

# **ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

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**THE ETHNIC MINORITIES  
IN VIETNAM**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Vietnam lies in the east of Southeast Asia. It is a region of tropical monsoon climate, the passage way of many migrant peoples, the confluence of many cultures. It includes many mountain areas, plains and coastal areas.

Among the 54 ethnicities living in Vietnam the Kinh (Viet), who is the main ethnicity, accounts for 90% of the whole population. Some other ethnicities such as the Tay, Thai, Muong, Hoa, Khmer have a population ranging from 500,000 to 1 million inhabitants. But some ethnic groups like the O Du, Ro Man... have only 200 or 300 inhabitants. They represent almost all language families present from south of the Yang-tze to all over Southeast Asia and can be classified as follows:

**Austro-asian Family**

a) Viet-Muong Language Group: 1. Viet (Kinh), 2. Muong, 3. Tho, 4. Chut.

b) Mon-Khmer Language Group: 5. Khmer, 6. Bahnar, 7. Sedang, 8. Kohor, 9. Hre, 10. Mnong, 11. Stieng, 12. Bru-Van Kieu, 13. Co Tu, 14. Gie-Trieng, 15. Ma, 16. Kho Mu, 17. Chor, 18. Ta Oi, 19. Cho Ro, 20. Khang, 21. Xinh Mun, 22. Mang, 23. Brau, 24. O Du, 25. Ro Mam.

c) Tay-Thai Language Group: 26. Tay, 27. Thai, 28. Nung, 29. San Chay, 30. Giay, 31. Lao, 32. Lu, 33. Bo Y.

d) Meo-Zao Language Group: 34. Hmong (Meo), 35. Zao, 36. Pa-then.

e) Other Language Groups: 37. La Chi, 38. La Ha, 39. Co Lao, 40. Pu Peo.

### **Austronesian Family**

Malayo-Polynesian Language Group: 41. Gia Rai, 42. Edeh, 43. Cham, 44. Raglai, 45. Chu Ru.

### **Sino-Tibetan Family**

a) Chinese Language Group: 46. Hoa (Han), 47. Ngai, 48. San Ziu.

b) Tibeto-Burmese Language Group: 49. Ha Nhi, 50. La Hu, 51. Phu La, 52. Lo Lo, 53. Coong, 54. Si La.

These 54 ethnicities include hundreds of local groups with different denominations and hundreds of dialects. The Kinh ethnicity who live relatively concentrated in the plains have settled down in the midlands and the plains of northern Vietnam and in the northern part of central Vietnam. They are formed by the combination of the Mon-Khmer population and the inhabitants of the Tay Thai belonging to Malayo-Polynesian, Han and Tang language groups.

The population of Muong, Tho, Chut, and the Mnong inhabitants who are less influenced by the Han live in the mountain areas of the provinces of Ha Son Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe Tinh and Binh Tri Thien. Most of the Mon-Khmer population live on

a strip of land stretching from the North West through the Truong Son Range to Tay Nguyen Central Highlands and the Mekong delta. Part of the Tay Thai population in the east of Viet Bac (northern North Vietnam) were present in Vietnam as early as before the Christian era. They contributed to the building of the first states in northern Vietnam. A part of the Malayo-Polynesian population who founded the ancient state of Champa live now in the central part of the Tay Nguyen Plateaux. The above-mentioned populations were present on this strip of land as early as before the Christian era.

Other populations entered Vietnam at different periods of history. The largest immigration occurred 5000 years ago and was connected with the bloody suppressions by the Chinese feudal courts, the invasion of feudal Siam, with wars, epidemics, shortage of land...

Migrations usually increased new elements in the local population, or sometimes created great upheavals which totally change the demographic situation of each locality (Viet in southern Vietnam, Hoa, Thai, etc.) These migrations gradually changed the language, ethnographic and cultural relationship of the new settlers as well as the aborigines. This led to the assimilation and identification of the various demographic elements of a locality, and sometimes erased the traces of some groups.

As a result of those historical upheavals, each group was no longer conscious of its inhabitancy, and had to live intermingled with other demographic elements. Each ethnicity had to split and live scattered in many localities. Consequently, in each

area there is a medium language, a bilingual or plurilingual phenomenon. The mother tongue or script is often forgotten and is used only within the family, ethnicity or becomes a dead language. This also applies to the lifestyle and culture. The national character has been blurred, and is characterized by a certain number of peculiarities such as the conscience of the national denomination, of a legend about a remote homeland, or about the odyssey of the ethnicity, or some cultural peculiarities.

From time immemorial the economy of Vietnam is one of self-sufficiency, relying on nature. The villages bore a more or less closed character. The population, whether they live on agriculture in the clearings or in the ricefields, are only self-supporting. They exchange their surplus products for products they fail to turn out. Owing to the difference in the national conditions of the localities, and the homogeneity of the production character, the villages cannot live separately, independently from each other. The population of the mountain area need salt, hardware, jars, silver ornaments, copper utensils, colour threads, etc. brought from the plains. Conversely, the population in the plains need buffalo, cattle, bamboo, wood, dyeing stuffs, medicinal materials, forest products from the mountain areas. The population in the coastal areas have a surplus of fish, salt, fish sauce which they exchange for rice, bamboo, timber and other necessities. This exchange of commodities has gradually become a traditional way of life. Such customs as "sworn-friendship" are not only applied between communes in one locality, among people of the same ethnicity, but also between communes belonging to different localities,

different ethnicities. This reflects the constant mutual aid character among the population of different ethnicities in time of bad crops or in time of war.

On the other hand, despite its richness, nature is extremely harsh. It requires a tremendous effort and a collective strength resulting from mutual attachment of people living in one or different areas. The need to join efforts in production, in the struggle against natural calamities from one generation to another constitutes the first fundamental factor that creates the will to unite all ethnicities with different cultures, different languages, whether they are aborigines or new settlers in Vietnam, into a higher community: COMMUNITY OF VIETNAMESE NATION. This community must necessarily take as its centre the plain, the inhabitancy of the Kinh, which is densely populated and relatively prosperous, where the productive forces have reached a higher degree, where formerly the capital of an independent and sovereign state was set up.

The unity of the various ethnic elements in Vietnam was formed very early; it was consolidated and tested as the nation was faced with the constant threat of foreign invasions by imperialist and feudal forces. Owing to its geographical situation and the richness of its natural resources, Vietnam has been all through its history the target of armies of aggression, many times stronger and extremely barbarous. That is why, once they settled in Vietnamese territory these ethnicities, on their own will, stood united to defend the life of the country and ensure the survival of their homeland, their ethnicities. From the beginning of the Christian era until now

the population of the national minorities in Vietnam have been struggling shoulder to shoulder with the Kinh against foreign invaders, from the Trung Sisters' Insurrection (40-43 A.D) capturing at once "65 districts" to the struggles for national independence or for the defence of the homeland conducted by Ly Bon (542), Mai Hac De (722), Ngo Quyen (939), Le Hoan (981), Ly Thuong Kiet (1075-1077), Tran Hung Dao (13th century) Le Loi (15th century), Quang Trung (1789) and especially during the last ten decades against the French domination, the Japanese rule, and in the struggle against US aggression and against the war of sabotage waged by the reactionary elements in the Beijing leading circles at present.

The various ethnicities in Vietnam live in a historical-ethnographic zone, or a large ancient historical cultural area stretching from south of the Yang-tze to the Indochinese peninsula and the Southeast Asian islands. Those populations have created a local culture called Austro-asian culture by scientists, which is quite different from the Huanghe (Yellow river) culture and the Indian culture. The apogee of that culture was the splendid and original Dong Son culture<sup>1</sup> The forefathers of those ethnicities crossed the threshold of civilization into imposing economic, political, densely populated areas having their own cultural colours and a high level of technique: construction of citadels, dykes, digging of canals, taming of elephants, buffalo,

1. The end of the Bronze Age—the beginning of the Iron Age. The first vestige of this culture was discovered at Dong Son (Thanh Hoa).

mastering the technique of metal working, building of river and sea-going vessels, building of curved-roofed houses-on-stilts, roofed-bridges, making agricultural implements (ploughs, hoes, adzes...), weapons (war hatchets, armour, bows, spears), household utensils (earthenware, pottery), ornaments (bracelets, motifs on clothes...), musical instruments (bronze drums, khi flutes...) articles of art (statues of human beings, birds, animals...). They also reached a high level of cultivation (rice, *Coix lachryma jobi* Linn.); they wore pullover-like vests, skirts, loin-cloths... They knew how to prepare food, drinks, tobacco (cooked rice, cake, fish sauce, brewage, tobacco) they had the habit of filing their teeth, perforating their earlobes, lacquering their teeth, chewing betel, tattooing their bodies; they also knew how to use currency units such as bronze drums, stone bracelets, mollusc shells or universal equivalents such as cloth, copper or bronze utensils (gongs, drums, cooking pots), buffalo, elephants, pottery (vase). In the cultural and spiritual field, they practise the cult of ancestors, organize societies in which women occupy an important position (matrilineal, bilineal systems besides patriarchy). They have myths about the common origin of their ethnicities: the legend of the squash, the legend of Mother Au and Father Lac, the legend about a woman who married a dog, the legend about Mr Drum and Lady Drum; legends reflecting the struggle against natural calamities (Son Tinh or the Genie of the Mountains and Thuy Tinh or the Genie of Waters), the concept of the Yin and Yang, of Mother rice or Rice Soul, the cult of Stone, of Trees, especially trees symbolizing longevity and vivacity



such as the banyan tree, the kapok tree; the custom of worshipping Heaven, Earth and Thunder. They divided time according to the agricultural cycles, the year being composed of two periods: the period of cultivation starting with the first spring thunder to the harvesting time, the time of rest and the time of getting busy with other work than farming work. Besides, they have a treasure of traditional medicine and popular literature and art with original woodcutting and lithography, love songs, puppet show and water puppet show, and other popular plays and games: "con" throwing, wrestling, walking on stilts...).

That culture is the cultural foundation of the different national elements on Vietnamese land, and bears a deeper and deeper Vietnamese hallmark in the course of its development. In the process of history that culture has been complemented, renovated and has received in a selective way the fine elements of the cultural trends from outside. But it still takes on a Vietnamese style and cannot be confused with any other foreign culture. It also reflects the most essential traits of the culture of each ethnicity. If at the end of the Later Le Dynasty (17-18th centuries) the literature in the plains was flourishing, that of the North-west knew a great development with the birth of such great works as "Tien Dan Nguoi Yeu". (Advice given to the lover at parting time) Khum Lu, Nang Va. It was also the period when in the Cao Lang area, the Tay Nung literature marked a new step in its development with novels in verse by Quynh Van, Quan Nhat or by anonymous authors...

A closer study of every traditional element in the material as well as spiritual culture of different ethnicities, of different localities, helps us see through the similarities and the most common points. It seems that the different ethnicities in Vietnam have been living in houses built in the same style wearing clothes of the same tailoring, using the same production tools in the clearings or in the fields. They have the same forms of faith and religion, the same forms and rules of recreations, festivities, songs and dances...

The manifestations of that cultural unity, which on the surface seem to be different, are almost the same. For each ethnicity has its own way of expression, which is sometimes very original, in conformity with the living conditions, the level of social development, the psychological character and the geographical landscape of each locality. It is for this reason that each cultural element of the Vietnamese nation is expressed in various and attractive forms. Those "slight differences" only highlight the unified core, which serves as a basis on which the individual element can develop.

The historical, economic and cultural relations have strengthened the trend of rapprochement and unification already existing among the different ethnicities in different localities. If in the plains, in each locality the process of formation of the local colour of two or many ethnicities has ended, in the mountain areas this process of formation of the local colour on the basis of the concord of many ethnicities living in the same habitat is still going on. That is the necessary result of the process of

living together, producing together and fighting together to defend the homeland of the various ethnicities in the same locality.

And the gradual formation of the common cultural colour of each locality is in fact the process of selecting the quintessence of the culture of an ethnicity so as to enrich the culture of the Vietnamese nation. That is why apart from being conscious that they belong to the Tay, the Zao, the Bahnar, the Khmer ethnicity, everyone feels that they have a common blood, a common conscience, the Vietnamese blood, the Vietnamese conscience.

Since the August 1945 Revolution, and especially since the complete liberation of South Vietnam, there have been considerable changes in the life of the different ethnicities in Vietnam. The working people of the various ethnicities are masters of their own destiny; they can elect the representatives at various levels, send their sons and daughters to Party and Government posts from the grassroots to the central levels. The people in the whole country are joining effort to eliminate the economic, cultural and social discrepancies between the mountain and the plain areas. Party cadres and people from the plains go to the mountain areas to build new homes and to help the local ethnicities develop local economy and culture. Cadres from various ethnicities who have been trained in the struggle and in production, or in schools and universities are keeping key positions in State and Party organs in their localities. At present, the heads of every level of authority in villages, districts and provinces in the mountain areas are cadres from different ethnicities.

With a view to gradually improving the living conditions of the people of various ethnicities, the Party and State have decided to help the people to take the road of collectivization of production, to gradually build the country's industrial potentialities, and turn our country from a backward agricultural country into a socialist industrialized one. At present, in the countryside the people have been organized into production collectives in adequate forms ranging from work-exchange groups and cooperatives to state farms. Industrial centres, industrial-agricultural-forestry complexes built everywhere in the country constitute a motive force of the country's economic and social development. The growing working class and intelligentsia include sons and daughters of the various national minorities.

Unlike in many developing countries, illiteracy in Vietnam has been fundamentally eradicated, even in the mountain areas and in the newly liberated areas of southern Vietnam. Vocational and complementary education schools have been opened in districts and provinces. Children of various ethnicities can learn their mother tongue. The people's power has been working on special scripts for different ethnicities. Text-books have been compiled and teachers have been trained to teach in the mother tongue. At present nearly ten scripts for various ethnicities are being worked out. The national language (quoc ngu) is the official language. It is used in administrative affairs and as a medium language between different ethnicities. A campaign for building a new life has been launched and the people's health has been cared for. Epidemics and infant mortality have decreased. Malaria has been

eradicated in the main and the people's life expectancy has been extended. With the development of public health in the mountain areas as well as in the plains, there is a health station in every village and a hospital in every district. The treasure of national literature and art has been brought into full play. The watchword "National character and socialist content" has been thoroughly applied. The fine traditions and wholesome customs of each ethnicity have been preserved and developed. Local ensembles of songs and dances have been set up throughout the country. Research institutes on national literature and art and on ethnography have published many books on the various ethnicities in Vietnam and on their literature and art treasure.

In a word, the cultural and economic differences between the various ethnicities in Vietnam — a legacy of history — have been gradually eliminated with a view to putting into effect genuine equality between ethnicities.

## A — AUSTRO-ASIAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

### a) VIET — MUONG LANGUAGE GROUP

#### The Muong

*Denomination* : Muong. Other names : Mol Mual, Muan.  
*Local groups* : Moi Bi, Au Ta...

*Population* : nearly 70,000.

*Language* : Viet — Muong.

*Habitat* : from Nghia Lo (Hoang Lien Son province) through the provinces of Vinh Phu, Son La, Ha Son Binh, Ha Nam Ninh, to Thanh Hoa; that is from the lower reaches of the Da river to the upper reaches of the Ma river, but mostly in Ha Son Binh. The Muong split from a proto Viet — Muong community in the first millenary A.D. While the forefathers of the present-day Viet went down the plains and were influenced by Han culture, the ancestors of the Muong stayed in the mountains, preserved their culture, developed fairly independently and got little influence of Han civilization, then had an interaction with the Thai later on. Thus the Muong are related to the Viet as to their origin and to the Thai in the cultural and social planes.

### *Material life :*

Each family lives in a house on stilts. The Muong house on stilts is built like that of the surrounding ethnicities, especially the Thai one, with the only difference that the bolt of the beam supporting the roof leans on the frame.

Men's clothes have nothing in particular, women's clothes are varied and original: daily-wear kerchief and blouse of white colour; black skirt with multicoloured-thread motif on the upper edge covering half the breasts; bracelets and necklaces — all that is simple and graceful.

Apart from a number of areas along the Da river and the mountain slopes still with burnt-out clearings, in general the Muong farm water paddies with a network of ditches and dams like the Thai. In the past, sticky rice was grown more than the ordinary one, but it is not the case now. Instead of one crop they now till two or three crops, bringing in five tonnes per hectare at places. Farming technique varies from one locality to another. In some places they plough and harrow like the Viet and the Thai; in others, particularly in the highlands of Thanh Hoa, they only harrow their fields and let buffaloes carocole to trample the weeds and soften the soil before planting out. Noria is widely used.

As there is plenty of land, mountains and forests, besides cultivating the fields the Muong also apply slash-and-burn method to grow rice and subsidiary crops, squash, vegetables, spices, etc. Moreover, they tend forests of industrial crops: bamboo, cotton, hemp, jute, lac-tree, many fruit-trees and industrial plants, especially cinnamon. Afforestation brings them a lot of fruit each year. Little attention is paid to gardening — the few vegetables needed being planted in the clearings. Wild vegetables,

bamboo shoots, mushrooms, birds, beasts, etc., constitute the main daily food.

The Muong breed buffaloes and cattle by letting them wander or tending them mainly as draught animals for agriculture, forestry to serve religious rites or to exchange with the lowlands. They also rear quite a lot of pigs and poultry.

Although a routine, hunting does not bring a large income. It is usually a pastime, a habit of men to protect the crops, regardless of its result. Weapons generally comprise cross-bows and arrows, flintlock, native hunting guns and other kinds. Traps are less used now to prevent mishaps for passers-by.

Fishing is more important than hunting. Together with vegetables, fish is the basic food item. Fishing tackles are varied: casting-net, eel-pot... Fishing is done throughout the year and everybody can catch fish.

The gathering of forest products has become a habit. Mushroom, morel, bastard cardamom, lac, honey, rattan, bamboo, medicinal plants are exchanged with the lowlands and provide a notable income.

Handicrafts are not yet separated from agriculture. They do not have a high technical level as yet and lack pottery, blacksmithry, goldsmithry, perhaps because of the proximity of the Viet markets in the lowlands. Muong skirt-upper edge is a fine-art product woven with a high skill and many motifs similar to Dong Son ones, much appreciated by the Viet.

On the whole, before liberation Muong economy resembled that of the Thai, a natural, self-supplying and self-sufficient economy. At present, economic constituents also include regional industries, trade, industrial crops and stock-breeding State farms. Thanks to improved technique agricultural yield also increases. Gathering of

forest products and hunting decline with the development of gardening.

#### *Social and family relations:*

The Muong live in villages or hamlets, called *quel* or *quen* grouping from 5, even 3 to 60 or 70 houses. Each village has a clear delimitation, a housing area, communal forests and mountains, a cultivated area, a water source, a cemetery... Families with no blood relation co-exist as neighbouring communes.

Villages are grouped into *Muong*. Such big muong as muong Bi, muong Vang, muong Thang, muong Dong, muong Lang Chanh, comprise 20 — 30 populous and rich villages, while a small *muong* only groups a few villages. At the head of a muong is a *lang cun* (called *dao muong* in Thanh Hoa, *tho tu* in Vinh Phu) assisted by an administrative apparatus. The muong are independent from each other. Of course, a small muong must have regard for a big or strong one. A hereditary noble family rules over each muong. Those families are: Dinh, Quach, Bach, Ha, Hoang, Xa, etc., the most influential being Dinh and Quach. Those belonging to noble families are called *tho lang* or *quan lang*. *Lang cun*, the eldest son of the major family branch takes care of the whole muong, in fact ruling over the *lang chieng*, the biggest hamlet with the largest fields *Lang xom*, or *dao*, younger sons of the major family branch or eldest sons of minor family branches manage smaller hamlets. The *lang* look after the administration, distribution of communal land, allotment of corvee tribute, and sundry duties according to tradition. They use bronze drums or bronze cauldrons to symbolize their authority. They adopt a particular way of life and enforce strict regulations to preserve it. A commoner may not marry a woman of a noble family, while a man of a noble family must take as first wife

a woman of a noble family. If a *lang cun* is heirless the people have to invite another lang family to run the affairs of the Muong. Before the 1945 August Revolution the *lang dao* system was already declining, accounting for the sharp rivalries between *lang* families, often leading to land-grabbing and murder.

Opposed to the *lang* are the commoners. Muong serf caste is consigned to a family: Bui family, which bears no blood character but a caste character (particularly in former Hoa Binh province). A commoner has a share of communal land but has to make contributions, nominally to the muong and the village, but in fact to the *lang*: corvee, sundry duties, tribute in kind (food and precious products). A part of the Muong living on clearings or in poor hamlets are regarded as *tua roong* or aliens, assimilated to the *cuong nhoc* or servants in the Thai region, allowed to live and make clearings but having to contribute corvee. The poorest become servants of the *lang*.

Inversely, some Muong of peasant stock are allowed to participate in the administrative apparatus of the *lang*. These *au* are trusted by the latter and hereditarily serve them in looking after public security, the management of their land, the village and the muong, the requisition of corvee, contribution, offering, the collection of taxes and land rent...

Worth mentioning is a form of exploitation by the *lang* called *xau*, 'no'. The fields of noble families are farmed by the commoners from beginning to end gratis. Every year, the entire inhabitants of a *muong* have to till collectively a given field of the *lang* (*xau*); this work brings little yield but helps the *lang* assert their authority over them. Besides, they have to allot between them the ploughing, harrowing, harvesting in the *lang's* other fields.



A Muong family bears a marked patrilineal character. The father wields absolute power in his small family. The eldest son succeeds to the fathers' functions and inherits most of the ancestors' properties (the younger sons have little and the daughters nothing) and are well considered.

Girls are not allowed to take part in social affairs. If the parents die without a son, their properties fall into the seigneur's hands because a daughter even living is regarded as nothing — according to an ancient custom called *thủ lut*. Only parents have a say in the marriage of their sons and daughters. In the commoners' families women enjoy a better status as they may discuss family affairs.

#### *Spiritual life:*

To consolidate this social order each muong had a genie, each hamlet also had its own — the *lang's* ancestor or the man who first reclaimed the land and established the village or the hamlet. Each family worships its forefathers.

Moreover, the genie of the earth was also commonly worshipped, especially Tan Vien genie (the genie of Mount Tan Vien or Ba Vi). In some places Buddha was worshipped; so was Christ in the temporarily-occupied zones during the war of resistance against French aggression.

The Muong have a rich folk literature. Many poems have been collected and edited such as: *The Birth of Land and Water*, *Ut Lot Ho Lieu*, *Huy Nga Hai Moi*, *Nang Om*, *Chang Bong Thuong*, *Vuon Hoa Niu Coi*, *Dang Van Va*, etc. There are interesting poems about love between man and woman, the revolt against forced marriage in the old regime.

Muong folk-songs praise productive labour, fine customs, depict the youth's feelings... People like to sing *vi dum*, alternate songs of two lines with six words in the first and eight words in the second. Worth mentioning is *Xec bua* song during festivities and wedding: groups of singers called *phuong bua* (15-20 people) go and sing from house to house, each of whom carrying a gong which they beat according to a tune appropriate to the song after singing.

Muong tales are very numerous, some of them have been collected and published in "*Muong tales*" and "*Selected folk Literature*" in Hanoi over the past years.

Famous among religious songs are *mo* songs recited by *mo* magicians in funerals, giving offering to ghost, invoking vital spirits. Apart from superstitious elements *mo* songs have a historical and literary content reflecting true life and the dreams of the toiling people. In particular, the *mo* song "*The Birth of Land and Water*" about the origin of mankind, the universe and Muong ethnicity, the *mo* songs about bronze drums, cultural elements, etc., constitute very precious documents for social science researchers.

The Muong constantly side with the Viet in building and defending the country. Muong region was the resistance base of many heroes in our history like Le Dai Hanh<sup>1</sup>, Le Loi<sup>2</sup>. Many heroes came from Muong

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1. The Army Commander under the Dinh dynasty who defeated the Song aggressors and ascended the throne in A.D. 980, establishing the Earlier Le dynasty with its capital at Hoa Lu (Present-day Ha Nam Ninh).

2. He rose up in Lam Son (Present-day Thanh Hoa) against the Minh aggressors and fought for ten years before wresting back national independence, then set up the Later Le dynasty (1428-1527).

ethnicity. Recently, in the war of resistance against French colonialism and US imperialism Muong fellow-countrymen contributed much manpower and wealth and achieved many exploits.

Since the August Revolution, having overthrown the *Lang dao* system, the Muong have rapidly engaged in collective work, building co-operatives and State farms. At present, they are actively participating in building a famous project right in their native place, Hoa Binh, the Da river water conservancy and hydroelectric station with nearly 2 million-KW capacity. Muong cadres have taken part in the administration at all levels from the centre down to the grassroots. Illiteracy was liquidated in 1960 although before the August Revolution 99% of the population was illiterate. Education has been brought to the villages. The percentage of university students catches up with that of the Viet in the delta provinces. Medical network reaches the hamlets. Infant mortality, malaria, and epidemics are things of the past.

### **The Tho**

*Denomination*: Tho. Other names: Keo, Mon, Cuoi, Ho, Dan Lai, Ly Ha, Tay Poong.

*Population*: Over 24,000.

*Language*: Viet-Muong, with many dialects which however do not hinder communication.

*Habitat*: West of Nghe Tinh province.

At first, by the end of the 18th century when Vietnam was in a chaos, small groups of Viet came from Thanh Chuong, Anh Son, Quynh Luu, Dien Chau (Nghe An province), then groups of Muong and Viet came from Nhu Xuan, Thieu Hoa (Thanh Hoa province) and both of them merged with indigenous groups of Thai into a

new community of Keo, Mon, Cuoi who recently call themselves Tho. This ethnicity is shaped on the basis of Viet culture (with many feudal traits) which also bears a number of characteristics of Muong and Thai cultures. A rapprochement with the Viet is under way.

### *Material life*:

The Tho live in both forms of houses: on stilts and on the ground, with a trend on the latter. The existing houses on stilts have a simple architecture: their balcony and windows are not ornamented like Thai and Muong houses while their leanto and gable are open. The houses on the ground have an architecture similar to that of the Viet in the highlands.

Male Tho's clothes and those of the Viet country folks before the August Revolution were much alike: baggy trousers in white calico falling down to the ankle, black robe reaching the knees, turban in violet crepe. Women's clothes vary from one locality to another and consist mainly of a skirt pulled over the head and a blouse split in front with a row of buttons, tight sleeves and split sides like that of the Viet. In general, the headgear is a white kerchief like that of the Muong; while a long white kerchief is worn as a sign of mourning.

The Tho commonly carry a fibre-woven bag slung over the shoulder.

The Tho's territory is an area of low and sloping mountains running northwest-southeast between high mountains and the plains. The soil is mainly constituted of feralite over basaltic rock. Owing to the topography the Tho have few water paddies although living a sedentary life. Farming is thus mostly done in clearings where dry fields are laid out to grow rice. Each clearing is used

for 3 or 4 crops then left waste. First, it is slashed and burnt and holes are poked to receive rice seeds. In subsequent crops the seeds are sown then the soil is ploughed and harrowed. The plough and sickle look like the Viet's rudimentary tools.

Besides rice, food crops include maize, sweet potato, cassava. The Tho grow hemp not to sell out to weave bags, nests to catch beasts, birds and fish. These products are meant for consumption and for barter with neighbouring groups to get cloth, blankets, skirts, blouses, kerosene, salt and metallic farming tools.

The Tho do not use the big nearby rivers to make irrigation works but only to catch fish individually with their hands (*ngu* and *nac* fish) or with such instruments as sweep, or collectively with a lot of instruments such as deep-net, weird, casting-net (*cham bao*).

The Tho are also past masters in hunting wild beasts with traps, cages, automatically-triggered arrows, nooses. In the past, hunting was a routine practice with set rules to apportion the games. Now hunting is no more a common practice and the results are poor because the ecological conditions have notably changed and agriculture is providing a new attraction.

The gathering of forest products still plays a part in family life, supplying the daily diet with many vegetables and fruit according to the season. And in the years of bad crops and in the pre-harvest months, forests and rivers constitute a store to draw on.

#### *Social and family relations :*

The land including forests, mountains, rivers, brooks, hills, fields and other natural resources is common property. He who exploits it may use it, but does not own

it. The land on which houses are built and gardens laid out is private property, which is often granted free and rarely sold. Water paddies are few, several *sao* (a *sao* = 360 square metres) per family, rarely one hectare. This has a bearing on social differentiation: an insignificant discrepancy between properties, living standard and especially the rights of villagers. In the past, the village had a head (*ong trum*) elected by the people to manage communal affairs, set fines on the contraventions of village customs, mediate the differences between villagers, represent the villagers, deal with higher authorities and preside over the ceremony to ask the deities bidding as to the "seed master" in the farming-opening ceremony. The village head was assisted by an *ong cau* who looks after office work and some youths entrusted with security work. In certain localities there was a *chu sac* responsible for worshipping deities. He drew his earnings from the village common land. Like in many other localities, above the villages were the communes, cantons, districts with a similar feudal-colonial administrative apparatus.

In general, the relations between the authorities and the working peasants were ones between the rulers and the ruled, but village customs also had sway.

The family is a small patrilineal one. However, boys and girls are free to marry themselves thanks to the custom of *ngu mai*. After the work of the match-maker a betrothal ceremony is held and the future bridegroom has to pay monthly visits to the future bride's, failure of which means a breach of his engagement. For the marriage to consummate the future bridegroom has to go through many rituals among which is a labour contribution to the future bride's family in the farming season—devoting half of his working-time for this in some places. Wedding presents include one buffalo, one

pig, 6 baskets of sticky rice, 100 piastres in coin and 30 measures of cloth to requite the upbringing of the bride's parents.

The Tho bury their dead in the ground. Before the August Revolution the corpse was kept one week or even one month during which time funeral services were held and offerings of tens of buffaloes were made. The coffin was hollowed out from a tree-trunk and buried in the direction of the running stream. The service is held 3 days, 50 days and 100 days after the burial.

At present, out-worn customs in marriage and obsequies have been left in oblivion: a new and progressive way of life is taking shape among the Tho.

#### *Spiritual life :*

Besides ancestral worship, there remain some agrarian beliefs and animism. In the village there are many temples to worship the genii of the mountains, the earth, water, fire, the men recredited with fighting the aggressors or working the land. Ceremonies are held in a temple every year and in another one the next year at the divinities' bidding. Besides, many kinds of ghosts are worshipped like those of herdsmen and those of mountain-goats. The major ceremony of the year is the farming-opening, one with the practice of asking the deities' bidding as to the "seed master" and the rite of slashing the forest and poking holes to drop seeds so as to open farming.

In the Tho's spiritual life folk literature and art takes pride of place with riddles, folks-songs, sayings and humorous stories having an educative content. Another favourite genre is the *ke dang* or stories with characters and plots. So are the sorcerer's incantations dealing with the world outlook and man's ethics of a community.

At present, nearly all Tho families have joined co-operativization in the form of agricultural co-operatives. Children of six upwards learn Vietnamese and attend general education schools. The basic general education schools, houses of culture, medical stations, maternity homes and trading co-operatives in the villages bring a new look to the countryside.

The Tho have a deputy in the National Assembly (the Seventh legislature) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Mrs. Truong Thi Lien, a member of the Women's Union in Tam Hop commune, Quynh Hop district, Nghe Tinh province.

#### *The Chut*

*Denomination :* Chut. Other names : Tu Vang, Pa Leng...

*Local groups :* A Rem, Mui, Sach, Ruc, Ma Lieng...

*Population :* about 3,000.

*Language :* Viet-Muong.

*Habitat :* in the valleys of Minh Hoa and Bo Trach (Binh Tri Thien province).

Only after liberation (1954) was this ethnicity discovered. As to its origin, it is very akin to the Viet-Muong and Tho.

#### *Material life :*

Before adopting sedentary life and farming the Chut lived in primitive and makeshift huts or in caves, Chut meaning stone cave. Later on, they knew how to build houses like the Bru, while the Sach and the Ma Lieng build houses like the Viet-Tho. Ruc and A Rem lived in grottoes until mid-20th century. At present, the Chut live in solid and spacious houses that befit the stable life brought by the revolution.

Not knowing how to grow cotton and weave cloth, the Chut have to buy clothes from the Viet and the Lao, as well as pick-axes, knives, copper pots... In summer, men used to wear loin-cloths and women skirts. In winter, they used to cover their bodies with dry tree-barks sewn into a kind of pull-over called *kcho*. Now they are supplied by the State with jackets, trousers, blankets, and so on.

Before the August Revolution, only the Sach engaged in farming whereas the Ruc and A Rem hunted and gathered products although they knew cultivation. Only now do the Chut till a few water paddies. Most of their farmed land are clearings grown mainly to rice, maize, cassava, vegetables, beans and tobacco. The land grown to cassava is farmed four years. But that devoted to rice and maize only two years. Usually the Chut apply the slash-and-burn method, poke holes and drop seeds, using mainly pick-axes, knives, and pointed sticks. Since their sedentation they have been helped by the local administration to rear buffaloes and oxen, and till their land with ploughs.

Their games are mostly small beasts, birds: they use arrows with or without poisonous tips, and hounds in collective hunting parties. Gathered products include for the most part starchy tubes, vegetables, fruit and mushrooms picked with pointed sticks or blunt knives. Aquatic products are caught in many ways: with bare hands, with fishing rods without hooks, poisonous leaves, by scooping or recently by casting nets.

#### *Social relations :*

Before liberation (1954) the Chut maintained self-management beside the colonial-feudal administration.

The village has its common land: all the forests, mountains, rivers, brooks, etc., used for its subsistence. With the help of other elders, the village head settles all affairs: worshipping deities, holding harvesting ceremonies, settle the differences, deciding the admission of immigrants... He is also the master of village ceremonies, which requires an alert man of elderly age, conversant with all matters and enjoying great prestige.

The village shelters differing families. Households of the same family prefer living near each other. However, village ties are also strong witness the holding of agricultural rites, the practice of labour exchange, of apportioning games, of mutual aid in difficulties.

The Chut family is a small one, having its own economy and habitat. After marriage the wife follows her husband and the latter usually builds a house of his own. Monogamy is predominant. Although the family is patrilineal, women are not oppressed because harmonious relations and democratic discussions prevail within the family. When doing clearing men slash and burn trees then poke holes while women drop seeds. Hunting is done by men while gathering is the work of women and children, under 12. Production is mainly done by individual families.

#### *Spiritual life :*

The worship of ancestors is not carried out by every family but only by the family head. Animism also plays a great role in the spiritual life: According to this belief there are spirits everywhere at whose head is the spirit presiding over forests, people and cattle in the village. When they go hunting the Ma Lieng would make an offering to their ghost. The Sach, May,



Ruc have periodical agricultural rites when sowing, when finishing dropping seeds, when bringing in the harvest... Current is the magic used by the sorcerer to cure diseases. In particular, the Chut are afraid of tigers, bears, snakes. In case they are injured by these animals, they have to stay in the forest several months before going home.

In the first months after delivery the mother and child have to stay in a shack in the forest, changing their shack three times, and each time requires a rite to "get rid of bad luck" before going home.

The Chut appreciate art and literature and enjoy playing *tro bon* guitar, flute, etc. At home or in the clearing they usually sing folk songs in the *ca tum* and *ca lenh* airs. Many people delight in story-telling: there are many tales which do not lose their attraction although told time and again such as the story about Mu Gia pass, the genesis of the earth, etc.

An agricultural people driven into harsh conditions, removed from the vast outside world, the Chut were thrown back into the past, their agriculture declining and their population decreasing. Faced with the danger of extinction a number of them returned to the cave period and were so poor that future bridegrooms only had blunt knives as wedding presents. But revolution has saved this ethnic group, bringing them from utter misery to sedentary settlement in populous hamlets, to tilling water paddies, making small irrigation works, setting up agricultural co-operatives and applying new techniques, intensive farming and crop multiplication. Many Chut learn Vietnamese and participate in all the commune activities: administration, education, information, culture and military affairs.

## b) MON-KHMER LANGUAGE GROUP

### The Khmer

*Denomination* : Khmer. Other names : Southern Khmer, the-Viet of Men origin, Khmer Krom, Cur, Cul, Cu and Tho.

*Population* : nearly 720,000.

*Language* : Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat* : The Khmer are mainly concentrated in Hau Giang province with Soc Trang as the provincial capital, then Cuu Long, Kien Giang, An Giang and Minh Hai, along with the Viet and Hoa. Apart from these provinces, a number of Khmer people also live in Ho Chi Minh city, and another number in Ba Ria of Dong Nai province with the Hoa, in Binh Long and Phuoc Long of Song Be province with the Stieng, in Tay Ninh with the Cham.

### *Material life* :

As aborigines, the Khmer settled very early in the Mekong delta which belonged to both Vietnam and Kampuchea. They gathered into *phum* or *Sroc* or villages like those of the Viet's. *Giong*, old stretches of alluvium emerging in the course of the formation of the Mekong delta, are chosen to be the Khmer's settlement. And this is also the old form of settlement. The top of the *giong* and the surrounding area are residential land, orchards and terraced fields under dry-crops. Then the *giong* mildly slopes to water-flooded rice fields.

The Khmer have so far set up more hamlets along main roads or by banks of rivers and canals. Many peasant families also live in market towns and provincial towns.

The Khmer live in populated areas. Formerly, a family shared the same house built on stilts covered on all sides

with roofs. Entrance to the house is from two sides. Two ladders lead to the house, one is for guests and the other for females only. Nowadays, such houses are only seen in the area near the border with Kampuchea, rarely in the Nam Bo delta.

Houses with earth walls are very popular, architecture is similar to the Viet's in the region. The ridge beam divides lengthwise the living space into two compartments. The front side of the middle room is reserved for guests; the back side is divided in two compartments for women. The right-hand and left-hand rooms are for men.

*Before the August revolution:* The common costume of the Khmer was the *baba* black dress. A checkered kerchief was used by women whose hair was done into a bun or cut short. The men, at home or at work, were usually bare-chested and wore short trousers. In some regions, there existed the custom of wearing skirts (*sa rong*) at home or when visiting neighbours or relatives. It is a length of silk colourfully woven. On festive days, Khmer women usually wore wide-leg trousers and gowns split on the sides. The gown is a kind of pull-over garment split in front and buttoned. A white scarf wound round the neck. In our days, white shirt, European-style trousers are the popular costume of the young people. As for young girls, blouses and black trousers are widely used. The way of arranging their hair is also diversified: plaits, curly hair, shoulder-length hair or hair-slide.

Working in irrigated rice-fields, the Khmer have accumulated much experience in farming. Basing themselves on the characteristics and terrains of the soil, they classify land into many categories.

The Khmer have also much experience in water conservancy. Cultivation is actively carried out in the rainy

season. Wells are sunk right in the fields for storing water, and ponds are used for irrigating fields under dry crops. Various measures are taken to water the fields: carrying a pail, wielding scoops or using foot-norias made by the Viet. In some regions, they take advantage of the ebb and flow of the tide to bring water into the fields, or build small-scale dams.

Khmer peasants use *phang* for weeding, and rakes for gathering grass. When transplanting rice, they use *noc*. Their ploughshare is longer than that of the Viet in Nam Bo. So is the Khmer-made harrow. The roller is widely used to level the earth.

Accumulated experience in farming also leads to the setting up of such organizations as mutual-aid groups and work-exchanging teams in Khmer hamlets and villages, which are called by the Khmer *dok day* or *dok day povah knea*. Apart from helping each other in production, these organizations also keep a close contact with villagers in daily life as house-building, wedding and funerals.

The Khmer have started using small pumps, insecticide and chemical fertiliser, therefore productivity has increased twofold or even fourfold.

After the liberation of the South (1975), Khmer peasants became the real masters of their land. Social transformations and the development of the water conservancy network have encouraged them to promote production.

Besides rice, the Khmer also grow dry-crops on the burnt-out-clearings: vegetables, water melon, beans, maize, potatoes, sugar cane, or fruit trees such as longane, mango...

The Khmer also rear buffaloes and cattle as draught animals and chickens, ducks, geese for food. However, in some regions, the rearing of cattle and poultry has become

a branch of the economy. But with the introduction of tractors into the Khmer countryside cattle-breeding has decreased.

In coastal and riparian villages fishery has become a sideline-occupation. A few families club together to buy nets, boats and fishing tackle to practise small-scale sea-fishing. On such big rivers as Tien Giang, Hau Giang, Cai Lon, Cua Lon, fish are caught with casting-nets and dip-nets with fishhooks; on small rivers and canals, traps, coops, scoop nets or "*Xa neng*", a unique fishing-scoop of the Khmer, are used.

Fish mainly serves as food; some are used to produce fishsauce "*bo hoc*", a traditional dish of the Khmer. The remaining, if any, is for sale.

Some handicrafts here have also been well-known for years: weaving silk for making *Sarong*, weaving cotton fabric, dyeing silk by using "*mac nua*" fruit, making ceramics, making furniture from rattan, bamboo, rush, latania, etc.

In the past, the development of ceramics focused on Tri Ton (An Giang) and Soc Xoai (Kien Giang). The products were made mainly by women. After being shaped, they were dried out in the sun and then baked. Motifs were made on the potter's wheel.

Silk-worm rearing and silk weaving strongly developed in Duong Hoa, Nguyet Hoa, Cau Ngang, Tra Cu (Cuu Long) and Du Tam (Hau Giang), which were famous for their fine and solid silk. The weaving of cotton cloth, kerchiefs, bath-towels... in Tinh Sien and Tri Ton also attracted a large clientele among the Viet. But the traditional weaving of the Khmer could not compete with the textile industry in both urban and rural areas of the South at that time.

Thus, there remained little room for basketry and mat weaving in the market of consumption of the old regime. Apart from fishing tackle, the Khmer also make ropes, baskets of all shapes and sizes for fruits. There are also rush-made products such as mats, baskets, rugs, etc., some of which were dyed and decorated. Rush goods in Ha Tien, Rach Gia (Kien Giang), Vinh Chau (Hau Giang), An Giang and Minh Hai are much appreciated by many people.

There are also a few carpenters, bricklayers, *thot not* sugar producers, honey bee breeders in the rural area. In the urban areas, a number of Khmer people engage in trade and services but most of them have matrimonial relations with the Hoa or the Viet.

#### *Social and family relations*

Class polarization in Khmer society began in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the countryside, over 90% of cultivated land belonged to private individuals. Few traces of public land were found: they were virgin land, alluvial soil, coconut tree forests which were communal property. They were distributed to the peasants and the income went to the public funds.

In exploiting the Mekong delta, the landlords, acting in the connivance with the Nguyen Kings, appropriated a lot of land belonging to the Khmer and the Viet. The local peasants' land continued to fall into the French colonialists' henchmen owing to the French policies regarding land reclamation. Under the French rule, the Khmer landlords came into being, a large part of whom was small landowners. The latter took active part in the local administration, at village level. There also appeared few middle and big landlords. Being the French's henchmen the latter owned from 700 hectares to 1,000 hectares

of cultivated land. Although the Khmer landlords were few, accounting for about 3% of the population, they owned, on an average, 50-60%, even 70% of cultivated area in some regions.

After the 1945 August Revolution, almost all the land of the landlords were distributed to peasants, regardless of their ethnicities. But under the U.S. and puppet authorities, as the result of the policy of compensating the landlords and henchmen for their lost properties in order to avoid class struggle, a class of bourgeois-landlords was formed, thus leading to some new forms of exploitation of the peasants. Besides land rent which sometimes reached 70% of the produce in some regions, bourgeois-landlords also resorted to other methods: usury, hiring agricultural machines at high price, low-price labour force, trafficking and hoarding, purchase of peasants' agricultural produce at low price etc... This situation led to the constant increase of poor and landless peasants. In Khmer society at some places the poor peasants accounted for 60%, and landless peasants 10%, of the local population.

Monks and intellectuals exerted a great influence on the people's life. The former, though indirectly engaged in the management of society, held spiritual power and played the role of educators and guides in Khmer society.

Among intellectuals under the French rule, there emerged a number of representatives of the progressive trend of society. They joined the anti-French resistance and became high-ranking revolutionary cadres. After the signing of the 1954 Geneva Agreement, our country was temporarily divided into two parts. A number of children of the Khmer peasants and revolutionary cadres regrouped to the North. Many of them have become doctors,

engineers, teachers, economic managerial cadres, etc. At present, they really are the core of the intelligentsia of worker-peasant origin, and their ever increasing contingent plays an important role in the economic, cultural, scientific and technical development in the new-type countryside of the Khmer community.

A village (*Sroc*) or hamlet (big *phun*) has, at least, a pagoda. Pagodas are religious, cultural and educational centres of the Khmer villages and hamlets, where the people gather once a year to pray for peace (*bon kem xan*) and to worship old Ta who is regarded as the ancestor of the *Sroc*. Marriages between boys and girls of the same village are encouraged. Nowadays, the Khmer still use the terms *me phum*, *me sroc* to designate the head of a hamlet or those in charge of the local administration. But they are not very usual.

In the old days, the Khmer had only a proper name given by their parents, which was probably accompanied by a sex-differentiating particle. This custom still remains in a number of Khmer in An Giang. Later, the Khmer were given by the Nguyen dynasty five family names namely Danh, Kien, Son, Kim, Thach which now exist in Tra Vinh, Soc Trang, Rach Gia. The Khmer's family names also derived from matrimonial relations with the Viet or the Hoa, such as Tran, Nguyen, Luong Ma, Ly, Lam etc., and from the rule under which children bear the father's family name (except for some cases in which children bear the mother's family name of their own free will or because they are out-of-wedlock).

Patriarchy and matriarchy co-exist in Khmer society. Although the former prevails, the latter still exerts much influence on the life, feelings and customs of the Khmer.

The basic cell of this socio-familial ensemble is the nuclear family. After wedding, the couple often wish to

live in a house of their own, but matrilocality is popular. The term *Me Khlot* meaning hostess refers to the wife, but the husband actually plays an important role in the family.

As regards inheritance there is no birth-right, no discrimination of lineage or sex. In case of divorce, each person keeps his or her own property, and common property is equally divided.

Monogamous marriage is usual. Polygamy is rare and mainly occurs in the upper classes.

Marriage between cross-cousins and parallel cousins is a common occurrence. But of late there are fewer cases of marriage between parallel cousins from the father's side. Matrimony between people of different generations is also forbidden. Levirate and sororate still remain in the Khmer's familial relations. Matrilocality meant to pay debts is only a thing of the past.

Cremation is a tradition of the Khmer. However, funeral ceremonies vary from one person to another depending on his or her social position. In well-to-do families, the ashes of the dead are sent to shrines often built in front of pagodas.

In poor families the dead are buried in the ground. After 3 years the bones are dug out to be burnt. The ashes then are either left to be worshipped at home or sent to pagodas. The funeral of the destitute ends completely after the burial. Sometimes, after the burial, close relatives become monks and nuns for a short time to pay tribute to the dead in accordance with the concept of Hinayana Buddhism. Every year, people celebrate the cult of the ancestors and the dead to recall them in memory.

### *Spiritual life :*

Long before the Khmer embraced Buddhism their ancestors in the South of Indochina had possessed an early traditional culture. Although Buddhism has become the orthodox religion here for two-thirds of a millennium, it has not yet removed all the religious vestiges of the ancient culture in this land.

Traces of totemism are still seen in Khmer customs: tattoo, worshipping the earth dragon (*neak*). Motifs of these dragons are used to decorate the roofs of pagodas; temples, the tombs and sickles.

Faiths relating to primitive agriculture could be found in many customs and rites, mostly at festivities and anniversaries through magical entertainments expressing wishes for prosperity, such as the ceremony to invoke the spirit of rice; the worship of the field genie, the domestic animal genie; the welcome-the-moon rite, the practice of flying lanterns, of floating lanterns, the amphibian boat race, the piling of mounts of rice or earth, the Buddha-statue-washing ceremony, and the worship of guardian angels such as *arak* and *neak ta*. All these practices are still very popular among the Khmer community.

Many archaeological discoveries made in the Mekong Delta show that from the dawn of our Christian era there existed here a cultural centre closely relating the Oc-Eo civilization of Southern Indochina. Besides, there are hundreds of *linga*, many of which have been assimilated with the local *neak ta*.

Hinayana, imported in the 13th century, has so far been a centre of faith of the Khmer. In the Mekong Delta alone there are over 400 pagodas with 10,620 monks and nuns of Khmer ethnicity in 1980. On the average there is one pagoda for every 1,600 inhabitants.



Endowed with the legacies of a brilliant civilization in their history, the Khmer residents have made a remarkable contribution to the common culture of the community of ethnicities in Vietnam.

Khmer folk literature and art are composed of many branches and genres: legend, tale, epic, adage, fable, humorous story, folk song, rhyme, theatre, ancient music, architecture, sculpture, painting, fine arts, popular dancing, etc.

The Khmer boast a rich treasure of *xo phia set* — proverbs, sayings dealing with social relations with a highly philosophical content. Sometimes a proverb of the *xo phia set* becomes a theme for a fable, a commandment in the educational verses of the Khmer ethnic group.

In addition, the Khmer have a treasure of tales. They are relating to local names, to the process of formation of the residential settlements of the Khmer in Southern Vietnam and to many customs and habits of the Khmer nationality.

The Khmer humorous stories have become a spearhead directly aiming at the decadent feudal society such as *The Stories of Aleu, Chak So Mok* and especially *Tho Manh Chay* that has some veins of the Vietnamese story of Dr. Quynh. Folksongs thrive greatly and are very popular with many themes: lullabies, songs sung at work, on the field, while boating, weaving, at wedding, and other ceremonies.

Folksongs are usually accompanied by music at parties. The ancient Khmer music was original and blossomed under different influences. It was septatonic and pentatonic. Its common musical instruments were: copper gongs, leather drums, tambourines, flutes, stringed instruments and the boat-shaped instrument called *renéat*.

Almost every Khmer can dance. Many traditional dances portray social activities and truthfully express sentiments and are highly appreciated.

The written literature of the Khmer dates from time immemorial and was inscribed on the *buong* leaves (called *Xa tra*) stored by the Buddhist clergy. It is composed of tales (*Xa tra Ruong*), familial education verses, Buddhist myths (*Xa tra Tes*), sketches about customs (*Xa tra Lbeng*). They for the most part take source from Buddhism.

Khmer architecture and sculpture give us plenty of original and magnificent palaces, pagodas and temples.

The Khmer have an indomitable fighting tradition. Together with the Viet the Khmer have many times risen up against reactionary feudal forces. We can cite as examples the uprisings led by Chau Vai Kuy (1820) and by To Va Som (1841) in Tra Cu. When Southern Vietnam was invaded by the French colonialists the Khmer turned their mind to the banner of Truong Quyen (Vietnamese) to fight against the French aggressors. Moreover, they took part in the subsequent struggle movements.

Since the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party (the present-day Communist Party of Vietnam), the Khmer have successively smashed all divide-and-rule schemes of the French colonialists, U.S. imperialists and the former Saigon puppet administration and together with the fraternal peoples in the region they have struggled for their independence, freedom and national reunification.

In the recent war of national liberation five heroic fighters were awarded the noble title of 'hero of the army' one of whom was heroine martyr Kieu Thi Nhan. Many monks and nuns also joined the revolutionaries'

rank such as: Reverend Son Vang, Superior Thach Xoa, Monk Sarat, etc.

During the recent years, Khmer militia, in co-ordination with the people's armed forces, have dealt heavy blows at the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique, henchmen of the Beijing expansionists. Such an exploit was made by a platoon of militiamen of Phu My village, Ha Tien province.

After liberation, extra plots of land were allocated to many Khmer peasant households. Many canals have been dug to irrigate the ricefields. Many littoral dykes have been built to step up agricultural production. A programme of general education has been applied to children whose new schools are temples and pagodas. Now the Khmer Buddhists have welcomed and taken part in the "Reunified Buddhists' Association of Vietnam". In the highest leading organ of the Buddhist section, there are three representatives of the Khmer Buddhist clergy. Since the liberation of the country, many cultural establishments and works of arts of the Khmer inhabitants have been classified and safeguarded. The Khmer countryside has been reorganized into productive collectives. Specialists of various branches have been trained and enlarged to speed up socialist construction and improve the material and spiritual life of the people. The Khmer ethnic group has now its representatives in the National Assembly (7th Legislature) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

### **The Bahnar**

*Denomination:* Bahnar.

*Local groups:* Tolo, Jolong, Bonom, Golar, Rengao, Krem.

*Population:* over 100,000.

*Language:* Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat:* in the provinces of Gialai-Kontum, Nghia Binh and Phu Khanh. The Bahnar live mostly in the districts of Kontum, Mang Giang, Kon-Plong and An Khe, adjoining the Ja-rai, Sedang and Hre peoples in the north, northwest and southwest, and the Viet people in the east. The Bahnar are presumably the descendants of the people who located in the coastal province of Nghia Binh in the remote past, and who are identified by Chams folkloric inscriptions as the Mada. Some time later they moved to the western mountain region.

*Material life:* Bahnar houses are set on wooden stilts. The roofs are covered with thatch and have bamboo frames. Some houses with the framework of *vi keo* (trusses) have been found only lately. Floors and walls are generally of plaited bamboo matting. A ladder leading to the floor is made from a tree trunk. Each village has one *nha rong* (communal house) with a tall and sloping two-sided roof.

Bahnar men wear loin-cloths and are bare-chested in hot weather. In cold season, they put on pull-over blouses like those of the Ede and the Mnong in Dac Lac province. A puffle sheet would be used on chilly days. Women wear a kind of sarong wrapped around the body from the waist down to over the knees, and pull-over blouses. Bahnar clothings are dyed in indigo and decorated with colour patterns and embroideries which depict nature and more or less the people's material life. Their jewellery comprises earrings, necklaces and bracelets made from copper or silver, and chains of multi-coloured glass beads.

Living on different terrains, the Bahnar show some difference in their socio-economic development. Besides cultivation in burnt-out clearings they also grow crops in dry or flooded fields.

Rotation of crops is practised with the general use of the hoe and with rather high technique. Dry fields are often near rivers or streams. Intensive farming and slash-and-burn methods are used here. The use of plough-share was not introduced until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Gardening is considerably developed. Apart from multi-crop gardens, there are single-crop ones in which grow subsidiary crops such as maize, potato, millet, etc., or industrial crops such as cotton, jute, indigo, tobacco, etc. The Bahnar have their own traditional calendar which sets ten months for production and the other two months for such work as marriage, house repairing, clothes-making, purchase, barter, ceremonies, festivals, visits and so on.

Together with crop cultivation the Bahnar used to raise a large number of cattles and poultry which greatly decreased during war time and has been gradually restored. Such sideline occupations as pottery, metal-working, knitting and weaving which had been unduly developed were destroyed during the war. In the past, the Bahnar conducted transactions through the Cham or Viet middlemen or teams which went down to plain markets every year to exchange forest products for necessary goods. Some animals and goods of value in the Central Highland of Tay Nguyen such as gong, jar, copper pot, buffalo, ox, elephant, horse, etc. were used as a unit for reckoning in barter in the Bahnar traditional society. That is why the Indochinese piastre under the French rule had no value to them. At present, the bank money, the State banking organizations and agricultural credit cooperatives serve as means of trading.

*Social and family relations*: The village was the settlement pattern, and at the same time, the only administra-

tive organization of the Bahnar. The village constituted a community which bore traces of the former clan community. Each village had its territory and land owned by the village itself. Besides the village land, members of the community were closely bound by social institutions, long-standing customary laws, religious beliefs and ceremonies, under the control of the chieftain and a council of village elders according to the democratic principle of the former military democracy. The centre of all community activities was *nha rong* (the communal house) in which to muster single male villagers into fighting units in defence of the village, and to hold festivals, religious ceremonies, etc.

In Bahnar villages there existed rich families who had accumulated wealth not through exploitation but by their production organization. However, in Bahnar society there was a rather clear differentiation which was the result of hiring manpower, lending, having house servants and slaves, though the latter were treated as family members. *Dich* was the slave who was bought and was no longer recognized as belonging to his own village or descent, but had to be reconciled to being a member of the master's family and village. *Dam* was the insolvent debtor who had to work as a slave for his creditor as long as he could not pay his debt. Under the French rule some influential men became richer than their clansmen and began to exploit the latter's labour. However, there was no social antagonism yet in Bahnar society as the prevailing customs of the community were still able to prevent the new relationship from materializing. The tradition of union and assistance was also found in the custom of intervillage alliances for the defence and the production development. Alliance ceremonies were

solemnly held and the gods may be invoked as witnesses of the oaths.

At present, on the way to socialism, the Bahnar's fine traditions are brought into play in order to build new Bahnar villages or *plays* which make up agricultural cooperatives. *Nha rong* constitutes the meeting hall, the office as well as the club of the cooperatives.

Families in Bahnar traditional society were large ones. The nuclear families descending from the same ancestors used to live under one roof. These days, extended families have been broken up, giving place to small ones which still keep close ties with their root families. Each nuclear family can live either separately or under one long roof together with several kin families. Each individual's name must bear the phonic group identical to those of his (or her) ancestors. There are no consonant complements to distinguish the sex. Individuals' names are not linked to the name of their lineage but to that of their village in order to distinguish them from namesakes in other villages. This explains why there are no namesakes in the same village.

The Bahnar families are bilineal ones which conform to the state of duolocality. Men often play a principal part in all village affairs while women take care of all housework.

Grown-up boys and girls are free to choose their marriage partners. Parents can have their say as far as traditional principles permit. For instance, marriage among those who come from the same grandparents, or even the same foreparents, are prohibited. Monogamous marriage is usual. Adultery, rape and incest, regarded as severe crimes, are severely punished or fined as such. After a person's death, the widow or widower has to go

in mourning for at least one year and can only remarry after the grave-abandoning ceremony.

It was a former custom that ceremonies of "blowing into the ear" were held for one-month old children and then their earlobes were perforated. It was believed that those who died without holes in their earlobes would be deported to the monkeys' land by Duydai the black-eared Goddess. It was not the Bahnar custom to hold funerary rites for chrisom children who died before their earlobes were perforated. Earlobe perforating was aimed to give a mark on the child's body, which meant *Hlomdon* ceremony was already administered to the child and he (she) was recognized as a full member of the village. At present, the practice of earlobe perforating no longer exists, but that of drinking *Hlomdon* alcohol is still found in many places.

The Bahnar bury the dead in the ground. Coffins are made from hollowed out tree trunks and sometimes are stored under the floor. To common deaths, funerary rites are celebrated at the house. In some places, the dead body is tied upward in the corner of the house, but in most places, the body remains covered with a sheet of cloth are laid on the floor. Food and drink for the cult of the deceased are placed aside and meals are served for the deceased for two days. It is also a Bahnar custom that the deceased's closest relatives or friends often harm themselves by means of knife, fire or by striking their heads on house columns to show their mercy upon the deceased, and cases of death happen regrettably sometimes. The Bahnar also make tumuli over graves. On each tumulus they build a catafalque surrounded by fencing. At the grave-abandoning ceremony, a tomb with a good number of decorative designs and wooden figures of man

is built. However, Bahnar tombs are not so great and sophisticated as those of the Jarai.

*Spiritual life*: Bahnar religious beliefs and tales have many elements similar to those of other ethnicities, the Viet in particular. The Bahnar believe in animism and worship the banyan tree and the ficus tree. The kapok tree is considered the guardian spirit and is made a pole for cult in ceremonies of buffalo-sacrifice or grave-abandoning ceremony. It is thought that spirits stay within every river, stream, mount, forest, etc., or in other words where there is land or water there is a spirit. The Catholic religion, which had infiltrated into Bahnar society since the mid-20th century, took advantage of the contradictions among the Bahnar, the Sedang and the Jarai to draw in 20,000 Bahnar people and distorted Bahnar tales to make them appropriate to the mythical stories in the Bible. However, the Bahnar Catholic adherents keep believing in animistic spirits in their traditional conception which itself assimilates Catholicism.

Being born in an area with stately and beautiful nature, and through successive generations which have existed and developed under all circumstances, the Bahnar have accumulated an abundant treasure of folklore which represents the life of production and fighting of a people embarking on a class society. Noteworthy is the treasure of legendary tales and epics which has only been discovered partly, but still shows up a host of spirits which reflect the world outlook and outlook on life of the Bahnar in times past. It also presents historical heroes covered with mythical elements. Besides, there are topical legendary stories, folk songs and music, and simple but original dances and so on, all of which represent plain pastoral sentiments. What is remarkable is their musical instruments made from rocks and many kinds of bamboo.

With various ways of playing the Bahnar folk musicians can turn out wonderful and miraculous sounds. Bahnar dances, together with the decorative motifs on the dancers' costumes, describe local sceneries and the people's life of hunting and fighting and are quite different from those created in the plains. Bahnar aesthetics can also be found in the art of wood carving, sculpture, in the styles of designing and skilful decorating of the *nha rong*, or more often of the bamboo implements.

Being one of the main ethnic groups in the Central Highland of Tay Nguyen, the Bahnar group has always been trusted by the other fraternal ethnic minorities and has set an example of courageous struggle against all invaders.

At present, thanks to the revolution, over a score of Bahnar cadres attain the level of higher education and hundreds of others have completed secondary education. The Bahnar people are represented at the National Assembly (7th legislature) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam by two deputies, one of which is hero Nup well known for his feats-of-arms in the anti-French war of resistance.

### **The Sedang**

*Denomination*: Sedang.

*Local groups*: Stieng, Mnong, To-drah, Ca-rong, Hanglang.

*Population*: over 73,000.

*Language*: Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat*: provinces of Gialai — Kontum, Quang Nam — Da Nang and Nghia Binh.

The Sedang are aborigines of this area. Their fellows are also found in Kampuchea. According to legends, they presumably located in the remote past in the northern

part (in Mount Ngoc Linh area) and moved to the present area centuries ago as a result of many historical upheavals.

*Material life*: The Sedang live in longhouses on stilts made from wood and bamboo. The four-sided roof is covered with thatch. Houses may be small in some places. The floor is approximately one metre high from the ground. An entrance door is placed in the middle of the front side and is opened upward. At the entrance is a platform supported by poles. There is a wooden ladder leading to the platform. In the middle of each village there is a communal house.

Sedang men wear loin-cloths and are bare-chested. In cold weather they put on a kind of duffle sheet. They wind their heads with a kind of turban, the ends of which fall back to cover the nape. Women wear a kind of sarong which is wrapped around the body from the chest downward. Sometimes they are also bare-chested and only put on waist-coats when it is cold. As late as in the beginning of the 20th century in many places Sedang women wore loin-cloths and were bare-chested like men.

The Sedang use mainly the slash-and-burn method, except a few groups in the eastern part who have begun to grow crops in fields. The Mnong sub-group, who presents an exceptional case, practises cultivation on flooded fields trampled by buffaloes and with primitive tools and technique. This method has been improved and developed.

Gardening with a variety of species has also been given much attention. Thus, it provides a considerable source of food stuffs and reduces the work of fruit gathering. Husbandry, primarily cattle raising, has been developed. However, the Sedang are interested in hunting which also meets part of their needs in foodstuffs.

Handicrafts are rudimentary and underdeveloped and consist of weaving and basketry. As they live in the open-cast mine area, the To-drah sub-group has relatively developed metal-working. Their leather bellows are original and not found in other groups. Iron can be worked from ore. There are up to 40 or 50 villages, each of which boasts tens of forges operating simultaneously, providing farming implements for local consumption and barter. Metal-working, which was destroyed during the war by the competitive commodity, has now been restored. But it has not become a main occupation yet.

Trade has shown little development, transactions take the form of barter or through some commodities used as equivalents.

*Social and family relations*: By the end of the 19th century, the Sedang society was on the point of reaching the stage of transition to a class society when it was upset and declined by invasions from outside. It was then dominated by the feudal-colonial regime.

Before liberation (1975) the village was the only social organization of the Sedang. It was their settlement and consisted of a number of houses, stores, irrigation ditches, a communal house, a cemetery, a hunting ground, streams and cultivated land. Villages were encircled by age-old forests and separated from each other by common lands. The residential area was protected by stockades and bamboo spikes and traps, and had only one entrance. Able-bodied men were organized into military units. Armed single men were often stayed at the communal house, ready to fight in defence of the village.

All village affairs were run by the village chieftain and a council of village elders according to the principle of democratic centralism. Every matter was discussed

until consensus was reached among villagers, regardless of their sexes, and the decision taken was executed by the chieftain.

All villagers had the right to own and use farm land, i.e. clearings, fields and gardens on the principle "to each according to his work." Members of the commune could sell or purchase land among themselves, but when they left the commune their land became communal land.

In Thai society, there were the rich, the poor and the well-to-do. There were cases of loans and hiring of labour but no exploitation of man by man among members of the same community. The rich were respected for having a lot of manpower, being able to hold a good number of buffalo-sacrifice ceremonies and to offer feasts to the village, and having quite a few gongs, jars, buffaloes, servants and slaves. Servants and slaves were treated as members of the family. When they were old enough to grasp all the village customs and practices and acquire much experience in production and fighting, they might become village elders or military commanders.

Villages were equal to each other. They could be large or small, rich or poor, friendly or hostile to each other, but no villages could dominate or be dominated by other villages. Conflicts among villages often occurred owing to the decline of the primitive communal system and the intrigues of the Siamese feudal forces through the slave trade. Another cause of the wars between villages was the custom of capturing strangers to offer to Gods as sacrifices to ensure bumper crops and the people's health. Later they waged wars to ensure a constant supply of slaves from prisoners of war. That is why hundreds of village names were erased in the course of history.

In the village, under the roof of each longhouse there lived a community of people composed of members of

a large family, relatives of in-laws, widows, orphans, co-villagers or sworn brothers. It was a form of extended family. Under each roof, there was a host and a hostess. The families living under the same roof worked together and shared the fruit of their labour. Rice was stored and distributed to all members according to their needs. Besides their common property which consisted of foodstuffs and domestic animals each family might have their own foodstuffs through rearing smaller animals or through gardening or farming. Each married couple had the right to live independently from the large family. Since liberation with the development of the movement of work-exchange and cooperatives, the role of the extended families has been gradually reduced. Smaller families split from the large one and concentrate on some areas.

Sedang families are bilineal ones. The Sedang do not have family names, but a complement is put before a person's name to show sex. According to a custom of the Cadong in Sa Thay region marriage is forbidden between people who observe the same taboo.

Equality between the sexes is observed by the Sedang. Step-children, adopted children, nieces and nephews are given the same treatment as one's own children. Friendship and sworn-brotherhood have developed into a fine tradition of the Sedang. Sworn-brotherhood occurred among namesakes and people of the same age, or having the same circumstances. Marriage is forbidden between children of sworn brothers, who are regarded as brothers.

The Sedang marriage represents the period of transition from dualistic to tripple system. Those who are of the same generation, but from different ancestors can marry each other. If two or more families are allied by marriage with one family, all their children are barred from marriage. As the population of a village is small and its

members are often bound by marriage ties, either from the man's or woman's side, many people have to remain single until the age of thirty or forty. In view of this situation, twin-villagers are often formed to pave the way for young people to find their marriage partners. Since liberation, it has been easier for them to choose their mates for the separation between villages has already ended.

*Spiritual life* : Spiritual and cultural activities of the Sedang are performed according to agricultural cycles. Religious ceremonies are mostly held in two periods: slash-and-burn and harvesting times. Other ceremonies such as festivals, weddings, new-house ceremonies, buffalo-sacrifice ceremonies and so on... are often held during the slack season lasting two months. The ceremony for the cult of Mother Rice is held annually by the household chief.

The Sedang are strangers to the concept of the Genie Creator. They worship only genii who are supposed to hold independently some functions. At present, there remain many backward customs such as grave-abandoning ceremony, sharing of property to the dead, childbirth at the forest edge, and so on...

They have a talent for folklore. Their treasure of folklore has been studied and written down in books on ethnic minorities' folklore. Some dances and songs have been adapted and turned into good account for public performances. Many kinds of games are played on festive days.

The Sedang display a spirit of perseverance and undauntedness against foreign invaders. They lived illegally during the one hundred years of French rule and some places were out of French control. From 1947 to 1975,

*Denomination* : Kohor. Local groups : Xre or Cho Sre ; French and US imperialists. Since liberation many Sedang have held leading positions in Party and State organs. Illiteracy has been eliminated. There is a class in each village and a school in each commune. Such social diseases as malaria are being eradicated and infant mortality has sharply decreased.

### The Kohor

*Denomination* : Kohor. Local groups : Xre or Cho Sre ; Nop or To Nop ; Ko don ; Chil ; Lach or Lat and Torang.

*Population* : more than 70,000.

*Language* : Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat* : mainly on the Lam Dong plateau. A few live west of Thuan Hai and Southwest of Phu Khanh.

The Kohor people are descended from people who lived for a long time on the plateau where they are now living, and historically have close relations with peoples speaking Malayopolynesian languages such as: Cham, Chu Ru, Raglai... Traces of tribal territories in the present area of settlement are fairly clear: along Highway 20; from Blao to Dzi Linh and then on the successive slopes of the Lang Biang plateau, where the Kohor people are now living.

*Material life* : The Kohor extended family lives in a long house on stilts. Early in the 20th century there were houses that were from 20m to 30m long; 3-3.3m wide and 1-1.5 high. The house's columns are made of wood, the roofs are thatched, the other parts are made of bamboo, the floors of crushed stems of *buong* or *mai*<sup>1</sup>. Assembling is by tying and making forks.

1. A kind in the bamboo family.



In Dzi Ling, houses on stilts of the *Xre* are built with new techniques: planing, tenon and mortise, boring, iron nails, nuts and bolts. Not to mention houses made of wooden planks or brick houses with tiled or corrugated-iron roofs erected on flat ground and furnished with modern conveniences inside such as were seen in strategic hamlets under the US-puppet administration.

*Kohor* women wear a skirt and a tight-fitting pullover shirt. They adorn themselves with earrings, bracelets or necklaces made of bronze or nickel. They often put round their necks strings of coloured glass beads. The earrings sometimes are made of ivory. *Kohor* men wear a loin-cloth and a long pullover shirt descending to the haunches. In summer, they are barechested. In winter they drape themselves in a blanket to keep warm.

The *Kohor* plant crops in burnt-out-clearings: one rice crop a year grown in the traditional way: cutting the wild vegetation, burning it then waiting for rain before making holes to sow seeds. After 2 years, the land is left fallow for 10 years for the forest to revive. Wet-rice cultivation is quite developed among the *Xre* and the *Lach*. They have worked hard to set up a system of irrigation channels to get water from the river and streams. The method of sowing is by broadcasting, not seedling transplanting. The *Chil* people practise nomadic cultivation and live a nomadic life; or nomadic cultivation combined with semisedentary life. But rice-growing people lead a relatively stable sedentary life. They harvest their crops using sickles and thresh rice on the fields, while the people practising slash-and-burn farming harvest the rice with their bare hands.

In some places, crops are grown on burnt-out clearings for several successive years. This method is differ-

ent from that practised by the *Ma* people who move to new clearings continually. Elements of dry-crop cultivation have sprung from the use of harrow.

Agricultural and forest products bring them good income. Vegetables and fruit being little grown, fishing and hunting are essential sources of food.

Besides rice, the *Kohor* also grow maize, beans, calabashes, pumpkins, vegetables, cotton and tobacco. They also grow some kinds of fruit such as: pawpaw, banana, jackfruit and pineapple...

Family sidelines such as basketwork and weaving are done between two harvests. The *Xre* are good at making ceramics while the *Nop* are good at metal working.

#### *Social and family relations:*

The *Chil* people live in scattered groups on the hillslopes. Each group consists of a number of homes related to each other on the maternal side. Some groups get together to form a *bon*. The *Xre* and the *Lach* people lead a sedentary life in stable villages on the Dzi Ling and Lang Biang plateaux. Most *Kohor* villages are born of neighbourhood ties. Only a few villages are bound by kinship ties.

Each long house is the home of an extended matrilineal family comprising many nuclear families. Each nuclear family has its own productive tools, crop land, and paddy stores. Such a long house is headed by an old man called *Kun pang*. The *Kun pangs* form a basic unit in the organizational system of the traditional society.

A *bon* is headed by a *Kuang bon* appointed by the council of *Kun pangs* to control all of the hamlet affairs. Under the French administration the economy, society and the traditional culture underwent no considerable

changes. The French colonialists relied on the social organization of the *Kohor* to rule over them: Each hamlet was headed by a *Khoa bon* who was generally the *Kuang bon* and was mainly responsible for mobilizing coolies and collecting taxes. A number of *bons* were gathered into a larger unit controlled by a *Racglon* who was in charge of putting the colonialist policies into effect.

The communal spirit binding the nuclear families living in one long house was very profound. The economic products of each family were kept in its own stores but whenever a family had not enough food to eat, it could freely take food from the others' stores.

Among the *Xre*, *Nop* and *Chil* groups living along the main roads, private ownership appeared and division into social classes began.

When a *Kohor* girl fell in love with someone, she told her parents and asked a go-between to make formal proposals of marriage to the parents of the boy. The handing over of a brass bracelet and a bead string guaranteed the promise of marriage. That is why *bracelet offering* and *bracelet-wearing* ceremonies were always held, witnessed by the go-between and the families of the partners. The wedding party ended with a procession which took the bridegroom to live with his wife's family. Their children would bear their mother's family name. If the wife died, her maiden younger sister could replace her and live with her widowed husband who did not have to wait until the end of the period of mourning (sororate).

When a person died, according to *Kohor* customs his body was shrouded and put in a coffin made of a hollowed tree trunk which was laid in the house for rituals to take place. After several days it was taken to the

forest for burial. The dead belonging to the same family or the same clan were usually buried in one great grave. After 5-7 years a funeral house was set up on that common grave after a ceremony called "abandonment of the grave".

*Spiritual life*: The traditional religion of the *Kohor* was a primitive polytheism. They considered *Ndu* the Creator. Around *Ndu* were other genii called *Yang* including agrarian genii. Each *Yang* represented a natural power. For each long house a *Yang* was selected to be its guardian spirit. Apart from their animistic belief, the *Kohor* also worshipped their ancestors represented by the "*Co nao*" in each long house. The "*Co nao*" was a skilfully carved wooden plank hung above the door. At present there is no longer a "*Co nao*" in the house but at that sacred place we still see some small tree branches or rice ears. These are the vestiges of ancestor worship.

During French colonial times, a number of *Kohor* hamlets along the main road were converted to Catholicism such as the *Xre* group living near the district town of Dزي Linh. Under the US-puppet administration, 30 *Xre* hamlets, 33 *Nop* hamlets and 15,000 *Chil* people living along Highways 20 and 21 were forcibly converted to Protestantism. However the two above religions could not extinguish the traditional beliefs and the custom of ancestor worship. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, basing themselves on the Latin alphabet, Catholic and Protestant priests devised a *Kohor* script to conduct religious propaganda. By 1918, the *Kohor* script was taught in several schools. In 1924, it was improved, but so far it has not been widely popularized. In order to hand down and preserve the treasure of folk culture

and art, the Kohor essentially use the oral way. Proverbs and folk poems are circulated among the people. Kohor poems, called *Tam pla*, are very lyrical and musical. The Kohor are one of several ethnic minorities living in the Tay Nguyen highlands to perform traditional dances in some ceremonies. Their musical instruments are chiefly the brass gong and bugle, bamboo flute, horn and lute with strings made of bamboo strips... There are many ways to produce sounds from these instruments and express the player's sentiments.

Under the US-puppet administration the Kohor were driven into concentration camps where the schemes of neo-colonialism were put into effect: separating the people from the revolution; changing people's places of residence in order to break up the relations of kinship and neighbourhood; shaking people's spirit by converting them to Protestantism; corrupting the young by gambling, drugs and prostitution; destroying the communal spirit and fine cultural traditions of the Kohor people. Finally they were compelled to accept the American way of life, to wholly depend on the US, and serve as its henchmen against the revolution. But those schemes were defeated.

After liberation (1975) people who were deceived into following the reactionary Fulro clique soon returned to their hamlets to live an honest life. Most Kohor peasants have joined cooperatives and agricultural collectives. The *Gung-Re* cooperative, whose members are all Kohor, is now leading a good movement of production in Dzi Linh district. The representative of the Kohor people in the National Assembly is Mr. Ha Giang De (alias Kche) who is member of the executive committee, of the Party provincial committee and vice-chairman of the people's committee of Lam Dong province.

## The Hre

*Denomination*: Hre.

*Other names*: Da Vach, Cham Re, Chom, Moi Luy, Thanh Dinh, Moi Son Phong.

*Population*: about 67,000.

*Language*: Mon-Khome which is similar with the language of Bahnar and Sedang.

*Habitat*: most of the Hre live along the Western mountain area of Nghia Binh province. Some live in scattered settlements in Kon Plong district of Gia Lai-Kontum province and Ham Tan district of Thuan Hai province.

The Hre are the aborigines of Nghia Binh province where they have been living for many centuries. They are much influenced in their economic life by the Viet with whom they have close relations.

### *Material life*:

The Hre live in houses on stilts. The floor is about one metre above the ground. The wooden poles whose feet are buried in the ground are simply trimmed. Each side of the roof has two common rafters which are higher than the roof beam and meet each other in one point making a "V" shape, which is called "the horns of house".

A house is divided in 3 parts: the first part serves as sitting-room and bedroom for males in the hot season for ~~can~~ alcohol drinking and common activities of the family.

From there one steps through the door into the second part of the house which serves as bedroom and where stove, rice mortar, water barrel etc. are stored. The remainder is used for women's business such as chopping vegetables for pigs, siesta, needle work...

Clothes and adornment are similar to the inhabitants in the neighbouring areas but scarves and skirts have salient features.

Old men usually wind white scarves round their heads and women cover them the way Cham people do.

Hre women wear dark indigo skirts which have various motifs. A skirt consists of two lengths of cloth making one leg sewn in the middle. When worn, it looks like a double skirt.

Wet rice is the staple food of the Hre. The names and shapes of the agricultural implements and farming techniques are similar to those of the Viet in the plains.

The Hre also work in burnt out clearings, engage in fishing, breeding, gathering, hunting, basketry, weaving...

#### *Social and family relations:*

A Hre village is fairly densely populated, accounting for 100 households. The village is run by self-managing organism. Besides his age, virtue and knowledge, his property is very important if a man is to be appointed village head to run public affairs. Some men in the village engage in fortune telling and conducting religious services. There are also middle men who contribute to maintaining order as well as good relations with neighbour communities. Some undaunted and courageous men have much experience in self-defence and using traditional weapons. In the past the colonialists and imperialist tried to buy influential elders. But most of them maintained contact with the people and took part in the resistance.

Before the revolution, the village maintained its control over fallow land, mountain, river, path, and sources of food. Private ownership was fairly strongly developed.

Trade in burnt out clearings and cultivable land often took place between the people inside and outside the village.

Some people lacked or had no means of production while some families owned a lot of land and buffaloes, but one person could not own from 5 hectares of land.

Class polarization was clear and there were many strata namely: the *Broong* or *Kap* owned great wealth: the *Lap ka* were well-to-do people. The *Pa* were poor. The *Poong* or *dik* worked as house servants to pay their debts. The *Proong* and some *Lap Ka* usually had house servants and exploited them. *Poong* had to live in their creditors' house, and had to do unpaid work until they had enough property to pay their debts.

After the August Revolution, many *Poong* were liberated. And after the liberation (1975) of South Vietnam this system of servant was completely abolished.

In Hre society, nuclear families and extended ones co-existed but nuclear families are popular.

The transition from matriarchy to the patriarchy is not completed, the bilinear character is easy to recognize. Relatives on the mother's side enjoy the same status as those on the father's side. Males and females have the same share of the heritage. The son or daughter who supports and waits upon the parents will have the lion's share. There is no birthright. The husband may live in his in-laws's house, the wife may live in her in-laws's house or the couple may have their own house. Duolocality prevails, but patrilocality or matrilocality lasts only a few years. After the birth of the first child, the couple build their own house and form a social cell, a new economic unit. Monogamy is usual. Adultery, incest, divorce... are strictly condemned by customs. Levirate and sororate are encouraged.

In the past child marriage was popular, now it is abolished. Exogamy is not encouraged. It is not the custom of the Hre to demand a high bride price or return the property as other ethnicities who arrange marriages for money. The role of a match-maker is very important in marriage, even though now the boys and girls have the last say. Wedding ceremonies are organised in both the bride's and bridegroom's houses. The most important rite is one in which a string is wound round the necks of the bride and the bridegroom in front of friends and relatives then the couple exchange quids of betel and bowls of alcohol.

*Spiritual life:* *Kachor and kaleu*, the two Hre folk songs are sung in festivals, and on other occasions...

Ancient tales, handed down from generation to generation, preserve their vivacity and diversity. A considerable part of them are collected in two volumes of: "Ancient stories of mountainous ethnicities in Nghia Binh".

The musical instruments consist of: gongs, drums, stringed instruments, *jalia* flutes, *Linh la*, *varai*, *rang ngoi*, *popel*, *ong vo hoi bbut* and *ching ka la* made of bamboo...

The Hre have a heroic tradition of struggle for liberation. They took part in the Tay Son movement at the end of 18th century. They put up a strong resistance to the French colonialists at the end of 19th century. The well-known *Bato* uprising took place at the native land of the Hre.

After the 1945 August revolution and during the nine years of resistance to the French colonialists the Hre took part in the movement in support of the resistance for the building of the army and guerilla forces, and for increasing production.

Mother Rach, war martyr Noi, etc. were shining examples of the revolutionary spirit at that time.

During more than a quarter of a century of resistance against US aggression there emerged among the Hre many outstanding sons and daughters who were awarded the title of "Hero of the People's Army Forces" by the State such as: war martyrs Dinh Nghit, Dinh Ruoi, Dinh Banh, Dinh Tia and Dinh Me. Many army units and localities have made great achievements in the fighting for the defence of our country: Guerilla and militia units in Son Thanh commune, An Quang commune and the people's armed forces in Ba To district, etc. were awarded the title of "Hero".

Infant mortality, premature death, epidemic and illiteracy were the scourges in the life of the Hre. The Hre depended upon the help of the genii and diseases were treated by cult. They had illusions in the ancestors, genii, devils of their own imagination. Many religious rites were practised in the hope of having bumper crops, prosperity, peace, good luck. Thanks to the revolution, the Hre are acquainted with science and technology. Forty people of Hre ethnicity graduated from universities. In Ba To district 2,133 patients were treated in hospitals or clinics in 1974. After liberation, in 1975, the figure was 8,720.

Most of peasants' families have joined in agricultural cooperatives or productive collectives. Son Ky cooperative, Voi Cao productive collectives, etc. become good models of productive labour and farming methods.

They have also trained many cadres capable of taking part in the management of the local administration and economy.

The Hre have two deputies in the National Assembly (seventh legislature).

## The Mnong

*Denomination:* Mnong.

*Local groups:* Mnong Gar, Nong, Chil, Kuenh, Dip, Bhiet, Prang, Breh, Rlam, Si to, Budong...

*Population:* Over 46,000.

*Language:* Mon-Khmer.

The Mnong community has many dialects which are not very different from each other. Except for the Mnong Gar group in Lak district who has a special local accent, they can understand one another.

*Habitat:* Mainly in Rac, Mdrac, Dac Nong, Dac Min, Krong Pach, Ea Sup districts of Darlac province and part of south-western Lam Dong.

Mnong is one of the ethnicities who have a long living history in Tay Nguyen. Their kin groups still live in Chlong Thuong province in Kampuchea.

*Material life:* The Mnong usually build their villages at the foot of mountains, near rivers, streams and lakes so as to get water for daily use.

Each regional group build a kind of house: house-on-stilts or house-on-earth. Houses-on-earth are built in Mnong Nong, Gar, Prang, Preh, Sito villages. Houses-on-stilts are built in Mnong Chil, Huenh, Rlam villages. Mnong Nong, Gar, Preh houses maintain the most traditional designs. Nowadays this pattern of house-on-stilts of the Mnong is similar to that of the Edeh — their nearest neighbours. The arrangement of the inside and their inner regulations are the same. The most typical ones are the houses-on-stilts of the Mnong Rlam in Lak lake. In general, the houses are 20 to 30 metres long sometimes 40 metres long. Houses-on-earth have a horizontal architecture, the entrance door is opened at one side of the roof.

Houses-on-stilts have a vertical architecture: the entrance doors are at the two bays of the house. The family living in a house-on-earth usually has a barn on a high floor and under it the fireplace. It is a kind of living room for the family. The roof of the house of the Mnong Gar is covered with grass which falls to the earth.

Not long ago, in remote areas, the Mnong have the habit of eating with their fingers. For want of kitchen utensils, food is usually put in bamboo containers. Now it is a new custom for them to use bowls and plates. The Mnong Gar usually eat rice but they also eat sour rice soup at lunch. They put the rice soup into the empty dry bottle gourd and take it to the clearings. Their foods usually are salt, dry fish, wild animals' meat and many kinds of wild vegetables.

They breed buffaloes, cattle pigs and poultry, but only use them for sacrifice ceremonies.

Can alcohol and tobacco are very neccessary for the Mnong of both sexes and at all ages.

In the past, the Mnong filed their front teeth and holed their ear lobes to adorn with ornaments. An ear-ring may be a piece of ivory having the form of a mortar, a slide of yellow bamboo or a piece of precious wood. Together with the custom of "filing teeth and stretching ear lobes" was the custom of lacquering teeth and chewing betel. Mnong men usually wear a loin-cloth and remain bare-chested. Mnong women wear a skirt falling beneath the ankle. Both men or women wear pull-over shirts. Men's shirts fall beneath the buttock, women's shirt is short and close-fitting... The loin-cloth, skirt, shirt are embroidered with traditional designs on a dark indigo

background. At present the young people wear western-style clothes. Mnong women who live in town also wear skirts and blouses.

The Mnong are fond of necklaces, bracelets, anklets, earrings and copper, nickel or silver rings. Particularly Mnong women like to wear necklaces made of five-coloured glass beads. Most of them have copper rings which are mementos of sacrifice and sworn brotherhood ceremonies. They also are the symbols of pledges with Genie or engagement presents.

The Mnong carry *gui* baskets on their backs. Buffaloes, elephants, horses are also used for transport. In areas where there are waterways they use boats.

The Mnong were the first among the ethnicities of Tay Nguyen to use hoes in agriculture.

Slash-and-burn method is the main method in Tay Nguyen agriculture. They grow water rice near lakes or along streams and rivers. Rice is the staple food. There is little sticky rice. Maize, potatoes, casava roots are subsidiary crops.

The Mnong usually cultivate on the slope of basaltic hill or mountain. Besides these inclined clearings, there are also flat clearings made on land full of elephant grass.

Every year, heads of Mnong villages and of all families meet to define the farming areas.

At present, the traditional method of cultivation is digging holes for seeds, the-crops depending on the weather. Nevertheless as the area is large, people are few and the weather is good, they have enough food.

They do not have many agricultural instruments, the main one is *xa gac* used to till clearings, pick-axe used to fell big trees. After the soil is tilled by hoes, they make holes with iron-pointed sticks. The seeds are put

in *Lo o* (a kind of bamboo). They use *Vang* and rakes to weed grass. Rice is cut by sickle, threshed and put into *gui* to be carried to the family's barn. The barn lies in the house, in the yard or in the clearings. The Mnong use many buffaloes to trample in the water fields instead of ploughing before growing rice. One month after rice seeds are sown the young seedlings are transplanted in other fields. Rice is alternated with maize, potatoes, gourds or melons of various kinds.

The main farming method is crop rotation, depending on the quality of the soil.

Land is cultivated in a certain area within the boundaries of the village.

The character of handicrafts in Mnong areas is self-sufficiency. It is not multiform but develops on a large scale. Some branches show much skill such as weaving, embroidery and basketry. They have the technique of making coloured designs on baskets of all kinds... Smithery is developed and is aimed at repairing iron instruments particularly at renovating iron agricultural implements.

Hunting and taming wild elephants are especially developed in Mnong areas (Easup, Ban Don). The elephants are tamed for ivory, fighting, hunting and as draught animals. They are also used to fell trees in state-farms in Darlac now.

Not long ago, barter was the main means of exchange of commodities. Now it is found in areas far from the main highways.

#### *Social and family relations:*

Vestiges of matriarchy remain in the Mnongs' traditional society. Duolocality is seen here, but matrilocality prevails. In this case the wife's family must pay the

larger part of the wedding expenses. The children take the name of the mother's family.

At present, there are still vestiges of levirate and sororate among the Mnong. The social cell is matrilineal family or commune of matrilineal families. At least two, on an average three or four couples live in the same long house. Each Mnong village usually has ten long houses.

The Mnong village is called *bon* or *uon* a grassroots social unit. The village population consist of members of three or five clans grouping into a neighbouring commune. The head of the village called *runut* runs the communal affairs. The village has a common source of drinking water, a cemetery and an area of land for cultivation, communal land.

In the Mnong village there are haves and have-nots but there is no exploitation of man by man.

#### *Spiritual life.*

The Mnong have the custom of burying the dead. The coffin has a *xon trau* shape. The dead's body is not reinterred. After one year they abandoned the grave. The Mnong build a catafalque above the grave and adorn it with wooden engraving shapes and paint black, red, white, designs on it.

The Mnong believe in Genii, for example the Genie of Agriculture, the Genie of Elephant. However, Mother of Rice takes an important role in the life of the Mnong.

The life, work and feelings of the Mnong are reflected vividly in the treasury of tales, sayings, popular songs and traditional music. Musical instruments are mainly made of bamboo of various kinds...

Vocal music is plentiful and creative.

Besides bamboo musical instruments, there are bronze musical instruments of various sizes: small gong, *num* gong, *bang* gong and big drum with a leather face. A set of wellknown lithophones, found in Darlac highlands in a Mnong village in 1949, is regarded as the oldest musical instrument.

Having a long history closely connected with their native land, the Mnong have a high sense of national independence and sovereignty.

In the past, many units of the French expeditionary Corps were frightened by Mnong fighters in the resistance movement led by N'Trang Long, of Mnong Bhut origin, a hero, a leader of Tay Nguyen. The spirit of N'Trang Long and his fighters nurtured the determination to safeguard their village and country for the Tay Nguyen people during the resistance against the French colonialists and US aggressors.

At present, the Mnongs have become real masters of their locality and of their country. They assume the responsibility of managing power and the economy and part of the health service, education, culture and science-technology in their locality.

Mrs H'Zau is the Mnongs' deputy to the National Assembly (seventh legislature) — member of Party's district committee, chairman of the Fatherland front committee of Dac Nong district.

#### **The Stieng**

*Denomination*: Stieng. Other names: Sa Dieng, Tho, Ta Mun.

*Population*: over 40,000.

*Language*: Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat*: Mainly in Song Be province (Phuoc Long and Binh Long districts), a few others in Dong Phu and



Dong Xoai districts (northwest of Dong Nai province) and south of Dac Lac province, about 700 km southwest of Lam Dong province: some Stieng villages in the highlands north of Tay Ninh province. At present, the Stieng live beside the Ma, the Mnong, the Kohor and mingle with the Khmer and the Viet.

The Stieng are regarded as the descendants of the aborigines in South Indochina and may have a common origin with the Mnong.

#### *Material life:*

The Stieng traditionally live in long houses built on the ground, each sheltering a big family or many small families (family commune). Paddy stores are erected in the house, around each of which lives a small family. The house has two roofs covered with tiger grass. The main doors are laid at both ends, while a side-door looks at the front.

The house is enclosed with bamboos assembled like a "big cage". The grass roof falls above 40 centimetres from the ground except for the side-door which makes a canopy. The length of the house depends on the size of the family. Most current are houses 30 to 40 metres long sheltering 3 or 4 small families. Rare are houses 50 to 60 metres long for 5 or 6 small families.

Beside long houses there are short houses for one or two small households.

In the past, men wore loin-cloths and women wrapped themselves with skirts. In the cold season they put on a blanket over their shoulders. Not long ago, before women wore skirts as they do now, they used loin-cloths like men. A number of people were dressed in blouses without collars tailored like pull-overs.

Handsome men wore jackets also tailored like pull-overs but with split sides on festive days.

Since the August Revolution, with the ever-growing contact with the Viet and other fraternal ethnicities, the Stieng have changed their clothes. Now men wear trousers or shorts, shirts or singlets, rubber sandals, plastic sandals or canvas shoes. Women wear skirts and blouses.

Very common, especially before the August Revolution, was the custom of filing teeth and perforating earlobes to put on ear-rings made of ivory, precious wood or bamboo pipe. The more the teeth are filed and the earlobes are perforated, the more handsome people are. The Stieng also wear around their necks a few strings of glass beads, big and small, and around their wrists brass wristlets, thick or thin, to make them more graceful. In the past, they also used to tattoo their bodies.

The Stieng's main production activity is to make clearings to grow rice which fits their nomadic settlement and farming. Tilling habits, production cycles and agricultural implements are like those of the neighbouring ethnicities: Ma, Mnong, Kohor, Cho Ro... The Stieng's clearings are polyvalent although rice is the main crop, as rice is alternated with sesame, maize, and sometimes with gourd, melon, beans... After 3 years the clearings are left waste. After nine or ten years, they are again farmed. Apart from rice and maize are grown sweet potato, cassava and some other starchy tubes to provide food for pre-harvest months.

Hunting and gathering forest products are common activities to supplement rice cultivation generative of low yields and too dependent on nature. The Stieng have many ways to hunt beasts in the forest and catch fish in the stream. Fish-catching is usually done in the rainy

season: chopping *ngu* fish with a knife, shooting with a spear, poisonous arrows, damming a brook and dropping poisonous leaves, installing bamboo lids in water courses, etc. Hunting beasts is done by chasing, waylaying, trapping by various means, shooting poisonous arrows, automatically-triggered traps, etc. When farming is slack the Stieng gather forest products: firewood, bamboo shoots, bamboo, rattan, yam, morel, mushroom, honey, and many vegetables and fruit.

Near each house is a garden with vegetables and fruit-trees but there is not a garden economy. Nor is the rearing of cattle and poultry developed, as each family only breeds a few pigs while oxen and buffaloes are very rare. Poultry mainly consists of cocks and hens to make offerings and treat guests.

A common side-line occupation is the weaving of such household articles in bamboo and rattan as dossier, basket, sieve, fishing tackle.

The Stieng like drinking rice alcohol kept in brown ware jars.

#### *Social and family relations:*

The Stieng's highest social organization is the village which is at the same time the basic residential unit. The commune and canton established by the colonial-feudal administration above the village are alien to their traditional structure.

The village comprises some long houses — up to ten — in which live about ten families, bringing the population from a few score to over one hundred. The village land also includes the tilled land, the forest, mountains, rivers and ponds recognized and respected by the neighbouring villages. This land is the common property of the community.

A Stieng village is a group of long houses. In each house there are many households — independent socio-economic units having its own production, stores and kitchen. These families are related by maternal, paternal or matrimonial ties. At the head of a long house is an elder, the oldest man in the house. He is assisted by other old and able men regarded as learned men. All the elders in the village make up the village council whose task is to settle the village affairs and appoint the village head.

The Stieng society is organized on the basis of an outworn clearing economy with an unstable mode of production combining nomadic settlement with scattered farming (each nuclear family having its own production). Therefore there cannot be a clear class differentiation.

Until the early 20th century when Western High Plateaux were still fraught with wars between villages, there were family slaves. These were mainly prisoners of war, debtors as well as bought slaves. Apart from the loss of freedom to live of their own they were considered dependents of the family head: to be of the same family, to work according to their abilities, to live like other members, to marry and to have children. They could be free any time they had the money to redeem themselves. Hence these slaves were not objects of exploitation. On the other hand, the Stieng had a concept of property which made social differentiation difficult. For them properties consists of gongs, musical instruments to play during festivities, brownware jars to hold alcohol, buffaloes and oxen to make offerings, elephants, slaves and children galore. These non-economic properties were not means to exploit others.

In principle, the regime of marriage is monogamy, but polygamy has existed for a long time. Through a go-between the family of a mature boy asks the hand of a

girl and brings engagement gifts. After the wedding, the wife lives at the husband's. In the past, a widow had to marry her husband's elder or younger brother, except for his eldest brother. In the case of a married brother she became his concubine.

The tomb of the deceased is piled high and a house built over it to keep the share of the deceased of the familial properties; these are to be destroyed in part to show that they belong to the other world.

#### *Spiritual life:*

Primitive polytheism is still common among the Stieng who believe in many evil spirits, ghosts and devils. This is reflected in the yearly worshipping ceremonies and many taboos in daily life. Owing to the influence of the Khmer, it seems, the Stieng worship a guardian angel (*Neak Ta*, *Ong Ta* or *Net Ta*) carved from wood put in a temple in the village or the forest. A ceremony is held every year in honour of the genie of the earth before the rainy season. The family heads bring the offerings, carry out the ceremony, take food on the spot and are confident that they will have a year of good weather and bumper harvest.

A dreadful thing in the Stieng's superstitions is the belief in haunted people which accounts for many blood-sheds in the former society.

Stieng folk art and literature has not been duly collected and propagated although it is an indispensable mental pabulum of the Stieng. By word of mouth they have handed down no few sayings, expressions, legends, tales, songs in weddings, and festivities. This is not to say of the Stieng's habits, customs, sculptures in grave-houses, fighting dances, and various rites which become rare at present.

Like many other ethnicities in South Vietnam after liberation, the Stieng now have schools, medical stations, are embarking on the collective path with their agricultural co-operatives and production collectives. They have a deputy in the present National Assembly, Senior lieutenant Dieu Mum, deputy-head of the security forces, Phuoc Long district, Song Be province.

#### **The Bru-Van Kieu**

*Denomination:* Bru — Van Kieu. Local groups: Van Kieu, Mang, Koong, Khua, Tri.

*Language:* Mon — Khmer.

*Population:* About 33 000.

*Habitat:* More than 2,000 people, dislocated by the Americans and their puppets since 1972, now live in Krong Pach district (Dac Lac province) while the rest settle in large groups in the districts of Huong Hoa, Tuyen Hoa, Lo Ninh, Ben Hai, Bo Trach and Trieu Hai (Binh Tri Thien province). Their co-racial sub-groups are also present in Lao (provinces of Kham Muon, Savanakheth, Saravan, etc.) and called So.

The Bru-Van Kieu are the original inhabitants long time attached to their present native land.

*Material life:* In general, their villages are arranged in two different ways: huts are built along the banks of rivers or streams in circular or oval lines, surrounding the communal house. Houses are built on stilts. In some places, the ends of the house are structured in the style of a tortoise shell like the houses of the Co-tus and the Gie Triengs in Quang Nam-Da Nang province. However, double roofed houses are most commonly seen. The inner disposition of all houses is alike: first, it is the room for the reception of guests with a "sacred" column.

for the cult of the ghost; next comes the room of the elderlies, then the room for each couple and their children and lastly, the room where belongings are stored and kept. There is only one fire place in the house; in winter there is an additional fire place in the sitting room. Wooden figures of birds or crossed-wood logs depicting the animal horns rising above the roof ends are the prevalent ornaments.

The Bru-Van Kieus are not yet adapted to the growing of cotton for cloth making. They beat out the bark of the "xui" tree to obtain white fibres and dye them for the making of loin clothes and coats for both men and women. Gradually they adopt the Vietnamese or Lao dresses. Today, the administration supplies them with textiles, clothes, blankets, mosquito nets, etc.

These people are in the habit of coating their teeth with black lacquer. Young boys and young girls have the custom of filing their teeth and tattooing their faces. Formerly both sexes wore chignons; unmarried women bore them on the left side, and married ones, on the top. Nowadays, the white scarf is the common head-dress of the women folk.

The rice-fields and the "ray", or burnt-out jungle clearings, are the two principal economic features. In the uplands of Quang Tri, comparatively favourable conditions exist for the development of wet rice. In other areas, people mainly grow crops in burnt-out clearings. The season begins in the 2nd or 3rd lunar month and lasts until the 9th or 10th month when the crops are brought in, thus closing the production year. Rice-growing techniques develop fairly well in some localities. Hunting and fishing constitute their auxiliary economic activity. Barter and marketing generally take place in

the village and at home. Some of the Bru-Van Kieus have become traders, acting as intermediaries in the exchange of goods between the upland and the delta regions.

*Social and family relations:* Differences of wealth are rather distinct in Bru-Van Kieu society. Land-owners have much wealth and power. Sometimes, they are both clan chiefs and village headmen. These functions are handed down to sons or brothers. They enjoy considerable privileges and regard the area under their jurisdiction as their private property, including even the people living in it. Under the influence of Vietnamese feudalism, the office of the village headman was held by a village chief and in areas dominated by Lao feudalists, the "pho ban" was instituted.

The Bru-Van Kieus call their village "vil". Each vil comprises one or several mu (called da or mui in some places) — exogamous groups, units. Members of the mu are consanguineous through the father. Nowadays, the traditional link between the family and the mu is still preserved. Nevertheless, neighbourly relations in the village are no less important.

The family of the Bru-Van Kieu is a kind of nuclear, patrilineal family. The position of the son is higher than that of the daughter who has no right to inheritance or can only receive a smaller share of the heritage. The family leadership held by the oldest man will be transferred to the eldest son of the family. Monogamy and patrilocality are well established. Young boys and young girls go and sleep in the communal house or take abode in tiny huts far from the village for love making. To make the marriage a success, the family of the boy must send presents to the family of the girl and satisfy its wealth requirements. When the

bride moves to the husband's home, she becomes a member of her husband's *mu* and the recognition of this status is formal only after the holding of the expensive *ta kol* ceremony to be arranged by the boy's family in which takes place the rite of wealth hand-over to the girl's family, to the brother of the bride's mother. The principle of exogamy is inviolable. The custom rules that as the boy of *mu* A gets married to the girl of *mu* B, so the boy of *mu* B must take a wife in *mu* C in accordance with the principle of propitious marriage. Levirate and sororate are allowed. Cross-cousin-marriage has been established. In marriage, the brothers and sisters of the bride have fairly large authority.

#### *Spiritual life:*

The cult of ancestors is the most important religious activity. Each family has its own altar. Each clan has a common worship place in which each dead is provided with a broken piece of bowl, a broken piece of cooker, a tin of rice, a tin of water and a parcel of cooked rice. Besides, people worship the ghost of the girl's family, the Genie of rice... Traces of totemism are also to be found here: each *mu* believes in its totem which still is taboo to them. The totem may be the squirrel, the "cu nau", the banana flower,... In some places, there is already the germ of the cult of the Genie guardian the genie of wealth and the village protector genie. Some people have recently adhered to Buddhism.

Bru-Van Kieu folk art and literature are fairly developed. Musical instruments include drums, gongs, aman, ta rien, pi, and kho lui wind instruments, po lua and ta lu string instruments etc... Many Brus play these instruments very skilfully. They are also fond of many types of folk songs. Alternate songs between men and

women are called *pro giong*, Singing combined with narrating is called *cha chap*. In their daily speech, people use words in the form of adages and proverbs, richly figurative and epitomizing life experience. The treasure of orally transmitted old-tales is rather rich and peculiar, dealing with the origin of mankind, customs and manners, primitive immigration and different aspects of life in the past. A number of these old tales have been collected in the book "Van Kieu Old Tales" first published in Hanoi and reprinted many times.

Together with brothers and sisters of other ethnicities, the Bru - Van Kieus play an active part in the struggle for national liberation and defence. Prior to the August Revolution of 1945 many Communist Party bases existed in their locality. Anti-French and anti-US Resistance bases were established there. The portion of the historic Ho Chi Minh trail passing through the western part of Binh Tri Thien province records the contributions made by the Bru-Van Kieus who built and maintained it at the cost of their sweat and blood. Violent attacks by the Americans and their puppets were focussed on this area because of its important position and the staunch fighting spirit of the Bru-Van Kieu and other ethnicities. Representatives of the revolutionary will of the Bru-Van Kieus are Ho Phom, cited as Hero of the People's Armed Forces, and Cu Bai village, winner of the title of Hero village. In the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 7th Legislature, Ho Thi Huong is a member representing the Bru-Van Kieus. These people have joined agricultural co-operatives. Most of their children are going to school. They enjoy all the necessary medical care.

As a token of their gratitude towards esteemed President Ho Chi Minh and their respect for him, since the

triumph of the August Revolution (1945) all the Bru-Van Kieus have adopted Ho as their first name.

### The Co Tu

*Denomination:* Co tu; other names: Phuong, Kan Tua, Kha Tu, Cao, Ha...

*Population:* About 27000.

*Language:* Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat:* mountain districts of Hien and Giang in Quang Nam—Da Nang province, and Phu Loc and A Luoi, Binh Tri Thien province.

The Co tus are the original inhabitants. Their co-racial groups also settle in the mountain regions of Southern Lao.

*Material life:* Usually, the villages of the Co-tus are distant from one another. The area of residence is enclosed with hedges, except for two main entrances. Houses are disposed in the form of an elliptic-shaped belt, surrounding the vast and rather flat yard of the village. The tall and large communal house stands in the middle of the yard or between the rows of houses. Here, guests are received, meetings held, common rites observed, trophies displayed, wicker-work done and tale-telling conducted by elderlies. Like other ethnic groups living in houses built on stilts in the Truong Son—Tay Nguyen region, the Co-tus, however, live in houses upcurved at both ends in the form of a tortoise shell, no matter what they are, communal, dwelling houses or barns.

Costumes for men or women are generally simple. Formerly, men wore loin cloths and were bare-chested. Now they are dressed like the Viet (majority people). Women wear skirts long enough to cover the lower part of their bodies and breasts. Red-coloured stripes are

woven into the skirt, forming bands of designs running laterally at its background. The woman's vest with a V-shaped collar is simply tailored and has no sleeves. It is the custom of the Co-tus to have their teeth filed to show their cosmetic art and to mark their age of maturity. They are fond of ornaments, and particularly women like wearing bracelets, armlets, necklaces, earrings and multi-coloured glass beads.

The Co-tus live mainly on slash-and-burn cultivation. Apart from rice, the main staple food, the slash-and-burn clearings also give corn, bean, potato, manioc, jack fruit, banana, vegetables, water melon... Each patch of the jungle clearings only gives one rice crop and then is left fallow until it is reclaimed otherwise it is to be switched over to the growing of crops other than rice. Farming techniques are not different from those practised by settlers in the surrounding areas. Tools include machets, hatchets, pointed sticks and weeders. The methods consist in slashing and burning the jungle patch, putting seeds in the holes dug with pointed sticks, weeding, and protecting the crops from birds and animals until harvest day. Rice is reaped by hand. Famine which results from nomadic life is the constant scourge for many generations. Sedentary settlement of nomadic people is being promoted. Nearly 10,000 inhabitants of Hien district and over 2,000 others of Giang district have settled down to a sedentary life. Of late, the Co-tus in some localities such as Chom and Trhy villages, Hien district, and La-e village, Giang district, have started using buffaloes to draw their ploughs introducing new rice strains, developing small-scale irrigation works and applying fertilizers. In Hien, per capita food production has steadily increased since liberation: 1976-375.8kg; 1978-600kg and 1979-800kg.

The Co-tus raised both poultry and cattle. The buffalo is a favoured animal as it is both the property of the family and the object of ritual sacrifice and, today, it even constitutes the draught power in wet rice growing areas. The group living close to the Vietnam—Lao border has the habit of growing cotton and jute and is skilled in cloth weaving. Co-tu men are expert hunters. They use cross-bows with poisoned arrow-heads, spears, scimitars and shot guns in hunting expeditions. Their skills in the use of primitive weapons (spikes, traps...) once sowed terror among the French, American and puppet troops. Gathering of forest products and fishing are side-line occupations aimed at self-supporting in food. Basketry is very popular. Formerly, barter and trade within their community and with other settlers were conducted on the basis of exchange of commodities. Today, they are more and more accustomed to the Vietnamese bank-notes.

*Social and family relations:* The Co-tu village is a community of settlers having its own boundary. It ensures self-government in accordance with the traditional social institutions. In this community the most able of all elders assumes the function of village head. Differences between the rich and the poor are very clear.

The patrilineal character finds rather clear expression in the role of the male member, in marriage and in family life. As marriage by purchase prevailed, formerly wealthy men possessed many wives, most of whom were young women. Marriage is permissible between cross cousins. Levirate and sororate were commonplace. The exogamous unit is Ca-bu—a group of consanguines of the male line. The choice of a husband or a wife is governed by this principle: as a male in group A takes

a wife in group B, so a male in group B is allowed to choose his mate only in group C and not in group A...

Small families, averaging 5—to—7 members each, have been organized. The father or the eldest son has full authority, including birth right. In some localities, especially in the upland regions, families of 3—to—4 generations with 15—to—20 members on an average are still prevalent. In these extended families, production work is done in common, but each couple and their children form a separate household.

Members of the same ca-bu have kinship ties with a common grandfather, and are closely bound together whether they live in the same village or not; there is a clan chief, a common name connected with a myth or a definite taboo (an animal or a plant), or to the name of a specific person. The process of development leads to the division of the ca-tu into different sub-groups.

*Spiritual life:* The Co-tus believe that everything has its "soul". This conception exerts a powerful influence on their daily life activities. Particularly, the rites relating to the belief in the "soul" of rice play an important part in their religious life. The old "blood-hunt" custom—seeking and killing a person alien to their community as a sacrifice to deities in their pray for a good crop and for security for the villagers, was fully abandoned in the 50's thanks to the agitation work of the communists.

The asset of the Co-tus' popular knowledge is fairly large: in medicine, astronomy... The Co-tus have their agricultural calendar established on the basis of years of observation and experimentation to govern their activities in keeping with climatic and soil conditions. On the basis of the movement of the moon in its different cycles, they reckon the days in the month in an

original way: to the name of a day corresponds with the shape of the moon.

Folk art and literature comprise many genres. Old tales have been introduced in the series "Co-tu Old Tales" published in Hanoi (1982). Boys and girls used to sing the "to len", a type of love song. Tho Co-lau tune, eloquent and impulsive, is heard when mobilisation is needed, especially when an appeal is made for the fight against the enemy. Of late, some Co-tu dances have appeared on the stage, attracting spectators from brotherly ethnicities. Gongs, stringed, wind and other musical instruments help enrich the spiritual life. With their creativeness, skill and dexterity, the Co-tu artists have to their credit many architectural works of artistic value. We can cite as an example the imposing, solid and communal house decorated with figurines of bird, man, animal... The Co-tu decorative art can also find lively and subtle expression in the commemorative pole planted on the occasion of well-known, buffalo-sticking festivals, commonly seen in any Co-tu village.

The art of wood carving, rudimentary but highly realist, portrays human beings, animals and tools through the decorations at the catafalques.

More than 10 years ago, during the anti-US war of resistance, a number of revolutionary cadres started to romanize the Co-tu language, thus creating the script for this ethnic group.

During the war of resistance against the French colonialists, the people of Hien and Giang districts have many times come out against taxes and corvees required for the building of Road 14, and put up a direct fight against the enemy. During the anti-US war of resistance, despite continual enemy bombing and acts of terror, they

continued to shelter cadres, provide our troops with food and work as civil carriers to serve the battlefront. Co-tu guerillas joined armymen in fighting against the enemy at Nam Dong, A so, Bo xit and other places. Bho Nuou Pho, a political commissar of the militia force of Cha Val village, and Y On, an 80-year-old militia woman of the same village (Giang district) were awarded respectively the titles of Hero and Heroine of the People's Armed Forces. At present, the Co-tus are enthusiastically taking part in the building of their native land and a new life. In the current National Assembly (7th Legislature) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Priu Pram is a deputy representing the Co-tu ethnic group.

### The Gie-Trieng

*Denomination*: Gie-trieng; other names: Bri la, Xop, Ka tang; local groups: Ve, Bnoong, Gie, Trieng.

*Population*: over 16,000 inhabitants.

*Language*: Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat*: concentrated in Dakgley district (Gia Lai—Kontum) and Giang and Phuoc Son districts (Quang Nam—Da Nang).

The ancestors of the Gie-trieng once lived principally in the present region of Quang Nam—Da Nang. Later on, a section moved to the basin of River Xe ca mang (Laos), then to Northern Gia Lai—Kontum. Today, members of their racial group can also be found in Laos.

*Material life*: The inner disposition of the Gie-Trieng village bears a clearly defensive character. Fortified hedges separate the residential quarter from the outside and dwelling houses are built in a definite order. In the middle of the village stands the communal house, the



tallest building with a roof in the shape of a tortoise shell, a floor 0.5—0.6 metres high above the ground, a ladder at each end, a corridor running lengthwise inside the house and partitioning the floor in two halves, one for unmarried girls and one for unmarried boys. It also serves the village's meeting place and reception centre. The Gie-trieng still build their houses on stilts, but in some places they live in mud houses, this type of house has made its appearance since the start of the anti-French war of resistance (1945). The mud house is structured in a single line, each village has only one house with a community room in the middle, the remaining space being divided into separate compartments, each for one family. Such a structure can also be seen in Dac Mon, Xop Nghet (Dakgley) and Phuoc Son.

The male dress is usually a loin-cloth and in cold days a blanket is wrapped across the chest. The women wear the skirt. They cover their chest by fastening the skirt under the armpits like the Co-tu, or with a girdle joined to the skirt. In some places, unmarried girls keep flowing hair. After marriage, they fasten their hair in a bun on top of the head. They like wearing copper and silver bracelets or some strings of glass beads. Women of well-to-do families used to wear earrings made of ivory, like the Brau and the Gia Rai.

The economic activity of this ethnic group is mainly oriented to crop growing in burnt-out clearings. Before liberation (1975), the Gie-trieng led a nomadic or semi-sedentary life. Farming methods are similar to those applied by settlers in surrounding areas. Apart from rice, they grow maize, potato, manioc, fruit trees and vegetables. Thanks to crop rotation several products can be obtained during a period of land utilisation. Because of

poor and unstable yields, sideline occupations make up for this gap. Food gathering, hunting and fishing supply foodstuffs for the meals. What comes from animal husbandry goes mainly to ritual sacrifices. Practically, all men and women practise basketery. In some areas, the women used cotton and flax yarn to weave cloth. Here and there in the villages, smithies are opened to repair work tools. In the Dakpet region the Gie-trieng know how to get gold from streambeds. Pottery is also a trade but technical skill is of a low order, without a potter's wheel. Jars, cookers, bowls and plates produced in Dakpet are utilized by settlers in the whole of northern Kontum. Handicrafts, animal husbandry and forest products are used to barter for salt, matches, hardware...

*Social and family relations:* Formerly, the first elements of class society already took shape in the land of the Gie-trieng. Differences of fortune divided them into 4 different categories of people: Those who had food surplus, those who had enough to eat, the poor and the slaves, the latter being prisoners of war sold away, defaulting debtors or orphans without support. The founder of the village or one of his descendants was appointed to run the affairs of the community. Owing to constant conflicts, the most courageous of all played the role of military commander in war. Today, the "blood hunt" custom is a thing of the past. This was thanks to the work of the communists in the 50's. In that same period, the organisation of the village on the war footing ceased to exist.

The concept of "kinship" is denoted by the word choong, with distinction between the male and the female line. The family names are called after an animal or a plant name, some others reflect the characteristics of the areas of settlement (such as a bridge), or are related

to a natural phenomenon (such as wood fire). Each family line is linked with a private history which is handed down from generation to generation.

Besides the form of small-size family, big-size families are still preserved in two different patterns: the members either live, work and eat together or live and work together but eat separately. The head of a big family is the oldest man whose wife has mythical relations with the "soul" of rice according to popular belief. The couple take care of production work and spending and at the same time develop relations with outsiders on behalf of the family. The organisation of labour is based on the principle of labour division according to age, sex and group.

Endogamy is forbidden. Levirate and sororate remain in force. The principles governing the choice of mates in marriage fully resemble those observed by the Sedang. Formerly, duolocality prevailed, but of late matrilocality or patrilocality is predominant. Five steps must be taken before marriage is consummated: the *bla* ceremony uniting the boy and the girl symbolically, the *ta va* ceremony introducing them to the village, the *ta lu* ceremony helping them to recognize relatives, the *loong* ceremony for exchanging gifts between the two families and the *Choo mrao* ceremony as an announcement to the Genie of the village and as a farewell party to friends who still spend the night at the communal house.

According to tradition, the woman delivers her baby in a hut built by her husband in the jungle. Ten days after delivery, she takes her baby home and a ceremony is held to recognize it as a new member of the family. Later on, the *kit pot* ceremony is held for the perforation of the ear-lobes of the baby. Teeth are filed at the age

of 15 — 16 for boys and 13 — 14 for girls and only until then can they be regarded as official members of the village.

*Spiritual life*: The Gie-trieng believe that the human creature has a "soul" which resides in the ear hole. After death, the "soul" is transformed into a ghost embodied in the *te* or *King Kang* bird which flies back to the ancestors in the caves of Giang district. This belief leads to the holding of a ceremony, in case of illness, in which a fowl, a pig or a goat is sacrificed. In the past, harmful magics of different sorts, love magic for example, were rather developed. The Gie-trieng's actions are governed by taboos and the belief in good and bad omens. Like other settlers in the region, religious activity for the most part has connection with agriculture, and focuses in the farming cycle, from soil selection to harvesting and storing. The buffalo-sticking festival, held once in several years, is meant for the pray for a good crop.

In the treasury of folk art and literature, singing occupies a notable place. There are tunes to lull the baby, extend congratulations, tell stories, mark the abandonment of a grave in springtime and sing a romantic love. There is a rich store of attractive old tales. Gongs, skin-headed drums, self-made bamboo guitars are the popular musical instruments. Decorative motifs on coffins and rice pounders bear realistic meanings.

With the triumph of the revolution, especially since liberation, rapid and new changes have taken place in the land of the Gie-trieng. Conflicts, disunity, capture of prisoners, slave trading have been done away with entirely. The campaign for sedentary settlement is yielding good results. Gradually, the people change their style of

work, organize collective production in work-exchange teams and agricultural co-ops, apply new farming techniques and, step by step, drive back poverty and backwardness.

In the fight against the French and American aggressors, the Gie-trieng demonstrated their unsubmissiveness and their aspiration for independence and freedom. Alang Bin and some others have been cited as heroes of the people's armed forces.

Cadres of various branches of services at different levels have reached their maturity. Typical of all is Mrs Y Mot (or Y Pan) — alternate member of the C.C. of the Communist Party of Vietnam and Vice Chair person of the current National Assembly.

### The Ma

*Denomination:* Ma, four principal local groups: Ma Ngan, Ma xop, Ma to and Ma Krung.

*Population:* more than 20,000.

*Language:* Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat:* in the southern part of Lam Dong province, concentrated in Bao Loc, Di Linh and Duc Trong districts, a section in Dong Nai province.

*Material life:* The traditional house of the Ma is built lengthwise on stilts. At the beginning of the 20th Century, there existed houses some one hundred metres long. Now, there remain only houses dozens of metres long and already 4-to-8 metre-long houses have made their appearance. Many 4-roof mud houses like those of the Viet can also be seen.

Women wear sarongs and pull-over garments, like the dress of the Mnong and Kohor. Men wear loin-cloths. In summer, they are often bare-chested and in winter, a blanket wrapped across the chest is added.

It is their custom to file their teeth and perforate their ear-lobes for ornaments which consist of big ivory rings or lengths of bamboo. Women used to wear strings of multi coloured glass beads in addition to a pair of copper necklaces. Both men and women like to wear many copper bracelets and anklets.

Cultivation with the slash-and-burn method is the Ma's main economic activity. It seems that the burnt-out clearings provide them with all the food needed for their daily meals, for predatory economy fails to feed them regularly while animal husbandry is less developed. There are two categories of burnt-out clearings: the new and the old. The former is the one put under rice only in the first year. The latter is the one developed from the second year onwards. Rice can still be grown for another year in this patch of land which then is left fallow until reclamation. Otherwise subsidiary crops are grown for several years in succession before the land is left fallow. Rice is the main crop but the Ma also practise crop rotation with maize, calabash, pumpkin, melon, cotton, capsicum...

Tools include hatchets, long-handled knives, pointed wooden sticks about 3 metres long capped with iron, small baskets for seeds and the Kao for weeding. Rice is threshed by hand. Sickles are used only for reaping glutinous rice. Ordinary rice is the staple food crop and so is called mother rice.

The Ma avoid clearing land in primitive forests. For them, a primitive forest is sacred and is the creator of the greenness of the earth.

Flooded ricefields, that account for very low percentage consist only of flat, low-lying treeless areas with savannas in the dry season that are under water in the

rainy season. Farming methods employed in flooded ricefields do not differ much from those employed in the burnt-out clearings. Tools, still very rudimentary, include hoes and wooden rakes (which serve as harrows). Everything is done by manpower. After raking, the ricefields are left dried up and then the slash-and-burn method is applied.

Around their houses the Ma keep gardens where tobacco, paw-paw, jack-trees, sugar canes, and sometimes, cotton, mulberry, millet are grown.

In the US-puppet time, small tea and coffee plantations appeared in some localities.

Animal husbandry is less developed. Poultry, cattle, pigs and goats are raised to be used as sacrifices. Some families breed horses and in the village there are some elephants for transport.

Handicrafts remain a sideline occupation. Wickerwork turns out household utensils in rattan and bamboo; from the looms of skilful weavers come clothing with patterns woven into it; smithies are found in many villages, repairing and making farm implements; canoes made of hollowed out trees are used for transports on rivers and streams.

The Ma eat ordinary rice. Their diet consists mainly of salt, wild vegetables, calabash, gourds, cassava brow-ses... rarely meat of game animals.

*Social and family relations:* Towards the beginning of the 20th century, Ma society found itself in the stage of serious decay, as far as consanguine community relationship was concerned, and was on the threshold of class society. It consisted of villages scattered over a vast area. The village was their settlement unit, in which there was one long house or more whose owners were

bound together by their common ancestors. These houses were grouped together or scattered within the village limits. Villages were independent of one another as self-supporting socio-economic units. Their members had either consanguine or marital relationships. Of late, a new type of village — neighbourly commune — has come into existence. Land owners are members of the commune whose representative is the village chief and at the same time the owner of the forest and the land. The villagers have the right to land ownership and enjoy all the fruits of their farm work. In each village one or two persons are assigned the task of directing the utilization of the forests and guiding, together with family heads, farm work during the year.

The difference between the rich and the poor is the result of three factors: production experience, labour force and industriousness. Wealth finds expression in the number of gongs and jars owned by each family in accordance with traditional social hierarchy.

The Ma carry out production separately and have their own rice stores. They are liable to use other families' stores in time of need, the concept of lending and borrowing being non-existing.

The impact of neo-colonialism on the employees hired by French and Vietnamese-owned plantations, and on the village chiefs in the traditional society led to the formation of an upper stratum in Ma society.

The Ma family is a patrilineal one. The large families are in the process of disintegration. An increasing number of smaller families have appeared. Patrilocality is prevailing, but there are still some vestiges of matrilocality too. Vestiges of matriarchy, group marriage and child marriage are still strongly felt. Levirate and cross-

cousin marriage are common occurrences. The authority of the mother's brother has not yet vanished in the Ma family. Birth-right is observed. Naming has no link with the family name. The name given to a new-born corresponds to the rhyme of the name of a dead person of the older generation in the family line, with boys taking the male rhyme and girls the female rhyme. The term *Nao* is used to differentiate the family lines of the Ma.

*Spiritual life*: The Ma hold many beliefs which find expression in agricultural rites: offering to the Genie of Fire before burning the clearing, ceremony for the putting of seeds into holes, offering to rice in ear, thanksgiving ceremony to Mother rice, belief in the "spirit" of rice, and not a few taboos.

Beliefs and legends in the Ma region are closely linked with its land, its mountains and its rivers. Folk art and literature include folk songs, old tales, epics... which express love of the native land, love of life and fidelity, and reflect the time of creation in the eyes of the Ma. Musical instruments include a set of copper gongs, cymbals, bamboo flutes and other wind instruments... They are performed on the occasion of buffalo-sticking ceremonies and harvest festivals, the biggest in the year. On such grand occasions, men used to adorn themselves with a tuft of bird feathers in their hair knot on top of the head and carry along weapons — a spear or a long knife, to display their moral integrity and their ethnicity's daring and courage.

The Ma are bound together in their community by economic, social, historical, territorial and racial ties and by cultural, material and moral factors as mentioned above. They are also knocked together by thousands of adages and age-old custom laws.

The Ma took an active part in the two wars of resistance against the French and the US imperialists. Resistance bases were set up in their territory.

After liberation, they settled down to a sedentary life to join in collective farming in more populous villages. Advanced farming techniques have found their way into Ma society. Health cultural and education work is developing.

The Ma are represented in the National Assembly of the SRV (7th legislature) by Kva Kang, Chairman of the Fatherland Front Committee of Phuoc Long district (Song Be).

### The Kho Mu

*Denomination*: Kho mu; other names: Xa cau, Kha Klau, Mang Cau, Tenh, Pu Thenh, Tay hay, Mun xen.

*Population*: about 23 000.

*Language*: Mon-Kmer.

*Habitat*: concentrated in the districts of Tuong Duong and Ky Son (Nghe Tinh), Dien Bien (Lai Chau), Song Ma and Thuan Chau (Son La) and scattered over a number of other districts such as Tuan Giao (Lai Chau), Muong La, Mai Son and Moc Chau (Son La) and Van Chan (Hoang Lien Son). Members of their co-racial group in Laos belong to the Lao Thenh group.

*Material life*: As the Kho Mu lead a nomadic life, their villages are usually small ones with temporary huts. Their homes are made of bamboo and built on tiny wooden poles. Their structure depends on the row of rafters. The floor is about 4 feet above the ground. Assembly techniques consist of a lash-together with mortices, fork-shape props and fiber. The roof is thatched

with wild grass and the floor covered with beaten lengths of bamboo and walled by mats of plaited bamboo. The houses need to stand only for 3 or 4 years, then are removed to new cultivation areas.

The Kho Mu grow cotton to spin yarn for cloth weaving. The looms are still rudimentary and are capable of turning out only a single variety of small-sized coarse linen with natural threads used for the making of men's loin-cloths and sidepouches. The product is chiefly used to barter with the Thai for large-size cloth or sarongs and cloaks. To-day, the male dress is the same as that worn by the Thai, that is long trousers and short shirts. The women wear long skirts and short waistcoats with silver clasps in the forefront. They cover their head with a handkerchief which flows down the shoulders. Their common ornaments are silver ear-rings and necklaces made of mollusc shells.

The Kho Mu have their agricultural calendar based on the lunar months but two months earlier. The first month of the Kho Mu calendar marks the conclusion of a year of labour when harvesting has been completed. Next comes the month of festivity when repair work is done on villages and houses and arrangements are made in home life; wedding and ritual ceremonies...

Settled in the middle of the hill-side, the Kho Mu clear the forest at all grades of the slope. The cultivation cycle calls for strict observance of various regulations without which the harvest may be affected. Crops depend entirely on natural conditions. Soil fertility deteriorates rapidly. The land is left fallow after one or two crops. Tools are primitive, farm work is toilsome and yields are unstable. Food obtained from cultivation can last the people 6-9 months. Therefore food gathering and hunting play a

fairly important rôle, ensuring food for the period between harvests and supplying most of the foodstuffs needed daily.

With such farm methods, in the old days, the Kho Mu could not settle themselves to a sedentary life and lived as nomads. With them, all the three stages, from low to high, of the process of development are apparent:

Nomadism in a close cycle in a period of from 10 to 15 years or half-nomadic, half-settled life.

Semi-sedentary life, thanks to intensive farming in some tracts of land, but far from enough.

Because of the nomadic way of life, the household articles are generally simple. Handicrafts are less developed. Basketry and gathering of forest products allow the Kho Mu to barter their goods for daily necessities: salt, cloth, metal tools, ornaments... Barter generally takes the form of exchange of goods, to the great disadvantage of the barterer. In the old days, money was not widely employed in society. Paper money had not been used until the establishment of the revolutionary regime. Shell money (*cauris moneta*) commonly used in primeval time are used as ornaments or fetishes. Particularly in marriage the family of the boy has to offer a number of shell money to the family of the girl as present.

*Social and family relations*: Before the August Revolution (1945), Kho Mu society was dependent on the Thai social organization. It was not organized itself into "prong's" as in Lao but was dispersed into "muong's" under the command of the Thai "a nha". Except in Dien Bien Phu, Tuong Duong and Ky Son, the Kho Mu villages, lying scattered in each of these districts, remain under the management of the Kho Mu a nha but must be placed under the direct control of the local landlord.

All members of the Kho Mu ethnic group form a section of the peasantry of Thai society — section of slave peasants (pua) who have to do unpaid work collectively and by village unit or pay tributes as defined by the landlord and are subjected to very severe differentiation of treatment as to racial relations. The self-governed Kho Mu villages appoint their respective representatives with the approval of the Thai ruler to run daily-life affairs in accordance with traditional customs. Differences of wealth have taken shape in the Kho Mu villages proper. Wealthy families usually are in the rank of village authorities or go in for priesthood. They own many farm hands and live on the fruits of their labour. The poor families have more people but lesser farm hands. Here, initial accumulation of wealth has taken form; property is evaluated in terms of buffaloes, gongs, jars... and formerly, copper drums and shell money. The mode of work in the village is based mainly on the principle of mutual assistance.

In the village, everybody lives truthfully, peacefully, merrily and open-heartedly. One home's guest is the village's common guest.

The Kho Mu family line bears the names of animals, birds, plants and sometimes inanimate things. To mention some of them: Rvai (tiger), Tmoong (fox), Ti ac (deer) Thrang (phoenix) Om (bong chanh) Om lit Braga (wag-tail), Ri vi (phuong cheo). Usually, each family line is divided into branches of the elder brother and the younger brother. From this, vestiges of the division of a family into clans can be seen. Family ties are influenced by vestiges of a social organisation in the period of the alliance of three clans on the principle of endogamy.

Each Kho Mu family line comprises many small families. The right to decide family affairs is shared among

the members depending on the nature of the affairs. It is a kind of the division of labour carried out on a sex basis.

The family head is therefore a representative of the family in the society.

The Kho Mu abide by a strict principle governing marriage. Boys and girls are free to choose their mates in a definite caste. Monogamy has been established. Women are equal to men although marriage already bears the trace of transition from matrilocality to patri-locality. During matrilocality the husband has to change his into his wife's family name but retains his own totem. The children, when they still live with their mother, bear the latter's family name, and when they build their separate family, it is the father's family name they take. When the wife goes and lives in the husband's home, she bears her husband's family name but retains her totem.

*Spiritual life:* Like other settlers at less-developed level, the Kho Mu believed that all their daily activities were governed by supernatural forces which they named "hroi", a common phrase for ghosts. The principal ghosts were "hroi lva" (the Sun) assisted by "chua drai" (lightning), "hroi ple" (the Earth), "pru dong" (the Octopus) symbolizing the power of the waters, "Rvai ho" (tiger) symbolizing the power of the jungle... In addition, there were the "hroi ta da". (Ancestors) and the "hroi gang" (House). Those were harmless ghosts who often came to the help of men but sometimes, in their wrath, might cause calamities to punish men.

Apart from the above-mentioned ghosts there were innumerable harmful ones which the Kho Mu conceived as the "phi" of the Thai.

Traces of totemism are strikingly evident witness the names of family lines. Each family line observes its own ritual of ancestor worship which is concealed from the society and the main rite of which requires that the house owner and his family mime the gestures of the totem to assert themselves as tiger, bird, etc. Such traces still find expression in the disguised totem during the ceremony, in the taboos prohibiting the killing and eating of the animal totem. Each family line has its own myth about its totem and believes that after death they take again the form of the totem.

As they adopt the slash-and-burn farming method, the Kho Mu believe there exists the rice soul symbolised by Mother Rice which helps rice to multiply and bring in a bumper crop. They also invoke the Sun and the Earth when praying for favourable weather conditions.

The Kho Mu have left behind a good number of myths related to racial histories in primeval times and a number of legends about beginnings of civilization, representing the world outlook and the outlook on life of primitive man. These old tales reflect their hard struggle against harsh Nature and against the Thai rulers, and express their aspiration for freedom and autonomy. The story of "Lu and Ua" is very popular among Kho Mu villagers. Many folk songs and limericks have been translated by Cam Bien and Cam Giang, poets of Thai stock, into the common language. They appear in the "Anthology of Literature of Minority People" published in 1962 in Hanoi by the Culture Publishing House.

Since they were liberated by the Revolution, the Kho Mu have actively taken part in the wars of resistance against the French colonialists and US aggressors. Settled to a sedentary life, they are building new-type villages and going in for collective farming. Culture education

and health work have developed in regions inhabited by the Kho Mu. Many engineers, doctors and teachers are of Kho Mu origin. They are equal to other ethnicities in the management of all aspects of social life.

### The Chor

*Denomination*: Chor, other names: Cor, Col, Cua, Trau, Moi Tra Bong...

*Population*: nearly 17000.

*Language*: Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat*: in the districts of Tra Bong and Son Ha (Nghia Binh) and Tra My (Quang Nam — Da Nang).

*Material life*: The Chor are the aboriginal inhabitants long settled in these regions. They usually build their villages in the middle of mountain slopes, near burnt-out clearings and cinnamon, tea and betel gardens. Now, many villages have been moved down the hill in relatively flat tracts of land in the valleys or along the banks of rivers.

They live in houses built on stilts. One or several long houses accommodated all the villagers. Today 70 to 80-metre-long houses can still be seen. In recent times, especially after liberation (1975), the people have gradually moved to mud houses. Short and small houses owned by one or several families have sprung up everywhere, as the Chor no longer live concentrated as in the past, but live separated, each household having their own family. Inside, the house is partitioned lengthwise into 3 parts. The *tum* is the part in which each family has its own room with a kitchen, a place reserved for furniture and articles and a sleeping quarter for women. This is where the life of a small family takes its course. From the *tum*, an opening communicates with the *truck* or corridor,



which runs lengthwise in the middle of the house to reach the entrance gates at both ends. The *gul* with no dividing wall is mainly destined for the affairs of the male: siesta, guest reception, drinking, gong beating... In the past, the long house was enclosed with thick and high protective hedges and equipped with means of defence to ward off attacks from the outside. Most of the villages still preserve the hedges just to confine domestic animals.

Weaving is still unknown. The Chor have to buy textiles and clothes from the Viet and the Sedang. Both men and women knot their hair in a bun confined by a comb at the nape of their neck. Women wear sarongs and girdles and short shirts. Men wear loin-cloths and are often bare-chested. In cold days, they wear a short shirt or cover their chest with a blanket. Nowadays, the Chor are dressed like the Viet, except for old women who still wear skirts. Most of the fabrics are supplied by the State-run shops. Ornaments include rings, bracelets, anklets and strings of multicoloured glass beads.

Slash-and-burn farming is the main economic activity. Of late, flooded rice-fields have been exploited but geological conditions do not permit the extension of areas under wet rice. Food, vegetables, fruit trees are grown in burnt-out clearings. Cinnamon and betel are special products. Cinnamon constitutes the principal income of many villages. Gathering of forest products, hunting, fishing, basketry and barter are additional activities.

*Social and family relations*: Under the traditional social institution, the villagers mainly are co-habitants bound by kinship ties.

The most prestigious elder holds the position of village chief. Skilful warriors play a big role in the organization

of self-defence work and revenge in accordance with primitive law. The "blood-for-blood" revenge custom did not end until the 50's of this century. The village's territorial boundaries are recognised and jointly defended by all its members. Everybody in the village has the right to clear land within the framework of communal ownership. When the reclaimed land become cultivable, the right to private ownership is confirmed. Land purchase and sale has become an activity in the recent period and only takes place in low-lying areas adjacent to areas where the Viet live. There are buyers and sellers of farm produce, land-lease is practised at the rate of two-thirds of the products belonging to the land-owner. However, both forms have appeared only recently and are not popular. Class polarization in Chor society is still at a low stage. There are two categories of people: a minority having greater economic abilities and the poor forming the majority. Ranking in the first category are families possessing many gongs, jars, buffaloes, cinnamon trees, copper pots, iron-clothes, skirts.

In the past, the Chor led a nomadic life. Slash-and-burn farming forced them to constantly look for new land, and diseases and superstitions compelled them to move to other places. Nevertheless, they did not adventure beyond the limit of the village land. Today, they begin to settle themselves, step by step to a sedentary life and are taking the path of collective farming.

In kinship relations, relatives of the male line are closer than those the female line. As a matter of fact, descendants of two brothers cannot be wed unless they are of the 4th or 5th generation whereas descendants of two sisters, or of cross cousins can establish marital relations if they are of the 3rd or 4th generation.

Monogamy is popular and patrilocality has been established. A childless husband can take a second wife only with the consent of the first one. Levirate and sororate are commonplace.

Along with the form of small patrilineal family, vestiges of the big family remain evident. The family is an economic unit. The Chor rejoice at the coming of the male and the youngest son usually undertakes the task of looking after the parents when they grow old.

Close village community relations are traditional in Chor society, and this finds clear expression in their settlement under a common roof, their utilization of a common spring, their spirit of disinterested mutual assistance and their mutual defence with the "blood for blood" revenge custom.

*Spiritual life*: The Chor believe that everything has a soul or secret life in it, including human beings. The male has 18 *phol* and 18 *phuoc* and the female 19 *phol* and 19 *phuoc*. They believe in cults and prophecies. Among the many rites, the buffalo-sticking ritual is the biggest and very wasteful both in terms of wealth and time. The pole to which the buffalo sacrifice is tied is an elaborate and a typical work of art and at the same time a precious ethnological document.

On festive days, the Chor are fond of singing, beating gongs and cymbals and telling old tales. Gongs and cymbals are musical instruments as well as the family's treasure. A set of three are often used to play in harmony with the drums. The *Xru* and *agioi* tunes have rich lyrical contents and express the feelings in a natural manner, their intonation is close to the narrative genre. The store of old tales is fairly rich. Some have been collected and published in the series of old tales of the minority people in Vietnam.

A staunch people determined to defend the freedom and peace of their homeland, the Chor had built their resistance bases in the Ca Dam mountain region to fight against the French aggressors many years before the August Revolution (1945). In Autumn 1959, people of Tra Bong district as a whole rose up and destroyed the machinery of coercion set up by the Americans and their puppets. In the anti-US resistance, Ho Thanh Lam of the Chor ethnic group won the title of Hero of the People's Armed Forces awarded by the State, and Tra Phong village was cited as Hero village.

As a token of their gratitude towards the Revolution, the Chor adopt the first name of President Ho Chi Minh as theirs.

Since liberation, they have seen rapid progress in all fields. Particularly in Nghia Binh, dozens of children of Chor families are university graduates. Mrs Ho Thi Xuan is a member of the National Assembly of the SRV, representing the Chor Community.

### The Ta Oi

*Denomination*: Ta Oi. Local groups: Ta Oi proper, Pa Co, Ca Tua and Ba He.

*Population*: Over 20,000

*Language*: Mon-Khmer, north of Truong Son mountain

*Habitat*: Two districts: A Luoi and Huong Hoa (Binh Tri Thien province). This ethnicity also live in Lower Laos.

*Material life*: Living in villages called *vel*. Each village has a few houses on stilts. Each house shelters a few families. The inhabitants live and work in a determined region. Each village has a communal house which

serves as a reception and meeting place. This house is adorned with horns of animals and feathers of birds together with gongs and alcohol jars.

Except the Ca Tua group, the Ta Oi do not know how to weave. They buy their clothes from other ethnicities and dress like the Lao. According to customs, when they come of age, men and women have their teeth filed, and wear heavy earrings and other ornamental rings.

The Ta Oi mainly adopt the slash-and-burn method but the Ba Hi also engage in the farming of wet rice. All present ricefields have increased in acreage in the region inhabited by the Ta Oi. Burnt out clearings give only one crop a year. Besides rice, which is the staple food, the Ta Oi also grow maize, manioc, sweet potato, beans, tobacco, hemp. Their farm implements are rudimentary, then technique is backward, their production depends largely on the whims of nature, resulting in their low productivity and unstable life. The Ta Oi are skilful in hunting and taming elephants. They go in for hunting with the aim of protecting crops and fending for themselves in food. They barter their products (tobacco, hemp...) for cloth, and metal tools. At present their requirements are met by State trade.

#### *Social and family relations :*

In Ta Oi society, there are the rich and the poor. Nevertheless class polarization is not clear. The spirit of community and assistance still prevails.

The vestiges of matrilineal alliance between the three groups are visibly seen: the Ta Oi follow the principle of marriage in direct proportion chain like the Co Tu. People outside this marriageable group are called Ya. Each group bears the name of an animal or a plant which is taboo for the people of this group.

The regime of marriage according to group is respected. Members of the same group regard themselves as descendants of the same ancestor mentioned in legend or seen in actual life. The families in the group have usually three or four generations living together or in different villages but consider themselves to be of the same kindred. The rights of the maternal uncle are respected particularly in the marriage of his nieces or nephews. He supplies foods and clothes, organizes the wedding of his nieces. Especially he is the witness and protector of the wedding, records the expenditure defrayed by the bridegroom. Then he is the adviser of the couple. He and his group have the duty to help his nephew. The son of the paternal aunt can marry the daughter of the maternal uncle. In this case, the maternal uncle—the father-in-law—“sells” his daughter, and the nephew—his son-in-law—has to “buy” his wife at a high price.

In Ta Oi society, matrilineal right is most powerful. Formerly very low, the status of the women after the August 1945 Revolution and particularly after the wars against the French and Americans and the abolition of backward customs, has been raised. The women can take part in social activities. Typical of Ta Oi women is Cam Lich, a young woman who was cited as heroine of the people's armed forces.

#### *Spiritual life :*

The Ta Oi call their folksong *cat*. According to their mood, they sing lullabies, love songs, classic songs. Their musical instruments are: gong, khene, wind instruments (srui, aman), string instruments (ta hi); they use them every day.

In the war against American aggression, many members of this ethnic minority received the title of “hero

of the people's armed forces" such as Ho Duc, A Num, Ho Duc Vai, Ho Soi, Can Lich.

After the liberation of the South in 1975, the Ta Oi return to their native villages and farm ricefields and burnt out clearings, do irrigation works, engage in intensive farming and use agricultural machines. They also dig ponds to rear fish and grow industrial crops.

Hero Vui represents the Ta Oi, at the National Assembly (seventh legislature) of the S.R.V.

### **The Cho Ro**

*Denomination:* Cho Ro

*Population:* About 7,000

*Language:* Mon-Khmer, Southern highlands. The Cho Ro also speak Vietnamese in their relations with other ethnicities. At present most of the Cho Ro have learned to read and write the common language (Vietnamese).

*Habitat:* They live in the Southwest and southeast of Dong Nai province, mostly in the villages of Xuan Loc district, and Chau Thanh district (Thuan Hai province). They also live in scattered groups in Tan Phu district (North of Dong Nai) and Binh Long district (Song Be province).

The Cho Ro is an ethnicity immigrated from South Dong Duong.

*Material life:* Before the August 1945 revolution the Cho Ro lived in houses on stilts, 2 metres above the ground. A ladder at an end of the house is used to enter the house. The space below the floor serves as cowshed and pigsty. At the rear of the house is a foodstore. In the past, a backward custom prevailed which consisted

in moving the family to another place when death occurred, and burning the house to avoid the misdeeds of the dead.

At present the Cho Ro live in houses built on the ground furnished with a bamboo bed (vestige of an ancient architecture) running along the three bays and occupying half of the house.

In many villages such as Xuan Phu, Xuan Tho, Xuan Binh (Xuan Loc district), Ngai Giao, Bac Dich, Bau Lam (Chau Thanh district) well off families have brick houses. This testifies to an accumulation of money to build a long and stable life, and also to the tendency to assimilate with the life of the Vietnamese in the surroundings.

Formerly the Cho Ro wore loin-cloths and were bare-chested; The women wore tucked skirts. This custom has now disappeared. Today, the Cho Ro dress like the Vietnamese. Nevertheless, there still exist some differences: women wear strings of glass beads and copper and silver rings. Young girls wear necklaces and bracelets or rings. When going out, men and women usually carry pickaback a basket whose shape and size vary according to the purpose of the journey.

Before the August 1945 Revolution, as their farming method (clearing land, burning trees and sowing seeds in holes) was obsolete, the Cho Ro led an unstable life and wrested a bare living, their burnt out clearings, planted with many crops, were farmed for three years and then given up, and they had to wander in search of new lands. Learning the experience of the Vietnamese, the Cho Ro divide their fields into three periods: in the first and second periods, they grow climbers: gourd, loofah, leguminous plants on the outer belt, and

manioc on the inner belt to protect the central part of their fields usually reserved for the growing of rice or maize.

In the first period, rice and sesame are planted in the same holes. In the second period, maize is raised alternatively with rice and sesame. In the third period, there appears a kind of garden in which the climbers uprooted from the cropfields are transplanted. These fields are then divided into three parts to grow three different kinds of foodcrop: rice, manioc and maize (but rice is always planted with sesame in the same holes).

At present with the new mode of production, the Cho Ro no more clear their land by burning trees. They settle definitely in a locality to farm their fields. They turn their burnt out clearing to grow rice, maize, manioc or leguminous crop with the rain water available in the wet season.

The Cho Ro begin the planting season by holding a ceremony in honour of the Genie of Rice (in the third month of the lunar year). They grow maize from the 4th to the 6th month, and rice from the 4th to the 10th month.

Their farm tools are: pickaxe (to fell trees), bush knife (to cut bamboo and creepers), dibble (to hollow holes), rack, hoe or *nih* (for weeding), sickle (for reaping). Formerly they used a *xa gac*, now a knife.

Besides their dry fields, the Cho Ro grow rice in water logged fields. In Xuan Loc and Chau Thanh districts, they farm wet ricefields and use, expertly buffaloes as draught animals.

In the slack season, they go to the forest to hunt wild animals and to the streams to catch fish, or fetch forest products such as bamboo shoots, honey, *dau rai*

(*Canarium oleosum*). Gardening and animal rearing are neglected. In handicrafts, mention should be made of basketry (baskets of various sizes to hold rice, maize, firewood or fruit and vegetables), plaiting of rugs (with coconut palm leaves), forging (to make farm implements), woodworking (to make mortar for pounding rice, house frames, coffins). Under French rule, the Cho Ro also accounted for a small number of plantation workers, but they were mostly lumbajacks and not skilled workers. There were no traders in Cho Ro society.

#### *Social and family relations :*

On the ancient Cho Ro society, there only remain the vestiges of the period when the French colonialists began their first exploitation of the country (end of the 19th century). At that time, in the regions inhabited by the Cho Ro land belonged only to the village. The head of the village was usually the head of a big family. Before the August 1945 Revolution, there was no clear class polarization in Cho Ro society. The Cho Ro were used to "living" from hand to mouth". Nevertheless they knew how to accumulate riches to build up their personal property, but these riches were usually gong, jars, apart from the rice reserved for their daily consumption. Buffaloes and oxen were served as sacrifices. As each inhabitant in the village is a member of a mutual assistance organization there is only a slight difference in terms of material wealth and standard of living.

Under French rule, there existed in the Cho Ro regions an administrative apparatus similar to the one seen in the Vietnamese countryside but headed by Vietnamese authorities such as village mayors, canton chiefs.

Under the U.S.-puppet rule, owing to the effects of neocolonialism, the discrimination in Cho Ro society was more conspicuous. Men were either pressganged into the army or worked in the administrative machinery. There were people who adopted Protestantism, other Catholicism. Their interests had nothing in common with the majority of the Cho Ro who were rather attached to their lands. In society, appeared the haves and have-nots. The haves owned fertile land; they bled while the have-nots—the overwhelming part of the Cho Ro—by hiring their labour force, by usury, by buying their crops standing, and bribery.

The Cho Ro are both patrilineal and matrilineal families. Composed of a husband, a wife and their children, each family lives in a separate house. At full age, the boy asks the hands of a girl through a match-maker, or vice versa. The wedding would be held at the girl's house, where the boy lives for several years before he is able to build a house for his family. The right to inheritance belongs to the woman but matriarchalism has seriously disintegrated while patriarchalism has not completely prevailed.

The Cho Ro bury their dead in the ground. The tomb is raised in the form of a hemisphere. In the first three days after the burial, at mealtime, the soul of the dead is invoked to come home (to share the meal). For this purpose, a handful of rice is scattered on the ground. After these three days, a ceremony to "open the gate of the tomb" is held and a "rice offering" ceremony is observed for 100 days running. In funeral, imitating the Vietnamese, the Cho Ro burn "ingots of gold" in votive paper, and every year, on the 23rd day of the 12th month, a "visit to the tombs" takes place.

### *Spiritual life :*

Primitive belief takes deep root in the spiritual life of the Cho Ro; it is manifested mainly in the belief of "everything having a soul", in the "agrarian belief" and cult of the ancestors.

A ceremony is held by the villagers in honour of the Genie of Forest. The master of ceremony is called Knang Son Timbri. The ceremony takes place every three years. It is also a manifestation of the "primitive agricultural" belief: All the families in the village make offerings to the Genie with the hope of securing a good health for themselves and for their animals and harvesting bumper crops. After the ceremony a collective meal is served. Formerly this was a meeting to honour the commitments contracted in production, in the maintenance of public order and performance of duty towards the community. Parallel to religious beliefs, are the activities of the inhabitants during the festive days. For the Cho Ro, the most important ceremonies are dedicated to the Genie of Forest and Genie of Rice. At present, the ceremony in honour of the Genie of Rice is performed every year by 76% of the population, but it is given up by those who have newly joined the community and adopted a new mode of life.

The ceremony in honour of the Genie of Rice is held after the harvest, and the offerings should include the rice grown by the families themselves. This ceremony is performed separately by each family with the attendance of the whole village. Some households even prolong the ceremony for two or three days. The set of seven gongs is used in the ceremony. On this occasion delicious drinks and dishes are prepared to offer to the Genie and then to the guests such as can alcohol (in jars

drunk through pipes), glutinous rice cakes, round pounded rice cakes sprinkled with sesame and rolled cakes. The Protestants and Catholics have now mingled their life with the Cho Ro community.

Of the traditional literature and art of the Cho Ro, there exists only a kind of duet sung in the ceremony held in honour of the Genies.

Insofar as musical instruments are concerned, besides the set of seven gongs, only instruments made of bamboo sections are found in the mountain region of Chau Thanh district.

In 1960, the revolutionary movement rose powerfully in the Cho Ro region. Dien, a Cho Ro who died for the country was cited as hero of the Vietnam armed forces.

Today, Cho Ro society has undergone great changes, ushering in a new era in the history of this ethnic minority. People in the 18—45 age bracket have known how to read and write the common language. That is why the contingent of Cho Ro cadres is greater and greater; they work in various branches of activity: health service, education, agricultural technique, economic management... Sang Van Mao, member of the executive committee of the Union of Collective Peasants in Dong Nai, represents the Cho Ro ethnicity at the National Assembly (7th legislature) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

### The Xinh Mun

*Denomination:* Xinh Mun. Other names Xa, Puoc.

*Population:* 9000

*Language:* Mon-Khmer; living near the Thai, speaking Thai.

*Habitat:* Son La and Lai Chau. Living for generations in these provinces and also in Central and Upper Laos.

### *Material life:*

They live in villages called *ban* in interlacement with the Thai. Their houses on stilts, covered with a roof having the shape of a turtle shell, are erected with a simple technique to collapse easily when they move them in their wandering life. At each end of the house there is an open terrace reached by a ladder. The arrangement in the house is monotonous: a *plang* serving as bedroom for unmarried boys and visitors occupies a bay of the house. This is also the place for the fire and the altar to worship "ghosts". A *Xia* where the family members meet: to sleep, cook meals and store household utensils, occupies two or three bays, depending on the length of the house.

The Xinh Mun grow cotton and go in for weaving. The men wear trousers and indigo vests and turbans, and a long indigo tunic on festive days. The women dress like Thai women: black skirt, short shirt adorned with two rows of buttons in butterfly shape; their hair is swathed in a turban; their jewelry bought from the Thai or H'mong, consists mainly of necklaces, bracelets and rings.

On their hilly fields or burnt out clearings, they grow food crops, mainly maize and rice — glutinous rice rather than ordinary rice. Depending on the inclination of the land, they use hoe or dibble to dig holes to sow the seeds, or plough to till flat fields. They pick paddy with their hands and cut the rice ears with knives. In some regions, the Xinh Mun organize themselves into co-operatives to farm their water logged ricefields, and the acreage of ricefields equals that of burnt out clearings. Besides, they eke out their food rations by

gathering and hunting. They rear animals for food, draught force and for sacrifices. Recently they have given up the habit of letting loose their animals. In some regions animal rearing is collective. Before liberation, barter was the main form of transaction: basket-work, rice, opium were exchanged for textiles, ready-made clothes, salt, matches, guns...

#### *Social and family relations :*

In the Xinh Mun society, formerly, there was discrimination between the rich and the poor. Usury and hiring of draught animals were noticed in low-lying land. The Xinh Mun were heavily exploited by the Thai feudalists. The Xinh Mun authorities (*quan xip*, *quan ban*, *tao ban*, *nai ban*—head of village—also bled them white like the Thai *phia tao*. The Xinh Mun had to live on tubers and game in the forest; their huts were covered with leaves, hence the name of "*Xe la vang*" or "*Xe toong luong*".

The two largest families of the Xinh Mun are Vi and Lo. Some animals and plants are regarded as taboos, for example the bird *de de*. Small patrilineal families prevail; the sons are granted the right to inheritance. In some families, three generations live together, and share the means of production. After liberation, the nuclear families have been able to build up their own assets. At present, many families still live under the same roof and share the part of paddy allotted to each of them by the cooperatives, but prepare meals separately.

Monogamous marriage is usual. Patrilocality is observed, but in the past matrilocality prevailed and lasted from 8-12 years; in case the girl's parents had no son, the son-in-law would live there for good.

Divorce is rare. Cross-cousin marriage and parallel-cousin marriage are allowed. Both levirate and sororate are commonplace. Before the celebration of marriage there are such ceremonies as "asking for the girl's hand", "living in the wife's family", and after the wedding, "return to see the wife's parents". In the "living in the girl's family" ceremony, the newly-wed couple must take a new name common to both of them.

After childbirth (in a sitting position), the Xinh Mun woman has to stay at home near a hearth. The placenta is put in a bamboo section and hung on a tree in an out-of-the-way place. When the child is one year old, a ceremony is held to give it a name. Most of the Xinh Mun have their names in Thai. Should the child's health be poor, it will have its name changed.

The dead is allowed to lie in state for three days, even one month before he or she is buried. In this case, a gunshot is fired to announce the sad news to the whole village. A son of the family pelts a stone at the altar of ancestors. After each meal, a son or son-in-law makes to the dead an offering of rice, drinking water and tobacco. Before it is put in the coffin, the body is washed with perfumed water, the mouth is filled with coins and the thumbs and big toes are tied-up.

#### *Spiritual life :*

The Xinh Mun hold that everybody has a soul in his head and many supplementary souls in his body; the "soul" of the dead is turned into "ghost". The dead parents and grand parents are worshipped. The ancestors become "ghost of the field", "ghost of the village". The ancestral altar placed in the house, while the altar of the parents-in-law is installed in a small hut on stilts, built near the dwelling house. Believing in



the existence of "village ghost", the Xinh Mun worship it once a year; as their village is located in the district of the Thai, every year they take part with the Thai in the ceremony in honour of the ghost of the district in which they live. The Xinh Mun hold ceremonies to cure diseases. "Harmful magic" and "love charm" are usual. The ceremonies related to production were observed mostly at sowing time and harvest time with the belief that the outcome of the harvest depends on the decision of the "soul of rice" and "ghost of the fields."

Under French rule, though oppressed by the colonialists and poverty and disease-ridden, the Xinh Mun were faithful to the revolution. In the war against the U.S. many Xinh Mun youths joined the army. The Xinh Mun militia and guerillas shot down two American planes.

Thanks to the Revolution, this ethnic group has made notable progress. The rate of infant mortality is very low. Malaria has been almost eradicated. The percentage of people affected by malaria is 5-7% (at Mai Son, Yên Châu). In marriage, the habits have changed for the better: matrilocality lasts only 2 or 3 years. Bride price has been greatly reduced. Production has been boosted by the application of new farming techniques. The Xinh Mun are represented at the National Assembly (6th and 7th legislatures) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

### The Mang

*Denomination*: Mang, or Mang U, Xa Mang, Mang Mieng O, Xa Cang Lai. Two local groups: Mang Gung (living at high altitude) and Mang La (at low altitude).

*Population*: 2,400

*Language*: Mon-Khmer. (Group in the northern mountains).

*Habitat*: On the mountain range between the Da river and Na river, on the territory of many communes in the districts of Sin Ho, Muong To, Phong Tho and Muong Lay (Lai Chau province).

### Material life:

The Mang live in bamboo huts on stilts, 7 metres long and 5 metres wide, covered with a span roof covered with elephant grass. The doors open on the lean-to. The corners of the roof are decorated with *puong nhua*, having curved up line, similar to *Khau cut* of Thai houses. In the house, there are the drawing room (choong) and the bedroom (Co).

The woman's costume is composed of a long skirt, a short tunic, a pair of puttees and a piece of white linen adorned with a motif covering the body from the armpits to the knees. The women have their hair bobbed and combed up to the top of the head, in the shape of a tuft of hair.

At their marriageable age, the girls, by coquettishness had tattoos pricked round their mouth.

The Mang lead a wandering life; they farm their land by rudimentary method, using pickaxes to fell trees, bush knives to cut branches, flintstone to produce sparks, dibble to hollow holes (to sow seeds) shoulder basket to collect forest products, thus from generation to generation they could not change nature to their advantage; but destroy their surroundings most dangerously.

Their staple foods are first hilly rice, then maize; their subsidiary food crops are manioc, sweet potato, gourd. Over the last two decades, the Mang Le have learnt from the Thai the technique of farming their hilly fields

with a hoe and growing rice in terraced ricefields with the help of irrigation works. The physical conditions of the region do not allow the Mang to develop gardening, animal husbandry, handicrafts and trade.

#### *Social and family relations.*

The Mang live in groups of ten houses called *muy*. Each of them forms a small commune which still bears the vestige of ancient tribal communes. There is no class polarization in the Mang society. The spirit of community is still conspicuously seen.

At present, the Mang are divided into five clans, each of whom adopts an animal as ancestor. The head of a family, formerly called *Mon dam*, is responsible for all economic, cultural, educational, social and religious activities of his tribe. Exogamy is a rule in Mang traditional society.

The small families are organized on a patrilineal pattern which bears many vestiges of the former clans. Monogamy and free choice of partner prevail.

The wedding ceremony includes a sham fight to dispute the bride, and this is, the Mang say, a manifestation of happiness. Perhaps it is the vestige of the former kidnapping of wife.

It is forbidden for a woman to give birth to a child in the dwelling house. A lying-in mother has to take shelter for some time in a hut apart. She has to cut herself the umbilical cord and cook her meals. Three weeks after childbirth, she was allowed to return to the house with her baby.

Formerly the Mang cremated their dead, now they bury them. The grave is filled with earth on a level with the ground. There was no exhumation.

#### *Spiritual life :*

The Mang worship their ancestors and believe that everything has a soul, that *Mon Ten* is the deity of creativeness. They have many ceremonies and customs associated with the "soul of rice" and with divinities of agriculture; many vestiges are related to the role of the woman in the former matrilineal regime.

Though they are in small number, the Mang possess a rich artistic and literary patrimony: sayings, folk-songs, traditional music, legends, and particularly epics, the most famous of which being *Soong Muang*.

It can be said that the immigration of the Thai in the Northwest of North Vietnam in former times brought basic changes in this region. The Mang, like other ethnic groups living there, were reduced to the status of subordinates to the local Thai bourgeois and to the colonialists and feudalists who were the root cause of their poverty and backwardness.

After the democratic reforms in the mountain regions in 1960, the social relations based on oppression and exploitation and cultural enmity between the various ethnicities have disappeared. A new relationship based on socialism has blossomed and developed. At present, in face of serious obstacles, the movement to persuade the Mang to settle down definitively in the locality continues to make headway.

#### **The Brau**

*Denomination :* Brau

*Population :* about 300

*Language :* Mon-Khmer, near the Bahnar and Sedang.

*Habitat :* only at Bac Bo village, Bo commune, Dac To district, Gia Lai Kontum province. Besides, their Kin

groups live, in the southeast of Laos and northeast of Kampuchea.

*Material life*: Bac Bo village lies on a flat earth mountain. The communal house built in the middle of the village is the centre of all activities. All dwelling houses on stilts have their faces and doors turned to it. The sharply slanting span roof is decorated with bird's heads or motifs of oval or round shape. The out buildings communicating with the main house by a ladder serve as bed room for old people and store house.

The Brau dress like the Ca Dong tribe (Sedang); they file their teeth and tattoo their faces and bodies, women wear earrings made of bamboo sections or ivory having the shape of a mortar; the bigger the hole to wear the earrings, the more beautiful the woman is considered.

The Brau live mainly on the products of their burnt out clearings. Rice is the staple food (formerly sticky rice accounted for the major part), then comes manioc, pumpkin, sesame, sugar cane, banana, mustard. The Brau usually prepare their fields in March, choosing a soft soil rich in humus. To clear land, they use pick axes and bush knives. In sowing, a man handles two dibbles 2-3 metres long to make holes to receive the seeds sown by a woman who follows him in his steps. Unlike the other minority peoples, the Brau do not bury the seeds and leave the holes open.

Their other occupations are: hunting, fishing, basketry smithy, gathering. They barter their products with the Lao, Viet, Sedang, Bahnar.

*Social and family relation*: Social stratification existed among the Brau. The rich were those who possessed great quantity of paddy, a herd of cattle, gongs, jars,

copper pots, ornamental rings, loin cloth, skirt. But most of the Brau were poor. The poorest were those who worked for the wealthy and powerful families. They are no more to be seen nowadays.

In the Brau ethnic group composed of patrilineal families monogamy and patrilocality are usual. Sororate is commonplace. The maternal uncle is most influential over the marriage of his niece or nephew. After the wedding ceremony the boy has to live in his wife's family for 4-5 years, before taking his wife to his house.

The Brau are sealed by a close unity and share weal and woe. When a member of the family dies the whole village comes to help it first to erect a sepulchre near the dwelling house. The co-villagers come to take leave of the deceased. They drink, beat gong and dance round the coffin. The inhumation takes place only 2-3 days later. The coffin is made by hollowing out a tree trunk. The grave is large enough to put the coffin in. The articles destined for the dead are put in the sepulchre.

#### *Spiritual life*:

In the belief of the Brau, Paxay is the supreme divinity which has created the cosmos, the firmament, the earth... According to them, there are many genii: genie of mountain, river, stream, vegetation... genie of water, fate... The master of ceremony is either the master of the house or a sorcerer.

Ceremonies relating to the "cult of rice" are held during the farming period.

The folksongs called *mot muon* by the Brau include nuptial choir, lullaby, "orphan" song. The young girls play a kind of musical instrument called *Klong put* (made of bamboo sections of various lengths) in the

north of the Central Highlands, and "top dinh bo" by the Brau. The boys beat gongs which are of different sizes: *tha*, *mam*, *coong*. A set of *coong* is composed of from 3 to 7 pieces, each having the value of one or two buffaloes. A *mam* costs 10-15 buffaloes. A *tha* (a set is composed of two pieces) is worth 30-50 buffaloes. The Brau like to play *tha*. They have a treasure of legends dealing with the gallantry of the youths, the beauty and virtues of young girls, the wit of small animals.

After the war against the Americans, the Brau help the frontier guards and armed forces to repel the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique who invaded our southwestern frontier. They have settled down in the plain and embarked on the road of collective production. They have built schools hospital and their life has changed for the better...

### The O Du

*Denomination:* O Du — Other name: Tuy Hat (pejorative)..

*Population:* over 100.

*Language:* Mon-Khmer, with some Viet-Muong elements.

*Habitat:* Live in interlacement with the Thai, Kha Mu, H'mong in Tuong Duong district (Nghe Tinh province).

Kin groups also live in Laos (Sam Neua province), called Tay Phong.

*Material life:* The O Du live in low houses on stilts supported by small columns and covered with elephant grass. The house has two kitchens: one to cook daily meals, another to prepare offerings for the genii and ancestors. The bed room of the parents is separated

from that of the children by a wattle. The mortar (to pound rice), on a level with the floor of the house has its support buried in the ground.

The O Du grow cotton to weave their own clothes and rear silk worms. The men wear trousers like the Thai. The women wear white plain tunic (not embroidered), skirt and turban like Thai women.

Under the colonial and feudal regime, the O Du hired themselves to the Thai landlords who grabbed all the farmland and forest land, thus depriving the O Du of their means of living while compelling them to pay a due in kind in exchange for their right to live on the territory of the Thai and to farm their fields. Though oppressed, they did not return to their semi-agricultural, semi-gathering life or gathering — hunting like the Viet-Muong groups in Nghe-Tinh and Binh Tri Thien provinces. This is because they have reached some degree of social development.

Now they have a settled life, farming their fields with quite a high technical degree, and going in for weaving, embroidering, basket making and wood-working.

### *Social and family relation:*

As the O Du are in very small number and live scattered (a few families form a village) they must associate themselves with other ethnicities in the region. However, in practice they exist as an entity apart. This consciousness is manifested in their calling themselves a community, and giving other ethnic groups a name chosen by themselves. As most of the O Du forget their mother tongue, because in their relations with other groups, they speak other languages, those who speak O Du are held in high consideration. At their old age,

they learn their mother tongue not only to talk to each other, but also to "understand their origin". All the O Du still remember the path traversed by their ancestors, the legends related to their native land, mountains and rivers, the vestiges left to them in the forest. They still preserve the cultural heritage of their ancestors such as ancient costumes which, on their death bed, all old people wish to wear, the style of houses which have their faces turned to the mountain (called *dinh luong tang*) and some particular ceremonies related to agriculture.

As the O Du do not have family names, they borrow from the Lao and Thai such names as Kham, Lo May, Lo Van... In their family, they follow the patrilineal regime, and in marriage, the principle of direct consent. This patriarchy manifests itself in family relations more obviously than the other groups in the region. The man has his say in all affairs of the family. The woman has no right to inheritance. But the boy lives in his wife's family. When the boy has enough money to "buy the head" (Klay Glay), the duration of matrilocality would be reduced to one year. This calculation begins from the first day in spring thunder is heard, a most ancient custom of the peasants in Southeast Asia. The age of a child is reckoned from the day the first thunder roars. To re-marry the man or woman has to wait for the first thunder because only, after this day does his late wife (or her late husband) "depart for ever", if not, out of jealousy, the deceased would do harm to him (or her). Formerly the day the first thunder was heard was the most important festival of the year. On that day, the O Du would meet on a flat ground of Suoi San, Suoi Pong to celebrate the ceremony to greet the first thunder of the year" (Chan phtroong trmay).

### *Spiritual life :*

In religious belief, the O Du are alike the Thai and Kho Mu. They call the "soul" by *mee* and "ghost" by *bua*. According to them the "house ghost" sways all activities in the family. When it is incarnated into a foetus (to become a human being), it would capture a member of the family and compel him to die. When ailing, an O Du would ask the "house ghost" to "re-marry" — that is to marry a ghost in the other world — so that it would enjoy pleasure and forget to return to the family. If not, the assistance of a sorcerer is required to invite a more powerful evil spirit to exercise this ghost, and prevent it from incarnating into the foetus.

Under socialism, the O Du are equal in rights to other ethnicities and regarded as one of the 54 members of the nation: They are cared for by the new regime to become mature and to increase their population. Now they enjoy a happy life. They live in roomy houses, and have all they need: bed, cupboard, blanket, mosquito net. Infant mortality rate has decreased year by year, so has the percentage of people affected by malaria. All children go to school. No cases of illiteracy are recorded. Many O Du work in the local administration.

### *The Ro Mam*

*Denomination :* Ro Mam

*Population :* about 150

*Language :* Mon-Khmer. (rather Khmer).

*Habitat :* Concentrated in Lang Mot, Mo Rai communes Sa Thay district, Gia Lai-Kontum province.

### *Material life :*

The village, called *do*, has a definite boundary; it is headed by an old man who has gained the confidence of the

people. The village is surrounded by a solid hedge. The houses on stilts built in square or rectangular quarters have their doors looking on the communal house erected in the middle of the village. Each couple in the family lives in a private room separated from the others by wattles and communicating to a corridor running along the house. Each house has many "kitchens". The middle room is reserved for visitors.

Men wear loin cloths. Women wear skirts tucked below the knees. The skirts and ornamented loin cloths are made of coarse material. Men and women wear short vests (mostly short-sleeved). The youth have four or six teeth of their upper jaw filed. The women like to wear big earrings or have the lobes of their ears stretched by a piece of ivory 5-6 cm long.

Burnt out clearings are the main means of production of the Ro Mam. Sticky rice is the staple food; then comes ordinary rice, maize and manioc. The farming method is similar to that of the Gia-Rai. Other occupations are hunting and gathering which also play an important role. Fish are caught by net, by hand or by poisonous leaves. The Ro Mam grow cotton, and weaving is their most developed handicraft. Formerly, they could fend for themselves completely in textiles. But later their homespun cloth cannot stand the competition of industrially made cloth. Trade is not yet developed. The Ro Mam barter tobacco and other products with the Lao, Bahnar, Sedang for salt, hardware, ivory earrings.

#### *Social and family relations:*

Though the parents, children and brothers and sisters live under the same roof, they are divided into small families having their own life and economy. In some cases, the sons, though married, still live with their pa-

rents and work with them, put their products in the same storehouse, but cook their meals apart. Monogamous marriage prevails, though some men have concubines. After the wedding, the boy lives in his wife's family for 4 — 5 years before returning with his wife to his parental home. This shifting of above continues until the parents of the boy or the girl are dead. Levirate is rarely applied. Cross-cousin and parallel-cousin marriage is forbidden. But sororate is allowed. So is marriage between two brothers and two sisters. Divorce is allowed if it occurs a few days after marriage, but it is not possible after a few years, particularly when the couple has a child. The wedding ceremony includes two steps: asking the girl's hand and the wedding proper. Formerly the Ro Mam observed endogamy. Now that exogamy is allowed the bride or the bridegroom can be a Brau, Sedang or Gia Rai.

During childbirth, the woman is confined in a close room in the rear of the house. She is helped by a midwife. When the umbilical cord is cut, the baby will receive a name which may not be identical with that of anyone in the village.

According to the Ro Mam customs, when a death occurs, the deceased has his or her face turned away; at burial his or her face will turn to the village. The cemetery usually lies in the West of the village and the tombs are aligned in the same direction. Usually 2 — 5 members of the same family who die at short intervals are buried in the same grave.

#### *Spiritual life*

The Ro Mam believe that everything has a "soul". After death, this "soul" would become a "ghost". In religious activities, the most important ceremonies are

those related to agriculture, mainly the worship of the "rice genie" (*choi sik*) after burning the trees, "seed sowing" (*et choi may bao*) which takes place symbolically at the entrance of the burnt-out clearings, when the rice plants bear ears (*gah*). Other ceremonies are held before harvest (*xet*), to greet early rice, late rice, and when "eating new reaped rice". Ceremonies are organized to cure diseases, but they are not so complicated as those of other groups.

The region inhabited by the Ro Mam—the Dong Duong tri—borderland—was heavily devastated by the war, but the Ro Mam were always faithful to the Revolution. This area was liberated at the end of the sixties.

Since then, this nationality has built a new life. Many of its members know how to read and write. This helps the quick cultural development of nearly thirty households living at the village:

### The Khang

*Denomination*: Khang. Other names: Xa Khao, Xa Gon, Xa Tu Lang.

*Population*: Over 2,000

*Language*: Intermediary between Viet-Muong and Mon-Khmer.

*Habitat*: districts of Thuan Chau, Quynh Nhai, Muong La (Son La province), Phong Tho, Muong Lay, Muong Te, Tuan Giao (Lai Chau province).

*Material life*:

Live a long time in the Northwest of northern Vietnam. Those who settle definitively in the region build solid three-bay houses on stilts. Formerly slightly bent, the roof of the lean-tos has now the shape of a

turtle-shell. Those who lead a nomadic life live in simple houses on stilts similar to temporary huts.

The Khang grow cotton but do not know weaving. They therefore barter their cotton with the Thai for textiles or ready-made clothes. Their costumes are similar to those of the Thai. Women, old or young, have their buns twisted on top of the head. Influenced by the Thai, this hair dressing makes it possible to distinguish between a spinster and a married woman.

Glutinous rice is the staple food. Besides, the Khang grow maize, sweet potato, manioc, groundnut, gourd, sesame, millet. The sedentary groups mainly grow wet rice while the others farm hilly fields alternatively with water logged rice fields in the rainy season. Shifting cultivation is practised by those who farm their hilly fields or burnt out clearings; they sow the seeds in holes made by dibbles like other highlanders. The habit of mutual assistance is manifested in different forms and at different levels: in small villages, in the busy season each family sends a member to work for another family. In large villages, mutual assistance groups are organized, or the field owner prepares a meal to treat the helpers, or this assistance is remunerated in kind: salt, meat, rice.

The Khang rear oattle and poultry: chickens, ducks, pigs, goats, oxen, buffaloes, and even pack horses and mount horses. Basketwork includes basket, rattan chair, trunk. The shoulder basket is a very convenient transport means. It is carried pick-a-back by a strap hanging from the forehead. Gathering is not so important as under the former regime, because the mode of production has changed. Gathering of aquatic products (with a basket), angling, trapping is usual. The Khang riparian of the Da river go in for fishing and

fish breeding. They devise many kinds of traps to catch birds and wild animals. They hunt them with arrows, flintlock which they make themselves, and go to the Nam Dia mountain (Tuan Giao) in search of flintstone. They are also skilful in making piraguas.

#### *Social and family relations.*

Formerly the Khang were bullied by the Thai *phia* and *tao* (mandarins) and subjugated by the feudalists. All this ethnic group was considered of lower status. Except the chief of the village and the sorcerer who were better off, the majority of the people lived in want and misery. The post of head of the village was appointed by the *phia*, *tao* against remittance of a sum in silver money. The head of village was assisted by a *quan tong* who took charge of *córvée* and statute-labour and payment of tributes, and a *quan tong* who acted as a messenger.

The Khang family is a nuclear one subjected to the patrilineal authority though there remain some vestiges of the matrilineal regime. During the stay of the husband in his parents-in-law, his children take their mother's family name, or the father's family name is given to the boys and the mother's family name to the girls. If the husband dies before a ceremony is held to recognize matrimonial life, the children worship only their mother. The role played by the maternal uncle is most important in the marriage of his nieces and nephews.

Ancient customs prescribe that the marriageable age for boys and girls is between 14 and 16. Matrilocality lasts from eight to twelve years. Usually after two or

three years the ceremony *tu bay hop* is organized by the boy's family. At the end of matrilocality, the boy has to hold the ceremony "returning to the house" before he leads his wife home.

When a death occurs, the whole village takes part in the funeral. The body is wrapped in a linen or rush mat and carried to the cemetery where it is put in a coffin before burial. The sepulchre, open on four sides, has a roof supported by six columns and covered with elephant grass taken from the house of the deceased. The Khang have the habit of laying on the grave personal articles and food for the dead. The altar of the "ghost" of the parents lies in a corner of the house near the bed of the master of the house. The children hold the ceremony for the cult of the "parents ghost" once every three years.

#### *Spiritual life :*

The Khang believe that everybody has five "souls" (*man*): the principal soul lies on the head, the four others on the limbs. After death, the "soul" on the head becomes the "ghost" of the house; that of the right arm, the "ghost" of hilly field, that of the left arm, "ghost" of the tree (used to make the coffins), that of the right leg "ghost" of the sepulchre; and that of the left leg, "ghost" of the sky. The Khang also worship the "ghost" of forest, "ghost" of stream, "ghost" of village. When somebody is ailing, they hold a sacrifice ceremony. Every year, the whole village observes the cult of the "ghost" of earth, "ghost" of sky to pray for good health, and good luck. Believing that rice has a "soul", they entreat it to give them



wealth, and observe many taboos and many ceremonies on the occasions of choosing farmland, at the beginning and at the end of the sowing season when the rice is ripe and before harvests.

The Khang have a rich collection of literary works. Their popular songs reflect their life and sentiments by simple images and also the sufferings they experienced in their service life under the *phia*, *tao* regime. Such stories as Khun Phai, Nang Muong, Khun Lu nang Ua, praising faithful love, are largely popularized among this ethnic group. The character Khun Co in the Khang legend in the Chieng Khoang region is typical of the hero fighting for the freedom and happiness of the people.

Fond of singing and dancing, the Khang make simple musical instruments, the best known of which is *hun*. The gong dance and sword dance are most lively. The folksongs are melodious lyrical and interesting.

At the end of the 19th century many Khang people took part in the uprisings led by Thai chieftains against the French.

When the colonialists invaded Vietnam again from 1946 to 1954, the Khang region was under French control, but many riparian villages along the Da river were revolutionary bases. In 1952, the Khang rose up against the French together with other ethnic minorities and the Viet armed forces and liberated the Northwest; later they took part in the historic Dien Bien Phu campaign. In the war against the Americans (1954-1975) and against the Chinese expansionists, they made a great contribution in lives and property to the common cause.

Since the liberation of the Northwest in 1953, great changes have been wrought in Khang society. Backward customs in marriage, nonsensical taboos, and superstitions have diminished. The living standard of the Khang has been raised. Quang Van Xai, a Khang old man in Chieng On village, Quynh Nhai district, has five children, all of whom have finished their secondary education and higher education. All tribal enmity has disappeared. In the Khang region, schools, hospitals and state shops have mushroomed, the new society has made its superiority felt.

## c — TAY-THAI LANGUAGE GROUP

### The Tay

*Denomination*: Tay. Other names: Phan, Thu Lao, Pa Di...

*Population*: Over 900,000

*Language*: Tay-Thai

*Habitat*: from Quang Ninh to Hoang Lien Son provinces through Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Thai, Ha Tuyen provinces, a small number in Dien Bien Phu (Lai Chau province).

*Material life*: They are indigenous people living since a long time in the present habitat.

Their village comprises on the average 40-50 houses, sometimes over 100 houses, usually at the foot of a mountain, a hill or along a stream. The villages in Cao Bang, Lang Son provinces are surrounded with bamboo clusters almost like those of the Viet. In the villages along the border many houses have stone walls and ramparts to fend off riots and robberies so frequent in the past.

Most of the houses are on stilts; with two or four roofs, two large compartments: the internal one serving as bed-room and kitchen, the external one reserved for the parents to worship ancestors, receive guests and work in, for the children to study in. They have roofs

covered with palm-leaves, grass or tile, floors covered with boards, columns, and sometimes pretty railings around. Nowadays brick and earth houses are more seen.

Indigo clothes are favoured by both sexes. Men's clothes do not differ from those of neighbouring highlanders. Women's clothes are like those of lowlanders with kerchiefs, split tunics and belts with two ends hanging behind. The Phen group wear skirts jackets like the Nung ethnicity Pa Di women's robes have silver buttons at the collar and in front of the chest. Women like to put on necklaces, bracelets (and in the past anklets) in silver as well as small ear-rings. Nowadays the Tay have adopted some features of Viet and Western clothes.

Acquainted with agriculture since a long time the Tay mainly grow aquatic rice. Farming technique is progressive with a system of irrigation, ploughing and harrowing similar to that of the Viet. Vegetable growing has only developed since the August Revolution because of the wealth of wild vegetables. However, the Tay have a tradition of growing specialized crops: anise (Lang Son), soya (Cao Bang, Lang Son), cinnamon (Yen Bai), trau (alcurites fordii montana), so (cannellia), lai (alcurites mohuccana), tea in Bac Thai, Ha Tuyen, tobacco (Cao Bang, Lang Son), not to mention cotton, indigo, and such fruit-trees as pear, plum, peach, persimmon, tangerine, wild pear, Spanish chestnut... They have the experience of tending bamboo to cater for the building of houses, the development of basket-work and the preservation of water sources.

Animal husbandry is thriving. Poultry and pigs are reared everywhere. Oxen and buffaloes are pastured

according to season and left grazing freely in the mountains. Well-known throughout the country are the horses of Nuoc Hai (Cao Bang), the pigs of Lang Son, the oxen of Bao Lac (Cao Bang), the ducks of That Khe (Lang Son) and Trung Khanh (Cao Bang). Like the Thai, the Tay have the practice of rearing fish in ricefields which has spread far and wide.

Sideline occupations are varied and aimed at meeting local needs and providing for exchange. Cao Bang embroidery is liked by many ethnicities and is constituting an export article. Barter is developed with neighbouring localities and across the border.

*Social and family relations:* Before the August Revolution (1945) Tay society was developed fairly but unevenly. Until 1954 the area of the Gam, Chay, Lo and Red rivers had been administered on behalf of the Vietnamese feudal Court by hereditary landlords. Peasants were divided into two categories: free peasants receiving communal land, managing village affairs, providing corvee or agricultural products for landlords, and semi-free peasants paying corvee and tribute for the right to reside, have some land and make clearings. The landlords ruthlessly exploited the peasants, maintaining the custom of "first night" (of a married woman with her landlord), that of burying alive village notables with their dying landlord. In other areas class differentiation was almost like that in the lowlands owing to the influence of the latter. Landlords were few but rich peasants outnumbered middle peasants and poor peasants made up the bulk of labouring peasants while landless peasants were almost inexistent and private land outdid communal land. Under French rule oppression was aggravated by exacting corvee, heavy taxes and odd jobs, accounting for the colonial and semi-feudal

character of Tay society. After liberation, under the Party's leadership, the Tay opted for collectivization in joining high-and low-level co-operatives.

Paternal family on a one-husband-one-wife basis constitutes the basic unit of Tay traditional society. However, parentage relations are still preserved with the cult of common ancestors, the maintenance of common habits and customs and the common settlements of differences. The father decides everything in the family. The eldest son carries on the lineage (in some places it is the second son because the eldest son may not be the right son owing to the "first night" custom). Women are not held in high esteem save in familial feelings.

In Ha Tuyen, Bac Can (Bac Thai province), matriarchy still subsists in the esteem for the wife's family, the right of the mother's brother, the bridegroom's stay for a certain time in the bride's family... The Tay practise exogamy within one's caste, costly wedding and monogamy. The eldest son has the biggest share of the heritage and his children rank above those of the younger son even when their age is smaller.

Marriage, funeral, name-giving ceremonies... are based on Confucianism. All the stages and rites are like those in force among the Viet in the past, save some ancient customs! Harmony reigns in the family, parents are liberal toward children, husband and wife are considerate. Divorce is rare. A woman abandoning her man has to leave her children and return engagement gifts and wedding expenses. A man repudiating her woman takes half of the children and property and pay her family a "face-washing" fee.

In the past the Tay live within their villages and their ethnicity. At present they enter into relations with

people of other ethnicities in their villages, go far to work as cadres, and marry people of other ethnicities.

Funeral has many rites similar to those of the Viet.

*Spiritual life:* The Tay follow the same religions as the Viet, with Buddhism and Confucianism more influential than Taoism. Each village worships the genies of the heart, of the earth and local spirits. The genie of the earth is worshipped in a temple or at the foot of a banian. Local spirits are worshipped in a forbidden forest or on a high mountain regarded as sacred. The Tay pantheon comprises genies of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, genies of the river, the mountain and other genies. Many families worship Confucius and Avalokitesvara on the altar for the cult of ancestors. Taoist rites are practised, following a Book of Rites regulating marriage, funeral, birth... very well-known among the Viet in the past.

Agricultural rites are held early in Spring when begins the season of production. Festivals are organized to go to the fields, celebrate the moon and leave the mountain, or lay eggs to thank genies and to conjure a bumper harvest, a thriving year, a good health for the village and families, as well as a good luck. This is also an opportunity for boys and girls to acquaint themselves with one another before a new farming season.

With the French colonialists' invasion Christianity spread to a few Tay villages. The Tay did not show any concern about religious doctrine but only about money, Church land and French protection. When the French colonialists were ousted from Vietnam Christianity was also abandoned.

Owing to a fairly long co-existence Tay culture exerts a fairly strong influence on Viet culture and vice-versa.

Tay literature and art are fairly developed. In the 16th-17th centuries a Tay demotic script was introduced by Quan Nhac and Quynh Van. Do Hau poems appeared in late 19th-early 20th centuries castigating the then society. A number of books in Tay demotic script record anonymous poems like Nam Kim-Thi Dan, Luong Quan-Bioc Rom... and stories imitating Viet or Chinese ones like Tong Tran-Cuc Hoa, Pham Tai-Ngoc Hoa, Kim Van Kieu, Luong Son Ba—Truc Anh Dai... or recording chronicles like those about Nung Tri Cao and Nung Van Van, under whose banner Tay patriots fought Chinese feudal aggressors or legends like those about Pu Luong-Gia Cai, Nine lords disputing a throne, Vu A Dong... Also numerous are Tay tales many of which are reminiscent of Viet one. A special mention is to be made of humorous stories and fables with a strong educational effect.

Folk-songs include *luon*, love-songs like the *hat vi*, *hat dum* of the Viet or the *sli*, *khap* of the Nung, the Thai... According to regions there are different *luon* tunes: *luon then*, *nang hai*, *luon sluong* in Cao Bang, Lang Son provinces, *luon coi* in Ha Tuyen, Bac Thai provinces, *luon khap* in Hoang Lien Son province... Like *quan ho* songs, *luon* songs in Bac Ninh province, or *han khuong* in Son La province have their own rules.

Related to *luon* is a recital in verse similar in content to *luon*, like the declamation of the Viet; *Then* is a wedding-song which has been collected since 1954.

Compared with other national minorities the Tay are poor in musical instruments and dancing moves. Like the Viet they have such entertainments as unicorn dance, stick dance, water puppet show, tug of war, chess, spinning-top, ninepins, but also particular ones like ball-throwing.

Since the liberation Tay literature and art have been developed with the appearance of stories, plays, dancing moves, with the emergence of professional writers and artists like poet Nong Quoc Chan, now Vice-Minister of Culture of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam — whose poems have been translated into many foreign languages. Parallel with the implantation of industrial areas, factories, mines, colleges, with its worthy contributions in the military, political, economic and cultural fields, the Tay ethnicity is promoting its tradition of building and defending the country in the present socialist construction and defence of the Fatherland.

The Tay-Nung script has been romanized. In all secondary schools in the Tay area the Tay language is used together with the national language. Books and newspapers in this language are printed and distributed in the Tay-Nung area.

In the history of building and defending the country the Tay have sided with the Viet to set up the Au Lac State before the Christian era, participated in the great wars of resistance against foreign aggression by the two Trung Sisters (first century A.D.), Ngo Quyen (10th century), Ly Thuong Kiet (11th century), Tran Hung Dao (13th century), Le Loi (15th century), Quang Trung (18th century) and later on in the war of resistance against the French colonialists, the US imperialists and the Beijing expansionists.

Many Tay take part in the Party and State apparatus from the centre down to the grassroots. Some are members of the National Assembly. And many scientific and technical workers are of Tay origin.

## The Thai

*Denomination* : Thai, Local groups : White Thai, Black Thai (two main groups), Tay Thanh (Thanh Ha, Nghe Tinh, Ha Son Binh), Tho, Tay Chieng, Tay Muong (Ha Son Binh).

*Population* : nearly 770,000

*Language* : Tay-Thai

*Habitat* : The Thai constitute the main population in Northwest Vietnam where they live with other ethnicities from the Red River to the Da River, the Ma River and the Lam River.

Their ancestors migrated to Vietnam particularly in the Northwest a very long time ago. Early in the second millenium A.D. as a result of waves of migration the White Thai, Black Thai and other Thai outnumbered other ethnicities in this area. The Thai also live in Laos, Thailand and South China.

*Material life* : The Thai usually live in bamboo houses on stilts with bamboo or wooden walls. These houses are spacious and artistically built. The roof of a Black Thai's house has the shape of a tortoise shell with eaves at the gables. The roof of a White Thai's house is rectangular often with a railing in front or around. Meanwhile the Thai's house in Thanh-Nghe looks like the Muong's one. Only the Thai's house with one staircase in Hoang Lien Son is built in the traditional way.

The Thai's house was formerly poorly furnished. But their living conditions greatly improved since liberation, nearly all families have tables, chairs, beds, wardrobes, mantle-lamps, bicycles, book-shelves, transistor radio sets, etc.

The clothes of the various Thai groups have the common characteristic of all indigenous Southeast Asian

peoples. Women wear close-fitting black skirts, blouses with silver clasps, robes and kerchiefs. It can be said that Thai original culture is partly shown in women's clothes. At present, in Thanh-Nghe area Thai girls are inclined to change their traditional blouses for Vietnamese shirts or jackets. The bun of hair on top of the head is being replaced by short hair, plaited hair or clasped hair.

The Thai learnt to plant aquatic rice a very long time ago. They settle in fertile valleys, along streams and brooks, and manage in some places to produce 5 tons per hectare with two rice crops a year thanks to small irrigation works by digging ditches making small norias and setting up a system of pipes to bring water to their fields. Apart from rice, they also grow maize, sweet potato, cassava, gourds, beans, cotton, indigo...

The forest provides the Thai with the material to make houses and household utensils, a number of daily necessities and food stuffs. Gathering, hunting and fishing hold an important place in their daily life. Over the past decades many co-operatives have raised their income and their members' living standard thanks to the policy of collection-purchase of forest products and encouragement of forest exploitation and afforestation.

Handicrafts are not yet separated from agriculture, being only a family sideline occupation. The Thai have enjoyed a reputation of cloth-weaving. In traditional society a wife had to bring to her husband's family enough mosquito-nets, blankets and mattresses for its use. Today Thai embroidery is well known in the world. Elegant and lively, complex and very natural blankets with flower, leaf, bird, beast and dragon patterns have been exhibited at home and abroad.

Markets are almost inexistent — they are only held on the border with China. Trade is mainly done through barter of daily necessities with people on the mountain tops and midlands, sometimes with convoys on the streams or caravans of pack-horses, cart-oxen of traders from Laos who bring commodities to sell or exchange for forest products. Under French rule the local seigneur had the monopoly of trade. After the liberation of the North (1954) socialist forms of trade have taken shape and developed with a network of State stores, stations to collect and purchase agricultural and forest products, poultry and cattle and marketing co-operatives...

At present, the Thai area is promoting the three strong points of the highlands: stockbreeding, afforestation and picking of forest products. Some co-operatives rear thousands of buffaloes and oxen, tens of thousands of hens and ducks, while specialized areas for growing industrial crops are established. Every year the State collects and purchases many forest products and precious medicinal plants.

*Social and family relations:* The Thai live in clearly delimited and populous villages called *ban*, comprising 40-50 houses or even hundreds of houses. The land includes fields for tilling, forest for hunting and picking, grass land for stockbreeding forbidden forest, cemetery, water source. With the movement for agricultural co-operativization after liberation (1954). Thai villages tend to be more concentrated.

In the first decades of this century the Thai lived in districts called *Muong* each of which under a seigneur. A big district grouped many small ones. A *ban* was the cell of Thai society, a rural commune gathering large and small patrilineal families descending from a number of families.

The seigneur and the notables managed and distributed the land and determined the duties to the village. The seigneur took the choicest fields, his relatives also had a share and no duty to perform, while the notables got more or less land depending on their function.

At first, they did not own many fields but later on these were expanded through grabbing those of other villagers. Land ownership thus led to a rather sharp class polarization:

— The ruling and exploiting class: comprising the seigneur, his relatives and high-ranking notables.

— The exploited class: including the free peasants, the resident peasants with no citizen rights (*cuong, nhoc pua*) the servants (*con huou*), those who lost their right to live and had to depend on the seigneur's protection.

In Thai country each region had an aristocratic family: Deo, Sam, Cam, Xa, Bac... living beside a number of common families: Lo, Vi, Loc, Lu, Quang, Kha... Each family bore totemic relationship through a fetish. The Thai usually have three family relations. Brothers related with another family through marriage are called *ai noong*. Fathers having daughters married to a family are called *lung ta*. Fathers having sons married to a family are called *nhinh xao*. These vestiges reflect the marriage between three clans in the past.

Just before liberation (1954) large patrilineal families were rapidly disintegrating while small patrilineal families were growing commoner. Although patriarchy still is the foundation of social structure Thai families live in harmony regarding the relations between husband and wife and other ones. Community spirit and mutual

affection prevail among villagers and districtsfolk. Hospitality is also a feature in the Thai area.

Before liberation marriage relations had a class character. Peasants' sons could not marry mandarin's daughters while peasants' daughters married to mandarin's sons could not be first wives. The custom of setting store by sons was apparent in marriage and in the family. Daughters are considered alien to the family. Among the White Thai in Lai Chau daughters sleep in the guest room. Daughters-in-law had to adopt their husbands' family name. When boys and girls fell in love with one another they had to reckon with the castes and status of their families in their village. However, to live with one another they sometimes availed themselves of habits and customs. Thus the boy might ravish the girl, accept to stay with the girl's family as son-in-law, or the couple might flee their village and agree to become servants (*con huou*) in another place.

*Spiritual life*: The Thai have their own script, originating from Sanskrit dating to the 5th century, thanks to which they can preserve a very rich spiritual culture comprising two currents of literature and art: the popular and the aristocratic. So far there have been discovered general histories (thousands of pages written on rice-paper), love-poems, books on ethics, religion, official system, law, very interesting and valuable tales and other popular literature genres.

Famous long poems have been collected and propagated far and wide like *Quam to muong* (Stories of our villages and districts), *Quan Tay pu xoc* (Stories of fighting Thai), *Xong tru xon xao* (Farewell to one's lover), *Khun Lu nang Ua* (Lu and Ua)... Thai tales include legends, chronicles, humorous stories and fables together with an abundant treasure of sayings and folksongs.

Thai art still manifests itself in the motifs of embroidery, and such well-known the dancing moves as *xoe vong* in galas, vegetable-picking, boat-pushing, buckler- and shield-dances.

Thai literature and art bear a notable influence of Viet ones and to a lesser degree of Lao and Han ones. A contingent of writers and artists comprising many writers, poets, painters, stage-and screen-actors has been trained and grown up in step with the development of Thai ethnicity.

The cultural and scientific-technical level has also been raised considerably. Today, out of ten thousand Thai more than 3 have graduated from university or college. Thai ethnicity boasts of nearly 300 engineers, doctors, teachers, researchers... illiteracy has been liquidated. A contingent of workers has taken shape mainly in the building of socialism and the war of resistance against US aggression. General education has been organized everywhere with schools of general education and complementary education in all villages. A network of hospitals, dispensaries, maternity-homes and drug-chests has brought medical service to the remotest corners of the area.

Many members of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam are of Thai ethnicity.

### The Nung

*Denomination:* Nung. *Local groups:* Nung An, Nung Inh, Nung Loi, Nung Phan Xinh, Nung Chao, Nung Zin, Nung Xuong...

*Population:* about 560,000

*Language:* Tay-Thai.

*Habitat:* Bac Thai and Ha Bac provinces, densely grouped, in Cao Bang and Lang Son provinces along with Tay ethnicity.

In the remote past, the Nung and Tay belonged to the Bach Viet racial grouping living in the Xi Jiang valley, Guangxi and Guangdong provinces (China). After Nung Chi Cao was defeated by the Chinese Song the Vietnam-China border was delimited and the people living in Vietnam were Tay while those living in China were Nung. The Nung entered Vietnam several times to escape the Chinese feudal Court's heavy oppression and exploitation and bloody repression after unsuccessful insurrections, or to look for land to till.

*Material life:* The Nung's houses differ according to group and locality. Some are built on the ground and others half on stilts. They are usually spacious with tiled roofs and rammed-earth walls. In the past the houses were composite: men lived on the floor, the cattle and poultry beneath, and the food, farming implements and agricultural products beneath the roof. After liberation and the drive for a new life, in many places the cattle have been removed, farming implements and firewood are now kept under the floor, and the house is airy, roomy and tidy.

Unlike the Thai's, the Nung's house is divided in two parts widthwise: the external one serves as drawing-room and place of worship, the internal one as bedroom and kitchen.

In general the Nung wear similar clothes but each local group has variants of its own, particularly women's. Men put on stand-up collared jackets, split in front, dyed indigo, buttoned like the ethnicities in South China or North Vietnam. Only the *Nung An* wear short five-flapped blouses buttoned on the right. Women



put on five-flapped blouses buttoned under the armpit — shorter than *Tay's* ones and with sleeves covered with patches of various colours. The lappets are differently hemmed according to the group. When working men and women usually wear round or oval shoulder-pads made of patches of cloth sewn upon one another to last their blouses and lessen the pain to their shoulders. Sometimes they put on aprons to cover the front of their trousers. After liberation the youth of both sexes like to wear blouses or Western trousers and shirts. However, middle-aged people and old folk still retain their traditional costumes.

Acquainted with agriculture since a long time the Nung aptly grow aquatic rice but lack land and have to grow subsidiary crops, vegetables and fruit in clearings and terraced fields. Farming technique both in clearings and fields is fairly high compared with neighbouring ethnicities. Long ago the Nung knew how to use manure, dung in particular. They leave the soil idle in winter, sow seeds without transplanting, rotate crops all the year round without respite in their gardens, weed 3-4 times for a crop, build stone embankments up to one metre high on their terraced fields... There are many varieties of plants. Apart from rice, there are maize and especially barley, as well as many subsidiary crops like sweet potato beans, peanut and vegetables. The Nung may be the best gardeners among minority people. Bamboo, fruit-trees, spices, anise, *trau* (*alcurites fordii montana*), sumac develop fairly well in many places.

Attention is paid to stock-breeding and poultry-rearing: every household tends hens, ducks, geese, pigs, buffaloes, and fish in the fields. Animal husbandry, however, is only a sideline occupation.

Handicrafts are fairly-developed, cloth-weaving in particular; torn clothes are rarely seen. Each woman has a loom, a milpa of cotton and a garden of indigo. The cloth is dyed many times until it turns indigo, then beaten with a big stick to make it shiny and smooth. Old clothes are often dyed again. Other common trades are carpentry, blacksmithery, brick — and tile — making, jar-making, cotton-carding, cotton-rolling, silver-engraving, basketry, bamboo furniture-making, paper-making...

The Nung are self-sufficient in daily necessities — save salt — to a fairly high degree, and still produce a surplus for exchange or sale with neighbouring ethnicities. But handicrafts except blacksmithery can only be done when farming work is not pressing. The Nung An are reputed for this trade in Cao Bang, Ha Tuyen provinces...

Gathering, hunting and fishing are not worth mentioning. The Nung hunt to preserve their crops and their game enters in the making of bone jelly: tiger jelly, monkey jelly, chamois jelly, stag jelly... State purchase of forest products has been impelled recently.

Since liberation the Nung have developed production in cooperatives, restricted slash-and-burn practice, turned clearings into dry fields and extended paddies by setting up small and medium-size irrigation works.

*Social and family relations:* The Nung live in hamlets and villages which tend to be more concentrated. Their houses are laid according to the terrain without any order, streets are narrow. The houses are surrounded with gardens of vegetables and orchards: pear, plum, orange, shaddock, banana... as well as sheds to do basketry, blacksmithery, carpentry... and stables for the cattle now. Nung villages which had

only temples, fountains and cemeteries as common places have at present co-op storages, kindergartens, infant classes, medical stations, people's committee seats, clubs...

In the past, the Nung people disdained by the ruling class of the majority people were intensely ethnicity conscious and loyal to the leaders of their localities and families. Class polarization was already clear before liberation. There is no communal land and all the land is privately owned through reclamation and thrift. Formerly exploited ruthlessly by the French imperialists and their local agents called *tho ty*, the Nung people, now masters of their region, set up agricultural co-operatives to build a new life.

In hamlets and villages the basic unit is the small families. The patrilineal character is clearly shown in the fact that the men decide everything, inheritance and marriage included. As the bride price is very high and the wedding very costly, the wife entirely depends on her husband and his parents. A distance must be strictly kept in the relations between the husband's brother and his sister-in-law according to Confucian ethics.

*Spiritual life*: There is much similarity between the cult of ancestors and festivities of the Nung and those of the Tay. They believe in Buddhism and worship Avalokitesvara, putting its altar above that of ancestors. They ask her to bless them in their daily affairs or in case of illness, drought, failure in their work. For them to eat cattle and dog meats, and to use them as offerings to her altar would be a great sacrilege.

The ghost of the platform under the eaves, unknown to the Tay, is considered very sacred although it does not have an altar of its own — a kind of genie of the earth

in the remote past. In Nung villages there still are magicians called *thay tao* or *thay mo* to help people out of an illness or mishap.

Nowadays the influence of religion and superstitions has greatly diminished with the increase of scientific, educational and medical activities among the Nung villages. Illiteracy is liquidated and there is a growing number of people going to school to raise their cultural level whereas only a few magicians knew Han or demotic Nung script.

Very rich is Nung folk literature and art. Common and famous are folk-songs used in acquaintance-making (*sli*) or in wedding (*co lau*). Each Nung group has its own tunes and songs which may last for weeks, dealing with the various activities of the ethnicity: praising nature, protesting the injustices in the former society, confiding one's love and one's hope for a bright future... Folk-songs are heard everywhere and at any time, not only in a season or in festivities or in a given circle: both the aged and children sing, particularly on market days in the highlands.

Besides folk-songs the Nung have other literature and art forms similar to the Tay ones and no less rich. This constitutes a good basis on which to develop Nung literature and art after liberation and accounts for the emergence of a new contingent of Nung writers and artists.

In the wars of resistance against foreign aggression the Nung ethnicity has fought shoulder to shoulder with other brother ethnicities for the independence and freedom of the country, and for the defence of the homeland. Witness the preinsurrection days in August 1945. The Nung area harboured many solid resistance bases, among which Pac Bo had the honour of sheltering

President Ho Chi Minh when he returned home to lead the insurrectional movement. In the war of resistance against French colonialism the Nung ethnicity together with other brother ethnicities won resounding victories from the border campaign (1950) to the campaigns for the liberation of the Red River riparian areas. In the crucible of the struggle emerged such heroes as La Van Cau, Phung Van Khau, Trieu Thi Soi well-known to the Vietnamese people. In the war of resistance against US aggression 10 heroes are of Nung ethnicity.

Many changes have taken place in the Nung people's life over the past thirty years. Their ethnicity consciousness has been consolidated. Their villages have got a better look. The contingent of Nung intellectuals and workers has grown up. Their settlement has been stabilized as nomadism has disappeared. Their co-operatives have been strengthened. And their living standard has been markedly improved.

### The San Chay

*Denomination:* San Chay. *Other names:* Man Cao, Lan, Sun Nham, Son Tu, Hon Ban. There are two groups: Cao Lan and San Chi.

*Population:* over 77,000.

*Language:* Tay-Thai

*Habitat:* Densely grouped in Ha Tuyen and Bac Thai provinces, and scattered in Hoang Lien Son, Vinh Phu, Ha Bac and Quang Ninh provinces.

Early in the 17th century the San Chay immigrated from China to Vietnam and settled in the Bac Bo upland. Perhaps the San Chay and the Zao had a common origin then split from one another throughout history, each group Cao Lan and San Chi using a language of its

own while understanding each other to some extent. The Cao Lan speak a variant of Tay-Thai language but in their acquaintance-making songs and in their incantations they use San Chi, a Cantonese dialect. Inversely, the San Chi in some localities in Son Dong, Ha Bac province, speak Cao Lan in some rites while thirty years ago old San Chi in Binh Lieu and Tien Yen districts, Quang Ninh province, still spoke Cao Lan fluently... This ethnicity is thus bilingual.

*Material life:* Having learned how to grow aquatic rice the San Chay managed to settle soon in the upland in concentrated villages with 20-30 houses each. Their former houses might be on stilts but the present ones are built on the ground, which explains the many kinds of houses: house on stilts, house on the ground, house half on stilts half on the ground, or house on the ground coupled with a house on stilts as an auxiliary one. Nowadays houses on stilts are less seen. Usually a house on stilts has two or three rooms and two lean-tos. A salient feature is the presence beside a main column near the entrance of a basket of bran with a few joss-sticks in honour of Chiec Vung, the genie of stockbreeding and protector of cattle. Beside the column which supports the roof under the main rafter of the last room is the altar of ancestors. Then comes the lean-to in a corner of which is the altar of either Avalokitesvara, the Emperor of Heaven or the Genie of the Hearth.

In clothing the San Chay tend to imitate the Viet or the Tay cohabiting with them. Women wear black trousers, buttoned blouses split in front with colour to choice. In many places old folks still put on five-flapped tunics. In the past, they used long indigo skirts, five-flapped tunics hemmed with such motifs as eight-pointed stars or stripes against a background of light

coloured cloth. Those are clothes for festivities, wedding ceremonies or far-off visits. On ordinary days San Chay women wear on their waist a knife-sheath woven with coloured thread instead of a silk belt.

The San Chay's farming technique of growing aquatic rice has reached a fairly high level similar to that of Tay, Nung, Hoa, Ngai ethnicities in the localities. However, clearings still play an important role.

Tools used for clearings include a pick-axe to fell trees, a bush-knife to cut off branches, a stick to poke holes, a seed-container, a weed-scraper and a sickle.

When sowing the San Chay go by pairs. A man makes a hole with a stick and walks backwards toward the clearings while woman standing opposite drops the seeds into the holes.

It is to be noted that before the sowing the owner of the clearings has to perform an agricultural rite called "granary setting-up". A level spot is chosen in the clearings into which four bamboo slats are driven to form a square, one of the slats being only half-driven. After putting a salt-packet and a bamboo tube filled with spring-water into this "granary", the owner plants into the square 12 measures of paddy. Only then does the sowing begin. Once it is done the owner hammers the slat left half-driven into the ground, "closing the granary". Before going home the owner plants two reed-tufts into the "granary" with the belief that the genii will make the rice tufts as big as the reed-tufts.

Besides rice the San Chay also grow such subsidiary crops as maize, sweet potatoes, beans, pea-nut, vegetables, sesame... Cattle — and poultry — rearing is fairly developed, but mostly for meat and for sacrifices. Moreover, forest products are also exploited: bamboo of various kinds, rattan, morel, mushroom... The San

Chay also rear fish in the ricefields, hunt beasts, catch fish in the streams and springs, and do some handicrafts: basketry, carpentry, blacksmithery, mainly family side-line occupations.

*Social and family relations:* Before the 1945 August Revolution the fields were privately owned through reclamation, a small part of which through trade. Most of these fields lend to intensive farming or crop rotation. The remainder which includes forest, water courses, embankments and other natural wealth is communal property; which is being reduced owing to private appropriation and population pressure.

In some places in Ha Tuyen and Bac Thai provinces the French colonialists by grabbing the people's fields to establish plantations reduced many San Chay to the status of tenant farmers, thus sharpening social contradictions and class polarization: landlord, rich peasant, and various strata of labouring peasants.

The upper classes, most of which were dissociated from production, were entrusted by the feudal and colonial administration with local administration and security. Some of them were local notables or deputies while others worked as local agents of district chiefs belonging to other ethnicities.

Despite class polarization there still remain some vestiges of rural commune in the form of village self-management.

A village is a residence unit comprising members of a number of families. Each family in turn is divided in many branches. But a family does not have a living space of its own although relatives like to live near one another. Moreover, a village often includes members of other ethnicities. However, a village be it large or small is headed by a *khan thu* elected by

the people whose task it is to look after public affairs, unite the population, settle the differences among them, and represent the village in its relations with outside, the upper administrative level included. However, but for all his great prestige and vast abilities the man does not enjoy any privilege and is sometimes poor. In some places he is at the same time the magician. Until now festivities and religious ceremonies still provide opportunities to consolidate the village community.

A San Chay family is a small patrilineal one. Since long a man may take only one wife and she lives with him. Common family names are: Hoang, Tran, La, Ly, Ninh, Chu, Tieu Ha, Lieu, Zuong... Each family in turn is divided in many branches. Marriage is forbidden within a branch even though the boy and the girl are strangers. The members of the branch are bound to one another by the cult of a common genie (like Nam Hoa, Genie of the Hearth, Avolokitesvara...), the observance of a common religious rite or some festish. Each of them has the task of helping his or her fellow-members the first time they meet each other.

Feudal doctrine still heavily weighs on the San Chay's daily life. Women are bound by austere customs. In the past, daughters-in-law had to have a small bamboo screen to put it between them and any man superior to their husbands speaking with them. Today this barrier is symbolized by any object at hand: fire-blower, fire-wood, fire-lighter, rice-pot, broom... This may be a vestige of a taboo on sex in the development history of marriage and family preserved by the feudal regime in the form of patrilineal right. However, patrilineal families are not completely divorced from communal relationships.

Although decision on marriage rests with parents, San Chay girls are more or less free in choosing their mates. This is shown in the betel-offering rite which begins the marriage as San Chay girls had the habit of chewing betel. The boy's family puts on the girl's altar of ancestors 8 betel leaves. If the girl does not take them away this means a refusal. As a matter of fact parents and offspring generally come to an agreement on marriage as the former usually take in consideration the latter's wishes.

A prominent role is given to a bridesmaid called *pa me* by the San Chi and *Pa chip* by the Cao Lan in the rite of taking the bride to the bridegroom's family. With her bushknife she beats all the obstacles on the way: stone, timber log, branch... to "blaze a trail"! The bride stays overnight at the bridegroom's. The next day, before going home she is led by *pa chip* to the brook to fill two bamboo tubes with water and to the forest to fetch a bundle of firewood so as to assert her role as a daughter-in-law and a wife in the new family. However, in the past it was a common practice for a son-in-law to stay at his in-laws' at least for 2-3 years so that one day after the wedding the bride returned home only to drop at the bridegroom's house now and then.

The San Chay bury the dead. While enshrouding the corpse the custom is to put a string of 7 cents (for a man) or 9 cents (for a woman) corresponding to the 7 or 9 holes on a human face: eyes, nostrils, mouth, ears, the cents symbolizing the stars leading the deceased to their ancestors. This accounts for the influence of Taoism and Buddhism, besides Confucianism. There are also rites to "break the hell" to "free the soul", to pray for Buddha, to worship God, to exercise devils by a

magician's making of talismans, reading of petitions, burning of votive paper...

*Spiritual life:* Besides religious forms, popular knowledge of agriculture, traditional medicine... a precious asset in the San Chay's spiritual treasure is their literature and art which have developed on their own or borrowed from neighbouring ethnicities and handed down from generation to generation. There are tales on the origin of the ethnicity like "The gourd" dealing with the deluge, "Catching the God of Thunder to eat him" reflecting the taming of nature for existence, or such tales as "The orphan", "Tao An", "The story of a honey-bee" reflecting the struggle to preserve human dignity.

Knowledge of nature, experience in production, human vices and virtues are epitomized sayings, folk-songs and poems. Highest in number and quality in the San Chay' spiritual life are the acquaintance making songs between boys and girls called *sinh ca*. These songs may last a whole night, drawing a host of singers, musicians and audience regardless of age.

Among the common musical instruments are brass gongs, trumpets, flutes, drums with leather faces and wooden staves and particularly drums with leather faces and terracotta staves, each face giving a different sound.

In the past there emerged from religious services a number of dancing moves reflecting the life of the community: drums dance, bird dance, farewell dance, lamp dance, road-mending dance, fish-stabbing dance, shrimp-scooping dance,... Over the recent years some of these dances have entered the repertoire of a number of art troupes.

In the wars of resistance against French then US aggression the San Chay fought side by side with other

brother ethnicities to wrest back independence and freedom so as to build a happy life. This fine spirit is borne out by the heroes of the People's Armed Forces Au Van Hung and Ly Trung Pham. Then in the war of resistance against the Beijing expansionists this is again shown by Army hero Lac Hi Son, a valiant gunner.

In the National Assembly, (Seventh legislature), the San Chay ethnicity has two women deputies Mrs. Nguyen Thi Lam — deputy-head of the Women's Union, Ha Tuyen province, and Mrs. Lam Thi Dinh — head of the Women's Union, Kien Lao commune, Luc Ngan district, Ha Bac province.

### The Giay

*Denomination:* Giay. Other names: Nhang, Giang, San Nhan, Bo Y, Pu Nam, Chung Cha, Bach Y... Local groups: Giay Nam, Pau Thiu, Pu Na.

*Population:* about 28,000.

*Language:* Tay — Thai.

*Habitat:* mostly in Bat Xat, Bao Thang, Muong Khuong, districts (Hoang Lien Son province) and Phong Thao (Lai Chau province).

About 200 years ago a number of Giay families immigrated into North Vietnam. Many Giay families have been here since only 150 or 100 years. In China this ethnicity belongs to Bo Y community.

The Giay have close relations in many fields (food, housing, clothing, language, customs...) with the Tay — Nung, Thai Bo Y... At present, in many localities Giay villages look like Tay, Nung, or Thai ones. This process of rapprochement is due to a common origin in the history of these ethnicities.

*Material life*: The Giay lived in houses on stilts. Nowadays the Giay in Ha Tuyen and Cao Bang still live this way but the Giay in Hoang Lien Son and Lai Chau live in houses with a drying yard in front. Moreover, each family has another house on its clearings for old folk to look after the crops and the cattle and poultry.

In the past, Giay women wore fanned-out skirts covering their knees while today their clothes are simple with less embroidery: indigo trousers with a red band on the belt, five-flapped blouse covering the hip with buttons under the right armpit—the blouse being hemmed with tabs of various colours. Men put on loose pants, jackets split on the sides and buttoned in front.

Women's hair is rolled around the head, stuffed with pink thread dangling behind. Wherever they go Giay women would bring with them a cloth bag with a star-pattern embroidery.

Each year there is a festivity called *roong poot* to begin farming work like in the Tay region. Much experience has been acquired about the growing of rice in water paddies. Mutual exchange teams called *au rau* have been organized. Every family also owns clearings to plant maize, sweet potato, cassava, gourd, vegetables, and tubers in. Attention is paid to stockbreeding: buffalo for ploughing and harrowing, horses as draught animals and big and poultry for meat and offerings. Buffaloes are parked in a patch of forest and brought back to the village for tending when the need arises.

Giay handicrafts are poorly developed save the weaving of bamboo household commodities. Very few people know how to make ploughshares and silver jewels. The cotton growing, spinning, weaving and embroidery have now become only sideline occupations.

*Social and family relations*: Before liberation and democratic reforms in the highlands (1960) there already was a clear class polarization. At the head of a commune was a mayor, assisted by two deputies each in charge of a few hamlets. These officials enjoyed most privileges, among which a share of communal land with the peasants' labour for tilling it—the mayor having local gendarmes at his service, men to grow medicinal plants for sale, to attend to funeral and wedding, or even a dancing troupe to entertain festivities. Under these officials were heads of hamlets—each hamlet comprising 5–6 households, assisted by two agents to exact corvée and taxes—these people also enjoying a share of communal land to still themselves and being exempt from taxes.

Prominent in Giay society were also the servants of the local military and civilian administration.

Upon peasants and other labouring people fell the burden of taxes and labour service for the upper classes.

In Giay region communal land took pride of place, accounting for a fairly well-knit rural commune.

Each village had a patch of forbidden forest called *ma doong xia* (sacred forest) in which the biggest tree was called forest-chief at the foot of which a service was held twice a year by a *pau cau* in honour of the village genie.

A part of the proceeds of the communal land was reserved for the cult of the genii of the village, of the earth... When holding a service people erected at the entrance of the village a bamboo tree with a lattice-work, on top of which hang symbols of the offering like ears of pig and buffalo, legs of hen or a tuft of hair of these animals. Those who entered the village without

permission were fined. They had to offer chicken and alcohol to the genie — this custom being so strictly enforced that the trespasser had to provide anything mentioned in the lattice-work or to pay for any animal killed by the villagers to appease the genie.

Giay family is a small patrilineal one. Before the liberation of the North (1954) feudal order was already established. The father and the husband have the last say in family affairs. Women had to observe the three obediences: to father before marriage, to husband after marriage and to son after the death of husband. Marriage was tantamount to a sale of the girl with complicated rites causing many impediments to the young people. Therefore there were many cases of girl ravishment or elopement.

In the past, as the medical network was not yet developed in the highlands Giay women used to deliver in a sitting position. The placenta would be buried under the bed. An altar was set up in honour of the goddess of childbirth. Only when the child was one month old was a ceremony held to report its birth to its ancestors and to give it a name. At the same time a magician cast a horoscope for it on a square of red cloth, which would be used to confront ages when getting it married or to choose the hour for enshrouding and burying it later on. If the child was in ill health its parents would choose someone as a godfather or a godmother. The strong belief in transmigration led to the practice of marking a still-born's ears to prevent its reincarnation.

In funeral the Giay left the corpse in a temporary shelter in the house during three days for a burial service. When announcing the obsequies the master of ceremonies had to join his hands in front of his chest

and kneel down in the veranda of the deceased's house. Then the corpse was carried away posthaste for fear of a ravishment — the corpse of a victim of violent death was not allowed to lie in state. During a mourning period the Giay abstain from having their hair cut and their beard shaven for 90 days in case of a dead father and 120 days in case of a dead mother. The mourning ended with a ceremony held before the Lunar New Year's Day.

*Spiritual life:* The Giay view the world as consisting of three stages, men living on the stage in-between. The stage of Heaven is magnificent and glorious while the stage underneath is cramped and shameful.

In the middle-bay of each house stands an altar with many incense-burners in honour of Heaven the Earth ancestors, genie of the hearth, genie of the earth...

The Giay preserve their knowledge, feelings and traditional life in their popular cultural treasure. Folk-songs and sayings standards of behaviour often resorted to in daily life.

Very widespread are tales, humorous stories, poems and riddles quite great in number and rich in content. Worthy of note are folk-songs dealing with everyday activities (*vuon la lau*), boys and girls' night songs (*vuon chang ham*), and farewell songs (*vuon sroong ran*).

Over the past decades the Giay region has made much progress. In the average out of 1,600 people there is one college graduate and four graduates from secondary education. In the National Assembly (seventh legislature), there is one Giay among the six deputies from Hoang Lien Son province, Mr. Ly Han Minh, director of Muong Khuong Hospital.



## The Lao

*Denomination* : Lao.

*Population* : about 7,000.

*Language* : Tay — Thai.

*Habitat* : along the Vietnam — Laos border in Song Ma district (Son La province), Dien Bien, Phong Tho, Than Uyen (Lai Chau province).

The Lao living in Vietnam belong to the Lao Bac group (or Lao Noi) more akin to the Thai than their fellows in Laos.

*Material life* : The Lao live on houses on stilts. The roof looks like a tortoise shell, similar to that of a Black Thai house but the main pillar is near the ordinary kitchen and not the guests' one. Owing to its height and width, lay-out, assembly technique and engravings a Lao house in Vietnam is akin to that in Laos. Each house has an altar to worship Buddha.

Lao women's clothes are reminiscent of Thai ones. In Song Ma district they wear a pieu kerchief with a beak on top or a tail hanging on a shoulder like Lu women do; the kerchief is often replaced by dextrously carved silver clasps. The skirts are black, high up to the breast, with taps of embroidery in coloured thread at the bottom. Lao women used to tattoo their hand-palms with a vegetable pattern and the men with a Buddhist swastika on their wrists and animals on their thighs, Lao people like to smoke tobacco from a laboriously carved pipe.

The Lao till water paddies with a technique similar to that of the Thai. Sideline occupations are very well developed. Their fairly original pottery-making with potter's wheels produces jars and pots of various sizes

with a high quality. Their cloth-weaving is quite thriving, embroidery in particular, the technique of which can match with Thai one. Their blacksmithing and silver-engraving show much skill. Lao people are good fishers and their salted and pickled fish is well-known around.

Thanks to a stabilized production base and flourishing sideline occupations, Lao villages are large and populated, sometimes comprising more than one hundred houses.

*Social and family relations* : In the past, Lao villages followed a Thai feudal administrative organization and managed their village affairs. Lao families and taboos are like Thai ones. All families large and small, have a patrilineal character although women are still well-considered. They live in harmony and take great care of their children, regardless of their sexes.

Marriage is based on mutual consent, one husband with one wife united for life. Cases are few of polygamy, divorce and adultery. Unknown is the custom of levirate or sororate. Marriage with members of other ethnicities is rare. There is no bonze to attend a wedding ceremony or no custom of baxi (tying a wrist with a thread) to wish good health to mother and child at childbirth. Cremation is reserved only for district heads (chau muong) and village heads (chau ban), in a ceremony presided over by a *chau hua* with many complicated rites according to the practice of the local Buddhist sect.

*Spiritual life* : The influence of Buddhism on the Lao ethnicity in Vietnam is not deep. The tower and pagoda near the village and district have the same significance and function for the Lao as the communal house for the Viet in the delta, or the column of the district or village for the Thai at the foot of which

ceremonies are usually held. The Lao regard the services at a pagoda as prayers to a genie for a bumper harvest, and the *chau hua* as a *mo muong* (magician) in the Thai region. Owing to Buddhist influence the offerings consist only of flowers and fruits presented to the tower on the 15th and 30th of each lunar month. At present, folk-beliefs are still maintained and the cult comprises many rites like in the Thai region. However with the implantation of general education schools and medical stations everywhere the Lao put less confidence in disease-healers using magic and talismans.

The Lao ethnicity has preserved a rich popular culture. In every village the *mo lam* is a learned man who knows many legends and tales and many folk-songs. These reflect the reciprocal influence of Thai and Lao literature. Very common are the books made of palm-leaves recording familiar Lao stories together with Thai lyrical *khap* songs. Lao women dance and sing, well, performing both *lam vong* dances and Thai fanned-out skirt dances. Of late the Lao also assimilate other brother ethnicities' culture. This brings the Lao nearer to the ethnicities in the region and raises their community spirit. With many men in the army and many women in the auxiliary services the Laos have brought a great contribution in manpower and wealth to the wars of resistance against French then US aggression, and are enthusiastically building socialism in the North-west.

### The Lu

*Denomination*: Lu. Other names: Thay U, Thay Sin, Thai Hung, Nhuon, Zuon.

*Population*: about 3,000.

*Language*: Tay — Thai.

*Habitat*: in Phong Tho and Sinh Ho districts (Lai Chau province).

In the past, the Lu perhaps lived in Xip Xoong Pan Na (China) before migrating into Vietnam a fairly long time ago. At first, they settled in present-day Dien Bien Phu area and belonged to the Bo Y community recorded in Vietnamese history books in the first millenary. In the 11th—12th centuries when the Black Thai arrived there they saw the Lu in their famous Xem Mun (Tam Van) Citadel. Late in the 18th century the Lu were chased from Muong Thanh and Tuan Giao (Lai Chau) by the invaders from Burma, and part of them might move to Phong Tho and Sinh Ho. Their fellows are still present in China, Burma and Laos. In the latter country they are assimilated to the Lao Lum group, in China to the Pa Zi community, and in Burma they are called Nhuon.

*Material life*: A Lu village is vast (40—60 houses on the average), lying on a slope facing a valley with a running stream. Lu houses are on stilts, large and airy but, unlike the Thai ones, they have only a staircase each. The Lu used to eat glutinous rice with fish and vegetables.

Unlike the White Thai, Lu women wear embroidered skirts and blouses split in front clasped with many ornaments. Men also put on embroidered trousers and bracelets. In the past, men had long hair, tattooed their bodies, perforated their earlobes and dyed their teeth black.

The Lu till water paddies — the water coming from surrounding ditches. The fields are ploughed, harrowed

and weeded fairly well manured with dung and garbage. Seedlings are transplanted. Milpa and garden are carefully tended, the milpa to grow maize, cassava, indigo, cotton and the garden, gourd, vegetables and fruit.

Stock-breeding is only a sideline occupation. Cattle and poultry are reared to entertain guests or to use as sacrifice, in funeral, wedding... Hunting is little-developed owing to the scarcity of wild beasts.

Weaving is given much attention. Each family has 2 — 3 looms. Lu embroidery is original, not inferior to Lao one and somewhat superior to Thai one.

The Lu's settlement is fairly well developed, witness the building of Tam Van Citadel and the worship of Buddha. However, with a small population and a dependence on feudal White Thai, the Lu have seen their life and culture degrade. Nevertheless, a study of its farming technique, handicrafts and some manifestations of its spiritual life reveals the progressive features of this ethnicity.

*Social and family relations:* Before liberation (1954), Lu villages were headed each by a *nai ban* whose task it was to collect products and pressgang manpower for the Thai seigneur. As semi-free peasants the *nai ban* knew how to ally themselves through marriage and keep the monopoly of their office in their families. In general they belonged to rich and large families. However, there was no sign of exploitation of man by man in the Lu community. Having private land the *nai ban* did not tenant any land of the Thai seigneur but abused their power to exact unpaid labour service (though not much), and took bribes. Therefore, there was only a difference between rich and poor while mutual help and co-operation in each village governed the relationship between men in the Lu society.

A Lu family is a small patrilineal one. Marriage is decided by parents but this also depends on the horoscope cast by the *chau ho*, the local Theravada bonze who presides over the village ceremonies and keeps the spiritual power in the society by combining Buddhist rites with popular beliefs, thus performing the function of the sorcerer in the Thai and Tay regions.

*Spiritual life:* The Lu believe in the ghosts of the house, village, district, and the *phi* (devils), like other Tay — Thai language-speaking ethnicities. The only trace of Buddhism is the pagoda, in the function of *chau ho*, line that of a bonze in Laos and Kampuchea, in the concept of bun or bliss to the village.

Folk literature and art in the Lu region include tales, sayings, poems, historical stories... resembling Thai ones in their form and expression as well as in the artistic life. Lu fanned-out skirt dance and khap are very famous but are not yet studied for a better promotion.

After liberation, Lu villages have undergone fundamental changes. The Lu are readily receptive to revolutionary ideas and have greatly contributed to the building and defence of socialism. In the war of resistance against the Chinese expansionists, the Lu are reliable defenders of the Binh Lu — Phong Tho border area (Lai Chau).

### The Bo Y

*Denomination:* Bo Y. Other names: Pau Y, Pu Zi, Chung Cha, Trang Gia, Tu Zi. Local groups: Tu Zi, Bo Y.

*Population:* over 1,300.

*Language:* Tay — Thai.

*Habitat:* about 250 people in Quyet Thang commune, Quan Ba district (Ha Tuyen province) and over 1,000

people mainly on the mountain slopes of Tung Chung Pho and Ta Chu Phung communes, Muong Khuong district (Hoang Lien Son province) on the Vietnam — China border.

The Bo Y in Ha Tuyen still preserve a language of its own, a dialect of the Tay — Thai language.

The Tu Zi in Hoang Lien Son have forgotten Bo Y dialect and use *kwanhua* (Chinese official language) instead.

The Bo Y migrated from Guizhou (China) to Vietnam, the first Bo Y families arriving in Ha Tuyen about 250 years ago, and in Hoang Lien Son about 100 years ago. Their fellows still remain in Guizhou.

*Material life:* A Bo Y house is built on the ground with three bays leaning on four rows of beams. The walls are made of rammed earth. In front is a veranda with the entrance to the house in the middle. The inside always has an upper floor of strong bamboo to serve as bedroom and granary.

In the past, Bo Y women wore fanned-out skirts like Hmong Hoa women, but over half-a-century they have adopted Nung women's clothes. Meanwhile, the Tu Zi in Hoang Lien Son have imitated the Han. However, Bo Y women always have an apron called *voi giao* or *vay giao*, and Tu Zi women have a pair of detachable sleeves called *zi suu* richly embroidered around the wrist like those of the Hmong and Lolo.

Bo Y women like to put on many silver ornaments like earrings, necklaces, bracelets... The Tu Zi also have silver

strings called *vui xeo xo* and *gia xo* to be clasped on their apron.

The Bo Y are skilled in tilling water paddies but in their present habitat they mainly rely on their clearings. As the land grown to rice (one crop a year) is small, maize becomes the main crop.

In the past, many Bo Y knew how to do carpentry, blacksmithery, pottery, stone-chiselling, silver-engraving... but these were only sideline occupations. Women knew how to grow cotton, spin, weave, and dye cloth with indigo, sew and embroider clothes, kerchiefs, skirts...

*Social and family relations:* Before the August Revolution, class polarization was not yet clear. Oppressed and exploited for the most part by Han landlords and despots, the Bo Y had to leave their country for Vietnam. Here they have united as one man to help one another carry out production and defend their villages. Each family is duty-bound to assist others with labour and wealth in such undertakings as house-building, wedding, funeral...

Bo Y villages are established near a water course to have water brought to every house through a system of bamboo pipes. The houses are grouped together with no fence in-between. Each house has a patch of garden nearby to plant vegetables, sometimes a pond to rear fish too.

The Bo Y live under a regime of feudal patriarchy. Each family has a series of 5 — 7 or 9 surnames to be adopted in succession, each of which showing the rank of each member in the family.

Marriage is proposed by the boy's family. The bride is brought to the bridegroom's house on horse-back — the bridegroom need not be present at the party. The custom of levirate and child marriage is being abandoned.

When Bo Y women is delivering, a branch of tree is planted in front of her house to forbid people to enter the house. The placenta is buried under the bed. An altar is set up in honour of the goddess of childbirth. When the child is one month old a ceremony is held to give him a name. When he comes of age he is given another name.

The Bo Y bury their deceased in the ground once for all. The mourning ends after one year with a ceremony. Children must observe strict abstinence during 90 days after their mother's death and 120 days after their father's death, and are forbidden to get married during three years.

*Spiritual life*: Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism have left an imprint on the Bo Y's outlook and way of life. Besides there are vestiges of such primitive beliefs as animism, polytheism. This appears through the Bo Y's worship and conception of life and death. The Bo Y worship Heaven the Earth, their ancestors (three generations), the genii of the mountain and the earth. Avalokitesvara, the genie of the river, the genie of the forest, the ghost of the spring, the ghost of the milpa, the ghost of fire...

Little remains of Bo Y folk literature and art, which have been merged into the cultural activities of other brother ethnicities living in the same natural milieu and one social environment.

#### d) MEO — ZAO LANGUAGE GROUP

##### The Hmong

*Denomination*: Hmong. Other names: Mieu too, Meo. Local groups: Blue Hmong, Red Hmong, Flowered Hmong, Black Hmong, White Hmong and Na Miao (according to women's clothes).

*Population*: over 41,000.

*Language*: Meo — Zao.

*Habitat*: the highlands of 9 provinces from Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Thai, Ha Tuyen, Hoang Lien Son, Lai Chau, Son La, Ha Son Binh and Thanh Hoa to Nghe Tinh, but densely grouped on the Vietnam — China border. Their fellows still live in Burma, China, Lao and Thailand.

The Hmong constitute an indigenous group in South China belonging to the Bach — Viet racial grouping. Since the later half of the 17th century they migrated into Vietnam and set up hamlets in the border highlands of present-day Ha Tuyen and Hoang Lien Son provinces. Two big migrations took place in mid-18th and mid-19th centuries. These migrations resulted from the ceaseless struggle against the feudal forces and racial oppression in the North.

*Material life*: A Hmong house is built on the ground with a very primitive architecture. It usually has three bays and two lean-tos. The altar is put in the central bay, the kitchen and bedroom in the others. However living near the Tay the Na Miao also build their houses on stilts.

The salient features of Hmong women's clothes are their fanned-out skirts falling beneath the knees and their blouses split in front. The White Hmong keep their skirts white while the Flowered Hmong, Blue Hmong, Black Hmong dye their skirts indigo. The bottom of the skirt is embroidered with a motif showing a spiral or geometric pattern.

A Hmong woman wears a white shirt under an unbuttoned flatcollared blouse split in front and hemmed with bits of gaudy cloth.

She also puts on a "backplate" and an apron then winds 4 — 5 times round them a belt, both ends of which hang behind. She rolls puttees round her legs and goes bare-footed. For their part, Na Miao women dress like Nung women. White Hmong women shave their heads leaving a tuft on top and roll a large turban around. Flowered Hmong women roll their long hair around their heads, the hair being stuffed to make it look thicker. Blue Hmong girls would let loose their hair, then make it a bun on top of the head when getting married.

Hmong women usually wear some bracelets around their wrists and fairly wide necklaces. Some put on ear-rings too. Men are dressed in loose pants and short broad-sleeved blouses. They let loose their hair or shave it save a top and roll a large turban around. They also like wearing brass or silver bracelets and necklaces.

The Hmong's diet includes maize, the staple food, and rice. Water paddies are few but there are quite a lot of terraced fields to plant rice. The remaining land is occupied by "fixed" milpas and mainly "mobile" milpas grown to maize or rice. Although the

milpas are stony and situated high up the mountain slopes the Hmong carefully plough and harrow them before sowing. Maize is alternated with beans of various kinds. Weeding is done 2 — 3 times. Rice is poked into holes or sown, alternated with gourd and vegetables. In many places milpas are surrounded with rows of Job's tears (*coix lachryma Jobi L.*).

Flax is the main industrial crop. Blue Hmong and Na Miao grow cotton and weave cloth. A special product is poppy which took pride of place in the Hmong's life. *Panax pseudo-ginseng* Wall. *Ligusticum Wallichii* Franch, *Campanumoea javanica* Blume; *Coix lachryma Jobi L.* are precious medicinal plants. Fruit-trees grown in orchards include peach, plum, jujube and pear well-known in the Northern provinces for their large size and flavour. Owing to transport problems, circulation is still limited.

The rearing of cattle and poultry is fairly developed. Nearly all families tend buffaloes, cattle and horses as draught animals. Every household has 5 — 7, sometimes a score of pigs. They also rear in 30 — 40, sometimes more than one hundred hens, which are the main fowls.

The exploitation of forest products: borax, *Polygonum multiflorum*, tea, *Cardamum trake*, "gau" tuber, *Berberis Wallichiana* D.C... provides a notable income to familial economy.

The Hmong like hunting with flint-locks and traps of various kinds to bag weasels, foxes, deer, roe deer, wild bears and sometimes tigers.

Their handicrafts comprise cloth-weaving, indigodying, *ban*<sup>1</sup> paper-making<sup>1</sup>, farming tools-forging, the

1. *Glai ban*: Writing paper made from bamboo.

making of flint-locks, silver ornaments, leather articles, household commodities in bamboo like basket, dossier, cauldron-lid, in wood like spoon, basin, trough... mostly done during slack season as handicraftsmen are few. Forest and handicraft products are exchanged in weekly market-days held in some population centres in the highlands.

In the past, the Hmong led a poor and hard life due to nomadism. Nowadays they are settling down and building irrigation works to develop water paddies, terraced fields and milpas.

*Social and family relations:* Before the August Revolution the colonial and feudal regime turned the Hmong self-management apparatus into a grassroots administration of theirs. This included the *seo phai*, *na phai* in charge of a group, the *trung truc* of a hamlet, the *thong ly* or *tong giap* of a region. In some places there were heads and deputy-heads of village and canton like in Viet society. Although the Hmong lived among other ethnicities, in many places their administrative units were run by a French agency.

All the land, forest, mountains... were the exclusive property of the State and the above-mentioned officials were its representatives. Besides, the heads of large families in a region also enjoyed great prestige among the population. Thus officials and heads of large families made up the upper classes in Hmong society, while toiling peasants only owned the land when they farmed it and had to provide taxes and corvée. Social differentiation was not the same in a settled area and a nomadic area.

In the first area, class polarization was already clear. Private ownership of land appeared. Often this ownership was linked to taxes and corvée. Land trade and dispute were common occurrences. There were landlords who grabbed up to one-third of the local land. Such forms of exploitation as renting out land, hiring labour, usury, hiring buffalo, abuse of function to get unpaid labour, monopoly of opium-dealing... were common-places. Taxes were levied on clearings, milpas, houses, markets, opium...

In the second area, when one found some arable land, one marked it — this was recognized by society. When one left for another place, the land became forest land. However, one could cede a milpa still usable to a relative, sometimes in exchange for a modest sum. Well-off were the families who had much manpower, found fertile land, knew handicrafts, and could protect their cattle and poultry. Also well-off were officials who took bribes and had the manpower of those under their protection: women abandoning their husbands, law breakers... These people were not yet dissociated from the masses and production.

Community and blood relations were salient features in Hmong society.

The village or *giao* was the smallest residential unit, comprising a few households up to more than one hundred ones. People lived in dense groups or scattered in small groups. They belonged to many families whose members were more or less numerous. Sometimes there was only one family — which was rare. The village had its land, its genie and its conventions guaranteed by public opinion and strict punishments. These conventions were reviewed and amended each year when the ceremony

in honour of the village genie was held. The common repast on this occasion was regarded as a pledge to abide by the conventions under the auspices of the genie (nao song). The village was headed by a *lung thau* or *song thau*, sometimes by two men taking turns to manage public affairs. In some places there was a form of rural commune higher than a *giào* called *giong*, which had the same characteristics but the head of which was not chosen by the population and was the highest official in the locality.

Common Hmong family-names were *Giang, Sung, Ly, Chang, Tan Lu, Thao, Then...* Personal names were usually the names of animals, natural phenomena or taboos. Marriage was strictly forbidden between members of the same family. Each family had its own conventions in worship. The head of a family was a man enjoying prestige, regardless of age and rank. Blood relations did not depend on residence, even national borders, but on the concept of a common ancestor. Members of the same family could live and die in one another's homes, they had to give mutual help, assistance, defence and protection, without minding one's life and property.

A Hmong family is a patrilineal nuclear one. Before the August Revolution men are regarded as superior to women and polygamy was a commonplace. After the "crossing the threshold" ceremony a married girl could not return to visit her parents unless she was permitted by her in-laws and was accompanied by her husband. When disagreeing with her in-laws she could call at neighbours and not at her parents and wait for a third-party's intervention. Should her husband die she would become his brother's wife; if the latter was married she became his concubine. In case her husband had no brother she would be married to one of his cousins.

When she divorced from her husband she could not live again with her parents but had to depend on the local authorities until she got married anew. A widow refusing to marry her husband's brother had to pay damages and leave his family with bare hands; she had no share of his property and could not bring with her any child save a suckling.

"Girl-ravishment" was common occurrence in Hmong society. When a boy wanted to marry a girl without her parents' consent he would manage to bring the girl home and hold a "crossing the threshold" ceremony. Two days later he sent word to the girl's family for the wedding ceremony. When the girl was ravished her parents were not allowed to go to her rescue. This custom compelled many girls to become "reluctant wives", or commit suicide by eating *ngon* poisonous leaves.

After democratic reforms in the highlands (1960) Hmong women have been freed from these shackles.

However, vestiges of matriarchy still remain, witness the custom of avunculate, under which the mother's brother looked after his nephews' and nieces' education before they came of age.

Marriage between cousins, particularly cross-cousins, conformed to Hmong customs.

A married couple usually wishes to have a son. Hmong women did not have the habit to deliver in a sitting position. A daughter's placenta was buried under the bed and a son's one at the foot of the main column of the house — the place to worship ancestors.

The Hmong bury their deceased in the ground. In the funeral ceremony they put the corpse on a shelf and hang it in front of the altar or put it on a bench which they brought to the door. Some families allowed the corpse to lie in state high on a floor for a few days



before burying it — perhaps a vestige of the custom of letting birds peck at the corpse as the Zao Tien group did. After enshrouding the corpse the deceased's clothes were cut in many places — to make them differ from those in our world. The obsequies include khene and drum performance as well as a sacrifice.

*Spiritual life:* The Hmong worshipped the ghost of the house, the ghost of the cattle... A very dangerous and widespread conception was the ghost of the living (*ngu hai*) which killed men and cattle, a conception causing slaughters of people. Many taboos, many ways of worship and many different conceptions about one's ancestor among the various families also bore the imprint of totemism. Besides, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism made their influence felt on a number of Hmong conceptions and social institutions: magic, metempsychosis, the feudal idea of regarding men as superior to women... Early in the 20th century, Christianity penetrated the Hmong region. In 1905 a church was erected in Sa Pa (Hoang Lien Son) then another in Nghia Lo. However, there were only 30 Catholic families in Sa Pa before 1945 but these also returned to their traditional beliefs later on.

Throughout the history of their ethnicity the Hmong have built up a bright, sane, rich and multiform literature and art which reflects the people's knowledge of nature and society, records their legitimate feelings and aspirations for freedom, equality and humanism, praises merits and virtues while pillorying such evils as laziness, avarice, cruelty, deceit and hypocrisy.

In the past, the Mmong did not have any script and had to hand down by word of mouth their literary treasure: tales; folk-songs, riddles, sayings... Their art mainly

comprised dance, music and plastic arts — particularly the traditional motifs of embroidery through the hand of their women.

In 1961 the Hmong romanized their script. Hmong tales and folk-songs have been collected, compiled and propagated in Vietnamese and Hmong languages.

Traditional music includes drum with a leather face, khene, leaf music and lip music. Drum and khene performance usually accompany funeral ceremonies and other familial rites. Khene, leaf-music and lip music are the chief means of exchanging feelings between men and women, to accompany folk-dances and songs in festivities, wedding ceremonies, or to greet guests.

Through the history of their existence and struggle the Hmong ethnicity has found in Vietnam a new home. Right in 1886 when the French colonialists invaded Bac Ha the Hmong rose up in arms under the banner of Giang Chan Hung and Giang Chan Zung. Until the first decades of this century the Hmong kept on fighting together with neighbouring brother ethnicities: in 1889 with the Zao led by Thao Chanh Lu and Dang Phuc Thanh in Hoang Lien Son, in 1911 under the leadership of Sung Mi Chiang in Ha Tuyen, in 1918 under the command of Pa Chay in Son La and Lai Chau. These struggles were aimed at opposing corvee and taxes, demanding the freedom to carry salt and opium, driving out the French aggressors, and the right to self administration.

In 1936 Party bases were set up among the Hmong in Nguyen Binh — Cao Lang, and later on in many other places. The Hmong brought a great contribution to the victory of the August Revolution in Viet Bac. In the war of resistance against the French colonialists' reconquest of Vietnam, the destruction of bandits, to safeguard

the security of the Fatherland, the liberation of the South to reunify the country, and the smashing of Beijing expansionists there emerged many Hmong army heroes like Sung Phai, Sinh, Giang Lao Pa, Sung Zung Lu... and lately Thao Mi Ta in Ha Tuyen... At present, the Hmong have four deputies representing their ethnicity in the National Assembly, seventh legislature.

### The Zao

*Denomination* : Zao, Other names : Man, Trai, Xa, Dong, Local groups : Zao Lo-gang, Zao Do, Zao Tien, Zao Lan Ten, Zao Quan Chet, Zao Thanh Y...

*Population* : over 340,000.

*Language* : Meo — Zao. On the basis of language comparison the Zao language can be divided in two dialects : the first dialect has two branches : Dai Ban and Tieu Ban ; the second dialect has two groups : Lan Ten and Quan Trang.

*Material life* : Owing to different living conditions the Zao have two kinds of hamlets : grouped hamlets and scattered hamlets. Those who grow wet rice or rotated crops live in villages on hill-slopes or at the mountain-foot, near a water source. Each village has 20 — 30 houses, built near one another. On the contrary those who farm clearings live in clustered houses scattered on a large area, each cluster having 5 — 7 houses, often 3 — 4 kilometres distant from one another. These clusters are fortuitously grouped only for a certain time because the clearings are soon exhausted.

The Zao have three kinds of houses : on the ground, on stilts, and half on the ground and half on stilts. They believe that only houses on the ground have a place to

worship Ban Vuong, their common ancestor. These houses are common in the villages where the Zao live a sedentary life.

Houses on piles are also common in the villages where the Zao live a sedentary life farming water paddies beside the Tay, the Nung and the Viet. However, some groups specialized in farming clearings like Thanh Y, Ao Dai, Slan Chi (in Bac Can)<sup>1</sup> also live in houses on stilts. In general, Zao houses on stilts have a structure similar to that of the Tay and Nung in the localities.

The houses half on the ground and half on stilts are usually seen in the clusters for nomadic life. They are built on mountain slopes with a steep gradient so as to save the labour to level the floor. Assembly technique consists in tying, mortising and using forks.

The disposition of the rooms follows a common order. The central bay always has a partition behind the altar of ancestors to provide a room to keep wine and preserved meat as a common practice among ethnicities on the northern border.

Traditional men's clothes are uniform. Large trousers in cotton, dyed indigo, with their upper edge dyed or not. Blouse for daily wear and robe falling down the knees for festivities and social intercourse, both dyed indigo and buttoned. The hair is let long and rolled into a chignon behind the nape or shaved leaving a tuft on top like Hmong men. The usual headgear is a long turban shaped into an "axe head". Now most people have short hair and the youth wear Western — style shirts and trousers.

1. Slan Chi group in Bac Can (Bac Thai) does not belong to San Chay community and forms a local group of Zao.

In general, women put on trousers and a robe split in front — only Zao Tien women wear rolled skirts. Both trousers and skirts are in cotton dyed indigo. For wedding Quan Trang women don baggy cotton trousers with very narrow legs. As for the Zao Quan Chet, the legs of their trousers are very tight, the lower edge of the trousers being ornamented with a motif, except the Thanh Y who only have a foil of indigo. All Zao women have an unbuttoned robe split in front their breast being covered with a brassiere or a vest. When putting on the robe they lash its two front flaps or use a belt like Zao Lan Ten women. The robe is dyed indigo and has a low collar. The Zao Do embroider a Ban 'Vuong seal on the back of the robe shoulder to which place the Zao Tien attach 7 or 9 coins. Thanh Y women wear very long robes with very broad sleeves ornamented at the wrist of red cloth.

Zao women have two ways to adorn their heads. They let their hair long and roll it around their head like the Zao Do or part it and coil it behind the nape like Quan Trang, Thanh Y, Lan Ten women. Or they cut it and brush their head with wax. Zao women seldom let their head bare, but usually put on an indigo kerchief. The Zao Tien in Cao Bang, Lang Son, Bac Thai, and Ha Tuyen wear a white kerchief.

Besides kerchief, the Zao have the custom of wearing a hat, a special kind with a square, round or crown shape. It is made of tangled hair stuck with wax or loofah fibre covered with an embroidered kerchief and fastened with silver ornaments. Old Lan Ten women have a hat like a dish on their heads. With the Zao Do and Zao Quan Trang the crown hat is reserved for the bride, with the Zao Tien for a funeral as ornament and with the Zao Thanh Y for daily wear like a bushel

on the head. Zao Do women put on a red flannel kerchief, and their blouse is hemmed with red flowers.

The brassiere of the Zao Do, Zao Quan Chet and Zao Quan Trang looks like a "bas-relief" with embroidered motif and silver ornaments.

Zao Lan Ten, Lo Cang and Zao Do women also wear white puttees, those of the Lo Cang being adorned with embroidered traditional motif.

Both men and women like silver or brass ornaments: rings, ear-rings, necklaces, bracelets...

To the three habitats of the Zao correspond three modes of economic life.

In the highlands the Zao live a sedentary life by farming fixed crops or rotated crops on small clearings where there is no crag. Their diet includes maize, the staple food, millet, sorghum and back wheat. Manure is not yet used except in Cao Bang, Lang Son and Ha Tuyen. Owing to land erosion and steep gradient the crops lack water and give very low yields resulting in food shortage.

In the midlands where most of the Zao live the usual mode of farming is slash-and-burn; rice and maize are the main food crops. Each clearing is used only for a few years then left waste. The destruction of forest which results from this mode of farming seriously affects the environment and causes a waste of natural resources.

In these two geographical zones the only agricultural implements are an axe to fell trees, a bush-knife to clear the underbrush, a stick to poke holes, a weed-scraper and a sickle. There are two modes of planting: the traditional one is to poke holes and drop the seeds, and the new one is to sow. In general, a clearing bears many crops. Alternate with rice are maize, millet,

beans, squash, gourd... Only cassava is grown alone while in a maize clearing, for instance, there are sweet potato, taro, yam...

In the lowlands the Zao live in narrow valleys or along roads beside the Tay, Nung or Viet. Here they mainly farm water paddies, terraced fields and milpas. Farming technique is similar to that of the neighbouring ethnicities. The acreage of water paddies keeps on increasing as many Zao leave the highlands to settle for collective farming in the framework of the new production relations.

Where there is a sedentary life stock-breeding develops vigorously to provide meats for men and manure for the crops. Many families have more than ten head of cattle. In some villages the herd of buffaloes and oxen numbers by the hundred. Goat is also reared for meat and horse for transport. The Zao breed many pigs, score of them in many families. The poultry includes hen, duck, goose, dove...

Zao handicrafts remain family sideline occupations especially during slack season. Zao women know how to grow cotton, spin yard and weave on rudimentary looms, and plant indigo-tree to get dye stuff. Their dexterity is shown through the motifs embroidered or printed on the cloth, according to tradition and not after new patterns. Another characteristic is that they embroider on the back side to get a basrelief motif on the right side. The Zao Tien print flower motifs by drawing with wax on the cloth then dye it with indigo to have a light-coloured motif. Even little girls know how to print flowers on their skirts.

Men's handicrafts include basketry and blacksmithery. They also make native hunting gun, flint lock and cast-iron pellets for hunting cartridges. Paper-

making has a long history among the Zao. Raw material includes straw, thatch and a number of tree-barks. The paper made is thin, fine, relatively white, ink-absorbent, not blurring and keeps a long time. Family registers, literary books, prayer books.. are handed down thanks to this paper. The making of ornaments in silver and brass is a family tradition. Moreover, the Zao exploit forest products, grow such industrial crops as tea, aleurites fordimontanas caryota, aleurites mohuccana, anise, hunt in the forest, fish in the rivers and springs and rear fish in the ponds, fields.

*Social and family relations:* Before the August 1945 Revolution the colonial and feudal administration carried out a divide-and-rule policy along with a demagogic policy. In the areas peopled with many Zao they set up a system of native officials attached to their administrative apparatus from the district down to the hamlet together with a security force, and give them some privileges so as to turn them into their agents for exploiting and oppressing the Zao and separating them from other ethnicities. Besides these notables, magicians also held high prestige among the population. Apart from these social elements there are toiling people exploited and oppressed from every quarter, especially Zao women. In the areas peoples with many other ethnicities the Zao were ruled by the upper strata of these ethnicities: tho ty, phia tao, lang dao...

Beside the ruling apparatus of the colonial and feudal administration Zao society still preserves some vestiges of rural commune.

According to a few ancient books Zao ethnicity has 12 great families, with Ban family as the major one. Each family is divided into many branches, each branch into small families whose head looks after the

worship of common ancestors. The house of the family-head is called great house and the others small houses. The family-head plays a very great role among the other families.

Zao family is a small patrilineal one, one husband and one wife and the wife living at the husband's. However, vestiges still remain of the system of big family and of matriarchy here and there, witness the right of the mother's brother and the bridegroom living at the bride's for a certain time.

The marriage has to go through many rites according to each Zao group. First of all, the lovers must have the parents' consent and "agreeable" ages. Then the boy asks permission to work for the girl's family. After about 3 — 4 days he asks to return home. One or two months later he asks to work again and is allowed to talk to the girl. They are allowed to sleep in a room reserved for them. A few days later, the boy retires to make preparations for the wedding if the girl's parents agree. Engagement gifts may be too costly for the boy to proffer right away but the wedding is only a provisional one to legalize the marriage. Sometimes the couple already have grown-up offspring while their official wedding has not been held yet. In this case, if they have a daughter about to get married they must present an offering to their ancestors and invite parents from the mother's side to come and tell the price. These will say the amount of the engagement gifts set for the daughter's mother. The engagement gifts set for the bride have to equal those set for her mother and these gifts belong to her mother's parents.

In the past, owing to their poor and backward life Zao population decreased sharply in many groups

through infant mortality. On top of this pregnant Zao women were regarded as bearers of ill-luck and dirt and consequently compelled to forbear many things.

Zao women have the custom of delivering in a sitting position. Three or four days after delivery a ceremony is held to inform the ancestors, then a month later another is held to thank the goddess of birth and give the child a name after that of a guardian angel. At ten a boy will be given an official name in a ceremony held on the occasion. Besides his surname and family name he also has a pseudonym taken from a list used by his family in order of succession. The name-giving ceremony is a solemn one, which may be also organized at the same time as the confirmation ceremony (or "qua tang") when a boy is 15 or 20. Only then is he recognized by everybody and the genies as a full member of the Zao traditional commune. In the groups where women cut their hair and brush their head with wax as said above, from the year when a girl is 13 a head-brushing ceremony is held during which melt wax is used to brush and the head is enveloped with a turban. This is a solemn ceremony like the confirmation one with a boy.

True to the belief that to die is to go to the other world a funeral includes a ceremony to bring the defunct's soul to the native land—Yangzhou. When a man breathes his last, if he is a man who has enjoyed confirmation three gun shots are fired to inform the Emperor of Jade. If he is a village-head his house-roof is pierced and an open umbrella is put there before firing. If the family wants the *tao* (magician) to show the way to the defunct, the family head has to take a knife, tie a rope around his waist and bring an offering to the *tao*'s, then make three bows. The

offering comprises a bottle of alcohol, two packets of salt and votive papers. After the tao allows him to announce the funeral, he has to call at every house in the hamlet to break the news and ask for help.

The Zao have three forms of burial: in the ground, in the fire and in the air. The place for cremation is chosen by the tao. The coffin is laid on 9 layers of dry wood arranged like a pig cage. The tao orders people to retire and ignites. This custom is common with the Zao. Ao Zai and somewhat with the Zao Quan Trang. Burial in the air only applies to those dying in an ill-fated hour. The coffin is assembled with whole plants of bamboo arranged like a pig cage and brought up on to a floor 2m high. After a year the flesh decomposes and the bones are put in a pottery urn then buried. This custom is common with the Zao Tien.

The Zao Thanh Y and Zao Quan Trang build catafalques on tombs. Their graves are usually marked with upright stones: one near the defunct's head, another two at his feet and the third across these two.

*Spiritual life:* The Zao worship their ancestors in their family and at the family head's. A cult is also held to their common ancestor Ban Vuong (or Chau Dang). The altar of ancestors is considered the most solemn place in the house. Agricultural beliefs hold the soul of rice as the most important then come the genies of the earth, the water and the fire.

In the past a dreadful thing in a Zao society was the belief in ngu hai ghost which harms people and cattle, a superstition which led to many murders.

In the Zao's spiritual life Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism exert much influence, particularly Taoism, witness the yearly routine rites and the prayers to

the supernatural in such events as natural calamities, epidemics, disease, birth, funeral...

On the other hand, folk literature and art have made their positive influence felt in the Zao's spiritual life. Since a long time the Zao have used Han script (but read in Zao language) to record and hand down a number of prayer books, family records, poems, legends... However, the major part is oral literature. It includes tales, humorous stories, fables, riddles, popular songs, sayings and folk-songs with a rich content and a highly attractive form. Most common and appreciated among folk-songs is pa zung, an acquaintance-making song full of lyricism. Zao tales have been initially collected, compiled and published in national script<sup>1</sup>. After the August Revolution there appeared a Zao poet, Ban Tai Doan whose first work "The salt of Old Ho" brought a new tint to Vietnamese revolutionary poetry.<sup>2</sup>

The art of ornamentation on cloth by Zao women shows their dexterity and exquisiteness in depicting the reality.

Since 1959 the Zao ethnicity has entered a new life, a sedentary life and farming. Many typical co-operatives have seen the day of light like Bang Chang (Cao Bang), Vang Pe (Son La)... Superstitious beliefs and bothersome abstinences have diminished. The Zao are no longer despised and burdened by poverty and disease. They have become real masters of their localities and of the country. The contingent of Zao cadres has grown up in number and ability for managing power and the economy from grassroots to central

1. Nationalities Publishing House, Hanoi 1978.

2. Literature Publishing House, Hanoi 1960.

levels. In the present National Assembly, seventh legislature, four Zao deputies come from Quang Ninh, Bac Thai, Ha Tuyen and Hoang Lien Son.

### The Pathen

*Denomination:* Pa Then. Other names: Pa Hung, Tong, Meo Lai, Meo Hoa, or Meo Do, Bat Tien Toc, Man Pa Seng.

*Population:* over 2,000.

*Language:* Meo — Zao.

*Habitat:* scattered in a number of villages in the districts Bac Quang, Chiem Hoa, and Yen Son (Ha Tuyen). Mostly concentrated on the left bank of Gam river in Tan Lap, Yen Binh and Tan Thinh villages of Bac Quang district. They live together with Tay and Zao ethnicities with whom they have many relations.

The Pa Then migrated from China to Vietnam by the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.

*Material life:* The Pa Then live in villages along watercourses to have water for daily use. They usually set up a system of bamboo pipes to bring water from the mountain crannies to their houses. The villages on the left bank of Gam river look the richest, each village grouping about 30 — 40 houses. Elsewhere the population is scattered at the mountain-feet or along big streams.

The Pa Then build three kinds of houses: on stilts, on the ground, and half on stilts and half on the ground. Where there is sedentary life and farming there are big houses on the ground with wooden columns nesting on stone. In the past, with a nomadic way of life the

houses were makeshift, but now with a sedentary way of life they are solid.

Pa Then women wear long skirts and robes. Their hair is rolled around their heads inside two swathes. The motifs on their skirts and robes represent dogs, diamond shapes, swastikas often seen on Zao cloth. They usually put on 3-4 pairs of big ear-rings.

In the past, the Pa Then led a nomadic way of life, growing rice and maize following the slash-and-burn method. Rice includes glutinous and non glutinous rice, according to the experience of each region. After 2 or 3 years the land is left waste. Clearings with thick humus and gentle slope are good for rice, while poor land mixed with pebble is devoted to maize, whereas clearings not used for rice are reserved for sweet potato and beans. The rice is harvested ear after ear, tied in sheaves and dried on the clearings before it is brought home and kept on the kitchen shelf.

Maize is the food crop holding second place in the Pa Then's life.

These farming methods dependent on nature account for the Pa Then's unstable life and their belief in superstition. However, for the past decades agricultural co-operatives have been established for the Pa Then to settle down and practise intensive farming, crop multiplication, boost agricultural production and rearing of cattle, and poultry. Such co-operatives like Minh Bac and Thuong Ninh have become advanced co-operatives of Ha Tuyen. Formerly, buffaloes and oxen were bred for sale, exchange or slaughter, but now they are used as draught animals in agriculture.

During the slack season to improve their diet the Pa Then go to the forest to hunt, gather forest products or catch fish in the rivers.

Pa Then women know how to promote their traditional weaving and the cloth they make is much appreciated in the sale and exchange with the neighbouring ethnicities.

Men are skilful in basketry.

*Social and family relations:* Pa Then society is going through a process of polarization, though not very sharp. Under French rule the Pa Then lived under a local feudal administration by other ethnicities: only after the completion of democratic reforms in the highlands (1960) did they become real masters of their villages. Now they take in hand the administrative, economic, cultural and social affairs of their localities.

A village is the habitat of many families. There is always a major family, perhaps the core of the population. Pa Then ethnicity sees itself as a community of eight families, hence the name Pa Then which means eight families. As a matter of fact there are more families now. Relatively clear vestiges of a common origin and totemism appear among these families. Marriage is forbidden between members of the same clan and relationship between them is governed by a number of customs.

A Pa Then family is a small patrilineal one. Marriage and family are governed by the feudal idea of regarding men as superior to women, the one-husband-and-one-wife-principle with the wife living at the

husband's home, the children adopting their father's name, the right of primogeniture, the children staying at their father's in case of divorce — the mother must leave empty-handed save a few belongings. Moreover, the bridegroom must live at the bride's at most 12 years depending on the latter's family. After living for half the time agreed the bridegroom may return home provided that he pays one silver piaster a year.

The Pa Then do not give a name to a small child but call it by its father's name, in addition to its rank in the family. Only when it matures is a ceremony held to give it an official name and to report to its ancestors about it. This rule seems to be applied to boys only, a vestige of the confirmation rite.

When somebody dies the Pa Then fire three gunshots to announce his or her death. Believing that man has 12 souls they put 12 tins of rice under the corpse and 12 pottery bowls turned upside on it. The coffin is made by hollowing a tree-trunk.

*Spiritual life:* Apart from the cult of ancestors, primitive agricultural belief is clearly seen in the Pa Then's cultural and spiritual life. Fairly marked vestiges still remain of the cult of *Water* and *Fire* which is at the root of the yin and yang principles. Ancient culture subsists in the cult of ancestors or some customary rite. On the altar of each family there is always a bowl of water with a lid on beside an incense burner. Nearby is pasted a coloured paper called *do quo* — with drawings of rice ears, flowers and animals if somebody in the family knows how to pray genies. This is the vestige of animism. In the rite "entering a new house" the



owner asks a respectable old man in the family to enter first and light a fire in the kitchen. He also brings to the new house some ash from the former one; the altar of ancestors and a number of things with a symbolic character like rice, maize, cattle... A cult of the genie of the earth and a cult of the new rice are held every year following the production cycle. Worthy of notice is that the offerings include apart from dyed sticky rice, gourd, squash, tubers and vegetables gathered in the forest — a cultural vestige quite conspicuous of ancient agriculture.

Although a small community the Pa Then still preserve their oral folk literature and art: sayings dealing with people's behaviour, experience in production, lyrical folk songs, *pa zung* tunes like Viet comic songs still heard in weddings or when boys and girls receive guests from afar.

The legends about the migration of the Pa Then ancestors as well as the tales and fables circulating among the population reflect the close relations and cultural intercourse between the Pa Then and the Zao and the Tay in the course of history.

Folk plastic art depicting nature, man's implements and life are also represented in traditional embroidery patterns on colourful women's clothes.

Up to now, the Pa Then's cultural life has undergone many changes. Those living in Linh Phu (Chiem Hoa) and Trung Son (Yen Son) preserve little of the traditional culture of the ethnicity. Their houses, clothes and way of life are similar to those of the local Tay while their language is stuffed with Tay words. However, those living in Bac Quang district still preserve many traits of their ethnicity.

## e) COMPOSITE LANGUAGE GROUP

### The La Chi

*Denomination*: La Chi. Other names: Cu Te, La Ti. Tho Den, Man La Chi, Xa...

*Population*: nearly 6,000.

*Language*: Kadai.<sup>1</sup>

*Habitat*: In the 4 villages of Ban Phung, Ban Ziu, Ban Pang and Ban May (Xin Man district, Ha Tuyen province). The La Chi are the native population there.

*Material life*: Since long the La Chi have adopted a sedentary life on the slopes of earth mountains. Their houses are not strung in a valley or along a watercourse but grouped in clusters of 5 — 7 to 10 houses. Only Na Long hamlet in Ban Phung village is densely grouped on a fairly gentle slope.

A La Chi house is built half on the ground and half on stilts, the roof for the former part being lower than that for the latter one. Only one staircase leads to the part on stilts. The house is surrounded by a rather thick wall of rammed earth reaching the roof. It has only one door. This is an architecture fit for the people of North Vietnam highlands constantly preoccupied with security matters.

La Chi clothes are simple and elegant without losing their original features. Most women wear trousers except a few who put on skirts like the Tay. A common daily wear is a robe with four flaps, split in front and

1. A composite language with elements from Tay-Thai, Viet-Muong, Mon-Khmer and Malayo-polynesian languages.

unbuttoned — the flaps being held by a belt. Under the robe is a brassiere. The robe and the brassiere are hemmed with a coloured fringe on a foil of dark indigo.

Men's daily wear comprises a pair of baggy trousers and a robe buttoned under the left armpit. In the past, they had their hair long and put on a turban.

Since long the farming of water paddies and terraced fields has been the major form of cultivation.

Main implements to work terraced fields include spade, grub axe, hoe and wooden harrow.

The La Chi have two ways of sowing to get rice-seedlings. Those planted in the deep paddies have to germinate in water while those sown in the fields have only to be dropped and covered with a thin layer of earth. Manure is used in two ways: by strewing it on the paddies when ploughing and harrowing, or by dipping in it the rice-seedlings.

As there are not enough paddies the farming of terraced fields constitutes the second form of cultivation. Judged from farming technique these fields comprise those to be hole-poked, those to be hoed and those to be ploughed. They are grown to rice, maize, sweet potato, cassava, arrow-root and other crops. Manure is also used in these fields. The fertile ones are devoted to cotton and indigo to cater for the need in cloth and yarn, and are fairly well tended. Most La Chi women are dextrous in spinning yarn, weaving cloth and dying indigo to make and embroider clothes. Men are good at basketry, while a number of them are engaged in blacksmithery and carpentry but work on a season basis.

*Social and family relations:* La Chi society has undergone a sharp class polarization. Nothing is left of the communal land system while the private land system

is developed. Quite common are the purchase, sale and mortgage of land and crops, the hire of manpower and usury calculated in kind. Under the French rule the whole Xin Man area and a part of Hoang Su Phi were administered by a La Chi canton chief. Officials usually came from well-off people to whom the colonial and feudal administration granted some privileges.

Each year, besides their corvee and tax duties to the central administration La Chi peasants had to contribute products and manpower to the local canton chief and village head. Land was gradually concentrated in the hands of a few influential people and the number increased of destitute peasants particularly in the period of temporary shortage and the years of natural calamities.

After the democratic reform in the highlands (1960) the injustices in the former society have been abolished. By 1970 all La Chi families have joined agricultural co-operatives.

A La Chi family is a patrilineal one, each house usually sheltering three generations. Before the 1945 August Revolution women were victims of the feudal idea of regarding men as superior to women.

The cohesion inside a family has slackened so that within the 5th generation boys and girls may marry themselves. The La Chi are bound together by the cult of their ancestors held in July — their greatest festival. Votive properties of a family comprise a leather drum and some brass drums. The master of ceremonies on behalf of the family is called *po mia nhu* (old parent in charge of votive properties), who is not necessarily a family head or the oldest member but a man conversant with prayer-saying.

*Spiritual life:* Besides the cult of ancestors, agricultural beliefs constitute the salient feature of the La Chi's cultural and spiritual life owing to their ties with agricultural production.

Each village has a rather close-knit religious organization, in which each family has two representatives to conduct yearly rites held in the communal house, a small house on stilts with two roofs resting on four pairs of columns. The skulls of buffaloes and oxen under the roof are the remains of these sacrifices. This house is the place to worship the soul of rice, the ancestors and Wang Zin Tung (alias Hoang Van Dong) supposed to be their ancestor.<sup>1</sup> In the past, the ceremony was held yearly as a solemn rite but now only once every 10 — 15 years.

The La Chi have a fairly rich folk literature connected with their present native place. They have many myths, legends and tales about the genesis of man and ethnicities (like the Pu Lo To story), the origin of the population (like Wang Zin Tung story) Ban Phung story...), about natural phenomena (the sun, the moon, the origin of rice...), and about a few traditional customs (the killing of buffaloes and oxen in a funeral, the sacrifice of fish, birds and mice, to the soul of rice...) La Chi youth like to hear old folk tell stories during rejoicings, festivities and slack farming season. Musical instruments include leather drum, brass gong, *tinh* instrument, lip instrument... In the past, during ritual days boys and

girls used to exchange their feelings through tunes similar to the Tay's *luon* songs. And in the buffalo sacrifice ceremony there still appear some *traditional* dances like kerchief dance, fan dance, belt dance, buffalo-horn dance... Common rejoicings comprise swing, ballthrowing. among the youth.

### The La Ha

*Denomination:* La Ha. Other names: Xa Cha, Xa La Nga, Xa Khao... There are two groups: La Ha Ung and Kla Phlao.

*Population:* over 2,000.

*Language:* Kadai.

*Habitat:* on the right bank of the Red River in Hoang Lien Son province and in the valley of Da river in Son La province.

*Material life:* The La Ha are the native population, present in Northwestern Vietnam since a fairly long time but known by ethnographers only since the seventies.

The La Ha live in villages of about ten houses on stilts. In the past, owing to their nomadic life, the houses are temporary but now owing to their sedentary life they are solid. In Thuan Chau and Muong La they have tortoise-shell-like roofs. In Than Uyen a La Ha house differs from that of the Thai and the Khang in the use of the floor: from 1/3 to 1/2 of it is used as a drawing room and the remainder as bedroom, dining room, etc. The altar of ancestors is not placed in a corner of the house like the case with the Thai, the Khang and the Xinh Mun. Besides, there are a number of particular customs like the bringing of green leaves, green things and raw meat through the door of the drawingroom and

1. Hoang Van Dong is a tho tu (headman) of Tu Long village (former Tuyen Quang province) who rose up against the oppression and exploitation of the local feudal administration. At present, the La Chi and Co Lao as well as the Hmong and the Hoa in Ta Chai village (Hoang Su Phi district) still worship him in a temple erected in his memory.

not through the door of the inner room, the putting of handles of saucepan and kettles along the direction of lying in bed of the host.

Before liberation, the La-Ha grew cotton but did not know how to weave cloth and bartered cotton with the Thai for clothes. Women dress like Black Thai. In some places they roll their hair in a bun behind the nape in case of an unmarried woman and on top of their head in case of a married one. Formerly men also rolled their hair in a bun behind the nape.

In the past, the La Ha lived mainly of the rice grown in the clearings and adopted the slash-and-burn farming method or crop rotation. Production was carried out according to Thai calendar. Cultivation technique is still rudimentary. Farming implements include a bush to clear the underbrush, a stick to poke holes and a weed-scraper. At present, the stick is only used to grow cotton for the La Ha are already acquainted with the use of ploughs and harrows to till the land. Water paddies begin to develop together with the clearings with embankments against erosion — the La Ha having adopted sedentary life and farming and joined agricultural co-operatives.

Besides farming the La Ha hunt, fish, gather forest products, do basketry and rear cattle. Before liberation stock-breeding was not developed, pigs and poultry being used mainly for sacrifices. Now it has become an important economic branch with the rearing of buffaloes and oxen and the tending of shellac.

*Social and family relations:* In the past, the La Ha were exploited by Thai feudal rulers. Each year they had to provide from 100 to 200 man-days to the Thai seigneur who took bribes and other presents too. After liberation they were freed from all these evils.

Small patrilineal family takes pride of place in the La Ha region. A wife completely depends upon her husband. After the wedding, a bride has to adopt her husband's family name. A widow has to stay with her eldest son or her husband's family. She may remarry but she still belongs to her former husband who is her official husband. The inheritance falls into the hands of her son or her husband's brothers.

In marriage, engagement gifts are very costly. Apart from 4 to 8 years of working for his in-laws a young man has to contribute 3.5 taels of silver as the "initial price of the girl". Levirate is forbidden. But sororate is allowed. So is cross-cousin marriage. Since liberation, especially after democratic reforms in the highlands (1960) the purchase character of marriage has diminished and the time of working for one's inlaws reduced to 2 — 3 years.

When they bury their dead the La Ha put money and paddy in the coffin which is made by hollowing a big tree trunk. The corpse is brought to the grave then enshrouded and buried. The catafalque is very simply made and has four banners of white and yellow cloth on four sides. Around it there is a basket of sticky rice, a tray of food and a trunk of clothes. After the burial the family have to pound the rice-mortar to chase "the ghost" before mounting the stairs.

*Spiritual life:* La Ha religious beliefs include many supernatural forces: "ghost of the river", "ghost of the spring", "ghost of the mountain"... They believe that a ghost can catch one's soul and make one fall sick or die, hence their frequent religious services. They make

a cult of their father, not of their mother and grandparents... A deceased becomes a "ghost of the house". Each year, when ban flowers blossom, they hold a ceremony to welcome spring and thank their father in presence of the villagers invited to come on the occasion. They also believe that different kinds of people become different kinds of "ghosts" after death.

Since liberation there has been a marked decrease in superstitions and backward customs. The people's living standard has been improved. Culture, education and medical service have vigorously developed. Infant mortality has been reduced. Malaria has been liquidated. Thanks to hygiene and preventive medicine the average life expectancy has increased considerably.

Owing to a long-standing co-existence with the Thai the La Ha speak Thai fluently and many of them can write Thai script. The La Ha have a rich and original folk literature and art. Folk-song tunes along Da river are lithe and lyrical. Dances are full of life. In the past they composed poems to oppose the phia tao regime and describe the sufferings of the population under the rule of Thai feudal seigneurs.

### The Co Lao

*Denomination:* Co Lao. Other names: Co Lao Do, Co Lao Trang, Co Lao Xanh.

*Population:* about 1,200.

*Language:* Kadai.

*Habitat:* mainly in 12 villages of three districts: Dong Van, Hoang Su Phi and Yen Minh (Ha Tuyen

province). Besides, they live scattered in five villages of Meo Vac, Vi Xuyen and Quan Ba districts (same province). The Co Lao migrated from Kweichow (China) into Vietnam about 200 years ago, a number of them coming later by the end of the 19th century. Their fellows still live in China.

*Material life:* in Ha Giang the Co Lao have soon settled down in the mountain areas, living in relatively densely populated villages of about 20 houses each. Their houses are built on the ground, usually on the slopes of an earth or stony mountain, with three bays or three bays and two lean-tos along with a veranda in front.

Co Lao women mainly wear long trousers down to their ankles and a five flapped robe down to their knees, split on the sides buttoned under the right armpit, and hemmed with a multicoloured fringe. The clothes also comprise a belt, a kerchief and a pair of puttees. In the past, women wore a long skirt, with motifs embroidered in red thread all around, which some Co Lao Do still preserve.

Owing to the natural characteristics of each region the Co Lao practise different forms of cultivation. For instance; in Dong Van, which is a plateau with many stony mountains, little arable land and few water-courses, the main form of production is farming in clearings and stone hollows. Thus maize is the staple food. Besides, the clearings are grown to rye, horse beans, green peas and some other tubers and vegetables. Intensive farming is done by making the best use of manure. Over the last twenty years the use of green manure and night soil has been introduced. On the other

hand, in Hoang Su Phi which is a region of earth mountains with a high temperature, an abundant rainfall and many watercourses, terraced fields are tilled and rice becomes the main food crop. Co Lao farming technique is similar to that of the Zao and the Hoa in the region.

The Co Lao in Hoang Su Phi also grow tea on the hills, which provides a sizable income for the family. Handicrafts include basketry, carpentry and blacksmithry. The main products are lattice, trellis, baskets, sieves, casks, horse saddles, tables, trunks and coffins. Blacksmithry is usually done during slack season, mainly for repairing iron implements.

*Social and family relations:* A Co Lao family is a small patrilineal one. A household groups 2 or 3 generations and makes up an independent economic and social unit. Monogamy is prevailing. Polygamy and divorce are rare. Besides, mutual affection within a family and mutual help within the rural community are rather solidly maintained. This is clearly shown in such affairs as house building, wedding, birth, funeral... to which everybody in the family and the village is duty-bound to contribute in wealth or labour.

Before migrating to Vietnam Co Lao society already underwent class polarization. Once they arrived in Vietnam the Co Lao soon grouped themselves in clusters and hamlets to help one another build a new life. This put an end to the social differentiation hundreds of years before the 1945 August Revolution. Although there are differences in wealth and living standard between the families in a village, these are not many and due mainly to their labour.

Under the colonial and feudal regime the Co Lao region was subject to the jurisdiction of the Ha Giang provincial administration (now belonging to Ha Tuyen province) and the direct management of local officials.

*Spiritual life:* The Co Lao practise the cult of ancestors and believe in many supernatural powers like the genie of the earth, the soul of rice, the ghost of the clearing, the genie protector of the cattle... Religious services are usually held on the occasions to pray for rain, good health and ritual days of the year. In the course of history, the Co Lao ethnicity has accumulated a wealth of oral literature comprising tales, humorous stories, folk stories, sayings, parallel sentences... which have helped to enrich the treasure of folk literature in Ha Tuyen. Since 1970 the Ha Giang cultural service and later on the Ha Tuyen cultural-information service have published works in which Co Lao traditional folk literature has been collected and introduced to the reader.

Since democratic reforms (1960) and the building of socialism later on were carried out in the highlands Co Lao Society has undergone many deep changes along with the progressive trend of fraternal ethnicities.

### The Pu Peo

*Denomination:* Pu Peo. Other names: La Qua, Ka Beo, Peu Ti, Peu Ti Lo Lo.

*Population:* more than 250.

*Language:* Ka dai.

*Habitat:* scattered in 7 villages of Dong Van district (Ha Tuyen province). Their fellows still live in China.

*Material life:* The Pu Peo have soon settled down in clusters on the slopes of stony mountains, each cluster comprising only 4 — 5 houses spread over a fairly vast area in the northernmost highlands.

Formerly they lived in houses on stilts. However, owing to shortage of material in the forest since late 19th century they have built houses on the ground like the Hoa and the Hmong nearby... Inside a house the altar of ancestors, the kitchen, the beds... are arranged in.

The Pu Peo women's clothes bear marked characteristics. Their skirt falls down to their ankles and has a brassiere over it. In the past, they were two robes quite different in style but now they usually wear one with an underwear (*bok tam*). *Bok tam* is a five-flapped blouse, buttoned under the right armpit, hemmed with a coloured fringe like the ornamentation on the Giay, Pu Na, Co Lao women's clothes.

*Bok ca* is an overwear very common in the past. It is a low-collared blouse, split in front, which falls down to the belt, has no button but can be closed by lashing two strings fastened to it. The blouse is hemmed by a coloured fringe with geometric patterns 5 cm wide. Women used to wear their hair in bangs and fix it with a comb, and don their head with a turban the variegated colours of the tassels falling on their shoulders. They also like to wear such ornaments as silver necklaces, bracelets.

The Pu Peo live of the farming of clearings and terraced fields. In the clearings, apart from buckwheat, there are maize and beans alternating according to the nature of the soil. Over the recent years new plants

have been introduced: kohlrabi, cabbage and such medicinal plants with a high economic value as panax pseudo ginseng Wall, ligusticum wallichii Frank. Buffaloes and oxen are reared as draught animals. Attention is paid to the technique of preparing the soil, weeding and using green manure for intensive farming. In the past, rice was harvested ear after ear, but now this is used only for sticky rice while ordinary is cut with a sickle.

Pu Peo men are good at carpentry. They can build houses and engage in basketry. For nearly 20 years now some families have learned to bake bricks and tiles which they sell on the local market.

*Social and family relations:* Since long there has been class polarization within Pu Peo society. Under the French rule most of the officials of the colonial and feudal administration came from well-off strata. The great majority of people in Pu Peo villages were toiling people with a miserable life. Class polarization led to cleavages in family relations.

Pu Peo family is a small patrilineal one. The father decides every family affair.

Monogamy and the custom of forcing the wife to live at the husband's are solidly maintained. The children adopt their father's family's name. There still remain vestiges of the marriage between three clans: If a boy of family A marries a girl of family B, a boy of family B has to marry a girl of family C. Marriage between people of differing generations is strictly forbidden. Levirate and sororate subsist on the basis of mutual agreement.

*Spiritual life:* The Pu Peo believe in the existence of the soul. Everybody has eight souls and nine spirits

that constitute the spiritual matter ensuring his or her existence and abilities. Therefore souls and spirits are preserved through many customs.

The most solemn place in a house is the place of the altar of three generations. Each generation is symbolized by a small stoneware (loong ten). A dried gourd and a tuft of ox-tail hair fastened to a wooden stick are instruments used for the cult of ancestors for they help the latter recognize their offspring.

The Pu Peo are among the few ethnicities in Vietnam to beat brass drums in solemn festivities. Moreover, they still organize collective alcohol-drinking (during ceremonies in memory of the dead) a very common practice in the past. At present, brass drum is only used in the ceremony to thank one's parents and bring their soul to the former native land which is usually held when the crops had been gathered in. In some rites of the funeral ceremony prayers are said which reveal the Pu Peo's world outlook and outlook on life, glimpses of the history of the community and the origin of a few customs and habits, in the form of legends like the stories about the deluge, the gourd, the banian... Besides the legends, tales and stories... Pu Peo's oral literature still comprises folk-songs reflecting nature and the nation's activities.<sup>1</sup>

Initial efforts have been made by the Ha Tuyen Culture — Information Service to collect and publish a number of works with a view to introducing to the public Pu Peo's popular literature.

1. Ha Giang traditional folk literature, Ha Giang cultural service, 1971.

## B — AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

### MALAYO — POLYNESIAN LANGUAGE GROUP

#### The Gia Rai

*Denomination*: Giarai. Other names: Giorai, Zrai, Drai.

*Local groups*: Choa, Hdrung, Arap, Mthur, Tbuan.

*Population*: over 184,000

*Language*: Malayo — Polynesian.

*Habitat*: mainly in Gialai — Kontum province (more than 170,000). Almost 10,000 live in the northern part of Darlac province and about 1,000 others in north Phu Khanh province. The Giarais are the largest ethnic group in Tay Nguyen (Central Highlands).

The Giarais moved from the coastal areas up to the Central Highlands centuries before the Christian era and lived side by side with communities speaking the Mon-Khmer language who had been living there long before. On their arrival in the Central Highlands, the Giarais split the Mon-Khmer community into two groups, settled in the highlands with their fertile red basaltic soil, bore the influence of the Cham language and established embryonic matrilineal states. The King of Fire (Po Teo Pui) and King of Water (Po Teo La) of the Giarai group living on the Pleiku highlands have been mentioned by the annals since the 17th century.

*Material life*: The Giarais lead a sedentary life in villages called *ploi* or *bon*. Each village has about 50



houses. The smallest villages sometimes have only a few dozen houses each, the largest, as many as a hundred. The village is often named after a river, a stream, a tribal chief, or an ancient village chief.

All the houses in the village have their front doors turned northwards and in ancient times each village was surrounded by a stockade which served as defence work. At the centre of the village stands a *nha rong* (house-on-stilts) reserved for community activities. Only the villages of the Chor ethnic group do not have such houses.

Giarai houses are the abodes of small matrilineal families and are of two kinds: long house-on-stilts, and short one. The houses in Ya-un Pa area are typical of the long house-on-stilts, and are traditional ones, with many matrilineal cultural features, and have many similarities with the long houses of the Edeh ethnic group in Darlac province. The architecture in Pleiku area is characterized by short houses-on-stilts, with the entrance doors opened beneath the roofs and dating later than the Ya-un Pa architecture in design and pattern.

The dresses of Giarai women usually consist of a gown dyed in indigo and a tight-fit waistcoat. The men wear loin-cloths and also a waistcoat, long enough to cover the buttocks. The loin-cloths are of two kinds: one long, the other short. The waistcoats, gowns and loin-cloths are embroidered with traditional designs. In the hot summer months both the men and women go about, bare-chested.

The Giarais live mostly on crop farming, with rice as the staple food crop, which is planted in the rainy season. The cultivated land in general is called *Hma* and consists of:

— *Hma mnai*, hillside farms bearing several food crops a year, along the streams, where rice is grown, in alternation with maize. Often these crop fields are also tilled like gardens, bearing grain crops, fruit trees, vegetables and beans.

— *Hma rung* or *Hma ro*, hillside fields planted with rice according to the slash-and-burn method. These fields yield two successive crops then are left waste for about 10 years.

— *Hma dnao* and *Hma ir* are fields specializing in wet rice farming. *Hma dnao* are swampy fields, and *Hma ir* are fields waiting for rain water to become wet rice fields.

Each Giarai family has also a multi-cultured garden (*dang*). In the suburbs of Pleiku, capital of Darlac province, the houses are surrounded each by a garden (*dang ga sang*).

The main farm tool of the Giarais is the hoe, which is of several kinds, to suit the different kinds of soil and the concrete needs of production.

The Giarais rear many kinds of domestic animals: buffaloes, cattle, elephants, horses, goats, pigs, poultry... Buffaloes, goats, pigs and poultry are animals used as sacrifices at ritual ceremonies. Oxen, horses and elephants are draught animals. Horses are also used for transport and for hunting wild hogs which abound in areas inhabited by the Giarais. But buffaloes are the domestic animal the most widely reared for bartering purposes...

Sideline occupations in Giarai areas include the weaving of bamboo and rattan household utensils, carpentry, joinery and smithery, noted for the floral flower designs which testify to the aesthetic sense of the working people in the Central Highlands. Giarai people also

excel in weaving cotton fabrics to make loin-cloths, blankets and clothes, with traditional flower designs and motifs.

Crop and cattle farming is complemented by fruit-picking and gleaning, especially by women and children, and hunting and fishing which are daily activities. As for hunting, it includes such valuable games as tigers, leopards, elephants and rhinoceroses, and particularly aurochs and wild hogs.

The Giarai village is a neighbourhood commune in which each small matrilineal family is a socio-economic cell. The managing organization of the village and commune is formed by the village elders who gather into a council and appoint the village chief to take charge of communal affairs. The mutual aid organization in production is called the *anham*.

*Social and family relations*: Each Giarai village is an administrative unit. Under the French colonial rule, each hamlet was run by a hamlet chief, who often was also the village chief.

The bonds between the members of the village by the ownership of land of each family in the village were recognized and respected by everybody, in accordance with the customs and time-honoured cultural traditions passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. All offences against those customs and ways of the village were brought before a tribunal for trial. Nowadays, those tribunals no longer exist.

In the areas inhabited by the Giarais there is an organization higher than the village. It is the Toring. It is a community comprising several villages. Each Toring is headed by a chieftain called *ptao*. The Toring is believed to have been founded long ago by widening

the alliance between the villages (*hrom bit bloi*) and to spring from the needs of military defence.

Generations of Giarais have left many vestiges of totemism. This has been proved by manifestations of inhibition within the framework of a clan, stories of totems and taboos. A number of well-known clans such as the Siu, Rchom, Nay, Ksor, Kpa, Rma... the King of Fire, the King of Water, belonging to the Siu clan and who usually married women of the Rchom clan regarded as the Giarai aristocracy are called *Rchom m̃in hbia* (Rchom princesses). Each clan is subdivided into several sub-clans.

Inter-marriage is possible only on condition that both sides have the same social status. The husband lives in the house of his wife's family, and their children bear the family name of their mother or a higher female ascendant. The daughters have a right to inheritance and the responsibility of taking care of their parents, and keeping the family's objects of worship.

In ancient times, the Giarais had the habit of perforating their daughters' ear lobes as early as the ages of 1 or 2, and of filing their children's teeth at the age of 15 or 16, considering this a sign of maturity and also a manifestation of "beauty", by Giarai standards.

Giarai girls take the initiative of proposing marriage to the man she loves, through a match-maker who brings him a copper bracelet in token engagement. The wedding ceremony takes place in three stages:

— The ceremony is held for presentation of the bracelet. After reaching mutual consent, the man and the girl exchange bracelets in the presence of the two families and the match-maker.

— *Chuc hpieu*, or prediction about the marriage through a dream. The man and the girl will find a good

or bad omen in their dream and, through it, will make the final decision.

*Vit sang ami*. It includes the ceremony to receive the bridegroom and the newly-weds visit to the husband's family.

A short time after the wedding, the new couple may go and live in a separate house from the bride's family.

Funerals in Giarai areas are very complex and expensive and take a lot of time, with numerous rites, especially in the building and decoration of the sepulchre. Proceeding from the concept that to die is simply to go and live in another world together with one's ancestors, and to become a ghost, the Giarais organize numerous rites to express their grief and sympathy, respect and consolation and affirm their separation with the defunct.

According to an ancient custom, close relatives belonging to the same maternal line were buried in the same grave. Sons-in-law were also buried there later. When the grave was full, wooden planks were put around it, and a number of coffins were added before the whole place was built into a sepulchre which was consecrated in a solemn ceremony. Nowadays, this practice has considerably decayed.

On the common grave people used to place an earthen vase which had already been pierced or breached, in which food and drinks were laid, as well as a torn basket containing personal belongings of the dead.

The Giarai sepulchre has a pretty elaborate architecture with many sculptures and a wooden fence. The sculptures, which represent male and female scarecrows, birds and animals, a male cook, or a calabash, testify to the talent and aesthetic sense of Giarai folk artists.

*Spiritual life*: The common belief of the Giarais is animism, with an invisible world of the *yang* who embody forces of nature and society, such as the *Yang Chu* (Genie of Mountains), *Yang Pen La* (Genie of Ferries), *Yang Ala Ben* (Genie of the Village), *Yang Sang* (Genie of the House), *Yang Hri* (Genie of Rice), *Yang Pen Tha* (Ancestors), *Yang Ptao* (Chieftains), *Yang Bla* (Genie of War), and so on.

The beliefs related to primitive agriculture within the matrilineal system account for the emergence in Giarai areas for the first time and as a unique phenomenon of two Kings of Water at Ploi Ot, in Chu A Thai village (Ia Un Pa district), and the King of Rice at Ploi Ptao, in Ia Lop village (Chu Prong district). In Ploi Mang, Chu A Tua village, there is also the King of Wind (Ptao Angin). At present, the main function of these Kings is that of masters of ceremonies praying for rain and against drought. The influence of these wizards are restricted to the Ia Un Pa and Chu Prong valleys. In each village, there is a person in charge of the worship of the Yang Ptaos (chieftains). He is called K'eng (assistant) and is appointed by the Ptao (chieftain). The K'eng is assisted by the Po Pen La (master of the ferries).

The Giarais have a rich and diversified traditional culture in Cheo Reo area, with the well-known *gong* a stringed instrument, and which has had a great impact on the neighbouring ethnic groups. The Giarais have many kinds of musical instruments: the *t'rung*, which consists of a series of bamboo tubes of different sizes and which is played by striking these tubes with a wooden rod, the *dinh but*, which is played by clapping hands to blow wind into its big bamboo tubes, the *dinh*.

*nam*, made up of slender bamboo tubes inserted into a dried calabash to amplify the sounds...

Giarai artistes excel in expressing their sentiments by playing brass cymbals, reciting long epics, or performing original folk dances. The ancient music of Cheo Reo area has a seven-tone gamut. Giarai folk art also includes a series of sculptures and statuettes adorning tombs and sepulchres, representing human beings and animals, with unpolished lines and shapes, yet very lively and having high spiritual values.

The Giarais deeply love their homeland. No wonder that when the French colonialists set foot on the highlands of Kontum and Pleiku, they immediately ran into a stubborn resistance from the Giarai people who fought relentlessly to defend their independence. They are also sedentary people whom it was very difficult to convert to Western Christianity.

The Giarais have two deputies to the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (7th Legislature). They are Dr Keor Kron, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Secretary of the Party Committee of Gialai-Kontum province, and Vice-Chairman of the Council of Nationalities, and Colonel Kpa Thin, chief of the Military Command of Gialai — Kontum province.

### The Edeh

*Denomination*: Edeh. Other names Rhadeh, Anan Edeh, Dega.

*Local groups*: Koa, M'dhur, Adham, Mlo, Ktul, Bih, Krung, Hoan, Hwing, Dong Kay, Dong Mak, Drau, Kmun, Kdrao, etc.

*Population*: about 140,000.

*Language*: Malayo — Polynesian.

*Habitat*: Mainly in the Central Highlands province of Darlac. A small part lives in the western area of Phu Khanh province south Central Vietnam.

*Material life*: The Edehs are the aborigines of Darlac province where they have been living for many centuries.

The Edehs live in elongated, boat-shaped houses-on-stilts with entrance and exit doors opened lengthwise, firmly resting on wooden pillars, and having no beams and rafters.

The length of houses depends on the number of people living there. In ancient times, many houses were a hundred metres long. Nowadays, the usual length is 30 — 40 metres. Occasionally, 50 to 60 metres long houses are seen. Most of the houses now are small in size. Cottages with rafters and beams are increasing in numbers in Edeh villages.

The inside of a house is divided in two parts. About one-third serves as sitting-room and common activities of the family. The remainder is partitioned into smaller rooms for married couples.

Domestic animals live beneath the bamboo floor, and the rice barn is installed some distance from the house.

In traditional villages, the men, at home or at work wear loin-cloths, are bare-chested and bare-footed, their hair done into a bun, their head ringed by a turban. When they go out or receive visitors they put on a longer loin-cloth, with vertical stuffs embroidered with floral designs. The classiest loin-clothes are those embroidered with many beautiful floral designs. Both ends of a loin-cloth are adorned with strings of white glass beads and long tufts of thread.

Jackets are of many kinds: long-sleeved, short-sleeved, sleeveless but all of them are pull-overs, and the collar

is opened down to the shoulders. A jacket is long enough to cover the buttocks and is split on either side. On its front part red threads are sewn together serving both as buttons and button holes, which form together an equilateral trapezium with the larger base on top and the smaller one at the bottom, and called *Kior Boh Nut* representing a spread eagle, a common decorative motif of the Edeh people. In the cold season, they put on a kind of cover-like duffle-coat. Nowadays, shorts, trousers, shirts and singlets have become a fad, especially among the young.

Edeh women wear a kind of gown, pull-over blouses with the collar opened down to the shoulders, and reaching down to the waist. Their long hair is done into a neat bun. The gowns are embroidered with floral designs girding the waist.

The background colour of Edeh dresses is dark indigo. Most of the floral designs are embroidered. Both men and women wear several copper bracelets, which are keepsakes from weddings, brotherhood ceremonies or birthdays.

The Edehs have long been leading a sedentary life in large villages, with closely huddled houses. Their main food crop is rice, which is grown mostly according to the slash-and-burn method.

Most rice farms of the Edehs are on level ground, savanna or elephant grassland with a negligible gradient.

Depending on the quality of the soil, each farm is tilled for 10 to 15 years or more, then left fallow for an equally long period of time. The length of the "idle" period usually depends on the amount of arable land which each family can use for crop rotation. Hillside farms with a steep gradient are cultivated for about

three years then left fallow for as many as 10 years before being tilled again.

The traditional farming method consists in slashing, burning, clearing and hoeing the soil, then holing it with a sharp pointed bamboo stick and putting in the seeds. Around the level-ground farms the Edehs often dig trenches to prevent crop destruction by wild beasts, and also to restrict invasion by elephant grass and weeds.

The Edehs prepare the soil very carefully before sowing. They remove all tree roots and clear the weeds with bamboo rakes or brooms.

Edeh farms still bear a multi-cultured character. Seeds of gourd, calabash, melon, cotton and other crops are often mixed with rice seeds and put in the same holes. Besides rice, they also grow maize and sweet potato either in alternation with or separately from rice. Unlike the Kinh (who are the largest ethnic group in Vietnam) and other ethnic minorities, the Edehs do not grow sweet potato in furrows but in flat ground.

On each farm, the Edehs set up a small and tall shack where they rest and watch the rice, chase away birds, and lay in wait for crop pests. Close to and around the shack they grow tobacco, sugarcane, aubergine, chilli, banana, papaw and other trees...

Near the Lak Lake and in the basins of the Krong Kso, Krong Ana and other rivers, many wet ricefields are cultivated by using buffaloes to tramp them, and by transplanting rice seedlings wholly, without cutting their tops as the Kinh or other people do.

The main farm tools of the Edehs are the axe, the hoe, the wooden rake, the bamboo broom, the holing stick, the seed holding tube, the rice threshing basket, the "gui" (cylindrical basket for carrying rice on the back).

The breeding of domestic animals, such as buffaloes, cows, goats, pigs, poultry... is mainly aimed at serving the worship of ancestors and genies and occasions of mirth or mourning, and has not yet become an economic branch.

The most common sideline occupation in all Edeh families is the weaving of bamboo, rattan, rush and other articles.

Blacksmithery is practised in virtually all villages but for the main purpose of repairing farm tools, depending on the various stages of the cropping seasons.

Pottery, which produces cooking pots, rice and soup bowls and other articles, only thrives in places where clay can be found. Today this trade has decayed, partly because of its still very primitive technique.

The only thriving trade is the weaving of cotton cloth with a very rudimentary hand loom. Alongside the weaving of very durable and beautiful fabrics is indigo dyeing, and the weaving of floral designs on cloth. It is here that the traditional skill and aesthetic sense of Edeh women is given full play.

*Social and family relations*: The Edehs live in *buon* — the equivalent of the Kinh majority's village. The smaller villages have a score of houses each, the larger ones sometimes up to 50 — 70 houses. An Edeh village usually is built on a relatively level ground or on a flat hill top. It is surrounded by a bamboo hedge or grove. It is the socio-cultural unit of the Edehs. There is also a smaller population centre called *alu*, which is equivalent to the *chom* or *xom* (hamlet) of the Kinh majority. An Edeh village has a special area called *ela buon* (communal land), which is collective property of the village community.

The Edeh village is a neighbourhood commune, comprising households whose members have matrimonial or residential ties.

Each long house shelters a large matrilineal family or a matrilineal family commune headed by the *Khoa Sang*. Formerly, the *Khoa Sang* was the oldest, most prestigious and exemplary woman, who knew how to run public affairs and arbitrate differences among the members of the household. She had the task of managing the common property of the long house, including the property handed down by the ancestors. These included brass cymbals, antique ceramic vases used to store alcohol, large chairs made each of a single log and reserved for the land lady, the guests and the orchestra.

An Edeh *buon* is run by a self-governed organization headed by the *Khoa pin qa*, the man who discovered the waterside place where the *buon* was moved to. Under the French rule, another title was added, the *Khoa buon*, an official of the colonial administration. Today, *Khoa pin ea* has the task of organizing the villagers to worship the Genie of Water of the waterside in Spring. He is no longer the person who discovered the waterside but only a village elderly elected by the people to run public affairs.

When a grave offence against the customs and ways of the village or a sharp dispute between individuals occurs, the *Khoa pin ea* would set up a custom tribunal to settle the affair. This tribunal is chaired by the *Po phat Kdi* (village custom assessor). The proverbs and sayings of the Edeh, their social relations and their village and commune organizations, receive the generic name of *Klei due bhien kdi* (practices), which serve as the basis for settling disputes and determining the degree of penalty to be meted out to the offenders.

Co-villagers are also related to one another by an organization for voluntary labour exchange in production called *Bring jit*, (or mutual help) in funerals, weddings, house construction, chair-making... called *H'rum jit* (mutual aid).

Each clan is headed by a *Khoa djue* who always concerns himself with organizing families with blood ties to live near one another to facilitate their mutual assistance.

A prominent role in Edeh society is played by the *Po lan*, the land owner, who is responsible for organizing every year the worship of the Genie of Earth and holding ceremonies to ask pardon from the holy spirits when incest or other offences against the people's traditional customs and ways are committed in the area under his jurisdiction. This area of management by the *Po lan* often extends beyond the limits of a *buon*. It is equivalent to a village, and is called *K'ring*.

Formerly, following wars between the villages, a number of villagers became rich and powerful, managing each several *buon*, equivalent to the *K'ring*, with many slaves under his command. They were the *M'tao* (chieftains).

The chieftains, the military commanders, the master of the waterside, the village owner, the land owner, the people's assessor, and even the fortune-tellers, the wizards and the advisors to the custom tribunals... constituted the upper class. Besides, these are the free peasants and a number of family slaves (prisoners-of-war, offenders who failed to pay fines to the village, debtors who failed to pay their debts etc.). These constituted the lower classes and strata, who made up the bulk of the population. The slaves in Edeh regions

were only family slaves and were treated like equal members of the family. They could easily be enfranchised if their families had the necessary things to pay fines to the village. While they were still slaves, they had the right to get married and live in separate houses, if they so wished. But they still depended on their masters, and were not free to come and live with their mothers as free citizens did.

Thus, Edeh society had been clearly differentiated, although the differentiation was not yet very profound. Towards the end of the French rule and under the US-puppet régime, a number of Edehs served as functionaries, soldiers, or were engaged in service activities, but most of them remained bound to their villages and communes. Only a handful of them alienated themselves from the working people and became agents of the imperialists and colonialists.

The social organization of the Edehs consists of many clans which line up into two main clans: the *Nie* and the *Mlo*.

In Edeh society, it is the girl's family that goes to the man's house and proposes marriage and bring gifts to him. After marriage, the newly weds live at the wife's house. Their children bear the mother's family name. The right to inheritance is reserved for the women, with priority to the youngest daughter.

Pregnant women live beneath the bamboo floor of the house-on-stilts, in a makeshift room for childbirth, and is cared for by a *bue* (local midwife). The newly-born infant is given the name of one of its deceased female ancestors at a ceremony organized by its mother or the midwife. The latter would take a bit of hen liver on which she puts a few drops of morning dew then rubs

it against the child's mouth, while pronouncing the above-mentioned names. If the child remains silent or smiles, then the name is considered accepted.

At age 14 or 15, an Edeh child has to attend a maturation ceremony marked by the practice of levelling six of the upper incisors and piercing both ear lobes to stretch them out gradually. In ancient society, this conformed to the concept of beauty, especially in old age, when the ear lobes flow almost down to the shoulders.

According to Edeh tradition, the dead are buried in the ground. A dead person has a share of the family's legacy which is buried together with him or her. Above the grave is a sepulchre or a boat-shaped house where rice and other things are offered to the spirits. After some time, when the family can afford, a ceremony is held in memory of the dead. Then the grave is abandoned.

*Spiritual life*: The Edehs' religious belief is primitive multi-deism. Standing out in their theological system is the system of genies of agriculture, the highest of whom are *Ae Die* and *Ae Du*. The climatic changes in the year are said to depend on the worship of the "soul of rice" the Genie of Earth, the Genie of Water and the Genie of Fire. Formerly, in Edeh society there were also the King of Fire and the King of Water, although they were not the representatives of a royal court or a State but the embodiment of a popular belief, a primitive world outlook.

The Edeh people boast a rich, original and brilliant traditional art and literature. Their literature is mainly oral with myths, legends, lyrical folk songs, proverbs and sayings, epics, tales, etc. Worthy of note are the oral stories about the existence of the Edeh people and the other family clans on the Darlac high plateaux such as

"Story of Bang Dran", "Story of Mount Yang Ging"... or proverbs and sayings, the most outstanding of which are the customary law — (*Klei due bhian kdi*).

With regard to epics (Khan), mention must be made of the excellent content and rendering of the Song about the Young Man Dan San, Dam Ton Mlan, Song about the Young Man Trang Qrieng, Xing Nga, Tam Bi, Khing Juh, Dam Thin, etc. With regard to folk songs, there are the tunes of *muynh*, *kut*, *X'yeb*... Musical instruments include cymbals, drums, flutes, horn bugles, multiple flutes, and a number of instruments made with the use of dried gourds to amplify the sounds.

Edeh plastic arts include the weaving of floral designs with colour threads on cloth and wood engravings on parts of houses, including decorations on sculptures representing human beings, animals, and so on, in sepulchres.

The Edeh ethnicity has taken an active part in both wars of resistance against the French and the US imperialists. Since the liberation of South Vietnam in 1975, many changes have taken place in Edeh areas. Schools, health stations, State stores have sprung up in many places. Edeh farmers are embarking upon the road of collective production. They have two deputies to the National Assembly (7th Legislature) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Dr Y Ngong Nie Kdam, alternate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, member of the State Council and Secretary of the Party Committee of Darlac province, and Colonel Y Block Eban, deputy Secretary of the provincial Party Committee and Chairman of the People's Committee of Darlac province.



## The Cham

**Denomination:** Cham. Other names: Chiem or Chiem Thanh.

**Local groups:** Cham Anoi, Cham Poong, Chavaku, Zoan Cham.

**Population:** over 75,000.

**Language:** Malayo-polynesian.

**Habitat:** More than 50,000 Chams live in the south central Vietnam provinces of Nghia Binh, Phu Khanh and Thuan Hai, over 20,000 others in An Giang Dong Nai and Tay Ninh provinces and Ho Chi Minh City.

Aborigines of the above-mentioned provinces, from the early centuries A.D. to the 18th century, the Cham people had built up the ancient State of Champa, which had gone through many periods of prosperity and decline. The period from the 16th to the 18th centuries was one of continuous peasant and feudal wars on the whole of the present Vietnamese territory. The process of national unification of Vietnam took place, in that historical conjuncture. Late in the 18th century, Po Klong Khuan, the last king of ancient Champa died at Phan Ri, putting an end to the dynasties of the Cham aristocracy. In this century, a part of the Cham people left Thuan Hai province to settle in southern provinces via Kampuchea. The last emigration to Kampuchea probably took place in 1822, under the leadership of Prince Po Chon. The emigrants arrived in Chau Doc and Tay Ninh provinces where they mingled with the Cham border guards sent by the Nguyen court. These are the two component parts of the Cham people in south Vietnam. Their co-nationals are now living in Kampuchea.

**Material life:** The Chams of central Vietnam live in large communities in Thuan Hai province, and in the coastal plains. The smaller villages have each some hundred inhabitants, the larger ones more than 1,000 household members. Cham houses are built in straight and orderly rows. Each family lives inside a cottage surrounded by walls or a fence, the entrance gates turning to the south, the west or in between the two.

A Cham house is built with earth roofed with tiles, sheet iron or thatch. The walls are made of bricks connected with mortar. The architecture of Cham houses is patterned on the Kinh's, and only now and then travellers can see a storeyed house. At some places, Cham people live in houses-on-stilts, but with floors only 30 centimetres above the ground.

In Nghia Binh and Phu Khanh provinces, Cham villages are built in areas covered with foothills, and the houses there are short ones, with rows of pillars the floors more than one metre above the ground, and the doors opened lengthwise. On each end of the house is a "horn" (*chkhe vang*), which is the prolongation of the lowest rafters of the roofs, and the two "horns" meet to form a V. The houses of the Cham Hroi group are small, being only 8 metres long and 4 metres wide, and suitable for their former nomadic life.

In a number of villages in Thuan Hai province, in the ancient traditional residential areas, each family lives in several houses built near one another and according to a definite order. They include the guest house (*thang ton*), a house for the parents and small children, a house for married daughters, a kitchen and a *tuc* house, which includes the rice barn, the nuptial room, and the abode of the youngest daughter's family.

Thus, houses in Cham areas show vestiges of residential patterns which reflect the disintegration of large matrilineal families and at the same time the decay of Cham society prior to the complete liberation of South Vietnam (1975).

Cham dresses are similar to the traditional costumes of the Kinh majority people living in the plains. The only difference is that the long robe worn by Cham woman has to be pulled over instead of being buttoned on one side. Cham Hroi women wear a kind of sari with a patch at the buttocks like the gowns of Bahnar women. They wear a black headcloth similar to those worn by the Kinh at funerals. In Thuan Hai province, elderly men wear their hair long, a headcloth and a sarong like a woman's gown.

The Chams boast a tradition of wet rice farming and fruit growing. Nowadays, farming and gardening are the main occupations of the Cham minority in Central Vietnam. The "lua chiem" (summer rice) widely grown in areas inhabited by the Kinh (who grow two crops a year the summer and autumn crops), probably originated from Cham areas. Basing themselves on the quality of the soil and the terrain conditions, the Chams divide their arable land into three categories of ricefields which are tilled according to different methods:

1. *Thuy dien*, or ricefields lying deep in the valleys, where the soil is the most fertile, are reserved for the cultivation of autumn rice. They also sow rice on these fields to get seedlings. The sowing is thick in the fringes, and scattered in the middle. When the seedlings come of age, they are picked from thick sowing places to be transplanted in other places, the rest is left to grow into rice plants.

2. *Tram Thuy*, or ricefields submerged all the year round, are the second most fertile after the *thuy dien*, and are used for transplanting rice, and not for sowing.

3. *Son dien*, or dry ricefields on hill or mountain sides, are cultivated only once a year. They depend on rain water, for irrigation, and are tilled by holing, ploughing and direct sowing. The rice is sown there in the fifth lunar month and reaped in the ninth month.

With regard to the Cham Hroi group, who live in barren areas where the main arable lands are littered with rocks, the chief mode of production is hillside farming. On these farms rice is alternated with subsidiary crops which account for 50 percent of the acreage. Besides the hillside farms there are dry paddy fields and wet or marshy ricefields at the foot of mountains.

Many historical data show that the Chams have rich experience in "bringing water into the ricefields." At present in the plains of Phan Rang there remain some hydraulic works such as the Chakling dam (dating back to the 12th century), and the Ma Ren dam (17th century).

In Gio Linh district, in the former province of Quang Tri, there are many vestiges of water reservoirs and a number of irrigation systems of the Chams.

The farming tools and methods of the Chams are almost similar to those of the Kinh.

Unlike their co-nationals in central Vietnam, the Chams in south Vietnam live mainly on fisheries, handicraft weaving and small trade, crop farming being only a side-line. Under the influence of US neo-colonialism, a number of Chams had become owners of rice-husking mills, saw mills, and river boats...

The Chams have since long been excellent fishermen and sailors. The coastal areas of central Vietnam have once been a theatre of operation of powerful fleets of

the Chams, each of them comprising up to hundreds of boats, including low-speed boats and large sail boats with cabins which gave support to the ground forces in operation. As early as the beginning of the 4th century, the Chams were already skilled sailors who often called at port-cities of China and Southeast Asia to trade in spice.

The Chams excel in ship-building. They have also produced buffalo or ox-carts for transport on land.

Weaving was also a relatively thriving handicraft of the Chams. Their renowned products included sheets of silk and sarongs made of natural silk.

Under the US-puppet regime, however, thousands of hand looms of the Chams in south Vietnam had to stop operation owing to competition by foreign goods. Only ceramics developed widely. At many places the Chams did not use potter's wheels and did not harden their products in stoves, but in the open air. The Chams have also smithies, metal working and gold or silver engraving shops.

From time immemorial Cham traders have had commercial and exchange relations with ethnic groups in the Central Highlands, with Kinh people, Laos and Kampuchians and occasionally with coastal cities of many Southeast Asian countries.

#### *Social and family relations :*

Before merging with the national community of Vietnam, Cham society had once been a feudal society with many vestiges of the matrilineal system. According to inscriptions on stelae at the My Son temple, in the 11th century, Cham society was divided into four castes as in ancient Indian society: the clergy, the knights, the common people, and the low caste. A vestige of this division is the differentiation into four social strata: the

Brahman clergy, also called the Root; the aristocracy, also called descendants of the gold-hatted king; the common people, also called the ploughmen, and the serfs who were looked down on as servants and insects.

Cham society is divided into two clans: areca and coconut.

Below the clans are the families, as shown in the worship of the Kut at the cemeteries. The Kut is a rock laid in front of a tomb according to the principle of maternal consanguinity. Each family is headed by a *Mu Raya*, a woman belonging to the last line of a family, who is entrusted with keeping its objects of worship and who has the task of organizing, once every two or three years, on the occasion of the people's major festivals, a ceremony to worship the ancestors at the cemetery. Each clan is divided into sub-clans. The head of a sub-clan is called the *Mua Paro*, who is also a woman. Each sub-clan has from 10 to 15 matrilineal families. Each clan has about a hundred such families and formerly they lived together in a definite sector of the village.

The Chams do not have personal names, but each person belongs to a definite clan.

In Thuan Hai area, the cells of Cham villages and communes are the scall matrilineal families, whereas in South Vietnam, the Chams, under the impact of orthodox Islamism, have gone through a process of transformation into patrilineal families, but with not a few vestiges of matriarchy.

In all the areas inhabited by the Chams, the husbands live in the houses of their wives' families. Nowadays, the role of Cham women in the clans and families is prominent only in the cult of ancestors.

The Chams still practise two forms of burial: inhumation and cremation. The Chams members of Brahmanism

usually have to practise cremation in keeping with their religious prescriptions, but they also bury the dead underground, as in the cases of children aged below 15 and of the serfs. The funerary rites are very complicated, and sometimes drag on for 10 days or even a fortnight, involving the use of large quantities of fabrics, clothes, rice, meat and labour. The scale and rites of a funeral depends on the age, social status, religion and clan of the deceased.

*Spiritual life:* Apart from traditional beliefs, the Chams in southern Vietnam practise neo-Islamism, only worshipping Allah and the prophet Mohammed. Meanwhile, the Chams in south central Vietnam are divided in two parts. About one-third of those members of Brahmanism or Hinduism worship the goddess Siva. Those people are also called *Cham Kaphia* or *Cham Chun*. This belief has had a great impact on the social structure and customs and ways of the Chams. The rest practise the *Bani* religion which is considered old Islamism. Between the Cham Ka Phia and the Cham Bani groups there is a gulf. They are forbidden to have marital ties with each other, to live together in the same village, and to eat at the same table.... Before Hinduism flourished in Cham country, Buddhism had already been introduced there. These religions have had a strong impact on all the social structures and institutions of the Chams.

Apart from the religions introduced from India, in areas inhabited by the Chams there remain many forms of popular belief such as the worship of the genies symbolizing nature's power like the Genie of the Mountains, the Genie of Thunder and Lighting, the Genie of Water, the Genies of Agriculture such as the Genie of Rice, the Genie of Mouse, the Genie of Earth, the Genie

Teacher of Farming, the Genie of Irrigation, and the Genies of Waves, admirals commanders of naval fleets and so on.

The Chams still observe numerous rites, taboos and practices related to production such as the worship of *Linga*, the custom of stealthy ploughing of others' rice-fields, the ceremonies for erecting a haystack, watching the ploughs and harrows, conjuring up the spirits of rice before the earing stage... These practices reflect the Chams' diversified activities in the course of history.

Cham culture has gone through periods of splendid development, characterized by an architecture using cubes all made of red bricks. These are multi-storeyed palaces and ancient shrines built on foothills in the heart of central Vietnam plains, the vestiges of which are still found at many places: the My Son bastion and the Dong Duong pagoda in Quang Nam, the Po Nagar temple in Nha Trang, the Po Rome temple in Ninh Thuan, the Cham towers in Tuy Hoa, Thuan Hai and also at Ban Don, Ea Sup and other places in the Central Highlands province of Darlac.

These architectural works taper at their tops on which there only remains a small square stone slab. Cham architecture is characterized by its harmony. Around each tower there are many decorative motifs made of square or parabolic figures in relief. Between the various floors figures representing lotus flowers and men fighting with wild beasts and monsters are stuck or engraved on blue rock or made of red ceramics.

Even now, people do not know what material was used by the Chams to link the bricks so solidly, without leaving any traces of the linkage. Each palace, each ancient temple is covered with an even red coating. It can be said that these architectural works, though

small in size, deserve to be regarded as a wonder in central Vietnam. And as many as 128 important architectural works in Cham areas are known.

Still popular among the Cham population are numerous folk songs, proverbs and sayings very diversified and reflecting a wide knowledge, and many aspects of life. In the folk literary and artistic treasure of the Chams mention must be made of the legends and tales, the family didactic songs, the lyrical songs and especially the epics and stories in verse, such as the epic on the heroes Cham Bri, Ta Tha Va, Kalin Parang, etc. which are still widely popularized. Ancient Cham folk songs and music have had a great impact on those of the Kinh people in central Vietnam, for example the *trong com* (a small drum partly smeared with cooked rice which give a muffled sound different from those produced by beating the drum with sticks on other places. — Ed.), the music of the *Nam Ai*, a melancholy song very popular in Hue, *ca ho Hue* (melodious songs sung by women while rowing boats on the Perfume River — Ed.) and so on. The folk art of the Chams, which is full of vitality, also manifests itself in traditional folk dances and sculptures and engravings on rock, wood and terra cotta, and on the bas-reliefs closely associated with architectural projects.

The Chams are one of the ethnic groups in Vietnam having a written language of their own. It is Sanskrit which has enabled the Chams, to develop and popularize literature and art, and to absorb the cultures of other nations. The story of "Tam Cam" (the Vietnamese Cinderella — Ed.) has been recorded in the Cham language, the Indian historic novels about Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Arabian novel "Arabian Nights"... and other works have been widely popularized since long.

An aboriginal people having close ties with the Kinh majority, the Chams have since long in history joined in the national resistance wars against foreign invaders, such as the uprising led by the Two Trung Sisters against the feudal domination by China's Eastern Han dynasty in the first century A.D. In the 13th century, before mounting the throne, Prince Harijit of Champa allied with the Dai Viet in waging a war of resistance against the Mongolian Yuan imperialists. Late in the 18th century, in the Tay Son uprising led by Nguyen Hue, the Chams, together with their chieftains Potithum Da Paran, Potithum Da Paguh and others fought side by side with the Viet insurgents and toppled the corrupt secessionist feudal groups. Early in the 19th century, the Cham Bani in Ninh Thuan province rose up to fight against oppression and exploitation by the Nguyen feudal rulers.

After the French colonialists' invasion of Vietnam, the struggles of the Chams side by side with the Viets and other fraternal peoples broke out successively from the middle of the 19th century until the victorious Revolution of August 1945. During the nationwide war of resistance to the French colonialists, the Chams made great contributions to building and defending resistance bases. Many young Cham took part in the Che Bong Nga unit<sup>1</sup>, the main force army unit in Thuan Hai which had many exploits to its credit and which had neutralized the reactionary "Cham thuong phuc hung" (Restoration of Champa) organization rigged by the French colonialists, and disbanded the army of the "Cham Thuong", lackeys of the French.

1. Che Bong Nga: King of Champa, a national hero in the history of the Chams, 14th century.

The Ngo Dinh Diem regime tried to stir up division inside the Cham community with the aim of dominating and assimilating it. It brought there a semblance of prosperity, and set up a "Cham cultural centre" at Phan Rang for the purpose of political deception. But the Cham people, always turning to the revolution, persistently struggled against the US aggressors for national salvation and reunification. The Chams had overcome many prohibitions by the drastic religious laws, as well as many traditional inhibitions and taboos to protect revolutionary cadres and take part in revolutionary activities, and many of them had been arrested, imprisoned, and deported to far-off islands.

The Cham ethnic group is represented by two deputies at the present 7th Legislature of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Van Hiep, Vice-Chairman of the People's Committee of Dac Binh district (Thuan Hai province), and Mr Mang Thi Lui, teacher, at the Nha Trang Teachers' College, in Phu Khanh province.

### **The Raglai**

*Denomination* : Raglai. Other names : Rangklai, Roglai and Oranglai.

*Population* : about 58,000.

*Language* : Malayo-Polynesian.

*Habitat* : More than 70 per cent of this ethnic minority live in northern areas of Thuan Hai province. The rest live scattered from Phu Khanh through southeast Lam Dong to Thuan Hai province.

The ancestors of the Raglai ethnic group were Malayo-Polynesian speaking people who lived in the southern part of the Indochinese peninsula or were

Malaysian off-shore islanders who had moved to the mainland in southern Indochina in the early centuries A.D.

*Material life* : The Raglai people live in houses-on-stilts with wooden pillars. The floor, about one metre above the ground, is made of opened giant bamboo. The roof frame is made of bamboo, big and slender. The roof is covered with thatch, straw or rattan leaves. The house is assembled mainly by tying its various parts with split rattan or using wooden forks as pillars. In areas neighbouring localities inhabited by people of the Viet ethnic majority such as An Son district (Thuan Hai province) and Khanh Son district (Phu Khanh province), mud-and-wattle houses have been built by Raglai people with new assembling methods using specialized tools.

The Raglais' traditional dresses have for the most part gone out of use. Today, most Raglai women wear skirts and neckless shirts like Cham women while men wear Western-styled trousers and shirts.

The Raglai people's legends and tales show that they have since long known how to grow wet rice by building irrigation works and that later on they moved to mountainous areas. The terrain of their areas has compelled them to practise hillside farming as the main method of cultivation. Rice is their main food crop. Next comes maize. On the hillside fields they usually alternate rice with subsidiary food crops or vegetables. Wet rice is also grown in some areas. Their farming method, very similar to the Chams', is fairly productive.

The main farm tools include axes, sticks for digging holes for sowing crop seeds, spuds, etc.

For handicrafts they have wickerwork, iron and wood work, pottery, cloth weaving, conical palm hat making,

sugar making... These, therefore, are but sideline occupations practised only in some regions in spare time during or between cropping seasons.

The Raglais also practise multi-cultured gardening. Animal husbandry is developing for home consumption and for sacrifices.

The pattern of economic appropriation still plays an important part in the Raglai people's daily life. It has brought benefits and sideline occupations to women and children, and men as well, in their spare time.

*Social and family relations*: Raglai society and families are still markedly matrilineal. The right to inheritance and to keep objects of worship belongs to the youngest daughter in the family.

The Raglai community is composed of many clans and families of matrilineal hierarchy which is called by an old term, "patek" (package). Each *patek* has its own name. The Raglai minority has eight *pateks*, each of which is divided into different branches. Each branch also has its own name. Each *patek* as well as each branch has its own family origin which shows vestiges of totemism. Each *patek* has a tradition house where such property legated by its ancestors as brass gongs, vases, etc. are kept as "relics in memory of ancestors".

The person in charge of such hereditary property is a woman of the youngest family branch. According to a Raglai custom, every three or five years, people of the same *patek* have to make offerings and place them in the tradition house for ancestral worship. If the last woman in the matrilineal hierarchy dies, this hereditary property will have to be put into her grave since her family branch has come to an end. This is done according to their matrilineal concept. This,

however, is a rare case because her sister's daughters and other female descendants are entitled to the right to succession.

Men and women of the same *patek* are not permitted to marry each other. Marriage between members of the same tradition house in particular are prohibited. However, marriage can be arranged between men and women of the same *patek* if they make ritual offerings to the genies and beg for absolution from the guilt of incest. Thus, inter-clan marriage between distant relatives is becoming a common practice.

After marriage, the husband lives in his wife's house. When going steady, the would-be husband can live temporarily in his fiancée's house so that he can acquaint himself with her family, show his talents and virtues, and serve his future wife's family. After the wedding, the husband stays for good in his wife's home and relinquishes virtually all of his rights and interests in his own parents' house.

If the wife dies early, she will be replaced by one of her female cousins. If the match does not please the widower, he has to return to his own parents' home, bringing back only a knife and personal belongings which he took to the bride's house at the wedding.

When a Raglai dies, the funeral and burial ceremonies take place at the village cemetery. The dead is dressed in his or her newest clothes and wrapped up with cloth. His coffin is made of a hollowed-out tree trunk on which the local wizard draws pictures of the moon, the sun, birds, flowers and leaves. Before the burial, a rice-offering service is held.

The Raglais have the custom of sharing property to the dead. Part of the offerings has to be destroyed beforehand. After burial, the grave is built up into a

mushroom-shaped sepulchre. Follow weeks of reinforcing the grave in coordination with spectre worship. The Raglais believe that the ceremony to upgrade the grave to a catacomb is really the day to bid farewell to the dead and, therefore, it is their biggest funerary ritual. The duration of this function depends on each family's economic capability. The main thing in this rite is to build a catafalque above the grave and adorn it beautifully, then hold a ceremony to conjure up the spirits of the dead, to spend four days during which men and women, young and old, eat and drink, sing and dance to the accompaniment of gong beats at the cemetery.

*Spiritual life*: Before liberation, a number of Raglais practised Protestantism. This religion, however, did not bring dramatic changes to their spiritual life. Besides Protestantism, they kept on practising traditional religions and worshipping their ancestors as well as the Genie of Agriculture.

Raglai folk literature and arts have developed fairly well. Proverbs, folk songs and tales have been popularized among the people. They reflect the sentiments and activities of the Raglai ethnic minority through different stages of history.

Their musical instruments are diversified and are played in varied ways. The most outstanding is a set of nine brass gongs which are often played at important festivals. Traditional festivals of the Raglais take place from December to March. They include a wine-drinking dance after harvest days.

The Raglais have made considerable contributions to the past wars of resistance to the French colonialists and the US imperialists. Many of them have been

awarded the title "Hero of the People's Armed Forces": Pinang Tak, deputy political commissar of a district military command, and Pinang Thanh, leading cadre of a village militia unit. During the border war started by the genocidal Pol Pot regime, several Raglais were awarded the title "Hero of the People's Armed Forces". Among them were Pham Minh Tu, Cao Van Be and Mang Da.

Since liberation, 52 per cent of the Raglai people have learned the three R's. Schools and medical stations have been set up in villages inhabited by Raglai people. Mrs. Mai Thi Kim Ket, a cadre of An Son district's agricultural service in Thuan Hai province, is a deputy to the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 7th Legislature.

### The Chu Ru

*Denomination*: Chu Ru. Other names Cho Ru or Cru.

*Population*: Almost 8,000.

*Language*: Malayo-Polynesian. (Owing to their places of inhabitancy favourable to social and cultural contacts with other ethnic groups including the Cham and the Viet in lowland areas, many Chu Ru people, especially the young, can speak Vietnamese fluently).

*Habitat*: The Chu Ru live in large communities in Don and Tu Tra villages, Don Duong district, and Loan village, Duc Thong district (Lam Dong province, Central Highlands).

Ancestors of the Chu Ru were once part of the Cham ethnic minority living in Central Vietnam's coastal areas. Later on, this population group moved up to mountainous areas, living aloof from its original community and bearing the name "Cru" (land-nibblers). It was



the Chu Ru who brought the wet rice farming technique to the areas they now inhabit in Don Duong district. Several names of their villages have testified to this fact.

*Material life*: The Chu Ru live in wooden-pillared houses-on-stilts, the frame and other parts of which are made of different kinds of bamboo. The roof is covered with thatch. Its size depends on the number of family members and the building method mainly consists in using bamboo ropes and tree forks to support the beams and rafters.

Chu Ru women wear skirts and neckless shirts like Cham women while men wear Western-style trousers and shirts. When at work many men put on shorts.

The Chu Ru have a long-standing tradition of agricultural production and has since long practised sedentary farming. Crop farming plays a key role in productive activities, with rice as the main crop. They also plant maize, sweet potato, calabash, bean and other vegetables on hillsides or in their family orchards. Rice fields are of two kinds: submerged fields called *Hma Gluh* and dry fields called *Hma Khac*. In the past, they were single-crop fields. On wet rice fields, they use hoes to turn up and level the soil and then sow seeds. On dry fields, they plough, harrow and level the soil, and then sow rice seeds.

The farming techniques of the Chu Ru remain backward as shown by their primitive farm tools such as ploughs, harrows, and soil-levelling instruments, all of which are made of wood. Perhaps, they are traces of the stagnation of this ethnic group. However, they are experienced in building small-scale irrigation works and in regulating the water volume needed at different stages of rice cultivation.

Together with crop farming, the Chu Ru pay much attention to animal husbandry. They raise buffaloes, cattle, pigs, horses, chickens, ducks, geese etc. Buffaloes and oxen are draught animals. Horses are used to transport farm produce and other goods to distant places for exchange. Buffaloes are of great importance in livestock breeding because they are used as sacrifices at grand worship ceremonies and in barter with lowland people or with other ethnic minorities.

The gathering of forest products by women and children, hunting by men, and fishing in streams, lakes and ponds still play an important part. They supply food and other necessities for domestic consumption and produce goods for exchange with lowland people.

The Chu Ru people's main sideline occupations include wickerwork and ironwork which produce kitchen utensils and farm tools. Cloth weaving is lagging while pottery is developing pretty well, as in Don Duong district, especially in Btan, Krang Go and Krang Cho villages.

*Social and family relations*: Plei (village) is the grass-roots unit of inhabitancy of the Chu Ru ethnic group. Each *plei*'s land area averages some three square kilometres. The demarcation line between *pleis* marked by wooden stakes or boulders agreed upon by *plei* chiefs has become a traditional border. In principle, land in a *plei* is public property. However, dwelling and cultivated lands have been turned into areas under the ownership of each clan, extended family or nuclear family. Therefore, the transfer of land ownership must be done according to the practices in each *plei*. People who want to buy plots of land must pay all expenses for sacrifice rite on the plots for sale in the presence

of the villagers including children who will serve as witnesses to this purchase.

A Chu Ru village usually is a rural commune. Close-knit families live near one another. The chief of the clan, who is the oldest sister or one of her brothers, still plays an important role. Nominally, land belongs to the clan, hence, the purchase must be agreed upon by its chief.

Each village consists of two or three clans. It is also inhabited by other ethnic groups such as the Kohor, the Raglai, etc. The village chief, usually a man, is selected by the villagers. He is in charge of controlling the village's land, guiding productive work, organizing the commune's daily life, and handling affairs related to people outside the village... and lives on his own productive work. Besides the village chief, the wizard plays an important role in the villagers' spiritual life. Each village appoints a person in charge of looking after the "irrigation works". He is called *poca* and is also elected by the people. To ensure safety for the mother and her new-born baby, each village has one or two midwives (called mother *boai*). All these persons, together with the old people, form a self-managing organization of the Chu Ru village community.

The Chu-Ru community has been differentiated into the rich and the poor. This differentiation results not from social conflicts but from the outcome of each family's labour. The property of rich families includes ornamental articles of high value such as gongs, cymbals, drums, ivory, rhinoceros horns or animals for sacrifice rites. Production means are primitive and not included in their valuable property. During the US-puppet regime and owing to the influence of colonialism and the flow of goods into the areas inhabited by the

Chu Ru ethnic group, many changes and upheavals took place in the commune. A section of its population which held power and wealth to do business along the capitalist line was formed.

Chu Ru communes are at the stage of disintegration of large matrilineal families and they are witnessing the formation of more and more small families. In the family, women hold a high status, the right to inheritance belongs to the daughters, and the uncles play a very important role. With larger families, there exist three or four generations of people having the same ancestress and living together in the same long-roofed house (called *'song tchun prong'*). They form a socio-economic community which shares a rice store and whose members have their meals together. The large family is headed by an aged man, husband of the woman of the highest ascendancy. Small families can live separately in a short-roofed house-on-stilts. However, families of the same ancestress can live in a long-roofed house-on-stilts although they do not share farm work, rice store and meals.

The Chu Ru practise monogamy. After marriage the husband must leave his parents' house and live in his wife's house. According to a custom, the girl takes the initiative of "proposing" to the man through a match-maker. After a little rite to "have a look" at the would-be-husband, a formal proposal ceremony is organized in which, according to the custom, the girl puts a ring and glass bead necklace on him. The final step is the wedding. Wedding presents include trousers, shirts and scarves, for the future in-laws, wine and cattle and poultry for feting. After the wedding, the wife stays in her husband's home for about two weeks, pending a ceremony to bring the bridegroom to the bride's house.

Pre-marital relations, which do not affect the happiness of the future married couple, are vestiges of the old regime of community marriage. Another practice of the Chu Ru is crosscousin marriage and levirate. Chu Ru men also marry women of neighbouring ethnic groups such as the Kohor, the Raglai, and lately, the Vietnamese.

*Spiritual life:* The Chu Ru worship their ancestors and practise polytheism. There are no altars in their houses but ancestral worship rites are usually held at the cemetery (called *Ket Alau*). These rites are arranged once every few years and at irregular intervals. Under the US-puppet regime, Catholicism and Protestantism infiltrated into areas inhabited by the Chu Ru. But, besides Jesus Christ and Our Lady, the Chu Ru kept on worshipping their ancestors and the Genies of Agriculture, and organizing festivities at the start of cropping seasons, and during and after the harvests.

The Chu Ru do not yet have their own script. Under French colonial rule, Catholic priests transliterated the Chu Ru spoken language into Latin but the use of the Romanized script was limited and did not have any impact on the people. Nevertheless, the Chu Ru ethnic group have preserved their diversified oral folk literature which includes folk poems, proverbs, stories in verse, epics and tales, which old people can recite three or four nights on end by the fireplace.

Chu Ru musical instruments include brass gongs, drums and flutes, and other traditional instruments such as *kwao*, *rtong*, *terlia*, etc. These instruments are played at festivals in accompaniment to the very popular *Tam Ga* folk dance which depicts the community activities of the Chu Ru ethnic group.

As an aboriginal ethnic group closely associated with Central Vietnam, the Chu Ru have demonstrated their patriotism and spirit of valiant struggle against foreign aggression through the successive nation-wide wars of resistance. In the anti-US struggle for national salvation, the Chu Ru and Raglai ethnic minorities were renowned for their K.67 resistance base in the Central Highland province of Lam Dong. Applying their "divide-and-rule" policy, the US-puppets concentrated more than 7,000 Chu Ru people at Ka Don, Ka De and Ka Rai hamlets in Tu Tra I and Tu Tra II villages (Don Duong district) for the purpose of controlling them, but they kept secret contacts with the revolution.

After liberation in 1975, areas inhabited by the Chu Ru ethnic group were among the first localities to have carried through the literacy campaign. Lieutenant Colonel Hoang Minh Do, a member of the Chu Ru ethnic minority, is a deputy to the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 7th Legislature.

## C—ETHNIC GROUPS OF THE SINO-TIBETAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

### a) CHINESE LANGUAGE GROUP:

#### The Hoa

*Denomination:* Hoa. *Other names:* Han, Ha, Xa, Phang, Thong, Nhan, Minh Huong.

*Population:* More than 930,000.

*Language:* Sino-Tibetan. Speaks fluently Cantonese.

*Habitat:* The Hoa people live at different places in Vietnam from lowland regions to mountainous border areas, from urban centres to rural and coastal regions and on offshore islands, from the North to the South. They live in large communities, in southern Vietnam, especially in Ho Chi Minh City and a number of southern provinces: Dong Nai, Cuu Long, Hau Giang, Kien Giang and Minh Hai. In northern Vietnam, they live in Hanoi, Haiphong, Nam Dinh and many localities in provinces bordering China.

The Hoa community living in Vietnam today is made up of descendants of the Hoa people who immigrated from China to Vietnam in the course of history, chiefly before and after the Christian Era. Most of them came from different localities in

China's southern provinces: Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, Zhejiang and Taiwan. The rest came from China's northern provinces. They immigrated to Vietnam by sea and river and land routes through Vietnam's northern mountainous border provinces.

*Material life:* In rural areas, the Hoa live in villages comprising each at least dozens of households, sometimes up to 200 households. The villages lie at the foot of mountains, on hillsides, in valleys, along river banks and in coastal areas. Most of the Hoa have settled in areas abounding in fresh water. In each region, the distance between two villages is negligible.

Hoa houses are usually designed on the pattern of the Chinese character (Mouth) for defence purposes. Each house has from three to five rooms or three rooms with two side chambers according to practices in each locality. It is surrounded with thick walls. Its only door stands at the centre of the antechamber and sometimes the two side-chambers have small windows.

The traditional house of the Hoa can be likened to a fort. The defensive character of these houses testifies to the fact that the Hoa had to live in a society full of upheavals at various stages of their history.

Nowadays, at many places, Hoa houses are mostly patterned on the Viet's abodes. There are fewer partitions and many more doors and windows, which make the houses more aerated and let in more light.

Hoa men wear long, flat-bottomed trousers, using strips of cloth or small twisted ropes as belts, short-flapped shirts with the lower edges covering the belt, a high collar and transversal button lines. Pockets are sewn on both front flaps of the shirt. The dresses usually are dark green. In the old days, they had long hair done into a bun. This hairdo can still be seen only among

old people. At present, Western-style trousers and shirts have become popular among young Hoa from town to country and on offshore islands.

Hoa women wear elegant but simple dresses. They include trousers and five-flapped high-collared shirts covering the buttocks, and split on both sides. The button line runs down to the right armpit and along the right side. Buttons and button holes are both made of cloth. Hoa women's trousers and shirts are made of coloured or floral fabric. The fad now is for dark-colour trousers and shirts of different styles. Most young Hoa city-dwellers in southern Vietnam wear jeans, trousers or pleated shirts. Most Hoa women wear their hair shoulder-length or plaited and wound around their heads. In the past, they preserved foot-binding, a vile feudal practice which crippled women both physically and spiritually.

The Hoa have a time-honoured tradition of growing wet rice. They have rich experience in rice cultivation: selecting rice seeds, making farm implements suited to cropping conditions, drawing up time-tables for rice sowing and transplanting, securing water for rice growth, weeding ricefields to keep them fertile, etc.

Their main farm tools include buffalo-drawn ploughs and harrows, hoes, spuds, spades, scythes, sickles, etc. The main food crop is rice. Next comes maize, sweet potato and cassava which are considered subsidiary food crops and an important ingredient of the daily meals in many localities. Most Hoa houses are surrounded with plots of land planted with vegetables and various kinds of beans.

Pottery is a long-standing craft of the Hoa in northern provinces in particular. Cloth and silk weaving, boat-building and metal working are also traditionally prac-

tised by the Hoa. Since long, handicrafts practised by the Hoa have gone out of the framework of family sideline occupations and now have really become an important economic branch.

A major part of the Hoa in urban centres live on trade, especially small trade. Most of them run shops. Others take part in handicrafts or work as barbers and hair dressers, watch repairers, tailors, shoemakers, mechanics or electricians. Many others are workers at State-run factories and enterprises or members of handicraft cooperatives.

*Social and family relations*: Hoa society has undergone profound class polarization. Under the impact of the former colonial and feudal regime, the overwhelming majority of the Hoa population in rural areas were labouring peasants oppressed and exploited by landlords and rich peasants. The Hoa landlords' interests were closely associated with the colonialists and imperialists. As a result of neo-colonialism in a number of southern Vietnam cities besides the Hoa workers (including factory workers and craftsmen), and poor city-dwellers (including small traders and people engaged in simple-manual labour such as porters, pedicab drivers, etc.), there were Hoa bourgeois and comprador capitalists. The latter ran banks and supply enterprises, thus controlling prices of commodities on the market. They always sought to disrupt the national economy while colluding with imperialism and had close ties with the Chinese reactionary forces.

The Hoa commune includes members of different clans and families. Each clan is led by a clan chief in charge of ancestral worship and settlement of major affairs within the family branch.

In each commune, there is a number of public utilities such as temples, pagodas and other places catering for the worship of ancestors and people who have rendered outstanding services to the fight against the aggressors and who have blazed the trail in the building of the commune.

In some communes inhabited by Hoa people (like the Minh Huong in Hoi An, in the central coastal province of Quang Nam — Da Nang), a self-managing apparatus had been set up on the pattern of former villages of the Viet ethnic majority. It included a Council of Elders respected and trusted by family branches in the commune. This council discussed and decided on the commune's affairs, especially those relating to communal land and penalties on infringements of the communal rules and regulations. Later on, besides this self-managing apparatus, there emerged a new group of village notables with different titles such as *tien thu chi*, *ky hao muc*, *quan vien...* who were granted a number of privileges and special interests in the commune, the feudal administration.

In major cities and a number of provincial capitals regarded as economic, political and cultural centres in a region, the Hoa had set up congregations of their own. Each congregation had its head and its own statute and rules. Affiliated to the congregation were mass organizations and associations. All the congregations were under the authority of the *Ly Su Hoi Quan*, a higher organization which later became the *Hoa Lien Hoi* (Association of Ethnic Chinese).

The Hoa's family organization is patrilineal, with higher consideration for men than for women. In principle, the daughters do not have the right to inheritance. After the wedding, the bride lives in her husband's

house. Children bear their father's family name. The final decision on the question of marriage comes from the parents. Child marriage was common among the Hoa community before 1954. Monogamy was practised. However, the bartering character of marriage was obvious in the setting of bride prices and in the discrimination of social status in the Hoa's drastic concept of *mendeng-hudui* (the young man and young girl should be well-matched in social and economic status).

Proceeding from the concept that the dead will live in another world with his or her ancestors after burial, the Hoa often take to the grave some belongings of the dead as offerings. At the burial ceremony, the widow had the habit of chopping a shoulder pole in two and placing one half into her husband's grave. The other half is set aside for later use by her children at her burial. It is believed that each half of the shoulder pole will help them to meet each other early in another world called: « Western Land of Buddha ».

The Hoa have the habit of placing a stone slab at the head of a grave as a marker. Well-off families erect a stele on which an epitaph is engraved, giving the deceased's surname and name, birthplace, the days of birth and death, etc.

*Spiritual life:* Ancestral worship is a salient feature of the Hoa's religious belief. They are also deeply influenced by the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. In urban centres, a section of the Hoa population practises Buddhism, others practise Protestantism or Catholicism. In rural areas, there remain among the Hoa vestiges of primitive religions such as totemism, animism, etc. This is manifested in the worship of many genies such as the Genie of Mountains, the Genie of Rivers, the Genie of Trees, the Genie of Stones... in the taboos

to be observed in production and daily life, and in the outlook on the world around.

Hoa literature and arts have a wide range of genres with diverse methods of expression and a rich and healthy content. The main genres include tales, poem-stories, songs, plays, folk verses, proverbs, humorous stories, folk songs, etc. Like the folk literature and arts of many other ethnic groups, those of the Hoa reflect the earnest sentiments among the people between man and nature and, at the same time, depict the bitter struggle between man and harsh nature, the fight against man's bad habits and ways such as laziness, selfishness, avarice, dishonesty and hypocrisy, for a fair and equitable, free, altruistic and perfect life.

At weddings and Spring festivities or at receptions of friends coming from afar, a form of cultural and art activity has been popularized among the Hoa living in the countryside. It is called *son ca* (*San co*) and includes alternate songs and love duets similar to those of the Viet ethnic majority.

Many Hoa songs reflecting a nostalgia of the past have been handed down from one generation to another orally or written in Chinese ideographs. While singing, the artistes, depending on concrete circumstances and relations, can alter a song by adding or leaving out words suited or not to the sentiments and atmosphere of the occasion. Each *Son Ca* party can sometimes last three or four nights in a row, drawing, almost all young men and women in the commune.

Operetta is also a typical stage art of the Hoa. It consists in telling stories, alternating with poetry recital and singing with gestures.

Popular musical instruments of the Hoa are bamboo flutes, brass trumpets, drums, hard wood chips and

various kinds of string instruments such as *ho*, *nhi*, *tam*, *ty ba*, *tam thap luc*, etc.

The Hoa often organize art troupes to make performance tours at Tet (Lunar New Year Festival) and other major traditional festivals. On such occasions, they give *wushu* shows, perform the lion dance, the unicorn dance and the dragon dance. Other items such as the rice-pounding, rowings, and tea-picking dances, the dance of butterflies fluttering in the royal palace, of the Mother Queen washing her face, etc. are also performed during rituals according to long-standing practices.

The Hoa ethnic group now living in Vietnam mostly consists of working people: workers, farmers, handicraftsmen, small traders and intellectuals. Most of them were born and have grown up in Vietnam. Their material and spiritual life, their social relations and their happiness have been closely associated with the Vietnamese Motherland and with other fraternal ethnic groups in Vietnam. They have gradually lost their former historical ties. The past has borne out the reason why they had to seek a new homeland and has shown them what to do to be able to live as they do at present.

The complete liberation of South Vietnam in April 1975 and the subsequent advance of the whole country to socialism have created a major obstacle to the expansionist policy of the reactionary Beijing leadership towards Southeast Asia.

Early in 1978, rumours were spread among the Hoa in Vietnam saying that Vietnam was an ally of the Soviet Union which was an enemy of China, that Vietnam would invade Kampuchea while China was siding with «Democratic Kampuchea», that Chinese troops would attack Vietnam, and that a war between China and the Soviet Union would break out in Vietnam, and

so on... If all these things happened, the rumours said, the lives of the Hoa in Vietnam would be threatened from four directions: they might be killed by the Vietnamese, or they might be burned to death by Chinese troops for their treason, or they might be beheaded by Soviet or Kampuchean soldiers who invaded Vietnam, etc.

These rumours were widely spread by the reactionary Beijing rulers by all ways and means. Credulous Hoa people, especially those living in Vietnam's northern border provinces, sold off their property, left their offices, mines and houses and crop fields... and returned to China legally or illegally. Many areas formerly inhabited by large Hoa communities became no-man's lands. However, many Hoa families who have seen through the wicked schemes and tricky moves of the Chinese authorities stayed back in Vietnam. Others who left Vietnam would choose another country rather than return to their "Motherland". Many died while leaving Vietnam illegally during the "exodus" unleashed by Beijing. And what about those Hoa who have gone to China? Many of them have been herded into people's communes for hard labour or forced to take arms to fight against Vietnam.

Facts over the past years have proved that the Hoa still living in Vietnam do not face any threat from the Vietnamese side.

### The Ngai

*Denomination*: Ngai. *Other names*: San Ngai, Ngai Luu Nam.

*Local groups*: Tam Ca Lau, Sin Lau, Hac Ca, Khanh Gin, Dan Le, Xuyen, etc.

*Population*: about 1,500.

*Language*: Chinese group (Sino-Tibetan family).

*Habitat*: mainly along the coast of and on islands off Quang Ninh and Haiphong provinces. Some have established themselves in scattered settlements in Ha Bac, Cao Bang, Lang Son and Ha Tuyen provinces.

The Ngai of today is a community consisting of several population elements of a number of tribes who had lived in Southern China before migrating to Vietnam in a sporadic way over many centuries A.D. under different historical circumstances. The *Viet su thong giam cuong muc* (Annals of the History of the Viet) speaks of the long-established presence of the *Dan* on the Vietnamese border. Most of them have lived for centuries in Quang Ninh province and claim themselves to be aborigines there. But the Hac Ca group did not cross the border into Vietnam until the first decades of the later half of the 19th century.

*Material life*: Before the liberation of North Vietnam (1955), the Ngai had two kinds of residence: professional fishermen lived on boats along the coast and farmers who tilled the land near the coast or in the mountains lived in hamlets on the mainland.

There was a time when the Ngai lived on fishing. They therefore did not gather into definite hamlets or villages. They put to sea in the day and returned at nightfall casting anchor at whatever place near the shore they happened to find themselves in to spend the night. Friends and kindred often fastened their boats together when at rest and in this case only one boat was anchored.

A boat is made of wood, five to six metres long and divided into three holds. On the deck right over the middle hold, there is a makeshift hut about one metre high, which is used as a bedroom. Fishing tackles are stored at the bow while the kitchen is located at the



stern. The holds are divided into several small compartments to accommodate food, water and other things. The hut is also used as a sitting-room.

Since 1976, the Dan have moved ashore and led a sedentary life in hamlets. Their mud houses or houses-on-stilts are built close to the tide line. Houses-on-stilts usually stand one metre above the water line at high tide. It is common practice among the Dan to have their houses erected against a cliff facing the sea. They look no different from those built by other Ngai farmers, theirs having nearly the same architectural patterns.

The Sin and the Hac Ca along the coast of Quang Ninh province and other Ngai groups in the mountains agglomerate into hamlets. They live in fortress-like mud houses, which are built sometimes on a rectangular plane surface, sometimes in a U-shaped pattern. There is but one front door right in the middle of the building on either side of which windows may be made.

Women's wear is composed mainly of a pair of trousers and a five-piece blouse with flaps, which completely covers their hips. The buttons are made of cloth and are on the right side of their dresses. Men's clothes consist of a pair of trousers and a shirt, some people of an older generation still favour their four-panel traditional blouse open at the chest, with a high collar and fabric buttons and their slacks.

Fifteen years ago, fishing was the only means of subsistence of the Dan. It was confined to casting a net and angling in the Eastern Sea. Women and children made their contribution by gathering molluscs, crustaceans, etc. Fish-rearing was done in a rather primitive fashion: they were towed astern fastened on a line. Some families kept a chicken or two in a coop at the stern as food supply in case of bad weather.

In response to the campaign for sedentary living, they have nowadays organised themselves into fishing co-operatives equipped with far better tackle and larger boats and as a result, they can catch from 10 to 50 tons of fish with each netting. Sideline occupations such as animal breeding, gardening and handicrafts flourish everywhere. Most of the womenfolk, old people and children now choose to stay onshore, thus putting an end to their nomadic life on the sea.

The difference between the Hoa and the Sin, the Hac Ca and other Ngai farming groups lies in the fact that there is hardly any trader among the latter. In the northern mountain region, apart from growing rice, the Ngai also use slash-and-burn method to cultivate maize, sweet potato, cassava, etc. Those living along the coast are good at reclaiming land from the sea. They build dams against the tide and plant rice on the newly-reclaimed fields. Their farming tools and technique are like those of the Hoa and other ethnic groups in the region.

They also grow several industrial crops such as cinnamon, camellia, etc. Animal husbandry and poultry raising are also fairly developed. In hogs from Mong Cai have long been recognized as a very good breed. Among a host of Ngai handicraftsmen, one can find smiths, moulders, weavers, boat-builders, etc. Mong Cai china and Cat Hai fish-sauce are famous all over the country.

*Social and family relations:* Before the liberation of North Vietnam (1955), child marriage and early betrothal were common in Ngai communities. As soon as their son was two or three years old, their parents asked a match-maker to look around for a suitable future partner for him, a girl who should be the same age or

a year or two older than him. The match-maker would call on the family of the little girl of her choice, give her some sugar candies wrapped in red paper and borrow from her parents the "child's destiny" with which a wizard would be asked to compare the boy's and the girl's age. «Destiny» here was a small round piece of red cloth about 20 or 30 centimetres in perimeter on which were listed in Chinese characters and ink the girl's surname and name and birth day and hour. If the wizard said that the children were meant for each other, then the boy's parents would bring gifts to the girl's parents and their children were considered engaged. When the girl was 13 or 14 the actual wedding would take place. The bridegroom should pay for every wedding gift. The wife would afterward move to her inlaws' house.

Ngai society is divided into small patrilineal families. Vestiges of a bigger patrilineal family linger in a kinship system and find their expression in the way children call their father's elder brother (they regard their senior uncle as their father).

When someone dies, his or her body is put in a wooden coffin and is buried after the bereft relatives have presented offerings to the spirits. On the grave, they lay a boulder as a marker, or put up stone slab on which a brief life story of the deceased is inscribed.

*Spiritual life*: It is quite clear that the Ngai are still polytheistic believers. They believe in many gods from the sea god, the Whale god, the Thunder god, the River god to the Wind god, the Rain god, etc., — who in their opinion are formidable forces governing their life. But on the whole the cult of ancestors still plays a role of prime importance. Religions, chiefly Taoism and Confucianism, have for a long time imbued their mind,

customs and habits and have had an impact on the traditional social order of the Ngai.

Owing to the fact that their forefathers were all sea-faring fishermen and that even now fishing is still their main trade, people of the Dan ethnic group have a very good knowledge of geography and climate, of sea-faring and the conduct of different sea animals, of weather-forecast by observing the stars and the change of hues and motion of the clouds, of spotting streams on the sea, etc. This special knowledge has been consistently reflected in their many folk tales, folk songs and proverbs.

Ngai fairy tales often speak of their struggle against natural forces and the fight between the good and the bad, for justice and a better life. The most popular Ngai folk song is *San Co*, which is a flirting, amorous duet sung at festivals, at weddings and occasions when young friends from various places gather together. A *San Co* party many last for three or four nights in a row.

Since liberation, production relations in the regions inhabited by the Ngai have changed considerably. Peasants have been allotted land and have embarked on the road of collective production by joining farming or fishing cooperatives from the lower to the higher type, the most active members of which are the Ngai cadres themselves. Health care and educational services have been daily widening and irrigation works have been built everywhere. Social relations have been steadily improved and marriage between the Ngai and the Viet and other ethnic groups are not uncommon these days.

The Ngai in Vietnam have basically the same roots: They are the offspring of those peasants who were forced to leave their native place because they could not bear the ruthless exploitation by the landlords who robbed them of their land and pauperized them, or of

those who fled the country after their revolutionary struggle had met with failure, or of those people on the run to evade heavy taxes levied on them or to avoid conscription...

No wonder these unfortunate people have gathered together into one community. The history of the Ngai has proved that right at the beginning, the first Ngai groups reaching Vietnam could easily intermingle in the Vietnamese community and were determined to oppose any forces of oppression and exploitation from the North, in defence of their peaceful life and their new homeland, Vietnam.

### **The San Ziu**

*Denomination:* San Ziu. *Other names:* Son Zeo, San Zeo, Man quan coc. (shorts — wearing Man), Man dat (land Man), Man ruong Rice farming Man), Man vay xé (Man wearing split skirts), San Nhieu, Lian Zao, San Zin Choc, Trai Dat (Lan trai)...

*Population:* about 66,000

*Language:* Chinese group (Nino-Tibetan family). Depending on where they live, the San Ziu people can also speak the language of other ethnic groups inhabiting the same area.

*Habitat:* The provinces of Quang Ninh, Ha Bac, Bac Thai, Vinh Phu, Ha Tuyen, Hai Hung and Thanh Hoa: Depending on the regions of settlement, they intermingle with other ethnic groups such as the Viet, Tay, Nung, Hoa, etc.

From Guangdong, China, they migrated to Vietnam in the middle of the 17th century in search of a better life.

*Material life:* The San Ziu live in villages, often at the foot of a hill in a semi-mountainous region. In the

old days, these were often tiny hamlets consisting of a couple of houses where one could hardly find any gardens or century-old, shady trees. Drinking water was mainly fetched from natural sources such as streams and rivers, as sinking a well was then considered an offence to the genies. But San Ziu villages have gone through considerable changes over the past few decades. Each village now has, among other things, bamboo groves, orchards, fish ponds, vegetable gardens, etc. and each house has a drying yard and a well. A number of San Ziu villages are as thriving as those in the Red River delta. San Ziu villages in Lac Tru commune, Lao Thach district (Vinh Phu province) or Binh Dan commune, Cam Pha district (Quang Ninh province) are thickly populated, with up to 200 houses each.

The San Ziu live in clay-and-wattle houses, some on stilts, others walled in.

Many San Ziu women still wear their traditional dresses, which consist of a calf-length skirt, often made up of five to seven pieces of cloth sewn together, a bodice and a long open-necked robe. The skirt and robe are either black or dark indigo. The bodice-straps are fastened on the back of the neck and are visible on the robe. The waist is girded by a cloth sash the two ends of which hang loosely down to the knees. San Ziu women wear black brocade head-cloths and puttees. Their ornaments include silver necklaces, bracelets, earrings and key chains.

On festive occasions men wear a pair of white trousers, a black robe, a silk turban with the hair done into a bun or a pleated ready-to-wear turban, and a pair of shoes. But their daily outfit only consists of a pair of brown trousers and a short-sleeved shirt. Nowadays, a great change in San Ziu clothing is taking place. Women

tend to wear a white blouse and black trousers while men like having their hair cut shorter and an increasing number of them wear Western shirts and trousers.

As wet rice is their main crop, the San Ziu eat rice as a staple food. But they also grow maize and sweet potato on hillsides. Their wet rice farming technique is pretty high and, on the whole, does not lag behind that of the Viet, Thai and Nung living in the same region. Witness the use, from time immemorial, of such farming implements as double-yoked ox-drawn ploughs and harrows, stone or wooden soil-grinding rollers, sickles, winnows consisting of two-bladed fans fitted to wooden boxes, buffalo-drawn sledges to bring the crops home, etc.

San Ziu farming technique also consists in alternating crops-maize, sweet potato, groundnut, sesame, pea, sugarcane, gourd, tuberous plant, etc. and in the use of many sources of fertilizers such as cattle dung, night boxes, buffalo-drawn sledges to bring the crops home, etc.

San Ziu farmers also excel in land reclamation. They have changed eroded hillsides and patches of wild gravelled land into subsidiary crop fields. This type of farming plays an important role in San Ziu life. Many hillside fields, carefully tilled and tended, have become dry or terraced fields good for rice cultivation.

In some areas, the San Ziu also grow mulberry and raise silkworms, or grow cotton for cloth and indigo, for dye. Attention has been given to the exploitation of forest products such as bamboo, rattan, timber, etc.

Fish is either reared in ponds and lakes or caught in streams and rivers. Most San Ziu dwellers in Quang Ninh province are salt-makers and fishermen.

Handicrafts, such as plaiting bamboo or rattan utensils, carpentry, brick and lime-making, smithery, masonry,

tailoring, etc. have gradually outgrown the framework of sideline occupations.

When farming does not require their immediate attention, they go hunting for meat in the woods.

*Social and family relations:* San Ziu society has been divided into rather distinct social classes but the degree of polarization varies from area to area. In areas where land was concentrated in the landlords' hands, class polarization was similar to that in regions inhabited by the Viet in the delta.

In general, the regime of communal land did not exist in San Ziu society, and each family gave a small portion of their reclaimed land to the village chief and to temple and shrinekeepers. But all told, the amount of land allotted to the village chief, which he could own, should not exceed two Bac Bo mau (7,200 sqm). In the case of temple-keepers, they would get a maximum of one mau (3,600 sqm), which he could tend only while in service.

Under the feudal and colonial regime, San Ziu peasants were subject to every kind of exploitation, from usury, land-mortgaging, sharecropping to seasonal labouring. Peasants in many places were forced to sell their land at a sacrifice to local feudalists and French planters and became tenants or hired farm hands. The San Ziu could only run themselves those arable plots, called "ruong xu", lying outside the French plantation, but they had to labour for the plantation owners when necessary. No wonder the San Ziu were one of the ethnic groups that provided a large number of sharecroppers and labourers to capitalistic enterprises, mines and farms.

In the former feudal-colonial administration there were also some San Ziu dignitaries such as *Khan Trai* (hamlet head), *ly truong* (village chief), *chanh tong* (canton chief),

who were responsible to a *tri chau* or *tri huyen* (district chief). In each village, besides the Council of Notables or the Communal Council, there was also a village chief, who usually was an old sage who knew well local customs and habits and was entrusted with the task of supervising communal affairs and acting as an arbiter in any dispute among his people.

There were no merchants since the people who sold their products were also those who made them.

In the past, most San Ziu wanted their adolescent sons to become wizards and to receive a spiritual decree. This wish stemmed from the belief that a wizard was not only exempt from spiritual harms but also could protect his family and his property against any mishap, and might be forever worshipped by his people. Nowadays, this practice of giving spiritual decrees has dwindled and in some regions, abolished, in the face of the continued onslaughts of the new culture and thanks to ever better material life.

The most common patronymic names are Ninh, Diep, Le, Tu, Truong, Ly, etc. Each family name has its own system of middle names put in a specific order consisting of seven, nine or twelve words. People bearing the same family name, even if they are strangers to each other, are considered consanguine relatives and all they should do to know where they stand in the hierarchy is to consult their middle names. But if they belong to the same generation, the older are considered the senior regardless of the genealogical tree.

San Ziu families are small patriarchal nuclear ones in which monogamy is practised. Polygamy is allowed only when the first wife bears no sons. Direct-line marriage is forbidden. Only from the fifth generation on is it allowed but before the wedding, the bride and the

bridegroom must present offerings to their ancestors and ask for pardon. Naturally the parents have the last say in marriage, which on the other hand, depends on the result of the comparison of ages between the would-be bride and bridegroom.

The traditional practice of bringing numerous betrothal gifts to the bride's parents is gradually disappearing. If a couple remains childless after long years of marriage it may organise a "remarriage", which proceeds as follows: after the winter solstice festivities, the husband pretends to get cross and chases his wife back to her mother's house. Then he sends a match-maker there to ask for his wife's hand and set a date for the wedding ceremony. So doing, they hope that as a "new" couple, they may have children.

The San Ziu bury their dead, whose bodies may be reinterred after three years. Their remains will be rinsed clean, then dried and arranged in a sitting posture in a big ceramic jar, which after that will be buried vertically. If the bones are put in a small earthenware urn, the latter will be buried horizontally.

At the funeral, custom decrees that children of the deceased should crawl round the grave once, starting at the foot of the coffin and flinging earth down as they crawl clockwise for the daughters and in the opposite direction for the sons. Before getting up, each should grab a clod and dash home without glancing over their shoulders. There they will throw the clods into stables or coops in the hope that this will bring them greater results in animal husbandry. After that, they will rush into the house and slump into a bamboo basket full of paddy so that the grains may stick to their clothes, and the more grains are on them, the more luck they will have. The funeral winds up with the children trying

to eat up each a boiled chicken laid where the coffin was yesterday. In the old days, the San Ziu also erected over the grave a burial hut consisting of four bamboo or wooden poles and the flat roof of which was covered with thatch or palm leaves. On the grave they put some of the things shared to the deceased: a knife, a hoe, a pair of wooden clogs, a conical hat, etc.

*Spiritual life:* The cult of ancestors and the Genie of Agriculture is the main aspect of San Ziu belief. There are always two incense burners on the family altar—one for the ancestors and the other for the Genie of Earth. For those who have got a spiritual decree, there is another burner for the *Phap Su* (Chief Priest). Some clans worship Lady Buddha Bodhisatva. The village's common places of worship are the temple for the cult of the Genie of Earth and the communal house for the worship of the Tutelary Genies both of whom, they believe, can help bring them good crops.

The San Ziu also worship the Kitchen Genie. Primitive Fire Worship is still very common here and the San Ziu take great care not to show lack of respect for the family kitchen.

San Ziu literary and folkloric works are rich in forms as well as in number<sup>1</sup>.

A wealth of myths, tales and satirical stories still circulate among the people. In addition, there is a whole lot of sayings, proverbs, etc. There also exists a very popular type of songs—those sung at wedding ceremonies. On festive occasions, at Tet, at wedding ceremonies or

1. Initially collected, translated and presented by Bac Hai, a San Ziu poet, in "Anthology of Vietnamese Literature", vol. VI, and in "Literature of Ethnic Minorities", in Vietnamese, Van Hoa (Culture) Publishing House, Hanoi, 1961.

at gatherings of friends and relatives, young men and women often join in *Soong co* singing, which sometimes lasts for six to seven nights in a row. This is a very popular form of spiritual life which still flourishes in San Ziu villages.

Among the most popular San Ziu musical instruments are the panpipe, the bamboo flute, horns, drums, cymbals, etc. In religious rites, some dances such as *Binh tanh* (lantern dance), *Lai that song* (stick dance), *Bang coong chiep senh* (trailblazing dance) *Ket cay than* (dance against evil spirits), etc., are often performed but singing and dancing in former San Ziu society had mostly religious purposes.

## b) TIBETO-BURMESE LANGUAGE GROUP:

### The Ha Nhi

*Denomination:* Ha Nhi. *Other names:* Ha Nhi Gia, U-ni and Xa U-ni. It includes three local groups: Ha Nhi Co Cho, Ha Nhi La Mi, and Ha Nhi Den.

*Population:* More than 9,000.

*Language:* Tibeto-Burmese.

*Habitat:* The Ha Nhi live in large communities in Muong Te district (Lai Chau province) and Bat Xat district (Hoang Lien Son province), northern Vietnam.

The ancestors of the Ha Nhi came from Yunnan province in southern China. They immigrated to Vietnam at different periods of time. The group inhabiting Lai Chau had settled earlier (about three centuries ago) than that in Hoang Lien Son (about 150 years ago). Branches of this ethnic minority still live in southern China.

*Material life:* The Ha Nhi live in clay-and-wattle house. Only a few of them, influenced by the Thai ethnic group, dwell in houses-on-stilts. Ha Nhi people who have settled down for sedentary farming live in crowded villages each having from 50 to 60 households. In contrast, those leading a nomadic life and practising slash-and-burn farming live in separate groups far from one another, each group having only a few families.

Nowadays, these nomads also have settled down to sedentary life, forming villages each with scores of households.

In the past, Ha Nhi boys and girls dyed their teeth with red shellac. The difference in dressing fashion between the two above-said groups is as follows: in Lai Chau province, Ha Nhi women prefer colourful clothes patterned on those of La Hu women. Their outer shirts sometimes are not open on the front flap but are split at the right side from the armpit downwards. In Hoang Lien Son province, Ha Nhi women's shirts are shorter and unadorned.

The Ha Nhi have since long practised rice farming on terraced fields on mountain and hill slopes. Of late, rice paddies have been formed in areas formerly under subsidiary crops. The Ha Nhi are experienced in carving mountain slopes to build terraced fields, irrigation canals and dams. Their farm tools include different kinds of hoes, pick-axes, spades and buffalodrawn ploughs and harrows. They use fertilizers, chiefly cattle dung, in cultivation. Animal husbandry, buffalo breeding in particular, is developing. Handicrafts such as wickerwork, cotton weaving and dyeing are important activities of the Ha Nhi.

*Social and family relations:* Before the liberation of North Vietnam in 1954, social differentiation among the Ha Nhi was already visible. Hiring of labour hands, lease of draught animals, and high-interest usury were common. Land lease, in particular, was very common in rice growing areas. The communal mode of production dwindled and the practice of mutual assistance declined. Crop fields became private property. Local feudalist forces of different ethnic groups controlled separate areas. Each Ha Nhi village was run by the hamlet chief.

and some villages were grouped into a community headed by a Ha Nhi manager appointed by the village chief of the Thai ethnic group. In Bat Xat district, these functions were called « *bình thau sec phai* ».

Each clan (Ly, Pha, Co, Bo, etc.) includes two or four family branches. The members of each family branch bear a patronymic name. Brothers of the same family install a common altar to worship their dead parents at the eldest brother's house. On the Lunar New Year's eve, children of each family are told about their ancestors and their family branch. With the principle of naming children after their fathers, many Ha Nhi people can recall the names of their ancestors from dozens of generations.

Most families in areas inhabited by the Ha Nhi are patrilineal. In some cases, parents live together with their married sons. But after their death, these couples often live in separate houses. In each family, the father or the eldest brother decides on everything. The eldest son usually stays back in his parents' home to worship their « spirits ». When necessary, he is replaced in this function by his youngest brother.

Ha Nhi young men and women can freely go steady before marriage. In some areas, Ha Nhi boys and girls of the same family branch may or may not get married within seven generations. According to a popular custom, the husband has to live in the wife's home from three to four years, or else he has to pay from 100 to 150 silver coins as wedding expenses. But in Bat Xat district, only when the wife's family has no sons or the sons are still very young can the husband live in his wife's home to look after the parents and later to attend to ancestral worship. Wedding rituals vary from one area to another. Wedding ceremonies in Bat Xat district are

more complicated but the bride does not have to change her family name to her husband's as Ha Nhi women in Muong Te district do.

When the father or mother dies, the altar and the bamboo sheets used to partition their bedroom are removed. The body is shrouded and lain on a bed in the middle chamber with the head turning towards the altar. The coffin is made of a hollowed-out log with a lid. According to a Ha Nhi custom, an egg is tossed into the air and the place where it falls is where the grave shall be dug. The grave is walled in by a structure the lower half of which is made of stones held together by mortar. The Ha Nhi do not build catafalques. In northern Vietnam, if a Ha Nhi inhabitant dies in the rainy season (from the sixth to ninth lunar month) the coffin is put on a scaffold in a nearby forest or hung over an already-dug grave, to be buried only after the monsoon.

*Spiritual life:* Besides ancestral cult (according to the patrilineal hierarchy), the Ha Nhi also worship the spirits of parents-in-law. Every year, in the second lunar month, they hold a grand offering service in the whole village during which they pray for good health of all villagers and for good success in both crop and cattle farming. The Ha Nhi also practise many other cults relating to farming, especially in rice growing areas, such as worship of the Thunder Genie, the Wind Ghost, and holding offering rites in celebration of the newly-harvested rice.

Ha Nhi folk arts and literature are fairly well developed. Apart from tales<sup>1</sup> there are many epics of

1. Some of them are printed in the book "Tales of the Ha Nhi Ethnic Minority" published in Hanoi, 1981.



literary and historical value such as "Ha Nhi Land" (Ha Nhi Mi Cha) and "Ha Nhi People's Life" (Ha Nhi De La). Many poem-stories deal with traditional marriage and other customs and practices. The *dan tinh* is a popular string instrument. Young people have many healthy games and entertainments such as "fund-raising game", springboard, swinging, etc., which show that the Ha Nhi love life, singing and dancing.

The revolution has saved the Ha Nhi from oppression and exploitation and brought them a life free from cold and hunger as well as a wholesome spiritual life. Many Ha Nhi have taken an active part in the literacy and complementary education campaign. Within two years (1963—64), illiteracy had been eliminated in Mu Ca village (Muong Te district), class-rooms had been built in each village, and each commune had set up a basic general education school. Che Chu Che Me, in Dien Bien Phu, was the first Ha Nhi girl to have graduated from a teacher training college. Mrs. Po Co, another Ha Nhi woman, is a deputy to the Vietnamese National Assembly, 7th Legislature.

### The La Hu

*Denomination*: La Hu. *Other names*: Xa Toong, Luong Xa La Vang, Xa Puoi, Kha Quy (Xa Quy), and Khu Sung (or Co Sung). The La Hu ethnic minority consists of three local groups: La Hu Su, La Hu Na and La Hu Phung.

*Population*: More than 4,000.

*Language*: Tibeto-Burmese.

*Habitat*: Muong Te district, Lai Chau province, north-western Vietnam.

*Material life*: People of the La Hu ethnic group are still living in China. In Vietnam, the La Hu live in

separate villages scattered on the slopes of earth mountains. Each village consists of several hamlets, each having a few households. From nomadic life and farming in the past, the La Hu have of late settled down for sedentary farming and their life has become more secure.

Most of them live in clay-and-wattle houses. Some of the houses are built on the pattern of the neighbouring Ha Nhi ethnic group: the furniture is arranged differently but there is always a fireplace for cooking, heating, resting and receiving guests. The fireplace lies a few yards from the chief of the family's bedstead. The ancestral altar is hung on the wall above the chief's bed.

La Hu women wear long indigo or black robes which reach down to the ankles. The button line runs along the right side of the robe and the collar and front flap are often adorned with patches of cloth of different colours and an embroidered line. The narrow-sleeves are made of blue, red, white and black patches of cloth sewn together. On festive days or during long travels, La Hu women put on a short sleeveless vest with the button line running down in the middle of the front flap and a butterfly-shaped arabesque ribbon with silver or aluminium coins and red beads attached on the edges of both front flaps.

Before liberation, the La Hu engaged in hillside farming, forest product gathering and hunting as their main economic activities. Maize was their main food crop. They tilled the land with small knives and hoes, using a sharp-pointed stick to dig holes for seeds. The stick was hardened by putting it over the fire for a while. Maize was grown on terraced fields together with cabbages, calabashes, beans and other plants. Each plot of land was cultivated only one or two years then left fallow for two or three years before being reclaimed.

After practising this method three or four times, the La Hu left the land fallow for good.

In the past, owing to their poor crop yields every year the La Hu had to live from six to seven months on tubers and other starch-bearing plants, wild fruit and vegetables. To harvest or gather these edible things, they used sharp-pointed bamboo sticks, knives and other simple iron tools. Besides cross-bows and arrows which were their common weapons, they used flintlocks and various kinds of traps for hunting.

Unlike other ethnic groups, the La Hu do not use poisoned arrows. To catch fish, they use bamboo devices and traps, and venomous plants. Of late, they have used fishing nets. They excel in swimming and diving to catch with their bare hands fish as well as frogs spawning beneath rocks in streams and ravines. La Hu men are skilled in wickerwork and smithery. Their products are mainly used at home and only part of them are exchanged with Thai and Ha Nhi people for cloth, salt, farm tools and other necessities.

*Social and family relations:* Under the old regime, the La Hu led a very precarious life. In the managerial system controlled by the colonialists and feudalists, *sung quan* was the highest public function that could be assumed by the La Hu. A man vested with this function had to urge the people to pay taxes and settle social affairs within his commune according to old laws and practices. He was assisted by a *tao ban* and a *seo phai*.

Each La Hu group consists of many different clans. Among people living in the same village, there are members of one or two major clans. Some clans are divided into family branches bearing the names of birds or other animals. Some bear the patronymics of other ethnic minorities such as Po, Vang, Phan and Giang.

Endogamy has brought about the co-existence of the above-said clans and family branches in La Hu villages and communes.

Each La Hu household averages from six to eight members. It mainly consists of the parents and their children. The patrilineal character of La Hu families is noticeable. Nonetheless, women enjoy almost equal treatment with men in family life.

La Hu men and women may go steady and decide on their love affairs. Monogamy is observed. Marriage is prohibited to men and women of the same clan but in some families, this taboo is only applied to people of the same close family branch. Marriage can be arranged between cross cousins and parallel cousins but levirate and sororate are forbidden. In the past matrilocality lasted 7—8 years. Nowadays, it is only 2—3 years.

La Hu women deliver their babies right in their bedroom. Three days after delivery, an old man or woman is invited to come and give a name to the newborn child. During these three days, the child receives its name from the first visitor. Only when the child grows slowly or frets too often is it given another name or nickname.

According to a La Hu custom, when a person dies, two gunshots are fired to chase away his or her spirits and to inform the neighbours. The coffin, before burial, is lain on a mat on the ground floor besides which the deceased's children perform rites while adult men play the trumpet or dance. An egg is thrown at a row of timber trees and the tree that happens to stand nearest the fallen egg is felled to make a coffin with. The tree trunk is split into two and hollowed out to make the coffin with the upper end of the log as its head. The burial day is carefully chosen. The location of the grave

is also decided on by tossing an egg. The La Hu do not build catafalques and the graves are not walled or fenced in.

*Spiritual life* : Ancestors are important objects of worship. Attention is only paid to the worship of parents and only when a family member is seriously ill is a service arranged to conjure up ancestors of three elder generations.

Every year, after finishing maize planting, the La Hu hold a service for the "Genie of Earth" on the "Tiger Day" in the fourth lunar month during which they pray for good health and fine success in both crop and cattle farming. During the cropping seasons, ritual services to celebrate the "rice soul" or "maize soul" are held. Smiths' families hold a ritual service for their trade's ancestors on "Horse Day" in the 10th lunar month<sup>1</sup>.

The La Hu do not celebrate the Tet (lunar New Year) festival at the same period of time, but at different times in each village after harvest. The villagers take part in singing, dancing, playing the trumpet and other entertainments, three or four days on end during Tet. They sing in the Ha Nhi language to a special rhythm. The *khen bau* is a popular musical instrument made of five slender bamboo tubes of different lengths fitted into a sound-amplifying box.

Since the liberation of North Vietnam in 1954, the La Hu people's life has undergone rapid changes. With the assistance of the Thai, Ha Nhi and other brotherly ethnic minorities, they have actively reclaimed waste

and virgin land for farming and boosted cultivation on terraced fields. Rice has gradually become their main food. In the past, they had no sedentary arable land. By 1973 Pa U village alone had reclaimed 40 hectares of land. In 1965, the La Hu began raising domestic animals.

Since the La Hu settled down for sedentary life and farming, their villages have been thriving. Each La Hu village now averages from 30 to 40 households. In some places, La Hu have moved down to lower lands along the Da River. Schools have been built in all La Hu villages. Illiteracy has been reduced and malaria brought under control. Infant mortality, due to malnutrition, as well as chronic famine, have become things of the past.

### The Phu La

*Denomination* : Phu La. There are six local groups:

— *The Phu La Han* group lives in Bac Ha and Muong Khuong district, Hoang Lien Son province.

— *The Xa Pho* group lives at scattered places in the provinces of Hoang Lien Son, Son La and Lai Chau.

— *The Phu La Hoa* group, whose women wear floral skirts inhabits Bat Xat district, Hoang Lien Son province.

— *The Phu La Den* group, whose women wear long dark indigo robes, dwells in A Lu village (Bat Xat district) and Nan Xi village (Xin Man district), Hoang Lien Son province.

— *The Phu La Trang* group lives mostly in Muong Khuong district, Lai Chau province.

— *The Chu La Phu La* group mostly inhabits Lung Phing village, Bac Ha district, Hoang Lien Son province.

1. The La Hu count days and years according to a cycle of 12 animals: tiger, rabbit, dragon, sable, horse, sheep, monkey, hen, dog, pig, squirrel and buffalo.

*Population*: more than 5,000.

*Language*: Tibeto-Burmese.

*Habitat*: mainly in the districts of Muong Khuong, Bao Thang, Bac Ha, Bat Xat, Shapa, Ximacai, Bao Yen and Van Ban, Hoang Lien Son province (a little more than 4,000 inhabitants) and Xin Man district, Ha Tuyen province (almost 1,000 inhabitants). A smaller number of Phu La live in Quynh Nhai district, Son La province, and Sin Ho and Tuan Giao districts, Lai Chau province.

The Phu La have since long lived in Vietnam's northern border areas. The book "Kien Van Tieu Luc" (Short Collection of Things Seen and Heard) written by the Vietnamese historian Le Quy Don in the 18th century referred to them and listed them under the denomination "Pho".

*Material life*: The Phu La live mainly on high mountain slopes. Each group comprises some dozens of houses located far from crop fields to avoid destruction by cattle and poultry which are reared according to the method of free grazing. Only in Bac Ha district do the Phu La live in separate groups side by side with the people of the H'Mong (Meo) Zao and Hoa ethnic groups.

Nowadays, two kinds of dwelling houses are still common in areas inhabited by the Phu La: the house-on-stilts and the clay-and-wattle house. Houses-on-stilts are preferred by the Phu La Hoa and Xa Pho living in Son La and Lai Chau provinces and in Bat Xat district, Hoang Lien Son province. Clay-and-wattle houses are common in areas inhabited by the Phu La Han in Bac Ha, Muong Khuong and Ximacai districts, Hoang Lien Son provinces.

The entrance door of clay-and-wattle houses stands in the middle of the central room while that of houses-on-stilts is at both side-chambers. The altar for ancestral worship stands at a corner of the central chamber. There is a square 20-centimetres wide window on the outer wall. This "ghost window" often remains closed except on worship occasions.

Each Phu La family has an auxiliary house about 20 metres from the main dwelling house where enough food is stored for a few days' use.

Phu La women wear long tight-fit skirts with a girdle. Different patterns of arabesque adorn their skirts, especially on the hems. Phu La Den women alone wear trousers.

Most Phu La women, those of the Xa Pho and Phu La Hoa groups in particular, wear square-necked pull-over shirts the flap-end of which does not drop below the waist. The shirts are adorned with parallel colour thread lines and the sleeves and flaps are straight. Both front and back flaps are embroidered with arabesques and their upper parts are adorned with colour glass beads. Narrow arabesques are often seen on the hems of shirts and skirts.

Arabesques on Phu La women's dresses are triangular, square or rhomboidal. They stand out on the dresses on account of their colours with different shades. Other arabesques represent pinetrees, harrow teeth, the Chinese character "wan" (ten thousand) or people standing in a line roughly stylized by square figures. The sleeves are adorned with patches of colour cloth. Most Phu La women wear a sash about one metre long and 10 centimetres across. Some 30 or 40 mussel shells are attached in a straight line around the waist.

Casual shirts of Phu La Hoa and Ka Pho men are double-flapped shirts with an open collar as low as the shoulders. Both flaps are adorned with glass beads laid in a cross-shaped figure.

A Phu La fashion is to carry a canvas hand-bag with colour tassels at both ends. The front side and strap of the bag are embroidered with arabesques and colour glass beads are attached to them.

The Phu La's main farming method consists in growing rice and maize on hillside fields. They also grow different kinds of vegetables and beans. In Bac Ha and Bat Xat districts, people of Phu La Han, Phu La Hoa and Phu La Den groups have since long practised hillside rice farming.

A number of cattle and poultry such as pigs, goats and chicken have been raised for meat and for offerings at ancestral worship services. In rice-growing areas, buffaloes, oxen and horses are bred for use in ploughing, harrowing and transportation.

The Phu La have developed high skills in making several kinds of handicraft articles appreciated by neighbouring ethnic minorities. These articles include a wide variety of wickerwork skillfully woven with arabesque motifs.

Phu La men are good hunters. They often use cross-bows with poisoned arrow-tips.

*Social and family relations:* On the whole, class polarization among Phu La families is not yet profound. The most trusted person in the commune is the senior wizard who represents the people in discussing and settling communal affairs.

Under the former feudo-colonial regime, Phu La communes were subject to heavy corvees imposed on

them by the local administration run by members of other ethnic groups.

The time-honoured tradition of mutual assistance among villagers has been maintained and graphically expressed during cropping seasons. Voluntary workers would have their breakfast at home and bring along food for lunch at noon on the hill-side fields. After a long day's work in the fields they are invited to dine by the host family and stay there till late at night to sing and dance.

Each Phu La village has one or two family branches. Each branch is divided into major or minor sub-branches. The difference between the two lies in worship practices in which the major branch uses fresh meat for offerings to ancestors or genies while the other uses sour meat. Marriage can be arranged for men and women of the same family branch but of different sub-branches.

The Phu La social fabric is made up of small patrilineal families. Children bear patronymic names and the bride lives in her husband's home.

Men and women can get married of their own free will after going steady for some time and after reporting their affair to their respective parents. After an informal dinner in the presence of both families and a number of close relatives and neighbours, they are recognized as husband and wife. The formal wedding may take place a few days or even years later depending on the capabilities of the husband's family. The dowry is a small part of property usually including knives, hoes, rice strains, a pig, chicks, a blanket, a rush mat, a cooking pot, a pan, bowls, chopsticks, etc. Wedding gifts from the bridegroom include a suit of clothes, a silver necklace, about 40 kilograms of pork, and two or three jars of sticky rice liquor. The marriage procedure is neither long nor complicated.

When a Phu La dies, his or her coffin is lain in state at his (her) hours for two or three days before burial. According to a custom, at the funeral, part of the sacrificial animals are used to make sour meat for offering to the "spirits" at a ceremony held at the grave. This major rite, held 13 days after the burial, lasts from the afternoon till the next morning. After that, the time mourning for the dead is over. The ensuing care for the grave will be given and commemorations held during the Lunar New Year days in the first three years. The third and also last commemoration is called "grave abandoning" ceremony.

*Spiritual life*: The Phu La hold ancestral commemorations at traditional festivities such as Lunar New Year's Day, the second lunar month festival, the 5th day of the 5th lunar month, the 14th or 15th of the 7th lunar month, etc. Besides pork and chicken, offerings include fish, shrimps, crabs and boiled gourd. A sheet of blotting paper is soaked with the sacrificial animals' blood and folded into a boat-shaped object and placed on the altar.

The most salient feature of Phu La folk arts is the arabesque motif embroidered on cloth woven by Phu La women. The skill in patching arabesques on wickerwork made by Phu La men is worth mentioning.

With regard to folk literature, Phu La tales and lyrical songs have been told and performed at festivals and wedding parties. Young people often take part in the "txin chi ba" dance at festivals in the first and second lunar months before the start of the spring rice cropping season. The Phu La boast a wealth of proverbs which are useful recommendations on production work and social relations and particularly help promote solidarity in the community.

## The Lolo

*Denomination*: Lolo. *Other names*, Lu Loc Man, Qua La, Di Nhan, Lac To, Man Di, Man Chi, Mun Di, Di Gia, Lala.

*Local groups*: Black Lolo and Hoa Lolo.

*Population*: over 2,000.

*Languages*: Tibeto-Burmese.

*Habitat*: Districts of Dong Van, Meo Vac (Ha Tuyen province), Bao Lac (Cao Bang province), Muong Khuong (Hoang Lien Son province).

The Lolo who had lived in Yunnan (China), immigrated to Vietnam probably in the 15th century. The second great immigration to Vietnam was in the 18th century.

*Material life*: The Lolo live in separate villages, in houses-on-stilts or half-on-stilts-half-on ground. The arrangement in the house is on the common pattern: in the middle room there is a "Ma Nha" altar next to the wall; the right-hand bay is the bedroom with a fireplace, the left-hand bay is reserved for the kitchen where tools are kept and the ancestors' altar is placed. These houses are built on high and clean ground looking onto valleys. Near the villages there are many big trees, particularly dense forests. Forests and big trees provide shade, protect springs and are regarded as the home of the Genie of Earth. That is why it is forbidden to fell trees here.

Lolo women's dress retains its national character, meanwhile men's dress looks like the Hmong's and the Tay's in the area. Black Lolo women wear black jackets whose 30cm-wide-sleeves have several coloured patches of cloth fixed to them. The skirt, also black, long and ample, is

creased at the waist band and at the knee. They also use a sash, puttees and a dark indigo scarf with multi-coloured thread fringe and embroidered with decorative designs. Hoa Lolo women wear round-necked jackets split on the breast, decorated with square ornament designs put together by triangular pieces of cloth, with multi-colour glass beads; their dark indigo or black trousers are also decorated like their jackets. They wear puttees like the Hmong women, besides they have decorative designs (patches of cloth or wax cloth) on their belts and scarves.

Cultivation is the Lolo's main branch of production in which rice and maize are the main food-crops. In the rocky highlands in Dong Van and Meo Vac districts the Lolo apply the sedentary method of agriculture on clearings and lands between rocks. The techniques of crop-overlapping, rotation of crops and fighting erosion are developed. On the foothills of Bao Lac district, cultivation has been done in terraced-fields, however sedentary cultivation on milpas still prevails.

Animal husbandry and poultry breeding are a secondary household economy aimed at ensuring self-sufficiency chiefly on festive days. Predatory economy still occupies an important position in the Lolo's economic life. Handicrafts which are less developed comprise mainly basket-work, carpentry and weaving.

#### *Social and family relations.*

Before liberation (1954), there was clear-cut class polarization in Lolo society: the exploiting class and exploited classes. The labouring people were also victims of the colonialists' "divide and rule" policy.

The Lolo families are organized on the same pattern. Each family group consists of several clans of three to

five generations. Families of the same clan live in one village, have close relations and the same rites for worshipping their ancestors. The clan-chief must belong to the senior branch. The role of the mother's brother is predominant only during the mother's life time. Relations with the wife's family slacken with the third generation.

Monogamy is universally observed among the Lolo and the wife should live in the husband's house. Child marriage (at the age of 13 — 14) was a common occurrence. Adultery is strictly forbidden. Levirate exists only in principle. Marriage between cross cousins is fairly popular, but there is only one case in a family.

The patrilineal nuclear family is common place in the Lolo region. The father and the husband have supreme authority in the family. The daughters can inherit her mother's jewels and have a dowry, but all other properties of the family belong to the sons.

When somebody dies, the chief mourner must arrange a dancing funeral (with dances and songs) during three or five days to take the deceased's soul to the land of ancestors. The son-in-law always takes the head in the procession. He carries a cloth bag containing a wooden head with a cloth strip wound spirally — symbol of the deceased's head. When the coffin is taken to the cemetery, the son-in-law must be one of the carriers. He and his wife's brothers should throw the first clods of earth into the grave.

#### *Spiritual life:*

In the Lolo's conception there exist "near ancestors" and "remote ancestors". The near ancestors include the deceased from the 3rd to the 5th generations, the remote

ancestors from the 5th to the 6th generations. All rites concerning the ancestors are held chiefly in the clan elder's house. However every family has their own ancestors' altar.

Every year the whole village commemorate the Genie of the Earth and pray for good crops. Having finished farm work, the Lolo families present offerings to the Genie of the Field. There are also some other ceremonies relating to agriculture.

The Lolo think that there exist *Mit-do* and *Ket-do* genies who rule the metaphysical world. *Ket-do* rules the universe and creates man. *Mit-do* rules the earth and protects man. The Lolo believe in ghosts and when they fall ill, a ceremony is held to present offerings to the ghost. This ethnic group observes many taboos in their daily life.

Lolo culture knew a period of fairly high development. Lolo script existed long ago. Some written relics are still preserved, but few old Lolo people know how to read.

The bronze drum-set which consists of a "male drum" and a "female drum" is the traditional musical instrument, the treasure of the whole clan and is beaten during funeral ceremonies as accompaniment to popular dances!

Lolo folk songs and tales<sup>1</sup> have a rich ideological content; they reflect the people's material and spiritual life in the course of history. Though having many mythical elements they present the world outlook of the ancient Lolo. These folk songs praise the fight against natural calamities and the class struggle, the tradition of industriousness, optimism and portray the good and

1. They have been introduced in "Lolo Folk Songs" published in 1975 in Hanoi, and in "Lolo Tales" Culture Publishing House, Hanoi, 1981.

the evil in society. These songs are always performed in moonlit nights or during weddings and funeral ceremonies. The young Lolo like to perform alternative singing in pairs (two girls and two boys). The five-word-to-a-line-metre, simple but meaningful, is popular in these songs and psalms for using worship.

Since liberation, in the Lolo areas, more health stations, schools and department stores have been built.

### The Cồng

*Denomination* : Cồng. *Other names* : Xam Khoong, Xa, Xa Coong, Phuy A.

*Population* : over 800.

*Language* : Tibeto-Burmese.

*Habitat* : villages of Muong Te district (Lai Chau province) near the border with Laos and China.

*Material life* : Before liberation (1954) they lived on mountain slopes in the highland. After the movement of sedentation (1960), most of them came to settle down in the Da riparian area. Their houses often look onto the foot of the hill or onto the river.

The Cồng live in three or four-compartment-houses with bamboo lattice as partition. The central compartment is used as sitting room. The room for the son and his wife is on one side, and on the other is the parents' bedroom, the ancestors' altar and the kitchen. In case the son-in-law lives with the family, the daughter and her husband live in the first room, next to the door. The house has only one window and one entrance door in the central compartment. The walls are thick and the door has a bolt. That was the structure of a house in the border area, best suited for defence purposes.

The Cồng do not know how to weave. They grow cotton and barter it for cotton fabric with other groups,



chiefly the Thai. *Công* women wear skirts ending above the ankle and folded on the right. They wear silver-jewels on the waist. Their blouses are short, ending just above the waist. The dark indigo sleeves are often decorated with two or three multi-coloured strips of cloth. *Công* men wear *la toa* trousers and shirts. Nowadays shirts are popular.

Like other groups in the neighbourhood, the *Công* grow crops on clearings which they use for three years or so. But since liberation, they have practised rotation of crops, so that they can exploit the land for more than ten years before it is left fallow. Recently the *Công* have extended their cultivated area by growing crops in fields. Besides, collecting is the household sideline economy, especially during the slack season. Basket-work is rather developed. The *Công* catch fish by hand or with poisonous leaves. At present many *Công* people buy boats from the Thai for fishing on rivers.

#### *Social and family relations :*

Before liberation, in the local administrative apparatus the *Công* held the posts of *Ky-muc*, *Tao-ban*, *Sa-qua* and were put under the rule of the Thai landlords. *Ky-muc*, *Tao-ban* administered one hamlet. *Sa-qua* administered some hamlets and had direct contact with the Thai village-mayor. The *Công* people then were forced by the Thai *Phia-tao* (landlords) to work as *nhôc*, *công* (coolies, carriers serfs) to serve them, but were still looked down on by the Thai.

The *Công* have various names of family-groups such as Lo, Ly, Chao, Hu, etc, which distinguish themselves from each other by the way of worshipping their ancestors, by the position of their altars, by the taboos they observe (birds, fish...) Each family-group is divided into

branches. In a village there are several family-groups but there is always a dominant one. The chief of a family-group has to attend to all matters of common interests, to help its members in marriage and to be the master of ceremonies in weddings.

The *Công* family is a patrilineal nuclear family. Monogamy is commonplace. Divorce and polygamy are rare. In the same family-group a couple may get married provided that the kinship relation between them goes back as far as the seventh generation. Parallel cousin marriage is a common occurrence. On the contrary, levirate and sororate are forbidden by the *Công* customs. Exogamy (with Thai, Ha Nhi, Sila, etc.), has been practised recently.

The married woman does her hair into a bun on top of her head. This is done immediately after the betrothal engagement by the fiance's family. Then the future son-in-law must come to live in the house of his future parents-in-law for 8 — 12 years. Matrilocality may be replaced by payment of a sum of money, which is about five white silver coins and some bank-notes. The wedding is often organized at the end of the year when the crops have been gathered in and often towards the last year of matrilocality. Many couples have got children during matrilocality and on wedding day the couple is often accompanied by two or three children.

*Công* women deliver their babies near the fire place. The placenta is kept in a bamboo tube and buried in the ground under the floor. Six or seven days after the umbilical cord heals up the grandfather or the uncle of the baby puts a thread round its wrist and gives it a name. If the baby often frets and falls ill, a soul invoking ceremony is held and the baby is given another name.

When a person dies, his body is placed in the bedroom (in case the deceased is the father or mother), or in the middle of the house (in other cases). There is a custom of throwing an egg to locate the future grave. The coffin is made of a big trunk which has been hollowed out. The "souls" of the living are carefully preserved during and after the funeral ceremony. Children have to go into mourning for their parents. The eldest son must have his hair razed by his brothers-in-law, and wear a white turban until the new rice ceremony is held.

#### *Spiritual life :*

The Cồông worship their ancestors of two or three generations. The father is the master of ceremonies, in case he dies, his wife replaces him. When the parents are no longer, the brothers celebrated in common all ceremonies. If they are married and live separately, each will have his own altar and hold the ceremonies separately. They present offerings to their ancestors during festive days, new rice ceremony, wedding day, on the birth of a child, at the parents' death, during illness regarded as the ancestors' punishment. The parents-in-law's "ghosts" are also worshipped by their son-in-law's family.

In the third month of the lunar year, before the new sowing season, the whole village holds in common a *ga ma thu* ceremony (worshipping the village genie) directed by a sorcerer. Formerly, before the end of the sowing season the host held a ceremony worshipping the *Nuong* "ghost" (now the whole village holds a collective ceremony). When the crops are gathered and the rice is stored, there are also some religious activities related to the faith in "the rice's soul".

Cồông popular literature consists of sayings and proverbs handed down from generation to generation to guide the people's behaviour or sum up experience on weather, cultivation and hunting. Fables, also very popular, are satires directed at bad habits and social evils. During festive days or wedding ceremonies some folk melodies are used by the young in alternative singing to express love.

Since liberation, the Cồông have adopted sedentation. They have joined agricultural co-operatives and lived happily in nice and clean houses in populous villages. The miserable life constantly threatened by poverty, ignorance and diseases is becoming a thing of the past. The Cồông have learned new farming techniques and how to cultivate in water fields, to breed buffaloes as draught animals and to build irrigation works. Many backward custom and habits are done away with in the life of Cồông people. The duration of matrilocality has been reduced to 3—4 years. Some Cồông have become important local cadres.

#### **The Sila**

*Denomination :* Sila. *Another name :* Cude-xu.

*Population :* about 400.

*Language :* Tibeto-Burmese.

*Habitat :* Muong Te district (Lai Chau province).

The Sila in Vietnam used to live in Phong Sali (Laos). But in view of the harsh oppression by Lao feudalists, seven Sila families immigrated to Vietnam and settled down in the border area.

#### *Material life :*

The Sila formerly lived in small villages in the highlands. After ten or twenty years they changed their

habitat. Nowadays they have come down to settle down in the riparian area of the Da river. They build houses with mud walls and one entrance door. The popular architectural style is the two-bay-two-wing house. The altar is never placed in the bay with the door. The host of the house sleeps in a separate room beside his parents' altar. There are two fire places in a house, the main one is in the middle of the house, the three stones which support the cooker are regarded as the inhabitancy of the ancestors.

The Sila women's dress consists of a short black or indigo skirt which is tucked on the front like the Thai's. The blouse buttoned at the right side armpit, the flap is made of pieces of cloth of different colours to which are fixed silver or aluminum coins for decorative purpose; the collar and the wrist are patched up with some colourful strips of cloth. The women's head-dresses vary according to their ages: hats and scarfs for young girls under age, scarfs for young girls and turbans for married women. During a long trip, a Sila woman often carries a hemp bag and decorated with tufts of red thread.

In the past men's teeth were painted with red shelac and women's were black lacquered. At present white teeth are popular.

The main foods of this ethnicity are rice and maize. After liberation (1954) sedentary cultivation on clearings appeared. In the process of sedentation they have started to plough water fields. Pigs and poultry make up the bulk of domestic animals. Recently the Sila have bred buffaloes. Hunting is not developed. Gathering done by women (of vegetables, tuber roots, forest-bamboo shoots, etc) helps improve the daily diet.

### *Social and family relations:*

Before liberation (1954) the Sila's social structure depended on that of the Thai in the area. Each village had their own representatives acting as *Tao Ban*, *Ky Muc*, the whole village had only one *Sa Qua* who was a Sila and whose duty was to collect taxes, manage coolies, appoint servants to work for the Thai canton and village chiefs, and run the village affairs in conformity with the laws and customs *Hu* and *Po* are two big family groups. Each of them consists of many branches. Cat is the common fetish of the Sila people. The *Hu* family group, in particular, never eat tiger meat. The oldest man in each family group acts as an *A-lu-lu-co-i-su* to attend to the affairs of the group, being the master in wedding and funeral ceremonies, etc. When he dies, his successor continues to ensure the cult of the ancestors at the same place. Towards the end of the third year, the latter must build a new house and move the altar there. The altar is usually placed near the central column of the house. The Sila present offerings to ancestors on festive days (December) and the new-rice-ceremony; the offerings consist of squirrel meat, fresh-water crab, gudgeon, alcohol, taro, potato, rice ears, a bunch of leaves, glass beads and beeswax.

The Sila family is a patrilineal nuclear one. A Sila family consists of the parents and their children, and sometimes the grandparents.

Marriage between members of different branches of the same lineage is not allowed. Levirate and sororate are strictly forbidden. Marriage between cross cousins and parallel cousins is acceptable if the two fathers are not of the same family group. A marriage is celebrated twice. After the first ceremony which is simple the new

couple live in the husband's house. The second ceremony includes the ceremony for handing over the bride price to the wife's family. The next day the couple has to attend a get-together party at the house of the wife's parents.

During pregnancy a Sila woman observes taboos and keeps on a diet. She must have her delivery at home and in a sitting position. After two or three days an old woman in the village is invited to come and give a name to the baby. A boy has an additional name, *Cha* and a girl, *co* or *cô*.

Members of the same family group want their graves to be near one another, occupying an area in the cemetery at the end of their village. The dead are allowed to "lie in state" for many nights during which a ceremony is held to see the "souls" off to their nativeland in Mo-U (Muong U—Phong Sali—Upper Laos).

Having chosen a place for the grave, the villagers help the bereaved dig the grave and build a catafalque. After the funeral the bereaved's children pay constant visits to the grave for nine days (if the deceased is a man), or for seven days (if the deceased is a woman). The last evening, an offering ceremony is held to see off the "souls". It is believed that a man has nine "souls" and a woman has seven "souls". Following is how children go into mourning for their parents: the son has his bun of hair tied on top of his head, the daughter must take off her necklace, her bracelet and all other jewelries. Marriage is forbidden during the three years that follow the funeral.

#### *Spiritual life:*

The Sila set great store by the worship of ancestors. Each family has its own altar for the deceased parents,

as for the grand parents and great-grandparents, they are worshipped in the house of the chief of the family group. Besides, every year towards the end of the first lunar month and the beginning of the second lunar month, the whole village holds in common a worshipping ceremony praying for security and good production. Every year a *Mu Phe* (chief organiser) is chosen. If good success has been achieved, the *Mu Phe* is chosen again the following year. In religious rites concerning production, there is a ceremony to invoke the Genie of Rice which is celebrated in the clearings first and at home later, some taboos should be observed before, during and after the sowing time. For example, strangers are forbidden to enter the houses and the village.

Like many other ethnic groups, the Sila divide time into cycles, each of which lasts twelve days. Each day bears a name of an animal: buffalo, tiger, etc.

Sila folk literature and art include epic poems, folk songs, sayings, tales and legends, etc. Alternative singing between boys and girls in praise of faithfulness, love and love of nature, is a very popular and developed form of artistic activity.

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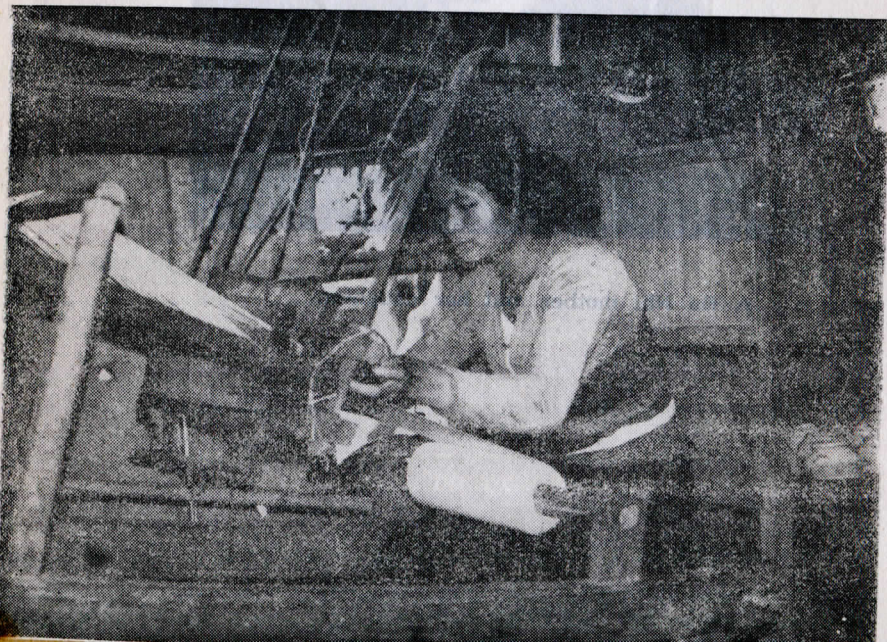
A Ha Nhi mother and her daughter.



Bahna women in Kon Tum.

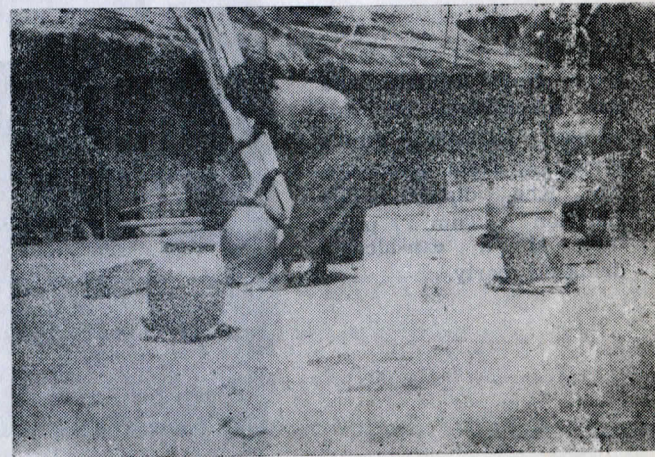


A Muong girl at the loom.

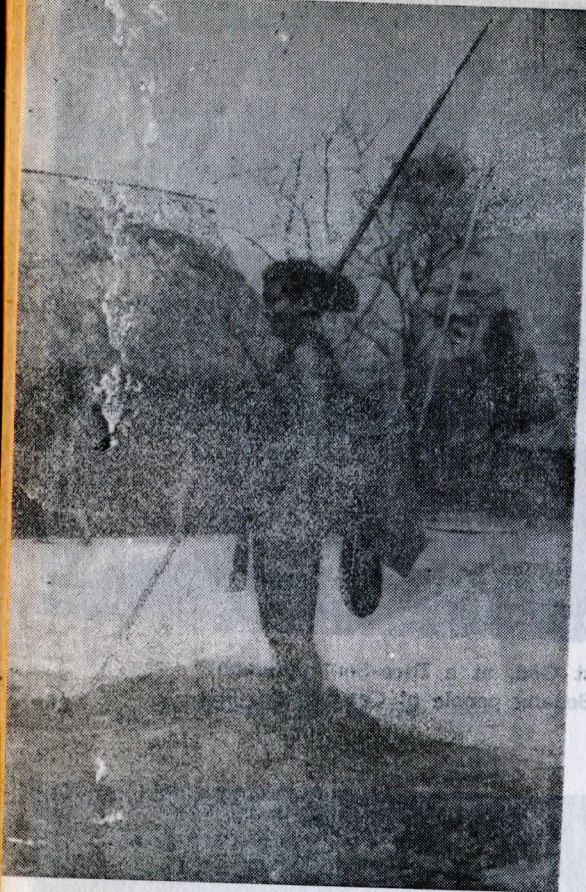


Musicians following Forest God, at a Rice-Soul ceremony before harvesting of the Sedang people at Cong Plong, Gia Lai-Kon Tum province.

A Gie-Trieng woman in the courtyard.







A Co Tu youth with fishing tackle.

Muslims leaving forest before harvesting of the Lai-Kon Tum province.

Hero Nup (centre) and the inhabitants of Stor village (Bahnar ethnic group) at Nam commune, An Khe district, Gia Lai-Kon Tum province at a can-alcohol drinking party.



Dan Lai-Ly Ha people (Tho ethnicity) in Tuong Duong district, Nghe Tinh province, at basketwork.



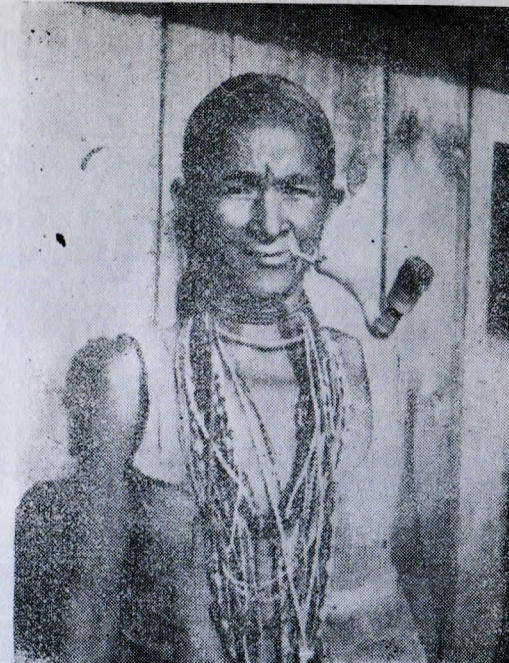
A Stieng young man with a traditional weapon (xa gac and javelin).



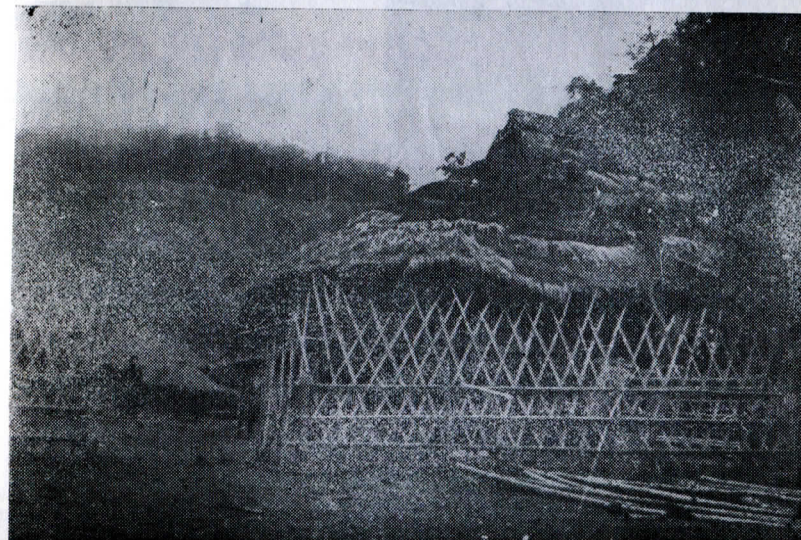
Mang women in their daily clothes.



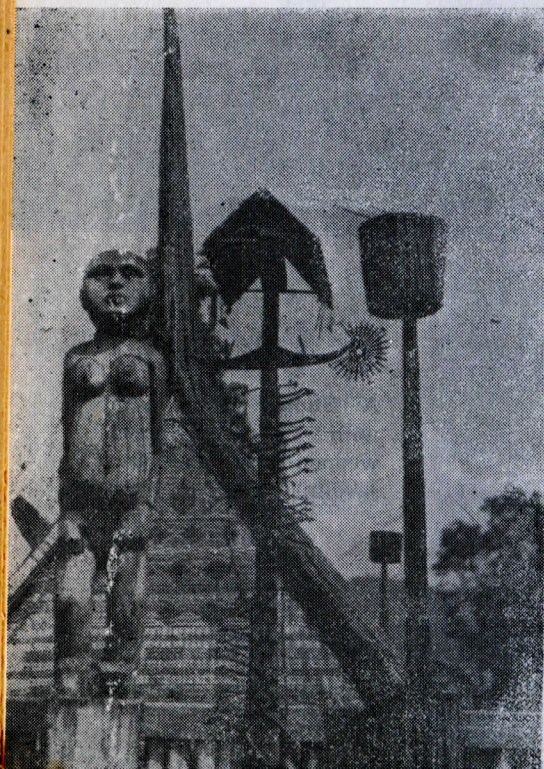
An old woman of Ma ethnic group with a pipe.



A corner of Long Lay village of the La Ha inhabitants in Thuan Chau, Son La province.



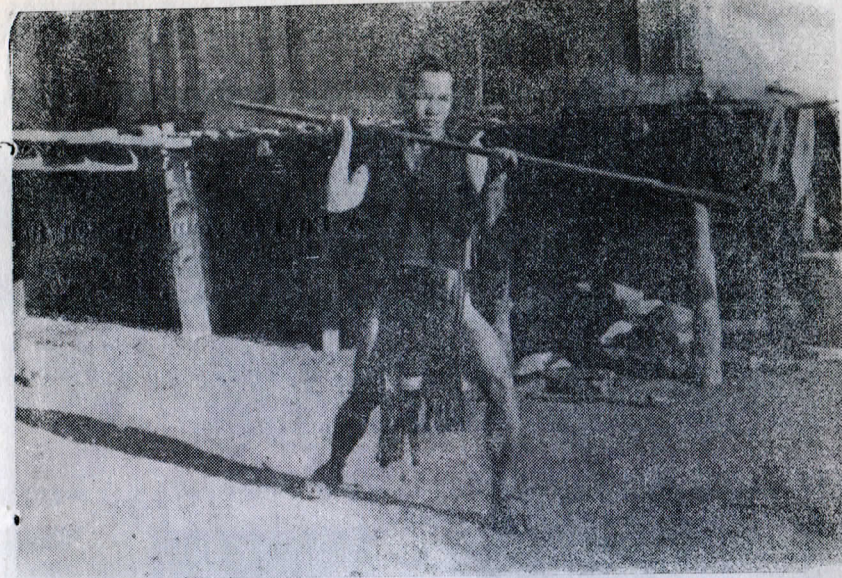
A wooden statue at a sepulchre. Gia Rai district, Plei Ku-Gia Lai-Kon Tum province.







Two Thai young women  
(Dien Bien district, La  
Chau province) in their  
traditional costumes.



A posture in the spear  
dance of a Gia Rai man  
in Chu Plong district,  
Gia Lai-Kon Tum  
province.



Co Ho women in Duc Trong district, Lam  
Dong province at work on the terraced field.

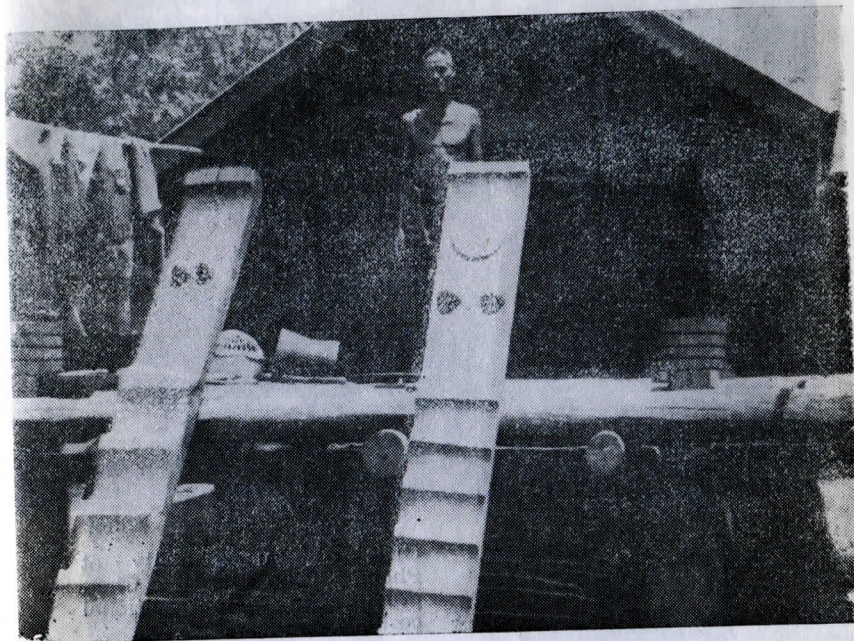


A Bo Y young woman  
at Quan Ba, Ha Tuyen  
province.





A Pu Peo young woman in her traditional costume.



An ornamental architectural design in the courtyard in front of an Edeh long house, Krong Buk district, Dac Lac province.



A team of Tay women weeding in their water-rice fields in a valley.

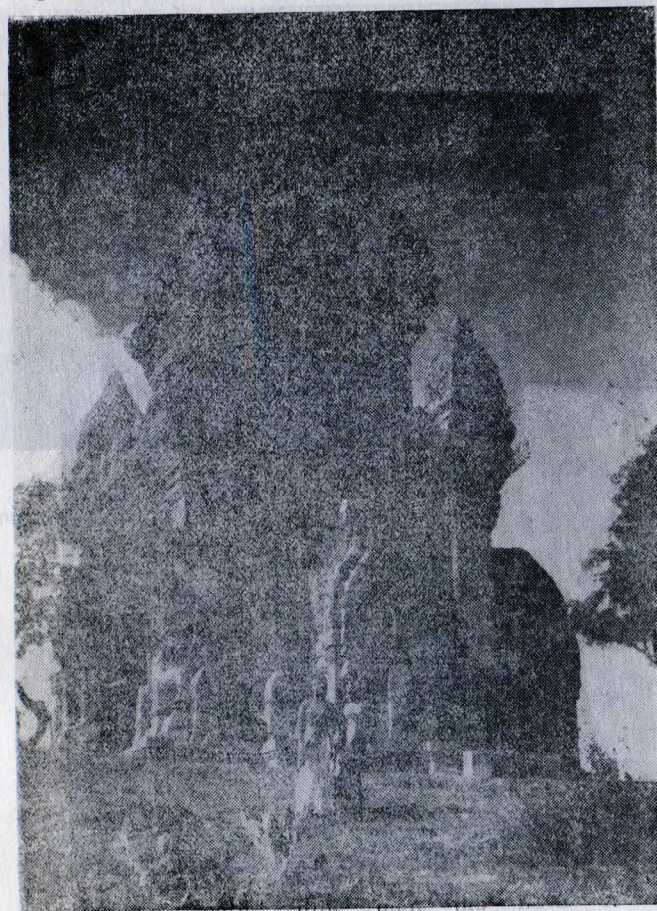




Girls of Lu ethnicity at Phong Tho, Lai Chau province in their traditional costumes.



Upper-class Hre women's clothes before the August 1945 Revolution.



An ancient Cham pagoda made of terracotta in Thuan Hai province.

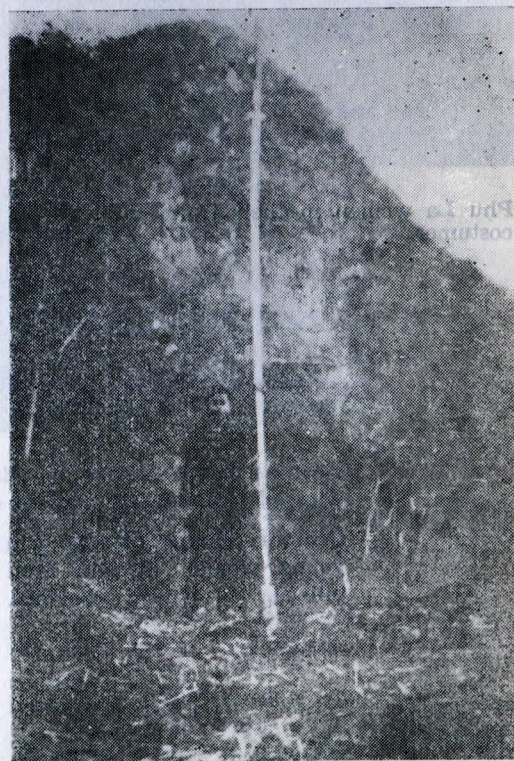




A Brau old man with tattcos on his back (Sa Thay district, Gia Lai-Kon Tum province).



A Xinh Mun man ploughing.



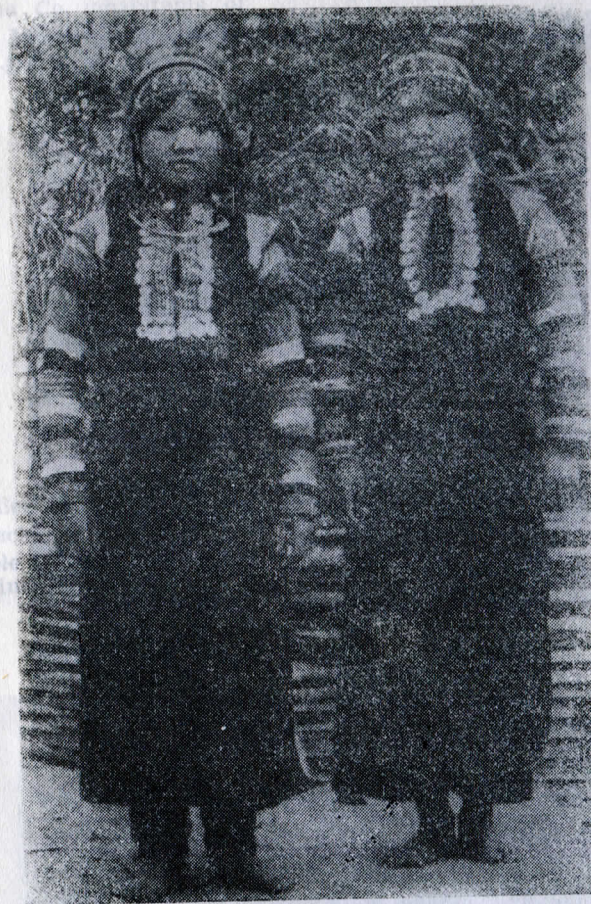
A Khmu young man with a special staff having music producing holes.





Phu La women in their traditional costumes.

Ordinary clothes of a La Chi young woman at Xin Man village, Ha Tuyen province.



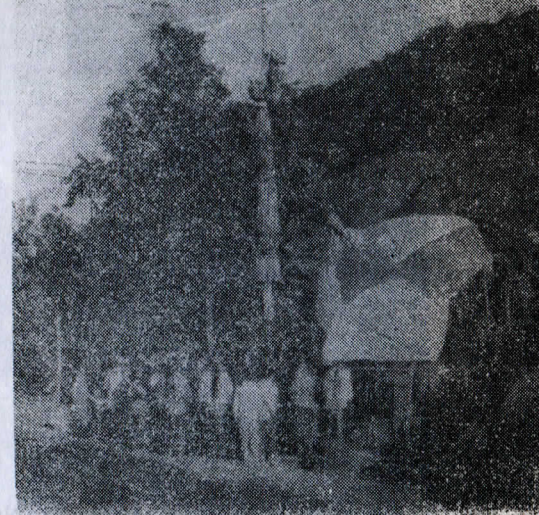
Ordinary clothes of La Hu young women in Muong Te district, Lai Chau province.



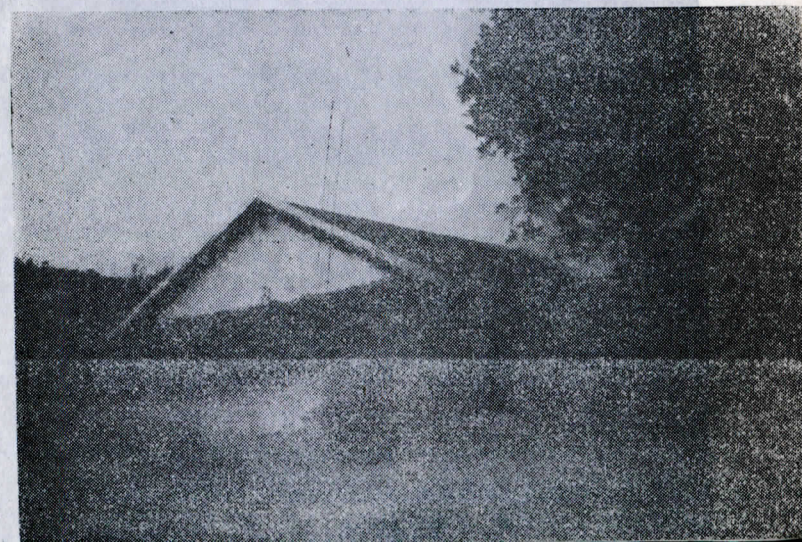


A Sila girl returning from the market (Muong Te district, Lai Chau province).

Buffalo-sticking ceremony of the Co inhabitants of Tra Mi district, Quang Nam-Da Nang province.



A tiled roof house with a jack-tree of the Hoa people in Ha Bac province.







A Cồng woman in Muong Te district, Lai Chau province.

Nung An women in their traditional costumes.

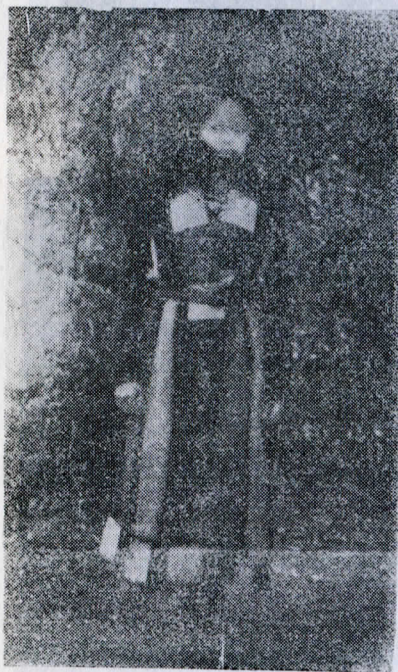


A Ta Oi girl with a pipe.





An O Du family at Sop Pot hamlet, Kim Da village, Tuong Duong district, Nghe Tinh province.



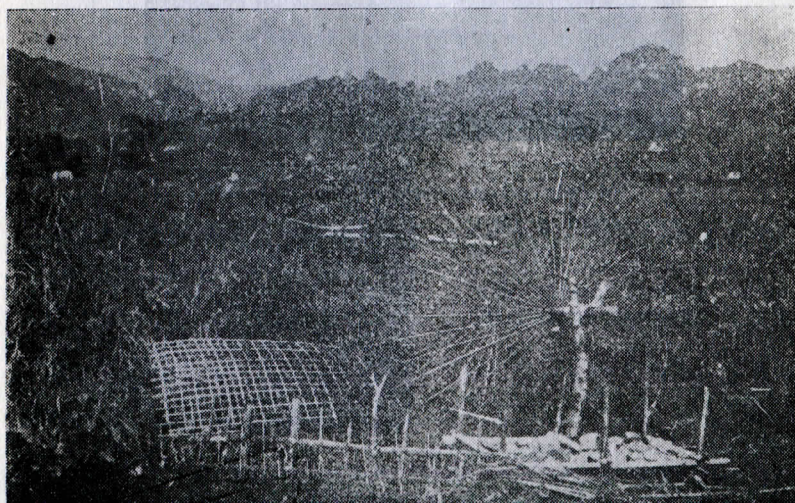
The typical costume of a San Chay woman.



Mnong people drinking can-alcohol from a jar.



A Lao girl at Song  
Mà, Son La province.

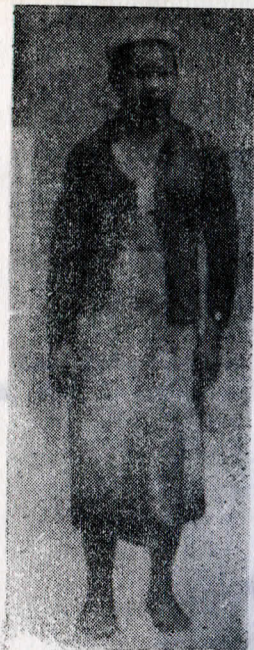


Chut women in Minh Hoa district,  
Binh Tri Thien province.

◀ A noria on the Ta Trang stream  
where live Giay ethnic group.

A Kháng woman (Thanh  
Yên district, Son La  
province) carrying a  
basket whose band  
rests on her forehead.





A Bru girl, (belonging to Bru-Van Kieu ethnic group) in Minh Hoa district, Binh Tri Thien province.



A Khang woman (Than Yen district, Son La province) carrying a basket whose band rests on her forehead.



A Xinh Mun young woman in Yen Chau district, Son La province.



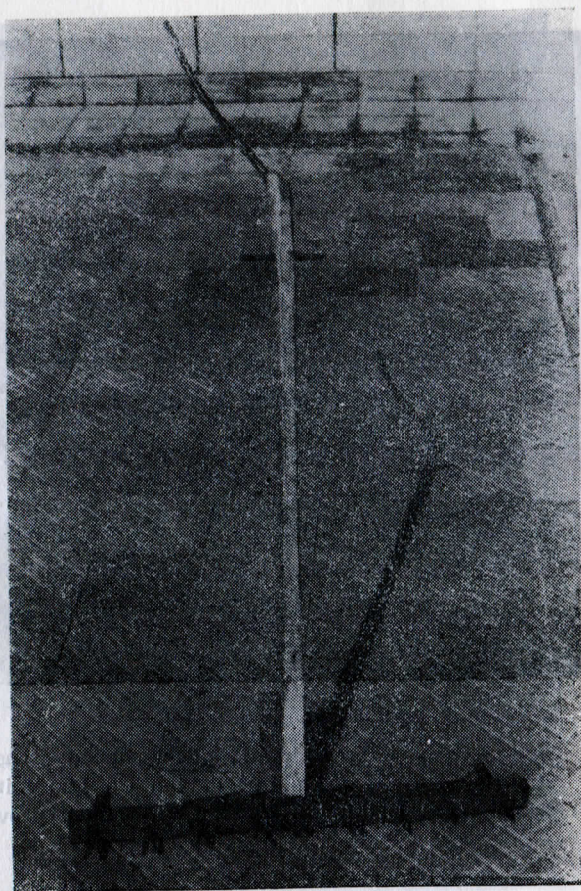


A Zao woman (Ha Bac province)  
embroidering her dress.

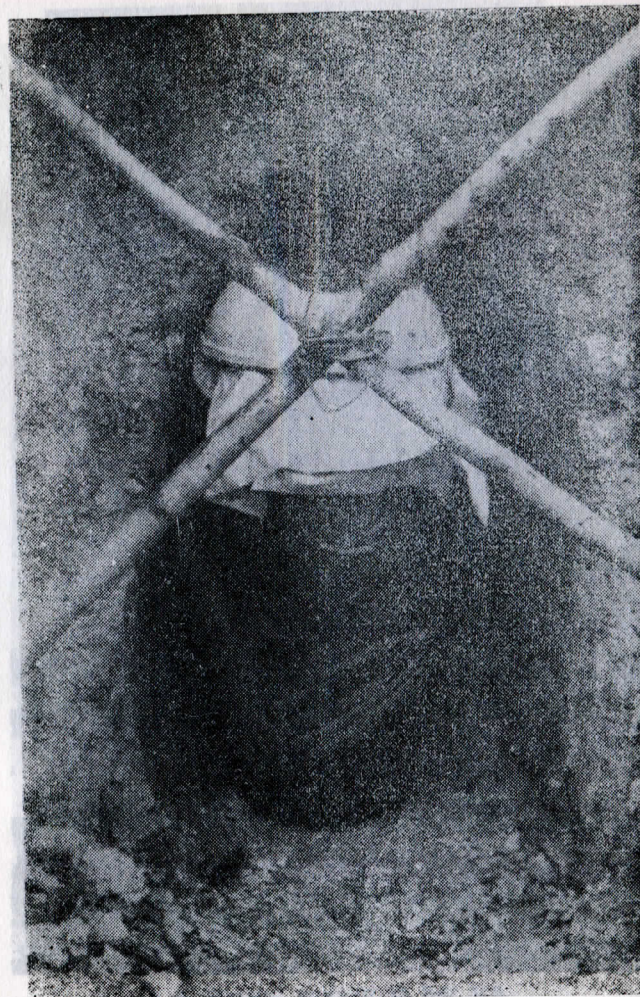


The custom of worshipping queer-shaped stones on  
the floor in the grass hut of the Co Lao minority  
people (the Dong Van Plateau, Ha Tuyen province)



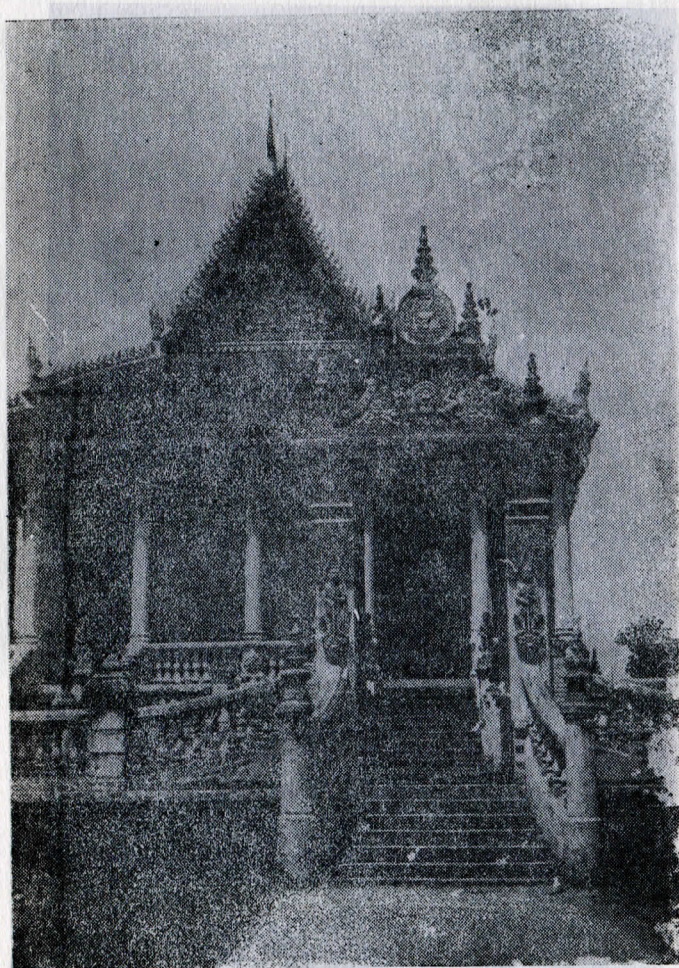


A harrow pulled by two buffaloes  
of Chu Ru minority people in Don



One of the jars for a dead body in the  
cave of the San Ziu minority  
people. (Soc Trang market-town,  
Khmer (Soc Trang market-town),  
province).



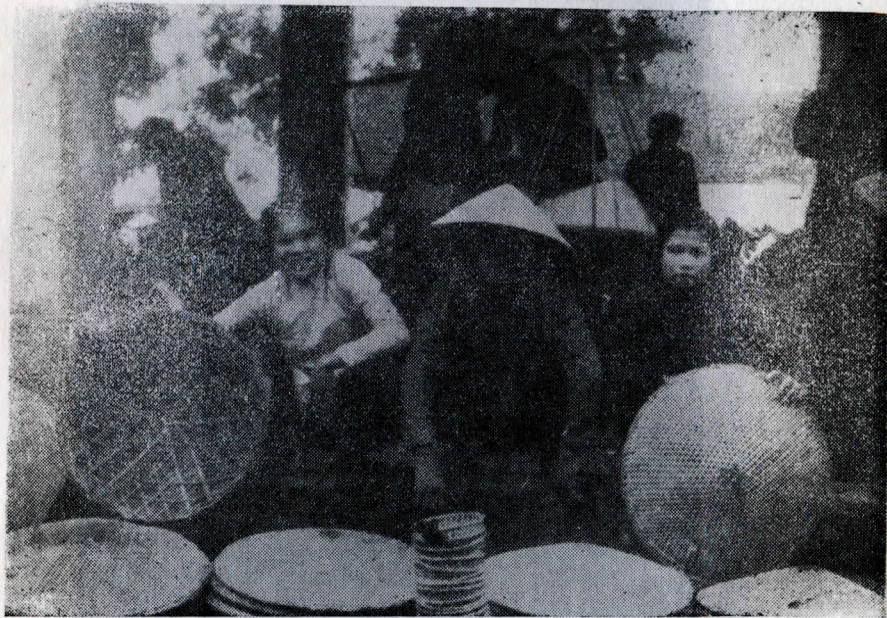


One of the four gates to the "Principal Sanctuary" of the Khleang Pagoda of the Khmer (Soc Trang market-town, Hau Giang province).



A Hmong woman in her traditional costume.





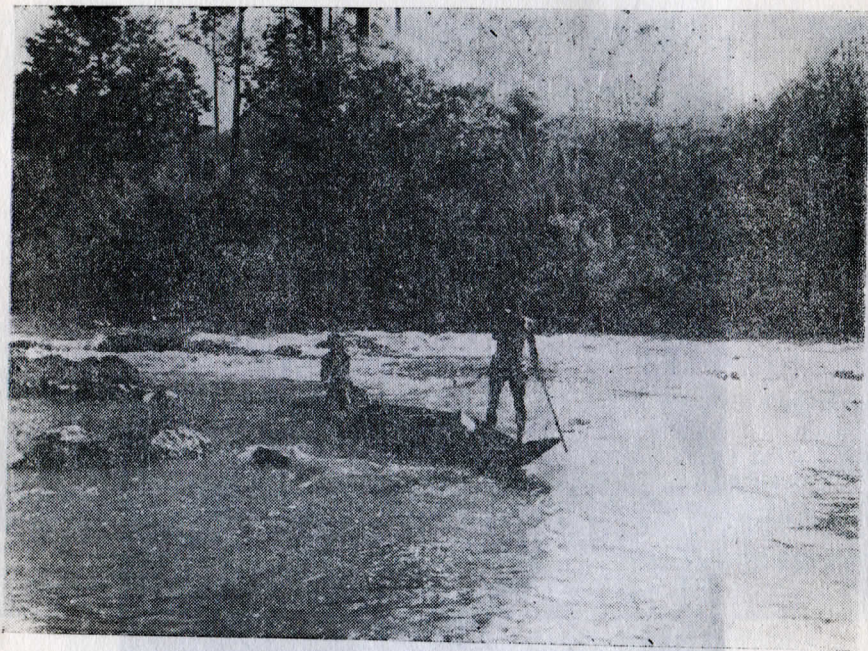
Ngai women (Quang Ninh province)  
selling artisanal products on a market  
day.



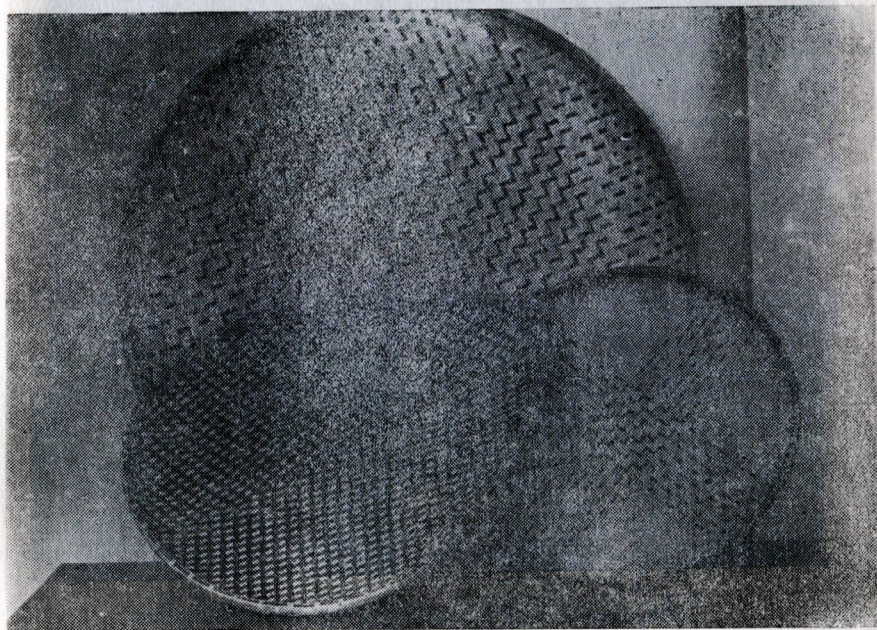
A Raglai young woman.

A Hmong woman in her traditional costume. One of the four "Principal Sanctuaries" of the Khmer, Pagoda of the Khmer (Soc Trang market-town, Hau Giang province).





Two Ro Mam men at Sa Thay, Gia Lai-Kon Tum province in their sampan on the Hray river.



Rice-winnowing tools of the Cho Ro people in Xuan Loc district, Dong Nai province.





Decorative motifs in a corner of a Buddhist temple (Hynayana Sect) of the Khmer people in Soc Trang district.



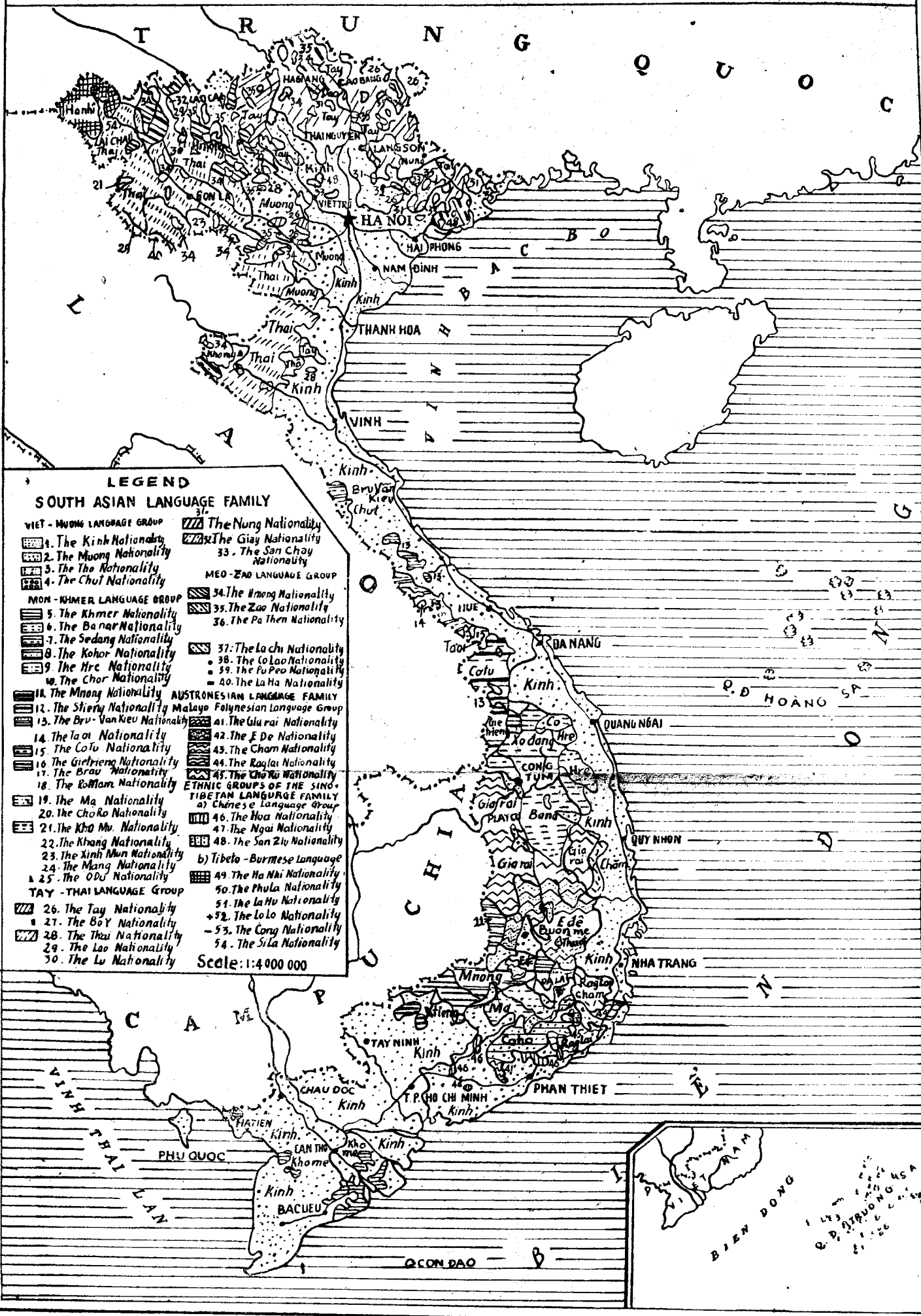
A Pa Then young woman at the loom, Bac Quang district, Ha Tuyen province.





Two Lolo boys at Bao Lac village, Cao Bang  
province in man's traditional costume.





LEGEND

SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

VIET - MUONG LANGUAGE GROUP

- 1. The Kinh Nationality
- 2. The Muong Nationality
- 3. The Tho Nationality
- 4. The Chut Nationality

MON - KHMER LANGUAGE GROUP

- 5. The Khmer Nationality
- 6. The Banar Nationality
- 7. The Sedang Nationality
- 8. The Kohor Nationality
- 9. The Hre Nationality
- 10. The Chor Nationality

11. The Mng Nationality

AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

12. The Stiery Nationality

13. The Bru - Van Kieu Nationality

14. The Iaai Nationality

15. The Co Tu Nationality

16. The Giay Nationality

17. The Bru Nationality

18. The Rong Nationality

19. The Ma Nationality

20. The Cho Nationality

21. The Kho Mu Nationality

22. The Khang Nationality

23. The Kinh Mun Nationality

24. The Mang Nationality

25. The O Du Nationality

TAY - THAI LANGUAGE GROUP

26. The Tay Nationality

27. The Bô Y Nationality

28. The Thai Nationality

29. The Lao Nationality

30. The Lu Nationality

31. The Nung Nationality

32. The Giay Nationality

33. The San Chay Nationality

MEO - ZAO LANGUAGE GROUP

34. The Mng Nationality

35. The Zao Nationality

36. The Pa Then Nationality

37. The La Chi Nationality

38. The Co Lao Nationality

39. The Pu Peo Nationality

40. The La Ha Nationality

41. The Glur Nationality

42. The E De Nationality

43. The Chom Nationality

44. The Raglai Nationality

45. The Cho Nationality

ETHNIC GROUPS OF THE SINO-TIBETAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

a) Chinese Language Group

46. The Hoa Nationality

47. The Ngai Nationality

48. The San Ziu Nationality

b) Tibeto - Burmese Language

49. The Ma Nui Nationality

50. The Phu La Nationality

51. The La Hu Nationality

52. The Lolo Nationality

53. The Cong Nationality

54. The Sila Nationality

Scale: 1:4 000 000







