TRADITIONS AND PATTERNS OF VIETNAMESE HISTORY

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In this paper, Vietnamese history is not viewed in terms of U.S. involvement but instead U.S. involvement is viewed in terms of Vietnamese history. To do this, the past of Vietnam is examined through traditions and forces that have remained fairly constant throughout its history rather than by the usual chronological structuring. There is no demarcation line between what is called history and what are called current events. Much of that happening in Vietnam is a continuation of historical traditions and ancient conflicts, although these are now dressed up in the language of rival ideologies, and viewed in the perspective of global political struggles.

This paper was written in 1968 when the author was a member of the Long Range Planning Task Group, which worked directly for the U.S. Commander in Vietnam, General Creighton W. Abrams. It was an attempt at the time to introduce an historical perspective to the planning task by identifying some of the traditions the Vietnamese themselves considered powerful. It is admittedly a compression and simplification of Vietnamese history and historians of Southeast Asia will find much to quarrel with in its individual points and its generalizations.

Why then reissue the paper now? Headlines of the past year—rumors of continued resistance to the Vietnamese government among the hill tribespeople and in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk's pleas that his country, Cambodia, is again the victim of Vietnamese imperialism, China's invasion of Vietnam—recall historical forces and battles discussed in this paper. Recent events do suggest, if not certain inevitability, at the very least, persistent patterns in the conflicts of Southeast Asia.
INTRODUCTION

Most Americans like to view history sequentially, as describing movement toward goals. This is in accord with American history—a people landing on one shore of a continent, establishing a government, advancing to the other shore, and theoretically, at least, perfecting the government. General Electric could not be more American than by advertising that "progress is our most important product." Progress and development are key words in our concept of history. To chart progress, our history usually is arranged chronologically (like a corporation sales graph) with phaselines at 1775, at 1865, at 1914, and so on. To bring our U.S. involvement in Vietnam into perspective we would tend to begin at some point in the past, possibly September 2, 1945 (the end of World War II) and then proceed by a series of dates to the present.

Reading Vietnamese history, one has the feeling he is watching a movie that he has seen before—possibly fifteen times. Like a neighborhood theater, Vietnamese history provides continuous performances of the same show. This feeling of having seen it all before is in consonance with the Vietnamese view of their own history. For them, it is cyclical; the patterns recur again and again. Only the actors change—never the script.

The Vietnamese are aware of their own historical traditions, and they regard them as powerful. They are the product of these traditions, whether they were educated formally or learned their history only through hearing the legends of Vietnamese heroes. They know the scripts, and they adjust their behavior according to them. It could even be said that the Vietnamese are captives of their history (or at least willingly play repetitive historical roles.)

Dates are not particularly important to the Vietnamese. To them, it is academic whether the French were defeated in 1954 or in 1953, or 1955. According to Vietnamese traditions, the fate of the French was sealed when they first attempted to establish French rule over the Vietnamese. For resistance to foreign rule is one of the most powerful Vietnamese forces that can be identified.
THE PREVAILING INFLUENCE OF CHINA

In the past the Vietnamese were well suited to be influenced by the Chinese. No impenetrable jungles or impassable mountains separate them from Southern China. Like the Chinese, the Vietnamese economy was based upon the cultivation of rice, which made the Chinese model appropriate for Vietnam. The Vietnamese were amenable to the influence of the Chinese, because Chinese culture was prestigious. The Chinese also had developed a theory of kingship which Vietnamese rulers found convenient to adopt. Recognition by the court of China guaranteed acceptance as part of the "civilized" world as opposed to the "barbarian" world, and it could be used by local rulers to legitimize their rule.

Yet the Sinicization of Vietnam did not coincide with the thousand years of Chinese rule. Chinese culture began to seep into Vietnam centuries before the imposition of Chinese rule and continued to do so long after independence was achieved. Chinese agricultural techniques—among them the use of water buffalo, the metal plough, and complex irrigation and drainage systems—were found suitable and adopted by the Vietnamese. Also, merchants from China found a market in Vietnam for their wares.

Chinese rule was imposed by degrees. In the third century B.C., a Chinese army was sent into Vietnam to conquer the population and incorporate the area into China. It could hardly be called conquest, for to the Chinese, conquest frequently meant no more than extracting some pledge of fealty to the emperor from the local lords, who then were left in place to rule the population. The "conquest" had been completed for only eight years when Vietnam became part of an independent kingdom which also included southeastern China.

This independent kingdom (called Nam Viet) lasted until 111 B.C., when a Chinese army entered Vietnam virtually unopposed and compelled the local rulers to again pledge their allegiance to China. The pledge made by their lords had little effect on the Vietnamese people, except for the higher tribute demanded by the Chinese. Vietnam was governed leniently as a home-ruled protectorate. Sinicization, which did not depend on Chinese rule, continued as before. The process was accelerated when increased numbers of Chinese immigrants arrived in
the first decades of the first century. Scholars, teachers, civil servants, and soldiers—all fugitives from the unsettled conditions in China—came to Vietnam and founded schools that spread the Chinese language and Chinese learning. The Chinese governor of the region made it compulsory for Vietnamese to wear Chinese dress and observe Chinese customs, and Chinese soldiers were encouraged to marry local women.

Most affected by Sinicization were those who had made the pledge of allegiance to China—the local Vietnamese lords who now saw their rule undermined by the introduction of Chinese institutions, and by the increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants who filled positions in the bureaucracy. The Vietnamese rulers were especially threatened when the Chinese decided to directly recruit Vietnamese troops for service under Chinese command. Faced with extinction, the Vietnamese lords and their retainers launched the first of their numerous revolts.

Chinese reaction was slow in coming—it was four years before the Chinese army arrived—but it was thorough. Easily defeating the rebel army, the Chinese decided to pacify the country and effectively incorporate it into the Chinese empire. To do this, they utilized every means of colonization and assimilation they had learned from their experience in absorbing foreign territories.

The Chinese could see no reason to keep local Vietnamese rulers as intermediaries, for they had discredited themselves by rebellion. Those local rulers that had not been killed during the rebellion fled south, or were deported to China. They were replaced by Chinese administrators, and Chinese troops were garrisoned throughout the countryside. Sinicization no longer meant that the Vietnamese would adopt Chinese culture because of its moral and technological superiority; it was now imposed upon them. In short, Vietnam was to be made Chinese. (This was the same policy which the Vietnamese themselves would later carry out in Cambodia.)

For several years after the revolt, the Vietnamese were barred from higher education. Later, however, the Chinese found it to their advantage to create a Sinicized native ruling class. Local Vietnamese were recruited, educated and trained according to Chinese customs,
and then given responsible positions in the administration. Some even filled high posts in China itself. Through these native cadres, and the Chinese immigrants, Chinese culture continued to seep down to the Vietnamese people.

Some historians (especially Vietnamese historians) contend that despite the efforts of the Chinese and their Sinicized Vietnamese allies, and despite 1,000 years of Chinese rule, Chinese culture did not reach the masses of Vietnamese peasantry. Some Vietnamese historians go further, and argue that the Vietnamese villages preserved pre-Chinese culture—including the Vietnamese language—and eventually became the bastion of Vietnamese nationalism. This view may be going a bit too far.

First, there is evidence that Vietnamese society at all levels was affected by Chinese culture, despite Vietnamese peasants stubbornly sticking to their local customs. The absence of any large cities in Vietnam facilitated the spread of Chinese culture. Chinese administrators and the native mandarins who were steeped in Chinese culture were close to the people in the villages, and brought the elements of Chinese culture to them. The village hardly was the bastion of Vietnamese nationalism against the imperialism of the Chinese, for periodic revolts against the Chinese typically were initiated by the elite—who were the most Sinicized, predominantly Chinese element of Vietnamese society!

Ultimately it was Chinese training that enabled the Vietnamese to achieve and maintain their independence. The Chinese had taught the Vietnamese how to operate a centralized state capable of mobilizing its power to resist foreign invaders—including those from China! The successful revolt that resulted in Vietnam's achieving independence was not a revolt against Chinese culture; it was a revolt against Chinese rule that worked to the detriment of local interests. Both local Chinese and their Sinicized Vietnamese counterparts joined in the revolt. Even after the Vietnamese achieved their independence, Chinese culture remained pre-eminent. In fact, Vietnam became more Chinese after independence was achieved than it had been before.
Following the achievement of independence, and several unsuccessful attempts by the Chinese to reconquer Vietnam, China recognized Vietnam as independent. At the same time, the emperor of Vietnam recognized China as his suzerain. It was a convenient arrangement that both preserved Vietnam's independence and saved China the expense of continuing costly campaigns to subdue Vietnam. Having received Chinese recognition, Vietnamese emperors were not above calling for Chinese assistance in putting down internal challenges to their rule. When they were not attempting to reconquer Vietnam, the Chinese acted as the champions of the Vietnamese legitimists. As such, they were not very successful: Four times they intervened on behalf of the ruling house—and four times they were defeated, and subsequently granted recognition to the usurpers. Following one such intervention they stayed to occupy the country. Twenty-one years later, driving out the Chinese armies, the victorious Vietnamese emperor called the latest Chinese attempt to take over his country unjustified, because Vietnam had never strayed from the paths of Confucian orthodoxy. His attitude reveals the extent to which Chinese culture had insinuated itself.

Subsequent Vietnamese rulers continued to make their country a small replica of China. Among the nations that surrounded China, Vietnam alone adopted the mandarin system of administration—which chained the operation of government machinery to a knowledge of Confucian classics. This was to have disastrous consequences for Vietnam. For the Vietnamese court, like the Chinese court, was prevented by its Confucian orthodoxy from responding successfully to the new threat posed by the Western powers. Convinced of the superiority of their own culture, refusing any compromise to their principles—unwilling to learn from the Western "barbarians" as the Japanese had done—the Vietnamese (like the Chinese) turned inward. Sealing themselves off from the real threat they faced deprived them of sufficient knowledge of the new challenge. Ultimately, it cost them their independence.

Imposition of French rule did not eclipse Chinese influence on Vietnam. During the first years of the colony, the French retained the Chinese-educated mandarinate. Then the non-cooperation and revolts
of the mandarins compelled the French to rule more directly. But, educated Vietnamese had already begun to question whether or not a government and society organized along traditional Confucian lines was capable of competing with the West. Loss of independence clearly demonstrated that it was not. Instinctively, the Vietnamese turned to China for inspiration—at a time when the Chinese already were debating whether Confucian tradition could be reformed so as to make it effective in a modern world, or whether it was necessary to abandon the traditional approach altogether—in a word, revolution.

Vietnamese students travelled to China and Japan, where they met Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, leader of the short-lived Chinese reform movement. Despite failure of the movement in China, its adherents in Vietnam tried to reproduce it at home—with an equal lack of success.

The Vietnamese then directed their attention to the Chinese revolutionary movements. Vietnamese students already had their revolutionary appetites whetted by reading Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau (heady stuff for Confucianists). This material did not come from their French Instructors, who taught French history from the Ancient Regime to Napoleon as if there never had been any French Revolution at all, but was found in Chinese translations. In 1908 the French, realizing this, prohibited the importation of books from China. But they could not prevent Vietnamese from slipping off to China to observe the birth of Sun Yat-sen's Republic, to then receive revolutionary indoctrination and military training at the Whampoa Military Academy, and to be inspired by the Chinese demonstration of independence from the West.

Impressed by what they had seen in China, Vietnamese conspirators returned to launch their own revolution. They turned to a format for political organization that had come to Vietnam from China—the secret society. The French colonial government prohibited the formation of political parties, and the surveillance of its security police ensured that none would be created. The secret society was within the range of the Vietnamese political experience and compatible with the circumstances. Members of the educated elite, these Vietnamese conspirators had little direct contact with the Vietnamese masses. For a political
party, they would substitute a small disciplined cadre; for popular support, they would rely on coercion and terror; for political action they would resort to violence. It is a pattern that still persists.

The VNQDD (Vietnamese Nationalist Party) is an outstanding example of this tradition, and of continuing Chinese influence. The VNQDD was founded in Hanoi in 1927 as a carbon copy of the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT). The KMT had inherited imperial China's resentment and contempt toward France. (The two powers had fought over Vietnam in the nineteenth century.) The VNQDD likewise was hostile to the French, who in 1927 had just turned down a Vietnamese request for constitutional advances. The KMT was determined to do away with French extraterritorial rights in Southern China; the VNQDD was determined to undermine French rule in Indochina. Both groups opposed the Communists.

The Chinese KMT was delighted at this development in Vietnam. It provided its Vietnamese counterpart with funds, asylum when necessary, and bases to conduct revolutionary activity. In 1930, following an unsuccessful revolt, most of the VNQDD leaders fled to China. There, many of them joined the Nationalist Army. When Chinese troops marched into Vietnam following the Japanese surrender, the leaders of the VNQDD were in train and attempted to ensure its continuance in power.

Communism in Vietnam came through French channels, not Chinese. (One author has written that Vietnamese Communists preferred to conduct their dialectics in French rather than their native Vietnamese, in which—like Chinese—it is difficult to express abstract concepts.) Nonetheless, the Chinese contributed a great deal to the Vietnamese Communist movement. Its organizational techniques were patterned after the Chinese secret society, as were the tactics of its guerrilla movement. Ultimately, material support for its struggle came from the Chinese. Vo Nguyen Giap reveals his indebtedness to Mao's tactics in his own book, *People's War, People's Army*.

Just as in the past, the Vietnamese did not adopt Chinese techniques without adding something purely Vietnamese. To the Chinese tactics of guerrilla warfare the Vietnamese added the use of terrorism, which the Chinese considered counterproductive. (Where the Viet Minh
used terrorism on a small scale, the Viet Cong institutionalized it as an essential element of their overall revolutionary strategy.) The Vietnamese added another element which the Chinese had avoided—the decisive victory, as at Dien Bien Phu. Ironically, it was the material support given to them by the Chinese—especially the artillery—that enabled them to include decisive victory in their strategy. As they still do, the Chinese regarded such battles as risky, and prefer the safer (if slower) process of protracted warfare. (It is true, however, that Mao does describe the "strategic offensive" stage of guerrilla war.)

Even in recent years, Chinese influence has not only manifested itself on the side of clandestine politics and subversion—Confucian philosophy itself still survives. Prime Minister Tran Van Huong, speaking that "if the government must count on force because it has lost authority, then the state will have lost the moral foundations of self-defense." This is the Confucian concept of the "mandate of heaven." Huong went on to call for a restoration of traditional Vietnamese values. His speech was in the tradition of the great Chinese reformer Liang Chi-Ch'ao. Huong was speaking like a mandarin!

**INCESSANT TERRITORIAL EXPANSION**

When the Vietnamese were not defending their homeland against foreign invaders, or themselves against each other, they were expanding their territory; sometimes they managed to do both at the same time. The primary expression of Vietnamese territorial expansion was the *Tien Nam!* or "March to the South!" The principal propelling force always has been the same: population increase.

The Chinese taught the Vietnamese more advanced means of growing rice, which enabled Vietnam to support more people. This resulted in population growth that outpaced even improved agricultural techniques. In the quest for more land the Vietnamese could not go north, for to the north was China itself. To the west were mountains which were inhospitable to their new form of agriculture. The lowlands in the south then were part of the Kingdom of Champa. The Cham also were attempting to expand their territory, but were blocked on the west and south by the great Khmer empire in Cambodia. Champa, Cambodia,
and Vietnam thus became participants in a three-way struggle that took place over a period of five hundred years, resulted in the disappearance of Champa, and continued between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians until Cambodia itself was threatened with being swallowed up by the Vietnamese [as is again the case in 1979].

The Cham primarily were a seapower, not a land power. Therefore they were at a disadvantage in holding back the steady advance of the Vietnamese, who had learned from the Chinese an efficient system of expanding their territory. The principal feature of the territorial expansion system was the fortified agricultural settlement. Occupied land was distributed following each successful invasion of Cham or Cambodian territory, primarily to army veterans who were to defend the frontier in return for the land. This they did. And they were not reluctant to expand their holdings if they could.

Border incidents were inevitable. In turn these provoked new invasions, which produced more veterans who occupied more land. The Cham and their sometime Cambodian allies retaliated by launching counter expeditions deep into Vietnamese territory. In this form, the struggle continued for several hundred years, during which both the Vietnamese and Cham capitals were sacked and burned several times. But it was the inexorable advance of soldier-pioneers that steadily decided an outcome in favor of the Vietnamese. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Vietnamese had completely overrun the kingdom of Champa, reaching Binh Thuan Province near the city of Phan Thiet.

The absorption of Champa removed the buffer between Vietnamese and Cambodians. At this time the Cambodians already were in their decline. Like the Cham, they were spread fairly thin over the land, and presented little match for the military colonization techniques employed by the Vietnamese—which were supported by their constantly growing population.

The Mekong River delta, then nominally under Cambodian rule, was particularly attractive to the Vietnamese. The land was fertile, and there was plenty of it. The Cambodians living there could muster little resistance on their own, and could not depend on help from their King—who was busy defending the realm against the invading Thai from the north.
The Chinese also were in the delta when the Vietnamese arrived, and by lending money to the industrious Vietnamese peasants—a better investment prospect than the easy-going Cambodian farmers—played a key role in helping them take over. Financed with Chinese money, the Vietnamese moved forward, inevitably followed by a claim of the Vietnamese government to lands which its citizens already had occupied.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Vietnamese held everything north of Saigon. Then Saigon itself was annexed in 1698. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Vietnamese extended their "protection" to a Chinese colony on the Gulf of Siam that was threatened by marauding Thai. Fifty years later Cambodia was forced to cede the entire region between Saigon and the Bassac River. The process of filling in this tract of land took the Vietnamese another one hundred fifty years. In the meantime, the Vietnamese government already had cast its eyes toward Cambodia itself.

Three things kept the Vietnamese from completely swallowing up Cambodia: internal strife within the Vietnamese state; the Thai, who had their own designs on Cambodia; and later, the protection of an outside power—the French.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the first emperor of a newly-united Vietnam gave the Cambodians an army to help them drive out the Thai, who retaliated by invading Cambodia in force. The Vietnamese met the invaders with an army of 15,000, which then remained to occupy Cambodia. Obviously planning to annex Cambodia as they had Cochinchina, a Vietnamese administration was imposed on occupied territory, and Vietnamese residents were posted in each Cambodian province to direct the Cambodian governors. Cambodia was to be Vietnamized as the Chinese had sought to Sinicize the Vietnamese. Unlike the Thai, who were themselves Buddhists, the Vietnamese attacked the Cambodians' national religion, Buddhism. Temples were destroyed, Cambodians were compelled by law to wear Vietnamese clothes and hairstyles, and Cambodian names were changed to Vietnamese names. In 1840, the Cambodian government was moved forcibly to Saigon, and the Vietnamese began to survey Cambodian lands.
These measures provoked the Cambodians to revolt. This again brought in the Thai who, taking advantage of this turn of events, invaded from the north. The result was a military stalemate between the Thai and the Vietnamese, which was settled by a treaty in 1846. The Cambodians were compelled to pay tribute to both the Thai and the Vietnamese—hardly a satisfactory arrangement. The Cambodians then turned to the French for protection, assuming that it was better to have a distant imperial power than two nearby rapacious ones.

The Vietnamese always had been more concerned with increasing the amount of land they could cultivate than they had been with military conquest. If alien people that came under their subjugation were treated harshly, usually it was because they were in the way; the Vietnamese wanted land to farm, not subjects. Farming in Vietnam meant growing rice in flooded paddies; since this is most easily accomplished in lowland deltas, the Vietnamese avoided the mountains to the west.

Even though their southward expansion brought them into conflict with the formidable Cham Kingdom, the Vietnamese were not deflected. Had they merely desired to extend the imperial domain, they might have adopted a different course and launched expeditions against weaker tribes and kingdoms to the west, compelling them to recognize the emperor of Vietnam as their sovereign. It was the strength of the Cham, not their weakness, that kept Vietnamese attention focused on the south. While Champa remained a powerful enemy until the beginning of the fifteenth century, it was imperative to Vietnamese security not to become involved in military adventures elsewhere. Nor were the Vietnamese especially successful in assimilating alien races. Their concern for security on the southern frontier, plus the fact that there was little potential rice land to attract the Vietnamese, saved the Laotian Kingdoms from suffering the same fate as Champa. Vietnamese forays into Laos were sporadic, and were not followed by the "occupation army" of rice farmers.

A Vietnamese army first invaded Laos in 1348, but was defeated by Laotian forces. A resurgence of the Cham threat in the last half of the fourteenth century, followed by the re-imposition of Chinese
rule in Vietnam during the fifteenth century, kept the Vietnamese from trying again in Laos until 1478. Again they were defeated.

Continual warfare between rival Laotian princes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries opened Laos to frequent interventions by the Thai, Burmese, and Vietnamese. In 1827 a Thai army invaded Laos and sacked its capital, Vientiane. The defeated Laotian King fled to Vietnam where he was given a Vietnamese army to reconquer his kingdom. Most of the army deserted on the way back to Laos, however, and the king again was defeated. This time he fled to Xieng Khouang, at that time a small Laotian kingdom that kept its independence by paying tribute to both Vietnam and to the Thai-backed Kingdom of Lan Xang in northern Laos. This posed a serious predicament for the king of Xieng Khouang: if he handed the fugitive over to the Vietnamese, the Thai would be provoked; if he handed him over to the Thai, the Vietnamese certainly would retaliate. Choosing the wrath of the latter, the king of Xieng Khouang handed the fugitive over to the Thai. As expected, his action provoked the Vietnamese into invading Xieng Khouang. The unfortunate king was taken to Hue, and executed. Xieng Khouang was annexed to Vietnam, and the Vietnamese then applied the same techniques of assimilation they had imposed on the Cambodians, including a law compelling Laotians to wear Vietnamese dress. Xieng Khouang probably would have been totally absorbed by Vietnam, had there not been the increasing threat posed by the French. Establishment of the French protectorate in Laos in 1893 stifled Vietnam's ambitions there, as the establishment of the French protectorate over Cambodia had done thirty years before.

Vietnamese economic imperialism prospered in the shadow of French imperialism. During the colonial period, aggressive Vietnamese merchants continued to move into Laos and Cambodia. France, regarding Vietnam as the most important of its Indochinese possessions, tended to view Laos and Cambodia as would a Vietnamese ruler—and hence solved colonial problems in Vietnam's favor. The colonial government encouraged emigration to Laos and Cambodia from the overpopulated Red River basin in North Vietnam. Finding the Vietnamese to be reliable and capable administrators, the French also staffed their colonial offices in the two countries with Vietnamese bureaucrats.
The resistance struggle and the foundation of a communist party in Indochina provided the Vietnamese with a cause and ideology that fitted well with their traditional instincts for conquest. The Indochinese Communist Party, although primarily a Vietnamese organization, claimed to speak on behalf of forty million people—a number achieved only by adding together the combined populations of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. And, if one were slow in addition, the point was stated bluntly in a 1939 nationalist newspaper, *La Patrie Annamite*:

We will have the space we need . . . One day Indochina will no longer be a collection of separate and distinct countries, but a single country impregnated with Vietnamese blood, inspired by Vietnamese dynamism and power of action.

If the reader still did not grasp the meaning of "Vietnamese dynamism and power of action," the Viet Minh stated it explicitly in a 1953 radio broadcast:

The people of Vietnam have the mission to make revolutions in Cambodia and Laos.

Early during the war against the French, Viet Minh guerrillas infiltrated Cambodia, established the Khmer People's Liberation Army, and later established a resistance government on behalf of the Cambodians. In 1950, a Viet Minh force of 3,000 invaded the country.

Laos was regarded as a sideshow for the more important struggle east of the Annamite Mountains, whether against the Chams, the Cambodians, or the French. However, the Viet Minh realized that tying down French troops in Laos would mean that many fewer to fight insurgency in Vietnam. The Viet Minh intervened in Laos according to the pattern established by a Vietnamese emperor—by ostensibly giving military assistance to a Laotian fugitive. In the nineteenth century, it was the King of Vientiane. In the twentieth century, it was one of his descendants, Prince Souphanouvong, leader of the Pathet Lao. In 1953, four Viet Minh divisions invaded Laos. They came across the traditional invasion route through Phong Saly, Sam Nuea, and Xieng Khouang
Provinces. Although the divisions later withdrew, the Viet Minh political apparatus was left behind to assist the Pathet Lao—and ease the way for further Vietnamese invasions into Laotian territory.

It can be said that modern ideologies merely cloak ancient conflicts. This is especially true in Southeast Asia. North Vietnamese forces today occupy provinces which frequently were invaded by the Vietnamese in the past. Their occupation is complete. In Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces it amounts to annexation. Ho Chi Minh has fulfilled the ambitions of ancient Vietnamese emperors.

RESISTANCE TO FOREIGN RULE

"We have fought a thousand years!" Vietnamese claim that Vietnam has resisted foreign rule for ten centuries. Vietnamese historians also would have the reader believe it. Western historians, who sometimes seem to be the enemies of a good story, point out that the claim does not stand up to historical examination:

Chinese interventions all occurred at the request of Vietnamese monarchs against rebellious factions ... If predatory invasions feature in Vietnam's history she has been more sinning than sinned against, and it is her very nationalists who have been the ones to seek moral support abroad, as well as material ... [Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam, 1968]

But tradition cannot be dismissed that easily. Most Vietnamese youngsters learn their history by listening to legends, by seeing pictures and statues, and by reading the works of Vietnamese historians—not by reading the critical works of Western historians. One need only look at the list of Vietnamese national heroes to see what quality is admired most in Vietnamese history: The Trung sisters, Vietnam's two "Joans of Arc" who launched the first revolt against the Chinese; Ngo Quyen who overthrew the Chinese rulers nine hundred years and eleven revolts later; Tran Hung Dao who drove back the Mongolian invaders; Le Loi who defeated China's attempt to reconquer Vietnam in the fifteenth century; Quang Trung who did the same three centuries later; Phan Dinh Phung, Hoang Hoa Tham, Nguyen Thai Hoc, all heroes of
resistance against the French. And, of course, Ho Chi Minh. It is irrelevant that the Chinese invaders which Le Loi, Vietnam's greatest national hero, threw out originally had been invited in by the emperor of Vietnam to secure his own throne. The invitation has been forgotten; Le Loi has not.

The Vietnamese tradition of resistance is based more upon pride of race and a stubborn devotion to native culture than on the exaltation of a Vietnamese state. During the thousand years when Vietnam was nothing more than a subdivision of China, the Vietnamese were able to preserve their own language and much of their pre-Chinese culture. The remoteness of Vietnam from the center of the Chinese empire was one reason. Another was the fresh waves of non-Chinese peoples migrating to Vietnam.

The revolts against Chinese rule also helped develop the tradition of resistance and national sentiment that were exploited in each succeeding revolt. The first revolt--there were at least eleven--was launched by the famous Trung sisters in 39 A.D. It was not the "national uprising" that some later historians claim it to be. Rather, it was an upper class affair, with very little participation by the Vietnamese peasantry. The revolt led by the Trung sisters was followed by a revolt led by another woman in 248, and others led by men in 411, 544, 602, and 722. The leader of the revolt in 722 proclaimed himself emperor, and--defeated by a Chinese army--fled to the mountains where he continued his resistance. This was the first revolt to have the support of the Vietnamese people. But the banner of revolt had to be raised three more times before the Vietnamese finally achieved their aim of defeating the Chinese and establishing their independence.

These uprisings usually are viewed by the Vietnamese as evidence of:

the patriotism and indomitable spirit of the Vietnamese people . . . and explain why Vietnam has not become a province of China in spite of one thousand years of Chinese domination and the intensive efforts to make the Vietnamese Chinese. [Saigon Post, 1969]
Having achieved independence, their efforts over the next 900 years were devoted to defeating Chinese attempts to reconquer Vietnam. Armies from China invaded Vietnam twice before the Chinese themselves were conquered by the Mongolians. Continuing the Chinese tradition, the Mongolians invaded Vietnam on three occasions. But the tropical heat and indigenous diseases reduced the ranks of the northern horseman, and the terrain was unsuitable for their cavalry tactics.

The struggle against the Mongolian invaders gave Vietnam one of its greatest culture heroes, Tran Hung Dao. He virtually is worshipped by Vietnamese as the symbol of the characteristic they consider most essential to their existence—resistance to foreign rule. On the eve of the Mongol invasion he is said to have assembled 10,000 village elders representing all regions of the country, and asked them whether he should resist the superior forces of the Mongolians or submit to their rule. All shouted for war. Tran Hung Dao's soldiers tattooed the slogan, "Death to the Mongols" on their arms, and the victory they won over a well-trained force two and a half times their size is regarded as one of the nation's most magnificent achievements. The communists tried to invoke the spirit of Tran Hung Dao by naming their 1951 offensive against the French after him.

The Chinese invaded Vietnam again in 1406. Again they came at the request of a threatened ruler, but remained to occupy the country. Faced with a superior Chinese army, the Vietnamese turned to guerrilla tactics and relied on tenacity to wear the Chinese down. The campaign lasted ten years—two years longer than Ho Chi Minh's campaign to drive out the French—before the Chinese abandoned their occupation. Chinese armies entered Hanoi again in 1788 to save a falling regime, but were defeated by Quang Trung. His soldiers infiltrated the capital and attacked the Chinese army during Tet—a feat repeated by the communists one hundred eighty years later.

During the nineteenth century the Chinese ceased to be the principal threat to Vietnam's independence, as both China and Vietnam turned to face the growing European threat. In Vietnam, the threat manifested itself in the "dangerous" faith propagated by the Catholic (primarily French) missionaries whose converts were even capable of
refusing to kowtow to the altar of their ancestors. This was an insult to Confucianism and, since the emperor's rule rested upon Confucianism, it was more than that—it was subversion. As in the early resistance to the Chinese, it was the Vietnamese rulers who reacted first to the European threat. They did so by prohibiting the propagation of the Catholic faith, later by persecution of the Catholic missionaries, and ultimately by resisting the rule of the French admirals who had used protection of the Christian faith as a pretext for military intervention. It was a futile struggle that ended in 1883 with all of Vietnam under French rule.

Examining the reasons why Vietnam failed to preserve its independence, one Vietnamese historian blames it on the fact that the ruling class was too far out of touch with the Vietnamese masses to rekindle their sense of nationalism, as earlier Vietnamese rulers had been able to do in driving out the Chinese. The Vietnamese people were not as upset by the foreign threat to Confucianism as were their rulers, who used the doctrine to sanctify their own dictatorial rule. In fact, the Vietnamese people were not overwhelmingly concerned with the preservation of their rulers. Some even viewed the French as welcome relief from the mandarins.

In spite of this, it took the French seventy-one years to "pacify" Vietnam. Resistance to the French began in the South, where the French first established their rule. But, the stronghold of resistance was North Vietnam. There are several reasons for this: The North Vietnamese were more thoroughly imbued with Chinese culture than the South Vietnamese, and at the same time remained more "traditionalist" Vietnamese. Since the resistance movements primarily were based upon the Vietnamese perception that foreign rule was a threat to Vietnamese culture and an insult to the Vietnamese race, it is natural that resistance movements should find their stronghold among the most traditional and most nationalistic people of Vietnam. Also, the North Vietnamese, who grew up among the sites of great battles and the tombs of national heroes who achieved fame by driving out foreign invaders, were heirs to a tradition of national resistance to the Chinese.
The minor resistance movements in the South were suppressed by 1875. There is evidence that these locally directed movements had little sanction from the Court of Hue. On the other hand, the revolt of the mandarins which began in Central and North Vietnam shortly after the establishment of the French protectorate was an imperial device to throw out the French and preserve the dynasty. At first, the purely royalist movement aroused little popular support. But continued resistance led to repression by the French, which in turn encouraged more widespread resistance. The imperial court's open participation in the revolt ended with the capture of the emperor, Nam Nghí, who had fled to the mountains to join the guerrillas. But, the rank and file fought for eight more years before the French could claim to have suppressed the revolt. In one remote area north of Hanoi, where the French had little hope of putting down the revolt, they were compelled to make a deal with the principal guerrilla leader, which allowed him to rule his own territory. Despite the fact that the early resistance movements against the French received little popular support, they did fire the imagination of the Vietnamese, provided them with new martyrs, and set the pattern for future resistance.

The anti-French movements that were carried on during the first decades of this century were intellectual conspiracies with little popular participation. It was not until the thirties that modern Vietnamese nationalism emerged. While still motivated by opposition to the French, the modern Vietnamese nationalists began to think of themselves more as patriots representing the nation of Vietnam than as representatives of the traditions and racial pride of the Vietnamese people. (Nevertheless, Vietnamese nationalism has never been entirely free from racism: one expression of this is the crude and cruel caricatures of Americans in the cartoons of South Vietnamese newspapers [during the American involvement]).

After 1930 the Vietnamese people began to participate more and more in the resistance struggle. At the same time, the non-Communist resistance organizations were fragmented and virtually destroyed, enabling the communists to monopolize the resistance movement. The
increased participation of the masses in the resistance movement reflected a growing awareness of their historical role as fighters against foreign rule. This awareness was preached by most of the resistance organizations, but was used most effectively by the communists. They went so far as to name their military campaigns against the French after national heroes of the resistance against the Chinese. (To do this while accepting Chinese aid and fighting with Chinese weapons was no little accomplishment.)

The fragmentation of the non-communist resistance movements resulted in their eventual destruction. Fragmentation was encouraged by the French colonial regime as a part of their "divide and rule" policy.

The decline of the non-communist resistance began in 1930, when the principal rival of the communists, the VNQDD, launched a premature insurrection. This resulted in the loss of many of their cadres, including the leader of the party who was executed by the French. The colonial regime was not their only enemy. The communists themselves engaged in wholesale liquidation of non-communist resistance cadres.

Superior organizational and tactical talents, willingness to liquidate non-communist rivals, and errors made by the colonial regime, combined to assure leadership of the resistance movement to the communists. Some Vietnamese may have one set of attitudes toward Ho Chi Minh and the communists as "aggressors," but it is undeniable that they were the leaders of the resistance against the French--which still evokes admiration.

Equating nationalism (a recent concept) with resistance to foreign rule (an old tradition) poses a dilemma for non-communist nationalists today. Despite the fact that the Viet Cong insurgents also receive foreign assistance, it is their opponents who--though claiming to be nationalists--most obviously take the "OK Salem" route, as their dependence upon the Americans is derisively called by other Vietnamese.

In following the tradition of resistance, the Vietnamese have developed their own pattern of resistance warfare. This pattern is based upon classical Chinese works on warfare by Sun Tzu (from whom Mao Tse-tung drew some of his inspiration), Mao's own work on
revolutionary warfare, and the philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore. Forty years ago Tagore predicted that the morally and spiritually superior civilization of the East eventually would triumph over the ruthless materialism and overmechanized West. This provided comforting assurance to the Vietnamese, who usually were faced with numerically and materially superior enemies, and relied on guerrilla warfare and tenacity to grind down the enemy's determination to continue the war. To this philosophical base can be added the Vietnamese predilection towards organizing along secret society lines, a willingness to employ terrorism, and the use of traditional base areas in the remote areas of Vietnam.

SOUTHERN RESISTANCE TO NORTHERN DOMINATION

The resistance to northern aggression, whether Tonkinese or Chinese, by the southern rice growing peasants of Cochin China is a fundamental force in Vietnamese history. [Senator Tran Van Van, 1966]

The existence of two Vietnams predates the Geneva agreement—which, in fact, followed fairly closely the historical boundary between the two. Southerners traditionally have tried to escape the domination of northerners, whom they regard as being "too Chinese." And, the North Vietnamese are a great deal more like the Chinese than the South Vietnamese. The natural divide between Chinese and Southeast Asian civilizations comes roughly at the sixteenth parallel, where the Annamite Mountain chain closes to the sea--making the North a geographic continuation of China--not at the border between China and North Vietnam. It was North Vietnam, not South Vietnam, that was under Chinese rule for a thousand years and consequently is more Chinese.

It is, of course, a matter of degree. Vietnam is very much like China, when compared with countries to its west and south. But, when compared with China, North Vietnam is less Chinese, and South Vietnam is less Chinese than North Vietnam.
The split between north and south Vietnam began back when the dense population of the northern delta commenced to overflow to the south. As the Vietnamese moved southward, they acquired some of the characteristics of the Indianized Kingdoms they conquered and absorbed. At the same time they shed some of their Chinese culture. These conditions did not lend themselves to maintaining unity with the North. By the time the southward advance had been halted by imposition of French rule in Cambodia and Cochinchina, Vietnam consisted of two great river basins more than a thousand miles apart connected by a narrow coastal strip—in some places only ten miles wide. North Vietnam remained an over-populated, underfed society which closely resembled that of China. Therefore, it was not particularly attractive to Chinese emigrants themselves, who chose instead to go to South Vietnam. Ironically, it was these Chinese emigrants who added to the differences already existent between South Vietnam and the more Sinicized North Vietnam. Refugees from Manchu rule in China, these emigrants (many of whom were merchants) were less Confucianist in outlook than those who remained in China—and perhaps even less so than the North Vietnamese.

A dynastic squabble in the sixteenth century led to the first actual split between North and South Vietnam. Taking advantage of chaotic conditions at the imperial court, the ambitious governor of Hanoi grabbed the throne for himself. This caused another, equally ambitious leader to establish an "exile" government in Laos on behalf of the deposed dynasty. The "exile" government succeeded in re-establishing its authority in Vietnam, up to the southern edge of the northern delta. But it was sixty years before these supporters of the old dynasty were able to drive out the usurpers. This reunification was short-lived, for during the war two powerful families emerged, the Trinh in Hanoi and their cousins, the Nguyen, at Hue. Although both proclaimed their fealty to the emperor, they maneuvered between themselves for the real power of state. Yet they were content with ruling their respective halves of Vietnam until the Trinh attempted to overthrow their southern rivals in 1620. The Nguyen retaliated by cutting off the tribute of rice they paid to the North.
This incident touched off a series of seven military campaigns by the North against the South, which lasted almost half a century. The North had the advantages of a larger population, which enabled it to field huge armies, and a superior government patterned after that of the Chinese. However, the north was compelled to fight far from its bases, and suffered from a lack of supplies. The South, whose armies were only one-fifth to one-half the size of the northern forces, remained on the defensive. They had the disadvantage of having to fight on two fronts, against the Cambodians in the south and against the Trinh in the north.

Early in the conflict the Southern regime constructed two huge walls across the coastal plain, just a few miles north of the present DMZ. The Northern armies were not once able to breach both walls; both sides avoided marching through the mountains to the west, even to flank the enemy. Both sides were assisted by foreign powers who attempted to use the conflict to advance their own interests in the area. The Dutch assisted the Northern Trinh, while the Southern Nguyen were helped by the Portuguese. The struggle ended in a military stalemate, with both sides agreeing to a status quo settlement.

The truce between north and south lasted a hundred years, until the Southern Nguyen were overthrown by internal rebellion. Trying to take advantage of South Vietnam's weakened condition, the North Vietnamese again attempted to invade the South. But, they were repelled by the victorious rebels, who in turn invaded the North and overthrew the Trinh regime. During the same period Vietnam's traditional enemy, the Chinese, also attempted to exploit the situation. They invaded North Vietnam for the seventh time, but were turned back by the victorious rebels.

It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that a Vietnamese emperor could claim to rule all of Vietnam. Even then he ruled through regional viceroys in Tonkin and Cochinchina, and they exercised considerable latitude in the implementation or non-implementation of imperial directives. And even this arrangement did not prevent the outbreak of revolts in both places. In 1833 the adopted son of the viceroy of Cochinchina declared himself "Pacifier of the
South." With Siamese assistance he held off the Imperial Army for two years. Revolts also broke out in Tonkin. In contradiction to the popular interpretation that the French were the culprits in creating a divided Vietnam, in one sense, the French unwittingly fostered unity. They provided the only thing upon which all Vietnamese seemed capable of focusing their attention—resistance to foreign rule. However, other than constructing a railroad from Hanoi to Saigon, French colonial rule did little deliberately to foster national unity.

French culture had difficulty in penetrating Tonkin, which was overcrowded, and presented little except its own people that could be exploited by a colonial government. It remained "Chinese." And, in the eyes of Northerners, the easy-going South Vietnamese became "too French." The establishment of French rule in Saigon pre-dated that in Hanoi by almost twenty years, and the less crowded land of the southern delta was attractive to French planters. Traditions were less well-established in the South: The Vietnamese got to Saigon not too many years before the French, and—having already assimilated the Indian civilizations of Champa and Cambodia—the South Vietnamese easily absorbed French culture.

The French divided Vietnam into three parts: Cochinchina, which was a French colony ruled directly by the French, and even had a representative (a Frenchman) in the Chamber of Deputies in Paris; Tonkin, which was called a "protectorate," even though the French had instituted direct rule; and Annam, a "protectorate" which the French ruled indirectly (less the city of Danang, which the French regarded as an enclave "owned" by the French, the same being true of Hanoi and Haiphong). The emperor at Hue was allowed no authority over either Tonkin or Cochinchina. Bao Dai, who became emperor in 1925, was allowed by the French to visit Tonkin only once. Prior to the Japanese occupation he had never been in Cochinchina.

The French administration of Vietnam did not change during the Japanese occupation of the country until close to the end of World War II. Then the Japanese decided to remove the colonial government and declare Vietnam's independence. Cochinchina, however, was not included and remained under Japanese military rule.
Following the defeat of the Japanese in World War II, Vietnam was occupied by the armies of two powers. This seemed to verify the differences between North and South. North Vietnam was occupied, appropriately, by Chinese troops; South Vietnam was occupied by Indian troops of the British Empire.

When war broke out between the returning French army and the Viet Minh, the French had little difficulty in re-establishing their rule in Cochinchina. Most of the fighting took place in the north, where the Viet Minh were stronger. In the South the insurgents attempted little beyond harassment to prevent the re-establishment of an effective government. No engagements of more than company strength on the Viet Minh side were fought in the South. This situation led to the agreements of 1954, whereby the French regrouped their forces south of the seventeenth parallel. The Viet Minh went north.

Although the original agreement called for eventual reunification, South Vietnamese leaders were not anxious to deliver themselves to northern domination in accordance with an agreement which they had played almost no part in drafting. Reunification with North Vietnam now was considered even more undesirable, since an ideological conflict had been added to the traditional animosity between the Northern and Southern parts of Vietnam. With the support of the United States, Ngo Dinh Diem refused to hold the elections. Instead, he established an independent South Vietnamese State.

Antagonisms between Northerners and Southerners still plague South Vietnam's politics. Ngo Dinh Diem at first created a predominantly Cochinchenine government. But, as the struggle against the communists developed, he relied more and more upon the staunchly anti-communist northerners (on the basis of their anti-communism) rather than southerners (on the basis of their anti-northern sentiments). This led to a situation in which southerners were being governed by northerners, but fighting insurgents who at this stage were mainly southerners. The process continued even after Diem's overthrow, reaching its peak when Tonkinese generals dominated the government from 1965 to 1967.
INTERNAL DISSIDENCE

Of all the names applied to the Vietnamese nation, Annam, "Pacified South" is the least deserved. The Vietnamese never have really been pacified—the South Vietnamese even less so than the Tonkinese, who were somewhat more accustomed to the regimentation of Chinese society. Dissenters, exiles, vagabonds, deserters, and veterans pushed south where they came into contact with other peoples whom they either overran or pushed aside—but never thoroughly assimilated. The advancing Vietnamese frontier left behind its residual minority groups, who then usually held grievances against the Vietnamese. Ethnic differences were not the only causes of resistance. Religious persecution, or the tyranny of the emperor and his mandarins, provided other causes for which an insurrection could be started. Internal dissidence is a major tradition in the history of Vietnam.

Peasant rebellions are a standard feature in oriental history, and Vietnam is no exception. Few years passed without at least one outbreak of rebellion. Unless the emperor was overthrown, not many of these rebellions were given much attention in the court annals, for the recorders regarded the rebels as little more than bandits—which they often were. However, once the emperor was overthrown, it became the duty of the Confucian historians to illustrate the mechanics of the mandate of heaven, and thus legitimize what had already been accomplished by force.

Few rebellions ever reached national proportions. The only one that did so prior to the resistance movement of 1945 was the Tay Son rebellion of the late eighteenth century, which succeeded in usurping the rule of the Nguyen and Trinh families. Typical of such peasant rebellions, the movement promised to establish a "Pure Land" or "Heaven on Earth." "Heaven on Earth" was to consist of land for the peasants and restoration of various privileges to Cham princes and Montagnards. In Saigon, "Heaven on Earth" also meant authorizing the massacre of ten thousand Chinese emigrants and the looting of their businesses. The regime created by the rebellion lasted a generation, but was overthrown by a restoration movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Vietnamese Communists are fond of pointing to the Tay Son rebellion
as precursor of the Viet Minh -- just as Chinese Communists like to
trace their lineage to the Taiping rebellion.

The Tay Son massacre of the Chinese population of Saigon was a popu-
lar expression of attitudes that are still held widely by Southeast Asian
peoples toward the overseas Chinese. Their industriousness, close-knit
society, business acumen, and economic monopolies have gained for them
status similar to that of the Jew in Eastern Europe or the Middle East,
with its attendant prejudices and pogroms. In Vietnam, there was an
added suspicion that the local Chinese represented a fifth column through
which Vietnam's traditional enemy would attempt to expand its influence.

During the late nineteenth century, protected by colonial rule,
the Chinese population of South Vietnam increased rapidly. The French
followed earlier Vietnamese imperial policy by granting the Chinese a
certain degree of autonomy in directing their own affairs—a privilege
which neither endeared them to the Vietnamese, nor encouraged assimi-
lation. The policy of treating the Chinese with special consideration
was reversed by President Ngo Dinh Diem, who gave them their choice of
either assuming Vietnamese citizenship or returning to China.

Ethnic differences also were the basis of other traditional con-
flicts in Vietnam: The Vietnamese versus the Chams, the Vietnamese ver-
sus the Khmers (the survivors of the Cambodian empire) and the Vietnamese
versus the Montagnards. The Chams were victims of an earlier and harsher
imperial policy of the Vietnamese, which eliminated the Cham as a signi-
ficant minority. This was not the case with the Montagnards, who success-
fully resisted any attempts of the Vietnamese to "pacify" them. The
traditional Vietnamese method of assimilation was to move in as many
ethnic Vietnamese as possible, and take over the land. But, land in the
western highlands was not amenable to penetration by rice-growing Viet-
namese; the Montagnards survived. Recently, Montagnard resistance to the
Vietnamese has followed a traditional political pattern in South Vietnam:
the combative political party with its own military organization.

The Khmers were not as fortunate as the Montagnards, in that
their land was appropriate to the needs of the advancing Vietnamese.
But, the establishment of French colonial rule in the nineteenth
century prevented the Khmers from suffering the same fate as the Chams.
The colonial government did not allow new Vietnamese settlers in the Mekong River Delta to disturb existing Khmer villages, and the Khmers were allowed to follow their own traditions and religious practices as well as to retain their land rights. Despite this, the Khmers in Vietnam were dissatisfied and did not abandon their irredentist aims.

In the late nineteenth century the Khmer resistance movement took the form of an exotic revolt named after its leader, Pu Kombo. Pu Kombo claimed to be descended from the ancient Khmer kings, and made a living by selling charms with magical powers which included immunity against bullets. From charm sales, Pu Kombo expanded into arms smuggling and founded a new sect which he called "The Way of the Meek." Later, his attention diverted from Vietnam, Pu Kombo was captured when he tried to take Phnom Penh and claim his throne. But remnants of the sect lived on, combining with other sects that seem to flourish in the western delta region. Ultimately these culminated in the Hoa Hao. Although overshadowed by the Viet Cong insurgency, the Khmer resistance movement has continued in Vietnam. To carry on the struggle against the Vietnamese, a party calling itself the "White Turban" was organized in the twentieth century. The party took its name from the white turbans worn by its followers. Embedded in their turbans were amulets having magical powers, among which was immunity against bullets. The "white turbans" were all that distinguished them from any other gang of bandits: They killed Vietnamese villagers and Viet Cong without distinction. Adopting the name Front de Lutte Des Khmers du Kampuchea Krom (Fighting Front for the Khmers of Lower Cambodia), the white turbans continued fighting. They expanded their aim to include liberation of "Lower Cambodia"—"Lower Cambodia" to the Khmers is the Mekong Delta to the Vietnamese.

The oldest ethnic conflict is that between ethnic Vietnamese and hill tribes of the western mountains. The Montagnards—a term given by the French to all mountain tribespeople regardless of ethnic group—traditionally have resisted Vietnamese rule. "Insulation" would better describe the Vietnamese policy toward the Montagnards than either "assimilation" or "colonization." The Vietnamese skirted the mountains in their march to the south, establishing a number of forts
in Montagnard areas mainly to provide protection against incursions of the hill tribes for the Vietnamese living in the lowlands. Little attempt was made to assimilate the Montagnards, whom the Vietnamese regarded as sub-human. Nor were the Montagnard lands attractive. Once tribal chieftains accepted nominal submission to the emperor of Vietnam, they were left alone. Nevertheless, Vietnamese history is filled with Montagnard uprisings.

The French institutionalized this separation by creating a separate administrative sub-division to govern the Montagnards. However, just as they did in Cambodia and Laos, Vietnamese merchants and Vietnamese bureaucrats moved into the Montagnard areas with the French, in some cases reviving or amplifying old hostilities. Two major Montagnard revolts took place in the 1930's, one of them lasting from 1936 to 1938.

President Diem reversed the policy of separation, and instituted a policy designed to integrate the Montagnards into the Vietnamese state. Vietnamese were moved from the overcrowded central Vietnam coast into the highlands, an effort that closely resembled Vietnam's traditional policy of imperial expansion. Montagnard resentment grew, and finally erupted in open revolt in 1964 and again in 1965.

Although the Vietnamese generally are regarded as tolerant of new religions and free from religious fanaticism, religious groups in Vietnam often have come into conflict with each other and with the central government. The basis for that conflict seldom has been doctrine itself, but rather the political power held by—or threatened by--its adherents. Some resultant patterns of conflict have been Buddhists versus the central government, Catholics versus the central government, Buddhists versus Catholics, Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects versus the central government, and Catholics, Hoa Hao and Cao Dai versus the communists.

The Buddhist movement against the regime of President Diem alleged the persecution of Buddhists, which was partially true. Buddhists have been persecuted off and on in the history of Vietnam, but never with the severity that has attended persecution of Catholics. Vietnamese emperors regarded Catholicism as a subversive political doctrine,
and converts were persecuted with varying degrees of severity prior to
the establishment of French colonial government. Converts fared better
once French rule was established, of course, and were regarded as an
important element supporting the colonial government. During the war
against the Viet Minh, the French even allowed the Vietnamese Catholics
to field their own private armies against the insurgents.

The Hoa Hao and Cao Dai, two other religious sects, also were
allowed by the French to field their own armies in South Vietnam.
Following the defeat and withdrawal of the French army, neither the
Hoa Hao and Cao Dai would permit their private armies to be incor-
porated into the new Vietnamese national army. In fact, the French
were accused of supporting them in order to maintain French influence
in South Vietnam. The government of Ngo Dinh Diem succeeded in buying
off some and disarming or dispersing the rest without much fighting.
The price paid, however, was the sects' non-cooperation with the
government when the communists renewed their insurgency. An added
price for cooperation always has been some degree of autonomy in
areas the sects consider their domain.

Not all sects were ethnic or religious. It would be hard to
describe the Binh Xuyen as anything other than bandits. Beginning as
river pirates and operating like a Chinese Tong, the Binh Xuyen
gradually gained control of the vice in Saigon and Cholon. This
included the gambling casinos, houses of prostitution, and narcotics
trade. It was a lucrative trade, and it was suspected that the
emperor Bao Dai received a cut of the profits; his appointing the
Binh Xuyen leader to the rank of general did nothing to dispel the
suspicions. The Binh Xuyen later consolidated their position by taking
control of the police in Saigon and Cholon, until 1954 when the Viet-
namese army drove them out after some fighting.

CONCLUSION: HISTORICAL FORCES STILL AT LARGE

The Vietnamese communists' claim that a foreign army never can
pacify Vietnam must be taken seriously. While it is just as easy to
overestimate the extent of anti-American sentiments among the Viet-
namese people as it is to mistake Vietnamese courtesy for real
affection, the fact remains that the American presence in Vietnam is that of a foreign army. In the history of Vietnam, the surest way to join the pantheon of Vietnamese heroes has been to die resisting foreign invaders. The Vietnamese repeatedly have thrown invaders out, a tradition to which they point with pride. And that tradition remains a powerful, historical force to which the communists skillfully have attached themselves. Vietnamization of the war effort, from the perspective of Vietnamese history, is a necessity.

The Vietnamese have been influenced profoundly by China. Their culture, their institutions, the form of Buddhism they profess, and their political development, bear the imprint of China. Chinese influence is likely to continue, especially in North Vietnam. It is both a historical tradition and a fact of geography. But recognition of this influence, which has been mainly cultural and intellectual, should not lead to the fallacy that Chinese expansion into Southeast Asia is inevitable and legitimate, or that China merely wishes to restore its traditional role in Vietnam and that the United States is attempting to refute a natural situation.

The Chinese are regarded by the Vietnamese as foreign invaders—natural enemies of the Vietnamese, who traditionally have resisted Chinese rule. Vietnamese recognition of a nominal and unenforceable Chinese suzerainty was no more than a convenient arrangement which left Vietnam free to expand southward, and freed China from becoming bogged down in costly wars in Southeast Asia. (Neither China nor the United States desires to get bogged down in a land war in Southeast Asia.) Nor was Vietnam's status unique as a tributary nation to China. China did not conduct foreign relations in the western sense of equality of nations: All who dealt with China, including European powers, did so—in China's eyes—as tributaries.

There is another significant aspect of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Although condemned by Vietnamese historians as acts of treason, requests have been made by Vietnamese rulers for Chinese intervention when domestic rebellion or external enemies threatened. None of the Chinese interventions succeeded in preserving a Vietnamese dynasty—but patterns of Chinese intervention still survive.
Vietnam must be counted among the most aggressively imperialistic powers of Southeast Asia. Vietnamese imperialism in Southeast Asia preceded that of the European powers, who arrived later. In fact, Vietnam even competed with Europeans for a while, until this was cut short by the imposition of French rule. With the departure of the colonial powers, ancient rivalries and ambitions have been revived. Both North and South Vietnam probably will continue to act as imperialists in their relations with Laos and Cambodia. It is unlikely that North Vietnam will be persuaded to disgorge Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces in Laos, which they have occupied historically, and virtually colonized. As Prince Sihanouk frequently points out, South Vietnamese ambitions in Cambodia may not be abandoned. Any threatening moves in either area, however, is likely to provoke intervention by the Thai; it is this factor--more than respect for artificial boundaries--that is likely to inhibit the Vietnamese.

South Vietnamese resistance to rule by the North Vietnamese is another long standing tradition. A divided, not a united, Vietnam has been the norm for the past five hundred years. The animosity between Northerners and Southerners extends to domestic politics as well. The creation of a reunited Vietnam has little appeal in the South, outside of the northern refugee groups. To the North Vietnamese, reunification means the imposition of Northern leadership on recalcitrant and retarded southerners in the same manner that Vietnamese leadership is to be imposed on the rest of Indochina. The South Vietnamese are likely to continue resisting any attempts to impose northern rule. Also, it is likely that the northerners will continue trying. The two Vietnamese nations can be expected to remain hostile to one another in the foreseeable future, even though overt hostilities may end. It is possible that some outstanding Vietnamese leader may be able to repeat the accomplishment of the Emperor Cia Long and establish at least nominal authority over both Vietnam. But, such a leader is not in sight. The only contemporary leader with anywhere near sufficient prestige in both North and South Vietnam is 78-year old Ho Chi Minh.

The intensity of the struggle against the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese masks other internal conflicts. South Vietnamese society
is divided into innumerable ethnic, religious, regional, and political
(communists would add "class") factions, which often are subdivided
into even smaller factions that gather around specific personalities.
The Viet Cong insurgency follows already existing group differences
in some cases, but frequently cuts across others.

Violence in South Vietnam was not introduced by the communists;
it was already there. Communist insurgency raised the level of
violence. Previously, factions carrying on sporadic warfare with one
another could do so only with the arms they could purchase, and what
little outside assistance they could obtain. The drawing of ideolo-
gical battle lines reflecting a concurrent international conflict
provided increased outside assistance to both the insurgents and the
government forces. This has made an armed society of one traditionally
prone to violence. Such a situation, coupled with a historical tradit-
tion of internal dissidence, suggests that the shooting—or at least
the potential of violence—will persist beyond the settlement of the
Viet Cong insurgency. Now even the very young have been armed. For
this is only one of many internal conflicts.

Historical patterns are ended neither by negotiations nor by
war. The historical patterns already described can be expected to
continue. Understanding their development over the centuries is
essential to understanding the present conflict. They suggest trends
that can be expected in the years to come.

Looking Back From 1979

The historical patterns persist. The American withdrawal did not
end the fighting in Vietnam. North Vietnam defeated South Vietnam by
force of arms and has imposed its rule on the south. There were for a
while occasional reports of holdouts still fighting in some remote
parts of the country, but little organized armed resistance remains.
The continuing flow of refugees from Vietnam, however, does suggest a
potential for resistance. The government possibly sees this emigra-
tion as a means of ridding society of potential malcontents.

The Vietnamese are clearly the predominant foreign influence in
Laos, and their invasion of Cambodia recalls traditional Vietnamese
imperialism in that country. The flow of ethnic Chinese refugees indicates that the Vietnamese have again demonstrated their traditional antipathy toward the Chinese. Expulsion of the ethnic Chinese also destroys their domination of commerce in the southern part of the country and facilitates the transformation to socialism.

The Chinese moved to thwart the growth of Vietnamese power in Indochina by briefly invading Vietnam (to "teach the Vietnamese a lesson"), and by providing support for continuing Cambodian resistance to the government established in Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese. The Thai have permitted Chinese supplies to cross Thai territory, thus involving them at least indirectly. As the Vietnamese-backed Cambodian troops close in on the Chinese-backed Cambodian resistance fighters along the Thai border, the possibility of clashes between the Thai army and Cambodian or even Vietnamese troops increases.