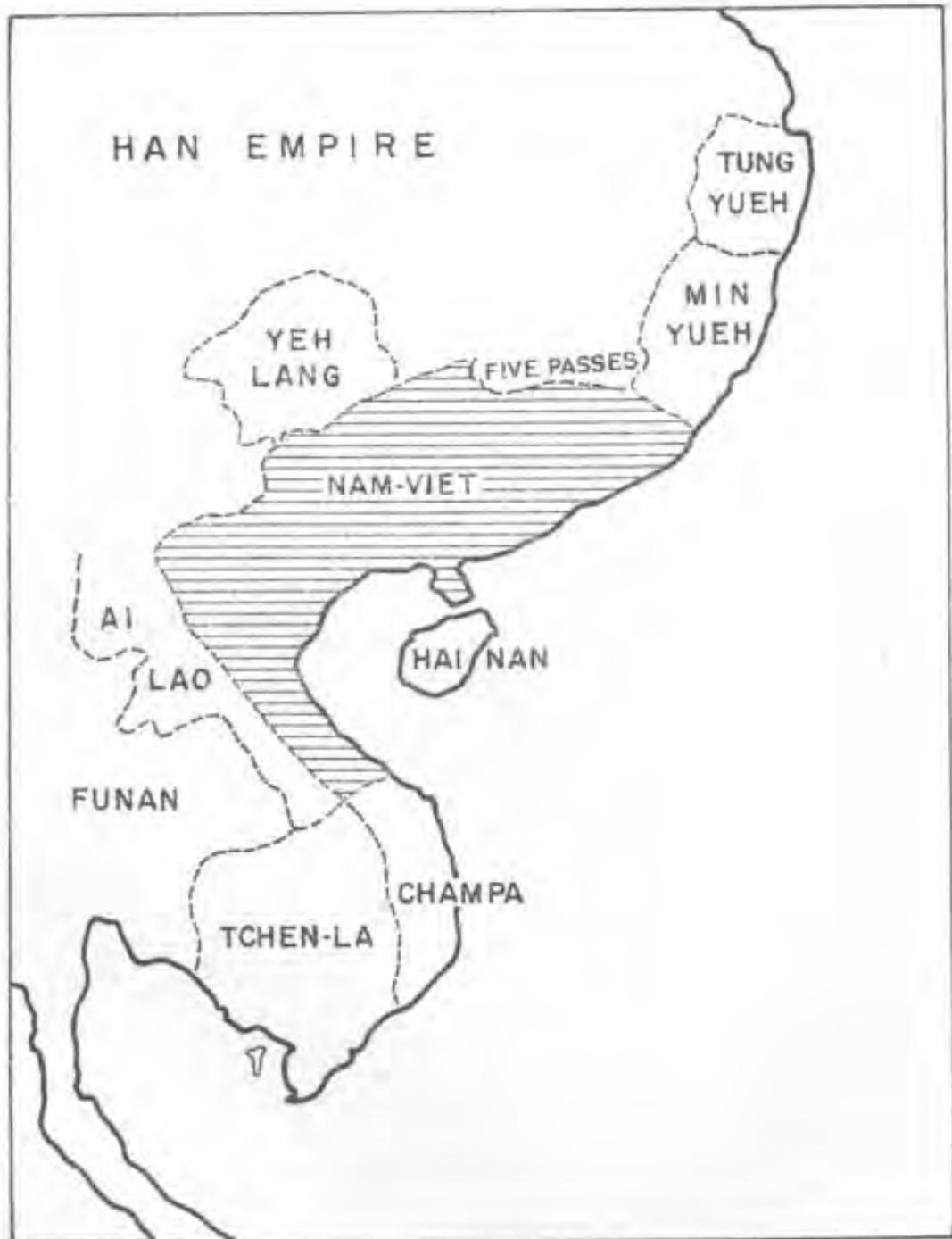
To avoid possible confusion in this study, North Viet Nam and South Viet Nam shall refer to the political divisions north and south of the seventeenth parallel, while Tonkin (or the northern part of Viet Nam), Annam (or the central part), and Cochinchina (or the southern part) shall refer to the three geographical divisions of Viet Nam.

### The People

Despite the political changes which have taken place throughout the history of Viet Nam the Vietnamese people constitute a nation issuing from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, and having, in general, the same customs.

The history of the period before the Han Dynasty in China (second century B.C.) is highly speculative, but popular belief holds that the ancestors of the Vietnamese nation came originally from the Yangtse River Valley in South China, and were found well settled in the Red River Valley by the second century B.C. These tribes, then called "Yues" or "Viets," moved gradually south, and as they did so they mingled with the native tribes of Indonesian origin, to create the present Vietnamese people.

In legend, the Vietnamese are "sons of the Dragon and grandsons of the Immortal." According to this tradition, a grandson of Emperor Than Nong, met a "tien" (fairy) during one of his tours south of the Five Passes in South China. (See Map II) Their son, Loc Tuc, married a daughter of Than Nong



NAM-VIET IN 111 B. C.

(Dragon Spirit), and the son of this union, called Lac Long Quan (Lord Dragon Lac), married Au Co, who subsequently gave birth to one hundred sons. This is the legendary origin of the "Bach Viet" (One Hundred Viets), ancestors of the Vietnamese, and the beginning of the Hong Bang or the first dynasty of Vietnamese kings.<sup>2</sup>

The Vietnamese people, now numbering about 24 millions, have established themselves mostly in the two deltas and along the coast in fishing villages. In addition, some ethnic minorities are found living in the plateau area, or near the China frontier, or at high altitudes. The highlanders in the north are mainly the Thai, Muong, Man and Meo. The most important of these groups is the Thai, who number about 700,000 and are divided into two main tribes. The two tribes are referred to as the Black Thai and White Thai, a distinction in name which is derived from the color of the shirts worn by the women. From South of the Red River delta to the Gianh River, the Muong, with a population of about 260,000, live on the border of the lowlands and up to altitudes of about 1,200 feet. Some anthropologists believe that they are the closest relatives of the Vietnamese, and that they (Muong and Vietnamese) have a common origin as indicated by language, ethnography, and proto-history. The divergence in the evolution of the two peoples determines the difference in their social structure and way of life. For instance, the Vietnamese gained village autonomy during the seventeenth century, but the Muong have kept a feudal system under which this occurred to a lesser degree.<sup>3</sup> The Meo and Man are nomads, and are found at higher altitudes of 3,000 - 6,000 feet.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For more detailed information on the origin and history of Viet Nam, see Le thanh Khoi, op. cit., pp. 65-79; Joseph Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958), pp. 67-77.

<sup>3</sup>For further information on this comparison see Jeanne Cuisinier, Les Muong (Paris: Publication de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, 1948), xi-xv. See also Henri Maspero, "Contribution à l'Etude du système phonétique des langues Thai," Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient (B.E.F.E.O.), XI, (1911), 153-169; and "Etude sur la phonétique historique de la langue annamite," B.E.F.E.O., XII (1912), 1-123 by the same author.

<sup>4</sup>For a complete description of the Meo and Man, see Henri Girard, Les Tribus Sauvages du Haut Tonkin: Man et Meo, Notes anthropométriques et ethnographiques (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1904).

At the end of the Annamese Mountain Chain live the Chams (population of 35,000) remnants of the once mighty Champa Empire which lasted for fifteen centuries. (See Map II) Formerly great navigators, they now lead a sedentary life and cultivate rice, cotton and beans.<sup>5</sup> The highlanders of the south, designated by the general term "Moi,"<sup>6</sup> number about one million, and are divided into various groups with different customs and traditions, and into two linguistic stocks--the Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian.

The Khmers,<sup>7</sup> who at one time occupied the whole Mekong delta, now form a minority of some 350,000 people living mainly south of the upper branch of the Mekong. (See Map I) Many Vietnamese towns in the south kept Khmer names (for example, Tra Vinh, Soc Trang, Sadec) until 1956, when the government decided to abolish all foreign terms and re-designated provinces and other geographic places with Vietnamese names.

Chinese comprise the largest single group of aliens residing on Vietnamese territory. Numbering around 700,000, they live mostly in large cities and practice trade, just as they do in other countries of Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> The largest

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<sup>5</sup>On the Cham civilization, see Jeanne Leuba, Un Royaume Disparu: Les Chams et leur Arts (Paris: Van Oest, 1923). The first chapter of this book was translated by Yale University, Southeast Asian Studies, 1949, 56 pp. (mimeo). See also Georges Maspéro, Le Royaume de Champa, (Paris: Van Oest, 1928).

<sup>6</sup>The general term "Moi," or "Savage," was formerly used to designate all highlanders living in the forests of south Annam and it did not apply to any particular ethnic group. At the present time, these people are called "Nguoi Thuong" or highlanders. See Marcel Ner, "Les Moi du Haut Donnai," Extrêm Asie, 88, (August 1933), 13-15.

<sup>7</sup>The term "Khmer" is used in the meaning of "Cambodian." It also refers to a language or a period in Cambodian history when Angkor was built (tenth century A.D.). For further information on the Khmers, see Louis Malleret, "La Minorité Cambodgienne de Cochinchine," Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises, XXI, No. 1 (1er Trimestre, 1946) 19-24; and Lawrence P. Briggs, The Ancient Khmer Empire (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1951).

<sup>8</sup>A recent presidential decree closed eleven occupations to foreigners, but the impact was greatest on the Chinese community which traditionally participated heavily in these occupations. See Ordinance No. 53, Sept. 6, 1956.

concentration of Chinese is in Cholon, a part of the city of Saigon, capital of the Republic of Viet Nam. This section of the city was formerly a separate sister city to Saigon, and its present population still reflects its previous identity as a distinctly Chinese community.

## History of Village Organization

### The Major Trends

The Vietnamese, like other peoples of Asia, are primarily rice-growers. They live in the countryside or clustered together along waterways. As one travels through the southern delta region, the typical rural landscape strikes the traveller by its immensity and its color. Above him the open blue sky, with a few scattered white clouds, spreads out as if to embrace the whole world; under his feet the checkered rice fields, wrapped in tender green or golden brown, run to meet the sky at the dark horizon line. Here and there, isolated or grouped into hamlets, the dark-brown thatched houses nest in the shade of the vermillion "flamboyant" trees or behind a row of palms. This is the rich delta land of the south, and here three-fourths of the population live in villages and grow rice. It is in these villages that one can find the heartbeat, the real life of Viet Nam. To the Vietnamese, their village has been their world, their home for centuries. Despite the insecurity caused by the civil war which plagued the countryside for nine years (1945-1954), and despite the migration of many people to the cities to seek a livelihood, the Vietnamese still feel they belong to the home villages where their families and their ancestors remain.

The Vietnamese village has acquired a special status through years of evolution. In Viet Nam, the village is not only the smallest administrative unit, but it is also viewed as the basic social, political and economic unit.<sup>9</sup> To appreciate its present organization, one should trace its development which reflects, in turn, the political changes which have taken place in Viet Nam. Just as we can distinguish three main periods in the history of the nation, we can classify the change in village organization into three stages:

1. The period of partial village autonomy--from the early days of Viet Nam's history to the coming of the French;

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<sup>9</sup>Vu Quoc Thuc, L'Economie communaliste du Viet Nam (Hanoi: les Presses Universitaires du Viet Nam, 1951), p. 19.

2. The period of partial control over the village--the period of French occupation (1858-1954);

3. The period of change--from the declaration of independence (1954) to the present time (1958).

During the first period, from before the Chinese domination to the establishment of the monarchy, the Vietnamese village gradually received the right to administer its own affairs with very little interference from the central authority. Just prior to the arrival of the French, village government reached a high degree of autonomy which writers have sometimes described as being almost equivalent to an imperium in imperio. Following the French occupation of Viet Nam, during which Cochinchina became a French colony and Tonkin and Annam protectorates,<sup>10</sup> changes in village government tended toward a higher degree of central government control of village officials and their activities, and also of the villagers themselves. Too much autonomy was incompatible with colonial policy. Since the end of the Second World War, there has been considerable change in central governments. The first was proclaimed by the Viet Minh, in 1945, as the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. Shortly thereafter, the French returned to Viet Nam, ultimately resulting in the reestablishment of Emperor Bao Dai. Finally, the Geneva Conference of 1954 divided the country at the seventeenth parallel. As a result, the Democratic Republic established itself north of this boundary and the Republic of Viet Nam came into existence south of it. The changes in village administration brought about by each regime do not show as clear a trend as before, but so far during this period the Vietnamese village has not regained its former autonomy.

Since this survey was originally intended to serve as an introduction to a study of a village in South Viet Nam, it is mainly concerned with tracing the factors which have shaped village organization in the southern part, or what was formerly Cochinchina. Reference to the rural organization in the other areas of Viet Nam is largely for purposes of comparison, and since the south was not colonized and exploited until the seventeenth century, village organization began there in an advanced

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<sup>10</sup>The southern part, far from the royal court, was more readily made into a colony, whereas the royal authority was much stronger in the central and northern parts. Later, by Decree of Oct. 17, 1887, the administration of the two protectorates passed from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies. This amounted to making these protectorates de facto, colonies along with Cochinchina, one might argue.

stage. From the outset, the villages established by these immigrants had notables, communal lands, a guardian spirit, and traditions and customs. In contrast, the village of the northern delta had undergone many changes before reaching the same stage at which village organization in the south began. Therefore, to appreciate what preceded the actual settlement of Vietnamese in the south, it is necessary to trace village administration to its origin in the north.

### Sinization of the Feudal System

Little is known about village government before the Chinese invasion (111 B.C.). The country was called Van Lang (Country of the Tattooed Men), and later Au Lac, under the rule of a king who was a vassal of the Chinese emperor. Still later, the country fell under the domination of a former Chinese general, Trieu Da, and was called Nam Viet. At that time, around 200 B.C., the land covered Tonkin and the southernmost part of China. (See Map II) It is believed that the Vietnamese society of that period was at a stage of feudalism similar to French society under Hugues Capet. Henry Maspéro, in his description of this land in its pre-Chinese days, concluded that it was a hierarchical and feudal society of the same type now found among the Muong and Thai near the Laos-Tonkin border.<sup>11</sup> The Lac (people of Au Lac) were sedentary and lived in small village communities governed on a hereditary basis by the heads of noble families who were their religious, administrative, and military chiefs. These were the brothers and sons of the Lac "marquis" (Lac Hau) who distributed the villages among their relatives, and these villages therefore constituted small hereditary fiefs. These "marquis," whose possessions corresponded to the huyen<sup>12</sup> of the Han period, depended, in turn, on the king for their lands.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the king, at the top of the pyramid, possessed all the lands within his domain, and distributed them as he wished to members of the royal family and the nobility. These lords, in turn, redistributed their properties among the lower nobility who were chiefs of village or of groups of villages. The latter kept a part of the land, and gave the rest to the village notables.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Maspéro, loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Probably provinces, in our terms

<sup>13</sup>Henri Maspéro, "Le Royaume de Van Lang" B.E.F.E.O., XVIII, No. 3 (1928), 4.

<sup>14</sup>The notables were those who enjoyed a privileged status among the village population due to their age, wisdom, degree of knowledge, and wealth.

Up to this point, the historians agree that the whole relationship was based on vassalage or dependency. However, they differ on the role played by notables in village affairs.

Mr. Vu Quoc Thuc, in his thesis, contends that the notables had the right to decide on all village affairs since the earliest times. In presenting this view, Mr. Thuc notes that the feudal system "topped village organization without penetrating it," that is, the feudal lords ruled over many villages, while within each village the authority belonged to the notables, especially the elders.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, there are few materials which can throw much light on the role of the notables in village affairs. While one might say that the notables took part in village administration during the feudal period, we do not know how large a part this was.

Under Chinese occupation, during the Han dynasty in China, all this was completely changed. Although Trieu Da, the Chinese who conquered Nam Viet, adopted Vietnamese traditions--"the conqueror became conquered"--later Chinese governors of Nam Viet undertook a policy of assimilation. For the next ten centuries under Chinese rule, Nam Viet underwent profound changes. Its people adopted the Chinese concept that the emperor is the son of heaven, intermediary between the people and heaven, and the supreme judge and grand pontiff. Chinese books, literature, and writing were introduced to the Vietnamese, and the Sinophiles formed a class of literati. No less important were the teaching of Chinese culture and traditions, of social and religious ceremonies (weddings, funerals etc...), and technical education in land cultivation. One of the consequences of this education--technical improvements in agriculture--had an important influence on village life. By teaching peasants to use a plough pulled by buffaloes, to build dikes in order to protect the fields from flood and sea water, and by encouraging them to clear the forests, the Chinese helped villages provide the economic base to support an increase in population. With equal zeal, Chinese administrators tried to change the feudal government of Nam Viet into a model of a Chinese province.

Some historians believe that the village largely escaped Sinization during this period, while the rest of the administrative system was, little by little, reorganized to correspond to that of the Chinese.<sup>16</sup> This might have been the situation in the very early days of the Chinese occupation. Others,

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<sup>15</sup>Le thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Buttinger, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

however, have suggested several probable results of the imposition of the Chinese system upon the Vietnamese village. For example, they point out that after the Trung Sisters' revolt in 40 A.D., the Chinese governor, Ma Yuan, divided Nam Viet into fiefs and prefectures--the country was already divided into nine provinces. Since the former feudal nobles had perished or fled during the revolt, only the chiefs of villages remained. Together with the Chinese immigrants, these chiefs came to comprise a mixed local aristocracy which accepted the new central authority and became subordinated to it.<sup>17</sup> Mr. Marcel Rouilly, in his thesis on La Commune Annamite,<sup>18</sup> states that the Vietnamese adopted the Chinese form of village organization during the first Chinese occupation in Nam Viet. For example, the village in China was divided into several large family groupings called ho, in which the family chief of each ho constituted the chief intermediary between villagers and central authorities. Each village was given 900 mau of land, in the center of which was a piece of land reserved for cultivation by the village for the state.

When the Chinese installed a similar system in Nam Viet, they divided the land into sections of 90 mau each (1 mau in Cochinchina = 1 French hectare). Each family group, corresponding to the Chinese ho, was then given one of these 90 mau sections. The land thus owned by the private families was called tu dien, while that part reserved for the state was called cong dien. A distinction between public and private lands still exists today in Viet Nam. In village administration, the former village chiefs became administrative personnel under the Chinese rulers, and thus, during this first Chinese occupation, village affairs appear to have been very much under the control of the central power.<sup>19</sup>

### Independence and Administrative Change

Through centuries of close contact with Chinese culture, the Vietnamese assimilated various parts of that great civilization, but they did not lose their sense of national identity. Following the earlier example of the Trung Sisters, who had reigned over Nam Viet for 3 years (40-43 A.D.), Trieu Au (248 A.D.) and Ly Bon (544-547 A.D.) led revolts against the

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<sup>17</sup>Henri Maspéro, "L'Expedition de Ma Yuan," B.E.F.E.O., XVIII, No. 3 (1928), 18.

<sup>18</sup>Marcel Rouilly, La Commune Annamite (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1929), pp. 18 ff.

<sup>19</sup>Le thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 102.

Chinese, but without lasting success. Toward the beginning of the tenth century, however, Khuc Hao succeeded in taking Giao Chau, or Giao province<sup>20</sup> from the Chinese, and maintained control over it for ten years (907 - 917). (See Map III)

During this short period of independence, Giao Chau was divided into lo (regions), phu (larger districts), chau (smaller districts) and xa (villages).<sup>21</sup> The administrative personnel were appointed by Khuc Hao,<sup>22</sup> but existing records do not reveal how the xa were administered. Many historians consider this date, 907 A.D., as marking the appearance of the xa as the basic administrative unit in the country.<sup>23</sup>

It was not until the Ly dynasty (1010-1225 A.D.) that a fixed administrative structure was given to the country, which had by then received the name of Dai Viet following its liberation from the Chinese. (See Map IV) Ngo Quyen, who had formerly served under Khuc Hao, succeeded in ending the Chinese domination in 939 A.D. The first dynasties of independent Dai Viet (Ngo, Dinh, and Earlier Le)<sup>24</sup> were more concerned with the restoration of peace and the subjugation of the warlords who plagued the country than with the establishment of reforms on the local level.

Under the Ly dynasty, the country remained divided into lo, phu, huyen (instead of chau) and xa (see above.) The village was under the administration of one or more xa quan (communal mandarins), appointed by the central authority--a form which was retained until 1467. This mandarin system, an imitation of the Chinese, was instituted to create an efficient device by which the kings could impose their authority throughout country. Essentially, it consisted of integrating all administrative and military personnel into a single hierarchy of nobility (nine degrees in the Vietnamese system), and of

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<sup>20</sup>This province was composed of Giao Chi, Hop Pho, Nam Hai and Cuu Chau fiefs.

<sup>21</sup>Tran trong Kim, Viet Nam Su Luoc (Hanoi: Tan Viet, 1951), p. 71.

<sup>22</sup>Le Thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 34.

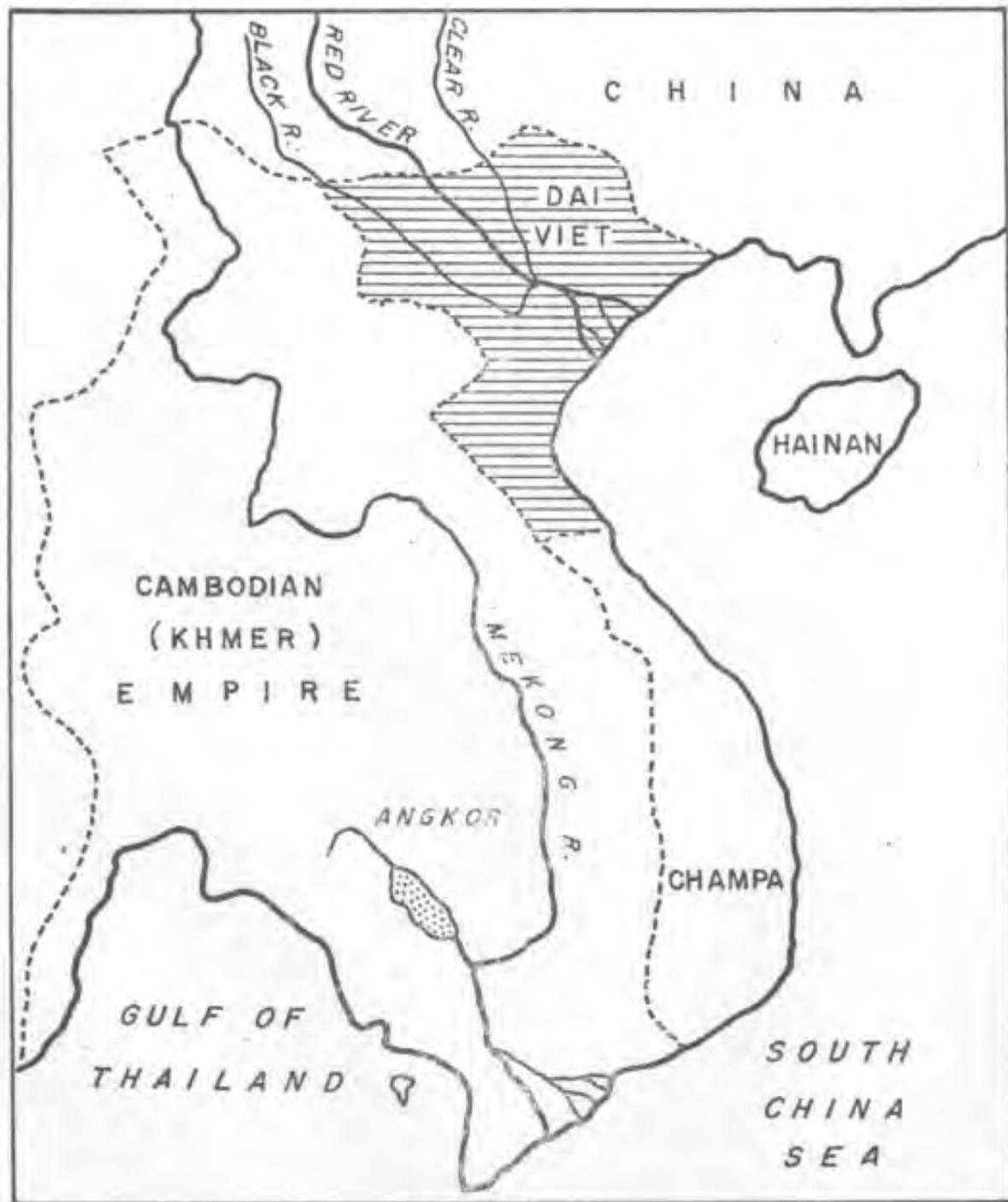
<sup>23</sup>Tran trong Kim, loc. cit., and Vu Quoc Thong, La Decentralisation Administrative au Viet Nam (Hanoi: Les Presses Universitaires du Viet Nam, 1952) p. 16.

<sup>24</sup>See Appendix.



THE PROVINCE OF GIAO  
(4th CENTURY A. D.)

MAP IV



DAI-VIET IN THE 12th CENTURY' A.D.

distributing diplomas to private citizens corresponding to the various degrees of this hierarchy.<sup>25</sup> The xa quan were chosen from among the mandarins of the lowest degree in the hierarchy.

Another means used by the Vietnamese kings to secure their authority over the villages was the investiture of a guardian spirit.<sup>26</sup> After a village was settled, the founders drew up a petition and sent it to the king for his approval, along with a biography of the person chosen to be the guardian spirit of the village. In Viet Nam, as in China, kings believed they were the representatives of heaven, and asserted that they commanded all the spirits within the country. Thus, each spirit had to receive a diploma of investiture, delivered by the king, in order to be entitled to a cult. There was even a hierarchy for spirits, and in commanding the guardian spirits--the spiritual chiefs of the villages--the king became the supreme head of all the villages.

It was also during the Ly dynasty that the village rolls were introduced for the first time. These rolls bore the names of all male villagers, and were classified into five groups: (1) members of the royal family and mandarins, (2) servicemen, (3) members of various professions (bonzes, medicine men, comedians), (4) men between 18-60 years of age, and (5) elders, the disabled, and children. The latter two groups included all those not specified in the first three. Only the mandarins and their sons could hold public offices. All others, rich or poor, could be called into the army. This idea of compulsory military service reflected a sense of national identity, for it was based on the assumption that the army was to defend the fatherland, and not some dynasty as had been the case previously.<sup>27</sup>

In local administrative reforms, the xa was divided into several giap (1041 A.D.) to facilitate tax collection and to provide some control over the activities of the villagers.

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<sup>26</sup>Although the origin of this custom is not known, each village was supposed to be under the protection of a guardian spirit. This spirit was believed to possess certain supernatural powers over men and the world. Its protection influenced the life of each villager, and the villagers kept a cult for it which involved some religious organization--ceremonies, a dinh (temple of the guardian spirit), and priests to conduct the ceremonies. The guardian spirit could be a spirit from heaven, that of a famous general, a mandarin known for his virtues, or even that of a man who was killed under unusual circumstances, such as by fire, lightning, or drowning.

<sup>27</sup>Le thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 148.

Each giap included fifteen persons whose names appeared on the village roll. At the head of each giap was the quan giap, chosen from among them by the fifteen members themselves. The quan giap was responsible to the royal authority for the administration of his giap. He was also in charge of tax collection, and could inflict penalties in certain cases. Unlike the xa quan, he could not represent the royal authority because he was a simple villager, and not a mandarin.<sup>28</sup> Considering that he was elected by the villagers, and responsible to higher authorities, he appears as a possible forerunner of the xa truong, although the giap itself disappeared at the end of the Ly dynasty.

Under the Tran (1225-1400 A.D.), instead of villages being divided into giap, they grouped them into dai ti xa and tieu ti xa, according to the size of the area of the grouping. The dai ti xa was administered by a mandarin of the fifth degree or higher, while the tieu ti xa was administered by a mandarin of the sixth degree or lower. The functions of these mandarins were to keep and revise the village rolls and land records within their groupings. The mandarin at the head of each village was then called chanh su giam, instead of xa quan as formerly. These village designations were abolished by 1398 A.D.,<sup>29</sup> perhaps largely because they created work duplication between communal mandarins and mandarins heading the village groupings. However, this system of grouping was later adopted by some provinces in the Republic of Viet Nam, and at the present time village groups are called lien xa.

The first efforts at land reform are credited to the Ho dynasty, successors to the Tran.<sup>30</sup> Due to the widespread poverty in the countryside--a result of the wars against the Champa and the corruption of the Court--the times were troubled, and periodic distribution of communal lands was carried out to maintain political stability. In addition, by royal decree of 1399, no one except a member of the royal family was allowed to own more than ten mau of riceland. Amounts in excess of this

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<sup>28</sup>Vu Quoc Thong, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>29</sup>Le thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>30</sup>It was also during the Ho dynasty that paper money was printed for the first time in Viet Nam. All metallic money had to be exchanged for the paper money issued by the royal treasury. See Ibid., p. 192.

were taken by the state and leased to peasants at reasonable rents.<sup>31</sup> This strigent measure was designated primarily to prevent large accumulations of land by wealthy landowners or by mandarins who were tax-exempt.

### The Second Chinese Occupation and Reforms of the Later Le Dynasty

The second Chinese occupation (1413-1427 A.D.) interrupted the chain of local administrative reforms in Viet Nam, and once again the village organization became modeled on the Chinese. This time each village was divided into ten giap,<sup>32</sup> each administered by a giap truong. Each giap, in turn, was composed of ten ho (families). The village was called ly, and this word was used in Tonkin for a long time, even after the arrival of the French. The head of the village was the ly truong, and both the ly truong and giap truong were chosen by the Chinese authorities from among the villagers.<sup>33</sup> The ly truong was responsible for maintaining order, and for the assessment and collection of taxes for the administration. The lien gia (family group) exists today in the Republic of Viet Nam, a social adaptation from the period of Chinese occupation and influence.

The office of ly truong and giap truong, like the second Chinese domination itself, had a fleeting existence. After driving the last Chinese troops from Vietnamese soil in 1428, Le Loi, the founder of the Later Le dynasty (1428-1788),<sup>34</sup> set about reorganizing the country administratively, economically, and socially. In village government, he increased the number of xa quan according to the size of the village population. Large villages (having at least 100 inhabitants) were now called dai xa, and were under the administration of three xa quan; medium-sized villages (having 50 to 100 inhabitants) were called trung xa, and were administered by two xa quan; small villages (more than ten inhabitants) were called tieu xa, and were administered by one xa quan.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 198 - 199.

<sup>32</sup>The Chinese giap differed from the giap under the Tran in its composition. The latter was composed of fifteen persons enrolled in the village, while the former was based on families.

<sup>33</sup>Vu Quoc Thong, op. cit., p. 20. Some historians believe they were elected each year; for example, see Le thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>34</sup>The country at this time was called Dai Nam. (See Map V)

<sup>35</sup>Vu Quoc Thong, op. cit., p. 20.

To maintain social equilibrium within the village, Le Loi ordered a population census and a general distribution of communal lands to all people, including women, elders, and children.<sup>36</sup> This measure created no problems because it affected mainly those large properties whose owners had died without heirs, or land that was not yet cleared. It was also Le Loi, under the name of Le thai To, who promulgated a severe penal code to suppress disorder and brigandage. Education was stimulated by building schools in provinces and prefectures, and a national college, Quoc tu Giam, was reorganized to train civil servants, that is, mandarins.

The most revolutionary reform in village government, however, was made by one of Le thai To's successors, Le thanh Tong, another great king of the Le dynasty. In 1461, the xa quan (communal mandarins) were replaced by xa truong (village chiefs),<sup>37</sup> who were elected by the entire adult male population of the village. This constituted a major concession by the central authority to the local people. As in the case of the xa quan, the number of xa truong varied according to the number of families in each village. They were held responsible for the entire village and served as intermediaries between the central government and the villagers. Although their functions were similar to the mandarins', they did not belong to the mandarinote, and thus were not considered as civil servants. In compensation for their services, they received a piece of communal land for their own use--an economical measure for the royal treasury. According to Mr. Vu Quoc Thong, this substitution of xa truong for the xa quan was inspired by the reform edict of the Chinese emperor Minh Thai To, which provided for the election of village chiefs who had been, until then, appointed by Imperial authority.<sup>38</sup> To prevent fraud in handling communal property, all

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<sup>36</sup>Previously, lands were distributed to adult males only. See Vu Van Hien, La propriété communale au Tonkin (Hanoi: Imprimeries Extrême Orient), 1939), pp. 24 - 25.

<sup>37</sup>The term xa truong is sometimes translated as "mayor". However, the xa truong in Viet Nam does not have the same functions as the mayor of a village in Europe or the U.S.

<sup>38</sup>See Vu Quoc Thong, op. cit., p. 33. Mr. Nguyen huu Khang, in his thesis La Commune Annamite (Paris: Sirey, 1946), feels that this important reform was due to a weakening of the royal authority. But this occurred in Viet Nam during a time of great prosperity, and when the royal power was at its peak.

public lands were formally declared inalienable, imprescriptible, and non-transmissible through succession.<sup>39</sup>

By the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, the successors of Le thanh Tong had become weak and incapable of governing the country, and power fell into the hands of three noble families--the Mac, Trinh, and Nguyen. General Mac dang Dung, taking advantage of the power given him by the king to repress a revolt led by some army leaders who were adherents of a descendent of the Tran, seized the throne and proclaimed himself king. Thereupon the Mac reigned in Thanh Long, capital of the Le kingdom, for sixty-five years (1527-1592).

The restoration of the Le Dynasty, which began in 1532, was the task of the two allied, but rival, families of Nguyen and Trinh, but the unity of the country under the Le was not lasting. Trinh Kiem succeeded in keeping the Le king under his domination through court intrigues, and in 1558 sent his rival and brother-in-law, Nguyen Hoang, to the southern province of Thuan Hoa. (See Map V) The ensuing rivalry between the Nguyen and the Trinh created a long bloody period in the history of Viet Nam which lasted from 1620 to 1802, and which has been called the "War of Secession." The event which led to a final rupture came in 1626, when Nguyen Hoang refused to pay taxes to the royal treasury, i.e., to the Trinh. For a long time the war was undecided, and a truce was in effect from 1673 to 1774. However, hostilities were started again by the successors of Trinh Kiem and Nguyen Hoang, and the country was not really unified until the advent of Nguyen Anh (Gia Long) in 1802.

#### Expansion Southward and Growing Village Autonomy

Expansion south of the Red River delta had begun under the early independent dynasties, but the most important phase of this movement took place under the Nguyen. (See Map VI) As the northern delta became too small for the growing population, the need for new lands grew acute. The most obvious route lay to the south because the hostile Thai tribes and rugged mountains

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<sup>39</sup>It was also during the reign of Le thanh Ton that the custom of the "glorious homecoming of the laureate" to his native village (vinh guy) originated. To encourage the literati, examinations were organized periodically, and the man receiving the highest grade in his field (either military or administration) was designated the "laureate" for that examination period. The laureate was then formally presented to the court, and received further honors from the king. A pageant was sent to accompany him to his native village, which was considered a great honor for the whole village.



VIET-NAM AT THE TIME OF THE NGUYEN-TRINH  
STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY, 1620-1802 A.D.

discouraged movement to the west. Frontier life attracted not only the needy and the persecuted, but also the adventure-seekers--those bold enough to go south and struggle with the dangers of a new land. As they moved to the virgin lands near the border, the settlers brought highly developed social organizations and agricultural techniques to the Cham who were already settled there. The major task of colonization was carried out mainly by military colonies composed of soldier-farmers who cleared and cultivated the land to provide for their own subsistence. At times they were assisted by prisoners placed under their supervision in penal colonies.<sup>40</sup> The land thus cleared by the military and prisoners was considered public land, and was given as temporary fiefs to deserving mandarins.<sup>41</sup>

The farther south the settlers went, the more independent they became from the central authority and the more they differed from those remaining in the north. The heart of Viet Nam was no longer solely in the north, and a spirit of regionalism tended to develop because the living conditions were different from those in the Red River delta. Since the north remained faithful to the Le dynasty, while the south supported the Nguyen, this spirit of regionalism remained strong even after the Nguyen had once again unified the country under the name of Viet Nam. The French, in turn, did nothing to promote national unity. On the contrary, they deepened the existing gulf by making the southern part a colony, while the central and northern parts became protectorates.

When Nguyen Hoang moved south into a new country, his principal tasks were to provide some kind of administrative organization and to build a strong empire. The latter was necessary because the Trinh had become more and more threatening north of the Gianh River. (See Map VI) Historians report that the administration of the Nguyen during this period was, in general, liberal, just, and kind.<sup>42</sup> At first the Nguyen adopted the administrative system of the Le, with the help of loyal mandarins who had followed them from Thanh Hoa and Nghe An.

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<sup>40</sup>Charles B. Maybon, Histoire Moderne du Pays d'Annam (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1919), pp. 110-111.

<sup>41</sup>Sometimes the acquisition of new lands was achieved through alliance. For example, under the Tran, a Vietnamese princess was married to a Cham king in exchange for the two provinces of O and Ri. (See Map VI).

<sup>42</sup>M.L. Cadiere, "Le Mur de Dong Hoi," B.E.F.E.O., VI, No. 1 (1906), 104-105.

M A P VI



THE MARCH TO THE SOUTH

Unfortunately, detailed information on village government in the south is not available, and the only accessible data on this period are those concerning local administration under the Trinh. Under this government, a decree concerning village administration was issued in 1711 which declared that all public lands would be distributed to the population according to the particular procedures in each village. From this measure, the notables acquired the practice of selling public lands.<sup>43</sup> In view of this change in the north, and also according to some historians, it seems probable that the newly-formed villages in the south acquired a greater autonomy than existed at the time the movement to the south began. Furthermore, it is believed the Nguyen were eager to populate the lands newly acquired from the Champa empire and the Cambodian kingdom, and therefore allowed the settlers to create new villages by submitting requests to the district mandarins.<sup>44</sup> Their only obligations vis-a-vis the central authority were to pay taxes and to provide men for the army and the corvées. The local administration of the village remained in the hands of its founders or its notables.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, village autonomy began with the substitution of xa trung for xa quan, and the century of wars which followed favored the development of this autonomy. When the French moved into the south in search of an access to China, they found well-organized village governments. The administration

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<sup>43</sup>Le thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 259.

<sup>44</sup>Maybon, op. cit., pp. 352-353.

<sup>45</sup>To become a notable, the candidate usually had only to give a banquet to the entire population of the village. This constituted formal admission to the body of the notables.

of village affairs was entirely in the hands of the notables, whose number was not limited. These were divided into the two categories of senior notables and junior notables.<sup>46</sup> The former held the specific duties, and were assisted by the junior notables.<sup>47</sup> In addition to its administrative autonomy, the village was endowed with legal status,<sup>48</sup> and as such it had the

<sup>46</sup>The senior notables included:

Huong Ca -- dean, by virtue of age  
Huong Chu or huong chanh -- official councillor of the commune  
Huong nhut -- first notable  
Huong nhi -- second notable  
Huong lao -- advisor to the council  
Huong su -- official intermediary between the commune and the mandarins  
Huong truong -- advisor on the implementation of orders from higher authorities  
Huong quan -- in charge of the police  
Huong le -- in charge of the organization of official ceremonies  
Huong nhac -- head of the musicians  
Huong am -- organizer of public feasts and banquets  
Huong van -- official poet and philosopher  
Huong than and huong hao -- in charge of the administration of the village  
Xa truong -- official intermediary between the commune and the central government  
Thu bo -- keeper of tax rolls  
Thu chi -- archivist  
Thu bon -- treasurer  
Thu khoan -- in charge of handling cong dien (public land)  
cau duong -- communal judge  
cai dinh -- in charge of the upkeep of pagodas.

The junior notables were divided into three categories:

- a) assistants to higher notables (huong le, cai dinh, huong am, huong van)
- b) assistants to xa truong: his deputy, chiefs of hamlets.
- c) communal secretaries; bien or bien lai

See Vu Quoc Thong, op. cit., pp. 38-39 fn. 1

<sup>47</sup>The main difference between village government in the north and that in the south lies in the fact that village administration under the Nguyen was in the hands of an only one council of notables, while in the north, there were both executive and deliberative bodies.

<sup>48</sup>In French, "personnalité morale." For detailed description of this topic see Nguyen huu Giai, La personnalité de la Commune Annamite (Paris: Les Editions Domat-Montchrestien. 1937).