

**BORROWINGS AND ADAPTATIONS
IN VIETNAMESE CULTURE**

edited by
Truong Buu Lam

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Center for Southeast Asian Studies
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1987

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Introduction

Truong Bui Lam

This is the second publication resulting from the special activities organized by the National Center for Southeast Asian Studies of the University of Hawaii during the academic year 1982-1983. The first publication was issued in 1984: An Annotated Index of the Journal Văn Sử Địa and Nghiên Cứu Lịch Sử. The special activities were made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The Center declared the year 1982-1983 Vietnam year and organized on the Hawaii campus a number of events focusing on the history and culture of Vietnam. In addition to scheduled courses taught as regular classes, the Center set up a series of public lectures delivered by distinguished scholars on Vietnam such as George McT. Kahin, Ralph Smith, Jayne Werner, and Cong Huyen Ton Nu Nha Trang. The summer of 1983 brought the Vietnam year to a close with a Summer Institute of Vietnamese Studies, which drew to Honolulu ten students from various parts of the country for an intensive ten-week study of Vietnamese language and culture. The Summer Institute also convened a symposium which brought together specialists of Vietnam from the University of Hawaii and other institutions to discuss the phenomenon of borrowing and adaptation in Vietnamese culture. This volume represents the publication of the papers that were read at that symposium.

The symposium preparatory committee settled on the topic of borrowings and adaptations rather swiftly. As usual, we knew much better what we did not want than what we wanted to have discussed at the meeting. We did not want to investigate the ever-recurring theme of the U.S. role in the Vietnam war and its consequences. Not that we lacked interest in the topic, but we felt that, given the state of scholarship on Vietnam in America in the last few years, there was not much we could do at that point to contribute to the war debate. Neither did we intend to engage in a debate concerning the other fashionable topic in Vietnamese studies: that of Indochinese refugees in America. Other agencies and foundations have already devoted a great deal of resources to the support of researchers working on that area these many years. We esteemed that we could hardly contribute any new or interesting insights there. We did, however, include a paper on this very topic in this collection, for the simple reason that the late Professor Nguyen Dang Liem succeeded in convincing the committee that, although his paper deals with the

topic of Indochinese refugees, it has more to do with adaptation and borrowing than with anything else. Indeed, as Nguyen Dang Liem wrote: "The aim of this paper is to examine the cross-cultural adjustment process of Vietnamese refugees. It will do so by reviewing the circumstances under which these people came to the United States and the rest of the Western world, the effects of their traditions on their adjustment process, the psychoreligious forces that dictate their way of life, thinking, and behavior, and their adjustment patterns."

Thus, we settled on the age-old fact of Vietnamese culture: that it is a thing of borrowings and adaptations. This is a topic to which, we felt confident, everyone concerned could contribute an interesting aspect or two of his or her own research. The field is wide enough and the applications so flexible that practically every taste and interpretation could be accommodated. Vietnam, being situated in a region which, historically, has been exposed to many diverse cultural influences, exhibited the problems and possibilities of borrowing and adaptation virtually on a daily basis. The proximity of China, Champa, and Angkor, followed by Chinese and French colonization and, more recently, U.S. intervention, all subjected Vietnam culture, dramatically and profoundly, to foreign values.

The examination of borrowed elements in any given culture cannot be undertaken without danger. The first lies in assuming an "unchanging process of cultural accretion, such that original cultural elements are transformed as they moved across the centuries" (Whitmore). The second goes by the name of the "jeepney model," or the search for origin as an end in itself. What this danger entails is an "implicit assumption that indigenous (original) elements are somehow more genuine and significant than are borrowed traits" (Rambo). The third peril comes from the tendency of human perception to blot out the forest with the trees, so to speak: that is, the researcher risks focusing on the "relata--the things that are related--in great detail while ignoring their interrelationship" (Jamieson). It appears, fortunately, that no symposium participant fell victim to any of these pitfalls.

Nguyen Dinh Hoa's paper, for example, does not concern itself at all with searching out the family tree of the Vietnamese language. On the contrary, what it emphasizes is simply the activity of the Vietnamese when they set out to borrow foreign ways to say things in Vietnamese. These borrowings can be grouped according to five activities: (1) Lexical adoption, resulting in what we call loanwords, which are "imitations or approximations of the sound and sense of words from other languages." (2) Lexical creation, consisting of loan translation, wherein a foreign "multiple lexical unit--a compound, a phrase or even a proverb--is reproduced by means of equivalent native words. (3) Graphemic invention, conception of a system of written symbols used to transcribe native words leading to the nom characters or the quốc ngữ romanized Vietnamese script.

(4) Indigenization of Chinese poetics, introduction of features of Vietnamese prosody so as to change the regulated prosody of Chinese.
(5) Grammatical borrowing, the creative copying of alien patterns. Through these five activities, Vietnamese creativity manifests itself in ways that enrich the original substratum of the language, both spoken as well as written. The borrowings have been many, but they have been so fully integrated that it is now difficult and in fact futile to distinguish any longer between what is genuinely Vietnamese and what is not.

John DeFrancis explains why, of all the countries in East Asia, only North Korea and Vietnam succeeded "in taking at the flood the tide of opportunity to reform their writing systems." Vietnam was introduced by a French missionary to the idea of alphabetic reading and it was also provided at the same time with an alphabetic scheme specifically designed for the Vietnamese spoken language. The result was a romanized system designed to transcribe the Vietnamese spoken language, which has become known since its invention in the seventeenth century as the quốc ngữ. But quốc ngữ did not become the Vietnamese official script until the end of the nineteenth century when the French colonialists decided to make use of it as an instrument to "deal with the Vietnamese in Vietnamese." After 1907, quốc ngữ made giant strides as the leaders of anti-French movements promoted it as a "popular writing of liberation, in contrast to Chinese, but primarily in opposition to French." The question then is: How were the Vietnamese able "to overcome their repugnance at the foreign creation being foisted upon them" by the colonialists? DeFrancis sees two reasons: the relative unimportance of writing in Vietnamese culture and the willingness of the Vietnamese to beat the enemy with his own weapon. One might add a third reason: the Vietnamese revolutionaries saw in the use of quốc ngữ a tremendous opportunity for their propaganda. Quốc ngữ is easy to learn to read and write; furthermore, a text written in quốc ngữ, as opposed to one composed in Chinese characters, is far more readily understood by the people.

The paper presented by Cong Huyen Ton Nu Nha Trang speaks of the role of French romanticism in the new poetry movement in Vietnam in the 1930s. The new poetry became a literary necessity because upon contact with French culture, young Vietnamese acquired "feelings and sentiments unknown to their elders. It was then impossible to contain these new feelings and sentiments within the old framework of restrictive versification rules." Love, characterized by mental anguish and emotional agony associated with the failure of love, constituted a prime motif in the writings of French romantic poets such as Lamartine, Vigny, Musset, Hugo. Now, since these new contents required new forms of expression, a new generation of poets had to cast aside in large measure the old literary tradition. "The only logical alternative was the versification which the French romantic poets had used to delineate the same contents. Thus started the rejection of the old Chinese T'ang poetic style and the rush of borrowings and adaptations of different ways of organizing verses,

rhymes, rhythm, and modes of expressions." While the technical arrangements of versification are interesting to observe in themselves, the more fascinating phenomenon to note is the absolutely revolutionary way for the new poets to bring into their writings the "auditory and visual imagery, the vivid and absolute language which their elders would not have ever dreamed of thinking let alone expressing in words." Examples:

"With love, the grass embraces the foot of the bamboo . . . "

or

"The garden laughs with butterflies and sings with birds."

or

"It's cold today and the sun went to bed early."

or

"O rosy spring, I want to bite into you."

The new poetry survived all its critics and detractors. Not that the victory was easy. It depended upon the effort of many talented poets who understood "the mysterious sounds and tone patterns, the natural rhythm of language to blend borrowed items with the beauty of literary tradition, so that the resulting product was uniquely Vietnamese."

"Of the many debates that enlivened the Vietnamese intellectual scene during the 1920s and 1930s, none is more celebrated than the debate that raged between defenders of 'art for art's sake' and advocates of 'art for life's sake'." Hue Tam Ho Tai studies that debate in her contribution entitled "Literature for the People: From Soviet Politics to Vietnamese Polemics." An interesting point to note right off is that nearly all who were partisans of the "committed literature" tendency were members of the Indochinese Communist Party. The debate thus engaged "Vietnamese intellectuals to be part of an international literary scene where the relationship between art and politics had emerged as a crucial issue." That "international literary scene" essentially encompassed the Soviet Union, France, and China. China's influence, as one might expect, was then on the wane in Vietnam. The names of the Chinese Marxist thinkers such as Chen Tu Hsiu and Kuo Mo Jo were mentioned, but just in passing. Although Vietnamese writers became by degrees increasingly familiar with authors from the English-speaking world, they in fact relied only on French and Soviet literary authorities to support their theses, and even then they read about Soviet congresses, conferences, debates etc., only as reported in the French press. Of all the literary doctrines that were gaining legitimacy in the Soviet Union, from Lenin's party literature to the proletarian culture, from the industrial literature or rabcor to socialist realism, the Vietnamese were mostly attracted to "Bukharin's flexible interpretation of socialist realism." However, even so, socialist realism was not fully relevant to the domestic situation of Vietnam, which was more akin to that of France than of the Soviet Union. Indeed, in both Vietnam and France, the communist parties were marginal and out of power. Vietnamese writers, therefore, more

readily toed the line espoused by their French comrades, who rarely applied any Soviet literary doctrine at all, be it the proletarian, industrial, or even the socialist realist variety. All in all, the Vietnamese in fact held their own ideas concerning the relationship between literature and politics. They used French and Soviet authorities simply to justify their own views, when relevant. More often than not, they were able to "pick the ideas that most suited their own particular needs and situation." In Soviet debates, much had focused on form. In France, both form and content had been at the heart of the controversy. In Vietnam, the "writers chose to emphasize content and to ignore stylistic concerns." In the relationship between literature and politics, therefore, "politics did not dictate literary directions, nor did literary convictions dictate political alignments."

John Louis Bassford explores the "Franco-Vietnamese Conception of Landownership." One would add to the title "in Cochinchina." Changes in landownership were part of a wider assault against "the village system and the harmony that was traditional Vietnam." In sum, what obtained right from the beginning of the French colonization of Cochinchina was dualism. The French Civil Code--including the system of landownership--was applied in Cochinchina by a decree of July 25, 1864, but only for the French. "From that time on, property transactions involving French citizens were handled just as they would have been in France." As for the Vietnamese, Vietnamese law--the Code of Gia Long--was specifically used. Nonetheless, the Vietnamese legal tradition was fundamentally changed. First, the whole conception of operating according to a set of written laws rather than by custom was a foreign idea. Second, the Gia Long code was grossly inadequate to newly emerging problems related, for example, to the regulation of property ownership and transactions. Third, that law, after all, was administered by Frenchmen. Fourth, the địa bạ was declared by the French to be a land register when in fact it had been a tax register. Fifth, land boundaries as recorded in the địa bạ had always been kept vague and inaccurate. They now became rigid and fixed. Sixth, land titles based on the địa bạ had never existed. Seventh, nonresident landownership was introduced as a new phenomenon. Finally, notions of ownership and usufruct were disassociated and, henceforth, vacant and uncleared land no longer signified unowned land. "A personal and perpetual right of ownership separate from occupation and cultivation was created by the French and this right was totally foreign to the Vietnamese."

John Whitmore, as mentioned earlier, is aware of the shortcomings of the "onion theory" of borrowings. Hence, in his paper, he tries to determine the "Vietnamese cultural core," not by peeling off successive layers and accretions but by seeking the answer to the question: "What kind of transformation has taken place, and to what degree?" After a rapid survey of all the centuries of Vietnamese borrowing" starting from the Đông Sơn era in the last millennium B.C. all the way down to the French invasion in

the nineteenth century A.D., Whitmore pauses to reflect on some "ideas on the Vietnamese cultural core" under its social, cultural, religious, political, and economic aspects. In conclusion, he sees "a series of transformations that had differing impacts on the core itself. Buddhism seems to have had an additive effect, drawing indigenous elements under the broad umbrella of the Hindu-Buddhist view of the cosmos. Confucianism seems to have been much more revolutionary in the changes it expected of the core elements."

After relegating the "jeepney model" of studying borrowings to the "intellectual junkyard," A. Terry Rambo suggests the "gene pool" method wherein the "original gene pool of a plant or animal population receives new genes as a result of mutation (the cultural analog of which is innovation) and cross-breeding with other populations (borrowing in cultural terms), and loses old genes as the consequence of natural selection." He then sets out to examine a number of cultural traits that serve as symbols of Vietnamese national identity according to the gene pool concept. Why national symbols? Because "they would be the most stable and enduring cultural elements and, thus, the traits least likely to be of foreign origin." Yet, a closer look reserves some surprises. The black flight suit worn by a South Vietnamese politician some years ago in an attempt to make of it a national symbol proved a totally unsuccessful borrowing because it was a "symbol of the alien American air force, not at that time a notably popular foreign presence." But then, how are we to explain the adoption of the pith helmet, a trait borrowed from the French colonialists, as a symbol of identity of the Vietnamese People's Army and a major symbol of Vietnamese nationalism? Simply, says Rambo, because the helmet is "cheap, easy to produce in quantity, lightweight, durable, offered protection from the tropical sun and rain, and provided an ideal framework for the attachment of camouflage." It survived the intense selective pressures of combat and became a universally recognized symbol of the People's Army of Vietnam, a "symbol whose foreign origins have largely been forgotten." The same reasoning can be held for the adoption of the áo dài as the national dress for Vietnamese women, although it is a fact that its origin is foreign. Now what about something that is not an item of dress? Let's talk about the traditional rural village of Vietnam, for example, considered by many scholars as the very center of Vietnamese national identity. Even that seems to have had a foreign origin. Indeed, virtually nothing is known about Vietnamese villages before the Chinese occupation of Vietnam. And it was only after the Chinese arrival in Vietnam that the Vietnamese village "took on characteristics which contemporary scholars consider to be traditional." Rambo's conclusion is that although it might be fascinating to determine the origins of contemporary cultural traits, it would, however, be more useful to try to understand how the diverse social systems function. "Such an understanding is more effectively sought through analysis of the interaction between the traits, regardless of their origin, which comprise the contemporary system. Particularly rewarding is to track

how the system has responded over time to the selective forces emanating from its larger environment.

Neil Jamieson warns us against paying too much attention to the *relata*, the things that are related, rather than to their relationships. What Jamieson would like us to do while talking about borrowings is to look at the borrower, Vietnam in this case, as a "dynamic sociocultural system in which the meaning and function of any part of the system are determined primarily by its relationship to other elements in the system." Example: hairstyle. Traditionally, Vietnamese men wore their hair long and pulled up in a bun. In the early phase of resistance against French intrusion, getting a haircut in the Western manner was the moral equivalent of treason. But in the beginning of the twentieth century, when leaders of Vietnamese nationalist movements asserted that the traditional Vietnamese hairstyle was nothing more than a Chinese custom imposed on the Vietnamese people by the Chinese colonialists, this attitude changed. "To many Vietnamese the traditional hairstyle abruptly ceased to be a symbol of Vietnamese-ness and patriotism; it was suddenly transformed into a symbol of backwardness and subjugation to foreigners." The same mutation occurred in the use of the Vietnamese romanized script, the *quốc ngữ*. In the nineteenth century, it was unthinkable for a patriot-writer such as Nguyen Dinh Chieu to write in any other script than the traditional *nôm* characters. But the twentieth century ushered in the wide use of the *quốc ngữ*, which was then hailed by everyone in the anticolonial movement as the foremost weapon of patriotism. Thus it is clear that "there is nothing intrinsically Vietnamese about writing in *nôm* or *quốc ngữ*," about either long or short hair. To better understand any culture, one must reach beyond the examination of particular traits (chignon versus short hair, *nôm* versus *quốc ngữ*, new versus old poetry, individualism versus familism) to seek out "patterns of continuity and change in the relationship between the traits in question and other elements in the sociocultural system. It is the context that evolves; and the context consists essentially of hierarchical sets of relationship, not simply the things that are related."

Borrowings and adaptations are two facets that attach to the same reality: the reality of cultural importation. The ability to import, in itself, bears witness to the vitality, vigor, and resourcefulness of the importing society. Indeed, the act of borrowing like the act of invention simply amounts to a new way of coping with a given set of circumstances. What difference does it make, culturally speaking, whether novelty originates from abroad or springs from one's own soil and people? Buddhism was originally "invented" in India. Now that we are in the twentieth century, does it make any difference to a Burmese, a Chinese, or a Korean that Buddha was not a fellow national? Have these people been diminished in any way for having "borrowed and adapted" Buddhism to serve selected ends in their respective countries? Vietnamese poetry, for one, became much more interesting to recite after it had adapted new rules of versification from French romantic poets. In any event,

societies exhibit a certain built-in mechanism by which they seem to assure, unless overwhelmed by drastic circumstances, that the borrowed items fit in well with the culture of the milieu that receives them. There are such things as aborted borrowings. The phenomenon of borrowing and adaptation, as well as the research into the phenomenon, remains open-ended. Culture and civilization constitute a continuum in which new and old, local and imported, invented and inherited elements interact to produce a meaningful and workable system by which a people solve the problem of reproducing themselves and their culture in an environment that is both given and evolving.

**Foreign Influences and the Vietnamese Cultural Core:
A Discussion of the Premodern Period**

John K. Whitmore

An examination of the manner in which the Vietnamese people received external influences helps us acquire a sense of the culture itself. The pattern of influence that foreign sources had on the Vietnamese reflects what Vietnamese culture itself consisted of, what was malleable in this culture and what integral to it.

One way of doing this is to follow Richard Winstedt's "onion" theory of Malay culture (or, as mentioned at the conference, a "jeepney" model)¹ and peel off the successive layers and accretions until we reach an irreducible minimum. Thus, for Malaya, off goes the Islam, then the Hindu-Buddhism, before we reach the indigenous nature of the Malay. This, however, assumes an unchanging process of cultural accretion, such that original cultural elements are untransformed as they move across the centuries. Instead, we need to consider, in a linguistic sense, constant change and transformation taking place as the culture develops, whether or not it is influenced from the outside. Yet, while this temporal change is taking place, a continuity still exists that allows us to recognize the culture as that culture, despite its changes. The question, then, is what kind of transformation has taken place and to what degree.

My approach to this topic is to try to determine what forms the Vietnamese "cultural core," not in the unchanging sense that Winstedt suggests but as a part of the Vietnamese cultural dynamics of the past two millennia and more. I rely on concepts of cultural change that help to distinguish that which is more integral to a culture, and which thus forms its "core," from that which is more susceptible to change and consequently more "peripheral." While change is going on to some degree at some place in all societies, there is a need to determine those areas in a culture that undergo major change and those times when the culture is more susceptible to change.²

Here we are concerned with those changes related, directly or indirectly, to borrowing from foreign sources. Thus, we are not looking for patterns of origination within Vietnamese culture but for diffusion from the outside and the manner in which this diffusion has affected the mode of life of the Vietnamese. Yet such borrowing is rarely automatic and complete. The introduction of a borrowed item or process requires a perceptual or motivational adjustment on the

part of the members of the indigenous culture, and this in itself is innovation. Each culture tries to fit new items into its own context and its own understanding of itself. This situation will inevitably be imperfect and may lead to tension and stress within the society.

Centuries of Vietnamese Borrowing

In the last millennium B. C., the people who were to become the Vietnamese stood in the middle of a wide network of foreign contacts. These contacts extended into the Yangtze Valley and the Yunnan Plateau on the north and west, and down the coast to various parts of the island world of Southeast Asia on the south. The Vietnamese archaeological site of ĐÔNG-sƠN in the Thanh-hoá province, just south of the Red River Delta, became the namesake for what has been termed a "civilization" covering a good part of Southeast Asia.³

Putting aside such an approach, what the ĐÔNG-sƠN site represents to us is an almost classic case of diffusion, both direct and stimulus, reaching from the shores of Vietnam along the trading routes of the coasts and islands to other developing cultures able to blend such technology and ideas into their own patterns.

The early Vietnamese, known as the Lạc, thus formed part of a Southeast Asian world which about 2,500 years ago was reaching out to make contact with the world at large and to expand the repertoire of cultural elements at its disposal. In the process, Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia were establishing an eclectic but not indiscriminate pattern of borrowing foreign elements that were adaptable to their own cultures and that could enhance their own advancement. What was important in this borrowing was the aid given the indigenous social, economic, and political developments of the time and the furthering of the cultural, artistic, and religious changes already taking place.⁴

The final centuries B.C. saw these early Vietnamese not only form a part of the expanding Southeast Asian world but also receive direct contact from the north. Imperial China crossed the Yangtze and reached the southeast coast in the effort to tap into the flow of goods and wealth circulating along the sea routes.⁵ The Chinese activity set off disturbances throughout the south; one consequence appears to have been the Shu/Thục invasion of the Red River Delta in the third century B. C. This conquest led to the kingship of An ĐÔNG and the establishment of CÔ-loa, the first major imposition of northern influence in historic times. An ĐÔNG was quickly followed by direct Chinese intervention, first that of the Ch'in dynasty and Chao T'ò, then a century later Han Wu-ti. While these contacts with China opened more direct communications with the north (witness the Han in 185 B. C. attempting to cut off trade in iron and cattle with the south),⁶ the local inhabitants of the Red River plain and further south retained their cultural and social patterns.

Chinese Domination

The first century A.D. brought major changes to Lac society. Initially, the influx of Chinese fleeing the Wang Mang disturbances of north China, then the uprising of the Lac aristocracy in A. D. 40 and Ma Yuan's crushing victory ended Lac leadership and imposed direct Chinese control over the area. From the beginning, the Chinese sought, at different times and in different ways, to bring their own civilizing influence to bear on local culture and society.⁷ Nevertheless, the major purpose of the Chinese presence in the south remained the wealth of foreign trade, and this meant a continuing Vietnamese contact with the maritime world through the following centuries.

As Keith W. Taylor has so well described in his study The Birth of Vietnam, the main impact of the Chinese control took place in the area of the central Red River Delta. This was not only an administrative but also a social, cultural, and religious center for the Han establishment. Here were formed the powerful Sino-Vietnamese families that undoubtedly both held large stretches of land and took part in the thriving trade. Through these families came the major influences of the period: the writing, loanwords from both spoken and learned spheres, the introduction to the Chinese intellectual world, literary forms, and general patterns of the Sinic style of life.⁸ Members of this elite world also played major roles in developing the Mahayana Buddhist community that began to thrive from the second century A. D.

The Buddhist influence represented not only the contacts with the north but also and more particularly the flow of ideas as well as goods along the maritime routes. Vietnam at different times in the first millennium A. D. formed an integral part of the international Buddhist world, connecting northern India, the island world of Southeast Asia, and China. Sanskrit formed the lingua franca of this exchange. By the eighth century, the Chinese had established a thriving cosmopolitan port area in the northern delta. Chams, Chinese, Persians, Khmers and Arabs, monks and traders circulated through its markets and quarters. This trading center seems to have been the major Chinese link to the coastal trade of mainland Southeast Asia, connecting the Yangtze Valley with the Cham ports, Cambodia, Dvaravati, and the Kra Isthmus. In these centuries, the region north of present-day Hanoi had become a major Mahayana Buddhist center, with influences derived from the sea routes and the south as well as the land routes and the north. Indian and Central Asian (Hu), Chinese (Han), and Cham thoughts and artifacts mixed freely.⁹

Eventually, in Taylor's description, Buddhism would form the necessary synthesizing element in the transformation of Vietnamese politics, culture, and society from regional diversity and competition to a unified monarchy. Both the sixth and the tenth

centuries saw an attempt by the Sino-Vietnamese elite to set up an autonomous, if not fully independent, regime at times of weakness in China, only to be succeeded by an upsurge of leadership tied to ancestral cultural patterns. Each case, however, saw a lack of complete political success by the indigenous forces and the need for Buddhist leadership to participate in the final political form.¹⁰

This time of Chinese domination was a period of the ebb and flow of central Chinese power, the rise and fall of local attempts at regional political overlordship, and the gradual spread of the cultural patterns. The result was not a society attempting to duplicate China's, but one which was transforming itself in reaction to both northern and southern influences. China's presence helped as well as hindered this development, and the Vietnamese society that emerged at the end of a thousand years had changed considerably. Nevertheless, this society can only be understood if we put aside any idea of a "little China," a "smaller dragon" for this period and look at the Vietnamese as taking part in many of the same efforts as their Southeast Asian neighbors.

The Buddhist Period

By the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Sung China had its own links to the maritime routes in the ports stretching from Hangzhou to Kuang-chou (Canton). It did not need the Vietnamese connection anymore, even if it had been able to reconquer the distant south.¹¹ The state of Đại Việt was thus able to set itself up unchallenged by northern power until it gained sufficient strength to repel any such major intrusion (in the 1070s). A more persistent challenge came from its sister state to the south, Champa. One major point of contention between the Vietnamese and the Chams in the tenth and eleventh centuries appears to have been international trade, most particularly the eastern trade route to the flourishing Angkorean empire in Kampuchea. Thus, in its early centuries of independence, the new capital of Thăng-long maintained its links with the south at the same time that it continued to borrow from the north. Đại Việt participated in the flow of an international network of exchange that had as its two poles China to the north and Java to the south.¹²

With independence, Chinese influence remained in the use of political titles and terminology (such as using the title đế, "emperor," for the ruler). This, joined to indigenous patterns (such as the blood oath of loyalty), afforded the Vietnamese a political structure overarching the local power centers. The Vietnamese had, however, put aside any thought of forming part of the Chinese empire itself and had begun, for example, to develop their own writing system (nôm) based on the Chinese characters. More important to the Vietnamese state in the tenth and eleventh centuries was the international Buddhist community. Monks served the Vietnamese throne as officials and clerks, handling the diplomatic correspondence, among other activities. These monks were the residue of the earlier

international contacts when monks had congregated from both north and west, from India and China.¹³ They formed the major link between the Vietnamese court and foreign cultures.

Northern Champa, just below the then Southern Border (Nam-giới) of Hoành-sơn, was also a thriving Buddhist center and had contacts with the Buddhist world of Java and the Malay Peninsula as well as with that of China. The Vietnamese and Cham Buddhist communities were in contact both with each other and with the international scene. For example, one tenth-century monk of Cham ancestry lived in a Vietnamese temple probably north of the capital and traveled through the southern Vietnamese territory of the time (Thanh-hoá and Nghê-an provinces). Vietnamese conquests of the Cham capital in 982 and 1069 brought back first an Indian, then a Chinese monk to take important parts in royal Vietnamese Buddhism. Cham masters seem to have played a significant role in the development of Vietnamese religious life.¹⁴

From 1010, the Vietnamese capital sat in the middle of the Buddhist community, at the site of the present Hanoi. From this location, the Vietnamese ruler contended as much with the Chams, the Khmers, and the hill peoples as with the Chinese. Within the Buddhist framework, the Vietnamese state faced many of the same political problems faced by other contemporary Southeast Asian states. In response to these problems, the Lý rulers built up, surrounded themselves with, and took part in the Buddhist establishment. They sent to China for copies of the Tripitaka and had many temples built. In the second reign (1028-1054), Avalokitesvara, of importance in Champa and Cambodia, appeared as a cult object, and in the third reign (1054-1072), it was Brahma (Phạm Vương) and Indra (Đe-thích).¹⁵

The art and music of the time well reflect the eclectic selection of the period. At the 140 foot high Vạn-phúc Temple, built (or re-built) in 1057 in the region north of the capital, we can see the blend of Vietnamese borrowing at the time. The Lý architects and artists followed a Chinese Buddhist model, constructing the temple with basic Vietnamese methods, and employed sculptures that reflected both the T'ang Lung-men style of Central Asia and patterns showing a definite Cham influence. Through their contact with the Chams, the Vietnamese would also have been exposed indirectly to Khmer and island architectural elements.¹⁶

At this temple has also been found a number of identical friezes in the T'ang Central Asian style that show a range of musical instruments known to the Vietnamese of the eleventh century. Eight of the ten sculpted figures are carrying recognizable instruments, and only one or possibly two of them can be said to be of purely Chinese origin. This, the eminent Trần Văn Khê notes, "makes us think of the joint influence of two types of music, Indian and Chinese, in Vietnamese music, with a certain dominance of Indian

music."¹⁷ Like the transverse flute, this Indian influence undoubtedly arrived via the sea lanes and Champa. An instrument that came directly from the Chams was the hourglass drum, known to have been used with rice cakes smeared across its two surfaces. Later, in 1060 and 1202, the Vietnamese historical records note the playing of Cham tunes at the royal court.¹⁸ As Trần Văn Khê demonstrated so beautifully at this conference, the Vietnamese took the spirit of the foreign musical elements and adapted them to their own tastes.

The important point here is that these centuries, down to the fifteenth, formed a period of cultural influences from both north and south. The Buddhist world, and the world of international trade with which it was connected, served as the link in both directions. Trần Văn Khê points out that this period may indeed be called one of Sino-Indian cultural forms, while for Jean Boisselier, in his study of Cham statuary, it was a time of mutual artistic exchange between Vietnam and Champa.¹⁹ Cultural relativity and the easy interaction among members of the Cham and Vietnamese aristocracies continued through the twelfth century and into the thirteenth during times of both peace and war. As the states on the eastern mainland of Southeast Asia grew in power, they expanded and collided. From the 1120s into 1210s, warfare and allegiances shifted back and forth among the capitals of Thăng-long, Vijaya, and Angkor. The cultural interaction thus continued both among the elite and through the channels of the Buddhist world. This we can see in such instances as the Vietnamese prince who took the Cham princess in marriage (1154) and the Vietnamese Buddhist monk in the early twelfth century who practiced Indian asceticism.²⁰ The Vietnamese ate "Cham rice," and the Chams show Vietnamese influences in their sculpture.²¹ Buddhism continued to act as a common ground between Vietnam and the states to the south. On two separate occasions in 1118, Khmer and Cham envoys were feted and received at celebrations marking the completion of Buddhist temples.²²

Yet, while their Cham and Khmer competitors were borrowing Sanskrit names and titles, the Vietnamese continued to use Chinese for the same purpose. They also, at different times, chose to introduce specific elements of Chinese court ritual and procedure into their Mahayana Buddhist world. Lý Thái-tông in the 1030s and 1040s appears to have begun to mesh indigenous and Sinic ritual, personally plowing a field, honoring his father, and promulgating, we are told, a law code with mourning regulations. Thái-tông did not pretend to grasp the true significance of these actions and relied on the advice of his literati counsellors, drawing praise from later historians.²³ The 1070s and 1080s are the years that have had the most impact on recent historians of the Vietnamese past. Following soon after the reforms of Wang An-shih in China, these years saw the introduction of the Temple of Literature, Confucian examinations, the National College, the Han-lin Academy, and the graded bureaucratic hierarchy from China.²⁴

Nevertheless, however striking, these changes seem not to have been deep or profound. They merely provided a small group of scholars versed in the Chinese Classics and in Confucian rites whom the royal court could call upon for aid in dealing with China and for enhancement of the royal position through their ritual observances. Indeed, the Confucian examinations were used sparingly through the twelfth century before they were merged with Buddhism and Taoism into one "Three Religion" (Tam-giáo) examination in 1195. The products of these examinations and holders of the foreign knowledge were posted only in the capital and would have formed a small fraction of the courtiers serving the royal clan.²⁵ As the selection of men in 1076 has indicated, those who were loyal, honest, and talented were promoted to run the state, while those who were literate (in classical Chinese) went into the National College.²⁶

The Vietnamese court in the late eleventh century and into the twelfth was apparently interested in developing useful techniques, ritual and otherwise, to further the power of the state. At the same time that the Confucian activities were being established there, the Vietnamese ruler was seeking authorization from the Chinese throne to purchase books on the military arts, occult sciences, and other such practical subjects. Though the request was denied, the Vietnamese continued their quest. At about this time we have the first mention of the Vietnamese use of elephants in warfare.²⁷

Through the twelfth century and into the thirteenth, Chinese innovations crept piecemeal into the Vietnamese cultural fabric. Only in the middle third century of the thirteenth century did the Vietnamese begin to make use of the Chinese administrative model in order to centralize power. With the greater administrative control came a higher development of Chinese classical studies in Vietnam, as members of the elite took a greater interest in its intellectual advancement. The 1230s and 1240s saw a new kind of examination meant to produce more generalized administrators (thái-học-sinh). Those who passed began to take administrative positions in the central government and eventually to be posted to provincial offices as the Trần extended direct government control out from the capital region.²⁸ In 1253, the Trần reestablished the National College, setting up statues of Confucius and other classical heroes (the Duke of Chou, Mencius, and the Seventy-two Sages) and ordering literati (nho-sĩ) to expound on the Four Books and the Six Classics. A prince set up the first major school of Chinese classical studies, and in 1272 Le Van Hui presented his Sinic style history of Vietnam, with appropriate commentary, to the throne. Literature in nôm began to appear.²⁹

The Mongol threat in the second half of the century both ended this experiment with Chinese-style administration and intertwined the fates of the Vietnamese and the Chams for over a century. Princes and their entourages took control of local and central government. Chams and Vietnamese jointly resisted the Mongol scourge. Thus,

after the wars of the 1280s, literati appeared in the government as proteges of powerful figures,³⁰ while the Vietnamese aristocracy interacted with their peers to the south. Buddhism continued to form the major cultural link between Champa and Vietnam. Nhân-tông, ruler of Vietnam during the Mongol wars, followed tradition thereafter by abdicating for his son and entering Buddhist life. Eight years later, in 1301, he journeyed south to Champa in order to visit its sacred Buddhist sites. While on his pilgrimage, he spent several months as a guest of the Cham royal court and felt so well received that he promised the hand of his daughter, sister of the ruling king, to his good host, the Cham king. In return, the Vietnamese received Cham territory.³¹

The result of this match was decades of antagonism when the Cham king died, the Vietnamese seized their princess from the funeral pyre, and the Chams demanded their territory back.³² In 1312 and 1318, the Vietnamese took the Cham capital of Vijaya, then began to lose interest in the Cham situation thereafter. The situation exploded in their faces after 1370 as the great Cham king Chế-bông-nga not only retrieved his old northern provinces but proceeded to invade the Red River Delta at will and to take Thăng-long several times. In these years of crisis for the Vietnamese, intellectual as well as political, a tale based on the Ramayana of India served to explain the nature and situation of the Chams.³³

The Vietnamese aristocracy of the fourteenth century saw merit in foreign exchanges (in a number of different directions), but they did not see any reason to change their basic way of life. In the 1320s, Trần Minh-tông declared to literati who urged change,

(Our) country has already established rules and regulations for itself. North (China) and South (Vietnam) are very different, (and) if (we) follow the schemes of pale scholars in seeking progress, then (it) will give birth to immediate Chaos.³⁴

Almost half a century later (in 1370), a son of Minh-tông's, Nghệ-tông, restated this philosophy in even stronger terms:

(When) the earlier reigns established the country, (they) had their own system of law (and) did not follow the (Chinese) system of the Sung. (This) was because in the North (China) and the South (Vietnam) each ruler had his own country and had no need to follow the other. (In the 1360s), pale scholars were employed who did not understand (the depth of) the establishment of law (in our state) (and) who changed the old customs of our ancestors to follow the customs of

the North entirely, as if (our customs) were clothes, music, (or) literature. We cannot select anything (of theirs).³⁵

The Chinese Model

Within a century of the last statement, Vietnam had adopted the Chinese model of government and philosophy, setting the ideal pattern that would rule the country until the French conquest. This hundred years saw Vietnam rise from a time of deep crisis in the late fourteenth century to reestablish itself as a powerful and prosperous land. The means to this end was taking the modern China of that age as the lodestone and putting aside the old pattern of eclectic borrowing from numerous directions.

The movement toward the Chinese model began in the intellectual crisis of the 1380s. Yao and Shun, mythic emperors of China, were called upon in the search for rule in place of anarchy. The powerful minister HỒ Quý Ly drew on the original Confucian classics (not the more recent Neo-Confucian texts) and put some of them into nôm so as to justify his position in the state, first as the Duke of Chou guiding a young king, then, when he seized the throne, as the Emperor Shun himself. Yet, in the first years of the fifteenth century, Confucian literati remained as intellectuals and did not serve as officials in the HỒ government, Nguyễn Trãi and his father being the exemptions. Trãi himself began to make significant contributions to Vietnamese language and literature. Despite the political changes, the HỒ state was structurally more similar to its predecessors than to the Chinese model that would follow. HỒ Quý Ly did borrow certain useful practices directly from the founder of the Ming dynasty, practices such as controlling the Buddhist church, holding a census, and circulating paper money.³⁶

A more difficult question than assessing the impact of the HỒ on the Vietnamese is to estimate the significance of the Ming colonial period. The tangible aspects are easy to point out--the crushing military might, the tight bureaucratic structure, the spread of schools and their libraries (Confucian and otherwise) across the Red River Delta, and the imperial orthodoxy imposed upon China and its territories. Yet it is hard to say precisely how this affected the path the Vietnamese state would take later in the century. On the one hand, a number of Vietnamese sided with the Chinese and helped them run the colony; on the other, many young Vietnamese attended the schools. In later years, after the Ming defeat, the former were destroyed or driven underground, while the latter remained and seem to have played a very significant role in the future of the Vietnamese state.³⁷

Certainly the Ming period gave the Vietnamese people a much closer experience with bureaucratic administration and modern Neo-Confucian orthodoxy than they had ever had before. While the

regime established by Lê Lợi after his victory in 1428 was similar in structure to those of the Hồ and the Trần before him, he did retain certain features of the Ming system, such as the schools, a greater sense of law and peasant landholdings, and the establishment of a firm coinage system. On his death, Lê Lợi's tomb was modeled on that of the Ming Yung-lo Emperor, built a decade earlier outside Peking. Yet, under the rather traditional and parochial rule of the first Lê rulers, a clash grew in force between those literati (like Nguyễn Trãi) who wished to retain the traditional style of Confucian belief in Vietnam and those (the younger scholars) who wanted Vietnam to follow the modern tenets of Ming China. In the late 1430s, the two groups squared off on the matter of court ritual, with the Ming modernists victorious. These same years saw the Lê ruler adopt the stance of the Chinese emperors in calling to heaven to acknowledge the errors that he, as ruler, had made, in using the Ming calendar for ritual events, and in replacing the earlier eel-like water creature of the Vietnamese with the Sinic-style dragon.³⁸

From the 1430s and 1460s, the influence of the modernist literati grew, despite being buffeted by the political turmoil of the years. The examinations of 1442 and 1448 are considered the first of the orthodox Chinese-style examinations in Vietnamese history.³⁹ Finally, under the rule of the young Lê Thánh-tông, the Ming administrative and philosophical systems became the official way in Vietnam. For the first time, the Vietnamese chose to follow the Chinese administrative system closely. The Ming model led Thánh-tông to do away with the counsellors who stood between the throne and the administration and to take direct control of the administration through the Six Boards. The Vietnamese, however, adjusted the Ming structure to fit the realities of their smaller country. They staffed this administration with the successful scholars of the triennial examinations, which followed the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and standard Chinese literary forms, thus bringing more Chinese terms into the language. The reorganization had almost immediate effect as Thánh-tông crushed an unrecalcitrant Champa in 1471. The Chinese model also meant a foreign policy that stressed morality over the earlier practice of cultural interaction. Later in the decade Thánh-tông would invade Laos for the first time. Ultimately, the major change made by Thánh-tông was to transform the Vietnamese concept of kingship from the earlier more personal ruler (vua) to the moral Confucian emperor (hoàng-đế) of China, at the same time as he implemented the Nam-giao, the Ming ritual of the Confucian sacrifice to heaven, in place of the blood oath of personal allegiance.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, not all aspects of Lê government took the form held by contemporary Ming China. Most important here is the law code. As Nguyễn Ngọc Huy has recently argued,⁴¹ the core of the Lê Code (Lê Triều Hình Luật) was put together in the 1430s and 1440s, undoubtedly following the pattern of the earlier T'ang dynasty code rather than the contemporary Ming code. Even though Thanh-tong stressed the Ming pattern, he did not attempt to adopt its legal code, despite its obvious applicability to what he was attempting. This has yet to be

fully explained, yet it is indicative of the fact that the Vietnamese did not borrow completely or indiscriminately in the fifteenth century.

From the 1460s into the middle of the following century appears to have been the period of the greatest Ming influence. During Thánh-tông's reign of thirty-seven years (1460-1496), he brought much of the ideological orthodoxy attached to Ming Neo-Confucianism into Vietnam. His regulations deal with the "proper" way of life as defined by this orthodoxy. As he noted in the 1460s, ritual and correct behavior were "what separated man from the beasts."⁴² Thánh-tông particularly focused on the family, emphasizing mourning regulations among kin and correct marriage procedures. A good example of this concern for the family is that, at the beginning of his reign, he introduced the concept of huông-hoà land to support the ancestral sacrifices. One-twentieth of inherited land was reserved for this purpose and was to go to the eldest son (where possible). In this way, Thánh-tông sought to bring the concepts of patrilineal succession and primogeniture into Vietnamese social structure where they had not existed before.⁴³ Indeed, we have one record of an indication that he might have been trying to go too far too fast. In 1485, a senior minister and former imperial tutor, Trần Phong, who had long been in and out of Thánh-tông's graces, was executed for complaining about the extent of Ming influence.⁴⁴

The Lê rulers of the first quarter of the sixteenth century continued this emphasis on Confucian morality and Sinic social organization when they could, in the midst of the political turmoil of the years. Despite our assumptions about Mạc Đăng Dung, this powerful general and his clan picked up the Neo-Confucian mantle of Lê Thánh-tông's famed Hồng-đức period (1470-1497) and, it would appear, continued the latter's efforts to bring Vietnamese society in line with that of Ming China. The Confucianism of the Mac family went back two centuries to the famed scholar Mac Đĩnh Chi as well as the Mạc Thụy, prime Vietnamese supporter of the Chinese during the Ming occupation. Even though Mạc Đăng Dung himself rose to power as a military man, we should not ignore his family background in discussing his impact on sixteenth-century Vietnam.⁴⁵ If anything, the Mac family was too sinophile in orientation to fit the Vietnamese tradition. Its emphasis in this direction continued the development of the huông-hoà institution and undoubtedly helped to make it a part of Vietnamese social structure.⁴⁶

The defeat of the Mạc in 1592 and their flight into the northern mountains brought the Lê restoration (itself a Chinese concept) and began to deflect the strong Ming emphasis that had existed for over a century. Warfare continued into the second half of the seventeenth century, now between the Trịnh and the Nguyễn, and the status of the Confucian literati, well maintained it would seem during the Mac dynasty, dropped drastically. Indigenous power relations came to the fore. Only in the 1660s, when the Trịnh had put aside the attempt at

military reconquest of the Nguyễn on the southern border, did they turn back to the Chinese model of administration, with its emphasis on bureaucracy and moral righteousness. In 1663, the Trịnh, via the Lê on the throne, promulgated an edict containing the moral dicta the Confucian elite expected the Vietnamese population to follow. This was very much an imposition of elite, Chinese-derived social patterns on indigenous social structure. Much of the activity involved setting up new procedures to insure correct handling of the reestablished Sinic ideals.⁴⁷ Yet it would appear that the elite backed away from the heavy Ming emphasis of Thánh-tông and the Mạc.

The period from the 1660s to the 1760s saw the Trịnh in the north and the Nguyễn in the south continue to implement the Chinese model as it had been established earlier. In a time of demographic, social, and economic change, the government in the north tried desperately to maintain its hierarchy of power through the countryside. As fiscal problems mounted, it attempted to control the tax base and to keep land and population out of the hands of the large landholders. Part of this was the effort to restrict the movement of "vagabonds," those not tied to the village registers.⁴⁸ At the same time, the government was imposing a hierarchy on the spirit cults of the countryside, drawing them under the central power of the cult to Heaven (Nam-giao) and driving less desirable elements underground.⁴⁹

These decades saw a growth of both Confucian orthodoxy among the literary elite and popular religious belief. The latter included Mahayana Buddhist and Roman Catholic movements and is linked to some degree to the growth of foreign trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One major contribution of future significance from abroad was the romanization of the Vietnamese language by Western Catholic missionaries, though initially it was used only for Catholic documents. The government attempted to counter the growth of heterodoxy by controlling the printing of books.⁵⁰

All the countervailing forces of the times exploded in the rebellions of the eighteenth century, that of the Tây-sơn in particular. We need to know the extent of foreign contacts that the various Vietnamese factions had before we can discuss the degree of such influence. For example, can Chinese White Lotus elements be found in the movements of the period? A specific stance of foreign participation was Nguyễn Anh's involvement with the Bishop d'Adran and his sending his eldest son, Prince Cảnh, to Paris to seek aid. The resulting "bizarre handful of French soldiers and priests," to borrow Alexander Woodside's phrase, served the Nguyễn with other foreigners, Chinese, Khmers, Thais, and Malays. The French contributed military expertise and most particularly brought the architectural concepts of Vauban, which helped the construction of citadels (as at Huế) once success was achieved.⁵¹

Even under the Gia-long Emperor, the French did not gain great power, and when his son, the Minh-mang Emperor, reached the throne in 1819 there was little chance that European influences could be strong. As Woodside has shown so well, the 1820s and 1830s saw the full adoption of the Chinese model. Gia-long had already adopted the Ch'ing code of China almost in toto, and now Minh-mang set up the full bureaucratic array of offices and pushed central power to the outer reaches of the kingdom. He also implemented a Chinese-style tributary system as the pattern for his foreign relations. The Vietnamese ruler even went so far as to borrow what he thought existed in China, even though it did not. Yet, as Woodside points out, Minh-mang did not allow his strong adoption of the Chinese model to rule out any consideration of Western elements at all. He took European technical and military items as of interest, accepting or rejecting them on what he considered their merits in the Vietnamese situation.⁵²

Minh-mang's successors were as much if not more Confucian than he, and not nearly so flexible as he intellectually. The Tứ-đức Emperor was a scholar in the classical Chinese meaning of the word, and his comments in the imperially sponsored national history of the mid-nineteenth century, the Sinic-inspired Khâm-Định Việt-Sử Thông-Giám Cường-Mục, reflect a view of the world more in tune with Chinese philosophy than with Vietnamese reality.⁵³ The result appears to have been a dangerous gap between the Vietnamese people and the throne in Hue just at the time of the French invasion.

Ideas on the Vietnamese Cultural Core

As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, throughout Vietnamese history there exists a theme of borrowing from external sources. The close involvement with China over the past two millennia has meant much adopted from that direction. Yet we should not let this fact blind us to other foreign sources. Through many of these centuries, trade was important to the Vietnamese economy and culture, adding elements of value to the Vietnamese from along the sea routes.

As life changed through the centuries for the Vietnamese, what remained constant in this life? To use the anthropological terms noted at the beginning of the paper, what can we say belongs to the Vietnamese cultural core and what to the periphery? As was stated in the 1370 quotation noted above,

. . . pale scholars . . . changed the old
customs of our ancestors to follow the customs of
the North entirely as if they were clothes,
music, (or) literature.⁵⁴

This is a good distinction between what is considered integral to the culture and what is considered stylistic. Let us examine "the old

customs of our ancestors" and make some suggestions for the Vietnamese cultural core.

Social

The patterns underlying Vietnamese society may be seen from early Chinese references as having been bilateral in nature with flexibilities that the Chinese tried unsuccessfully to convert.⁵⁵ Evidence from the Lý period suggests that even in the royal family there was neither primogeniture nor indeed any strict practice of succession.⁵⁶ The status of women has been consistently higher in Vietnamese society than in China, as women played significant political roles (witness the Trưng sisters and Lady Triệu) and formed the transitional link between dynastic powers. Both Chinese and European sources have long noted the relative freedom of movement obtained by Vietnamese women, and this movement held in general for members of Vietnamese society, including children. Overall, the key point to be made for Vietnamese social organization has been its flexibility and the nature of choice so fundamental to it. Without a strict lineality and rigid clan organization, Vietnamese could choose the nature of their kin alignments and of the social organizations they joined.⁵⁷

Cultural

The mythic pattern in Vietnamese culture goes back into the early centuries of its history. A strong continuity exists in these myths, despite the transformations of certain of their elements to accord with cultural changes that had taken place. It is through these myths that the Vietnamese people maintained their relationship with the past, not by means of the Chinese-style histories. In a sense, this is a timeless approach to the past, since by means of the myths significant figures and events of the past remained alive in the present. While retaining significance, the myths do change with the times and thereby remain contemporary. A good example of such change was the turtle claw of King An-dương becoming a dragon claw in the story of the sixth-century Triệu Quang Phục. Yet in the myth of Lê Lợi, the central figure was once again a turtle.⁵⁸ Despite the changes, the continuity is there in the form of the water creature and its political power. Of interest here, then, is the eel-like water creature (probably similar to that in the original of Dragon Lord Lạc in the Vietnamese origin myth), which appears prominently as a motif in Vietnamese sculpture from the eleventh century into the fifteenth. It too would turn into a dragon.⁵⁹

Another major element in Vietnamese culture is the language and the nôm script derived from the Chinese for it.

Religious

Linked to the myths and forming a major part of Vietnamese life are the spirit cults. The range of spirits involved in the cults is

large and goes from peculiar individuals who died violent deaths in strange ways to the great, heroic figures who performed memorable deeds in striving to defend the realm. Like the myths, of which they form a part, the cults too bring the past into the immediacy of the present and make it live. Not only are they of temporal significance but also spatial, as they help define the landscape of Vietnam. The cults have their own specific locales, and the range of the locales provides definition to Vietnam itself.⁶⁰

Again, like the myths, the cults are not frozen in time and their significance changes through the centuries. In 1329, the Việt Điện U Linh Tập recorded the "invisible powers of Viet," which had proven efficacious in the wars against the Mongols and the Chams. These were the early heroes and heroines who generally came to be eclipsed by the more powerful spirits of the great national heroes of later centuries, particularly that of Trần Hưng-đạo. Only the Trưng sisters of the earlier period maintained their high position.⁶¹

Political

The power of the spirit cults reached into the political realm as well. Given the flexible nature of Vietnamese social organization discussed above, there was a major need for charismatic leadership that would draw the choice of significant individuals to follow. Leadership, then, depended greatly on the quality of leader-follower relations, and a major task for any would-be ruler was to strengthen and broaden loyalty beyond the personal ties of kin and lieutenants. A major way by which this was done was through the blood oath, whereby courtiers and officials swore loyalty to the ruler before the spirit world and asked the spirits to punish them severely if such loyalty were not delivered.⁶²

Economic

I would again argue that international trade, of however limited a scope, formed a major part of Vietnamese life through the centuries. In general, the Vietnamese have been more open to the sea routes than their northern neighbor and more open as well to cultural elements and ideas that moved along these routes. Vietnamese society generally seemed to allow greater participation by both sexes and all social classes in trade.⁶³

A glance at the legal code of the Lê dynasty (the Lê Triều Hình Luật)⁶⁴ will give us a hint of the relationship to the cultural core held by the items discussed above. The purpose of the Lê code appears to have been to maintain the cultural core and at the same time to control it, thus both keeping in touch with the culture and reinforcing the introduction of Chinese elements, Confucian and bureaucratic. Within the borrowed framework of the code, the Vietnamese insured the continuity of key elements of their civilization.

Yu Insun has shown very well, in his doctoral dissertation "Law and Family in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Vietnam,"⁶⁵ the strength of indigenous bilateral social patterns through the eighteenth century. References to the oath (articles 103, 107) indicate the continued concern of the government for threats from traditional charismatic leaders, and numerous other articles show the worry over control of manpower by private (and public) individuals. The mythic and religious aspects were dealt with more administratively than legally, as the matter of the spirit cults reflects. The government sought to control "heterodoxy" in the code (see, for example articles 215, 413) without actually detailing intrusion into cultic and spritual practices. The extent of government control appears most strongly in the code as regards foreign trade. Articles 71-77 call for major restrictions in Vietnamese contacts with such merchants, yet we know from contemporary witnesses (viz. Samuel Baron) that the opposite was quite often the case.

In looking at the Vietnamese cultural core through time, I tend to see a series of transformations occurring, transformations that had differing impacts on the core itself. Buddhism seems to have had an additive effect, drawing indigenous elements under the broad umbrella of the Hindu-Buddhist view of the cosmos. Confucianism seems to have been much more revolutionary in the changes it expected of the core elements. During the Lê dynasty, these changes were handled more sensitively and gradually than under the succeeding Nguyễn, yet the Lê changes were no less revolutionary for all their Vietnamese-ness.

The major issue now existing is: How Confucian did the Vietnamese become? And when? A large gap presently exists between premodern historians (like myself) who follow the historical development of an initially shallow Confucianism in Vietnam and students of the twentieth century, especially anthropologists, who have found a deep-set Confucianism in modern Vietnamese society.⁶⁶ Part of the answer lies in the as yet uninvestigated impact of Confucianism--how deeply into Vietnamese society did it go? Another part may well be a product of the Vietnamese ruling class under the immobilizing hand of French colonial rule. (See, for example, the emphasis placed on the family by the Franco-Annamite group in the 1920s and 1930s).⁶⁷ We need to know much more about the modern transformation of the elite in Vietnam and of Vietnamese society in general before we can speculate further in this direction. It may be that the Viet Minh and the Communists hewed closer to the cultural core of their people than their opponents, despite the former's foreign ideology. We need to ask now and in the future the contribution of Marxist ideology to Vietnamese culture in the same way that we ask it of Buddhism and Confucianism.

The Vietnamese cultural core would be a constant though shifting entity. What would count within it would be that which was

considered essential and integral to the culture at any given time. Foreign elements and ideologies would become grafted onto it, and the "core" of the twentieth century would differ greatly from that of two millennia before. The important fact is the Vietnamese ability to make any such "foreign-ness" Vietnamese.

NOTES

1. R. O. Winstedt, The Malay Magician (London, 1951); See Terry A. Rambo in this volume.
2. For other statements on change in cultural systems, see Terry A. Rambo and Neil Jamieson in this volume.
3. G. Coedès, The Making of Southeast Asia, trans. (Berkeley, 1967), 17-19; K. W. Taylor, The Birth of Vietnam (Berkeley, 1983), 7-10, 312-313.
4. J. Kennedy, "From Stage to Development in Prehistoric Thailand," in K. Hutterer, ed., Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia (Ann Arbor, 1977), 23-38; J.K. Whitmore, "The 'Opening' of Southeast Asia," in *ibid.*, 139-141.
5. Taylor, Birth of Vietnam, 14, 17-18, 29, 32, 78; K. W. Taylor, "An Evaluation of the Chinese Period in Vietnamese History," The Journal of Asiatic Studies (Seoul) 23, 1 (1980): 142.
6. Taylor, Birth of Vietnam, 35.
7. *Ibid.*, 33-34, 36-41, 45-48; Taylor, "Evaluation of Chinese Period," 146-148.
8. Taylor, Birth of Vietnam, 48-57, 72-84; Taylor, "Evaluation of Chinese Period," 148-152.
9. K. R. Hall, "Eleventh Century Commercial Developments in Angkor and Champa," JSEAS 2 (1979):425-428; Taylor, "Evaluation of Chinese Period," 152; Wang Gungwu, "The Nan-hai Trade," JMERAS 31, 2 (1958): 81-82, 84, 91, 93, 103, 104.
10. Taylor, Birth of Vietnam, 163-164, 264; Taylor, "Evaluation of Chinese Period," 153-154, 159.
11. O. W. Wolters, The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History (Ithaca, N.Y., 1970), 34-35; F. Hirth and W. W. Rockhill, Chau Ju-Kua (New York, 1966 reprint), 45.

12. Hall, "Eleventh Century," 428-432; J. K. Whitmore, "Vietnam and the Monetary Flow of Eastern Asia, Thirteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in J. F. Richards, ed., Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds (Durham, N.C., 1983), 373-375; Peggy Choy-Sutton, "The Rice Economy of Fourteenth Century Majapahit," in J. K. Whitmore, Chatchai Panananon, and K. R. Hall, eds., Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History, vol. 2 (forthcoming).
13. Trần Văn Giáp, "Le Bouddhisme en Annam," BEFEO 32 (1932): 220-227, 235-238, 243-245.
14. J. Boisselier, La statuaire du Champa (Paris, 1963), 27, 77, 83-84, 88-89, 135-138, 143, 402; Giáp, "Bouddhisme," 235, 253-254, 256, 261; K. W. Taylor, "The Rise of Đại Việt and the Establishment of Thăng-long," in K. R. Hall and J. K. Whitmore, eds., Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History, vol. I (Ann Arbor, 1976), 179.
15. Taylor, "Rise of Đại Việt," 174-180.
16. L. Bezacier, L'art vietnamien (Paris, 1954), 17-18, 28, 34, 35, 53, 139-141, 181-186; Boisselier, Statuaire, 298-301.
17. Trần Văn Khê, La musique vietnamienne traditionnelle (Paris, 1962), 19.
18. *Ibid.*, 17-19, 21-22; A. B. Woodside, Vietnam and the Chinese Model (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 23.
19. Khê, Musique, 16; Boisselier, Statuaire, 299, 303.
20. Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư (TT), 4, 11a-b; trans., 1st ed. (Hanoi, 1967), I:286; Giáp, "Bouddhisme," 250-252.
21. Ma Tuan-lin, Ethnographie des peuples étrangers a la Chine, trans. (Paris, 1883), II:356; Boisselier, Statuaire, 299, 301-303.
22. TT, 3, 18b, 19a; (Hanoi), I:248-249; Giáp, "Bouddhisme," 247, 261.
23. Taylor, "Rise of Đại Việt," 176-177.
24. *Ibid.*, 180; TT, 3, 8a, 10a, 11b, 12a; (Hanoi), I:236, 239-241.
25. Phan Huy Chú, Lịch Triều Hiến Chương Loại Chí (HC), trans. (Hanoi, 1961), II:6-7; III:6; R. B. Smith, "The Cycle of Confucianization in Vietnam," in W. F. Vella, ed., Aspects of Vietnamese History (Honolulu, 1973), 6-7.

26. TT, 3, 10a; (Hanoi), I:239; Chú, HC, II:69, 86.
27. Bezacier, Art vietnamien, 117.
28. Chú, HC, II:69, 87; III:6-8; TT, 5, 11b, 17a, 20a; (Hanoi), II:16, 22, 25.
29. Chú, HC, II:115; IV:64; TT, 5, 15b; (Hanoi), II:20; Phạm Thế Ngũ, Việt Nam Văn Học Sử (Saigon, 1963), II:51-54; O. W. Wolters, "Lê Văn Hưu's Treatment of Lý Thần Tông's Reign (1127-1137)," in C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters, eds., Southeast Asian History and Historiography (Ithaca, N.Y., 1976), 203-226.
30. Chú, HC, II:69; Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 7-9.
31. TT, 6, 16b, 21a; (Hanoi), II:87, 92.
32. TT, 6, 22a-23b; (Hanoi), II:93-94.
33. Trần Thế Pháp, Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái, trans. (Saigon, 1960), 10, 98; Taylor, Birth of Vietnam, 356-357. Originally, this tale was placed second in the collection, behind only that of the original Vietnamese kings, but at the end of the fifteenth century, following the crushing defeat of the Chams in 1471, it was placed twenty-first.
34. TT, 7, 21a-b; (Hanoi), II:145.
35. TT, 7, 33a-b; (Hanoi), II:158-159; O. W. Wolters, "Assertions of Cultural Well-Being in Fourteenth Century Vietnam," JSEAS, 10, 2 (1979): 444, 447-448.
36. J. K. Whitmore, "Crisis, Reform, and Defeat: Vietnam and Hồ Quý Ly, 1360-1407," ms., 1976; Nguyễn Đình-Hoà in this volume; Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 9.
37. J. K. Whitmore, "Chiao-chih and Neo-Confucianism," Ming Studies 4 (1977):51-91.
38. J. K. Whitmore, Transforming Đại Việt (forthcoming), chap. 2; Khê, Musique, 29-32.
39. Whitmore, Transforming Đại Việt, chaps. 3-4.
40. *Ibid.*, chap. 5; Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 11-12. On the new Chinese terms coming into the Vietnamese language, see Nguyễn Đình-Hoà in this volume; for the standard Chinese poetic forms, see Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang in this volume; and for a statement on Confucian beliefs, see Nguyễn Đăng Liêm in this volume.

41. Nguyễn Ngọc Huy, "Le Code des Lê: Quốc Triều Hình Luật ou 'Lois Pénales de la Dynastie Nationale'," BEFEO 67 (1980): 147-220; "On the Codification of the National Dynasty's Penal Laws (Quốc Triều Hình Luật)," The Vietnam Forum 1 (1983): 34-57.
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43. "Legal Section," Thiên Nam Dũ Hạ Tập (A.334); R. Deloustal, "Du hương-hoà," BEFEO 11 (1911): 50-62.
44. S. B. Young, "The Law of Property and Elite Prerogatives during Vietnam's Le Dynasty: 1428-1788," Journal of Asian History 10, 1 (1976): 12-13.
45. J. K. Whitmore, "Mạc Đăng Dung," Dictionary of Ming Biography (New York, 1976), II:1029-1035; "The Five Hundredth Anniversary of Mạc Đăng Dung's Birth," The Vietnam Forum (forthcoming); Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 14-16.
46. J. K. Whitmore, "Social Organization and Confucian Thought in Vietnam," JSEAS (forthcoming); Deloustal, "Hương-hoà," 58, n. 1; Hồng-đức Thiệu Chính Thủ (A. 330), 1a, 4a-8a.
47. K. W. Taylor, "The Literati Revival in Seventeenth Century Vietnam," in Whitmore, Chatchai Panananon, and Hall, Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History, vol. 2; Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 15-18; R. Deloustal, "Code de Procedure," BEFEO 19, 4 (1919): 435-515.
48. Nguyễn Thành Nhà, Tableau économique du Vietnam aux XVII^e et XVIII^e Siècles (Paris, 1970); Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 18.
49. J. K. Whitmore, "Bureaucratic Control of the Spirits," paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies Meeting, Washington, D.C., 1980.
50. Woodside, Chinese Model, 262; Taylor, "Literati Revival"; Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 16-17, 19; John DeFrancis in this volume; Whitmore, "Monetary Flow," 379-387.
51. Woodside, Chinese Model, 3, 16-18; Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 20-21.
52. Woodside, Chinese Model; Smith, "Cycle of Confucianization," 21-24.

53. See J. K. whitmore, "Note: The Vietnamese Confucian Scholar's View of His Country's Early History," in Hall and Whitmore, Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History, vol. 1, 193-203; Taylor, Birth of Vietnam, 165.
54. TT, 7, 33a-b; (Hanoi), II:158-159.
55. Taylor, Birth of Vietnam, 13, 34, 36, 39, 75-78, 130.
56. Wolters, "Lê Văn Hữu," 203-226.
57. Whitmore, "Social Organization."
58. Taylor, Birth of Vietnam, 1-7, 303-305, 316-319, 334-339, 353-357; J. K. Whitmore, "The Vietnamese Sense of the Past," The Vietnam Forum 1 (1983): 4-8.
59. Whitmore, Transforming Đại Việt, chap. 2.
60. Whitmore, "Bureaucratic Control of Spirits"
61. Whitmore, "Vietnamese Sense of Past," 8-10.
62. J. K. Whitmore, "The Oath of Allegiance in Southeast Asia," in Whitmore, Chatchai Panananon, and Hall, Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History, vol. 2.
63. Whitmore, "Monetary Flow," 363-393; "Social Organization."
64. Lương Thần et al., trans., Lê Triều Hình Luật (Saigon, 1956).
65. Yu Insun, "Law and Family in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Vietnam," Ph.D. diss., 1978, University of Michigan.
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Vietnamese Creativity in Borrowing Foreign Elements

Dinh-Hoa Nguyen

Thanks to a resilient nationalism crystallized in a resilient national culture, Vietnam was able, despite ten centuries of northern, that is, Chinese, rule to preserve its own language, its own customs and mores, and through these its own identity and personality. National consciousness also nurtured revolts against the aggressors from the north and finally, with the victory on the Bach-Dang River, ended more than a thousand years of foreign domination and ushered in the era of independence, marked by the establishment of a unified autonomous feudal state starting in the tenth century. The subsequent five centuries saw the advancement and expansion of the Great Viet State and also the flourishing of national culture. Chinese continued to function as the official written medium in affairs of state as well as in intellectual exchanges.

Around the eleventh century a native script or demotic system of writing called chữ nôm ("southern characters") made its shy appearance (Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1982), and until its demise in the early twentieth century it was used in private documents, deeds, and contracts as well as in many works of popular literature, notably those of the eighteenth century. With the abolition in 1918 of all civil service examinations based on a knowledge of Confucian classics and skills in prose and poetry writing using both systems of Hán and Nôm characters, the new Roman script contributed in the seventeenth century by the collective efforts of Portuguese, French, Spanish, and Vietnamese Christian workers was put to use by the French rulers as a means toward their end of effective and profitable colonialization. The Vietnamese, however, succeeded in turning this new educational tool to their advantage. Indeed, quốc-ngữ proved to be a powerful instrument in the struggle to eradicate illiteracy and later in the spread of education and culture, jettisoning Vietnam into the international arena of politics, science, and technology--all this through, and despite, eight decades of colonial rule and well into Republican days starting in 1945. The modernization of Vietnamese, which went hand in hand with efforts at standardization and unification by scholars in both zones during the 1954-1975 partition, has been recounted in proceedings of several conferences held in 1956 in Saigon; in 1960 in Hanoi; and, since reunification of the country,

in 1978 in Hà Nội, Huế, and Hồ Chí Minh City; and in 1979 in Hà Nội (Nhà Văn-hoá 1956; Viện Văn-học 1961; Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1979; Ngôn-ngữ 1979).

This brief study of linguistic borrowing, called "cultural borrowing" by Bloomfield (1933:444-460), will be limited to an examination of the following five activities: (1) lexical adoption, (2) lexical creation, (3) graphemic invention, including romanization, (4) indigenization of Chinese poetics, and (5) grammatical borrowing.

Lexical Adoption

It has been said that "languages are greedy" and "probably no language has ever been content solely with the lexical materials available from its own resources; and perhaps every language has from time to time increased the range and span of its vocabulary with what are generally called loanwords--imitations or approximations of the sound and sense of words from other languages" (Miller 1967:255). Although words of Western origin started invading the Vietnamese lexicon only decades ago, the phenomenon of lexical borrowing has been continuous in the course of the long history of the national language, with the principal donor language being Chinese.

Chinese Loanwords in Vietnamese

Roughly speaking, Chinese loanwords followed two routes: the popular route, via the spoken language used by Chinese officials and traders in daily contacts with the Vietnamese people during the days of direct Chinese rule (111 B.C.-A.D. 939), and the learned route, via the written language which the intelligentsia--or intelligentry, to use Professor Stephen O'Harrow's term--had to master in order to pass the grueling literary examinations leading to mandarinal positions within the civil service structure. Both layers of borrowed lexemes were in a sense superimposed upon the core vocabulary of Vietnamese, which consists of such native monosyllables as gạo 'rice', trái 'fruit', nước 'water', giời/trời 'sky', giăng/trăng 'moon', and of even such dissyllables as đầy-đủ 'fully, completely', sáng-sủa 'brightly', địu-dàng 'gentle, sweet', chia rẽ 'to divide [a group]', ("tiếng nôm lồi": Lê Ngọc-Tru 1973:xxi-xxviii).

Although following different approaches to the analysis of Sino-Vietnamese elements (Hán-Việt), that is, lexical items borrowed from Chinese, the scholars (Maspero 1912, 1916; Wang Li [1948] 1958; Nguyễn Bạt-Tụy [1953] 1958; Nguyễn Khắc-Kham 1969, 1971; Mineya Toru 1972; Hashimoto Mantaro 1978; Gage 1976, 1979; Ray 1979, to name just a few) have agreed basically on how and when an item was borrowed, what kind of change it underwent in terms of Chinese phonology and/or in terms of Vietnamese phonology. Maspero and Wang agreed that

Sino-Vietnamese was the kind of language in Giao-châu (Jiao-zhou) around the end of the Tang dynasty and primarily based on the Trảng-an (Chang-an) dialect. Hashimoto commented further that "the Chinese language taught at Vietnamese schools in Jiao-zhou must have been a kind of koine spoken in the southwestern part of China," and that "the Sino-Vietnamese we nowadays observe is fundamentally the reading of Chinese characters based on such a koine but 'fossilized' in the romanization of Alexandre de Rhodes in his famous dictionary of what Maspero calls 'annamite moyen,' Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum (1651)" (Hashimoto 1978:9).

At any rate, the completely acclimatized segment comprises a large number of loanwords that denote foodstuffs, articles of clothing and furniture, and that are interspersed in descriptions of housekeeping, health care, arts, and skills as well as handicraft products and techniques. These direct loans have been called nho xưa by Nguyễn Bạt-Tụy (1958) and tiếng nôm chuyên gốc Hán-Việt by Lê Ngọc Trụ (1973). Examples of these "more deeply entrenched Chinese" (Gage 1976) loanwords or "vietnamized Han words" (Wang 1958) are: bà 'grandmother'; bến 'pier'; buông 'to release'; buồng 'room'; căn 'room, apartment, house'; cởi 'to untie'; dao 'knife'; đầu 'head'; đường 'road'; gan 'liver'; gần 'near'; giấy 'paper'; giặc 'rebel'; kém 'minus, weak'; keo 'glue'; khéo 'skillful'; nguồn 'source, origin'; tim 'heart'; vườn 'garden'.

These long Vietnamized words are no longer associated with the reading of the corresponding Chinese characters, and few native speakers realize that they are not "pure native words" (thuần Việt) but rather are very early loans, sometimes referred to as cổ Hán-Việt, "ancient Sino-Vietnamese" (Wang 1958).

Different from them are names of Chinese dishes or ingredients such as húng-liu '(five) spices', lạp-xương 'Chinese sausage'; lô-máy-phần 'sweet rice, cooked glutinous rice'; lục-tầu-xà 'mung bean soup'; mãn-thần 'wonton (soup)'; phở '(beef) noodles'; tào-phở 'soybean custard'; tim-sâm 'dim sum, dumplings'; xà-xiu 'roast pork'; xê-cầu 'lime sherbet'. Besides these examples borrowed from Cantonese, some culinary terms are loanwords from the Triều-châu (Chao Zhou) dialect: hủ-tiêu 'flat rice noodles'; phá-lầu 'stewed meat with spices'; xà-bần 'hodge-podge' (Lê Ngọc Trụ 1973:17).

But these recognizable loanwords are referred to as tiếng tàu ("Chinese words") unlike a category of true Sino-Vietnamese loanwords "imported into Vietnamese as the reading of Chinese characters" [emphasis mine]—"a kind of 'literary' loan words which may one day die out after the Vietnamese cease using ideographic characters" (Hashimoto 1978:5). With regard to their phonetic shape they show similarities with southern Chinese dialects, especially Yue and Min, spoken in Southwest China. Content-wise we have words pertaining to government and social order, religion, law, medicine, literature, and arts.

Whereas thoroughly naturalized loanwords designate tangible objects, tools, utensils, and ornaments, and thus have a need-filling function, the learned loanwords appear to lend prestige to their users. As in the case of Japanese, "potentially any morpheme or any word existing in Chinese of any variety at any period in the history of the language has in theory always been available as a potential loanword" in Vietnamese (Miller 1967:235), and the recipient language only becomes so much richer.

Indeed, in everyday language there is a large number of highly productive Chinese-borrowed lexical units that may enter into larger combinations. HỒ LÊ (1976:134-146) lists some 200 so-called "potential" morphemes of the type -si 'specialist, expert', or vô 'non-, un-, im-, il-', which are used to compose dissyllables such as thi-si 'poet', van-si 'writer', hoạ-si 'painter', or vô-chủ 'without the owner', vô-cô 'inorganic', vô-danh 'anonymous', vô-ích 'useless', and trisyllables such as vô-chính-phủ 'anarchy', vô-điều-kiện 'unconditional', vô-giá-trị 'worthless' or even tetrasyllables vô-danh-tiểu-tốt 'a nobody', vô-tiền-khoảng-hậu 'unprecedented', vô-tuyền-truyền-hình 'television', and so on.

Moreover, a native speaker of Vietnamese does not need to know the original meaning of each bound morpheme in order to understand the meaning of the compound of which it is a constituent. Such compounds as lãnh-tụ 'leader', mâu-thuần 'contradiction', qui-mô 'scale', and hi-sinh 'sacrifice' have become semantic wholes, and the constituents have lost or are in the process of losing their meaning. Synchronically speaking one should not think that every element of Chinese origin has meaning because to do so would be "replacing the synchronic viewpoint by the etymological viewpoint in our analysis of modern Vietnamese" (Nguyễn Tài Căn 1975:12).

A poet such as Nguyễn Trãi (1380-1442) had at his disposal such pairs of words as buông:phóng, buông:phòng, gan:can, gan:cận, tuổi:tuế, xe:xa, ao:tri, tróc:dầu, trăng:nguyệt. As "each individual is a battlefield for conflicting linguistic types and habits" (Martinet, in Weinreich 1963:vii), Nguyễn Trãi made his choice in each case reflect a division of labor between competing elements in terms of poetic function: in his Collected Poems in the National Language (Quốc-âm Thi-tập), written in chữ nôm, for "moon" he used trăng only three or four times but nguyệt more than fifty times. Later poets, too, freely and aptly selected either member of the pair of "synonyms" to suit the literary context.

Another statistical detail: among the highest frequency group of 272 words which occur ten times or more out of a 2,235-word vocabulary in Nguyễn Trãi's 254 vernacular poems, only 54 words, or 20 percent are Chinese loans. Altogether such learned words as đắc 'to obtain', nguyệt 'moon', thê 'the world', tri 'pond', phú-quý 'wealth and fame', quân-tử 'superior man', and thê-gian 'the world' make up only 3 percent, whereas 17 percent are those thoroughly

vietnamized lexemes such as cảnh 'scenery', cúc 'chrysanthemum', hoa 'flower', hương 'fragrance', mai 'plum tree/blossom', thông 'pine tree', thu 'autumn', thú 'delight', trúc 'bamboo', tuyết 'snow' (Nguyễn Tài Căn and Vũ Đức Nghiệu 1980: 18).

Teaching and Learning Sino-Vietnamese.

In addition to books written by Chinese authors, there were word lists and manuals designed by Vietnamese scholars for the use of students of Chinese classics. At least three or four of them utilized Vietnamese verse as mnemonic devices to introduce the pronunciation and meaning of each Chinese character.

Nhất Thiên Tự ("The Book of One Thousand Characters") is actually a word list giving 1,015 Chinese words in alternate groups of three, then four, characters; each reading is followed by its gloss in a line of six (3 X 2) syllables and a line of eight (4 X 2) syllables. Below are the first four lines in the lục-bát or six-eight meter introducing fourteen Chinese characters:

	天	冬	地	坦	雲	運		
(1)	THIÊN	giỏi	ĐIA	đát	VÂN	mây		
	雨	霜	風	風愈	晝	日	夜	脰
(2)	VŨ	mùa	PHONG	gió	CHU	ngày	ĐA	đêm.
	星	生	路	栗	祥	怡		
(3)	TINH	sao	LỘ	móc	TUÔNG	diêm		
	麻	令	慶	福增	漆	多	多	
(4)	HU	lạnh	KHÁNH	phúc	TẮNG	thêm	ĐA	nhiều

(Nguyễn Đình-Hòa 1963:1665-1678)

The sixth word of any octometer rhymes with the sixth (or last) word of the preceding line, and its eighth word rhymes with the sixth (or last) word of the following hexameter; memorization is made easy for the subteen students in a most ingenious fashion. In the above examples, the quốc-ngữ forms of the Chinese characters appear in capitals, and the rhyming Vietnamese words listed below the nôm characters are mây and ngày, đêm and điêm, then điêm and thêm, and so forth.

Another Vietnamese-authored textbook, equally inventive, is Tam Thiên Tự ("The Book of Three Thousand Characters"), long thought to be anonymous. In 1969 the late scholar Trần Văn Giáp disclosed in an article on the origin of chữ nôm that the author of Tam Thiên Tự Giải-âm was Ngô Thì Nhậm (1746-1803), who first called the book Tự-học Toàn-yêu 字學纂要 ("A Glossary for the Study of Characters") in his Preface. The text consists of 1,500 lines of four words, and each line introduces two Chinese characters followed

by their Vietnamese glosses in nom characters. The first six lines are reproduced below:

	天	奎	地	坦	
(1)	THIÊN	giới	ĐIÀ	đát	
	舉	措	存	群	
(2)	CỬ	cát	TỒN	còn	đát
	子	孫	孫	召	cat
(3)	TỬ	con	TỒN	cháu	con
	六	老六	三	巴三	cháu
(4)	LỤC	sáu	TAM	ba	sáu
	家	如	國	若	ba
(5)	GIA	nhà	QUỐC	nước	nhà
	前	畧	後	後	nước
(6)	TIỀN	trước	HẬU	sau	trước
					sau

(Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1973:4-6)

The four-meter verse is a folk verse widely used in proverbs and sayings, folk songs, and particularly in the satirical poem called vè. As the diagram above shows it, the last word of each line rhymes with the second word of the following line, before the caesura: đát and cát, còn and con, cháu and sáu, and so forth.

This four-word verse predated the six-eight (lục-bát) meter, but the latter became more popular (Bùi Văn Nguyễn and Hà Minh Đức 1971:206).

Lexical Creation

Under a strong cultural stimulus to adopt foreign terms, native speakers and writers proud of their mother tongue and keenly aware of their identity as members of a speech community often resort to the method of loan translation. Whereas direct loanwords represent the phenomenon of transfer, which is due to "language interference," loan translations, as attenuations of the process of borrowing, consist of native elements joined together according to foreign models. In a loan translation proper, a multiple lexical unit--a compound, a phrase, or even a proverb--is reproduced by means of equivalent native words (Weinrich 1953:51). Again Nguyễn Trãi was one of the earliest authors to use loan translations or calques, partly through the freeing of bound morphemes (Nguyễn 1975, 1983). Analysts often cite examples from his Quốc-âm Thi-tập:

<u>ấn cả</u> 'major retirement (e.g., right in the capital city)' from <u>đại-ấn</u> 大隱	Poem No. 17
<u>bốn dân</u> 'the four social classes' from <u>tứ-dân</u> 四民	126
<u>câu thần</u> 'magic verse' from <u>thần-cú</u> 神句	4
<u>chèu quế</u> 'cinnamonwood oar' from <u>quế-trạo</u> 桂棹	42
<u>di nghỉ</u> 'to move or to stop' from <u>hành-chỉ</u> 行止	6

In a loan rendition, the model gives only a general hint for the reproduction (of a literary allusion, a popular saying, etc.). For instance, cày ăn đào uống (QATT, Poem 102) and nước đào giếng, còm cày ruộng (Poem 129) are both derived from

井而飲，耕田而食，帝力何有於我哉

"If I can dig a well to get my drink and plow a field to get food to eat, then what effect could the king's power have on me?"

Máy bay from phi-cổ, tàu lửa or xe lửa next to hoà-xa are modern examples of loan translations preferred to direct transfers to refer to the airplane and the train, respectively. "Skyscraper" has been rendered as "skypiercer"--nhà chọc trời--and "nightclub" as "nightbox"--hộp đêm--after the French boite de nuit.

Other classical writers after Nguyễn Trãi, Lê Thánh-tông (1442-1497), Nguyễn Bình Khiêm (1491-1585), Đoàn Thị Điểm (1705-1748), Nguyễn Gia Thiều (1751-1798), and most of all Nguyễn Du (1765-1820) all created new expressions through loan translations of one kind or the other. Current efforts in preserving the purity and the clarity of Vietnamese are precisely being pursued in this direction (for 'marines' lính thủy đánh bộ, after thủy-quân lục-chiến, from lục-chiến thủy-quân/thủy-binh; for 'the Pentagon' Lầu Năm Góc, after Ngũ-giác-đài; for 'the White House' Toà Nhà Trắng, after Bạch-ốc or Bạch-cung; etc.).

Translation carried to the extreme may, however, lead to lack of precision, and therefore to confusion, when a technical term is involved. The word for helicopter is a case in point. The Greek etymons hélix, -ikos 'spiral' and pteron 'wing' should have given máy bay cánh xoay instead of máy bay trực-thăng or, more recently, máy bay lên thẳng "straight-up takeoff plane"--which might cause confusion with VIOL (from vertical takeoff and landing) "an aircraft, usually other than a helicopter, that can take off and land vertically" (Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, 2nd College Edition 1979).

The meaning of a lexeme in the donor language often changes in the recipient language. Lịch-sự 曆事, from âm-lịch sự-cổ, luyện-lịch sự-tĩnh, canh-lịch sự-biên, means "experienced" in

Chinese, but in Vietnamese its meaning is "[of dress] elegant, chic, [of speech, conduct] correct, nice, courteous." The meaning of tiêu-tâm 小心 is "to be careful, cautious" in Chinese, but "to be mean, petty" in Vietnamese. Other examples of this shift in meaning are:

<u>khôi-ngô</u> 魁梧	'[of body] husky'	'[of face] handsome'
<u>khôn-nạn</u> 困難	'difficulty'	'miserable; despicable'
<u>khúc-chiết</u> 曲折	'winding'	'articulate'
<u>lôi-lạc</u> 磊落	'[of heart] clear'	'[of talent] outstanding'
<u>ý-tử</u> 意思	'meaning'	'sensitive, considerate'

Chinese-derived monosyllables usually denote titles, ranks, administrative units, roles, or functions: tú from tú-tài 'holder of first academic degree', cử from cử-nhân 'holder of second academic degree', giáo from giáo-viên/giáo-sư 'teacher', lý from lý-trưởng 'village mayor', án from án-sát 'provincial judge', huyện from tri-huyện 'district chief', and so forth. This practice of monosyllabic reduction has been used in Western loanwords as well, resulting in such clipped words as lốp 'tire', (from Fr. enveloppe), săm 'inner tube' (from Fr. chambre à air), xăng 'gasoline', (from Fr. essence), cầm 'police commissioner' (from Fr. commissaire), or áp from the English apartment, tách from the English technician, ly from the English assembly, and so on. The latter two forms were the source of such punning devices as used in the phrase chồng tách vợ ly referring to refugee couples in post-1975 Texas or California, where the husband worked as a technician and the wife, even though not speaking much English, could be employed on the assembly line: tách and ly mean "cup" and "glass," respectively, in vernacular Vietnamese.

Several units have the potential of becoming lexemes proper once they are given freedom of occurrence as autonomous terms used in scientific and technical discourse: căn 'root', diện 'plane', hàm 'function', hệ 'system', lực 'force', sinh 'biology', tính 'character, nature, -ness', tuyến 'line [of transportation or defense]'

The sociological aspects of lexical elaboration are discussed in a two-volume work which contains papers read at a conference on the theme "Preserving the Purity and Clarity of Vietnamese in Lexicology" in 1979. Participants agreed that there has developed a division of labor between native elements and their Chinese-derived equivalents: trăng and nguyệt, đàn and cầm, ao and trì, and so on in classical poetry; and more recently nước and thủy, lửa and hoả, hạt and ca, đường and tuyến, and so on. They also saw that not all the

Sino-Vietnamese terms have to be replaced by native lexemes. A lexicologist pointed out that there are no two exact synonyms, since each of the two doublets has its own function, and that to use them both in appropriate contexts only contributes to the enrichment of Vietnamese: Nguyễn Văn Tu ([1979] 1981:2:270-271) illustrates the choice between two words meaning "young female, girl"--gái as in cô gái, con gái, học-sinh gái, and nữ as in nữ-giới, đồng-hồ nữ, xe đạp nữ. A lady linguist argued further that, since the contents of a native word and of a borrowed word have each become specialized, the effort, in terminology work particularly in the social sciences, to substitute Vietnamese lexemes for Chinese loanwords may (a) jeopardize scientific accuracy and precision; (b) introduce a lengthy expression that is hard to remember, or else (c) de-formalize or vulgarize (dung-tục-hoá) a technical term (Nguyễn Thị Tân [1979] 1981: 2: 260-265). She objects to such expressions as môn học (về) . . . 'the study of . . . ' and prefers such compounds as địa-danh-học 'geonymy', địa-chất-học 'geology', địa-lý-học 'geography', and so on, all of which contain the suffix -học '-logy, -ics'. She also advocates the retention of tiên-bối 'predecessor, forefather' instead of người trước; đa-thê 'polygynous' instead of lấy nhiều vợ; hành-khúc 'march' instead of khúc đi; tập-thành-khúc 'potpourri' instead of khúc hồ-lôn, and so on.

A large combination may assume hybridized shape, that is, may contain a mixture of native and borrowed elements. Examples are linh thủy 'sailor', súng lục 'revolver, six-shooter', kinh lão 'eyeglasses for old persons', môi-hóa 'labialized', chủ hàng trưởng 'store manager', xe ô-tô 'automobile', xe xích-lô 'pedicab', xe buýt 'bus', xe tắc-xi 'taxi', trắng bốp 'immaculate white' (modifier bốp from Fr. propre), and more recently xe lam 'three-wheeled public vehicle' (modifier lam from the trademark Lambretta). Both elements may be exoglossic as in the hybrid forms canh gác 'to watch, guard' from Sino-Vietnamese 戡 'to watch; watch of the night' and French garde, or o-xy-hoá 'to oxidize' from French oxygene and Sino-Vietnamese 化 'to change'.

Descriptive periphrastic expressions are most frequently used: cái gạt tàn thuốc lá 'the thing where you flip cigarette ashes--ashtray', máy cắt cỏ 'machine to cut grass--lawn mower', máy đánh trứng 'machine to beat eggs--eggbeater', tàu há mồm 'vessel that opens its jaw--landing craft', máy bay cánh cúp cánh xoè 'plane whose wings can fold or spread out--F-111 fighter plane', and so forth. It is precisely this device which helps word coiners when they are called upon as scientists and/or teachers to invent a new terminology needed in science instruction.

As detailed elsewhere (Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1977b) terminology workers ever since the 1940s have essentially followed three routes: (1) use of Vietnamese elements, as in máy khâu 'sewing machine', máy cưa or cưa máy 'power saw', mò hàn 'soldering iron', (2) use of Sino-Vietnamese elements, as in đưỡng-khi 'oxygen', nhiệt-kế

'thermometer', âm-cực or cực âm 'cathode'; and (3) direct transliteration of Western terms.

Through the third process, which is based upon international nomenclature, Vietnamese has absorbed some new letters from the Roman alphabet, those that represent new consonants (w, f, z), consonant clusters (br-, cl-, cr-, pl-, -pr, st-, tr-), as well as such syllable codas as those ending in -al, -el, -ol, -od, -oz, and -ic.

As in other areas of innovation, the specialists in striving toward such objectives as accuracy, precision, systematicity, ease in use, and conciseness have shown considerable creativity in their collective work as linguists, scientists, and educators (Lưu Văn Lăng [1964] 1977).

Graphemic Invention

For a long time classical Chinese was considered Vietnam's literary language, read in the Sino-Vietnamese fashion and written in a special style. Then the appearance of chữ nôm, in the eleventh century according to the latest research, marked a significant step in the assertion of Vietnam's cultural identity. This script was conceived as a system of written symbols used to transcribe native words. Though based on Chinese characters, the "demotic" or "southern" characters, undecipherable to the Chinese themselves, stimulated the production of several masterpieces of national literature (Đào Duy Anh 1975; Lê Văn Quán 1981).

Of the six methods used in creating Chinese graphs, the nôm script utilizes mostly the two processes of jiǎ jiè and xíng shēng. A nôm character may be a Chinese character, a combination of Chinese characters, a combination of a Chinese radical and an incomplete Chinese character, or an abbreviation of a character. It may also be marked with a diacritic (Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1959 and 1982a). By making Chinese-borrowed graphemes represent either the sound or the meaning of a Vietnamese word, one obtains a distinction between two homonyms: thus, năm 'five' is written 南五, but năm 'year' is written 南_年.

Among the most ingeniously designed characters are 天 trời 'sky', 企 trùm 'leader, boss', 令 seo 'village crier', 望五 ram '15th day of the [lunar] month', 尛 mây 'a few', 上 trên 'space above', 下 dưới 'space below', 紉 chuỗi 'string of beads', and 無 lũ 'worn out' --all hiu i characters.

Various aspects of improved graphization have been discussed since the invention of the Roman script called quốc-ngữ, product of the collective labor of Catholic missionaries engaged in the evangelization of the Vietnamese people. Though Alexandre de Rhodes (1593-1660) of Avignon earned the credit for its early codification

through a Catechism, a Grammatical Sketch and a Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary (Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1983a), the latter works reflected the phonological and grammatical features of seventeenth-century or Middle Vietnamese (Gregerson 1969), so perfecting this useful romanization, which has basically remained unchanged since then, has always been a timely topic.

During the colonial period the French (Le Grand de la Liraye, Aymonier, Cadière, Dubois) had taken up the problem. But the Vietnamese themselves (Phó Đức-Thành, Nguyễn Khắc Hiếu, Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh, and Trần Trọng-Kim were the early enthusiasts of the 1919-1928 decade) have made significant recommendations toward the standardization of the novel system of writing. Those proposed "spelling reforms" range from rigorous scientific ones (e.g., Nguyễn Bạt-Tuy's suggestions concerning vowels and final consonants) to eccentric ones (e.g., Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh's suggestion regarding tone spelling--using f, z, w, g and s to represent the huyền, hỏi, ngã, sắc, and nặng tones, respectively, or Trần Trọng-Kim's suggestion regarding the differentiation of homonyms by means of final letters -s, -t, -k, -b, -th).

Two conferences are worth mentioning: a Conference on Language Unification (Hội-nghị Thống-nhất Ngôn-ngữ) held in Saigon in 1956, and a Conference on the Improvement of Quốc-ngữ (Hội-nghị về Vấn-đề Cải-tiến Chữ Quốc-ngữ) held in Hanoi in 1960. A Committee on Language Codification (Ủy-ban Điện-chế Văn-tự) was set up in South Vietnam in mid-1967, and an Institute of Linguistics (Viện Ngôn-ngữ-học) was established in North Vietnam in 1969.

Building on the work of their predecessors, linguists, writers, and educators have endorsed sound recommendations for a logical and rational solution to the problem of script revision and modification. This particular domain of language planning will succeed only if each proposed reform would be carefully studied by language specialists, then thoroughly and constructively discussed in open meetings before a period of dissemination, experimentation, and gradual implementation, to be followed by an evaluation of the spread of pertinent language products with due respect and consideration for sociolinguistic feelings and attachments.

Indigenization of Chinese Poetics

The lục-bát or six-eight meter and the song-thất-lục-bát or seven-seven-six-eight meter and their derived forms are typically Vietnamese genres. But classical poetry writers in traditional Vietnam also followed Tang metrics when composing "regulated verse" if they were not turning out "old style" poems.

The regulated style in due course grew more popular despite its demanding criteria. Basically a sonnet of eight lines of seven

syllables each thất ngôn bát cú is governed by strict rules concerning its structure: final rhymes (in lines 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8), fixed patterns of tone contrasts (even, bằng, versus oblique, trắc), syntactic and semantic parallelism of the two antithetical couplets in the middle of the octet, and the principle of adhesion (niêm), which requires that both second syllables in the pairs of lines 1 and 8, 2 and 3, 4 and 5, 6 and 7 have either an even tone or an oblique tone (Trần Trọng-Kim 1943:252-258).

Tang prosody also stipulates that a major caesura occur before the last three syllables of the heptasyllabic line. But Vietnamese poets introduced features of their native prosody to change the cadence of the regulated heptameter: the medial caesura in the Vietnamese poem was shifted and came before the fourth syllable, thus breaking a line into a three-word hemistich followed by a four-word hemistich. In his Quốc-âm Thi-tập ("Collected Poems in the National Language"), Nguyễn Trãi often used this rhythm:

Poem 13, Line 3 Bàn củ thiêu / hạm đèn miến sách,
4 Tỉnh quen chẳng / kiếm trúc cùng mai.

"Lacking old friends, I love my lamp and books,
Maybe as a habit I seek bamboo and plum trees."

Poem 52, Line 3 Khách lạ đèn / ngàn hoa chửa rụng,
4 Câu mâu ngậm / dạ nguyệt càng cao.

"A new guest comes--no flower fell yet,
A magic verse is sung--the crescent moon rises even
higher."

Sometimes the fifteenth-century poet paused after the second word in each line of a couplet:

Poem 57, Line 3 Đắc thời / thân thích chen chân đến,
4 Thất sở / láng giềng ngảnh mặt đi.

"When you thrive, kinsmen come in flocks,
If you fail, neighbors look the other way."

Poem 139, Line 5 Lều không / con cái hàng tình phụ,
6 Bếp lạnh / anh tam biếng hỏi han.

"Your hut empty--the kids would turn ingrate,
Your hearth cold--friends and chums seldom call."

In a few cases Nguyễn Trãi opened a line with the topicalized element, then paused as if to keep hearers or readers in suspense:

Poem 51, Line 8 Lá / chứa ai quét cửa thông.

"The leaves: no one has raked them at the pine gate."

Poem 70, Line 5 Say / hết tác lòng hồng-hộc.

"Drunk [with books] I think no more of wild geese."

Poem 62 contains this antithetical couplet:

Line 3 Dìp / huyện hoa còn quỳên khách,

4 Rày / biên tuyết đã nên ông.

"Then the county in bloom could keep its guests,
Now with my snowy hair I have grown old."

The most creative Vietnamese poets, unwilling to obey the rules of Chinese prosody too slavishly, preferred "to play fast and loose with them, bend them to fit different habits of native verse" (Huỳnh Sanh Thông 1979:xxx). An extraordinary innovation of theirs consisted in using a hexameter, or a line of six words (lục ngôn), instead of a heptameter within an eight-line sonnet. Nguyễn Trãi himself used as many as a total of 359 lục ngôn lines in his 254 vernacular stanzas (Bùi and Hà 1971:19, note 2). A few examples have been cited above, but Poem 41 contains even four lines of six words:

Line 1 Con cờ quây, rượu đầy bầu.

2 Đòi nước non, chời quân đầu.

3 Đạp áng mây, ôm bó củi,

4 Ngồi bên suối, gác cần câu.

"I bring my chessboard, a gourd full of wine,
And roam around, up hill and across brook.
Stepping on clouds, hugging a bundle of firewood,
Or sitting by the stream, a fish pole next to me."

It is truly amazing that Poem 64 has up to seven line of lục ngôn and that in Poem 67 all the lines but the closing one has six words each. This mixing of lục ngôn lines, a peculiarly Vietnamese feature found under the Trần (1225-1400) and up to the Restored Lê (1528-1802) (Trần Trọng-Kim 1943: 270), ceased to exist in later poetry.

One last example of Nguyễn Trãi's style as a non-conformist: a couplet of five words in Poem 182:

Line 5 Già / mặc số trời đất,
6 Giàu / ai qua vợ con.

"Getting old? Just bow to the fate in Heaven and Earth,
Growing rich? Be sure to share it with wife and kids."

Grammatical Borrowing

Conservative native speakers object to the borrowing of foreign grammatical features, but alien patterns are often copied rather creatively. French for instance has contributed such forms as qua-loa-rở-mang 'pro forma, sloppily' from qua-loa 'rough, sketchy, sloppy' and French -rement; bét-dẽm 'the last one, the bottom one, the worst' from bẽt 'lowest, last' and French -iẽm; inchẽable 'impeccable, perfect' from French in- and chẽ 'to belittle, disparage' and French -able.

A recent convention consists in using word order to distinguish an adjective from a noun:

1. (a) chủ-nghĩa tử-bản for 'capitalism'
- (b) tử-bản chủ-nghĩa 'capitalist'
2. (a) chủ-nghĩa xã-hội for 'socialism'
- (b) xã-hội chủ-nghĩa 'socialist'

French, and more recently English, constructions have been borrowed by bilingual speakers, who tend to make frequent or excessive use of nominalizers (such as cái, sự, việc, tin), the relative pronoun mà (to translate who, which, that), and the preposition bởi.

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Vietnamese Writing Reform in Asian Perspective

John DeFrancis

There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
Julius Caesar, IV, iii, 217

The miseries of writing systems based on Chinese characters have afflicted four Asian countries--China, Korea, Japan, and Viet Nam. The tide of opportunity to reform their writing systems was taken at the flood by Viet Nam and North Korea. China, Japan, and South Korea, however, missed the opportunities presented to them and so remain bound to the miseries of Chinese characters.

There were two lost opportunities for China. The first came shortly after World War I when the great upsurge of national feeling known as the May Fourth Movement included as one of its main components proposals for reform of the Chinese system of writing as a means of helping to revitalize and modernize the country. Some intellectuals, including Chen Duxiu, one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, advocated abandoning Chinese characters and adopting Roman letters to write the national language. An alternate proposal was advanced by Hu Shi, a scholar of quite different political persuasion who subsequently became Chiang Kai-shek's ambassador to the United States. Hu advocated instead that characters be retained but that they be used to write not in the dead classical style but in a living vernacular style which could pave the way for an eventual transition to the use of Roman letters.

There is, however, a fundamental fallacy in Hu Shi's reasoning. Chinese characters have been so tied in with the classical style and the latter has been so deeply entrenched in the minds of Chinese intellectuals that most have been unable to overcome its influence in their attempts at writing in the vernacular. Complaints are still

Unless otherwise indicated, documentation for this paper is to be found in author's publications listed in the References.

frequently voiced today that even the scripts of radio broadcasts, which one would think would surely be written in close approximation to everyday speech, are actually so loaded with classical turns of phrase as to cause difficulties for broadcasters and listeners alike.

Hu Shi's character-oriented approach to a vernacular writing style stands in contrast to the approach suggested by Chen Duxiu and later spelled out more precisely by Lu Xun, China's greatest writer of modern times. The latter specified that the writing style should be based on the direct transcription of speech into an alphabetic script so as to get away from the influence of the characters. In support of a New Writing movement involving the Latinization of Chinese, Lu Xun urged: "From the lips of living people take words and phrases that are full of life and transfer them to paper. . . . What can be said can be written."

The decision to follow Hu Shi's indirect character-oriented approach rather than Lu Xun's direct alphabet-oriented approach means that much of so-called vernacular writing in characters still cannot be directly transcribed into alphabetic writing. And this means in turn that Hu Shi's approach to vernacular writing has shown itself to be not the great success that is generally claimed for it but a colossal failure in achieving the avowed goal of preparing the way for a transition to writing based on the Latin alphabet. The currently dominant partly literary, partly vernacular style remains one of the most serious obstacles to any such basic reform in the Chinese system of writing.

The second lost opportunity for China came with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. It was the confident expectation of Chinese language reformers that the Communists would now implement the change in writing that they had advocated in the thirties and forties. In 1939 Mao Zedong had told the American journalist Edgar Snow:

We believe Latinization is a good instrument with which to overcome illiteracy. Chinese characters are so difficult to learn that even the best system of rudimentary characters, or simplified teaching, does not equip the people with a really efficient and rich vocabulary.
Sooner or later, we believe, we will have to abandon characters altogether if we are to create a new social culture in which the masses fully participate. [1968:446.
 Snow's emphasis.]

This was only one of many expressions of support by top Communist leaders for a fundamental change in the Chinese system of writing, not merely a minor tinkering with the shape of the characters such as the Chiang Kai-shek regime had briefly decreed in 1935 in an abortive attempt at character simplification. In the Communist-controlled area centered around Yan'an, a Latinized system of writing had even been

accorded legal recognition by a decree promulgated in 1940 which stated that documents drawn up in Latinization would have the same status before the law as those drafted in characters. Small wonder that the many supporters of Latinization throughout the country saw the inauguration of the new regime in October 1949 as assuring the possibility of finally implementing a reform that various Chinese had been advocating since the 1890s.

In a stunning reversal of policy, however, Mao Zedong ordered in 1950 that writing reform should give top priority to character simplification and that alphabetic writing should be indefinitely deferred.

The most authoritative explanation for this reversal has been given by Premier Zhou Enlai. In a talk with a former French minister of education, Zhou stated that those Chinese who had already received schooling and who were needed to expand education were so attached to the characters that it was deemed the better part of wisdom not to add the difficult problem of writing reform to all the other urgent tasks confronting the new government. It may also be that in the euphoria of winning a civil war against a regime backed by the foremost capitalist power, the leaders of new China felt that they could also overcome the hitherto intractable problem of achieving mass literacy on the basis of Chinese characters.

The furthest that writing reform was permitted to go was the creation of a new alphabetic scheme that was carefully presented as having only a limited role. Even the mere creation of the new phonetic scheme was delayed for several years by Mao's request that it be based on Chinese characters. Hapless language reformers dutifully attempted to comply with Mao's request for a so-called "national-in-form" system, failed to come up with a satisfactory characterlike alphabetic scheme, and only succeeded in receiving final acceptance in 1958 for a scheme called Pinyin, a Latinized system based on the Peking dialect that was to have limited use as a means of transcribing Chinese characters and as the official transcription whenever it was needed, as in publications aimed at a foreign readership.

Language reformers are trying to push Pinyin into wider areas in the hope of making it a full-fledged orthography independent of characters, one that would not replace the traditional script but would coexist with it in a situation of digraphia, in which each script would be used in the areas to which it is best suited. But Mao's great leap backward has created an atmosphere much less conducive to any basic reform. The opposition to alphabetic writing that existed before 1949 has in the thirty-odd years since then been reinforced by both official and unofficial actions. During the Cultural Revolution xenophobic youths in Peking tore down street signs that presented the names in Pinyin as well as in characters. In Amoy, people possessing materials in alphabetic writing were forced to bring them out, pile them up in the street, kneel alongside the pile, and apply a match to these un-Chinese materials.

Although the worst excesses of the Cultural Revolution are a thing of the past, and Mao Zedong's long-buried reiteration in the 1950s of the need for an eventual transition to writing in Latin letters has recently been revealed, the poisoned atmosphere lingers on, and it is now much more difficult to carry out a basic reform than it was at the flood tide of Communist victory.

The lost opportunity for Japan came in 1946. In March of that year a U.S. Education Mission was sent to Japan to look into the Japanese educational system and to advise General Douglas MacArthur as to what policy the defeated adversary should be required to adopt in this area, including the traditional writing system, which consists of a mixture of Chinese characters or Kanji and native syllabic script or Kana. The Commission recommended that "in time Kanji should be wholly abandoned as the popular written language and . . . some form of Romaji be brought into common use by all means possible" (Hall 1949:357).

The Japanese reaction to this request was mixed. It was whole-heartedly supported by those Japanese who hoped to revive the movement for Romaji, a romanization movement which came into being in the 1880s but had been ruthlessly suppressed by the Japanese militarists before the war (DeFrancis 1947; Hall 1949). It was strongly but now more discreetly opposed by other Japanese. The American Occupation authorities were also split on the matter (Hall 1949). A young American second lieutenant in charge of textbook revision was so strongly in favor that he issued an order calling for the immediate compulsory adoption of Romaji as the basis for elementary school textbooks. His superiors were of a different mind. Only twenty minutes after the brash young officer decreed this historic change in Japanese writing, his commanding officer countermanded the order. Never before perhaps has a tide ebbed so fast. MacArthur sided with the upper-echelon brass, former civilian specialists in Japanese belonging to that group of Westerners who, on exposure to Chinese characters, end up with an even more proprietary and protective attitude toward the characters than those to the symbols born.

It is interesting, but of course fruitless, to speculate on this historical might-have-been. If MacArthur had supported the recommendations of the U.S. Education Mission in the area of writing reform, in the situation then prevailing in the country Japanese adherents of Romaji might well have been able to muster enough strength to overcome the undoubtedly strong opposition of the entrenched establishment, the academic and educational as well as that of the government bureaucracy. But the historic opportunity was lost. Thanks to a milder reform which has limited the number of Kanji to a little less than 2,000 (in contrast to the 6,000-7,000 in previous use), and to an economic upsurge that has made possible at least nine years of schooling for the whole population, a high rate of literacy has been achieved and hence the traditional Kanji plus Kana orthography is now more firmly entrenched than it ever was.

The Korean situation is a little more complex. Here too at the end of the war there was an opportunity to break with the past. This past included the use of a mixed writing system, a combination of Chinese characters and a native alphabetic script called Hangul, when the Koreans themselves were in command of their own educational policy. During the period of Japanese control, Korean was proscribed and Japanese was used in its stead as the medium of instruction. With the restoration of Korean as the medium of instruction after the defeat of Japan, the possibility presented itself of actually carrying out the recommendation made by some Korean reformers from the 1890s on to abandon characters and to use only the native Hangul script.

The South Koreans have vacillated on this issue. Educational policy since 1945 has at times promoted Hangul over characters. At times the mixed system has been favored but with a change somewhat similar to that in Japan, namely, the limitation in number of characters to under 2,000. The result of this vacillating policy has been a general weakening in command of characters by the population as a whole (Blank 1981). It is therefore possible that over time the command of characters will be so weakened that the sphere of Hangul-only publication will be greatly expanded beyond its present fairly extensive limits to the point where it becomes the predominant if not exclusive form of writing in the whole of Korea.

At present Hangul-only writing is the official system of writing only in North Korea. There the opportunity for writing reform that presented itself after 1945 was seized, but not immediately. It was only in September 1949, after relations between North and South and between their rival mentors had deteriorated to the point of implacable hostility, that Premier Kim Il Sung formally decreed the exclusive use of Hangul as the only national system of writing and banned the use of Chinese characters completely throughout the entire society of North Korea (Blank 1981). Among the reasons for the delay, which perhaps included the need for some preparatory work, may have been the hesitation subsequently shown by Kim Il Sung about unnecessarily deepening the differences between North and South, a thing which he sought to avoid by opposing those who suggested abandoning the practice of writing the phonemic symbols in squares to represent syllables and adopting instead a linearly sequential system of writing as in Western orthographies (Kim Il Sung 1972:130-131). The Hangul-only policy, coupled with seven years of compulsory education, the most extensive program of compulsory education in Asia at the time it was promulgated, has apparently dealt effectively with the problem of illiteracy in North Korea (Blank 1981). The use of Hangul in all levels of education and publication also gives the lie to the often-repeated claim that the ambiguity of alphabetic writing is such as to make indispensable the use of Chinese characters.

In the case of Viet Nam the tide of opportunity to reform the traditional system of writing cannot be pinpointed quite so

obviously, as in the case of the three other Sinitic countries. It did not occur, in any event, at the time when the Vietnamese were first exposed to a simple alphabetic system, any more than in the case of the first exposure of the Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese to such writing after the coming of Western missionaries. Father Alexandre de Rhodes created, or at least systematized, a romanization system in the middle of the seventeenth century, but like his co-religionists elsewhere he did so only to help Westerners with their language study and proselytizing activities and not to provide the native population with a simpler system of writing.

For more than two hundred years the romanization system was dormant, used to a limited extent by foreign missionaries, to an even lesser extent by a few converts, and not at all by the rest of the population, which insofar as it wrote at all did so primarily in classical Chinese and secondarily in *Chữ Nôm* (or simply *Nôm*), a system of representing the Vietnamese language by largely phonetic symbols adapted from Chinese characters. This situation changed when the French began their conquest of Viet Nam in 1861. It was replaced by a situation marked by no less than four competing systems of writing.

The invaders of course used French among themselves and promoted it among the Vietnamese as part of a policy, common to all imperialist powers--including Japan and the United States as well as France--that the eminent linguist Einar Haugen (1973:55) has bluntly labelled "linguistic genocide." The goal of a "France Asiatique" was held by virtually all colonial administrators, with disagreement merely over how to achieve this aim--whether by the exclusive use of French, as advocated by Etienne Aymonier, or by a limited initial use of Vietnamese or even Chinese to ease the way into French, as advocated by Paul Bert.

The romanization system devised by Father de Rhodes was taken out of its dormant state by the French colonialists in the 1860s and was made into an instrument for dealing with the Vietnamese in Vietnamese. It was referred to by the name *Quốc Ngữ*, "National Language," a term dating back at least to the fourteenth century that originally designated Vietnamese as opposed to Chinese, the latter having been the basis of official writing in Viet Nam ever since the beginning of Chinese influence more than a millennium earlier. Native collaborators, chiefly well-educated Catholics who in some cases already knew the system, took up *Quốc Ngữ*, using it in the low-level functions assigned to them by the colonial administrators. A few, notably the well-educated *Trương Vĩnh Ký*, sought to promote the system as the primary orthography for the Vietnamese language, to this end producing a respectable amount of varied materials in the system.

Nôm emerged as the written language of those in opposition during the first phase of French conquest. The Chinese-educated officials

fled from the south into the still-unoccupied areas of central and northern Viet Nam, leaving a void that was filled by opposition literature written in Nôm. The blind poet Nguyễn Đình Chiểu, for example, rejecting everything French, including the Quốc Ngữ script promoted by them, eulogized fighters who fell in the struggle against the invaders, denounced collaborators, and called for resistance.

In the 1880s and 1890s, as the French pushed their forces into the rest of the country, they were met by resistance from scholar-officials with their backs to the wall who expressed their opposition in literature written in Chinese. Some opposition literature was also written in Nôm. Quốc Ngữ remained the writing of collaboration.

By the end of the century the French had largely succeeded in crushing Vietnamese resistance. The beginning of the new century can therefore be said to have ushered in a new phase, one in which the war of words, now that armed warfare had virtually ceased, took on an added importance. In this war of words the question arose, more forcibly than before, as to how those words should be written by the Vietnamese who had taken up the pen against the French. Several choices were available to them.

They might have chosen to emphasize Nôm. This had the advantage of being an indigenous creation based in form only on an alien script but having the more important feature of giving written expression to the voice of the Vietnamese people themselves. Or they might have chosen to emphasize the prestigious writing system borrowed from China that was already well established as the medium of written communication among the traditionally educated Vietnamese elite. To be sure, anticolonial Vietnamese did make some use of both these systems, but instead of limiting themselves to these difficult and hence for the masses inaccessible scripts, they opened the way to broadening the scope of those who could be reached by the written word by choosing also to make use of Quốc Ngữ.

This was a momentous decision. If we can speak of a tide in the affairs of the Vietnamese that led to the fortunate reform of their writing system, I think we must date the beginning of the flood tide by the decision made in 1907 by anticolonial leaders to emphasize the use of Quốc Ngữ. This was the year that Phan Bội Châu published his essay *New Vietnam* calling for the introduction of Quốc Ngữ into the Vietnamese educational system; that the first Quốc Ngữ newspaper of a nationalist tendency, *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn*, was started in Saigon by a supporter of Phan Bội Châu; and that the Tonkin Free School was established with classes in Quốc Ngữ and with extensive publications in this system reflecting a mood of what David Marr (1971:166) calls "incipient nationalism." And it was only four years later that a young man, just out of his teens who later became known as Hồ Chí Minh taught Quốc Ngữ at a school subsidized by a fish-sauce factory and sundry shop.

In my giving such emphasis to the anticolonial support for Quoc Ngu as the beginning of a tide that led to the final ascendancy of this sort of writing, I am deliberately assigning lesser importance to two other related events that antedated the developments just mentioned. The first of these was the contribution that was made, quite unwittingly, by Father de Rhodes. The other was the French promotion of Quốc Ngữ after their military penetration into Viet Nam.

There are two aspects to the contribution of Father de Rhodes. One is introducing Vietnamese to the idea of alphabetic writing, the other is providing an alphabetic scheme specifically for the Vietnamese language. We must be clear about the limited significance of both these aspects. It should be noted, first of all, that there are two ways in which one might conceive the idea of alphabetic, or more generally, phonetic writing. One is to invent the idea. The independent invention of the idea of phonetic writing appears to have happened only three times in the history of mankind, first by the Sumerians with their syllabic signs created about the fourth millennium B.C., then by the Chinese with their syllabic (or more properly morphosyllabic) characters dating from the second millennium B.C., and later by the Mayans with their partially syllabic glyphs of the first millennium of our era. The transition from syllabic to alphabetic writing, variously attributed to the early Semites and the Greeks, was an important advance in phonetic writing, which, incidentally, means all writing, all true writing (Gelb 1963; Trager 1974).

The second way to acquire the idea of phonetic writing is to borrow it. The hundreds of writing systems of the world, which fall into the two broad categories of syllabic and alphabetic scripts, are all due to the less original process of diffusion of the idea of phonetic writing that originated among the Sumerians, Chinese, and Mayans and was extended by the Semites or the Greeks. In their creation of Nom the Vietnamese had already borrowed the idea of syllabic writing from the Chinese, as did the Japanese in creating their Kana syllabaries. The Koreans too borrowed the idea of alphabetic writing from several sources to create Hangul (Ledyard 1966). Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese had all been exposed to the Latin alphabet in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thanks to their contacts with Western missionaries, but the impact was minimal until new conditions that developed toward the end of the last century led reformers in all these countries within a few years of each other to initiate consideration of reform of their writing system.

As to the Vietnamese being presented with a specific scheme by Father de Rhodes, they might have done better themselves if, after exposure to the idea of alphabetic writing, they had been left to their own devices. They might have been able to follow the precedent of the Koreans in devising their astonishingly good phonemic script as early as the fifteenth century, or the Chinese in adapting the

Latin alphabet to create the excellent Pinyin system promulgated in 1958. Creating an alphabetic script is no big deal once you have the basic idea.

The same cannot be said, however, for accepting an alphabetic script, particularly if, as was the case with Quốc Ngữ, it is imposed as a writing of domestication. The French hoped to use Quốc Ngữ to tame the Vietnamese, to make them docile subjects by feeding them pap in an easily digested form, using for this purpose hirelings like Trương Vĩnh Ký and Phạm Quỳnh. The Vietnamese recognized the strategy and reacted against it, first by rejecting the system completely and then, from 1907 on, by turning it into a national script that was able to avoid the elitist aspect of Chinese and Nom and to serve instead as a popular writing of liberation. In so doing they extended the significance of the term Quốc Ngữ by viewing the romanized writing as their "National Language" not merely in contrast to Chinese but primarily in opposition to French.

This last development had been foreseen and warned against by Aymonier, an exponent of the French-only policy who held the Vietnamese and their language in contempt and looked upon Quốc Ngữ as a "barbarous" thing, a dangerous "enemy created, nourished, and lovingly supported by the French themselves." He warned that Quốc Ngữ

will merit its name, to our detriment, if it succeeds in bringing about the creation in Viet Nam of that which does not yet exist, a true national language which will not be the French language. It will then constitute the most dangerous weapon in the hands of patriotic Vietnamese hostile to France. It is to be supposed that as of now, in French Cochinchina, such ideas are confusedly sprouting in the minds of some natives who are more or less educated in Quốc Ngữ.
[Aymonier 1890:30]

It was precisely the ability of anticolonial Vietnamese to see and act upon the utility of Quốc Ngữ as a weapon in their struggle to control their own destiny that makes the developments of 1907 so crucially important in the history of writing in Viet Nam. The perceptiveness and audacity of the Vietnamese exceeds, in my mind, that of other users of Chinese characters. The Koreans, if they did not back off completely from the idea of abandoning characters, as did many in the South, had an easier time in carrying out a reform, since they already possessed a purely indigenous alphabetic system of great merit with which they could identify. The Japanese, as Roy Andrew Miller (1982) has pointed out, wallow in myths about their language and their writing, myths which reinforce a feeling of uniqueness that not only makes abandonment of characters unlikely but constitutes a danger of ethnocentrism again gone amok. In China the xenophobic young storm troopers who burned literature in a Latin script, which after all was not forced upon them by foreign overlords but was advocated by their own people to advance China, helped to

create an atmosphere in which it is more difficult now than it was a generation ago to mount a campaign for fundamental reform of the writing system.

How is it that the Vietnamese were able to avoid the smug ethnocentrism of their Asian neighbors and to overcome their repugnance at the foreign creation being foisted upon them? How is it that they were able to see Quốc Ngữ as a weapon of anticolonialism and national revival that should be wrestled from the hands of the enemy? How is it that there appears to have been so little disagreement among the Vietnamese, even so little discussion of the pros and cons of Quốc Ngữ, in contrast to the extensive polemics in China, Korea, and Japan over such issues as the problem of homonyms and the problem of a cultural break with the past?

A partial answer to these questions appears to lie in the fact that writing in Viet Nam was more weakly based than in the other Sinitic countries, in part because it did not comprise a single entity but was divided into Chinese and Nôm, each having its own restricted area of use and neither being capable of serving as a truly popular script. But this, I think, was a secondary factor, because the ability of people to put up with what might be called Rube Goldberg scripts, contraptions that accomplish the simplest tasks in the most outlandishly cumbersome fashion, is well attested in the history of writing.

Another point that comes to mind is the possible realization on the part of the anticolonial leaders that, with their adversary promoting Quốc Ngữ from a position of greater strength, it was quixotic to think they could counter it by using Nôm or Chinese or some other writing system that they might create. Under these conditions, it was better to attempt the strategy of trying to beat the enemy with the weapon of his own choosing. Whether such a strategy was carefully thought out in this way or was a more or less unconscious accommodation to the existing situation is a question the answer to which I can only speculate on.

Scholars who are specialists on Viet Nam can doubtless add to the discussion of the questions raised above. For myself, with my interest in the fate of Chinese characters in the writing systems of the four countries in which they have been used, I can only express my admiration for those Vietnamese who, under conditions far more adverse than those suffered by their Asian counterparts, were better able to join the narrow issue of language and writing with the broader struggle for national sovereignty and social revolution.

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The Role of French Romanticism in the New Poetry Movement in Vietnam

Cong Huyen Ton Nu Nha Trang

Early modern Vietnamese literature was marked by direct borrowings and adaptation of various elements of French literature. The process of integrating borrowed items into existing literature was, however, by no means uniform. The novel, for example, was imported with relatively little trouble, for it posed no threat to the Vietnamese literature. The first modern novel, TỔ TÂM by Hoàng Ngọc Phách (1925), was controversial but the controversy it created centered on the morality of the story it told, not its form, which was closely modelled after that of Dumas' La Dame aux Camelias. Meeting with no competition from the local literature, the novel form was readily accepted and straightforwardly assimilated, filling the gap left by the traditional verse narrative, which had ceased to be created since Nguyễn Đình Chiểu's Lục Vân Tiên (1850s). The same cannot be said with regard to the borrowings from French poetry which were at the heart of the New Poetry movement in the 1930s. The foreign elements espoused by the new intelligentsia were confronted with a cherished poetic tradition which had produced some timeless pieces; the result was a more critical and drawn-out process of adaptation. This paper focuses on the formative stage of New Poetry when borrowings and adaptations were most intense. References will be made to Lưu Trọng Lũ, Thế Lũ, and Xuân Diệu, whose imaginative adaptations of imported items, as well as independent innovations, contributed substantially to the formation and development of New Poetry.

The New Poetry movement started with an article by Phan Khôi entitled "Một lối thơ mới trình chành giữa làng thơ" (A new form of poetry presented to the poetic community) published in Phụ Nữ Tân Văn, no. 122, March 1932. After having criticized the old forms of poetry whose strict rules, he felt, inhibited sincere expression, Phan Khôi proposed a new verse form, for which he had not found a descriptive name, and cited as illustration a poem he had composed a few months earlier, "Tình Già" (Old Love), with such lines as:

Hai mươi bốn năm xuã, một đêm vừa gió lại vừa mưa,
Dưới ngọn đèn mỏ, trong gian nhà nhỏ, hai cái đầu xanh, kê nhau
than thở.

"Ôi đôi ta, tình thương nhau thì vẫn nặng, mà lấy nhau hẳn là
không dặng;

"Để đến nỗi tình trước phụ sau, chỉ cho bằng sớm liệu mà xa
nhau."¹

The poem has ten lines which vary in length, ranging from eleven to sixteen words or syllables (Vietnamese being monosyllabic). Each line has two words that rhyme with each other: one within the line, the other at the end of the line. The poem defies all the basic rules of versification observed at the time; rules which were direct borrowings from T'ang poetry and include the rhyme scheme (a whole poem linked by one end-rhyme, aaxa for a four-line poem and aaxaxaxa for an eight-line poem) as well as the elaborate balance of lines exactly against each other in terms of tones, grammatical structures, and thoughts. Exhibiting an obvious disregard for these rules, the poem demonstrates the principle suggested by Phan Khôi: "To express the ideas close to one's heart in verses that have rhymes, that are not bound by (other) rules."²

Phan Khôi's article and poem created quite a stir. Supporters and practitioners of T'ang style poetry were quick to attack his radical departure from poetic tradition, seeing it as a threat especially to the survival of the commonly practiced and highly valued form of eight lines and seven words to a line.³ It should be noted that Phan Khôi was not the first to complain about the narrow framework of old poetry. Phạm Quỳnh, observing that many poems in the old form printed in his journal Nam Phong were not well received, commented that old poetry was too difficult to imitate and suggested that "one extend its form a little bit."⁴ In translating La Fontaine's "The Cicada and the Ant," Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh had to use a form free of the restrictions of traditional versification rules. But the mild plea of the former and the mere translation, not original creation, of the latter could hardly be considered a potential threat. Equally inconsequential was Trịnh Đình Ru's criticism of T'ang form, which he proposed to be replaced by traditional forms in "chủ nôm," not by newly devised forms.

The first person who publicly endorsed Phan Khôi's poetic innovation was Lưu Trọng Lũ. In June 1932, Phụ Nữ Tân Văn printed Lưu Trọng Lũ's letter of support to Phan Khôi together with two poems. The letter was signed with the pseudonym Miss Liên Hương, but the poems bore Lưu Trọng Lũ's name as author. The same letter also appeared in Phong Hoá, no. 31, January 1933, together with four other poems by Lưu Trọng Lũ.⁵ The attached poems showed a close relationship to Phan Khôi's poem in that there were no restrictions in number of lines and of words in each line. Lưu Trọng Lũ's verses

were even more flexible in length, ranging from three to twelve words. End-rhymes were used instead of the internal rhymes seen in Phan Khôi's impression of the poetic stagnation of the times and suggested that the old rules be done away with so that talented people could have the necessary freedom to genuinely express their "immense poetic souls." He was aware that too much liberty might lead to confusion and loss of poetic order, but it had to be so in the initial stage, for only with liberalness could one develop to the greatest extent all that was fine, valuable, and beautiful in oneself. Although confusion would no doubt prevail, a time would come when sufficient experience in the art would lead to evolution of principles and rules less restrictive: rules and principles promoting a wider range of creative expression. His call for liberty from traditional form and his sensitive recognition of the difficulties involved seem to characterize well the two interrelated aspects of the actual historical evolution of New Poetry.

Using Phụ Nữ Tân Văn as the base from which to launch an attack against the limitations of old poetry, Phan Khôi turned the journal into the first forum for New Poetry. Beside printing Lưu Trọng Lư's letter and poems, Phụ Nữ Tân Văn also printed articles and new poems by Nguyễn Thị Mạnh Mạnh (pen name of Nguyễn Thị Kiêm), who was active in the women's movement. This led to the "battle of the pen" (bút chiến) between the old and the new in the literary circle of the South, with several journals attacking the poems introduced by Phụ Nữ Tân Văn. The debate spread to the North. Phong Hoá, the journal of Tự Lực Văn Đoàn (Self-Reliance Literary Group) that advocated modernization in all areas of culture, immediately joined the New Poetry movement initiated in the South. In issue no. 14, September 1932, Phong Hoá criticized old poetry and proposed to get rid of rules like length of verse, parallel sentences, and also to do away with allusions and clichés: "Our poetry must be new, both in forms and in ideas." In the following issues, Phong Hoá began an open, vigorous attack on old poetry and old literature in general, pointing a finger at specific poets and poems in old forms. In January 1933, when reprinting Lưu Trọng Lư's letter to Phan Khôi in which were found ideas in some aspect similar to its own, Phong Hoá reiterated its position on poetry and added that the journal would henceforth publish new poems of "fellow poets."⁶

The tempo of the debate accelerated with a speech given by eighteen-year-old Nguyễn Thị Mạnh Mạnh on 26 July 1933 at the Association for the Promotion of Education (Hội Khuyến Học) in Saigon on the subject of New Poetry. She strongly criticized the outdated mode of expression represented by the T'ang form and the "lục bát" form (six- and eight-word lines) in "chữ nôm" and presented a few poems she had created in new forms. The talk given by this talented and hence potentially influential young woman triggered emotional responses from the old school. It initiated a chain of arguments and counterarguments that added fuel to the existing battle in printed words between the traditionalists and the modernists and brought into

sharp focus the contest involving not only individuals but also the news media. Major periodicals supporting New Poetry included Phụ Nữ Tân Văn, Phong Hoá, Tiểu Thuyết Thứ Bảy, Hà Nội Báo, Loa, Ngày Nay; those opposing included An Nam Tạp Chí, Văn Hoá Tạp Chí, Công Luận, Tiếng Dân, Văn Học Tuần San, Tin Văn.⁷ The controversy lasted several years, with its intensity decreasing markedly toward the end of 1936 when the new forms seemed to be gaining ground.

If Phụ Nữ Tân Văn served as the testing ground, Phong Hoá, being one of the most popular journals, was the primary catalyst for the subsequent development and popularization of New Poetry. It was the major forum for the exchange of ideas and innovations, for the exposition of trials and errors. From the breeding ground of Phong Hoá emerged many of the major writers of New Poetry, Thê Lữ and Xuân Diệu among them.

For all the appearances of a debate on form, the issue went deeper than that. The ardent search for different verse forms had its origin in the rapid changes occurring in all areas of social and cultural life. In his speech on the "New Poetry Movement" given at the Association of Education in Qui Nhon in June 1934, Lưu Trọng Lữ discussed the changes in the mentality of his generation that were germane to new poetry. He noted that upon contact with French culture, young people had acquired feelings and sentiments unknown to their elders:

While it is almost a sin for the traditionalists to simply look at a pretty young woman, to us it is as refreshing an experience as to contemplate a green rice field. Their love is conceived only in terms of marriage, but for us love is multifaceted: passionate love, fleeting love, intimate love, love from a distance, sincere love, illusory love, innocent love, mature love, temporary love, eternal love. . . . As you can see, the emotions of people nowadays are very abundant and complex. Is it possible to contain them within a framework of restrictive versification rules?⁸

Lưu Trọng Lữ was talking about changes in content rather than in topics. New attitudes gave the same theme a new content of such dimensions that it threatened to overflow static old forms. Once and again, the arguments of members of the New Poetry movement harked back to such a justification for seeking new forms. Here Lưu Trọng Lữ only referred to the impact of French culture in general, as perhaps he did not need to specify what was common knowledge at the time. We should note, however, that in the area of literature, what the youth of Vietnam had available to read in school and out of school were works of French classicists and romanticists. Four French romantic poets were exalted: Hugo, Lamartine, Musset, and Vigny, who were leading figures of the French romantic school.⁹ A focus on various forms of a sentiment like love, as explained by

Lưu Trọng Lũ, certainly betrayed the influence of French romanticism that was a reaction against the exclusive devotion to Reason prevalent in the eighteenth century.

It was not purely coincidental that Lưu Trọng Lũ should have mentioned the theme of love as an example to illustrate the different contents given to the same subject matter by the old and the new. Love was the most predominant theme in New Poetry. Other major themes of frequent occurrence during the formative stage included disillusion with life and escape from society; liberation and growth of the individual; and exaltation in the beauty of nature. French romantic poets had explored these topics in their works, raising them to the status of nineteenth-century *idees fixes*. Beaudelaire observed that "romanticism is the most current and most timely expression of beauty."¹⁰ Thế Lũ, whose first poems appeared in Phong Hoá toward the end of 1932, sang of the beauty of young women, of nature, and of individual freedom. If Lamartine's search for peace and contentment led him away from the society of men to nature, which seemed more sympathetic and benevolent, Thế Lũ escaped the depressing life of the towns and sought refuge in the beauty and purity of the highlands. While Lamartine aspired to an impossible paradise, Thế Lũ dreamed of a fairyland where echoed the marvelous tunes of the flute. Xuân Diệu's exalted expression of love paralleled Musset's. His Vietnamese depiction of the mental anguish and emotional agonies resulting from failure in love was very close to one of the major motifs of French romantic love poetry found in Hugo.¹¹ Though the influence of French romanticism on Lưu Trọng Lũ was not immediately apparent, he must have had Lamartine in mind as the model when he suggested that the role of the poet in modern times was to penetrate the depths of the souls of young people and explore their repressed feelings and emotions, then translate these penetrations into melodious verses which would offer solace.¹² His lyrical poems certainly reflected this view of Lamartine's on poetry.

All of these themes with new contents readily found a firm place in the literary scene, being well received by a growing number of the urban young and of no concern to the old, for they were scarcely revolutionary. The social and political events which occurred in the early 1930s would seem to have made the escape into beauty, depicted by Thế Lũ, quite welcome. Moreover, as early as 1916, Tan-Đà had already written poems on earthly pleasures, love, disillusion with life, nature. Hoàng Ngọc Phách's Tổ Tâm had also prepared the audience for the theme of unhappy love with all its intensity of emotions. Soon after Nguyễn Thị Mạnh Mạnh's provocative speech, the traditionalists indicated that they had no quarrel with the new content: "The guideline for contemporary poets is to use old forms to express new ideas."¹³ This viewpoint was obviously quite contrary to the thinking of the modernists. Since the basis of their arguments was that new forms were required to express new contents, writers of New Poetry could not look to their literary tradition for inspiration, at least initially. The only logical alternative was

the versification which the French romantic poets had used to delineate the same contents. In fact, the rejection of the T'ang style led to a rush of borrowings and adaptations of different ways of organizing verses, rhymes, rhythm, and mode of expression from the then familiar French romantic poetry.

To replace the fixed form of the eight-line poem, writers of New Poetry borrowed two verse structures which could be compounded to vary the length of the poem and thus accommodate the poet's complex emotions and sentiments. In the first structure, all verses are grouped together, and they are not limited in number. The second consists of stanzas whose number is also unspecified. Stanzas of three, four, six, eight, and more lines were experimented with. The four-line stanzaic form appeared to be the most popular. The ease with which the quatrain was adapted was probably due to the fact that it was not entirely alien. As mentioned earlier, one of the most prevalent verse forms in old poetry was composed of four lines.

With regard to length of lines, two attempts at innovation were noteworthy. The first was Nguyễn Vy's direct borrowing of the French Alexandrine, resulting in his writing of twelve-word verses. His adaptation of this form received much ridicule. The main criticism was that the lengthy lines sounded jarring, not attuned to any familiar Vietnamese poetic melody. This form had no followers. The second was the popular form of eight-word verses, which was innovated chiefly through the efforts of Thế Lũ. This new form pointed more to the influence of French versification than has been readily acknowledged to date. In fact, it has been a general tendency among Vietnamese literary critics to only point out that folk poetry, more precisely the "hát nói" form, contained the seed of this new form: in "hát nói" one often finds two or four consecutive lines of eight words among an indefinite number of lines of varying length,¹⁴ and moreover, Thế Lũ's successive rhymes, aabb, are a familiar feature of this form of folk poetry. The influence of literary tradition as such cannot be dismissed. On the other hand, the similarities between the new verse form and French romantic versification are too obvious to ignore: Thế Lũ's poems, which use predominantly uniform lines of eight words occasionally interspersed with a line of nine words, are closer to many of Victor Hugo's poems, for example, which exhibit verses of uniform length, than to poems of the "hát nói" form. While the end-rhyme pattern of "hát nói" is confined to successive rhymes, Thế Lũ's innovated verse form displays successive rhymes (rimes suivies) and also alternating rhymes (rimes croisées), abab, both of which were used by Hugo to link his verses. An example from each poet's works will suffice to illustrate the corresponding features:

Tiếng ve ran, trong bóng cây râm mát
 Giọng chim khuyên, ca ánh sáng mặt trời
 Gió nồng reo trên hồ sen rào rạt
 Mùa Xuân còn, hết? Khách đã tình ỏi,
 (Thê Lữ)

Tu me parles du fond d'un rêve
 Comme une âme parle aux vivants.
 Comme l'écume de la grève
 Ta robe flotte dans les vents.
 (Victor Hugo)

Thus, it appears that the features common to "hát nói" and French poetry, that is, eight-word lines and successive rhymes, likely facilitated The Lu's selection of what to borrow from French versification as well as the audience's acceptance of those borrowings.

The two rhyme patterns used by Thê Lữ in this new verse form were two of the three rhyme schemes which writers of New Poetry borrowed from French poetry and applied to other verse forms as well (e.g., five- and seven-word verses). The third pattern is embracing rhymes (*rimes embrassées*), abba. The source of borrowing was acknowledged by both sides of the debate when, without question, they constantly referred to these rhyme schemes by their French terms preceded by Vietnamese translation of them. The adaptation of these rhyme patterns was a smooth process, undoubtedly due to the fact that they had a semblance of familiarity. Supporters of old poetry disparaged the newness claimed by the new by commenting that successive pairs of rhyming lines had been seen in "cổ phong" and "tử khúc," old poetic forms in classical Chinese literature prior to the advance of the T'ang style, which were known to all traditionalists.¹⁵ What these critics failed to mention was that the pattern had been in their backyard all the time, extensively and spontaneously employed in folk poetry.

Trời xanh diu, sởi mây hồng vỡ vãn
 Trên bờ sông, cô em đưỡng thổ thân
 Đứng lặng nhìn, mặt nước chiếc thuyền trôi
 Với ánh chiều thu, bầm tím chân trời
 (Thê Lữ)

Lay tr^oi m^ua xu^ong
 Lay nu^oc t^oi u^ong
 Lay ru^ong t^oi cay
 Lay bat com day . . .

(Folk Poetry)

The other two rhyme patterns also found their resemblances in traditional poetry: In the form "cô phong," mentioned above, there was a rhyme pattern abcb quite close to the alternating rhyme abab. Folk poetry has a rhyme scheme approximating the embracing rhyme, abba, which in a fashion can be said to be a combination of successive and alternating rhymes.

Rhythm was part of another issue of concern related to the adaptation of borrowed items. Since Vietnamese is a tonal language, the beauty of poetry depends on the arrangement of words which gives it melody (điệu). Poetic melody is conditioned by two factors: distribution of tones and rhythm. In old poetry, the rule of alternation of tones specified the positions in a line to be filled only by "bằng" or even tones as opposed to those slots to be occupied only by "trắc" or uneven tones. Rhythm was produced by length of lines and pauses within a line. The latter generally followed some regular pattern. Critics from both sides agreed that many poems written in the new form were very poor in melody. Rejecting the old rules of tonal pattern and rhythm, practitioners of New Poetry were left to their own devices. The less imaginative and innovative of them had difficulty working out satisfactory alternatives. Nguyễn Vỹ's twelve-word verses were a failure because he did not take care to give them the palpable melody that distinguished Vietnamese poetry from prose, making it recitable in a singsong way. Thế Lữ's success with the new form of eight-word verses, on the other hand, was the result of a smooth interaction between the influence of French romantic poetry and the native poetic melody ingrained in the mind of the Vietnamese audience for centuries. Thế Lữ looked at "hát nói" for inspiration, endowing his lines with variations of the traditional arrangement of tones and pauses. He borrowed the caesura from French versification to add dramatic effect to expressions of changes of emotion, which he indicated by punctuation. Enjambement, or run-on lines, an expressive device often seen in Hugo's poetry, was adapted by Thế Lữ to affect a change in melody. After Thế Lữ, Xuân Diệu's more audacious use of this "running-over" eventually established it as an accepted device in rhythm.

When it came to mode of expression, the influence of French romantic poetry was more apparent, especially on Xuân Diệu whose audacity with imagery and language has been a inspiration for writers of New Poetry. Making his appearance on the literary scene in 1935 through Phong Hoá when he was eighteen years old, this poet brought

with him the auditory and visual imagery, the vivid and absolute language that were the devices employed by French romantic poets to express their thought and emotions. There was the personification of non-human organisms and inanimate objects which made them concrete reflections of the poet's sentiment. Thê Lữ projected his love thus:

Ái ân bở cồ ôm chân trúc.

(With love, the grass embraced the feet of the bamboos.)

And Xuân Diệu followed with such lines as:

Vườn cười bâng bướm hót bâng chim.

(The garden laughed with butterflies and sang with birds.)

Bữa nay lạnh, mặt trời đi ngủ sớm

(It is cold today, and the sun has gone to bed early)

Apostrophe, common in French romantic poetry, was also used by Xuân Diệu:

Hỡi xuân hồng, ta muốn cắn vào người.

(O rosy spring, I want to bite into you.)

Of greater subtlety, perhaps, was the combined influence of the Romanticists and the Symbolists on Xuân Diệu's synaesthetic perceptions as reflected in expressions like "fragrant music," "pretty breeze," "Bare feet happily listened to the skin of the earth." He drew the senses into the relationship with each other not to evoke an invisible world beyond as French Symbolists did, but to feed his sentiments, as was the indulgence of French romantic poets.¹⁶ Above all, Xuân Diệu was marked for his bold utilization of language. His metaphors and similes were unusually vivid: the moon was "the imaginary beast", winter was seen as "a grey framework of iron"; spring ripens on the cheeks"; "January was as delicious as a pair of lips pressed close." Inversion of syntactic order was one of Xuân Diệu's unique modes of expression. This technique of inversion looked very French and was a novelty, yet in fact the identical device existed in folk poetry. All of these innovations sounded rather awkward to the audience at first, but when his art matured in the recognizable framework of Vietnamese melody, every one of Xuân Diệu's new expressions was a delightful surprise.

For all we have seen, New Poetry was in opposition to old poetry not so much in terms of overall structure, rhyme, and melody but more in terms of content and mode of expression, both of which clearly betrayed the influence of French romantic poetry. The New Poetry movement started with the rejection of T'ang style, which prescribed

a fixed form having rigid rules of tonal arrangement and parallel sentence structure. The controversy ended in 1936 when these rules of tonal arrangement and parallel sentences were no longer imperative. This new atmosphere of poetic freedom allowed the poet to modify the old forms as his creative requirements demanded. For example, the quatrain form of five- or seven-word lines rhyming aaxa was used again not as the overall structure of a poem but merely as a repeatable stanzaic entity. In all forms, inherited from tradition or innovated under the influence of French versification, care was given to melody, which kept New Poetry truly Vietnamese in spite of all the borrowings.

The victory of New Poetry was not an easy one: numerous trials and errors were experienced, considerable time and energy were spent over several years before New Poetry acquired a definite shape which was not better than old poetry, only more suitable and more appealing to contemporary Vietnamese. Its success certainly depended a great deal on changes in the social environments which prepared for it an audience receptive to a new literary taste. But it took talents like Lưu Trọng Lư, Thế Lữ, and Xuân Diệu, who understood, in the words of Lưu Trọng Lư, "the mysterious sound and tone patterns, the natural rhythm of (their) language,"¹⁷ to blend borrowed items with the beauty of literary tradition, so that the resulting product was uniquely Vietnamese. Their sensitivity was art itself.

NOTES

1. Thanh Lăng, Phê Bình Văn Học Thế Hệ 1932 (Saigon: Quốc Học tùng Thư, 1965), p. 35. Underlining mine.
2. Ibid.
3. Văn Bang, "Tôi thất vọng về ông Phan Khôi" (I am disappointed with Mr. Phan Khôi), Ân Nam Tạp Chí, no. 39, 30 April 1932.
4. Viện Văn Học, Sơ Thảo Lịch Sử Văn Học Việt Nam--1930-45 (Hanoi: Văn Học, 1964), p. 76.
5. Thanh Lăng, Phê Bình Văn Học Thế Hệ, p. 38.
6. Ibid., pp. 189-192.
7. Ibid., p. 335.
8. Ibid., p. 290.
9. Phan Củ Đệ, Phong Trào "Thơ Mới" 1932-1945 (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1982), p. 27.

10. Henri Peyre, What is Romanticism?, trans. Roda Roberts, (University of Alabama Press, 1977), p. 89. This quotation is from Baudelaire's "Salon de 1846."
11. References: Robert T. Denomme, Nineteenth-Century French Romantic Poets (Southern Illinois University Press, 1969); John B. Halsted, ed., Romanticism (Harper and Row Publishers 1969); H.F. Stewart and Arthur Tilley, eds., The Romantic Movement in French Literature (Cambridge University Press, 1910).
12. Thanh Lăng, Phê Bình Văn Học Thế Hệ, p. 185.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 336. Quoted from Chát Hàng, "Thơ Mới" (New Poetry) in Văn Học Tạp Chí, no. 22, 1 August 1933.
14. Viện Văn Học, Sổ Thảo Lịch Sử Văn Học Việt Nam, p. 76.
15. Thanh Lăng, Phê Bình Văn Học Thế Hệ, pp. 337-339.
16. Peter Broome and Graham Chesters, An Anthology of Modern French Poetry 1850-1950 (Cambridge University Press, 1976).
17. Thanh Lăng, Phê Bình Văn Học Thế Hệ, p. 296. Quoted from Lưu Trọng Lư's letter to Tấn Đạ.

**Literature for the People:
From Soviet Policies to Vietnamese Polemics**

Hue Tam Ho Tai

Of the many debates that enlivened the Vietnamese intellectual scene during the 1920s and 1930s, none is more celebrated, and none lasted longer, than the debate that raged between defenders of "art for art's sake" (nghẹ thụat vị nghẹ thụat) and advocates of "art for life's sake" (nghẹ thụat vị nhaṇ sinh). Begun in 1935, it was waged fitfully over the next few years, and might have gone on longer had not war intervened.

Although the advocates of "art for art's sake" tend to be grouped together with those who, in 1933, were labeled as "idealists" in the course of a related controversy, they are not easy to classify politically. The leading defender of pure art, Hoài Thanh, was already leaning toward communism at the time of the debate and later joined the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), working very closely with his erstwhile antagonist, Hai Trieu.¹

Those who propounded the idea of politically committed literature were ideologically closer to one another, to the point that the literary historian Thanh Lăng suggested that they were all members of the ICP.² In fact, a few minor contributors to the controversy, such as Phan Văn Hùm and Nguyễn Đức Thiệp, were Trotskyists rather than Communists. Furthermore, literary polemics made for strange political bedfellows. At the origin of the debate was Phạm Quỳnh's idea, expounded in 1921, that although in Europe it might be possible to keep literary and social issues separate and distinct from one another, "in an underdeveloped country like Vietnam, a writer has the duty to promote social stability and guide the common people."³ The Communists would no doubt argue that revolution rather than social stability was to be promoted under colonial rule; but they could not agree with Phạm Quỳnh that "the writer has the duty to guide the common people." Fortunately, Phạm Quỳnh took no part in the debate, so that Hải Triều and his allies were spared the embarrassment of having to take up cudgels on behalf of a man they thoroughly despised.

Most studies of the debate on literature and politics have so far focused on the purely domestic context in which it took place. Of particular interest to scholars has been the role of the ICP's policies toward intellectuals and its use of the debate to gain their support. Yet, it can also be studied as an attempt by Vietnamese intellectuals to be part of an international literary scene where the relationship between art and politics had emerged as a crucial issue.

After World War I, European artists and writers had become fired with the notion that art could be employed as a weapon to remold society and politics.⁴ Dadaists, Surrealists, as well as Communists shared a contempt of postwar bourgeois society. Beyond that, however, both their political and artistic views varied enormously. Vietnamese intellectuals eagerly followed the trends that clashed with one another on the international artistic scene through an avid perusal of French newspapers and journals. By 1935, when censorship was lifted, the official newspaper of the French Communist Party (FCP), *l'Humanité*, was readily available to Vietnamese readers, as was *Monde*, a literary review published between 1928 and 1935 under the editorship of France's leading Communist intellectual, Henri Barbusse. Some Vietnamese were also in contact with French critics, writers, and politicians, either directly or via correspondence.

Not only did the Vietnamese want to take part in a wider debate; they also invoked foreign critics and writers to support their particular views on the relationship between art and politics. Thus, the debate cannot be analyzed in purely domestic terms but must be situated in the context of the international debate on the same theme that took place under the mounting threat of fascism.

If anything, the debate furnishes proof that China was no longer the main source of ideas. On two occasions, Hải Triều invokes the Chinese Marxist thinkers Chen Tu-hsiu and Kuo Mo-jo; but they are brought in merely to lengthen an already long list of Soviet and French literary authorities which Hải Triều uses to support his case, rather than because of their own stature or originality.

Hải Triều and others relied on accounts of literary debates, conferences, and congresses that appeared in the French rather than the Soviet press for a variety of reasons. Not the least of these reasons was their greater mastery of the French language even for those who had attended the Workers' University of the East in Moscow. Greater availability of materials from France, familiarity with her literature and history, and the relative ease of contact between French and Vietnamese intellectuals were additional reasons. Furthermore, the decline of the Comintern in the 1930s made it difficult for the Vietnamese to follow the twists and turns of Soviet politics during that period.

Understandably, however, in their accounts of Soviet literary debates, the French played up the role of French participants or observers and those aspects of the debates that were most relevant to

their specific situation. Thus, what the Vietnamese came to know of Soviet literary policies was filtered through the prism of French sensibilities and concerns. Since both the sociopolitical and literary contexts in which the FCP operated were radically different from those that obtained in the Soviet Union, its literary concerns also differed markedly from those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The French critics who wrote for l'Humanité or Monde were thus more than transmitters, albeit selective, of a received line; they adapted it and even advanced their own interpretation of what was politically committed and proletarian literature. Thus, within the restricting confines of what the Vietnamese called "popular literature" (văn hoá bình dân)--it was almost never called "proletarian literature" (văn hoá vô sản)--there was a fairly wide variety of choice and of interpretive possibilities. The Vietnamese were thus able to pick the ideas that most suited their own particular needs and situation.

Among members of the ICP who took part in the debate, the two leading figures, Hải Triều and Hoàng Tân Dân, argued distinctly different conceptions of the appropriate form and content of what politically committed literature should be. The range of ideas expressed in the debate was made possible by the absence of a defined Party position on literature, a lacuna that was filled by the publication in 1943 of the ICP's "Theses on Culture" (Đề cương về văn hoá). The "Theses" were amplified in 1948 in Trương Chính's "Marxism and Vietnamese Culture" (Chủ nghĩa Các Mác và văn hoá Việt Nam).

It was Hải Triều who dominated the debate and it is he who is considered the leading proponent of the Communist conception of literature during the period that preceded the promulgation of the "Theses." It was he who coined the slogan "art for art's sake, or art for life's sake." Yet, Hoàng Tân Dân's own ideas, which have tended to be overlooked, turned out to be closer to those embodied in the "Theses on Culture." At the risk of oversimplification, it could be said that whereas Hải Triều was more French, Hoàng Tân Dân was more Soviet. During the period of the Popular Front (1936-1938), when censorship was lifted and materials poured in from France, Hải Triều's moderate voice prevailed. But with the onset of war, and the new emphasis on patriotism as the dominant theme of socialist realism in the Soviet Union, Hoàng Tân Dân's more rigid views came closer to official literary policy.

Soviet Literary Doctrines

By the time the debate on literature exploded on the Vietnamese intellectual scene, a number of literary doctrines had succeeded one another in the Soviet Union.

By 1920, Lenin's advocacy of "party literature," first propounded in 1905 and then limited to works of propaganda, was widely

understood to embrace all literary works.⁵ But Lenin himself kept the CPSU from too close an entanglement in the literary life of the country. Soviet literary life in the immediate post-Revolutionary period was enlivened by debates between extreme advocates of proletarian culture (or Proletkult) and their opponents. Generally speaking, the advocates were critics rather than practicing writers and tended to discount some of the most important issues confronting writers, such as literary form, technique, style, originality, and innovation. Clarity, accessibility, and, above all, proletarian purity were their ideals. They did not believe in the immortal and transcendent value of art. To them, art was a product of a certain class at a certain time, and it spoke to that class and time; to that extent, it was no more than propaganda of a higher order. For that reason, it was only logical that the Party should guide literary production and adjudicate on its merits.

The targets of the Proletkult advocates were not bourgeois writers, for most had disappeared from the Soviet literary scene. Rather, they were fellow-travelers who agreed with their critics that art should serve the cause of the revolution and of the people, but who nonetheless believed in its lasting value. Often writers of real talent and sincere artistic concern, they chafed at the narrow limits imposed by the Proletkult zealots.

Despite pleas by the latter that the Party should become more involved in literary matters, during Lenin's lifetime the CPSU remained above the debates between the Proletkult promoters and the fellow-travelers. Lenin himself expressed some skepticism about the necessity of a specifically proletarian literature. Even more pronounced were Trotsky's own doubts, for he held the opinion that the proletarian regime was no more than a temporary phase on the way to a classless society and therefore did not have specific cultural characteristics of its own.⁶

On 18 June 1925, the Central Committee of the CPSU did pass a resolution endorsing the idea of proletarian literature, but that resolution was vague as to the form such support would take. Furthermore, fellow-travelers were to be treated "with tact and care." Their deviations from accepted norms of proletarian literature must be regarded with tolerance.

A shift occurred with the adoption in 1927 of the slogan "class against class," the downfall of Trotsky, and the adoption in 1928 of the first Five-Year Plan, which called for the mobilization of writers in the national effort of production. Under the new literary doctrine, writers were expected to "stand in the midst of the revolutionary working class, to roll up their sleeves and undertake, along with the proletariat and its Communist Party, the immense and joyful task of socialist construction."⁷ The result of this directive was the rabcor, or industrial literature, experiment. The objective of this experiment was to forge closer links between

writers and workers through a number of devices. One was to draw more workers into the ranks of writers; another was to organize visits by writers to factories and worksites so that they could read their works to the workers, thus making literature more accessible to the people it was intended to serve. Writers were also encouraged to draw their inspiration from the experiences of worker. Some spent months in factories or worksites to immerse themselves in the proletarian ethos.

Reams and reams of novels, stories, and reports were produced during this period. The generally poor quality of this huge output provoked a backlash among readers. In the interest of truthfulness and accessibility, the authors had eschewed literary embellishments and all stylistic artifices that might confuse readers as to what was fact and what was fiction, and had paid scant attention to problems of narrative.⁸

The dominant force behind the rabcor experiment was an organization founded in 1926 called RAPP (Association of Soviet Proletarian Writers). During the rabcor years, RAPP began absorbing other associations of proletarian writers while attacking fellow-travelers. But it contributed to its own downfall by adopting extreme left views on politics and literature at the Kharkov conference of 1930. By 1932, with the end of the Five-Year Plan on the one hand and the looming threat of fascist aggression on the other, the CPSU decided to promote a more moderate stance which was reflected in literary politics.

Under the combined pressure of Bukharin, who had always entertained reservations about the value of proletarian literature, and Maxim Gorky, who had organized group visits to factories but had become disturbed by the development of events, the CPSU ordered RAPP dissolved on 23 April 1932. A few months later, an organizing committee met in Moscow to set the basis for a broader based association which was to be called the Union of Soviet Writers.

Some scholars view the creation of this Union as the true beginning of Party involvement in Soviet literary life and of the imposition of an official literary policy, for RAPP had not been an official organ of the CPSU.⁹ Yet, when it was created, the Union of Soviet Writers was seen as a new beginning, as an attempt to accommodate the views not only of the advocates of proletarian literature, but also of the fellow-travelers who for the last few years had been the butt of attacks by the former. Indeed, the watchword of the Union was "vigilance against exclusivism."¹⁰

In the first issue of the Union's journal, International Literature, which appeared in 1933, was reprinted the text of the speech which Kirpotin made at the meeting of the Union held 29 October to 3 November 1932. In the speech, Kirpotin sought to define a new literary theory to replace the discredited Proletkult dogma;

that new theory was given the name of socialist realism. According to Kirpotin, that meant the "true and accurate expose of life, rich and complex, in both its positive and negative sides, with socialist elements triumphing in its evolution." He went on to state that, "broadly interpreted, it is opposed to anything that is false and distorts reality." He further argued that socialist realism was in no way opposed to revolutionary romanticism. Kirpotin's definition thus left a great deal of room for interpretation and inventiveness.¹¹

The first Congress of Soviet Writers was held in 1934 under the chairmanship of Maxim Gorky, hero of the post-rabcor era. It was the first internal Soviet congress in many years where foreign delegates had been invited; their very presence ensured that the general tone of the debates would be moderate. Yet, when Radek demanded that writers must choose between James Joyce, the epitome of the decadent bourgeois writer, and socialist realism, the foreign delegates who included both members of the FCP and fellow-travelers such as Aragon and Malraux, balked. Malraux in particular, cast cold water over the whole notion of "directed literature."¹²

At that same conference, Bukharin, adopting a softer stance than Radek, amplified on the meaning of socialist realism. He rejected Zola's dictum that the novelist is merely a recorder of reality and therefore need no longer exert his imagination, and asserted: "On the contrary, socialist realism can, and must 'dream' while relying on real trends of development."¹³ This was another way of saying that writers could have great artistic leeway in using literary devices such as metaphors, similes, flashbacks, etc. . . . which had been frowned upon by the rabcor advocates as distorting reality and being confusing to ordinary readers. In its early phase, socialist realism was thus a welcome release from the numbing literalness of rabcor literature. Only with the ascendancy of Zhdanov would it become rigid literary policy.

Bukharin's flexible interpretation of socialist realism and of the role of the politically engaged writer was to prove attractive to Hải Triều, who quoted him on several occasions. Yet, how relevant was socialist realism to countries other than the Soviet Union, the only country where the Revolution and the triumph of the proletariat could be extolled? How could writers avoid falling into the trap of naturalism while pursuing socialist realism? How could they write truthfully and yet positively about working-class life? Because of its uniqueness the Soviet Union was not a good model. The domestic context in which the ICP operated was much closer to that of the FCP, which was one more reason for Hải Triều to draw inspiration from the attempts by French Communist intellectuals to promote a literature that not only would embody their political views but would also be acceptable to readers of all persuasions.

Henri Barbusse and the Literary Policy of the FCP

To be acceptable to wider audiences was an important concern of the FCP, for since its inception it had languished on the margin of mainstream political life in France, garnering few votes and, equally important for a party made up mainly of bourgeois elements, attracting few converts of real stature into its ranks. An added complication was that the label "proletarian literature" had already been appropriated by a group which was led by a mediocre writer named Henry Poulaille. Poulaille and his group insisted that proletarian literature could only be for, about, and by members of the working class. Although the FCP could no doubt have agreed about the first two desiderata, the class origins of most of its authors would have disqualified them as proletarian writers. Moreover, Poulaille and his followers were adamantly anti-Communist.¹⁴

The idea that there should be an international line on literature had been adopted at the first congress of the Proletkult in 1920, but the French rapporteur of the congress, who had been expected to implement the line in France, drowned on his way home. In the absence of specific guidance, the FCP was left with the freedom to forge its own interpretation of "party literature" in accordance with the requirements of the French situation. That concern with appropriateness in turn caused trouble in Moscow. The following year, the FCP was advised to maintain vigilance against petty bourgeois literary tastes.¹⁵ There is little sign that that advice was heeded; by and large, Communist literary editors chose to ignore the concept of proletarian literature, especially since the name had been taken up by the anti-Communist Poulaille group.

One of the most influential Communist critics was Parijanine, who was in charge of translating Soviet works into French in l'Humanité. In 1928, his Trotskyist sympathies led to his downfall, but until then, it was he who selected Soviet materials for presentation to the French public. Parijanine refused to allow that revolutionary zeal could be an adequate substitute for real talent, and he could be as vitriolic in dealing with "social" authors as with bourgeois ones. "A great social writer has no obligation to write well. That would preoccupy him needlessly," he wrote in a scathing review of a mediocre novel called Virginité by a certain Léon Frappié. That merciless sarcasm, directed at a social author, would have been ill-viewed by Proletkult advocates in Moscow.¹⁶

In 1927, the idea of an international literary line was revived, along with another attempt by Moscow to exercise greater guidance over the literary policies of the FCP. The man selected to implement this new line was Henri Barbusse. That choice was almost inevitable, for Barbusse was the only writer of stature to have joined the FCP. There were other writers of talent, such as Romain Rolland, who generally supported the FCP politically and shared its ideals, but they had opted to remain fellow-travelers rather than committed

members of the Party. Furthermore, Barbusse had impeccable bourgeois credentials and prestigious connections by marriage. When he joined the FCP in 1923, he was at the height of his literary fame. He had received the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1917 for his novel Le Feu, which was based on his war experience. Three years after joining the FCP, he was named literary editor of l'Humanité. In 1928, he also became editor-in-chief of a new literary review, Monde. In appointing Barbusse to these two influential positions, the FCP wanted to signal to the French intellectual community its concern for literary excellence; yet, it was precisely this concern that led Barbusse away from the path of orthodoxy as conceived by the rabcor champions in the Soviet Union.

Monde was to be the means through which the international literary line, readopted at the 1927 congress, was to be disseminated in France. However, Barbusse interpreted his mission less as the promotion of proletarian literature than as attracting writers and intellectuals to the Communist side, though not necessarily into the ranks of the FCP. It would be enough that they become fellow-travelers, supporting its policies without being affiliated to the Party. In fact, Monde proclaimed itself to be free from all "ideological, political, and financial ties." Further, "it would not participate in political polemics."¹⁷ Barbusse did not ignore proletarian literature altogether, but he preferred the terms "popular literature," leaving their exact meaning unclear as to both form and content.

He advocated "a simple, unembellished style" for the sake of making literature accessible to the working masses, but he was himself too good a writer to dismiss out of hand the usefulness of literary artifice. Although he criticized the decadence of bourgeois literature as exemplified by Proust, he also recognized the desirability of borrowing from it a number of useful techniques. More damning, however, Barbusse did not hesitate to say aloud what most other French Communists dared only say sotto voce: that rabcor literature was as dull as ditchwater.

Unfortunately, the time he picked to make public his disdain of industrial literature (which he pejoratively called "propaganda literature") coincided with the peak of RAPP influence. Soon the wrath of the rabcor establishment was visited upon him. Barbusse did not attend the Kharkov conference which enshrined, however briefly, the literary views of RAPP. Instead, he sent a message that did nothing to mollify its leadership. In particular, he claimed: "The only condition which we should demand from intellectuals in order to assemble them into a unified movement is that they should support the claims of the proletariat."¹⁸ Barbusse thus refused to demand of the French intellectuals that they toe a particular line whether in literary or even political matters.

Soviet delegates at the Kharkov conference were loud in their condemnations of Barbusse's views. But the man was too precious both as a leading light of the French Communist Party and as an internationally acclaimed writer to be verbally manhandled. Everything Monde stood for came under attack as if the views expressed in its pages had flowed from a disembodied bourgeois force rather than from the pen of its literary editor. "Proletarian literature," it was affirmed at Kharkov, "is nothing less than a weapon of the class struggle. The Proletarian artist cannot be a passive observer of reality. He is above all a man of revolutionary practice; through each act of production, he takes part in the struggle that will liberate his class."¹⁹ A special resolution was passed to condemn Monde, and a directive was issued to the FCP: train more workers-writers on the lines of the Soviet rabcor experiment.

Not long after the Kharkov conference, the RAPP fell from favor and was dissolved altogether in April 1932. The new policy of international conciliation may have inspired Barbusse to plunge into the literary fray once more, for in May of that year, he launched the idea of an International Congress against imperialist war. He was joined by Romain Rolland in June. The two men proceeded to canvass European intellectuals and to lay the groundwork for a congress which was held in Amsterdam 27-29 August 1932.

The Amsterdam congress vindicated the policy toward intellectuals which Barbusse had pursued all along, for it marked the end of the political isolation of the FCP, eventually culminating in the formation of the Popular Front. The Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR) was created in December 1932 under the aegis of the FCP. Its membership was greatly enlarged by the adherence of writers whose motive for joining was less commitment to either Communist ideology or politicized literature than revulsion against fascism. No effort was made to dictate to these recruits into the AEAR what they should write about and how they should write, and none let their political sympathies color their views on literature. The FCP was not even in a position to dictate to its own members a rigid literary line, for to do so might send it back into its previous marginality. The price the FCP had to pay for its newfound popularity was tolerance of the divergent views of its many famous supporters both in literary and political matters.

Barbusse died on 30 August 1935 while on a trip to the Soviet Union. The accounts of his life that appeared in the Communist press bordered on the idolatrous. None of the disagreements he had had with the Soviet literary establishment a short while before was allowed to cloud the hagiography. His Kharkov critics, now fallen from favor and beginning to become victims of purges as well, were vilified as Trotskyists or agents of Germany. His life was presented as a seamless, preordained journey toward communism, despite the fact

that his most famous novel, Le Feu, was suffused with pacifism. What Barbusse would have made of this biographical laundering can never be known. Despite his strictures against proletarian literature, he had always appreciated the usefulness of propaganda and had done his share of praise-singing on behalf of the Soviet Union. A few months before his death, he had published a glowing account of life in the motherland of the Revolution entitled Stalin. In the end, however, the uses that were made of his life and death were tributes to his own ideas on how to deal with intellectuals, for his posthumous glory owed less to the correctness of his literary convictions than to the fact that Barbusse, who seldom quoted Marx as an authority on anything, had joined the FCP during its difficult period of isolation and had remained a faithful friend of the Soviet Union all through the years.

The Debate

It was this particular aspect of Barbusse's career that made him a valuable inspiration for Vietnamese advocates of politicized literature. The Vietnamese political context was closer to the French than to the Soviet for, like the FCP, the ICP was out of power. The Vietnamese Communists were thus anxious, as Barbusse had been, to gain the support of uncommitted intellectuals. In launching a debate on the nature and aims of literature, they also had the comfort of knowing that the European intellectual climate favored their particular interpretation, for some of the best-known writers in France had joined the ranks of AEAR. Malraux, who was personally known to a number of Vietnamese from an earlier stay in Saigon, had long been a fellow-traveler. Of particular note, however, was André Gide, whose prestige was much greater than that of the young Malraux, and who exerted his influence over Vietnamese intellectuals as different from one another as Nguyễn An Ninh and Nhất Linh.

But there were also some crucial differences between the French and the Vietnamese contexts. One was the vexing question of audience. Vietnam had only a small working class; the masses were made up overwhelmingly of peasants. To write about workers would be to write only about a small minority and to ignore the majority. But to extoll the peasants would be to go against the trend of the Soviet Union where peasants were not only despised but also suspected of being enemies of the revolution. This dilemma was not lost on the opponents of the "art for life's sake" position who challenged the literary activists to write for and about the masses.

On the other hand, the intellectuals who had joined the ICP were by no means second-rate; they enjoyed the respect of their peers and could draw them into the Party. Furthermore, insofar as fiction, which was fast becoming the dominant literary genre, had a very short past, it was more amenable to the guidance of literary critics both as to its content, its form, and its role within society. Lastly, the still prevalent Confucian notion that the written word must be

the vehicle for the Way (văn dĩ tải đạo), that it must be used to convey ideological orthodoxy, predisposed a large number of non-Communist writers to espouse the views promoted by the ICP. It was on this very ground that Hải Triều and Phạm Quỳnh met each other. In fact, at the origin of the debate was an attempt to rid Vietnamese literature of the shackles of didacticism. Hải Triều seized the opportunity to mold both literary and political opinion and to win converts into the ICP.

Although it was Hoài Thanh who eventually came to dominate the "pure art" side, the controversy was sparked by Thiệu Sơn. In February 1935, he wrote an article which appeared in Tiểu Thuyết Thứ Bảy (Saturday Fiction), expressing his dismay at the traditional view of literature as a second-rate kind of writing, good only, in the words of the poet Nguyễn Du, "for buying pleasure to while away a few nightwatches" (mua vui một vài trống canh).²⁰ Thiệu Sơn proposed to elevate the prestige of the creative writer, that is, the writer of fiction and poetry, and to lay to rest the idea that writing, whether creative or interpretive, should have a socially redeeming function. He particularly attacked Phạm Quỳnh's views on the novel that were published in 1921. According to Thiệu Sơn, the Vietnamese writers of the period since 1913 had merely "used literature for social purposes; they were not writers in the Western sense of the word." Thiệu Sơn followed this first article with another, entitled "Art and Life" (Nghệ thuật với đời người), in which he embroidered upon the theme that literature should not preach. Using a profusion of French examples, he argued in favor of pure, disinterested, impartial, and nonpartisan art. On 23 March 1935, he published yet another article, "Popular Literature" (Văn hoá bình dân), in which he welcomed the trend toward novels which took as their themes the lives of ordinary people, but he attacked the idea that only works that praised ordinary people were worthy of the label "literature."²¹

One day later came Hải Triều's rebuttal of Thiệu Sơn's earlier articles. In "Art for Art's Sake or Art for Life's Sake," which was published in Đời Mới (New Life), he quoted Bukharin to the effect that "art is both a product of society and the systematization of sentiments in images." Again, quoting Bukharin, "art is a means of socializing sentiment."²² To reinforce his argument, he cited various Western literary critics and in particular Romain Rolland's Life of Tolstoy, which he left in the French original: "Le vrai art est l'expression de la connaissance de la mission et du vrai bien de tous les hommes." He concluded by asserting that "so many artists such as Dickens, Dostoievsky, Millet, Hugo, Barbusse, R. Rolland, etc. . . . and all the artists in the Soviet Union are now advocating that art should be put at the service of humanity." "In the Soviet Union," he asserted, "in artistic circles, people care only for art for life's sake, they ignore art for art's sake. That is because they consider the concept of art for art's sake to be the symbol of the decadence of bourgeois culture." He then quoted Kuo Mo-jo on "literature and the class struggle": "What is literature? It is the

expression of reality." In August 1935, in a review of a new novel, Kép Tử Bền (Actor Tử Bền) by Nguyễn Công Hoan, he declared that "the kind of literature that is most appreciated in the world is literature that contains these two elements: as to form, the realist tendency; as to content, the socialist tendency."²³ But he refrained from defining the meaning of either "socialist" or "realist." The body of the article leads the reader to conclude that his views on the subject were even more elastic than those of Bukharin or of any of the FCP literary critics of the time.

Thiếu Sơn, who followed international literary debates as closely as Hải Triều, was not above using Bukharin for his own ends. In an article entitled "Realism" (Tả chân chủ nghĩa), which appeared in November 1935, he claimed not to reject the idea of realism but to object only to the dry, flat realism of the socialist school. Arguing for a combination of realism and imagination, he used the very word that Bukharin had used in 1932: "to dream."²⁴

In the meantime, another entrant into the combat had appeared: Hoài Thanh. Hoài Thanh had not originally been interested in the specific merits of politically committed literature. But like other critics of his time, he was concerned with defining its nature in a way that neither French nor Soviet critics were concerned. As the debate heated up, Hoài Thanh's position hardened and he eclipsed Thiếu Sơn as the main defender of the pure art position. By August, the arguments advanced by Hải Triều and his allies exasperated him sufficiently for him to declare; "You can have any kind of literature you like; but first, it must be literature."²⁵ Hoài Thanh, and the other so-called idealists, claimed that literature should not be put at the service of "the immortal man." A work worthy of the name of literature would survive the passage of time and be read by people of all backgrounds.

While Hải Triều was defending a flexible interpretation of socialist realism in literature, another member of the ICP, Hoàng Tân Dân, took a harder line. Hoàng Tân Dân wrote for Văn học tuần san (Literature Weekly), a Communist literary journal published in the south. He was also a veteran of the earlier debate on "idealism versus materialism." In June, he wrote an article on "Popular Poetry" (Nói về thi ca bình dân) in which he emphatically refuted the idea that popular literature meant relaxing reading for the masses. The aim of popular literature, according to him, was "to awaken ordinary people to their rights, and to call on them to unite to struggle against the class that oppresses them."²⁶ In a critique of sad, romantic, effeminate, and whining literature, such as then flooded the market, he argued that "there is only one kind of literature worth the name literature, and that is literature that praises ordinary people, that elevates ordinary people, namely proletarian literature, literature that advocates class struggle."²⁷ He was thus taking exactly the opposite position from Hoài Thanh.

In the debate, the materialists had deliberately used the term "popular" rather than "proletarian," and "ordinary people," rather than "workers." Although it could be argued that the choice had been dictated by convenience--few people actually understood the concept of a proletariat in Vietnam--it also seems that it had been made to fudge over the problem that Vietnam really did not have a large working class about whom works of literature could be written. Lê Trậ̀ng Kiệ̀u knew this very well when he challenged the advocates of "art for life's sake" to write about the peasant masses of Vietnam, claiming that this would be much more appropriate to Vietnamese realities than writing about workers. Hoặ̀ng Tậ̀n Dậ̀n, however, was unequivocal in his interpretation of popular literature and made it clear that it was the literature of the working class.

Hoặ̀ng Tậ̀n Dậ̀n's dogmatic rigidity thus provided an admirable foil for Hặ̀i Triệ̀u's more conciliatory and supple arguments. Because he drew on so many sources of authority, Hặ̀i Triệ̀u was able to be highly selective. Not only did he pick his own sources, he also distorted their messages as well. Even as he invoked Barbusse, he rejected the notion that literature must have lasting value. That value, on the contrary, was linked to a specific period and a specific class. Yet, that was precisely the sort of view which Barbusse had fought against. Thus, Lê Trậ̀ng Kiệ̀u was not far off the mark when he accused the materialists of misusing Bukharin and Kuo Mo-jo.²⁸ Another of his accusations had a familiar ring to those who were aware of the Soviet and French debates: the materialist literary critics, he claimed, had been unable to produce anything but theories. At least, he challenged, "you should be able to write something original; so far, you have only been aping others"

The Role of André Gide

In fact, the idealists were as beholden as the materialists to Western conceptions of literature. They read the same journals and newspapers, the same novels and short stories, and were thus able to use their knowledge of international literary politics to subtly undermine the arguments advanced by their opponents. They did not reject out of hand the idea of realism, nor the concept that literature should be concerned with the lives of ordinary people. But they wanted to defend literary excellence over ideological purity. In André Gide they found an ideal illustration of the dangers of linking literature and politics.

Of all the recruits into the AEAR, none was more prestigious, and none was more prized and welcomed, and yet none was more wayward than André Gide. He had joined the AEAR in early 1933 along with other famous writers such as André Malraux. By then, his international reputation was firmly established. His influence over Vietnamese intellectuals cannot be overstated. It is said that Nguyễn An Ninh

went everywhere with a copy of *Nourritures Terrestres* under his arm. In his famous speech, "The Aspirations of Annamese Youth" of October 1923, Ninh used as his organizing metaphor the theme of Gide's *Le Retour de l'Enfant Prodigue*. Even his reverence of Tagore (Ninh had a portrait of the Indian poet in his home) was due to Gide's work of popularization through his translation of *Gitanjali* from English into French.²⁹ Others besides Nguyễn An Ninh also drew inspiration from Gide. Nhật Linh, who began writing after Gide's fateful trip to Chad, evinced in his early story *Hai Vẻ Đẹp* (Two Kinds of Beauty) a dissatisfaction with pure aestheticism which has been traced back to Gide's influence.³⁰

Yet, Gide's flirtation with politically committed literature and with communism, which came about as a result of his experiences in Chad, was only a temporary diversion from his personal itinerary as a writer. But whatever the causes of his sudden desire to put himself and his pen at the service of the downtrodden, his adherence to the AEAR was considered by the FCP as a major coup; every effort was made to capitalize on it while accommodating his literary views. Gide, however, soon proved that he was first and foremost an artist concerned with eternal aesthetic values and impatient with political dogma.

As the most prestigious adherent of the AEAR, he was invited to give the keynote address to the first International Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture, which was designed as an anti-fascist rally. But as it turned out, his speech, entitled "In Defense of Culture," proved of little comfort to the advocates of politically committed literature within the AEAR, for he lambasted the idea of guided literature, and all efforts to subordinate art to temporal--and temporary--concerns. If the Communists were annoyed at being lectured to (with quotations from Bukharin, Gorky, and other Soviet luminaries) on the need of literature to transcend its class and time origins, they did not then let it show. Gide's speech was warmly received by his audience and prominently reproduced in accounts of the congress which appeared in the press, including the Communist press.

Gide's speech exploded on the Vietnamese literary scene like a bombshell. Taking their cue from their French counterparts, the Vietnamese Communists had warmly welcomed Gide's adherence to the AEAR and his advocacy of service to mankind. His speech was gleefully seized upon by their adversaries. Hoài Thanh used long extracts from it in his article "Literature is Literature." The materialists cried foul, claiming that Gide's ideas must have been distorted in press accounts, and announced that they had written to him to ask for clarification. Apparently they received a reply which did not allay their problems, for it was never published.³¹

In early 1936, that speech, together with a commentary by Hoài Thanh, was reproduced in a collection of articles published jointly with Lê Tràng Kiều and Lưu Trọng Lư under the title "Literature and

Activism" (Văn Chương và Hành Động). It was designed as the manifesto of a literary group calling itself Phượng Đổng (Orient). To adorn the title page of the booklet, the group had chosen, in a deliberately provocative stroke, a comment by Pierre Abraham who, beside being a member of the editorial board of the review Europe (founded in 1923 by Romain Rolland), was also a dedicated Communist: "There have been times when mankind did not need government, trade, agriculture, communications, or scientific research. But never has mankind not needed to sing or hear singing, to dance or see dancing." Aside from Gide's speech, the booklet included articles whose leitmotif was that the two governing principles of literature are truth and beauty, both of which transcend the transitory political concerns of mankind.

A few months later came the further disquieting news of Gide's total disenchantment with communism. Gide had traveled in the Soviet Union at the invitation of its government from 17 June to 22 August 1936. Although he was thoroughly lionized (he was asked to pronounce the funeral eulogy for Gorky in front of Stalin and other Party leaders), the trip had an unsettling effect on him. He became uneasy at the signs of an incipient personality cult. He was taken aback when, traveling through Stalin's native town, he decided to send him a telegram, only to have a postal clerk demand that he rewrite it on the ground that, as it stood, it did not praise the Soviet leader sufficiently.³² The homosexual Gide also discovered that the motherland of the Revolution was even more puritanical than his own country, and that the workers' paradise was still backwards. His dream of utopia shattered, Gide could hardly wait to be back in France to publish his findings. Retour de l'URSS appeared barely two months after his trip ended. In June of the following year, further reflections gave rise to Retouches à Mon Retour de l'URSS, which was even more critical of the Soviet Union than the earlier publication. Gide's flirtation with communism was over with a vengeance, sowing discomfiture among his admirers in France and Vietnam alike.

Gide's change of heart provoked shockwaves on another battlefield. By late 1936, relations between Trotskyists and Communists in Vietnam had become so strained that it was only a matter of time before complete rupture happened. The Trotskyists, who were of one mind with the Communists on the literary front, exploited Gide's revelations to bolster their anti-Stalin arguments, something which the Communists bitterly resented. But the Trotskyists, like everyone else at the time, were used to look outside Vietnam; for most of them, the path to Marxism-Leninism had run through France. Gide was not merely a convenient weapon in their long-standing battle against the Communists; he was also a real source of inspiration.

Literary Icons

After the pure art advocates had appropriated André Gide for their cause, in early 1937, Hải Triều decided to introduce to Vietnamese audiences three Western writers who could serve as role models. His selection alighted on Gorky, Rolland, and Barbusse. The collection or profile was entitled Văn Học và Xã Hội (Literature and Society), which was something of a misnomer, as the critic Hải Thanh, who wrote a preface for the book, acknowledged. According to Hải Thanh, Hải Triều had originally intended to write on the relationship between literature and society but had then decided to write about the relationship between writers and society. And indeed, Hải Triều focused less on the oeuvres of the three authors under consideration than on their social and political activities.³³

Gorky was portrayed as "the engineer of a new civilization," through his encouragement of young writers. The thread running through his life (as retold by Hải Triều) was the helpfulness and the devotion of this great artist to the masses. Gorky was praised for founding the Union of Soviet Writers, an organization in which artists would be free to create, unfettered by statutes. At the same time, however, socialist realism, the charter of the Union, was defined as "depicting honestly and clearly past or present phenomena, so that these depictions of reality can lead the masses to enlightenment, and to the struggle to build socialism."

Romain Rolland, a fellow-traveler rather than a committed Communist, received nearly as eulogious a treatment. Hải Triều admitted to having gone from an early adulation of Rolland (caused by the latter's biography of Gandhi), to doubts about his petty-bourgeois nature. But in the last few years, all his former admiration had come back, all his doubts had been allayed. The reason: Rolland's solidarity with the proletariat and, in particular, his solidarity with oppressed colonial peoples, as well as his militant anti-fascism. In other words, Hải Triều's reverence for Rolland owed little to the latter's writings or literary views, and more to his politics.

In his potted biography of Barbusse, Hải Triều followed the obituary models used in the French and Soviet press earlier. He averred that for Barbusse, the road from pacifism to communism had been "logical." Dates and events were somewhat juggled for the sake of proving this point. Barbusse's difficulties at the Kharkov conference were not mentioned, but his praise of the Soviet Union in Stalin and his role in launching the Amsterdam congress were given due prominence.

Clearly, in putting together this collections of profiles, Hải Triều intended to provide Vietnamese intellectuals some role models rather than to enunciate a clear conception of literature's role in society. His choices were highly instructive: it was more important

to be a faithful friend of the Soviet Union and to defend oppressed people than to have correct ideas on literature. Gorky, Barbusse, and Rolland were all writers of international reputation, and, therefore, their names would be at least familiar to the intellectuals H^{ai} Tri^{eu} was writing for; nonetheless, it remains that they espoused moderate views on the subject of politically committed literature and were at best lukewarm about the merits of socialist realism.

It could not have been easy to try to lay down literary law in 1937. By 1937, Stalin had begun to dispose of his enemies, real and imagined, by branding them either as Trotskyists, agents of Germany, or both. Radek was executed in 1937. Bukharin was tried and executed the following year, together with leaders of the RAPP. One of Bukharin's codefendants was specifically accused of having poisoned Gorky in 1936. He was the brother-in-law of the RAPP leader Averbakh. Most of the protagonists in earlier debates on literature were thus eliminated, and it was no longer wise to quote them. Only Gorky was acceptable, for he was dead.

For some reason, the pure art advocates had fallen unaccountably silent. Later that year, Hai Trieu returned to the topic in a series of articles which appeared in the journal S^ong H^uo^{ng} (Perfume River). The first three were devoted to attacking bourgeois literature and affirming again that all literature is a product of its class and time. Before H^{ai} Tri^{eu} had a chance to discuss the actual nature of socialist realism, the journal was closed down by the colonial authorities.³⁴

The appearance in 1938 of the novel L^{am} Than (Misery) by Lan Khai was greeted with great enthusiasm by H^{ai} Tri^{eu}, who claimed that the author was waving the banner of socialist realism in Vietnam and hoped that others would follow.³⁵ What provoked H^{ai} Tri^{eu}'s enthusiasm was that Lan Khai had chosen to write about miners. As H^{ai} Tri^{eu} noted, what was called social or popular literature in Vietnam had tended to focus on beggars, orphans, rickshaw boys, thieves, and prostitutes and had ignored the most important group of people, those who were not exploited, those who were the foundations of a new society, namely, the workers. In writing about them, Lan Khai had balanced description of their less admirable traits, such as their coarseness, their addiction to alcohol or opium, their clinging to outdated customs and superstitions, with remarks about their more positive qualities, including their esprit de corps, sense of honor, and purity. H^{ai} Tri^{eu} would later be chided for having heaped such praise on a work by an author who was essentially decadent and romantic and who, after the publication of L^{am} Than, would no longer use the plight of the proletariat as his subject matter.

In March 1939, H^{ai} Tri^{eu} returned again to the subject of socialist realism, once more propounding his idea that a writer is an engineer of the soul. He stated: "A socialist realist writer must serve only the truth; he must not put truth at his service."³⁶ But

how to conciliate various perceptions of "truth" and how to serve that "truth" were left vague. In response, Lưu Trọng Lũ invoked Gide to caution against the dangers of mixing politics and literature.³⁷ Gide's two books on the Soviet Union were political tracts; they might even be in error. They certainly would not add to his stature as a writer, nor contribute to world literature. In what turned out to be the last article on the subject, Lưu Trọng Lũ, a poet, showed his mettle as a debater, for whom should he invoke but the father of Marxism?

Marx had been an avid reader. And which authors, Lu asked rhetorically, had he liked to read? Shakespeare, Aeschylus, Goethe, Dante, Burns, Walter Scott, Dumas, Heine, Cervantes, Balzac. And to conclude: "Marx was very fond of literature; and in his comments, he had very broad ideas. He did not let his political prejudices lead him into error in literary matters; his admiration for Scott and Shakespeare attests to this fact."

Conclusion

Whatever side they ranged themselves on, Vietnamese intellectuals were keenly aware of international literary developments and often quoted the same authorities, albeit in order to reach different conclusions. By and large, the critics who dominated the debate drew their inspiration from Western sources, rather than from China. Although they were becoming more familiar with authors from the English-speaking world, on the whole they relied on French and Soviet literary authorities to support their own views. In Soviet debates, where the need to exalt the revolution and the achievements of the proletariat was not really in question, much of the debate had focused on form. In France, both form and content had been at the heart of the controversy surrounding politically committed literature. In Vietnam, the materialists chose to emphasize content and to ignore stylistic concerns. These were seized upon by the idealists even as they agreed on the need to produce literature that portrayed the life of ordinary people with sympathy.

Looking back at the debate with the hindsight of several decades, one would have to conclude that the idealists had a logical advantage, even though they carried their rejection of the social origins of literature to extremes. The aims of Hải Triều and of the materialists were two-fold: to encourage the production of politically committed literature and to win converts in the struggle against colonial rule. This two-fold aim revealed how complex the relationship between art and politics can be. The two novels praised by Hải Triều as harbingers of a new socialist realist trend, Kép Tú Bền and Lâm Than, were written by authors who by no stretch of the imagination could be called social authors and who eventually found themselves on opposite sides of the political divide. But Hoài Thanh, Hải Triều's old antagonist, eventually became his close ally.

In the midst of battle, Hải Triều recalled listening with pleasure to war poems which Lưu Trọng Lữ recited to him.³⁹ Politics did not dictate literary directions, nor did literary convictions dictate political alignments.

NOTES

1. Hoài Thanh (real name Nguyễn Đức Nguyễn) joined the ICP in 1947 but had already tilted toward the Party for several years before that. At the second National Cultural Congress of 1948, he worked closely with his erstwhile adversary, Hải Triều. See Phan Củ-Đề and Hà Minh-Đức, Nhà Văn Việt Nam 1945-1975 (Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Đại Học và Trường Học Chuyên Nghiệp, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 543-572.
2. Thanh Lăng, Phê Bình Văn Học Thế Hệ 1932 (Saigon: Phong Trào Văn Hoá, 1973), vol. 2, p. 111. This assertion is based on an interview with Hoài Thanh in 1960.
3. Phạm Quỳnh, "Bàn về tiểu thuyết," in Nam Phong 43 (Jan. 1921): 15.
4. See for example, George Steiner, "The Cleric of Treason, in New Yorker, December 8, 1980.
5. Lenin, "The Organization of the Party and Literature," in Novaia Jizn, 13 Feb. 1905.
6. See his Preface to Literature and Revolution, 1924. Lenin's doubts were expressed in his "Theses on Proletarian Culture," which he produced on the occasion of the First International Congress of the Proletkult held on 8 Oct. 1920. See J. P. A. Bernard, Le Parti communiste français et la question littéraire, 1921-1939 (Grenoble, 1972).
7. Quoted in Bernard, Le Parti Communiste, p. 42.
8. Katerina Clark, "Little Heroes and Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan," in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 189-206. See also Bernard, Le Parti Communiste, pp. 41-48.
9. This view is forcefully argued by Sheila Fitzpatrick in "Cultural Revolution as Class War," in Fitzpatrick, Cultural Revolution in Russia, p. 29.
10. For an account of the conference, see Bernard, Le Parti Communiste, pp. 115-123.

11. Ibid., p. 116.
12. Ibid., pp. 132-133.
13. Ibid., p. 121.
14. Ibid., pp. 23-28.
15. Third Congress of the Communist International, 22 June-12 August 1921. See *ibid.*, p. 51.
16. Ibid., p. 53.
17. Ibid., p. 57. *Monde*, 1st issue, 9 June 1928. The journal was published until 1935.
18. Bernard, *Le Parti Communiste*, p. 60.
19. For an account of the anti-*Monde* debate, see *ibid.*, pp. 61-66.
20. Thiều Sơn, "Hai cái quan niệm về văn học," in *Tiểu Thuyết Thứ Bảy* 38 (Feb. 1935). Excerpts appear in *Thanh Lăng*, pp. 80-84.
21. Thiều Sơn, "Nghệ thuật với đời người," in *Tiểu Thuyết Thứ Bảy* 41 (9 March 1935); "Văn hoá bình dân," in *Tiểu Thuyết Thứ Bảy* 43 (23 March 1935). Excerpted in *Thanh Lăng*, pp. 84-92.
22. Hải Triều, "Nghệ thuật vì nghệ thuật hay nghệ thuật vì nhân sinh," in *Đổi Mới* (24 March 1935). Full text appears in Hải Triều, *Về Văn Học Nghệ Thuật* (Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Văn Học, 1969), pp. 18-28; the article is also excerpted in *Thanh Lăng*, pp. 93-101.
23. Hải Triều, "Kép Tử Bền, một tác phẩm thuộc về cái triêu lưu 'nghệ thuật vì dân sinh' ở nước ta," in *Tiểu Thuyết Thứ Bảy* 62 (August 1935). Reprinted in Hải Triều, *Về Văn Học Nghệ Thuật*, pp. 53-56; also excerpted in *Thanh Lăng*, pp. 117-119.
24. Thiều Sơn, "Tả chân chủ nghĩa," in *Tiểu Thuyết Thứ Bảy* 77 (16 Nov. 1935); excerpted in *Thanh Lăng*, pp. 128-129.
25. Hoài Thanh, "Văn chương là văn chương," in *Trăng An* (15 August 1935); excerpted in *Thanh Lăng*, pp. 119-120.
26. Hoàng Tân Dân, "Nói về thi ca bình dân," in *Văn Học tuần san* (1 June 1935); quoted in *Thanh Lăng*, p. 111.
27. Hoàng Tân Dân, "Bệnh của nhà văn," in *Văn Học tuần san* 9 (Nov. 1935); excerpted in *Thanh Lăng*, pp. 127-128.

28. Lê Tràng Kiều, "Cùng các ông Phan Văn Hùm, Hải Thanh, Sơn Trà, Hồ Xanh, Cao Văn Chánh, Khổng Hữu Tài, Hải Triều, v.v." in Hanoi Báo 1 (1 Jan. 1936); excerpted in Thanh Lăng, pp. 134-139.
29. Leon Werth, Cochinchine (Paris, 1926), p. 34.
30. Phạm Thế Ngũ, Việt Nam Văn Học Sử Giản Ước Tân Biên (Saigon: Quốc Học Tùng Thư), vol. 3, p. 428. The author traces Gide's influence from Nhật Linh to Nguyễn Tuân and attributes it to Nguyễn Mạnh Tường's own enthusiasm for Gide. Nguyễn Mạnh Tường returned from France in 1933 and taught at a Hanoi lycée.
31. This was revealed by Lưu Trọng Lú in "Con đường riêng của trí thức: để đáp ứng các ông Phan Văn Hùm, Trần Huy Liệu, Bùi Công Trừng, Hải Triều và Trương Tửu," in Tao Đàn 5 (1 May 1939); excerpted in Thanh Lăng, pp. 165-174.
32. Bernard, Le Parti Communiste, p. 161. For a study of the origins of Gide's interest in communism, see Georges Brachfeld, André Gide and the Communist Temptation (Geneva, 1959).
33. Hải Triều, Văn Học và Xã Hội (Hanoi: Tủ Tủ Mới, 1937).
34. The articles were collected under the heading "Văn học và chủ nghĩa duy vật" in Hải Triều, pp. 37-47. They originally appeared in Sông Hương 8 (26 Aug. 1937); 9 (2 Sept. 1937); and 10 (11 Nov. 1937). Sông Hương was closed down on 14 October 1937.
35. Hải Triều, "Lâm Than, một tác phẩm đầu tiên của nền văn tả thực xã hội ở nước ta," in Dân Tiến 1 (27 Oct. 1938). Reprinted in Hải Triều, pp. 57-61.
36. Hải Triều, "Đi tới chủ nghĩa tả thực trong văn chương: những khuynh hướng trong tiểu thuyết," in Tao Đàn 2 (16 March 1939); reprinted in Hải Triều, pp. 62-67. Also excerpted in Thanh Lăng, pp. 150-155.
37. Lưu Trọng Lú, "Con đường riêng của trí thức," in Tao Đàn 5 (16 May 1939).
38. Lưu Trọng Lú, "Cái khiếu văn chương của Karl Marx," in Tao Đàn 8 (16 June 1939); excerpted in Thanh Lăng, pp. 197-199.
39. Hải Triều, "Nói chuyện thơ," in Thép Mới 1 (10 Oct. 1949); reprinted in Hải Triều, pp. 97-100.

The Franco-Vietnamese Conception of Landownership

John Louis Bassford

The changes which the French wrought in the theoretical framework of land ownership in Vietnam must be viewed as one part of an overall assault on the unity of the village. Inward-looking and self-sufficient, the traditional Vietnamese village preserved Confucian/Vietnamese values in its economic, social, and political structure. Its institutions had adapted over a long period of time to bring a harmony to social relations and a psychological security to the villagers' view of their place in the world. The village was Vietnamese, in many senses, and its unity and continuity guaranteed the traditional way of life for Vietnam.

France had to conquer Vietnam militarily and rule it politically in order to achieve its purpose, but more than anything else it had to change Vietnam to succeed. Changing Vietnam meant changing the village. To achieve its religious and cultural aims it could disseminate the accoutrements of French civilization in the large cities and spread French education and religion to a small urban elite. To succeed economically by introducing capitalism and annexing Vietnam as a subsidiary of France's economy, however, required fundamental changes at the local level. It required (1) the end of the semi-autonomous, virtually self-sufficient village unit and its replacement with an interdependent, market-oriented economy and production for export; (2) the substitution of individualism for collectivism in the form of the head tax and personal registration; (3) a land market as an outlet for surplus capital and the basis of the free enterprise system; and (4) a system of written laws and a colony-wide court system to enforce those laws. In short, it required a combined assault on many integral parts of the village system and the harmony that was traditional Vietnam. One part of the system that was changed was the conception of land ownership.

Landowning Customs in Traditional Vietnam

In traditional Vietnam vacant land was worthless, both politically and economically, and in fact almost meaningless. Power came from people, people installed on the land. Peasants were the source of taxes, in the form of surplus production, and of soldiers. The size of the national treasury and the number of soldiers who

could be mustered determined the kingdom's strength; the amount of land occupied by the emperor's subjects determined the size of the kingdom. Power emanated from the center as far as the most distant settlement under the emperor's control. The idea of boundaries was a vague concept. Wars were partially fought in order to gain prisoners and increase the size of the population, not the land area of the country.

Within this context, it was entirely consistent to equate usufruct--the occupation and use of the land--with ownership. While in theory all the land in the kingdom belonged to the emperor, in fact one had only to occupy vacant land, put it into cultivation, and agree to pay taxes on it to have it granted.¹

The property owner then held a "perpetual usufruct" with which accrued all the rights of private property.² The landowner was required to register his property on the địa bạ (land register) of the village, but no survey or measurement was required; as the địa bạ was used as the basis for taxpaying, the information recorded was purposely vague and inaccurate.³ Taxes were assessed on the size of the holding, which in turn was always a function of how much land a family could farm.⁴ Despite changes in the law codes promulgated by emperors, the basic principle of landownership remained constant up until the French period--occupation plus tax payment established ownership.⁵

Land transactions between individuals were regulated by custom in the village. Generally, the emperor's law stopped at the village gate. Land was conceded to villages, and it was the village as a whole which was responsible for taxes and providing corvee labor and soldiers as needed. It was up to village government to certify what contracts there were, to settle disputes, and to regulate landownership within the village. Custom, not written laws, set the pattern for this regulation.

Custom determined that private property did exist and that property could be transmitted from one person to another. Privately held land could be passed on through inheritance. As responsibilities in the village resided in the family, not the individual, property passed on within a family was not viewed as having changed hands. Property could also be sold in two ways. Because few people could write, the concerned individuals decided on what sort of agreement they wanted, usually following one of several traditional modes, and then approached an educated person to have it written up. To be valid, agreements had to be signed by the village notables and, by custom, accompanied by gifts for the notables.⁶ In that way, the agreement was recognized by the entire village.

One type of sale was a permanent transfer of rights, which was almost always indicated on a written bill of sale. The new owner acquired all the rights and duties of the original owner and had his

name inscribed on the địa bạ in place of the previous owner. The other type, by far the most common in Vietnam, was a temporary transfer of rights. It was less frequently recorded in writing and transferred the use of the land for a certain fixed period of time only, with the original owner reserving the right to reclaim the usufruct. The buyer could resell the land to another, but always with the original condition guaranteeing the permanent owner's rights. The first owner remained registered on the địa bạ.⁷ Either type of sale represented in reality only the transfer of the value of improvements on the land. Unimproved and unoccupied land, being worthless and, by definition, "unowned," would never be sold.

Land that was abandoned was treated according to individual circumstances at the village level. It would generally be given in concession to the first person who desired to put it under cultivation again and pay the taxes. Recently abandoned land would be granted a one-year tax exemption and land left uncultivated for a long period of time would be exempted for three years. Land unoccupied because those who inherited it had not yet been notified would be temporarily farmed by someone who agreed to pay the tax. Sometimes, as in the case of the death of a landowner without heirs, the village would solicit someone to become the landowner in order to keep up the number of registered villagers.⁸ (By custom, only landowners were inscribed on village roles.) In all cases, the situation would be handled at the local level by people familiar with the individuals involved and the circumstances surrounding each piece of property.

Ownership was always granted upon occupation and willingness to pay the tax, not on registration in the địa bạ. The địa bạ was merely coincidental with landownership. When a person paid the tax or became responsible for paying the tax, his name was inscribed on the địa bạ, which was a tax register in fact, not a land register. People, not land, were taxed in Vietnam. The land descriptions on the địa bạ were really only indications of the individuals' (and thus the village's) ability to pay the tax. Those descriptions were always kept vague and inaccurate in order to minimize the amount of tax due. The địa bạ never served as an accurate register of the village's property, and it never was meant to.

The first survey of land in Cochinchina to establish the địa bạ was carried out under Emperor Gia Long in 1806.⁹ Nothing remains of that survey.¹⁰ A second survey was begun in 1836, during the reign of Emperor Minh Mang.¹¹ This work described the land of each village--the boundaries of each parcel, what quality of land it was, what was produced on the property, what was formerly produced there, who the owner was, and the origin of the property. This survey was conducted only one time, after which it was the responsibility of the village council to maintain the record.¹² The result was that it

became increasingly easy, over time, to underestimate the amount of land cultivated in a village.

There were three categories of landholding in Vietnam, that of (1) the individual, (2) the village, and (3) the emperor.¹³ Except for the land owned by individuals and villages, the emperor owned all the land in Vietnam--all rivers, forests, uncleared land, and abandoned properties. Villages owned property in two classes. Công điền (communal ricelands) and công thổ (communal properties other than riceland, such as fishponds and forests) were property held in common by the entire village, acquired either with the original founding of the village, from donations by private owners, or by the reclaiming of abandoned land. It was permanently inalienable. The second class was the bôn thôn điền (ricelands) and bôn thôn thổ (other lands), which had been acquired by the village's own resources and could be resold.¹⁴ Both classes of land were used to provide for social welfare. The ricelands were periodically redistributed for use by the poor and for the support of widows, orphans, soldiers' families, and the aged. They also generated resources to provide for village services such as maintaining schoolteachers, public buildings and shrines, and financing village feasts.¹⁵

Traditional Concession Policy

It was a basic policy of the government to encourage settlement of vacant lands, thereby increasing the size and power of the kingdom. The history of Vietnam from the time of its independence from China in the tenth century to its conquest by France in the nineteenth century was one of steady expansion to the south. That expansion was achieved through both organized efforts by the government and private cooperative ventures on the part of individuals. Spurred on by a cultural imperative, the frontier was gradually pushed out through the mechanism of a consciously liberal concession policy.

Concessions, in traditional Vietnam, were merely the official recognition of people's establishment on certain pieces of land. As noted earlier, ownership equaled occupation plus the payment of taxes. However, peasants did not live in isolation but together as a village, and it was the village which was responsible to the emperor for the taxes. The granting of the right of ownership, by the right to occupy, was thus from the emperor to the village, not to the individual. A group of people got together, settled on vacant land, formed a village, began farming, and then notified a mandarin. The village was then officially recognized by the emperor. That recognition was, in effect, the concession of that land. The matter of apportioning land between villagers and regulating individual property ownership was thereafter a village concern, as discussed above.¹⁶

Concessions, being the "right to occupy," were also granted by the government in organized efforts to push Vietnamese settlement into new areas. One form that such efforts took was the agricultural colony (*dinh điền*). Social misfits, displaced persons, and poor peasants banded together, under the direction of a special administrator, to settle in a new area.¹⁷ After having established themselves, their village was recognized and the land officially granted. The basic motivation for the colonists was to find a place in society and get a fresh start. The government benefited, of course, by an extension of the kingdom and augmentation of tax resources.

The other type of organized settlement effort, the one most common and most important for Cochinchina, was the military colony (*đồn điền*).¹⁸ The settlers were soldier-farmers who cleared new areas for agriculture and tilled the land but who also served guard duty and were on call to fight in case of war. Such an arrangement provided both a self-sustaining occupation force to make Vietnam's claim to suzerainty over an area a reality and the military presence needed to defend the colony against lawless frontier elements as well as, if need be, the area's original inhabitants. Such was the case in Cochinchina where the military colonies helped to expand Vietnam at the expense of Cambodia.

The military colony was adopted from the Chinese model that was used in the Red River Delta during the period of Chinese rule (207 B.C.-A.D. 939).¹⁹ After independence, it was employed by Vietnamese emperors, notably by Lý Thánh Tông (ruled A.D. 1128-1137) and Lê Thánh Tông (ruled A.D. 1460-1497) in the gradual expansion to the south. That southward movement brought the Vietnamese to Cochinchina in the eighteenth century, where the institution of the military colony was used to occupy the Transbassac. A campaign to establish military colonies in that area was begun during the reign of Gia Long in 1788.²⁰

One of the first actions taken by the French government in Cochinchina was to abolish the military colonies. More than one thousand of the soldiers who defended Cochinchina against the French in the 1861 battle at Chi'Hoà had been from military colonies. Fearing further resistance efforts, the French government dissolved the military colonies in areas under its control, especially in Gia Định and Mỹ Tho. In 1867 the French gained control over all of Cochinchina. That same year Admiral de la Grandière issued an order disbanding all the military colonies of Cochinchina.²¹ As a result of this policy, some of them were transformed into regular villages, and others dispersed.²²

French Tradition of Property Ownership

The French tradition of property ownership and regulation was significantly different from that of the Vietnamese. The differences

lie within the broader context of alternate civilizations--the Western European traditions of individualism, capitalism, and nationalism versus the East Asian adherence to Confucianism and kingship. For the Vietnamese, the kingdom extended as far out as the settlements of people under the influence of the emperor, its exact extent being rather vague. Property was regulated by custom and disputes were resolved by the judicial use of general Confucian principles. For the French, political suzerainty was strictly demarcated by borders, distinct lines which could be mapped with accuracy. All the people and land within those boundaries were part of the country; everything outside was foreign. Whether the land was occupied or not--city, swamp, or forest--it was part of the state territory to be regulated uniformly. Property was regulated with a body of law administered by the state, adjudicated through the courts, and enforced by the police, and conflicts were settled in a supposedly impartial court process which interpreted the laws.

The differences inherent in the two traditions are apparent in the issue of personal property rights. Vietnamese property rights were familial and were embodied in village custom. Customs were unwritten and uncodified, yet were specific and generally acknowledged. Rights were protected by the importance of custom in the social fabric. Conflict resolution was the domain of the Confucian scholar-bureaucrat and council of elders; fairness depended on the official's sense of propriety. Justice was an individualized rendering of opinion based on the particular circumstances of the case and the overriding need to preserve social harmony. By contrast, French property rights were personal and clearly spelled out in the body of civil law. The law was universal and standardized. Justice was rendered by a stranger who interpreted the law to ensure that the individual's rights were preserved.

Property rights for the French were embodied in the concept of private ownership. All property in the country, everything within its borders, was owned by someone, either by individuals, groups, or the state. Ownership was eternal and absolute, bestowing all rights over the use of that property. As such, it could be put to use in an economically productive manner, left idle, sold, rented, or mortgaged. Its use was distinct from the condition of its ownership. For the Vietnamese, the use of the land was an essential characteristic in defining ownership. Vacant, uncleared land by definition could not be owned by an individual and was always available for settlement. Occupation generally established rights to a piece of land, which were usually forfeited when that property was abandoned.

Another basic difference between the two traditions was the conception of the economic function of land. For the French, land had come to be identified as a commodity, a source for investment, and an outlet for surplus capital. The existence of a land market was, therefore, both natural and essential for the healthy

functioning of the capitalist system. The free exchange of land allowed the demand to be met speedily and efficiently by the supply at an appropriate price. As a basic cornerstone of the economic system, private ownership of land was deemed essential and the guarantee of the rights of ownership, through the legal structure, was equally important. By contrast, the Vietnamese regarded land as a factor in production but not as a market commodity. There was no land market for investment purposes only and outsiders were virtually prohibited from acquiring land in the village. Land was rarely sold without the right of repossession.

These differences in the two traditions of land regulation were manifested in the issue of land titles. The French claimed ownership of land by the possession of written titles, issued and recorded by the state. To legally possess a deed to a piece of property was to be "entitled" to all the rights of ownership as defined by law. To prevent confusion, titles were recorded by the government. Any sale or mortgage must likewise be recorded to be valid. Boundaries were clearly indicated. They were an essential part of the title, being necessary in order to establish a legal definition for the property and to allow its exchange as a commodity and at any distance. A system of land titles and title registration was thus fundamental to the French system of landownership. The Vietnamese tradition, on the other hand, placed little importance in written acknowledgement of ownership. Ownership was not defined by possession of a written title and the exchange of property could not be accomplished by a mere transfer of paper. The only recording of ownership was the địa bạ at the village level, which, as stated earlier, was essentially a tax register and not a land register. As landowning was regulated by custom at the local level, there was no place for a bureau of conveyances in the system. In short, the institution of property titles was totally foreign to Vietnam and embodied a tradition of land regulation radically different to the Vietnamese tradition.

French Property Laws: Dualism

The French conquerors of Cochinchina set about at an early date to establish a system of land titles and title registration. In February 1862, Admiral Bonnard announced the sale of lands in Saigon. At that time, Saigon had been conquered militarily but the area had not yet been ceded by the emperor. That technicality notwithstanding, Bonnard utilized French civil law to confiscate land, houses, and other buildings "for the public good" to be resold to Frenchmen.²³ In order to guarantee the titles to the property purchased in this sale, Bonnard issued an order establishing a system of title registration and mortgage. The February 20, 1862, proclamation clearly stated its purpose:

There exist in Cochinchina neither public officials nor [property] registration; nevertheless, the lands which

constitute the territory of the city of Saigon are going to be put up for sale; [and] the consequence of this transaction will be to establish real property, for which it is important to offer guarantees which assure the good faith of the transactions and give them an authentic character.²⁴

To this effect the Admiral Governor ordered that all property worth more than 150 piasters must be verified by a deed and recorded by the head of the Bureau of Civil Affairs, to the exclusion of all other means of verification. Property thus verified could then be mortgaged. The ordinance spelled out the details of property registration and then stated that "the prescriptions of the present ordinance do not apply to transactions between Vietnamese or people of Asiatic race."²⁵

Thus, the French system of landownership was established in Cochinchina, but only for the French. This double standard continued thereafter in Cochinchina, with French laws applying to the French and Vietnamese who were French citizens ("Assimilés") and the Vietnamese system applying to Vietnamese and "other Asians." A legal dualism was established which functioned at least until 1925.

The French Civil Code was applied in its entirety to Cochinchina by a decree of July 25, 1864.²⁶ From that time on, property transactions involving French citizens were handled just as they would have been in France. Titles were issued and recorded; disputes were settled in French courts. In transactions involving Frenchmen and Vietnamese, French law applied.

For Vietnamese and "other Asians," Vietnamese law was used. A decree of August 23, 1871, defined "other Asians" as Chinese, Cambodians, part-Chinese, Thais, minority hill peoples, Chams, and Malays who lived from Tonkin to Cochinchina. All others fell under French law.²⁷ That same decree established the Vietnamese địa bạ as the official land register for the Vietnamese.²⁸ Already in 1865, it had been ordered that all transactions by Vietnamese and other Asians must be registered.²⁹ Use of the địa bạ was to be the equivalent of French title registration.

"Vietnamese law" meant the Gia Long Code, which was discovered when the French conquered Cochinchina.³⁰ During the early 1860s, a French translation of the Code was distributed to serve as the basis for judicial decisions. Apart from the severe shortage of copies of the Code, however, French officials found the unedited text extremely hard to use. There was no separation of penal and civil laws, and even to officials trained in the law the Gia Long Code was woefully inadequate.³¹ Moreover, this Code was never meant to be a complete guide to property regulation, which traditionally was never managed by a set of laws in any case. The Gia Long Code was used by French "Inspectors of Native Affairs" who, as part of their duties as regional administrators, rendered justice. Thus, although the

Vietnamese were to be governed by Vietnamese law, the fact remained that traditionally, property had not been regulated by law, the Code applied was grossly inadequate, and French officials, usually ignorant of Vietnamese language and customs, administered the law.³²

Dualism in Cochinchina should not be viewed as simply the continuation of two separate traditions existing side by side. The French system of land regulation was certainly recreated as nearly as possible in the new environment, but the Vietnamese tradition was fundamentally changed. First, the whole conception of operating according to a set of written laws rather than by custom was a foreign idea. Second, the laws which applied were taken from a Vietnamese code that was spotty and grossly inadequate, never having been meant as a text for regulating property *in toto*. Third, the laws were administered by Frenchmen, people with a vastly different cultural background, and who were generally ignorant of Vietnamese language and traditions. Fourth, the *địa bộ* had never before functioned as a land register but only as a tax register; its existence was only incidental to landownership. It had been purposely kept vague and inaccurate. Fifth, boundaries never had the significance they came to have when the *địa bộ* was transformed into a formal land register. Sixth, the land market, which became possible with the transformation of the *địa bộ* and its implied function of creating land titles, never before existed in Cochinchina. Seventh, the possibility of nonresident landowning also was new to the system. Eighth, the basic distinction between ownership and usufruct had not been made before in Vietnam and this opened up the possibility that vacant uncleared land was not necessarily also unowned land. A personal and perpetual right of ownership, separate from occupation or cultivation, was created by the French and this right was totally foreign to the Vietnamese.³³

Viewed in this manner, then, the changes made in the Vietnamese system of landowning in Cochinchina were not gradual but rather sudden. Fundamental changes occurred not only in 1925, with the final transition to French law, but had begun already in the 1860s, the start of French rule. Far from how it was perceived by the French at the time, dualism was in fact a radical alteration of the Vietnamese system of landholding from the start. Thus, cultural shock, misunderstandings, and confusion, all of which increased the chance for dysfunctions in the system, occurred throughout the French period, not just at its end.

Another development which also greatly affected the functioning of this landowning system was the changes which took place in the Vietnamese village during the French period. Basically, the Vietnamese village came to lose its semi-autonomy and with it, its function of social unification and protection against the central government.³⁴ The individual, rather than the commune, became more and more the focus of attention from the central government. Personal landholding was scrutinized; people were taxed singly; and,

generally, the government dealt with the peasant on an individual basis. This process greatly changed the function of the traditional village leadership. Serving on the council of elders became an onerous duty, with recruitment growing more and more difficult. The village official became a servant of the French, burdened with expensive, time-consuming, and distasteful tasks, rather than a servant of the village. As a result, village administration by the educated and most respected became instead governance by the unskilled, the newly rich, the collaborators, and the opportunists.

These changes were especially significant for the landowning system. Village leaders were responsible for maintaining records of and, later, verifying ownership in the village. They were key personnel, the intermediaries in the system. Therefore, when the nature of village administration and the character of the officials changed, this change greatly altered the viability and reliability of the system. The officials no longer represented the haven of security which was the village but rather came to stand for the rapacious demands of a foreign, colonial government. Being employees of the French (albeit unpaid), backed up by the might of the colonial army, chosen by the French (and not the villagers themselves as before), and no longer inhibited by traditional social and ideological restraints, village officials could easily use their positions for personal gain. Having these officials be responsible for the địa bộ, although outwardly identical, was in fact a greatly different situation during the French period than it was in traditional Vietnam. Not only had the địa bộ changed but the officials in charge of it as well.

The key to understanding the economic motivation for the system of dualism and, indeed, the functioning of dualism as a whole, is the French desire to make landownership more secure. To the French way of thinking, the traditional Vietnamese system of ownership rendered landholding anything but secure. Lack of definite boundaries for parcels of land, the absence of laws to guarantee rights, and the apparent vagueness of customs all seemed to make landowning tenuous at best. On top of this, the traditional precept that the emperor owned all the land was interpreted literally by the French. Administrators believed that Vietnamese could be dispossessed at will by the emperor and thus, in the broadest sense, had no real property rights.

The contradictions inherent in the new system thus made sense to the colonial government. That there were two separate sets of laws and procedures was viewed as unfortunate, perhaps, but the best compromise possible under the circumstances. The French preserved the shell of the Vietnamese mode of land regulation because it was familiar to the populace, it would speed resettlement and pacification, and to abolish it was a practical impossibility. Yet, they altered essential aspects of that system in an effort to improve it--to furnish the Vietnamese landowner with a valuable and desired

commodity, the secure and lasting right of property ownership. That they desired to change it was a combination of misconceptions, economic motivations, and the drive furnished by the belief in a mission civilisatrice to bring the benefits of progress and a superior civilization to the Vietnamese. It is ironic, perhaps, that this perversion of the traditional system of property ownership, which was intended to better guarantee Vietnamese property, in effect paved the way for despoliation, loss of land, and, in general, a much greater insecurity for the Vietnamese peasant than ever existed before the French conquest.

French Concession Policy

If the basic motivation for the system of dualism in landownership was to make property rights more secure, then the primary motivation for the French concession policy was to extend cultivation. Of course, the two were interrelated. Landownership policy created the environment to allow and encourage agricultural extension and concession policy provided the means to achieve the end. Cochinchina was still the frontier when the French seized control and much of the colony was unoccupied. Fertile delta land was Cochinchina's greatest resource and the French colonial government sought to encourage the extension of cultivation by all means to increase production and promote the growth of trade. Canal projects provided access, transportation, and drainage to stimulate production for market; the system of landownership guaranteed property rights to make investment in agriculture secure; and the concession policy made access to rural land easy and usually free so as to make the development of agricultural land attractive.

To achieve this fundamental aim of agricultural extension, the concession policy did not cater to any one group or type of potential property owners but sought to spur simultaneous development by all interested people in Cochinchina or France. Land was given to Vietnamese, French, and "other Asians," to churches and laity, to military and civilians, to civil servants and private individuals, and to companies, corporations, and investment groups both in Indochina and in France. Small farmers were consistently encouraged to become property owners with free concessions of land, up to ten or twenty hectares. The process was handled exclusively at the provincial level, working through village officials and recording the land transactions on the village địa bộ. From early on, the government expressed its desire to establish the Vietnamese smallholder on the land through a liberal concession policy aimed at this group. Large landholding, ranging from the small estate of fifty hectares to the large plantation covering thousands of hectares, was also allowed as a means of attracting capital investment in agriculture both from within Cochinchina and from France. Large holding was encouraged by generous concessions, either free or reasonably priced, and other provisions, such as the

deferment of taxes for a certain number of years. However, large concessions were subject to many more regulations, changing over time to ensure that the land was indeed put under cultivation and not merely held for speculation. Such restrictions included the granting of only provisional titles until the land was under cultivation, the setting of certain time limits for developing the land before it would revert to the state, and the original requirement of demonstrating adequate capital for development before the concession would be made.

Although large concessions were given and at times specifically encouraged by official policy, at no time were these concessions meant to come at the expense of the Vietnamese smallholder. Mechanisms were set up to ensure that land given in concession was unoccupied and unclaimed. Settled land, generally whether registered on the địa bạ or not, previously the subject of tax collection or not, was supposed to be excluded from new, third-party concessions. Also, huge tracts of land were generally not given in a block so as to make small-scale settlement impossible. In spite of many large concessions, the basic policy was to simultaneously establish the Vietnamese smallholder. It was never the policy of the colonial government to create a propertied elite, a small class of landowners who controlled Cochinchina's land and its use.

Conclusion

The landowning and concession systems in Cochinchina under the French were confused, complex, and open to abuse. The reality differed greatly from the theory, as formulated in the set of decrees creating the systems. Far from being organized, systematic, and equitable, as envisioned in the laws, concessions and land registration came to be just the opposite--complex, inequitable, and haphazard. Rather than becoming standardized, over time, many states of landholding came to exist, including registration on the địa bạ, holding a permit to occupy, having a temporary title, holding permanent title, paying taxes only, or holding a receipt for a concession request. Surveying was so poor and schemes of one sort or another so numerous that the true state of landholding was never really known beyond the village level. While such a situation may have worked well in traditional Vietnam, it was anathema to a colony-wide concession system and free market in land.

Despite the good intentions of making landowning more secure, the French inadvertently made landholding less secure. The shell of the traditional system was continued without the substance. Thus, while Vietnamese continued to settle and work unoccupied land as before, they no longer necessarily owned their farms and could easily lose them. An official piece of paper with marks on it from the government no longer was permanent and sacrosanct. For those who

came into contact with the administration and chose to seek French titles, the road was fraught with hazards.

One reason the French efforts failed is that they were based on Western traditions of landowning. Titles were of paramount importance in the French notion of security, based on French conditions, the tradition of law, and the capitalist needs for a land market. The French system was imposed on a society and economy with radically different underpinnings. Inasmuch as this was recognized in continuing the Vietnamese system of land registration on the đia bô, what was not noted was the changes wrought in village society which rendered the traditional system insecure for the peasant owner-occupant. The combination of an alien system and fundamental changes in the traditional system opened the way for many abuses and left the peasant at the mercy of a whole set of officials, many of them unknown to him. A modern scholar characterized this situation well:

The French colonial masters taught new lessons which made a paragon of wealth rather than wisdom and virtue. Beyond destroying cultural inhibitions, the Westerners opened up a myriad of legal and illegal avenues for the pursuit of wealth. Instead of taxing new fortunes, the colonial government further rewarded the winners by opening wide loopholes so they could pay little or no tax. For the new culture broker there lay means, motive, and opportunity. . . . The result was a series of land transfers impoverishing peasants, enriching aggressors, and most important, creating a climate of insecurity and helplessness. Once beset by acts of nature often beyond their control now the peasants were doubly beset by acts of man beyond their control.³⁵

There are several reasons why the French government did not respond more directly to the contradictions inherent in the landowning system. None of them involved maliciousness or a conscious attempt to exploit the Vietnamese peasants per se. In fact, what ensued was the opposite of what the administration tried to create through its legislation and believed it was creating in fact. The administration simply paid heed to the theory, the forms created, and was generally out of touch with the reality of the countryside. When failures in the system came to its attention, it responded with new legislation. When specific complaints came to its attention, it dealt with them through inquiries and through the court system. It genuinely felt it was doing a good job.

As for measuring the success of these efforts, one must remember that Cochinchina was a colony, and development, in the fullest sense of the word, was not the intent. The basic aim of making landowning secure was to promote the extension of cultivation. The government thus measured the success of its concession and land registration system differently than did the Vietnamese peasant. It looked at

total acreage under cultivation, taxes collected, and tonnage exported. In all of these measures there was success. Cultivation was greatly extended; hence the program, to the government, was a success. One can therefore understand how, with all the best intentions, the colonial government could inadvertently and, generally, unknowingly create a situation of abuse, inequity, and suffering in the countryside.

NOTES

1. Huai-Te Cheng, Gia Định Thông Chí, translated by G. Aubaret, Histoire et Description de la Basse Cochinchine (Pays de Gia Định) (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1863), p. 18; Pierre Brocheux, "L'Economie et la Société dans l'Ouest de la Cochinchine Pendant la Période Coloniale (1890-1940)" (Unpublished thesis, Paris, 1969), p. 70; Edgar Mathieu, La Propriété Foncière et Ses Modalités en Droit Annamite: Essai Sur l'Organisation et le Régime de la Propriété Rurale en Cochinchine (Paris: J.B. Sirey, 1909), pp. 8-9.
2. A. Boudillon, Le Régime de la Propriété Foncière en Indochine (Paris: Emile Larose, 1915), p.14.
3. Brocheux, "L'Economie et la Société dans l'Ouest de la Cochinchine", p. 70.
4. Gia Định Thông Chí, pp. 18-19.
5. Brocheux, "L'Economie et la Société dans l'Ouest de la Cochinchine, p. 70.
6. Alfred Schreiner, Les Institutions Annamites en Basse-Cochinchine Avant la Conquête Française (Saigon: Claude & Cie., 1901), pp. 313-314.
7. Ibid., pp. 316-317.
8. Schreiner, Les Institutions Annamites, vol. 2, p. 299.
9. Gia Định Thông Chí, p. 19.
10. Schreiner, Les Institutions Annamites, vol. 2, p. 299.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., pp. 299-304.
13. Boudillon, Le Régime de la Propriété Foncière, p. 14.

14. Ibid.
15. Gerald C. Hickey, "Social Systems of Northern Viet-Nam: A Study of Systems in Contact" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1958), p.55.
16. Mathieu, La Propriété Foncière, p. 8; Lý Bình Huê, Le Régime des Concessions Domaniales in Indochine (Paris: F. Loviton & Cie., 1931), pp. 62-64; Gia Định Thông Chí, pp. 18-19.
17. Lê Thành Khôi, Le Viet-Nam, Histoire et Civilisation (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1955), p. 359.
18. Brocheux, "L'Economie et la Société dans l'Ouest de la Cochinchine", p. 21.
19. Ibid., p. 20.
20. Phan Lạc Tuyên, "Cuộc Khán-Hoang Miền Lục-Tĩnh Của Bình-Sĩ Việt Nam Thời Xưa," Bách Khoa 12 (July 1957), p. 15.
21. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
22. Brocheux, "L'Economie et la Société dans l'Ouest de la Cochinchine", p. 21.
23. Le Contre-Amiral, Commandant en Chef Bonnard, "Arrêté Portant Règlement sur la Vente des Terrains du Territoire de Saigon," February 14, 1862, Archives d'Outre Mer (AOM) (Paris) AF Carton 108, Dossier F21(2).
24. Arrêté du Contre-Amiral, Commandant en Chef Bonnard, Saigon, February 20, 1862, AOM (Paris) AF Carton 108, Dossier F21(2).
25. Ibid.
26. Maurice Gil, Le Régime Juridique et Economique de la Propriété Foncière en Indo-Chine (Toulouse: Les Frères Douladère, 1926), p. 26.
27. Ibid.
28. Guy Gran, "Viet-Nam and the Capitalist Route to Modernity: Village Cochinchina, 1880-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1975), p. 245.
29. Decree of January 28, 1865. Boudillon, Le Régime de la Propriété Foncière, p. 41.

30. Milton Osborne, The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia, Rule and Response (1859-1905) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 76.
31. Ibid., pp. 76-83.
32. Ibid., p. 79.
33. Lý Bình Huê demonstrated the French attempt to create this personal and perpetual right of ownership through examination of court cases. See Lý Bình Huê, Le Régime des Concessions Domaniales, pp. 122-157.
34. For a close analysis of this process, see Osborne, The French Presence in Cochinchina.
35. Gran, "Viet-Nam and the Capitalist Route to Modernity," pp. 236-237.

**Cross-Cultural Adjustment of the Vietnamese
in the United States**

Nguyen Dang Liem

Chiều chiều ra đ¹ứng cửa sau,
ng²o' về quê mẹ ru¹ốt đ¹au chín chi¹ều

Every afternoon, I go and stand at the threshold of
the back
door.

My eyes are fixed toward my native horizon, and I feel a
heartbreaking nostalgia.

The lullaby reflects well the feeling of Vietnamese refugees. The massive and controversial movement of Indochinese refugees in recent years creates formidable pragmatic and ethical considerations. Thousands of people have been condemned to death at sea by refusal of aid or sanctuary. Other tens of thousands languish in camps today. Assumptions about refugees, often implicit, generate attitudes which become uncritically translated into public policy and personal behavior. Meaningful debate of the morality and practicality of policy positions and individual attitudes requires better understanding of the refugee experience, behavior, and communicative styles.

When the refugees from Indochina first came in 1975, the United States government was more concerned about their self-sufficiency and employment than about their cross-cultural adjustment and communication. Federally funded programs under the Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP), which became the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) after the influx of Cubans and Haitians in 1980, have since then stressed the vocational training of household heads and almost totally ignored needs for cross-cultural adjustment and communication. The Refugee Act of 1980, passed by the United States Congress, approved the creation of the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the Department of Health and Human Services to administer a program of language and job training.

In declaring the passing of the bill (which would later become the Refugee Act of 1980) by the House Judiciary Committee,

Representative Elizabeth Holzman (D-NY) chair, House Immigration and Refugee Subcommittee, stated on September 19, 1979: "For the first time we have a comprehensive resettlement program." The so-called "comprehensive resettlement program" emphasized language and job training and apparently benefited only a segment of the refugee population, namely the young and able household heads, the majority of whom are males. It did not cater to the needs of the women who are homebound because of the presence of their young children, and the elderly. Furthermore, the program did not mention education in cross-cultural adjustment and communication.

The aim of this paper is to examine the cross-cultural adjustment process of Vietnamese refugees. It will do so by reviewing the circumstances under which these people came to the United States and the rest of the Western world, the effects of their traditions on their adjustment process, the psychoreligious forces that dictate their way of life, thinking, and behavior, and their adjustment patterns. Since the cross-cultural adjustment of the Vietnamese is a direct correlate of the conflict and social cohesiveness between these people and their host community and school setting, this paper will also propose solutions to eradicate conflict and to promote social harmony and cooperation.

Vietnamese Exodus Since 1975

With the sudden fall of Vietnam in April 1975, some 125,000 Vietnamese were hurriedly evacuated to Wake Island, Guam, and the Philippines. The first groups left by airplane straight from Tân Sơn Nhứt Airport, and the last ones by helicopter or small boat from Saigon and then by ship from the high seas off the coast of Vũng Tàu. From the Pacific islands, the people were sent to refugee camps in California, Arkansas, Florida, and Pennsylvania in the United States, and to France, Canada, and Australia. Beginning also in April or shortly after, Cambodian and Laotian refugees crossed the borders into Thailand and crowded makeshift refugee camps.

Life in the camps in Thailand, Wake Island, Guam, the Philippines, and in the United States was hard and full of uncertainties. Everything was new and strange: the food, camp life, the search for sponsors, lack of medical assistance, burning heat and chilling cold, and the communication gap between camp authorities and refugees. The camp authorities wanted to move the refugees as soon as possible, but the sponsors were scattered throughout the nation and the usually large families of refugees were split up, with members separated from one another by thousands of miles. This situation, and the fact that over 75 percent of the refugees still had members of their immediate families in Vietnam, increased the already strong tendency to fatalism among the people, keeping them aloof and noncommunicative with the outside world while they searched

for guidance in their behavior from popular beliefs, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

Since 1975, people have continued to flee Vietnam in unseaworthy fishing boats and rafts or to cross the fireline at the borders of Laos and Cambodia to get into Thailand. It is estimated that half of the Vietnamese never make port, and half of the Lao and Cambodians never reach Thailand. Those more fortunate get to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, or the Philippines and other countries. From July 1979 to approximately the end of 1981, the United States had been accepting 14,000 Indochinese refugees monthly, particularly those already in camps in Southeast Asia. There are now approximately half a million Vietnamese in the United States. Other countries such as France, Canada, and Australia also pledged to accept more Indochinese refugees in Geneva in July 1979. Presently, there are some 200,000 Vietnamese in camps in Southeast Asia. The Orderly Departure Program, which allows qualified Vietnamese to leave the country, is being encouraged for humanitarian purposes such as family reunions.

Vietnamese Traditions

It is not possible to begin an understanding of the adjustment process of Vietnamese refugees without a knowledge of what life was for these people in their homeland.

Life in Vietnam is based on a "rice culture" attuned to the rhythms of seasons of planting and harvesting. For a thousand years, the technology of the water buffalo was stable in the lowlands, and the method of slash-and-burn rice cultivation was traditional among the people in the highlands of Vietnam. One's ancestors, the source of one's life, had planted and reaped on this land. Their graves stood in the rice fields and their spirits continued to watch over the family. Individual death did not mark an end. Here the past and present merged: there existed the sense of a natural harmony between the people of the land, between the living and the dead.

The cradle of Vietnamese society was the village. Enclosed behind a tall bamboo hedge, each village was a separate entity, complete with its own population, customs, and even its own deity enshrined in a communal house, a tiny world within the rural world of Vietnam. The village provided the individual with security in a potentially hostile environment. Within its web of social relations, one's place and duties were exactly defined even in the language itself: the use of kinship terms as personal pronouns in the Vietnamese languages always indicated the social, hierarchical, or age relationship of the two speakers. In the past, few people left the villages where they were born, for to do so was to leave their place in the world, to lose touch with their past and their ancestors' interactions, entering a moral, legal, and spiritual void.

Thus, communication with people from other villages, let alone foreigners, was either nonexistent or based upon an inherent distrust. One could consider these settings rustic, yet it was within the encircling hedges of the villages and the absence of communication with the outside world that the people of Vietnam found the strength to carry on a resistance to cultural and racial assimilation.

In Vietnam, the family rather than the individual is the basic unit of society, and harmony in personal relationships is valued more than personal achievement and competitiveness, which are deemed selfish. Intelligence, scholarship, and, by extension, wisdom are valued more than physical prowess or bravery for its own sake. Physical beauty and grace are important attributes for both men and women, but virtue is praised more highly.

Filial devotion, brotherly love, and conjugal fidelity are highly valued. Marriage was formerly arranged by the family. Second wives and mistresses have been an institution reluctantly tolerated by the first wives.

In communicating with the people from Vietnam, Western observers have often been intrigued with their grace, charm, intelligence, and apparent friendliness. They have also come to realize that the character of these people is more complex than initially suspected (Liem 1980a).

Long experience with foreign domination has taught the people of Vietnam a wariness of all strangers, never entirely nullified by the desire for friendship and mutual understanding. One must never be in a hurry to explain oneself. The Vietnamese possess an inwardness, a well-developed ability to keep their true feelings hidden. Desires are expressed by indirection, by hinting, and by "talking around" the subject.

American straightforwardness is considered at best impolite, if not brutal. In Vietnam, one does not come directly to the point. To do so is for an American a mark of honesty and forthrightness, while a person from Indochina sees it as a lack of intelligence or courtesy. Falsehood carries no moral stricture for a Vietnamese. The essential question is not whether a statement is true or false but what the intention of the statement is. Does it facilitate interpersonal harmony? Does it indicate a wish to change the subject? Hence, one must learn the "heart" of the speaker through his/her words.

In Vietnam, one thinks very carefully before speaking. The American style of "speaking one's mind" is thus misunderstood, the Indochinese listener looking for meanings not present but to be looked for and perhaps "found." On the American side, meanings present are missed, leading the Indochinese to regard Americans as

"unintelligent." The Vietnamese, accustomed to their behavioral norms and communicative styles, will likely encounter cultural difficulties.

Vietnamese Psychoreligious Forces

Before the cross-cultural adjustment of the Vietnamese is discussed, it is crucial to recapitulate the moral and religious universe of these people, that is, their psychoreligious universe. Their religious universe is composed of Buddhism, the cult of ancestors, popular beliefs, Confucianism, and Taoism. To these psychoreligious and philosophical elements, Christianity was added in recent history. There seems to be a perfect harmony of religions in Vietnam in that their teachings coexist as an amalgamous wisdom guiding the behavior of each Indochinese person, whether Buddhist, ancestor worshipper, or Christian.

Popular Beliefs and the Cult of the Ancestors

Nowhere on earth, according to the philosopher Jung, does a society exist which is not convinced of the immortal and transcendental nature of the human soul, embodied in a psychic principle capable of surviving the disintegration of the body. With the Vietnamese, this psychic principle consists of a number of more or less pure elements: the souls and vital principles whose numbers vary from one ethnic group's beliefs to another's. The number of souls ("Hồn") and vital principles ("Phách") vary from males and females: man possesses three souls, which command the superior functions such as life, intelligence, and perception, and seven vital principles, which are concerned with the visceral functions; woman is said to have nine vital principles instead of seven because of her supplementary responsibilities of childbearing. Of the three souls of human beings, the "Linh Hồn," or the soul for intelligence, is the transcendental one. While the principles related to the organic functions wane with life, the Linh Hồn possesses the capacity for survival. This is the origin of the cult of the ancestors among the Vietnamese.

The cult of the ancestors requires that one must honor the dead on a par with the living; and the greatest misfortune conceivable is to die without leaving a male descendant to perpetuate the cult of the ancestors. If a person dies without leaving any descendants at all, however, the souls of the dead, for lack of homage and honor on the occasions of traditional feasts and anniversaries, are doomed to eternal wandering--one of the most appalling maledictions that could afflict any family. It is thus that the custom of polygamy among the Vietnamese was explained and justified in the eyes of the law: it more or less assured that there would be a descendant to participate in the cult. Adoption was considered to be a last resort.

The cult of the ancestors is accompanied by a certain number of beliefs and practices. The Vietnamese believe that the souls of their ancestors are the natural protectors of the family line; it is to them that prayers are addressed, imploring, for example, the curing of a sick child. Their influence, and the sum of good actions they accomplished in their lifetimes, are also used to explain success in business, in examinations, and all other fortunate developments.

In the family, the ancestors' altar is the piece of furniture of greatest value. It is the place where the entire family gathers on the occasions of the main feasts of the year. It is a rallying place--a symbol of family solidarity. Around the altar, in the presence of the ancestors, all discord must disappear, and it is before the altar that major decisions are made, and marriages consummated.

The cult of ancestors, which has no connection with religious faith, exerts a profound influence on the daily life of the Vietnamese people. The recollection of the ancestors--the fear of offending them or soiling their reputations--coupled with the desire to please them are sources of inspiration, which guide the actions of the descendants. Even for a hardened sinner to lack respect for the ancestors is the worst offense imaginable.

The cult of the ancestors can act as a substitute for religion, and many Vietnamese content themselves with it. But this cult is only a consequence or a sort of continuation of the respect owed to the parents beyond their terrestrial existence. Thus, filial piety and the cult of the ancestors are but two aspects of a single obligation. Filial piety stems from the idea that a child is indebted to his parents for all the sacrifices they made for his upbringing and education. The child thus owes his parents many favors and kindnesses, in addition to gratitude for the greatest kindness of all: the gift of life. Consequently, the child thus owes submission to the authors of his existence no matter what his age. When his parents grow older, he ought to prove his gratitude by providing for their wants, as in the words of a popular Vietnamese song:

The kindnesses of my father are comparable to the Thai
mountain,
Those of my mother, to a perennial Spring.
With great fervor I venerate my father and my mother,
In order to conduct myself as a pious son.

Buddhism

According to Buddhism, life is a vast sea of suffering in which one wallows hopelessly. In effect, the vicious circle of existence

is renewal in the course of endless reincarnations. The cause of suffering is desire: desire for life, happiness, riches, or power. If desire were suppressed, the cause of pain would be destroyed. The essence of Buddhism's teaching is contained in the concept of Karma, the law of causality: the present existence is conditioned by earlier existences and will condition those that follow. Thus the virtuous person should strive constantly to improve by doing good deeds and by renouncing sensual pleasures in order to become conscious of Buddha, who is present in every living being. Consequently, desire must be first overcome and a pure heart is necessary to break the chains binding one to an earthly existence in order to reach the state of bliss called Nirvana.

Confucianism

Whereas Buddhism teaches the Indochinese to strive for Nirvana, Confucianism addresses social problems. Confucius founded his doctrine on the basis of etiology. He said that the stabilizing of a regime depends on an ideal and this ideal can have value only if it is based on great examples from the past.

The doctrine of Confucius is set forth in the four classical texts called Tứ Thư and in the five canonical works called Ngũ Kinh. The Confucian teaching points that will help us understand the behavior and the adjustment problems of the Vietnamese are the innate goodness of man, self-perfection, and social relations.

1. The Innate Goodness of Man. According to Mencius, the most distinguished of Confucius' disciples, a man is inherently good; to preserve this inherent goodness, it is only necessary to keep passions in check. If men do not live up to their potential goodness, it is because they neglect their intellect, which atrophies in the humdrum routine of everyday life. The wise man, in contrast to the ordinary man, improves himself through study; he knows himself and is the master of his passions. For this he will be honored by his heirs, and his soul will have peace in the hereafter. In sum, those who do good are rewarded and those who do evil must suffer the consequences.

2. Self-Perfection. According to Confucius, there are four rules which must be followed to achieve perfection. First, one must be interested in everything that exists and second, be able to penetrate the secret, inner essence of things. The third requirement is clear thinking, and the fourth is a pure heart.

3. Social Relations. Confucianism is a doctrine of social hierarchies. It defines the attitudes each member of the society should have by rigid rules and it prescribes the formula for three all-important sets of social interaction, called "Tam Cường." These interactions are between ruler and subject, "Quân Thần"; between father and son, "Phụ Tử"; and between husband and wife, "Phu Phu."

It also dictates a moral code for the man of virtue, "Quân Tử,"[?] who should be a living example of the five cardinal virtues--humanity, equity, urbanity, intelligence, and honesty. The man of virtue should also follow a path of moderation: exaggeration in any direction is to be avoided, and equanimity is to be cultivated. This attitude has often been mistaken by Westerners for impassiveness, placidity, or even hypocrisy. This moral perfection may be progressively attained by traversing four essential steps: the improvement of oneself, the management of the family, the governing of the country, and finally, the pacification of the world.

As for the woman, she should in all circumstances conform to the three obediences: obedience to her father until she is married; obedience to her husband after she leaves her father's house; and obedience to her eldest son, should she be widowed. Further, the model woman should possess the four essential virtues: skill with her hands, agreeable appearance, prudence in speech, and exemplary conduct.

Taoism

Whereas Buddhism teaches the Vietnamese to seek happiness after life in the form of Nirvana, free from the vicious circle of life and death, Confucianism and Taoism both teach seeking of happiness in the present. The former essentially recommends dynamism, activity, and advancement by means of self-improvement; the latter essentially advocates inertia, blending with nature, and harmony with self, with fellow human beings, and with the universe. Thus, one could picture the Buddhist way toward happiness in Nirvana as a direction vertically upward, the Confucian trajectory toward happiness as a horizontal arrow forward, and the Taoist road toward happiness as a horizontal arrow but directly opposite that of the Confucian one. From this picture, it is possible to see how the Taoist influence suggests a neglect of material possessions, success, power, and activity. It directs the Vietnamese to look for pleasure and contentment in nature, quietness, and a peaceful, unworried mind. Especially when faced with apparently insurmountable difficulties such as those of a refugee, a defeatist attitude toward the outside world in general, and toward communication with fellow human beings in particular, may be adopted.

In comparison with the other religions, Christianity was introduced to Vietnam relatively recently. It was not until the sixteenth century that Christian missionaries began preaching the Gospel in Vietnam. As was noted earlier, whether a Vietnamese is Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, or Christian, the teachings of Buddha, Confucius, and Lao Tse constitute a source of wisdom which dictates his behavior in general and his communicative style in particular. Added to these religious forces, his native geographic and historical conditions also play an important role in his world view.

Despite moves to the cities in more recent times, the Vietnamese kept their roots in the villages where agriculture prevailed and dictated the mode of life. For this reason, the Vietnamese peasants face natural catastrophes stoically. Intelligent in their daily work, knowing how to cope with inevitable disasters, they were truly Pascal's "thinking reeds" which bend but do not break under strong winds. This flexibility when faced with difficulties helped the Vietnamese endure through the long years of war and the trauma of exodus and resettlement. It is hoped that it will help them in their cross-cultural communication and cohesion with the host community, a matter which is likely to be hindered by their nostalgia, loneliness, and even lack of stamina due to their attachment to their native land.

Adjustment Patterns

The adjustment patterns of the Vietnamese refugees could be considered under socioeconomic, psychocultural, and sociocultural dimensions. They are the other side of the coin of the conflict and social cohesiveness between the Vietnamese and their host community, since the better adjusted the refugees are the more integrated they are in the community.

Although there are naturally individual variations within an age group, one may discern distinct patterns of adjustment among the elderly, adults, and children. Ingrained in their traditions and governed by their psychoreligious forces, the Vietnamese elderly are encountering more than any other age group among the refugees the difficult task of dealing with many unfamiliar aspects of life. The adult group, eighteen to forty years of age, has the economic advantage of work and earnings but is psychologically disadvantaged because its members were born and raised in the midst of confusion and war. Children seem to adjust themselves in the new cultural environment faster than the other two groups. But they run another kind of risk, namely, of being in a cultural vacuum and not firmly and deeply grasping either the Vietnamese way of life or the American behavioral pattern. Across all ages, there is a common element: the refugees experience more or less acutely "culture shock," which may entail severe mental, emotional, behavioral, and psychosomatic difficulties. Culture shock is largely due to the differences between one's native way of life and the new environment. Human beings, however, possess the ability to adjust or adapt to new conditions and patterns of social interaction.

Because of the likely different adjustment patterns among the elderly, adults, and children, the following discusses patterns specific to these age groups whenever pertinent.

Socioeconomic Adjustment

1. The Elderly. While retirement age is normally sixty-five in the United States, it used to be fifty-five for white collar workers

in Vietnam or for the farmer whenever his children started working in the fields and were able to support him. When one retired, financial needs were met by one's children in accord with the family system and respect for the parents discussed above. In the United States, the Vietnamese elderly's children, even when they want to, are unlikely to be able to support them. They have to rely upon Social Security income, which is minimal for them since they have not worked in this country and contributed to it, and which carries in their own eyes a psychological stigma of being abandoned by their children.

As for the employment of those who consider themselves to be elderly but who are under sixty-five, it is difficult for them to find jobs because of their lack of knowledge of English and of marketable skills. For the lucky ones who get a menial job, their income is predictably very low.

2. The Adults. According to a survey in Illinois in 1980 (Kim 1980), the rate of unemployment of Indochinese refugees steadfastly decreases as the length of their stay in the United States increases (62 percent unemployment rate among those in their first year of residence and 13 percent among the fifth-year residents [Kim 1980:13]). The same study shows that the rise in income level of Indochinese refugees parallels the length of their residency.

The general pattern of employment of Vietnamese refugees is that the majority of them start with menial jobs. This situation is a probable cause for social conflict between the newcomers and the unskilled oldtimers. Similarly, the fact that the refugees depend on public financial assistance in one form or another when their income is low and that they compete for low-cost housing are other causes for potential interethnic conflict.

Pertinent to the employment and social interaction is the Confucian social hierarchy between ruler and subject, which explains the success or failure in the relationship between the Vietnamese worker (in the role of a subject) and his employer (in the role of a ruler), as well as in the relationship between the refugee himself and his sponsor.

The Vietnamese employee considers his employer his mentor. As such, the latter is expected to give guidance, advice, and encouragement, and the former is supposed to execute orders, to perform his task quietly, and not to ask questions or have doubts about the orders. Because of his concept of the relationship, the Vietnamese employee does not voice his opinion to his boss but just listens to his orders. This seemingly passive and unimaginative attitude is aggravated by a linguistic difference between Vietnamese and English. The Vietnamese literal equivalent of the English word "yes" is "đạ" (pronounced /ya/ in the Southern Vietnamese dialect). However, whereas the English "yes" means unequivocally "yes," the Vietnamese "đạ" means a variety of things. In the final analysis, it

can mean "yes," but in general usage it merely means "I am politely listening to you," and it does not at all mean that "I agree with you." The listener may disagree with what he hears, but due to his politeness and deference to his boss (or his sponsor), he cannot say no. His English "yes" for him conveys the polite and noncommittal Vietnamese "da," but to the American it can carry only its English meaning. Thus, the Vietnamese may appear insincere or even stupid to the American.

Another factor that can contribute to strain and misunderstanding between the Vietnamese and the American is the enigmatic Vietnamese smile. The Vietnamese smiles when politeness prevents him from contradicting his interlocutor. He also smiles when he does not completely understand what is said to him and yet, also out of politeness, does not want to ask for clarification.

At the same time, the Vietnamese expects his employer to be paternalistic, kind, and soft-spoken. The latter's direct and straightforward speech sounds rude to him. And because he is not supposed to retort or talk back, the only alternative for him is to try to swallow his frustration until he cannot bear it any more. At that time, his last recourse is to resign and to look for another boss who would be more understandable and kind by Vietnamese standards. This problem of communication is aggravated by the fact that, being in a strange environment and new job and in most cases not speaking English well enough to express his thoughts, the Vietnamese likely misunderstands his American boss and is likely misunderstood by him.

Also relevant to the pattern of employment of Vietnamese is the third set of Confucian social interaction, that between husband and wife. It is quite apparent that the role of the traditional Vietnamese woman and her relationship to her husband according to the Confucian norm may clash with the reality of the American environment. In most cases, the husband's salary alone is not sufficient to meet the high cost of living in the United States. The wife then has to work to supplement the family's income and often is able to get a more lucrative job than her husband. Furthermore, nature seems to favor women in second language learning and the wife makes better progress in speaking English. Again, there is a role reversal. The husband feels, either consciously or unconsciously, threatened. On the other hand, the wife, because of her work and interaction with the outside world, does not have enough time to perform her traditional role in the family. Being exposed for the first time to the "Women's Liberation Movement"--freedom, self-sufficiency, and equality--the Vietnamese woman may react more strongly against the traditional role than her American counterpart. This conflict between her husband's conservative expectations and the role of women in American society may precipitate breakdowns in the family structure. All this may cause marital problems, as seen in the growing number of divorces among refugees. In the past, the

expectation of the four traditional virtues limited the education of the Vietnamese woman to the high school diploma in the majority of cases. In Hawaii particularly, where the job market is tight, openings for the Vietnamese woman are often found in jobs related to the tourist industry and often require her to work at night. These jobs are distasteful and arouse the suspicions of her husband. This may be another source of marital conflict.

In his relationship with a Vietnamese couple, the American man should always bear in mind this Confucian set of standards for social interaction between husband and wife. Whether he is a counselor, social worker, doctor, or salesman, Confucian etiquette requires that he talk to the husband first before talking to the wife. Even while he is talking to the wife, he should always make the husband feel that he is the head of the family. His seating arrangement vis-a-vis the two of them should also reflect this male preponderance: the husband should be in front of and closer to him than the wife.

Psychocultural Adjustment

1. The Elderly. Most if not all of the Vietnamese elderly left their country with the sole objective of being with their children and grandchildren. A few of them are preliterate in their native language. The majority of them, even if they have been attending English classes for the last five or six years, do not speak enough English for their daily living. Given their original purposes for coming to the United States and their linguistic handicap, the Vietnamese elderly are generally not highly motivated to learn about the American culture and social system, let alone to socialize with the American people.

Because of the loss of their children's financial support and their own respect and role in the family, Vietnamese elderly tend to have low self-esteem. Their considerable difficulties in adjusting to the new linguistic and cultural environment result in their feeling alienated from the host community. Ironically, they also feel that they are not as useful to their own groups as they should be. Consequently, they also feel a certain degree of alienation among their own people.

In his transactions with the Vietnamese elderly, the American should remember the Confucian hierarchy according to age mentioned above. He should always show them respect both linguistically and extra-linguistically. The rule requires that he sit still in front of elderly people; his eyes should be directed downward and not straight at his interlocutors; and his feet should be flat on the ground and not crossed. Gesticulation is considered to be bad manners.

2. The Adults. The majority of Vietnamese adults have a high acculturation motivation because they see their future in this

country. However, they are likely to have a low self-image and a feeling of alienation like the elderly.

3. The Children. Vietnamese children mostly have the acculturation motivation, self-image, and feeling of alienation transmitted to them by their parents.

Social interaction between father and son in Confucianism is governed by the rule of total obedience of the son to the father. In terms of psycho-cultural adjustment the rule of order may create conflict between the father and his sons and daughters in the United States. The father adapts more slowly, if at all, to the American, culture where his relationship to his children is less formal and restrictive than what he is used to. He expects them to conform to the Confucian order just as he himself did in his relationship to his own father. But the children are socializing with their own age group and tend to act in the American way. Alas in most cases, if not all, the children speak English better than their father. The father resents the reversal of roles, his children feel it, and the situation could explode into an open confrontation. Or the children may conform to the traditional norm of relationship with their father. In that case, they may feel their difference from their peer group.

Sociocultural Adjustment

1. Fear of the Death of Elderly. As mentioned earlier, the Vietnamese elderly believe in the immortality of the soul. In order for their souls to have a secure life after death, there should be proper ceremonies at their funerals and good care for their souls after death. Unsure of a piece of land for their tombs, necessary offerings, and the existence of an ancestors' altar, the elderly are fearful for their future after death.

2. Relationships within Communities and Families. There are common problems among the Vietnamese refugees of all ages within their own families and communities: being separated from missing family members; painful memories of war and departure from home country; homesickness; difficulty in communication with family in home country; lack of Vietnamese/community support; and family conflicts due to role reversals.

3. Relationships with Other Groups. An overall lack of English language competence among the refugee population, especially among the elderly and homebound women, prevents them from having meaningful relationships with their host community, citizens and student organizations, and often civic clubs. It also hinders their use of health and social services.

4. Organizational Participation. There is an almost total lack of American organizational participation by the Vietnamese elderly, a

matter explained by their English-language proficiency. In places like Honolulu where there are well-organized Indochinese mutual assistance associations, the elderly have an opportunity to meet with their own people (Honolulu has ten Indochinese mutual assistance associations whose total memberships account for a large majority of the Indochinese local population, and which function in close collaboration with one another under the Council of Hawaii Indochinese Mutual Assistance Associations).

Homebound women participate more actively in Vietnamese mutual assistance and religious associations than their male counterparts. It is very encouraging to see that Vietnamese elementary and high school students are also getting more and more involved in extracurricular school activities.

5. Use of Mass Media. The use of mass media in English as a means of information is minimal among the elderly population because of their deficiency in the English language. The elderly and adults read local newsletters and nationally circulated journals in their vernaculars. It is a great source of consolation for them to publish in these periodicals.

Conclusion

It is the conviction of the writer that the ultimate goal in resettling refugees in the United States is to make the newcomers not only taxpayers but happy citizens as well. In order to arrive at that goal, not only do we need to assist them to become economically self-sufficient, but we also need to help them, and ourselves, to have better mutual understanding and appreciation. The American dream of liberty, equality, and freedom will not be completely realized until the newcomers--the refugees and immigrants--are given their chance to enjoy it and to contribute their human heritage to our cultural plurality.

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Black Flight Suits and White Áo-Dài: Borrowing and Adaptation of Symbols of Vietnamese Cultural Identity

A. Terry Rambo

Area Studies and mainline social science, as practiced within the disciplines of anthropology, economics, history, and sociology, have tended to follow distinctive developmental paths. The social sciences have emphasized theoretical innovation, with collection of data primarily undertaken to provide empirical testing of new theories. Area studies, in contrast, have been heavily empirical in orientation, starting from the collection of "facts" about particular countries or cultures and drawing on theories developed in the social sciences in order to help explain these data. One consequence of this division is a frequent lag between formulation of new theories in the social sciences and their application in area studies. A more serious consequence is the retention of outmoded theoretical positions in area studies long after they have been abandoned within the social science disciplines themselves. An example of such lag is offered by a recent monograph which synthesizes what is known about the ethnology of Malaysian aborigines (Carey 1976) using an ethnic classification scheme derived from the theoretical postulates of the kulturkreislehr (culture-circle school). This is an extreme diffusionist viewpoint which flourished in Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s but was largely discredited in mainline anthropology more than thirty years ago.

Vietnamese studies appears to be no exception among the area studies in suffering from a lag between the making of theoretical advances in the social sciences and their application to the concrete data with which it is concerned. This is nowhere better illustrated than by the continuing reliance on historicism as the main mode of causal explanation. This is exemplified by the continuing concern, one might fairly say preoccupation, with the historical origins of Vietnamese culture. A seemingly endless stream of papers is published discussing the emergence out of the mists (and myths) of prehistory of the ethnic group now labeled as Vietnamese. It seems that, to many scholars in our field, knowing the origin of a thing is a sufficient explanation of its contemporary character.

In this historicist mode of scholarship, special attention is given to trying to identify those aspects of contemporary Vietnamese culture which are ancient and indigenous as opposed to those elements

which represent more recent borrowings from foreign cultures. This search seems to be motivated, at least in part, by the implicit assumption that indigenous elements are somehow more genuine and significant than are borrowed traits. Such a concept of cultural development might be labeled as the "jeepney model" of ethnogenesis. Just as a skilled mechanic could take a Filipino jeepney, remove a couple of hundred kilograms of chrome, scrape off the garish paint, and find underneath it all an authentic olive drab American army jeep, so can the dedicated researcher, by identifying and stripping off all foreign borrowings, discover the true, authentic Vietnamese ethnic identity. It can be shown, for example, that when the tonal character and lexical items borrowed from Chinese are removed, the Vietnamese language belongs to the Mon-Khmer family, or that, when patrilineal relationship terms of Sinitic origin are subtracted, the Vietnamese kinship system is fundamentally bilateral in nomenclature.

Knowledge of origins, is, of course, intrinsically interesting. It can also, as John Whitmore suggests in his paper presented at this symposium, provide useful insights regarding potential points of strain and conflict within a society. It does not, however, constitute a sufficient explanation of the current form and functioning of a culture. This point is hardly original with the present author since it was first made almost a century ago by the historian Frederick Jackson Turner when he forcefully argued that the unique character of American culture was better explained in terms of its adaptation to the special needs of frontier life than it was by reference to its putative Germanic tribal origins (Turner 1894).

Although he did not use the term, Turner's view of ethnogenesis was that of an adaptive system, changing and evolving in response to environmental forces. This model of cultural development is analogous to the evolutionary process in biology in which the original gene pool of a plant or animal population receives new genes as a result of mutation (the cultural analog of which is innovation) and cross-breeding with other populations (borrowing in cultural terms), and loses old genes as the consequence of natural selection. Every gene that survives within the evolving pool is as genuine and important a part of the whole as every other, regardless of whether borrowed or not. It is impossible to selectively remove the genes of "foreign" origin and still have a functioning organism. It is the gene pool rather than the jeepney that I believe offers the more appropriate model for analysis of Vietnamese cultural development.

To illustrate the value of the gene pool model as opposed to the jeepney model in the analysis of cultural change, I propose to examine a number of cultural traits that serve as symbols of Vietnamese national identity. I am focusing on symbols of national identity because these might be expected to be among the most stable and enduring cultural elements and, thus, the traits least likely to be of foreign origin. This view appears to be confirmed by the first case to be described--the black flight suit--since its clear

identification with foreign forces led to its total rejection as an acceptable symbol of Vietnamese national identity. As subsequent examples of the People's Army pith helmet and the áo-dài national dress will illustrate, however, foreign origin has not always disqualified borrowed traits from achieving prominence as symbols of Vietnamese identity.

Some years ago, General Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, then the prime minister of the Republic of Vietnam, won global notoriety when he and his glamorous ex-stewardess wife appeared in public wearing black flight suits with lavender neck scarves. Ridiculed by Western journalists for looking like an "Asian Captain Midnight," Kỳ was accused of employing a borrowed foreign cultural symbol--a flight suit--that, if it had any meaning at all to Vietnamese peasants, was as a symbol of the alien American air force, not at that time a notably popular foreign presence in the countryside. Clearly, this was an inappropriate symbol to employ in attempting to rally the population in support of the Saigon government and, given the outcome of the war in April 1975, the black flight suit was demonstrated to be an unsuccessful borrowing; a symbol manqué, if you will. One might well argue that a more appropriate symbolic dress for an aspiring national leader such as Kỳ would have been the áo bà ba, the black pajamas worn by the Mekong Delta peasants (and, of course, the guerrilla fighters of the National Liberation Front who sought to identify with the rural population).

The forces that victoriously entered Saigon in April 1975 were not dressed in black pajamas, however, but instead wore the uniform of the Vietnamese People's Army; rubber-soled canvas sneakers, green trousers and tunics, and, on their heads, the distinctive pith helmets of the Northern regular forces--the "hard hats" as they were known to American G.I.'s during the war. A uniform is by its very nature a symbol of identity, so that it is curious that not a single component of the Vietnamese People's Army outfit is Vietnamese in origin. The pith helmet, in particular, is every bit as foreign in origin as Kỳ's black flight suit although, in this case, a trait borrowed from the French colonialists rather than from the American neocolonialists. So closely was it identified with the former rulers that it was popularly referred to as the "casque coloniale" (Nguyễn Đình Hòa: personal communication), and because of these associations the Diem regime discouraged its wear by civil servants in the South after 1954. And yet today that same borrowed helmet is being employed as a major symbol of Vietnamese nationalism. Why, one is tempted to ask, if there is such concern with ethnic authenticity, did not the forces of national reunification march into Saigon wearing instead the traditional conical hats of the Vietnamese peasantry?

The answer, of course, is that these forces belonged to a modern army. Modern armies constitute cultural systems in their own right which must, in order to operate efficiently, follow certain

functionally determined rules of behavior. One common rule is the wearing of distinctive uniforms, visible identification markers which set members of the army apart from the population as a whole. When the People's Army was being formed, the only readily accessible model of what a modern army should be like was the French colonial army, and, therefore, it is hardly surprising that its solar topee, suitably modified with a red star (another key identity symbol of non-Vietnamese origin), was adopted as the standard headgear of the nascent Vietnamese regular army.

Given the conditions under which infantry warfare was waged in Vietnam, the pith helmet was not a bad choice, certainly one superior in practical terms to the other headgear worn by the French forces during the Indochina War--the beret--which would later be adopted by special American units when they in turn were seeking uniforms appropriate to counterinsurgency troops. The pith helmet was cheap, easy to make in quantity, lightweight, durable, offered protection from the tropical sun and rain, and provided an ideal framework for the attachment of camouflage. It survived the intense selective pressures of combat and became, in the process, a universally recognized symbol of the People's Army of Vietnam, a symbol whose foreign origins have largely been forgotten. In contrast, the flight suit was functionally linked to a form of high technology warfare that proved ill-suited to Vietnamese conditions. The forces that relied on this inappropriate technology lost the struggle and the flight suit remained a foreign symbol, indeed, a symbol of subservience to foreign interests.

It may be argued, of course, that the pith helmet does not offer a convincing case of the borrowing of a national symbol. After all, it was adopted so recently that its durability within the cultural system cannot yet be established, and it may well still suffer the same fate as Mao jackets in the Chinese People's Liberation Army or as Zumwalt suits in the U.S. Navy. Perhaps a more profound and convincing example of the borrowing of foreign cultural traits which are then transformed into symbols of Vietnamese national identity is offered by the case of the áo-dài dress. Today, the áo-dài is universally recognized as the national dress of Vietnamese women. It is as distinctive in its own right as the butterfly sleeves of the Filipino gowns made famous by Imelda Marcos or the sarong kebaya of Malaysia and Singapore, which has been given wide publicity by the aggressive advertising campaign conducted by Singapore Airlines. At the very same time that Kỳ was playing the fool in Saigon in his black flight suit, Mme Nguyễn Thị Bình, foreign representative of the National Liberation Front, was dazzling antiwar conferences in Europe with her white áo-dài. No one, however, accused her of un-Vietnamese behavior or slavish imitation of foreign cultural traits.

And yet, it is well known that the áo-dài is no more Vietnamese in origin, and, from a historical point of view, hardly much more ancient in time of adoption, than Kỳ's flight suit or the People's

Army pith helmet, although in this case it represents borrowing from China rather than from the West. Until their wear was prohibited in 1739 by royal edict, a short skirt (mán or vái) and halterlike top, similar to those still worn by Jarai and Rhade tribeswomen, were the traditional dress of Vietnamese women. In their place, the court demanded the use of tunic and trousers copied from the then current fashion in the Chinese court. Adoption of this foreign borrowing met with considerable popular resistance, and despite several subsequent decrees banning the wearing of skirts their use continued in remote villages in the Northern part of Vietnam until the 1920s. In the less tradition-oriented Southern region, however, adoption of the tunic and trousers was more rapid and complete and, over time, the tails of the tunic were gradually lengthened to become the fashionable áo-dài of today.

The emergence of the áo-dài as a cultural symbol is particularly interesting because it simultaneously involved its wearers in making statements about their ethnic identity and class affiliation. Thus, while the traditional loose-fitting áo-dài was worn on ceremonial occasions by members of both sexes and all classes in the countryside, in the developing cities of the colonial era the new form-fitting style was worn exclusively by elite women, who were able by this single act to establish their social status, their modernity, and, perhaps most importantly, their adherence to being Vietnamese. Wearing of Western-style skirts, while perhaps equally suitable for displaying one's commitment to modernity, was left to the socially despised lower-class con gáis of the colonial masters.

Wearing of the form-fitting áo-dài also carried certain feminist connotations. Consequently, it was attacked in the 1920s and 1930s by traditionalists as being un-Vietnamese and representing a major threat to the established social order, particularly the subordination of wives to their husbands (Nguyễn Ngọc and Nguyễn Văn Luân n.d.; Phạm Thế Ngũ 1965:422). Even in the 1960s, the wearing of the áo-dài with a scoop-necked collar in public appearances by Mme Nhu, the wife of President Diệm's brother, was cause for scandalized comment by traditionalists. Despite such resistance, the form-fitting áo-dài gradually won full public acceptance, with its use spreading from the urban elite to even poor peasant girls dressing up for special occasions. By the time Mme Bình was marching through the streets of Paris, the áo-dài was indeed a true symbol of Vietnamese national identity and the fact of its foreign origin was largely forgotten.

The cultural traits described thus far have all been items of dress. Consequently, the objection may be raised that, as such, they are no more than ephemeral fashions, changing according to passing whims and thus not constituting part of the true cultural core, that set of social, political, and religious institutions which are asserted to have given Vietnam its unique identity over the last two millennia. As a social scientist who views society as an integrated

system (Rambo 1983) I find the idea of the a priori identification of certain institutions as belonging to a stable core, while others are assigned marginal, almost epiphenomenal status, to be theoretically unacceptable. There is no valid basis for asserting that the kinship system, for example, is more of a core institution than is style of dress. In fact, there are empirical grounds on which to argue the reverse: Witness the persistence of the basic dichotomous pattern of male and female dress (i.e., trousers versus skirts) in the West since the Dark Ages despite massive changes in most other institutions, including most of those usually assigned to the cultural core.

Leaving theoretical considerations aside for the moment, let us look at the case of a social institution usually considered to be at the very center of Vietnamese national identity, the traditional rural village (làng-xã). Writers, Vietnamese and foreign alike, wax eloquent over the village. It is seen, in the words of Lê Thành Khôi (1955:133, translation mine), as being "anchored to the soil at the dawn of history," the one indigenous social institution that "was not touched by the [Chinese] conquerors, and has constituted, behind its bamboo hedge, the anonymous and unseizable retreat where the national spirit is concentrated."

Lê Thành Khôi's words accurately reflect the sentiment felt by many Vietnamese intellectuals toward the village as a historical institution, but they are hardly founded on historical reality. The reality is, as I have elsewhere discussed at considerable length (Rambo 1973:297-303), that virtually nothing is known about the organization of villages in Vietnam prior to the Chinese occupation. In fact, the scant available evidence suggests that the pre-Sinitic village resembled a modern-day Mường settlement, which has, of course, a totally different pattern of organization from that of the traditional Vietnamese village. It was only after the Chinese conquest and the incorporation of the rural population of Northern Vietnam into a large-scale agrarian state that village organization took on the characteristics which contemporary scholars consider to be traditional. It is likely that some of its characteristics are direct borrowings from standard Chinese administrative forms while others originated as adaptations to life under a state regime well characterized as an "oriental despotism." It is certainly significant in this regard that many of the features of village organization considered uniquely Vietnamese, such as corporate landownership (the công điền plots distributed to its citizens by the village) and a high level of administrative autonomy (e.g., "the emperor's writ stops at the village gate"), were attributed by Karl Marx to Oriental peasant villages in general as characteristic of the social evolutionary stage associated with the "Asiatic mode of production" (Krader 1975).

This brings us to a key point about the role of borrowings in Vietnamese culture, the fact that pre-Sinitic society in Vietnam was

essentially tribal in character, probably corresponding to Elman Service's "chiefdom" evolutionary stage (Service 1962), a form of social organization not unlike that of the Mường at the time of the French conquest. Tribal culture, however genuine and indigenous to the country it may have been, did not offer a suitable basis on which to organize a large-scale agrarian state. If social evolution was to proceed, new cultural forms were needed. Given the proximity of the highly successful Chinese prototype of a hydraulic civilization, it is hardly surprising that many of its institutions were borrowed by the people inhabiting what is now Vietnam. It is only after incorporation of the institutions necessary to support a state level of social evolution into their previously tribal culture that they became, in effect, truly Vietnamese, by which I mean people with a pattern of beliefs and behavior that today we would recognize as being Vietnamese. Thus, if we employ the "jeepney model" to reconstruct their pre-Sinitic culture, we end up not with something authentically Vietnamese but instead with something that modern Vietnamese themselves would label as "savage," a culture suitable to người mại, not người kinh.

That Vietnamese culture has evolved from simple to complex and in this evolutionary process has borrowed much from other cultures should hardly be cause for comment. Virtually all dynamic societies have engaged in similar extensive borrowing. The classic case is the absorption of Roman institutions by the Germanic tribes as they infiltrated the imperial frontiers, a massive exercise in cultural borrowing that laid the foundations for the development of modern Western civilization. Yet I doubt that any serious scholar would suggest that Germanic folk customs and institutions constitute the true cultural core of present-day European society (although Himmler and his Nazi colleagues spouted such nonsense in their Aryan racial mythology). Knowing the origins of contemporary cultural traits is intrinsically interesting--witness the continuing popular fascination with folklore and the search for "roots"--but it does not constitute a theoretically sound basis for explaining the present way of functioning of social systems.

Such understanding is more effectively sought through analysis of the interactions between the traits, regardless of their origin, which comprise the contemporary system. Particularly rewarding is to track how the system has responded over time to the selective forces emanating from its larger environment. Historical research is integral to such analysis of cultural evolution and adaptation, but it is history applied to understanding processes of change, not merely assigning sources of origin to existing traits.

Vietnamese culture, with its long history of borrowing and adaptation, offers an ideal subject for such evolutionary analysis. The growing body of documentation provided by area studies specialists offers a rich empirical base for the testing of social science theories, including the "gene pool model" of cultural

evolution set forth earlier in this paper. At the same time, theoretical innovations can offer stimulus for the collection of new data. Current discussions by Vietnamese scholars of the "Asiatic mode of production" and its application to understanding of Vietnamese history (Pham Huy Thông: personal communication) are likely to provide one such stimulus to research. Ideally, Vietnamese studies should develop as a dialectical exchange between fact and theory, area studies specialists, and social scientists. Such development, however, requires the willingness to abandon outmoded interpretations. A first useful step in this direction might be to place the "jeepney model" in the intellectual junkyard where it rightfully belongs.

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**Relata, Relationships, and Context: A Perspective
on Borrowed Elements in Vietnamese Culture**

Neil Jamieson

In Vietnamese studies, both in the United States and in Vietnam itself, far too much attention has been devoted to studying single elements of the culture and far too little to the relationships among them, to the context which defines (and constantly redefines) their meaning and function. This tendency to focus on the relata--the things that are related--in great detail while ignoring their interrelationships leads to serious problems and even tragic misunderstandings when we talk about Vietnam, or Vietnamese culture, or the "Vietnameseness" of something or someone.

The tendency to study traits in isolation is intimately related to another salient characteristic of Vietnamese studies: a persistent concern with identity. But why should Vietnamese identity, both national and personal, be so much more problematic than that of many other peoples? Vietnamese studies sometimes seems to be virtually obsessed with studying the sources and chronological priority of indigenous traits, presumably because it is assumed that this sort of work somehow provides a viable basis for a distinctive Vietnamese identity, an identity built upon a solid core of uniquely Vietnamese traits. Borrowed elements in Vietnamese culture often seem to be viewed as unfortunate blemishes, or disruptive intrusions, or superficial overlays upon some pristine and eternal core of authentic Vietnamese culture. It may well be the case, however, that to no small extent identity remains a problem for many Vietnamese precisely because efforts to construct an identity are so often based upon this mistaken notion, which is in itself posited upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the very nature of culture.¹ If that which we seek does not possess the qualities we attribute to it, we can never get enough of it to satisfy our need.

In response to this perception of the state of affairs in Vietnamese studies, this paper is not so much about Vietnam itself as about different ways of looking at Vietnam. In particular, I want to use the concept of "borrowing" to emphasize the importance of viewing Vietnam as a dynamic sociocultural system in which the meaning and function of any part of the system are determined primarily by its relationship to other elements in the system. Both meaning and

function, in other words, are determined by context rather than by origin.

Context in the general sense means "setting." I use the word here to refer to a complex set of clusters of relationships, a large and complex system consisting of many interrelated subsystems and itself in turn a part of still larger systems. For example, we are accustomed to talking about kinship systems, agricultural systems, political systems, religious systems, and so on. We also talk about family systems, village systems, state systems, and many other kinds of systems. We use the word "system" in this way to convey the idea that there is something about the way the various parts are arranged and related to each other that gives this particular configuration of elements special characteristics. A system is not merely a random collection of things that happen to be together.

Looked at another way, however, it is clear that kinship, agriculture, religion, and politics are all interrelated dimensions of family life. A family system involves some degree of functional integration of the way its members earn a living, worship, reckon kinship, settle disputes, and cooperate with other families to accomplish tasks essential to the common good. At the same time, of course, villages are composed of many families and societies are composed of many villages (and cities). Ultimately, the entire human population, in turn, is but one among many species in the larger biotic community through which energy flows and in which matter and information are exchanged.

Clearly, then, each part of such an entity--kinship terminology, family, rice fields, political institutions, and so on--consists of a more or less functionally integrated set of relationships, and each of these sets (or "systems") is simultaneously a subset or subsystem in a larger system or set of relationships. There is a complex hierarchy of sets of relationships and mega-relationships between sets. This web of relationships is what I mean by context.

It is this context that is the primary unit of adaptation and evolution. It is this complex hierarchy of sets of relationships that evolves, that changes in patterned ways over periods of time. And it is just such an evolving context that is the primary referent of the noun "Vietnam" or the adjective "Vietnamese." To be Vietnamese means to be enmeshed in a particular interlocking cluster of such sets of relationships, to be an integral part of this specific evolving context.²

Perhaps a simple and relatively recent example from Vietnamese history can help to clarify this point and illustrate its significance for analysis. In the nineteenth century Vietnamese men did not get haircuts but wore their hair long and pulled up in a bun. The significance to this male chignon extended far beyond habit or mere questions of style. It was deeply embedded in the primary

Neo-Confucian values of moral debt (ón) and filial piety (hiếu). Many people believed that to cut one's hair was to sully the body one possessed as a gift from one's ancestors. To willfully mar this product of their loins, it was felt, was a clear breach of filial piety and indicated a failure to acknowledge one's moral debt to one's progenitors.

To Nguyễn Đình Chiếu, the renowned blind poet who was so articulate a spokesman for the early phase of patriotic resistance to the French, getting a haircut in the Western manner was for a Vietnamese the moral equivalent of treason. It not only symbolized collaboration with the French invaders; it was, worse yet, a visible rejection of one's Vietnamese-ness. In his last major work, written in demotic script (chữ nôm) about 1874, Chiếu summed up the prevailing orthodox position on this subject precisely in terms of a strong link between patriotism and continued adherence to traditional values.

I would rather face eternal darkness
Than see the face of traitors

.
Being blind but keeping one's honor intact and untarnished
Is better than having eyes and accepting corruption.
Being blind and keeping one's body and mind intact
Is better than having eyes but having to cut hair and
trim the beard.³

The first forty years of Vietnamese resistance to French colonialism were characterized by such strict adherence to traditional ways. But by the turn of the century even the most ardent patriots had to acknowledge that the soldiers of righteousness (nhĩa quân) had shed their blood in a pathetically ineffectual attempt to oust the colonial forces. By 1900 the conquest and reorganization of Vietnam as a colony of France appeared to be established beyond doubt for all practical purposes. In 1901 Governor-General Paul Doumer complacently reported that not a single one of the colonial troops in Indochina had been killed since 1897, while most of the resistance leaders were either dead or imprisoned.⁴

After forty years of painful effort the Vietnamese had been singularly unsuccessful either in expelling the French or in evolving a satisfactory adaptation to their presence. Many Vietnamese burned with shame and grew incapacitated with self-doubt. "What contempt our ancestors must have for us!" exclaimed one anguished writer.⁵ "Why do they rule the world, while we bow our heads as slaves?" another anonymous poet asked.⁶ It was from this abyss of despair that Vietnamese intellectuals marveled at the stunning victory of Japanese forces over the Russians in the war of 1904-1905. And thus did Phan Bội Châu travel to Japan in 1905 and again in 1906 to observe at first hand the "miracle of the rising sun" that had

enabled a yellow-skinned Asian people to defeat a nation of white-skinned barbarians.

When Phan Bội Châu, himself a paragon of Neo-Confucian virtue, saw for himself how the Japanese seemed to have transformed themselves into a people capable of resisting modern Western firepower by successfully incorporating the mysterious source of Western dominance into their own sociocultural system, he returned to Vietnam to advocate the "new learning" (tân học). Suddenly, many elements of traditional Vietnamese culture came to be viewed in a new light, and many other Vietnamese flocked to Japan to learn how the miracle had been accomplished.⁷

The Tonkin Free School Movement began in Hanoi in March 1907 as a direct result of the impact of the Japanese example and it quickly spread throughout the land. This movement emphasized first and foremost instruction in the romanized alphabet (quốc ngữ), which had been available and in limited use for some time but was denigrated by patriots like Nguyễn Đình Chiểu as a symbol of collaboration with French imperialism. Until the early years of the twentieth century the perceived intimate bonds among traditional values, the symbols of those values (such as writing in characters and long hair worn in a bun), patriotism, and Vietnamese-ness had severely inhibited the widespread acceptance of quốc ngữ. But in the changing context of 1906-1907, quốc ngữ came to be hailed as the foremost weapon of patriotism.

Volunteers improvised makeshift Vietnamese language courses and texts in mathematics, geography, and history along with a smattering of economics, science, and political theory. To further popularize the modernizing message of the school, lecturers went forth into the community twice a month to present public talks to a wider audience.⁸ Among the most popular of these speakers was a young man named Phan Chu Trinh, who had himself been spectacularly successful in the traditional mandarin examination of 1901 and who had visited Japan in the company of Phan Bội Châu in 1906.

In one of his well-attended public lectures, Phan Chu Trinh turned to the subject of haircuts. At the conclusion of his speech he called out to his audience in a ringing voice:

Several thousand years ago our people cut off their hair and tattooed themselves. Only when Chao T'ò took over our country did we become infected with Chinese customs, but even then only a few invaders came in and . . . compelled us to imitate them that our men began to let their hair grow and wore it in a bun . . . and we became Chinese. but today . . . fortunately, Heaven has opened our minds. We have awakened and the entire nation is modernizing. So go out and cut your hair! Don't leave any more land for that stupid gang of parasites to colonize on top of your heads,

from which they can suck your blood! Wouldn't it feel wonderful to be rid of them? Don't you think so? Wouldn't it?⁹

With one deft thrust Trinh had linked the contemporary colonialism of the French with the historical colonialism of the Chinese and vividly portrayed the parasitic nature of both with the metaphor of lice. Thus the entire traditional world view--and in particular the conservative Neo-Confucian elements prized so highly by Nguyễn Đình Chiểu and other nineteenth century patriots--was equated with a set of conditions in which parasites (lice, the Chinese, and the French) could flourish at the expense of the Vietnamese people. To many Vietnamese the traditional hairstyle abruptly ceased to be a symbol of Vietnameseness and patriotism; it was suddenly transformed into a symbol of backwardness and subjugation to foreigners.

In this new context, to get a haircut was a symbolic declaration of one's receptivity to modern ideas, modern education, and modern technology. It became an emblem of modernity, which was for a rapidly growing number of Vietnamese becoming associated with anticolonialism, patriotism, and independence. By cutting off one's hair, one was not only literally depriving the parasitic lice of a place to nest; one was also symbolically depriving the human parasites of colonialism of the conditions of backwardness and conservatism that enabled them to infest the land.¹⁰

Fewer than thirty-five years after Nguyễn Đình Chiểu's last major patriotic poem, the signs of his symbols had been completely reversed. In this new context things like romanized script and haircuts had different meanings and different functions. There is nothing intrinsically Vietnamese about writing in demotic script or in quốc ngữ, about either long hair or short hair. The relationship between a particular cultural trait, an ethnic identity, and any specific political stance is basically symbolic, arbitrary, and contextual. To advance our understanding of Vietnam (or anyplace else) we must go beyond the study of particular traits such as hairstyles or writing systems to look for patterns of continuity and change in the relationships between the traits in question and other elements in the sociocultural system. It is the context that evolves; and the context consists essentially of hierarchical sets of relationships, not simply the things that are related.

Another wonderfully revealing example of the process of contextual evolution occurred twenty-five years after Trinh's brilliant speech on haircuts. This was the heated debate over the "new poetry" in Vietnam. During the years 1933 through 1936, especially, passionate arguments over the merits of this or that poem raged in the newspapers and cafes of Hanoi and Saigon. These lively discussions revolved around radical differences in both form and content between the "new poetry": and earlier poetic conventions in

Vietnam.¹¹ In retrospect it is quite remarkable how little most of these debates had to do with the intrinsic artistic merits of the works in question.

The most agitated and most articulate criticisms of any particular poem tended to be at bottom not at all for or against the poetry in and of itself. People were instead supporting or opposing the broader literary, philosophical, and political trends to which the specific work was perceived to be related. The meaning and function of this poetry--and the diverse and extreme critical reactions to it--therefore had many different levels. These levels in effect corresponded to a sequence of links in a chain of interwoven relationships extending to a broader and deeper range of elements in Vietnamese society and culture.¹²

This controversy over the new poetry can readily be seen as a simple extension of the earlier ones over hairstyles and writing systems. In emblematic pattern the new poetry was to the old as the haircut was to the chignon, and as quốc ngữ was to chữ nôm. The romanized alphabet, haircuts, and the new poetry represented modernization, which was equated in the minds of many Vietnamese with their quest for dignity and strength in the modern world and thus represented as well markers to the most hopeful path to a viable Vietnamese identity. Chữ nôm, long hair worn in a bun, and the old prosody stood at this time for the rigidity in traditional society that was believed to have led to the shameful subjugation of Vietnamese to foreigners. No one kind of writing system or hairstyle or poetry, of course, was more genuinely Vietnamese than the other except as part of an evolving context at some particular historical moment.

The phrase "evolving context" shifts one's view from the study of things to a greater attention to the process through which adaptive change leads to the replacement of certain elements in the sociocultural system by others believed to be better suited to new conditions. Through a continual process of mutual adjustment, then, all parts of a sociocultural system tend to change over time to better achieve and maintain a certain degree of compatibility in their multiple relationships with various other parts. Or, sometimes, they don't. And then the people and institutions whose existence is entangled with the unresolved contradictions and incompatibilities within the system of relationships have problems.

The controversy surrounding the new poetry provides us with an excellent example of the more complex contextual ramifications of change within a complex system. One key factor in the problematic nature of the web of relationships between the new poetry and other elements in the Vietnamese sociocultural system of the time was romanticism. Most of the new poetry (as well as many novels, short stories, and essays of the time) was avowedly "Romantic" (lang mạn) in a sense clearly derived from nineteenth-century European usage. A

discussion of the significance of romanticism, often implicit, lurked in the background of many of the debates over the merits and shortcomings of the new poetry in Vietnam. This in turn involved a number of related questions. What was the relationship between individualism and romanticism? And what was the relationship among individualism and the family, the village, and the state? These questions were of crucial importance in considering the answer to the larger, overriding question of the relationship between individualism in particular (and Westernization in general) and aspirations for achieving both national independence and a viable but distinctly Vietnamese modern identity.

By this time, however, traditional Vietnamese culture was so discredited in the eyes of some people that radical change in imitation of the apparently more successful Western tradition seemed to be the only hope. Nguyễn Tường Tam, who published under the pen name of Nhất Linh, wrote an editorial in Phong Hoá, no. 18 (October 20, 1932), that concluded:

Each side has its good points and its bad points, and it is not yet certain where morality lies. But when the old civilization is brought out and put into practice before our very eyes, we are dissatisfied with the results.

We can only continue to hope in Western civilization. Where that civilization will lead us, we do not know. But our destiny is to travel into the unknown, to keep changing and progress.

Thus Tam and his newspaper, Phong Hoá, quickly became staunch supporters of the new poetry movement.

Implicated as it was with romanticism and individualism, however, the new poetry posed far greater difficulties for the process of mutual adjustment within the sociocultural system than did haircuts or writing systems. The linkage between quốc ngữ, haircuts, modern education, and the new poetry was one of direct lineal progression. But individualism--introduced through French textbooks, derived mainly from French literary tradition, and advocated and popularized through the new poetry and associated "romantic" novels and short stories written by and for young products of the French school system--was more intimately related to and much less compatible with other basic subsystems in Vietnam than any of the other innovations. When put into practice in daily life individualism clearly had a very different meaning and function in Vietnam than it had had in the quite dissimilar context of nineteenth-century France.

Especially at the basic levels of the family and the village, individualism in particular was in direct and apparently irreconcilable conflict with some of the most fundamental attitudes, values, and institutions of the Vietnamese people. The immense

differences between Vietnam and France in this regard may be traced back to the very roots of the Western European and East Asian traditions. For Vietnamese, particularly following the Neo-Confucian emphasis of the elite class during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the family was the root metaphor of society and the primacy of moral debt to parents was the foundation of civilization. But Western civilization had always been based upon a very different principle.

As far back as the book of Genesis (2:24) the Judeo-Christian tradition has unequivocally stated that "a man shall leave father and mother and cling to his wife." This was also the teaching of Jesus (e.g., Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7). Here the clash between Eastern and Western cultures was revealed at what was to the Vietnamese the most profound level imaginable. Most adult Vietnamese in the early 1930s had been raised to believe that "spouses are like a garment that one can take off and cast aside, but brothers [i.e., close consanguinal kin] are like one's arms and legs."¹³ How could individualism and its associated notions of romantic love and personal freedom possibly be reconciled with filial piety and the primacy of family obligations? No one had a good answer to that question. But to some of the young men and women who wrote and who read the new poetry, this implied that the old family system itself would have to be overturned if Vietnamese society were to be modernized and revitalized to take a place of independence and pride in the twentieth century. Others, however, decried this prescription as selfish and harmful to society. It was intolerable to many because it seemed to them to be both un-Vietnamese and inhumane.

It is highly significant that during the very years that the controversy over the new poetry was at its peak, many of the most popular novels written in Vietnamese were based upon precisely those vexatious dilemmas posed by the conflicting demands of individualism on the one hand and communalism (most notably familism) on the other. The use of criss-crossing categories for classifying behavior and passing moral judgments upon oneself and others had painful human consequences. The social and psychological outcomes of the resulting value conflicts and misunderstandings within the family setting were probed and elaborated by many of the most prominent novelists of the decade.

In his very famous novel entitled Breaking the Ties (Đoạn Tuyệt, 1935), Nguyễn Tường Tam (Nhật Linh) argued stridently for the triumph of individualism over communalism as represented by the old family system. One of the characters in this novel argues in a forceful speech that:

The Vietnamese family cannot be left intact to be exactly like the Vietnamese families of previous centuries. . . . this inhumane family system has come to the day of its demise and . . . it must now yield place to a different system appropriate to the new life of today.

But Nguyễn Công Hoan, writing in response to Tam's novel, has the heroine of his book, Miss Minh the Schoolteacher (Cô Giáo Minh, 1936), ask herself, "Should I really follow European ideas to smash an Asian family?" She eventually decides that "breaking the ties with the old family is a selfish thing to do." Speaking through the sympathetic character of Miss Minh's aunt, Hoan chided Nguyễn Tường Tam and the reading public for the tendency to polarize everything in terms of the terrible old and the wonderful new.

There is only right and wrong in this world. It seems to me as if you want to live only for yourself. What do families become then? Who cares about anybody else any more? What if everybody seeks their own happiness . . . , if all of us went our own way, thinking of nothing but selfishness? If everyone's household became that way, what would life be like? I think that even though we all live with certain natural rights, because our lives touch upon each other, we should sacrifice a bit of our rights for everyone else. And nothing is lost that way, because we get back whatever we give many times over in sacrifices that other people make for us.

Such fiction was avidly read and discussed, especially by the younger, French-educated members of a growing urban middle class, to whom these cognitive conflicts were most stark and most emotionally crippling.¹⁴

The French, of course, had thoroughly internalized their own individualism. They taught it in their classrooms, often most effectively in subtle ways of which they were scarcely aware. And it was also an implicit value that shaped many of their policies and decisions. The results were often an unpleasant surprise to them, in large part because of their ethnocentric assumptions regarding the superiority of individualism. To the French, greater individualism was self-evidently both desirable and inevitable because it was in their experience an intrinsic part of what they took to be progress.

Many Vietnamese peasant families suffered grievously as French attempts to improve and modernize (as well as to control) the structures of village life transformed rural Vietnamese society in unforeseen and largely undesirable ways. Individualism proved to be as incompatible with communalism in the rural village as it has been remarked to have been in the urban family. And it was, if anything, even more disruptive as it ramified through this deeper and more complex level of society.

John Bassford has provided us with a very good example of this pathological process in his paper on "The Franco-Vietnamese Concept of Landownership" in this volume. As he notes, many Frenchmen felt that fundamental change was essential in the villages of Vietnam, both to serve the economic interests of French colonialism and to enable the Vietnamese people themselves to experience the blessings

of progress. After the first decade of the twentieth century, growing numbers of Vietnamese came to agree with them that change was indeed necessary and desirable.

To the French, security in landownership was a precondition of rational economic development. They believed a lack of such security in property rights to be one of the greatest deficiencies of village institutions in Vietnam. From the French perspective, land was a commodity. Taking for granted the many attitudes, values, and beliefs associated with individualism and capitalism, they sought through various judicial and administrative reforms to establish property rights that would be personal, absolute, universalized, and standardized. An ideal system for the French was one in which property rights were based upon legally certified titles of ownership. They assumed that disputes were best settled through the operation of a justice that was blind, in strict accordance with the clearly articulated and detailed articles of a body of civil law.

In Vietnamese villages, however, property rights were familial, not personal; they rested upon village custom, which stressed the use of land rather than its registration as the basis of ownership. Furthermore, to the Vietnamese justice was ideally not at all blind, nor should it be absolute in any legalistic sense. Village disputes were ideally settled by taking circumstances thoroughly into account and working primarily to maintain social harmony through the negotiation of compromise solutions rather than to establish legal rights and wrongs in any absolute sense.

Thus, a series of reforms instituted by the French to make landownership more secure had the effect of making it less secure because the meaning and function of key elements in the new system, which was a mixture of French and Vietnamese traditions, were quite different from what they had formerly been in either France or traditional Vietnam. In traditional Vietnam the government dealt with semi-autonomous villages, which in turn dealt with families, not with individuals. By eliminating the significant mediating role of family and village and making the relationship of mutual rights and obligation between the individual and the state a direct one, the French colonial administration brought about a profound change in the meaning and function of village leadership, and this eventually caused important changes in the nature of the leadership itself.

As Bassford demonstrates, the traditional village land book (địa bạ) was essentially a land register to the French but a tax register to the Vietnamese. In practice, however, in the new context, it functioned in ways that met the expectations of neither group, especially since the officials in charge of it had also been rapidly changing. Thus, when the French tried to change the Vietnamese villages, "what ensued was the opposite of what the administration tried to create in its legislation and believed that it was creating in fact."

Most Vietnamese, of course, interpreted French actions from a different set of initial premises. In this cognitively confusing and epistemologically muddled world, both the French and the Vietnamese were often wide of the mark in their analyses of why things were happening as they were. Many of the actual results of both French and Vietnamese actions were quite unanticipated and sometimes completely at variance with the intended outcomes. It is important to note that this phenomenon transcended the intelligence, the personal motives, and the political goals of individual actors. To a significant degree the gaping disparity between the intended and the actual results of attempts to improve the lot of the impoverished peasantry (no matter how well-intentioned they may or may not have been) arose from the failure of all parties to appreciate the extent to which meaning and function are determined by context and the lack of understanding of the underlying cultural values and assumptions that led other people to behave as they did.

Because the complex systemic causality of many rural problems has been so poorly understood, few of the proposed solutions have been truly efficacious. And to the present day most explanations of the multiple transformations that have wracked Vietnam over the past 150 years remain unsatisfying. One might go so far as to suggest that in general French colonialists, both conservative and revolutionary Vietnamese, and American scholars of Vietnam (not to mention American officials) have all been guilty of the same epistemological errors. Of course, members of various other ethnic and ideological groups besides Vietnamese, French, and Americans all tend to project their own values, assumptions, motivations, and beliefs onto other people who see the world quite differently. There are many personal, historical, and ideological reasons for these tendencies. The trend is a general one and appears in many different guises, some academic, some political, some a mixture of the two. But all such approaches are intellectually unacceptable because they ignore the central premise that function and meaning are determined by context.

Though this trend may be general and even more popular, it is, nevertheless, simply wrong, and it seriously impedes our progress toward a more sophisticated and useful understanding of the complex process of adaptation and readaptation by which sociocultural systems and their constituent elements change and evolve. It is this concept of an evolving context that should guide our work--not just for the sake of abstract intellectual values, but because in the long run this is the most effective way to address and to solve human problems. This applies equally, I would argue, to the issue of identity and to all manner of ecological, agricultural, and political problems, as well as to the study of history and culture.

Before concluding I will try to demonstrate this point by relating the significance of the concept of an evolving context to the problem of identity at a more concrete level. Most of us could, I am sure, readily agree that under French colonial rule

archaeological and historical studies tended to present a distorted and not very flattering picture of the inhabitants of the Red River Delta and central coastal plain prior to the period of Chinese domination. Indigenous Vietnamese culture has too often been portrayed in the past as an empty vessel of dubious worth into which the merits of superior civilization poured for millennia from China and India, and later from the West.¹⁵ And so it pleases us to learn of the accomplishments of Phung Nguyen culture, to discover how early the cultivation of rice is to be found in Southeast Asia and of the admirable irrigation systems devised by early Vietnamese inhabitants of the Vietnamese plains.

In the past a great many foolish statements have also been made about the value of the Vietnamese language and its alleged inferiority to French, or to Chinese.¹⁶ It is therefore also a source of considerable satisfaction to see the artistic and scientific uses to which the Vietnamese language has been put with outstanding results. It is difficult not to sympathize with and to want to participate in research activities that are directed toward documenting an improved image for earlier Vietnamese culture and society.

But at the same time we must realize that from a modern social scientific point of view this is all nonsense. We know that languages and subsistence patterns, like kinship systems, art styles, and all other components of a culture arise and take particular forms to meet the special needs of a particular group of people living in a certain set of circumstances. We also know that these circumstances change over time and that in response to altered circumstances that pose new challenges and new opportunities all cultures also change over time--sometimes through invention, but more often through borrowing.

From this perspective, intensive wet-rice agriculture is not better than slash and burn agriculture in any absolute sense. One way of growing rice is better than the other only under certain conditions and when judged by a certain arbitrary set of standards of values. Irrigated rice fields used in conjunction with transplanting techniques produce more grain per unit of land, but slash and burn agriculture produces more grain per unit of labor.¹⁷ Huge centralized irrigation systems permit higher population density and greater social complexity, but they tend also to be more vulnerable to disaster and to increase social and economic inequality.¹⁸ Research that concentrates on establishing the temporal priority of some technological or social innovation in one country instead of in another is then neither scientifically useful nor a valid means of building an ethnic or national identity. There is even a danger that such work can unwittingly legitimize the false premises that gave rise to the problem in the first place. It may be, in other words, a sucker's game in any event. It is almost certainly a very poor allocation of scarce resources.

Take as an example those hardy Vietnamese settlers who resorted first to slash and burn horticulture and then to broadcasting rice seed instead of transplanting seedlings in the frontier regions of the Mekong Delta. They were not abandoning their cultural heritage; they were merely acting sensibly under conditions that made labor a more valuable resource than land. As settlement progressed and land became more and labor less scarce, farmers in these areas began transplanting rice seedlings like their cousins to the north. Agricultural techniques--like writing systems, haircuts, and poems (or, as A. Terry Rambo demonstrates, tunics and solar topees)--derive their function and meaning within a specific context and can be properly understood only as a part of that context.

It is much more fruitful and interesting to ask how and why some particular change occurred in a certain way in a particular place at some specified time than it is to wrench cultural elements out of their contexts and compare them in isolation in some hapless attempt to determine which is better than the other or which is more Vietnamese. Research that is directed primarily toward refining our understanding of an emerging context provides a valid basis for generalization and is cumulative. Therefore, because it has theoretical significance beyond the particular instance, it has a competitive advantage in the quest for funds that are essential to sustain a serious research program.

Vietnamese studies in the United States has suffered from a potent combination of parochialism and lack of depth. As a fledgling field it is scarcely thirty years old. Before any solid base of data and experience could be generated, it became radically politicized in the 1960s. Nearly forty years of war and ideological conflict have had a baleful influence upon Vietnamese studies in Vietnam itself and around the world. This situation has hampered fieldwork, distorted theory, and restricted the scope of fruitful collaboration. The point now is not who is to blame but what can be done to improve this state of affairs.

Several complementary steps appear to be promising means of overcoming the major deficiencies of the field. The first and most important is simply to pursue high quality basic research with renewed vigor. Many of us both in Vietnam and in the United States and elsewhere are already doing this, or trying to as circumstances permit. A lack of adequate and appropriate institutional support remains a serious problem. Another potential source of enrichment to the field is the conduct of many more comparative studies. This is difficult to do, but it is something over which many of us as scholars and teachers do have some influence. Finally, I suggest, we can improve the quality of Vietnamese studies by promoting greater awareness of the implicit ideas and concepts that shape our work and by vigorously discussing the validity and usefulness of our underlying assumptions. This is what I have tried to do in these brief remarks on the relationship between context and borrowed elements in Vietnamese culture.

NOTES

1. Although there are literally hundreds of definitions of culture, there is a general consensus among contemporary anthropologists that in addition to being learned, shared, and symbolic, cultures also tend to be adaptive and integrative. Studying the nature of the process of adaptive change and assessing its profound implications for human society has been of crucial theoretical significance since the seminal work of Julian Steward, dating back to the 1930s. The major unresolved issues revolve around the extent to which particular cultures actually are adaptive or integrated.
2. The general theoretical perspective presented here is derived from many sources, but the writings of Gregory Bateson have had the greatest and most direct influence. Of particular relevance are his comments in Steps to an Ecology of Mind (New York: Ballantine, 1972), pp. 102-103, 153-156, and 338-339.

My argument parallels and supports that offered by A. Terry Rambo in this volume. The major alternative model, that of growth by accretion upon an enduring core, is best represented in this volume by the paper of John Whitmore, whose work is much more closely attuned to the dominant research questions formulated by the Vietnamese themselves.

Models by their very nature are not right or wrong, but one model may be more useful for certain purposes than another. This paper is about the ideas and concepts upon which various models are based. Other papers in this volume are cited extensively, but only to provide examples to illustrate a particular theoretical point.

3. Trần Mỹ Vân, Responses of Late Nineteenth Century Vietnamese Writers to the French Colonial Impact (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1976), p. 152.
4. Vũ Đức Băng, "The Tonkin Free School Movement: 1907-1908," in Walter Vella, ed., Aspects of Vietnamese History (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1973), p. 31.
5. Nguyễn Hiến Lê, Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục (Saigon: Lá Bối, 1968), p. 62.
6. David Marr, Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism: 1885-1925 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 176.

7. Vũ Đức Băng, "Tonkin Free School Movement," p. 54; Nguyễn Lê, Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục, p. 37; Marr, Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism, pp. 111, 141, 143; Joseph Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, vol. I (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 515; David J. Steinberg, ed., In Search of Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 304; William J. Duiker, The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam: 1900-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 44-45.
8. Nguyễn Hiến Lê, Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục.
9. Ibid., p. 82.
10. Soon a "Haircutting Chant" was being sung by a new generation of patriots:

Comb in the left hand,
Scissors in the right.
Clip away! Clip away!

.....
Off with stupidity!
Off with foolishness!

.....
Today we snip,
Tomorrow we shave!

Many a "bun of backwardness" was hacked off by unskilled but enthusiastic scholars-turned-barbers. See Nguyễn Hiến Lê, Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục, pp. 82-83; Marr, Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism, pp. 169-170; Vũ Đức Băng, "Tonkin Free School Movement," pp. 66-67; Steinberg, In Search of Southeast Asia, p. 305.

11. Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang's paper in this volume vividly portrays the nature of this debate and in so doing illustrates the extent to which the "search for different verse forms had its origin in the rapid changes occurring in all aspects of social and cultural life." Her discussion of the emergence of the New Poetry provides us with an excellent example of the process of adaptive change in one cultural domain as an integral part of a larger evolving context.
12. Huế Tâm Hồ Tai reveals the complexity of one strand in this chain through her discussion of the relationship between literary debates in Vietnam and literary and political trends in France and the Soviet Union.
13. Nguyễn Văn Ngọc, ed., Tục Ngữ Phong Dao (Proverbs and Folksongs) (Saigon: Thăng Long, 1967), p. 17.

14. Nguyễn Tường Tam (Nhật Linh) attacked the old family system in Breaking the Ties (Đoạn Tuyệt, 1935) and Loneliness (Lạnh Lùng, 1936). Trần Khánh Giu, writing under the name of Khải Hưng, contributed a series of novels that explored family tensions: In the Midst of Spring (Nửa Chủng Xuân, 1933); Family (Gia Đình, 1935); Inheritance (Thừa Tục, 1936); and Escape (Thoát Ly, 1936). Nguyễn Công Hoan criticized the rigidity and snobbery of upper-class families in Branches of Gold, Leaves of Jade (Lá Ngọc Cành Vàng, 1934), and then responded to what he perceived to be the excesses of individualism in Miss Minh the Schoolteacher (Cô Giáo Minh, 1936).
15. In his influential and still widely used scholarly overview of The Making of Southeast Asia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966; originally published in French as Les Peuples de la Péninsule Indochinoise, Paris: Dunod, 1962), George Coedès gratuitously remarks that "It is interesting to note that even in prehistoric times the autochthonous peoples of Indochina seem to have been lacking in creative genius and showed little aptitude for making progress without stimulus from outside" (p. 13). Then, at the end of the book, he concludes that his data provides ample justification for maintaining that the civilizations of the Indianized countries of Indochina are simply overseas extensions of Indian civilization. . . . Although the civilization of Viet-nam seems to be patterned more closely on that of China than the Indianized civilizations are on that of India, this does not, in my opinion, argue any fundamental differences in the natural characteristics or social organization of the early Vietnamese as compared with the Mon-Khmers or the Tibeto-Burmans; and from prehistoric times, all of these peoples seem to have shared the same lack of inventiveness . . . , and to have been receptive rather than creative when brought into contact with foreign civilizations.
16. Even Paul Mus, a sympathetic and sophisticated observer, "had no doubt that the Vietnamese language is insufficient for the tasks it will be asked to perform." John McAlsiter and Paul Mus, The Vietnamese and Their Revolution (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 101.
17. M. J. T. Norman, Annual Cropping Systems in the Tropics (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida); A. Terry Rambo, "Why Shifting Cultivators Keep Shifting: Understanding Farmer Decision-Making in Traditional Agroforestry Systems," paper presented at the Joint East-West Environment and Policy Institute/United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Workshop on Community Forestry, Nakorn Rachasima, Thailand, August 22-29, 1983 (Honolulu: East-West Center, Environment and Policy Institute); Marvin Harris, Culture, Man, and Nature (New York: Crowell, 1971).

18. Elman R. Service, Origins of the State and Civilization: The Process of Cultural Evolution (New York: Norton, 1975); Morton H. Fried, The Evolution of Political Society (New York: Random House, 1967); M. A. Little and G. E. B. Morren, Jr., Ecology, Energetics, and Human Variability (Dubuque, Iowa: Brown, 1976); Fred Plog and Daniel G. Bates, Cultural Anthropology, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), pp. 150-152.