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Negotiating Community and Nation in Chợ Lớn: Nation-building, Community-building and
Transnationalism in Everyday Life during the Republic of Việt Nam, 1955-1975

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Abstract

Negotiating Community and Nation in Chợ Lớn: Nation-building, Community-building and Transnationalism in Everyday Life during the Republic of Việt Nam, 1955-1975

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My dissertation examines everyday life of Chinese communities during the Republic of Việt Nam based on a variety of sources in Vietnamese, Chinese, French and English, most notably rare and rarely-used Chinese-language newspapers from Chợ Lớn. Focusing on social life ordered around markets, native place congregations and temples, schools and work places, hospitals and medicinal halls, sports clubs and restaurants, private homes and public leisure places, my dissertation provides a rich tapestry of Chợ Lớn's Chinese community, particularly its middle class, and the changes it underwent over time. I situate Chợ Lớn in multiple relations: as one center of greater Sài Gòn, economic conduit for the southern Vietnamese hinterlands, socio-cultural hub for Chinese communities throughout Indochina, nodal point in transnational Chinese exchanges linking San Francisco, Hong Kong, China, and Singapore, and contributor to Cold War-era and Taiwan/ROC-centric Sinophone articulations.

The dissertation is organized into four main chapters: 1) Chợ Lớn's built environment and human geography, its lived and shared spaces; 2) Education from kindergarten to adult learning between local and transnational networks and the state; 3) Sports and competitions over disciplining bodies and controlling social time; and 4) young adulthood, women in the public

sphere, and socialization into multi-layered networks through marriage, work, philanthropy, and other ways of accumulating and spending social capital. Here Chợ Lớn emerges as a site of contestation between diasporic community interests, a “nation-building” Vietnamese state, and the transnational Chinese world not easily negotiated by individuals and further complicated by war, violence, and ideological divisions.

My dissertation makes significant contributions to a variety of fields: social history (and here everyday urban life) of which Việt Nam Studies are still desperately starved, to the growing body of studies on the Republic of Việt Nam (and a rare one where the RVN simply “is” rather than “fails”), to conversations about diasporic/minority communities with multiple identities in Việt Nam (and elsewhere), and to knowledge of overseas Chinese and the dynamic currents in the Cold War-era transnational Chinese world.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ARVN | Army of Republic of Việt Nam |
| <i>BK</i> | <i>Bách Khoa</i> |
| <i>BTG</i> | <i>Báo Thế Giới</i> |
| <i>ĐNNTC</i> | <i>Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí</i> |
| DRV | Democratic Republic of Việt Nam |
| GHI | German Historical Institute |
| GMD | Guomintang |
| KMT | Kuomintang |
| NXB | Nhà Xuất Bản |
| ROC | Republic of China |
| RVN | Republic of Việt Nam |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| PRG | Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Việt Nam |
| <i>SGDN</i> | <i>Saigon Daily News</i> |
| SRV | Socialist Republic of Việt Nam |
| TPHCM | Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh |
| <i>YT</i> | <i>Yuen Tuong Jih Pao</i> |

Introduction

The following were some articles and advertisements typically found in some of the Chinese newspapers published in Chợ Lớn, Việt Nam's Chinatown during the Republic of Việt Nam (RVN, 1955 – 1975):

Báo Thế Giới (世界報, *World News*)
01 April 1959, Wednesday:

Louis Cha, *Legend of the Precious Sword* (金庸, 書劍恩仇錄)
Tian Wai Tian restaurant (天外天酒家)
A Perfect Match at Lidu Theater (臭頭髮水某, 麗都戲院)
Top-grade Bird's Nest at Hui Hai Medicinal Hall (匯海藥行)¹

Thế Giới Tự Do (*Free World*)
December 1958:
Musical performance by Anh Ngọc
Trần Dzụ Hồng's Art Exhibition²

May 1959:
21 – 24 March: New York Philharmonic Orchestra performed with the National Orchestra in the Saigon Botanical Gardens³

The first segment highlights some of the serialized novels and options for food, film and goods available in Sài Gòn as gleaned from a Chợ Lớn Chinese daily. Serialized novels in Hong Kong and films from Hong Kong made their way to Chợ Lớn and into the everyday life of Chinese communities in the RVN. The latter are event reviews from a Vietnamese-language monthly magazine published in Sài Gòn, highlighting some of the cultural exchanges during the Cold War. The former advertisements are a sneak peak into the vibrant everyday life of the Chinese community in Chợ Lớn during the RVN. They highlight the Chinese community's options as they navigated between nation-building, community-building and transnationalism, which were circumscribed by the Cold War context. While some of the Chợ Lớn Chinese communities interactions were an extension of longer historical networks, some of these networks were

¹ *BTG*, April 01, 1959, pp. 1-3.

² *Thế Giới Tự Do* 7, 12 (1958), pp. 5, 24.

³ *Thế Giới Tự Do* 8, 5 (1959), p. 28.

modified by the postcolonial context and a Cold War context. Through a study of everyday life of Chinese communities, I examine the varied effects of these different forces on the lives of the Chinese living in Chợ Lớn. As my study relies heavily on newspapers, this dissertation skews towards the everyday life of middle-class Chinese who had access to newspapers, bought advertisements in the newspapers and were also the target of these advertisements.

Chợ Lớn was Sài Gòn's twin city. Located some three miles from Sài Gòn, they were adjacent to each other and the boundaries between the two blended, even as the two cities had their distinct centers. Chinese had settled in Chợ Lớn prior to advent of French colonialism in Việt Nam in the late-nineteenth century, but many of the key Chinese institutions in Việt Nam were formed during the French colonial period. The central institution amongst Chinese communities in Việt Nam is the native-place congregation system. Native place, or the province that one originated from was a way Overseas Chinese organized themselves due to differences in dialects and culture. In French Indochina, this system was known as the congregation system. In studies of Overseas Chinese elsewhere, this is commonly known as the *huiguan*. Congregations in this dissertation refers to *huiguans* but I continue to use the term congregation to reflect the particularities of this institution in French Indochina, and later, Việt Nam.

The Chinese community in southern Việt Nam was a fairly recent historical phenomenon, which dated back to the seventeenth century, following the fall of the Ming dynasty, and the rise of the Qing dynasty. Political upheaval in China led to the first mass emigration of Chinese groups to Southeast Asia. This changed the face of Southeast Asia, as port cities along the coasts of Southeast Asia grew with an increasing Chinese population. Colonialism in the 1800s intensified this phenomenon, and led to another large influx of Chinese into Southeast Asia.

Chinese in Southeast Asia have often been described as sojourners, and this is an apt description, up until 1949, when the doors back into mainland China were closed to some.

In 1949, China split into two rival political regimes. The People's Republic of China (PRC), which aligned itself with the Communist world remained in mainland China, while its political rival, the Republic of China (ROC) retreated to the island of Taiwan. Chinese in various parts of the anti-Communist world found themselves cut off from the motherland by the Cold War, as the PRC joined the countries behind the iron curtain. While some of Chinese returned to the PRC answering the hail of the ideology, most other Chinese found themselves in an in-between state, subject to the discipline of the host nation-state, or adopting the identity of being a transnational Chinese, who were de jure citizens of the Republic of China (ROC), and under their jurisdiction.⁴

While Chinese communities during the colonial period were more aligned with their native-place identity and did not develop a greater "Chinese" consciousness, Chinese identity changed with political upheavals in China. Revolutionary leaders who sought to end the Chinese imperial system like Liang Qichao (梁啟超) and Sun Yat-sen (孫中山) made their rounds amongst Overseas Chinese communities from San Francisco to Honolulu to Singapore to fundraise for revolutionary. This had the impact of heightening Chinese communities' political consciousness and fostering a "Chinese" identity that went beyond one's native place. The division between the PRC and ROC put many Chinese to test. Having lost the option to return to the 'motherland' in the PRC, the transnational Chinese world started to emerge and went beyond economic exchanges. A new imagined community, which Shi Shu-mei terms "Sinophone"

⁴ Philip Kuhn, "Why China Historians Should Study the Chinese Diaspora, and Vice-versa", *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 2, 2 (Nov 2006), pp. 163-172.

world, was formed.⁵ This Sinophone world was nurtured by informational exchanges, cultural exchanges et al.



Suicheng Congregation Building

Literature Review

Scholarship on the Chinese in Việt Nam

Of the different ethnic groups who live in Việt Nam, the Chinese have probably received the most amount of scholarly attention. While the concept of ethnicity and our current understanding of Chinese are somewhat different, this group from the north has appeared as a separate group in Vietnamese imperial dynastic records. For instance, in the Nguyễn dynasty records on the northern borderlands regions, they appear as Qing subjects (清人) or as Qing merchants (清商). Evidently, what is a Chinese, and who they are is in a state of constant flux.

⁵ Shi Shu-mei, “The Concept of the Sinophone”, *Modern Language Association*, 126, 3 (May 2011), p. 710.

Nevertheless, in recent scholarship Chinese have often been discussed as a group with fixed identity instead of a nuanced understanding of the changing meaning of “Chinese”.

Consequently, there are several comprehensive surveys on the Chinese in Việt Nam as well as ethnographies of the Chinese. These approaches are somewhat limited, as it does not address the spatial and temporal contexts, and they may lead to changing definitions of Chinese-ness, and changing opportunities for the Chinese. Nevertheless, such studies have formed the foundation of academic knowledge on the Chinese in Việt Nam and my dissertation builds on these studies.

Among several comprehensive surveys of the Chinese in Việt Nam, a majority of them begin in the colonial period, with slightly different focuses – political, economic, or diplomatic.

Thomas Engelbert’s *Die chinesische Minderheit im Süden Vietnams (Hoa) als Paradigma der kolonialen und nationalistischen Nationalitätenpolitik (The Chinese Minority in South Việt Nam as a Paradigm of Colonial and Nationalist Nationality Policy)*,⁶ spans the colonial period and the post-colonial periods. It employs a top-down approach, examining official policies enacted against the Chinese community and outlines the political constraints within which the Chinese community operated. In keeping with his general approach to the topic, Engelbert’s treatment of the RVN period is similar. He highlights the major policies towards the Chinese during the Republic and thus informs my dissertation of the legal framework within which the Chinese community operated.

Outside of Engelbert’s ambitious and comprehensive monograph, most other studies on the Chinese in Việt Nam chose to focus on shorter time periods. The colonial period is a particular favorite of scholars. In English language scholarship, Alain Marsot gives a comprehensive overview of the Chinese community in his 1993 monograph, *The Chinese*

⁶ Thomas Engelbert, *Die chinesische Minderheit im Süden Vietnams (Hoa) als Paradigma der kolonialen und nationalistischen Nationalitätenpolitik* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2002).

Community in Vietnam under the French, through the eyes of the French archives and other secondary research from French secondary literature on the colonial period in general, and also on studies of the Chinese community in particular.⁷ Marsot's macro study of the Chinese community was particularly useful to this dissertation in understanding broader trends like demographic changes of Chinese immigrants into colonial Indo-China, and some of the formal institutions put in place by colonial authorities to control the populations within their colonies.

While Marsot's study took a top-down approach from the perspective of the French colonizers, Tracy Barrett's *Overseas Chinese in Indochina* was more centered on Chinese communities.⁸ Consequently, her monograph is an insightful analysis of the convergence and divergence of Chinese communities' interests with those of French and Nguyễn imperial authorities. Barrett succeeds in giving Chinese communities more agency than other scholars of the Chinese in Việt Nam, highlighting the pitfalls of analyzing their interests solely from the perspective of larger political entities. Through *Overseas Chinese in Indochina*, one learns more about the institutions central to Chinese communities, for instance, the congregations, and some of their functions amongst Chinese communities. One gets a glimpse into the social history of the Chinese, for example, hospitals and schools set up to cater specially to select communities. Nevertheless, there are several pitfalls associated with Barrett's dissertation-turned-book. While her study is centered on Chinese communities, its selection bias strongly favored prominent individuals, limiting its insight to the highest stratum of Chinese communities and, in particular, its leaders. Furthermore, her assertions are heavily supported by case studies of Chinese communities in Hà Nội, with very little attention to networks shared between Chinese communities in Indochina. Her title is a bit of a stretch, as there is no information on Chinese

⁷ Alain Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam under the French* (San Francisco: EmText, 1993).

⁸ Tracy Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indo-China* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

communities in Laos and Cambodia. Nevertheless, her study of the congregations and their functions lay some of the groundwork of my study.

Relative to the colonial period, and post-1975, there is a dearth of scholarship on the Chinese community in the post-colonial period from 1954-1975. This is perhaps due to the centrality of the Vietnam War/Second Indochina War in scholarship on Việt Nam in this period. While monographs like Engelbert's and, to a greater extent, Lương Nhữ Kí's dissertation (discussed below) also feature this period, Clifton Barton's dissertation and Vietnamese scholarship are the most comprehensive sources on this period.

Clifton Barton's 1977 dissertation is an anthropological study of the function and movement of credit amongst the Chinese community in Chợ Lớn.⁹ Although his study has a strong economic focus, he also highlights the interdependence between economic capital and social capital, and how these two often worked hand-in-hand. While his subjects remained anonymous, making his study general, its insight into the middle class in Chợ Lớn, and their relationship with other Chinese communities in Indochina was an excellent resource for my research. In particular, the importance of social capital within the community informed my research on social relations within the community.

Democratic Republic of Việt Nam (DRV, 1945 – 1975) and Socialist Republic of Việt Nam (SRV, 1975 – present) scholarship on this period is strongly tied to the Vietnam/Indochina War. Concerned with ideology and the national history writing project, communist Vietnamese scholarship attempts to include the Chinese community within the national efforts in the war of resistance against American imperialism. Consequently, there is a greater focus on select segments of the Chinese community, for instance, the working class, and Chinese communists

⁹ Clifton Barton, "Credit and Commercial Control: The Strategies and Methods of Chinese Businesses in South Vietnam" (PhD Dissertation: Cornell University 1977).

who worked alongside Vietnamese revolutionary operatives in the country's 'liberation'. For instance, in Phan An's edited volume on *Người Hoa Quận 6 (Chinese of District 6)*, the research unit asserts that the Chinese in district six were the "earliest to follow the [Communist] Party and Uncle Hồ in sacrifice and combat against the French bandits, the invading American bandits, protecting the independence and freedom of Sài Gòn and the Vietnamese fatherland".¹⁰

Scholarship on this segment of the Chinese community complement my study, which skews towards the middle-class of traders, merchants, industrialists, and intellectuals, and contribute to a more holistic view of the components that made up the Chinese community in the RVN.

Following the 1954-75 period, scholarship on the 1975-1979 period blossomed, and this scholarship is related to international relations, and how the Chinese community became pawns in global politics involving factions within the Communist bloc, whereby antagonism between the SRV and PRC led to the exodus of about a third of the Chinese community through semi-legal channels, or as so-called boat people. As a reflection of the politics surrounding this period, there is scholarship from the PRC, ROC, and the SRV, either as accusations of the 'expulsion' of the Chinese from the SRV, or defense of the evil ploys of the PRC to use overseas Chinese as a fifth column to undermine the authority of new nations in Southeast Asia. For instance, an unauthored edited volume published in English by Beijing's Foreign Language Press in 1978, *On Viet Nam's Expulsion of Chinese Residents*, reflects PRC perspectives on the issue and claims Vietnamese ethnic discrimination and subsequent expulsion of its ethnic Chinese inhabitants.¹¹ By contrast, SRV scholarship claims that this was a Chinese ploy to foment dissent amongst its ethnic Chinese citizens, and the effectiveness of PRC propaganda led to the flight of its

¹⁰ Phan An, *Người Hoa Quận 6: Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* (Ho Chi Minh City: Mặt Trận Tổ Quốc Việt Nam Quận 6, 1990), p. 6.

¹¹ No author, *On Viet Nam's Expulsion of Chinese Residents* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1978).

inhabitants.¹² Ramses Amer's monograph attempts to balance these perspectives by including perspectives of the different parties involved. He grounds his study in the historical perspective, and I find his study particularly useful for the historical migration of the Chinese to southern Việt Nam.¹³

Following the 1979 exodus of many ethnic Chinese, the topic mostly falls off the radar of Western scholarship, but gains prominence in Vietnamese scholarship. In SRV scholarship, the ethnic Chinese are now subsumed within ethnic studies, and regarded as one of the many ethnic groups living within the socialist state. For instance, in the preface of an edited volume on the Chinese, *Góp Phần Tìm Hiểu Văn Hoá Người Hoa Ở Nam Bộ (Understanding the Culture of the Hoa People in the Southern Region)*, Lưu Kim Hoa introduces the ethnic Chinese as “a component of the different ethnic groups of Việt Nam.”¹⁴ Studies of the “Hoa” are like studies of other ethnic groups and focus on aspects of culture of the ethnic Chinese within the greater mosaic of the SRV. As a group, they were depoliticized in SRV scholarship similar to other groups in the *trung nguyên* region (Central Highlands region). By reducing them to a culture and portraying them only in their role as contributing to the cultural diversity of Việt Nam, socialist scholarship avoid uncomfortable issues with regards to their economic domination prior to 1975, or their exodus from 1975-79. It de-politicizes and tames the Chinese through ethnography. These studies were helpful in understanding aspects of Chinese culture during the Republic and were used for topics like commercial life and fashion amongst the Chinese community to give a better view of everyday life.

¹² Vietnam Courier ed., *The Hoa in Vietnam: Dossier II* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1978).

¹³ Ramses Amer, *The Ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and Sino-Vietnamese Relations* (Kuala Lumpur: Forum, 1991).

¹⁴ Phan An, *Góp Phần Tìm Hiểu Văn Hoá Người Hoa Ở Nam Bộ* (Ho Chi Minh City: NXB Văn Hoá – Thông Tin, 2006), p. 6.

Taking a different tack, Lương Nhĩ Kỳ's doctoral dissertation "The Chinese in Vietnam: A Study of Vietnamese-Chinese Relations with Special Attention to the Period 1862 – 1961" features a shorter time span than Engelbert's book, ending in 1961 – the year of his doctoral dissertation. It also studies the Chinese from the perspective of diplomacy. While one does not learn much about the Chinese community per se, it illustrates the global politics surrounding the Chinese in Việt Nam (both under the control of the DRV and RVN). Although Kỳ's dissertation depicts the Chinese as a pawn of the politicking of the RVN, PRC, ROC and DRV, a better way to understand this dynamic is to conceptualize it as the opportunities available to RVN Chinese communities.¹⁵

Trần Khánh's *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam* has the same time frame as Engelbert's study, but has an economic focus. He argues for the centrality of the Chinese in the economic development of Việt Nam through time, and how they dominated the economic sector, particularly during the colonial and the Republic periods. Their economic prominence, however, was curtailed with the rise of the SRV. Khánh's study highlights the similarities Chinese in Việt Nam shared with other Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. These historical surveys create the problem of portraying stasis amongst a dynamic community.¹⁶

Collectively, none of these studies address my specific interest in the Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn during the RVN, but they do contribute to various components in my dissertation. Studies that focus on diplomacy do not take into consideration the agency of the Chinese community in international history, or other aspects of international history. For instance,

¹⁵ Lương Nhĩ Kỳ, "The Chinese in Vietnam: A Study of Vietnamese-Chinese Relations with Special Attention to the Period 1862 – 1961" (PhD Dissertation: University of Michigan, 1962).

¹⁶ Trần Khánh, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

the flow of cultural and economic exchange illuminates a different aspect of exchange in contrast to the political focus of diplomatic history. Studies like SRV scholarship on the Chinese focus on post-war depoliticized culture, or the war-time proletariat, but do not focus on the middle-class in the urban setting, and how they were movers of the economy and a node in the massive network of transnational Chinese exchanges in East Asia, Southeast Asia and beyond. My study fills in this lacuna in the history of the Chinese community in Việt Nam.

Scholarship on the Republic of Việt Nam

Within the field of Vietnamese history, while much is written about this period (1955 – 1975), there is also a dearth of scholarship on the RVN itself. There is a surfeit of scholarship on these two decades of Vietnamese history, due to its association with the Vietnam War. Aside from the whole field of military history, which analyzes the Vietnam War, its origins, and its failure from a US perspective, an accompanying field of diplomatic history also sprouted in attempts to understand the war that led to a form of “emasculatation” of the American nation.¹⁷ Of these works, a majority of them focus on the relationship between the US and its Vietnamese ally – the RVN. Due to the instability of the regimes in the RVN following 1963 (known as the revolving door government until ca. 1967), the majority of scholarship focus on the RVN under its first president, Ngô Đình Diệm. In the literature on the RVN, there exists also a strong rural focus. And some perspectives used to examine the RVN include diplomatic history, political history, and social history.

In the field of diplomatic history, Seth Jacobs’ two books, *America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950 – 1957*

¹⁷ Christina Schwenkel, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009)

and *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam, 1950 – 1963* examine the way the US conceptualized Diệm, and conversely, how Diệm advertised himself to his audience amongst American politicians. It highlights the role religion played in the initial stages of US involvement in Việt Nam. Jacobs points out that Diệm's success with American politicians was closely tied to his staunch Catholicism and his portrayal of civil war in Việt Nam as a religious war.¹⁸

In Philip Catton's book *Diem's Final Failure: Prelude to America's War in Vietnam*, he studies the strategic hamlets and argues that their failure foreshadows the inevitable collapse of the RVN. The strategic hamlets were a rural resettlement program initiated by Diệm to address the issue of communist influence in the rural areas under RVN control. Consequently, he built walled villages to contain villagers and to restrict their movements, particularly at night. Catton points out that the program was a catastrophic failure, which inadvertently led to the end of Diệm's reign and the last hope of the RVN as a viable, self-sustained nation. Catton's strength is that his one of the few studies on the RVN that do not focus on its partners, but on the RVN itself. As such, it provides great insight into some of the so-called nation-building attempts in the RVN, that is, the strategic hamlets. In doing so, not only does it shed some light into the inner workings of the RVN and dispel some of the spectre of the RVN being merely a US puppet regime without agency – as alluded to in other studies, which approach the topic using an American-centric lens.¹⁹

In the field of social history, there are two works in the English language on the topic. One is David Hunt's *Vietnam's Southern Revolution*, and the other one is Robert Brigham's *Life*

¹⁸ Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950 – 1957* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Seth Jacobs, *Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

¹⁹ Philip Catton, *Diem's Final Failure: Prelude to America's War in Vietnam* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

and Death in the South Vietnamese Army. Collectively, they are a contribution to the oft-neglected field of social history of Việt Nam as well as the time period of the RVN. However, they present a limited view of social history of Việt Nam, which do not encapsulate the RVN for reasons discussed later. My study on the Chinese in Việt Nam complements these studies and presents an alternative understanding of both the RVN and everyday life during the RVN.

David Hunt's *Vietnam's Southern Revolution: From Peasant Insurrection to Total War* traces the changes to Mỹ Tho from the beginning of the Indochina War to its end. Through a documentation of the negative impact of the war on the community, Hunt argues that the RVN was doomed to failure. Hunt's book is a significant contribution to our understanding of social history within the field of Vietnamese history, how the war played out in a rural context, and Mỹ Tho's connection the RVN capital – Sài Gòn. Despite the contributions of his work to the thin fields of Vietnamese social history and the RVN, his research focuses on the rural context, which does not represent the RVN's powerbase. Nevertheless, his work informs my study about the relationship between rural-urban interactions within the RVN.²⁰

Robert Brigham's *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army* is an innovative book and, as the title suggests, is a look into everyday life within the Army of the RVN. It examines various aspects of everyday life, for instance, the food the soldiers ate, and the hardship associated with being in the military. Brigham's research is the first instance of examining everyday life within Vietnamese history, which heretofore has been almost entirely focused on abstractions and the lives of the elite or the rulers in history. Brigham gives details of lived experience. Through his examination of the lived experience, including the issue of poor

²⁰ David Hunt, *Vietnam's Southern Revolution: From Peasant Insurrection to Total War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).

morale within the army – which limited its effectiveness as a fighting force – Brigham makes the argument for how the RVN's military failed.²¹

While these excellent books are RVN-centric and elucidate various aspects of the now-defunct RVN, they are also haunted by the spectre of the US/RVN failure in the American/Viet Nam War. Consequently, underlying their study is the question of why the RVN failed. Consequently, their research feeds into their foregone conclusion, as these studies base their analyses in the rural areas. The support base of the RVN, however, was urban and middle-class. My focus on the Chinese community in Chợ Lớn examines a group that would be overall more included to support the RVN, and how the RVN worked (or did not work) with one of its target audiences. Additionally, this work is also one of the few urban studies in the field of Vietnamese history – another glaring lacuna. As Anthony Reid argues, Southeast Asia history is essentially urban, and Southeast Asia had a long history of urbanism.²² My study of the Vietnamese urban context in the mid-to-late twentieth century will contribute to the broader conversations about both Southeast Asian urbanism and the global urbanism.

Scholarship on the Overseas Chinese

Scholarship on the Overseas Chinese, particularly, the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and beyond, although a relative new historical field, is somewhat well-researched. For instance, Victor Purcell's tome *The Chinese in Southeast Asia* covers the whole region and temporally stretches from the pre-colonial to the postcolonial period.²³ Although it is a well-researched field, there is a great disparity in terms of themes and geographic areas researched. To

²¹ Robert Brigham, *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

²² Anthony Reid, "The Structure of Cities in Southeast Asia, Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 235-50.

²³ Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

date, there is no real study which examines both intra-regional and cross-regional connections within the networks of the Overseas Chinese. This is despite the two century-long existence of a Chinese transnational Chinese network which stretched from Asia to America.

In studies of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, there is a geographic bias towards Chinese communities in the Dutch East Indies, later Indonesia and British Malaya, which later became Singapore and Malaysia. For instance, Leo Suryadinata is a leading expert on Indonesian Chinese, and their history, particularly in the twentieth century.²⁴ Some pioneers associated with the study of Chinese in British Malaya include Wang Gungwu and Yen Ching-hwang.²⁵

The central themes of these studies also reflect the unique historical experiences of the different communities. In particular, political struggles and the tension of identity are pivotal to some of these studies. Another prominent theme is the economic role that various Chinese communities played within the countries that they settled in. By contrast, there is very little on their culture, or the role of networks, outside of economic networks, and the pathways created by economic connections within the historical perspective. Only recent scholarship on the late-twentieth century focus on the issue of information networks and the mediasphere as well as and the concept of a greater overseas Chinese network that went beyond economics. For instance, Sun Wanning's study of what she terms the "Chinese mediasphere" observes the recent phenomenon of transnational cultural imaginations. She argues that the existence of a transnational Chinese mediasphere has the effect of mitigating the trials of global migration amongst the Chinese in the world, as they are able to imagine a world outside while at home, whilst imagining a home while overseas. While her study is interesting, it lacks a historical

²⁴ Leo Suryadinata, *The Culture of the Chinese Minority in Indonesia* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1997).

²⁵ Yen Ching-hwang, *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya, 1800 – 1911* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986); Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991).

perspective of the development of such a transnational mediasphere, albeit in a very different form.²⁶ This edited volume informs my understanding of some of the functions of networks and helps me understand them from a historical perspective.

These works are limited in that they approach the study of overseas Chinese as country studies, and do not examine their place within nodes of a greater network sufficiently. Nevertheless, these studies allow me to situate my study and help me understand the similarity of the situation of the Chinese community within the RVN to other regions, and some aspects which are more particular to their unique situation. Hence, I hope to contribute to the conversation, while also steering the field into new directions, where one will understand Chinese communities within Southeast Asia as part of a transnational Chinese network in the historical perspective.

The study of Overseas Chinese from the perspective of Hong Kong also reflects Hong Kong's historical self-perception. While studies of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia are essentially country studies, Hong Kong situates its historical role both as an intermediary between China and the Overseas Chinese, and also as the focal point of these networks. For instance, the edited volume, *Rethinking Hong Kong: New Paradigms, New Perspectives* examines the centrality of Hong Kong in Overseas Chinese networks. Although Hong Kong was a gateway to China, the homeland which has emotional and cultural importance, Hong Kong ended up playing a more important role than China itself, due to its role as an intermediary. For instance, clan associations set up branches in Hong Kong to handle the traffic of their networks from different parts of the world; Hong Kong also acted as the main warehouse and supplier of ethnic goods like Chinese medicine, which was disseminated to Overseas Chinese all over the

²⁶ Sun Wanning, "Introduction", in *Media and the Chinese Diaspora: Community, Communications, and Commerce* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

world. I find the concept of networks and nodes proposed in Elizabeth Sinn's article useful in understanding the role of the Chinese in the RVN, but it is limited, as it does not explain the role of secondary nodes which functioned as headquarters themselves, for instance the role of Singapore, or the role of Chợ Lớn.²⁷

Methodology

A Note on Sources – History of Chinese newspapers in Chợ Lớn

My dissertation relies heavily on Chinese newspapers in circulation in Chợ Lớn found in the National University of Singapore (NUS) library. There are six titles available, and the collection is very incomplete. In some cases, for instance, the minor publication, *Báo Thế Giới* (世界報, *World News*), they only had two years in their collection. Fortuitously, the most complete newspaper in their collection is *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao* (遠東日報, *Far East Daily*), is also one of the most important newspapers in Chợ Lớn, alongside the *Zhongguo Ribao* (中國日報, *China Daily*), and later, *Yazhou Ribao* (亞洲日報 *Asia Daily*). Temporally, there is also an imbalance in the collection, with the majority of the collection featuring the 1970s. The oddities of transliterating the different newspapers against academic convention in this dissertation reflect how these different Chinese dailies were titled. However, the content of the newspapers were all in Chinese characters despite their different titles.

Although the collection is very incomplete, this collection is an important cache of information about the Chinese. To date, other scholars of Việt Nam, Southeast Asia, or Overseas Chinese have not utilized this resource. It is a treasure trove that offers rich insights into the Chinese living not only in Chợ Lớn, but also in southern Việt Nam, Cambodia, and Laos. In fact,

²⁷ Elizabeth Sinn, Wong Siu-lun, Chan Wing-hoi eds, *Rethinking Hong Kong: New Paradigms, New Perspectives* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2009).

a Chinese newspaper journalist from Bangkok in the 1960s commented that the extent of newspapers in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn, and their quality, made them the best in Southeast Asia.²⁸

While my study is limited to two decades, ending with the closure of the Chinese press in Chợ Lớn on 30 April 1975, Chinese newspapers in Chợ Lớn have a longer history. The first Chinese newspaper in southern Việt Nam started in 1918, but the first Chinese newspaper in Sài Gòn, *Huaqiao Bao* (華僑報, *Overseas Chinese Newspapers*) was started on 10 October 1920 by a French priest. It was later taken over by Cen Qibo (岑琦波), Yu Qunchao (余群超), and Chen Zhaoji (陳肇基), changing its name to *Huaqiao Ribao* (華僑日報, *Overseas Chinese Daily*). It ended its print run in 1925. 1925 was also the year the Kuomintang (國民黨, Kuomintang/Guomindang) dabbled in the Chợ Lớn Chinese press. This was also the beginning of a half-century long relationship with the Chinese in Chợ Lớn.²⁹

In the early 1930s, there was a burgeoning of Chinese newspapers in Chợ Lớn. Some sixteen titles were started in this period. While some of these papers were short-lived, a few became central to their communities. The *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* and the *Zhongguo Ribao* were born in this period of flourish for the Chinese press. While these newspapers were circulated amongst the Chinese, their target audiences differed from one another and certain publications were often closely associated with their respective communities.

The *Zhongguo Ribao* was founded in 1930 by merchants and the Guangzhao congregation's leader, Liang Kangrong (梁康榮). Following his death in 1965, Huang Yunzhou (黃允洲), also the head of the Guangzhao congregation, became its editor. The paper later became the *Jianguo Ribao* (建國日報, *Nation Building Daily*), which was helmed by Huang

²⁸ Man Man (漫漫), *The Tragedy of Sài Gòn's Overseas Chinese Newspapers* (西貢僑報的滄桑劫難) (Taipei: Xinyue Wenchuang/新悅文創, 2012), p. 47.

²⁹ Man Man, *The Tragedy of Sài Gòn's Overseas Chinese Newspapers*, p. 32.

Yunzhou, and his son, Huang Naiqin (黃乃芹). It circulated mainly amongst the Cantonese in Chợ Lớn and within other Cantonese communities in Indochina.³⁰

Yuen Tuong Jih Pao was founded on 29 March 1940 by Chaozhou businessman Zhu Jixing (朱繼興) and its first editor was Cai Wenxuan (蔡文玄). While it stopped during World War Two and the Japanese occupation in Việt Nam, it was restarted on 11 September 1945, with Zhu Jixing's nephew, Zhu Wenyi (朱聞義), serving as its latest editor. It catered mainly to the Chaozhou communities within Chợ Lớn, within Việt Nam, and in Indochina.³¹

Although the *Zhongguo Ribao* and *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* were both community newspapers, their widespread circulation meant that individuals and businesses of other communities subscribed to it and advertised in it, if they wanted to keep abreast of the latest developments or have their businesses reach a wider audience. Both the *Zhongguo Ribao* and the *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* remained stalwarts in the RVN until its fall. Due to limits of accessibility to other resources, my research relies heavily on the *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao*. While it is not entirely representative, and skews towards the Teochew community's experience of the RVN, many of the observations made here have broader implications for the historical experience of the Chinese community as a whole.

Aside from community papers which appealed to all members of the community (mostly its working males), interestingly, there were also niche papers, like the *Báo Thế Giới* (世界報, *World News*), which was targeted at women, and was run by a female editor, Zhang Ruifang (張瑞芳). Set up in 1946, it was formerly known as the *Funu Ribao* (婦女日報, *Women's Daily*), but changed its name to *Báo Thế Giới* to broaden its appeal. Despite its name change, the

³⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

³¹ Ibid., p. 35.

material was still heavily skewed towards topics like the role of women in modern society as well as issues like fashion and healthcare.

Following the initial period of newspaper publishing in the 1940s, tied to the rise of Overseas Chinese nationalism, and also the rise of the newspaper industry within Việt Nam, the 1960s saw another boom in the newspaper industry within Chợ Lớn, which eventually launched it to its position as the leader of Overseas Chinese newspaper publications in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1961, Guo Depei (郭德培) – former principal of Chongzheng School – launched an industry-leading eight-page newspaper, Chenggong Ribao (成功日報, *Success Daily*).³² It represented a high point in the Chinese press as the number of pages was unprecedented.

Reading Chợ Lớn Chinese Newspapers

In reading the newspaper, my main research focuses on the social interactions as they manifested themselves within the newspapers and on articles pertinent to issues of community, transnationalism, and identity. I use the newspapers as my site of observation for networks within the Chinese community and beyond. The Chinese newspapers in Chợ Lớn were unique in that at least a quarter, and sometimes, more than half of the newspaper was full of personal advertisements, reflecting on social interactions and hierarchies. It was also a way in which social capital circulated within the community in the public sphere. Some forms of personal advertisement include wedding notices, obituaries, birth of children, and divorce notices. I also focus on the local news section, which is usually half to one page in length, in newspapers that ranged from four to twelve pages in length. In addition, I also paid attention to relevant editorials, world news pertaining to overseas Chinese, and columns about select topics like education,

³² Ibid., pp. 46, 119.

youth, and women, which are the focuses of my dissertation. I passed over news which were copied over from international news feeds, but considered the types of news feeds that are copied over from the Vietnamese news in order to understand the concerns of the Chinese community and their relationship with the RVN at large. It represents a selective reading for what was available in the newspapers. These newspapers, however, are a rich resource for future research and scholars interested in the Chinese community in the RVN can use these newspapers for research topics like Overseas Chinese literature in the RVN, as there were many serialized novels written by RVN Chinese literati such as *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao* contributor, Shan Ren (山人). This can add to the conversation about cultural history in the RVN.

Chapters Overview

My first chapter will feature a background of Chợ Lớn. It examines the physical space of Chợ Lớn, and the inhabitants that fill this space. The pre-1955 period is derivative and relies heavily on research done by other scholars on the city. It also uses some primary sources ranging from nineteenth century traveler reports to newspapers from the period to develop the space, and how the space was filled with the migration of the Chinese. The post-1955 period is derived from my work with the Chinese newspapers. It gives a sense of how Chợ Lớn's inhabitants experienced and shared the space.

My second chapter focuses on education at the different stages, from kindergarten to adult education. It examines states and communities' tug-of-war over the mind and its contestation with individual agency. The RVN state's tools included curriculum requirements and restrictions on Chinese higher education, while communities' tools included generous

financial aid. I also highlight education's relationship with the transnational Chinese world and individual adults' agency to adapt to changing contexts.

The third chapter focuses on sports in the RVN. It studies the body as a battlefield between state and communities. Here I examine the state's novel attempt at controlling social time and social life and communities' responses to the state's intrusion. The Cold War context gave communities the opportunity to use sports as a means of strengthening networks within the transnational Chinese world.

Finally, my last chapter focuses on young adulthood. I study how young Chinese adults were socialized into the transnational Chinese networks, either through their debut in the public sphere at the event of their marriage, or how they learnt the ropes of social networks through their workplace. In this chapter, I examine how private sphere and the public sphere are blurred, and the importance of social capital to social networks. I also examine the prevalence of the transnational Chinese world in the everyday life of young adults.

Contributions

Within the field of Việt Nam studies, my dissertation will be one of the few studies on everyday life in an urban context and also contributes to an alternative understanding of the RVN that does not begin with the question of "why it failed".

My dissertation will also contribute to the field of Overseas Chinese studies. In China historian Philip Kuhn's lecture-turned-journal article on the importance of studying Overseas Chinese to understand Chinese history, he argues that migrant communities are "connected by a 'corridor' – cultural space that transmits people, money and information in both directions."³³ While there is much attention to the first two, there are limited studies on the transmission of

³³ Kuhn, "Why Chinese Historians should Study the Chinese Diaspora", p. 168.

information. My study on the various flows within the transnational Chinese world addresses this important aspects.

More broadly, my dissertation is part of the larger, more contemporary conversation about minorities with multiple identities within a transnational world of increasingly fluid boundaries.

A Tale of Two Cities:

Physical Infrastructure and Human Geography of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn

Located some three miles apart from each other, and connected by some major thoroughfares and canals, Chợ Lớn was Sài Gòn's twin city, albeit with very different qualities. If Sài Gòn were the Washington D.C. of the Republic of Việt Nam (RVN), then Chợ Lớn was its New York. While Sài Gòn functioned as the political and administrative heart of the RVN, Chợ Lớn was its economic capital. The development of these two cities in their different functions dated back to the early nineteenth century, starting with the rule of Nguyễn Dynasty, the last Vietnamese imperial house. Their specialized function was further heightened during the French colonial period. Urban development of the twin cities in the RVN was the continuation of a two-century long historical development. Migration, colonialism, and the Cold War shaped the face of these heterogeneous cities.

In this chapter, I highlight key developments of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn over two centuries; the evolution of its physical infrastructure, and its changing demography. Public spaces united the twin cities' inhabitants with common interests that cut across ethnic lines, but ethnicity and community also created enclaves. Class also carved up the cities, as the cities' rich mingled in exclusive spaces, while the cities' disenfranchised shared and loitered the streets. In this fragmented space, a steady stream of migrants over two centuries filtered into the contoured landscape. During the colonial era, Chợ Lớn emerged as a Chinese city, participating as a major node in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Chinese economic networks, while Sài Gòn became a cosmopolitan colonial city.

Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn's Infrastructure Prior to 1860s

Although the areas known as Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn are now part of Việt Nam, in its early history it was part of the Angkor empire and sparsely settled by Khmers. Following the

fall of the Ming dynasty, there was a mass migration of Chinese during the seventeenth century, who moved into Southeast Asia as a means of coping with the change of regime from the Han-ruled Ming dynasty to the Manchu-ruled Qing dynasty. With the settlement of Chinese in various parts of Southeast Asia, many trading ports along the coast of Southeast Asia grew. Formerly known as Gia Định and a city within the greater province of Gia Định, Sài Gòn was one of the ports along the coast that grew up in this manner in the seventeenth century. The increasing settlement of Sài Gòn by *kinh* (ethnic Vietnamese) started in the late seventeenth century when the Lê dynasty (1428 – 1789) effectively split into two and was under de facto control of two different lords. Northern Việt Nam fell under the de facto control of Trịnh lords who had their capital in Hà Nội while Việt Nam south of the seventeenth parallel was under the control of the Nguyễn lords. The Nguyễn lords made Huế in central Việt Nam their capital, and *kinh* were encouraged to move south to bring more land into cultivation, and to explore the opportunities available. By the late-seventeenth century, it was no longer sparsely settled, but was teeming with Chinese, Vietnamese, and Khmers amongst others, who sought a living in this frontier.¹

In contrast to the predominantly agricultural nature of Vietnamese society in the pre-nineteenth century, even in its early days Chợ Lớn and Sài Gòn were commercial by nature.² Trade was the main function of the twin cities, which became part of the trade route between China and Southeast Asia. In Li Tana's article on taking a littoral perspective to Việt Nam's coastal cities, she argues that in the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century, southern Việt Nam and its coastal towns were part of maritime Southeast Asia, and was integrated into the

¹ Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); George Dutton, *The Tây Sơn Uprising: Society and Rebellion in the Eighteenth-Century Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

² Tôn Nữ Quỳnh Trân, "Sài Gòn Qua Các Bản Đồ Cổ", *Sài Gòn Xưa & Nay* (Saigon: NXB Trẻ, 2007), p. 32.

trades routes traversing the South China Sea.³ Lê Văn Phú, an eighteenth century governor of Gia Định-Biên Hòa had a very poetic description of the hustle and bustle in Chợ Lớn:

The streets extend, the goods pile up,
The rivers serpent, boats and carts line up like waves.⁴

His observations were echoed by accounts from foreign travellers to Sài Gòn. Early-nineteenth century travellers like American explorer John White and Scottish diplomat and colonial administrator John Crawfurd wrote of journeys up the Sài Gòn river to Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn for the purpose of trade. For instance, John Crawfurd reported of his meeting with “a native Cochinese merchant” on 2 February 1822 who mentioned that “two American ships have obtained full cargoes at the Port of Saigon.”⁵

Due to the commercial nature of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, the majority of the physical infrastructure prior to 1869 was built with the function of facilitating trade with the region and included markets like Chợ Lớn (literally – large market), roads that facilitated the movement of goods between the markets and from the city to the river, the port, and factories for boat repair. For instance, in the map of French official Le Brun in 1795, some prominent features included Chợ Bến Thành (Bến Thành market), and large canals joining Chợ Lớn to Sài Gòn, conveying goods from the Chợ Lớn warehouses to the port of Sài Gòn, before these goods were traded to Southeast Asia and beyond.⁶

As a prosperous port that was teeming with local inhabitants and traders, peripheral structures for the purpose of protection grew within the settlement. One form of protection was geared towards the community’s spiritual welfare, while the other form of protection looked towards the community’s physical well-being. In other words, temples and military

³ Li, Tana. “A View from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast” in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37.1 (February 2006): 83 – 102.

⁴ Hoàng Anh, “Cholon, the Chinatown” in Nguyễn Khắc Viện, Hữu Ngọc, *From Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City: A Path of 300 Years* (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 1998), p. 230.

⁵ John Crawfurd, *Journey of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochinese-China* (London: Colburn, 1828), p. 44; John White, *History of a Voyage to the China Sea* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1823), pp. iii-iv.

⁶ Trần, “Sài Gòn Qua Các Bản Đồ Cổ”, pp. 33-35.

structures also developed in this port city. For example, Chùa Kim Chưởng (Kim Chưởng Pagoda) was built in the western part of the city in 1755, and Chùa Cây Mai (Cây Mai Pagoda) was also marked out in Le Brun's map.⁷ For the physical protection of this prosperous port, based on Nguyễn Hữu Cảnh's observations, there was some degree of military organization, and an army for the defense of city. In 1790, the Nguyễn lord who would become the first Nguyễn dynasty emperor, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh also built a citadel in Vauban-style for the protection of Sài Gòn according to French architect Olivier de Puymanel's plans. Inside the citadel, there was a temple, stores, depots, an arms factory, and a flag tower.⁸ The physical structures were captured in Trần Văn Học's 1815 map of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, as shown below.

There were parallel developments in Chợ Lớn's infrastructure; buildings that became the focal point of Chinese communities during the RVN were first built in the early-nineteenth century, and reflected the main concerns of the Chinese community – commerce and community welfare. Hence, some of the permanent structures erected in Chợ Lớn were markets and congregation buildings (會館, *huiguan*), which served the commercial and emotional needs of the Chinese community respectively. These landmarks became the heart of Chợ Lớn Chinese communities for some two centuries.

A key example of a congregation building is the Suicheng *huiguan* (穗城會館), which serves the Cantonese community.⁹ First built in 1776, it became, and has remained the focal point of the Cantonese community for some two centuries. While it was built with the intention of honoring Mazu (媽祖), the Chinese patron saint of seafarers, and a commonly-worshipped deity amongst overseas Chinese communities, the Suicheng *huiguan* expanded

⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁸ Viễn, Ngọc, *From Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City*, p. 9.

⁹ During the French colonial period, the French administration organized the different Chinese communities into congregations, on basis of their provincial origins. In Overseas Chinese studies, the congregation building is equivalent to the *huiguan*.

from worship to a host of other functions that served the needs of the community. It was both a site of religious worship and a gathering place for the community. Over two centuries, the Cantonese community took painstaking effort to upkeep of their community building. In the years 1858 - 1859 and 1970, the community pooled together their financial resources to enact major repairs to the building. Individuals and small business owners contributed varying sums to the renovations of their community's gathering place. In 1858-1859, under the leadership of Cantonese congregation leaders, Li Zhurong (李著榮), Zhong Luncui (鍾掄萃), Zhang Fuyuan (張阜源) and Xu Tingzhen (許廷珍), more than a hundred individuals and small businesses contributed sums ranging from ten to twenty cash for a major renovation of the Suicheng *huiguan*. Contributors did not just come from Chợ Lớn, but also from the environs of Chợ Lớn, like Bình Dương district in Tân Bình province. More than a century later, in 1970, under the leadership of the third (modern-day) leadership committee of Suicheng *huiguan* and its president, Li Zhu (黎珠) of Hesheng Metals (合生銅鐵行) and vice president, Li Guorong (李國榮) of Rongshenglong Rubber Factory (榮生隆膠廠), the community rallied together for a major renovation of Suicheng *huiguan*, which now also housed the Suicheng school (穗城學校) within its premises.¹⁰ The Suicheng *huiguan* is one of the oldest congregation buildings and one example amongst many. Other Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn also built and gathered in their own community buildings, and some examples include the Sanshan *huiguan* (三山會館) associated with sojourners from Shanghai and the Qiongfū *huiguan* (瓊府會館), whose members originated from Hainan.

Another key physical structure in Chợ Lớn was the Bình Tây market, which was described by observers as brimming with goods. In Elizabeth Sinn's introduction to an edited volume analyzing Hong Kong's role in the world, she argues that Hong Kong played a key

¹⁰ Stelae in Tianhou Temple (天后廟), Chợ Lớn. The Tianhou Temple.

role interfacing between Southeast Asia and China, contributing to China's economic growth since the late-nineteenth century.¹¹ In her analysis of Hong Kong as a "gateway", Hong Kong played a key role within the Overseas Chinese world, whereby Hong Kong functioned as a center, and key intermediary between the different aspects of the transnational Chinese world, and mainland China. Expanding on Sinn's model, it is useful to understand that within this network, there were also key nodes, which channeled goods, people, and ideas between the different parts of the transnational Chinese world and Hong Kong. Some of these key nodes include Singapore, Bangkok, and Chợ Lớn. Chợ Lớn functioned as the gateway between the hinterland cities of French Indochina like Phnom Penh and Vientiane, and Hong Kong. This was reflected in the hierarchy of Chinese congregations within French Indochina. In Tracy Barrett's study of Chinese communities in French Indochina, she points out that in French Indochina Chợ Lớn sat at the top of the pecking order. This meant that congregations in Hà Nội and Sài Gòn followed the lead of congregations based in Chợ Lớn. The logic of power within the transnational Chinese network ran counter to the logic of colonial administration, whereby Hà Nội and Sài Gòn were the seats of colonial power.¹²

As such, the Bình Tây market located in the node of this network was a scene of bustling commerce. The location of Bình Tây market preceded its current imposing physical structure. It served as a warehouse for goods, whereby goods were brought here from other parts of Indochina for export into the transnational Chinese economic pathways. Some of these goods included rice, sugar, and forest products.¹³ Conversely, goods from the Chinese transnational networks also entered the Indochinese markets from Bình Tây market. Ethnic goods like traditional Chinese medicine from Hong Kong first arrived in Bình Tây market,

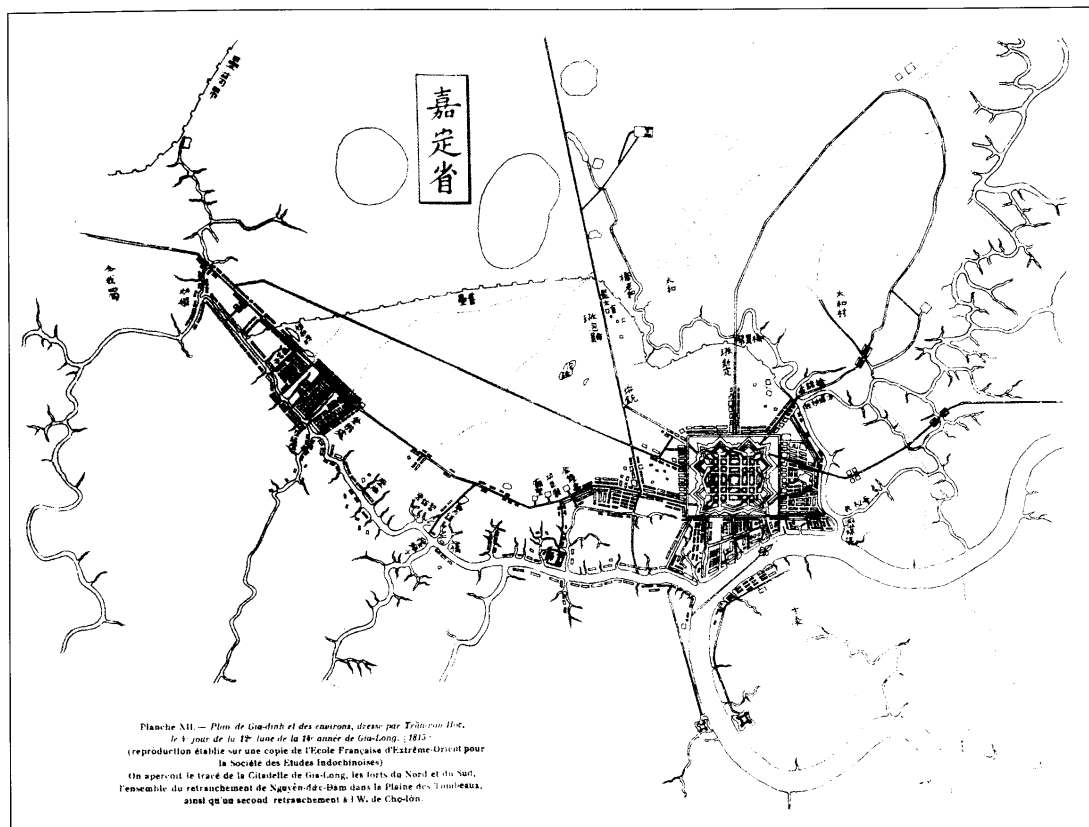
¹¹ Elizabeth Sinn, "Introduction" in *Rethinking Hong Kong: New Paradigms, New Perspectives*, eds. Elizabeth Sinn, Wong Siu-lun, Chan Wing-hoi (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 2009), p. iv.

¹² Tracy Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indo-China* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. 154.

¹³ Alain Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam under the French* (San Francisco: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), pp. 150, 160.

and the shops that sprouted around it, before being redistributed to the different retailers in Chợ Lớn, Cần Thơ, Hà Nội and Phnom Penh. In the pre-1860s, this was an organic focal point of goods in French Indochina.

Despite Emperor Gia Long's (Nguyễn Phúc Ánh) attempts at building structures to defend Sài Gòn, the citadel could not withstand French invasion of Sài Gòn in the 1860s. The citadel was razed to the ground by invading French troops, and with its destruction, Sài Gòn underwent a new phase of physical infrastructure development. Markets and roads that developed spontaneously in response to market demand gave way to French city planning, as Sài Gòn became a colonial city in 1861.¹⁴



Bản đồ tỉnh Gia Định của Trần Văn Học (1815)
 Plan de Gia Định et des environs par Trần Văn Học (1815)

Trần Văn Học's map of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn, 1815¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

¹⁵ Lê Quang Ninh, *Saigon: Ba Thế Kỷ Phát Triển và Xây Dựng (Saigon: Three Centuries of Development and Construction)* (Ho Chi Minh City: NXB Tổng Hợp TP. Hồ Chí Minh, 2004), p. 44.

“A City for 500,000”: Sài Gòn from 1860s – 1955

Taking a stroll through District 1 of present-day Hồ Chí Minh City, some of the most impressive structures include the ornate Opera House at the end of Lê Lợi street, the sprawling Reunification Palace on Nam Kỳ Khởi Nghĩa street, the imposing Notre Dame Basilica on Ngô Đức Kế street and across the street from the Basilica was Gustave Eiffel’s Saigon Central Post Office in front of Hai Bà Trưng street. If one wants to escape the concrete jungle of Hồ Chí Minh City, one can also take a walk in the Botanical Gardens at the northeastern edge of District 1. The French architectural-style of these buildings, the tree-lined boulevards of Lê Duẩn street, and the long thoroughfares had their origins in 1860s, when Koffyn planned “a city for 500,000”.¹⁶ This section will first focus on state-driven initiatives, before turning to look at how non-state actors also shaped the city’s character. After outlining some of the buildings that became part of the physical landscape of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, I will turn to who lived in the city and how different segments of the population experienced the city in colonial times. Here, I follow Margaret Crawford’s introduction to the edited volume, *Everyday Urbanism*, where she extols the virtues of studying the quotidian, as it presents the opportunity of “reclaiming elements of the quotidian that have been hidden in the nooks and crannies of the urban environment.”¹⁷

Following Koffyn’s plan and various other colonial city planners’ visions for Saigon, a colonial city took shape. From the 1860s to the 1900, there was a flurry of building activities, which saw the construction of the Botanical Gardens (1865), the Presidential Palace (1867), Indochina Governor Office (1875), Post Office, hospital (1867), central library (1882), and opera house (1900). Modeled after the French capital, Paris, an early twentieth century visitor to Saigon called it “a European city set down on the edge of Asia”, as he strolled down the tamarind-lined streets, and observed statues “[a]t almost every street

¹⁶ Trần, “Sài Gòn Qua Các Bản Đồ Cổ”, pp. 37-8.

¹⁷ Margaret Crawford, “Introduction” in *Everyday Urbanism*, eds. John Chase, Margaret Crawford, John Kaliski (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2008), pp. 6-11.

intersection ... of some one who bore a hand in the conquest of the country.”¹⁸ Apart from the above buildings for administration and social service, on the darker side of colonialism, barracks were built for the army, and so was the prison.¹⁹ Among the sights on Rue Catinat in the evenings were “haggard, slovenly officers of the *troupes coloniales* and of the Foreign Legion.”²⁰

Economic exploitation was one of the chief reasons for French colonialism, and early city planning reflected this. Great attention was paid to the construction of transportation routes and various factories. In the mid-nineteenth century, due to the importance of Chợ Lớn, canals were built to link Chợ Lớn to Sài Gòn, and thoroughfares also ran from Chợ Lớn to Sài Gòn, easing the transportation of goods. Apart from roads and canals, the French also built factories like sugar refineries, distilleries and shipyards.²¹ Additionally, with the advent of French colonialism, Sài Gòn was increasingly integrated into the world economy, and began to produce cash crops for the demands of the world market. In the early-twentieth century, Sài Gòn became a major exporter of produce like rice, coffee, and rubber. As these raw materials required processing, factories like husking mills were also built in Chợ Lớn and Sài Gòn to process rice prior to their export. For instance, there were at least two husking mills in Sài Gòn and seven in Chợ Lớn that dealt with the demands of export.²²

With the growth of the colonial state, it became imperative to train some members of the local population to keep the colonial machinery running. To fulfill this need, a new schooling system was built, as an alternative to the classical Chinese education that was in place prior to French colonization. The function of these Franco-Annamite schools was to

¹⁸ Alexander Powell, *Where the Strange Trails Go Down: Sulu, Borneo, Celebes, Bali, Java, Sumatra, Straits Settlements, Malay States, Siam, Cambodia, Annam, Cochin-China* (New York: C. Scribner's son, 1922) pp. 272-273.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40

²⁰ Powell, *Where the Strange Trails Go Down*, p. 274.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40; Phan Khoang, *Việt Nam Pháp Thuộc Sử: 1885 – 1945* (History of Việt Nam during the French Colonial Period) (Saigon: Khai Tri, 1961), p. 412; Giebel, Christoph. *Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism: Ton Duc Thang and the Politics of History and Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

²² Việ, Ngọc, *From Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City*, pp. 42-43.

train locals to fill in lower-levels of the French bureaucracy, and in later years, train technical workers to work in the colonial industrial enterprise, like its shipyards and its factories. To this end, the education system expanded across colonial Indochina – the number of schools grew from 3809 in the 1932-1933 period to 6040 in the 1949-1950. The majority of these were primary schools spread across the various provinces, including rural areas, while institutions of higher education like high schools, technical colleges and universities were concentrated in provincial capitals, with the tertiary education available only in the largest cities of Hà Nội and Sài Gòn.²³ Some of the schools found in Saigon include the École des Mécaniciens (School of Mechanics), the École Pratique Industrielle (School of Industrial Practice), and Lycée Chasseloup Laubat.²⁴ In Army of the Republic of Việt Nam (ARVN) General Lâm Quảng Thi's memoir, his experience with education illustrates how higher education had the effect of funneling students towards the major colonial cities of Hà Nội and Sài Gòn. While he did not end up in Sài Gòn for his education, he had to go to Cần Thơ for high school, as there were no high schools in his village.²⁵ Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Việt Nam (PRG) Minister of Justice, Trương Như Tảng's memoir reinforces the funneling effect of the colonial education system. Attending Lycée Chasseloup Laubat in Sài Gòn, he met Prince Sihanouk from Cambodia, who was sent (alongside other Lao and Cambodian native elite) by the French colonial authorities to institutions of higher education in Hà Nội and Sài Gòn, before finishing their university education in France.²⁶

In short, the colonial government had a central role in the planning of Sài Gòn, whereby structures were built with the purpose of serving the colonial government's needs. Development, however, was more laissez faire in Chợ Lớn, whereby the permanent structures

²³ *Số Liệu Thống Kê Việt Nam Thế Kỳ XX (Statistics of Việt Nam in the 20th Century)*, p. 198.

²⁴ Philippe Franchini, *Saigon 1925-1945: De La 'Belle Colonie' a L'eclosion revolutionnaire ou la fin des dieux blancs* (Saigon 1925 – 1945: Of the Beautiful Colony's Growing Revolution or the End of the White Gods) (Paris: Autrement, 1995), p. 245; Giebel, *Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism*.

²⁵ Lâm Quảng Thi, *The Twenty-Five Year Century*, (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2001), p. 10.

²⁶ Trương Như Tảng, *A Viet Cong Memoir* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), pp. 4-5.

were built at the initiative of its inhabitants. In both Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, non-state actors also had a role in shaping the character of the twin cities. Buildings like shopping arcades, cafes, and restaurants, which lined the boulevards of Sài Gòn and the streets of Chợ Lớn and answered to other everyday needs of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn’s inhabitants were built by non-state actors.

Chợ Lớn’s inhabitants were in charge of building their own structures due to the lack of concern by the colonial government, and also due to their own unique needs. An example of the first instance is the impressive Bình Tây market, whereby local inhabitants had to take initiatives in the face of the lack of concern from colonial authorities. As commerce in Chợ Lớn grew, more immigrants settled into Chợ Lớn to market their wares, leading to congestion. To deal with the problem, in the 1930s, a local Chinese businessman, Quách Đàm took the lead and petitioned local authorities for permission to build a new market of reinforced concrete with his own funds. The end result was the Bình Tây market, which still stands today in Chợ Lớn.²⁷



Bình Tây Market, 2010

²⁷ Anh, “Cholon, the Chinatown”, pp. 230-231.

Apart from the lack of concern from colonial authorities, some of Chợ Lớn's inhabitants also had different educational needs. Chinese communities across Southeast Asia were known to place an emphasis on Chinese education, and to that end, they built their own Chinese schools to educate their children. While the colonial authorities set up Franco Annamite schools, many Chinese in Chợ Lớn sent their children to the several Chinese schools in Chợ Lớn built for such a purpose. Here, the congregations took a leading role in the provision of education. For instance, in 1910, the Suicheng school was constructed for the instruction of the offspring of the Chinese community. Such schools were often located within the same compound of the congregation building, further cementing their role within their communities, as it catered to different audience within the communities.

Non-state actors' role in shaping the face of the twin cities was not limited to Chợ Lớn. In Sài Gòn, some impressive structures were built to answer the everyday consumer needs of its inhabitants. Many multi-story shopping arcades sprung up on the expansive tree-lined boulevards of Bonnard Boulevard and Rue Catinat, as the heart of Sài Gòn became the destination of haute culture and luxury shopping. Some of the impressive structures that were built for such purposes included the Charner department store on Bonnard Boulevard in downtown Sài Gòn.²⁸ Department stores like Boy-Landry on Rue Catinat sold items like tobacco and cigars.²⁹

Aside from such spectacular permanent structures, many restaurants and cafes also became part of the twin cities' streetscape. Many restaurants for varying budgets serving a wide array of fares were to be found in Chợ Lớn. Part of this experience was captured in Margaret Duras' novel, *The Lover*, which was set in colonial Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. Although Duras' novel is fictional, Duras grew up in Sài Gòn, and I believe that some of the evocative scenes in her novel were likely based on her experience of the city, making it a lens

²⁸ The Charner department store building still stands today in Ho Chi Minh City. It is the Saigon Tax building on Lê Lợi street. *Sài Gòn Qua Bưu Ảnh Xưa* (Saigon: NXB Văn Hóa Sài Gòn, 2007), p. 16.

²⁹ *Sài Gòn Qua Bưu Ảnh Xưa*, p. 64.

into colonial Sài Gòn in the early-to-mid twentieth century. In one scene, the main protagonist, the scion of a wealthy Chinese family, goes to a Chinese restaurant in Chợ Lớn with her lover. Below is her description of the experience:

We go to one of those Chinese restaurants on several floors, they occupy whole buildings, they're as big as department stores, or barracks, they look out over the city from balconies and terraces ... On the terraces there are Chinese orchestras. We go up to the quietest floor, the Europeans' floor, the menus are the same but there's less yelling.³⁰

While noise was a pervasive theme in Duras' description of Chợ Lớn, there was respite to be found in some of the elegant cafes. Early-nineteenth century tourist to Sài Gòn, Alexander Powell comments that “[t]he most characteristic feature of Saigon is its café life”, where Europeans would spill out on the streets towards nightfall, and gathered at the little tables of cafes found around Boulevard Bonnard and Rue Catinat, sharing gossip, and reading newspapers like *Courrier de Saigon*, and *Figaro and Le Temps* from France.³¹ Some of these cafes' names, like *Café Restaurant de Marseille*, helped transport its patrons to the French Mediterranean.³²

Thus far, I have only described the permanent structures that gave ‘the Pearl of the Orient’ its face. Temporary structures, however, also had a great role in shaping its character, contributing to the frenzied pace of the city. Restaurants and cafes were evidently the choice of patrons with well-lined pockets. But for the poorer inhabitants of the twin cities, like its rickshaw pullers, the ubiquitous soup stand found along the streets had to suffice.³³ If one earned a little extra on a good day, one could perhaps partake in a dish of roasted meat found in the open-air markets in Chợ Lớn, or snack on some of the roasted peanuts and fruits that

³⁰ Margaret Duras, *The Lover* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), pp. 47-8.

³¹ Powell, *Where the Strange Trails Go Down*, p. 273.

³² *Sài Gòn Qua Bưu Ảnh Xưa*, p. 45.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

street vendors sold.³⁴ To quench one's thirst, one could also stop at one of the makeshift tea vendors that set up their little shops under the shady boulevards of Sài Gòn.³⁵

Having described some of the structures in the twin cities, I will delve on the people who encountered these structures daily. Continuing its early history as port cities with a heterogeneous population, colonial Sài Gòn was cosmopolitan. Apart from the usual mix of Vietnamese, Chinese and French, others who came to dwell in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn included Indians (Chettiers), Armenians, and Arabs amongst others, giving Sài Gòn an urban mix which resembled other Southeast Asian colonial cities like Rangoon and Singapore. Indians took a share of the money-lending pie, and could be seen sitting in their dhotis (white loin cloths) along the sidewalk, while Armenians were famous for their carpets. Khmer and Lao peoples from other parts of colonial Indochina also streamed into Sài Gòn, some of them in pursuit of higher educational opportunities that were not available in Cambodia and Laos.³⁶

Aside from its cosmopolitan mix, another feature was also the draw of Sài Gòn for young intellectuals, due to the higher education opportunities that were available in Sài Gòn and Hà Nội. Some of the more famous figures who passed through Sài Gòn for this purpose include former king of Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk, Sơn Ngọc Thành, prime minister of Cambodia, Tôn Đức Thắng, first president of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Nguyễn An Ninh, one of the early Vietnamese martyrs.³⁷ Evidently, Sài Gòn became a hotbed of political discussion amongst young intellectuals who lived in colonial Indochina. Some of the products of their intellectual labors include the publications, *Le Cloche Felée (The Broken*

³⁴ *Sài Gòn Qua Bưu Ảnh Xưa*, p. 88; Duras, *The Lover*, p. 41.

³⁵ *Sài Gòn Qua Bưu Ảnh Xưa*, p. 81.

³⁶ Powell, *Where the Strange Trails Go Down*, pp. 274-275.

³⁷ Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Passion, Betrayal, and Revolution in Colonial Saigon: The Memoirs of Bao Luong* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 24-25.

Clock), and *L'Annam (The Annam)*.³⁸ In Hue-Tam Ho Tai's study of colonial Sài Gòn, and Barbier Street murder protagonist Bảo Lương's life, she, along with fellow middle-class intellectuals imbibed in new ideas in the bookshops of Sài Gòn, and discussed these ideas in the cafés of Sài Gòn.

Everyday life was, however, not all about politics for everyone. Recreation, like eating, had the effect of separating the social classes who lived in Saigon, and in very similar ways. While the city's well-heeled found recreation behind the closed doors of the Sporting Club located behind the Presidential Palace, the streets belonged to the urban poor and working class. The tennis courts and swimming pools provided recreation for the rich in Sài Gòn, who peeled off their tailored European suits, and changed into tennis shorts or bathing suits to keep their energy levels up in the energy-draining weather of the tropics.³⁹ Other options included the Eden cinema at the junction of Charner Boulevard and Bonnard Boulevard, or for those who felt like enriching their knowledge, a visit to the museum was also an option.⁴⁰ The poor roamed the streets with no respite from the oppressing heat. A common scene in colonial Sài Gòn, was the mixture of Europeans in their starched cotton shirts and locals wearing their *nón lá* (Vietnamese straw hat), strolling around the square in front of the opera house.⁴¹

These snapshots collectively presented a colonial city bustling with commerce, teeming with different groups of people, who had different ideas about the future of the city. As wide as the city's boulevard was the range of lived experience of its different groups of inhabitants. Evidently, there was some degree of differentiation between the Chinese and other inhabitants of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, particularly in the field of education, as some

³⁸ Việן, Ngọc, *From Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City*, p. 53; Philippe Peycam, *The Birth of Vietnamese Political Journalism Saigon, 1916 – 1930* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2012); Judith Henchy, "Performing Modernity in the Writings of Nguyễn An Ninh and Phan Văn Hùm" (PhD Dissertation: University of Washington, 2005); Giebel, *Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Anti-Communism*.

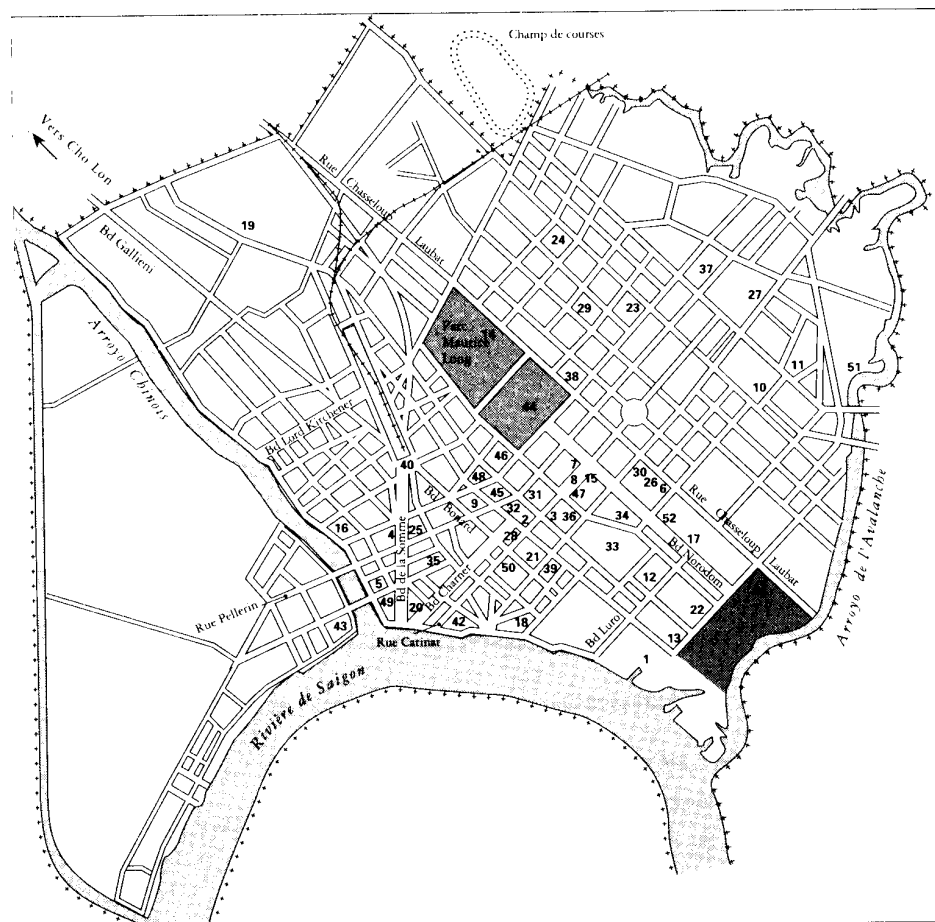
³⁹ Duras, *The Lover*, pp. 17; Franchini, *Saigon 1925-1945*, p. 245.

⁴⁰ Franchini, *Saigon 1925-1945*, p. 245.

⁴¹ *Sài Gòn Qua Bưu Ảnh Xưa*, pp. 8, 77.

Chinese attended Chinese schools. But otherwise, it appeared that a greater divider in the two cities was not one's ethnicity, but one's wealth. For the rich, Sài Gòn became their playground, where they could wine and dine in luxury, and create a semblance of the high European life behind closed doors. But for the poor and the working class, the long paved streets became their means of livelihood, consumption, and recreation, before some of them returned at night to their little cubicles, which they called home.⁴²

Plan de Saigon



- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Arsenal de la marine | 18 Caserne Francis Garnier | 35 Immigration |
| 2 Bureaux du gouvernement | 19 Camps des Mars | 36 Institution Taberd |
| 3 Bibliothèque | 20 Douanes et régies | 37 Institut Pasteur |
| 4 Banque de l'Indochine | 21 Direction d'enseignement | 38 Lycée Chasseloup Laubat |
| 5 Banque Hong Kong Shangai | 22 École normale | 39 Manufacture d'opium |
| 6 Chambre d'agriculture | 23 École supérieure de jeunes filles | 40 Marché central |
| 7 Hôtel Continental | 24 École des filles annamites | 41 Musée |
| 8 Cathédrale | 25 École des mécaniciens | 42 Messageries pluviales |
| 9 Casino | 26 École pratique industrielle | 43 Messageries maritimes |
| 0 Cimetière européen | 27 Église de Tânđinh | 44 Palais du gouverneur général |
| 1 Cimetière indigène | 28 Eden cinéma | 45 Palais du gouverneur de Cochinchine |
| 2 Couvent des Carmélites | 29 Évêché | 46 Palais de justice |
| 3 Clinique Angier | 30 État major | 47 Postes et télégraphes |
| 4 Cercle sportif | 31 Gendarmerie | 48 Prison centrale |
| 5 Cercle militaire | 32 Hôtel de Ville | 49 Port de commerce |
| 6 Chambre de Commerce | 33 Hôpital Grall | 50 Théâtre municipal |
| 7 Caserne d'Infanterie coloniale | 34 Inscription maritime | 51 Théâtre annamite |

Plan of Sài Gòn in the early-twentieth century

⁴² Duras, *The Lover*.

Sài Gòn in the RVN, 1955-1975

In 1955, Ngô Đình Diệm, the first president of the Republic of Việt Nam declared its independence, with Sài Gòn serving as the capital of the RVN. With a change of regime, there were several changes, like road names, and there was a new phase of construction in Sài Gòn. At the same time, legacies of the old city, like the exclusiveness of certain places remained. This section will discuss some of the changes and continuities of everyday life in the cities of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn from the colonial period to the RVN period.

A major change was Sài Gòn's road names. The naming of places is an illuminating practice that sometimes tells a road user the original function of a place, or it might signify what a regime in power might wish to convey. Changes in regime often involve a change in street names.⁴³ This was certainly the case when the RVN came to power. During the colonial period, the French administration was intentional in its naming of Sài Gòn's streets; Chợ Lớn's street names were acquired in a more organic manner. For instance, Sài Gòn's streets bore the names of French dignitaries like Chasseloup Laubat. In Chợ Lớn, streets were often named after communities or landmarks. For instance, Canton street (廣東街) or Sailor street (水兵街). Majority of the streets were renamed under Diệm's reign. The changes to the road names are an excellent lens into the RVN's conceptualization of its claim to nationhood.

The change to street names certainly reflected its claims to being an authentic Vietnamese regime as opposed to a puppet regime. The RVN's rival regime, the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam (DRV), which had de facto control of territories north of the Seventeenth Parallel dismissed its southern rival as a puppet of the US, and Diệm was often referred to as Mỹ-Ngụy Diệm, or "American – puppet Diệm". An attempt at "nation-building" can be seen by some of the RVN's choices of road names. Popular Vietnamese personalities, like first century female warriors Hai Bà Trưng, thirteenth century military hero

⁴³ Victor Savage, Brenda Yeoh, *Toponymics: A Study of Singapore Street Names* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004), p. 2.

Trần Hùng Đạo, early Lê dynasty statesman, Nguyễn Trãi, and late Lê dynasty female poet Hồ Xuân Hương became the new names of some of the major boulevards in Saigon. Boulevard Gallieni, which connected Sài Gòn with Chợ Lớn became Trần Hùng Đạo boulevard; Bonard Boulevard, which stretches out in front of the Opera House, and was lined with shops, became known as Lê Lợi, after the founder of the Lê dynasty. By naming streets after these popular Vietnamese folk heroes, the RVN regime was using toponymics to declare that it was also a Vietnamese nation.⁴⁴

Its vision of nation, which was alternative to the DRV's brand of revolutionary nationalism, could also be observed from some of its choices of street names. It is perhaps telling that several streets in Sài Gòn were named after members of the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (VNQDDĐ, Việt Nam Nationalist Party).⁴⁵ For instance, in 1955, one of the streets was named after Nguyễn Thái Học, the VNQDDĐ's founder. It signifies that the RVN was claiming its political lineage from the VNQDDĐ and continuing the VNQDDĐ's vision for Việt Nam.

Apart from claiming a reformist brand of nationalism, other street names suggested the RVN's conceptualization of the Vietnamese nation. While some revolutionary Vietnamese reviled Petrus Kỳ for being a French collaborator, he had a place in Sài Gòn during the RVN, both as a street and as a high school. According to Đoàn Bạch, Petrus is revered due to his ability to bridge cultures and brought fame to Việt Nam through his scholarship.⁴⁶ The concept of embracing foreign cultures into Vietnamese culture is also evident from the choice of naming a street in Chợ Lớn Khổng Tử (Confucius street), and keeping Pasteur Street. To quote Bạch:

⁴⁴ Đoàn Bạch, *Saigon Street Names: A Short History of Vietnam's Heroes* (Saigon: No publisher, 1967), pp. 65, 71, 85,

⁴⁵ The VNQDDĐ is the Vietnamese equivalent of the Republic of China's Kuomintang/Guomindang.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Vietnamese are patriotic but by no means chauvinist. The proof is that many Saigon streets have been named after foreign great men who have contributed to the building of Vietnam culture or welfare such as Confucius and Pasteur.⁴⁷

Based on the RVN's choice of place-name changes for Sài Gòn, it is evident that it was trying to assert that it was an authentic Vietnamese regime that followed in the legacy of the VNQDD. Additionally, it also had an outward looking character, which welcomed foreign influences into Vietnamese culture, as long as they had the function of enriching Vietnamese culture.

Although the RVN inherited the majority of its infrastructure from the French, it also embarked on building projects, in an attempt to define the RVN nation. Broadly, there was an expansion of education in the RVN. In 1955, there were 3446 primary schools in the territory under the RVN. By the end of 1972, there were 8275 primary schools. In the development of education, the capital of the RVN – Sài Gòn – evidently presented the greatest opportunity for education; while other provinces under de facto RVN control had less than five percent of primary schools, more than ten percent of the primary schools were located in the Gia Định-Sài Gòn area, even though Gia Định-Sài Gòn was not one of the largest provinces.⁴⁸ The concentration of education in Sài Gòn was even greater at the level of higher education. For instance, during the 1965-1966 school year, at the high school level, 46 of the 214 high schools were found in Sài Gòn.⁴⁹ Tertiary education was also concentrated in Sài Gòn, and some of these include Sài Gòn University, and the National School of Music.⁵⁰

Apart from the expansion in education, there was also an attempt to use education as a means for nation-building. Previously, under the colonial regime, the Chinese were allowed to build independent Chinese schools and have their own education system outside of the French colonial education system. Diệm, however, tried to put a halt to this system by

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 59-63.

⁴⁸ *Số Liệu Thống Kê Việt Nam Thế Kỷ XX*, pp. 1061, 1072

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 1087-1088.

⁵⁰ *SGDN*, January 14, 1966, p. 2.

curtailing the establishment of independent Chinese schools and the other independent Chinese establishments like congregations and associations that allowed the Chinese community to circulate within their enclaves in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. For instance, one of his earlier measures required Chinese schools to Vietnam-ize their school names.⁵¹

Despite the regime's attempt to standardize the education experience for its citizens, particularly amongst its Chinese population, non-state actors also came to supplement the state's education system. In the 1960s, there were a large number of language schools that sprung up in Chợ Lớn that offered instruction in various languages like English, French, Japanese, Vietnamese and Chinese – despite the ban on Chinese schools. The languages on offer depended on what was required by the changing times. There were no fewer than twenty of such private institutions, with small shop fronts on the prime pedestrian streets of Chợ Lớn, offering after-school education enrichment programs.⁵²

Aside from trying to establish a common education system, the nature of education infrastructure in the RVN had the impact of drawing intelligent young Vietnamese from their villages to the cities. In particular, Sài Gòn was home to a significant proportion of college students. Youth groups promoting common interests mushroomed in Sài Gòn, and some of these groups included sports groups, performing arts groups, and social welfare groups.⁵³ Sometimes, these groups represented the intersection between the quotidian, and the reality of wartime RVN. For instance, a group of students from public and private high schools in Sài Gòn, a band from the National School of Music, and an orchestra of the Public Works Advanced School joined efforts to put up a performance for a Korean military unit, which participated in the war as partner of 'free' Asia in the Cold War.⁵⁴

⁵¹ "Chinese Schools to Vietnam-ize their Names", *YT*, February 27, 1959, p. 4.

⁵² "Guangya School (廣雅高級中學) Language Classes", *YT*, September 14, 1966, p. 2.

⁵³ *SGDN*, January 08, 1966, p. 7; *SGDN*, January 11, 1966, p. 2.

⁵⁴ "Students entertain Korean troops", *SGDN*, January 11, 1966, p. 2.

Indeed, Sài Gòn had a very different demographic from the surrounding countryside. Based on statistics produced by USAID on the RVN, approximately 88 percent of the RVN was agriculture south of the seventeenth parallel, while 9 percent of the RVN's population was involved in secondary economic sectors like manufacturing. This 12 percent of the population was concentrated in the cities in the RVN, and particularly in Sài Gòn. For instance, Sài Gòn was home to more than 80 percent of the retail shops in the RVN. Consequently, there was a very young population living in Sài Gòn, who either worked in the some 3000 shops and factories in Sài Gòn, or were studying in the institutions of higher education. Based on a 1962 statistics on the RVN, more than half of Saigon's population was below the age of twenty. Amongst this young urban population, there was also an unprecedented level of literacy. Compared to one to two generations ago, where literacy levels were significantly below fifty percent, more than eighty percent of this young urban population was literate.⁵⁵

Another minor change in the RVN was its citizens' new accessibility to recreation. Previously, sport was a preserve of the French colonial, who depended on it to keep them healthy or Saigon's rich inhabitants who were able to buy into the colonial lifestyle. During the RVN, the Youth and Sports Department attempted to promote and develop national sports, and make it popular amongst the youth.⁵⁶ The former colonial enclave, the Sporting Club, also became open to Vietnamese, and competitions between Vietnamese sportsmen and athletes from other countries were played there. For example, on 6 January 1966, the Spanish Davis Cup champion played against RVN's tennis champion, Võ Văn Thành.⁵⁷

While there were efforts to create a (presumably) more equitable society, such efforts sometimes remained as best intentions that did not translate into reality. This can be observed particularly in the realm of entertainment and leisure, which was still the preserve of the

⁵⁵ USAID Vietnam, *Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1965-1969*, pp. 3-7.

⁵⁶ "National Sports Charter to be Updated", *SGDN*, January 08, 1966, p. 7.

⁵⁷ "Spanish Davis Cupmen Play Vietnam Champions", *SGDN*, January 06, 1966, p. 7.

wealthy in the RVN. For instance, while the Sporting Club was now open to Vietnamese, the barriers of entry were high. In 1968, one had to pay an entrance fee of 3,000 đồng and a monthly fee of 1,000 đồng to join the Sporting Club – and this was only after one had an introduction from a member of the Club. To put things in perspective, 3,000 đồng was the monthly salary of a schoolteacher in 1968.⁵⁸ This general lack of recreational opportunities for the majority of the two cities’ less well-heeled inhabitants was also commented upon by *Saigon Daily News*’ editor, Nguyễn Văn Tươi. In an editorial, he beseeched the government to build more parks and recreational spaces, particularly for the young living in Sài Gòn. He lamented:

Only one small, overcrowded swimming pool is open to the public, No soccer field, no stadium, no place where the poor children can run and expend their energies, get exhausted but happy, soaking with healthy sweat, breathing in good air instead of the one coming from motor exhausts.⁵⁹

As evident from above, not everything was a break from the past, as there were continuities between Sài Gòn during the RVN, and Sài Gòn under French colonial rule. For instance, a host of restaurants, bars and hotels in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn sprouted, serving the international population that also traversed the streets of Sài Gòn. Previously, Rue Catinat was dotted by open-air cafes and French colonial administrators smoking their cigarettes. Known as Tự Do street (Freedom street) under the RVN, bars serving American servicemen have come to replace the café culture in downtown Sài Gòn. While Đoàn Bịch was approving of the street name changes, he certainly did not appreciate this change in landscape, which he describes as “garish”.⁶⁰

A similar continuity with the past could also be observed in Chợ Lớn, where Chinese restaurants evolved with the changing times. Previously, it had a European menu to cater to its French clientele. But now, restaurants like Fuji Japanese restaurant (which was a Chinese

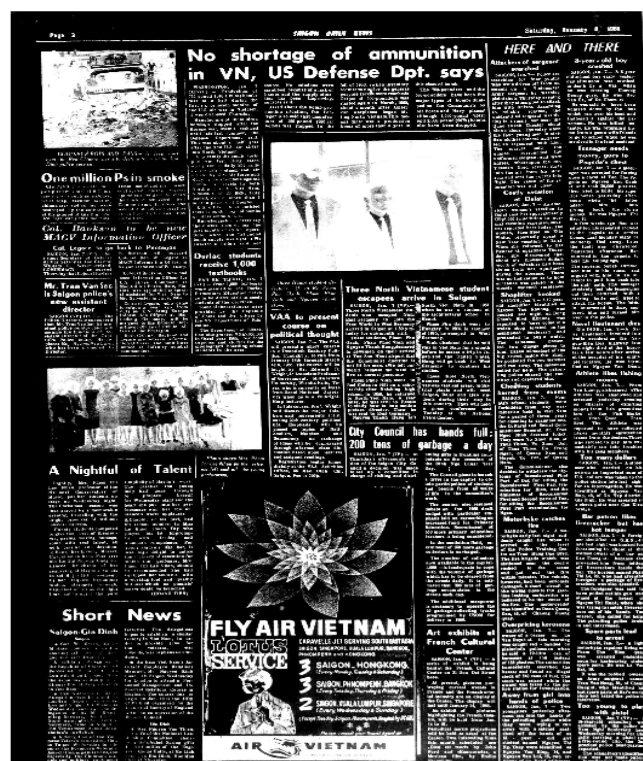
⁵⁸ Kaisuchi Honda, *Vietnam War: A Report through Asian Eyes* (Tokyo: Mirai-Sha, 1972), pp. 42-43, 54.

⁵⁹ Nguyễn Văn Tươi, “Let’s give our children a break”, *SGDN*, January 07, 1966, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Bịch, *Saigon Street Names*.

restaurant in fact) advertised Japanese, Chinese, American and French cuisine in both English-medium magazines sent to the American army in the provinces, and also in *Saigon Daily News*. As a side note, despite its best attempts at capturing the wide international clientele that now lived in Sài Gòn, visitors to the restaurant were certainly not impressed by the quality of the food, or its service for that matter.⁶¹

There were other continuities in Sài Gòn, particularly amongst the poorer inhabitants of the RVN. Like Sài Gòn during French colonial times, the streets became the domain for the disenfranchised members of society. For instance, orphans roamed the streets of Saigon,⁶² while children from better-off families were kept at home. Consequently, certain streets in Sài Gòn became associated with criminality. One of the more commonly reported stories involved school-going children being robbed by poor youths on their way home from school. For instance, a fairly typical report in the newspaper, *Saigon Daily News* can be found below:



Saigon Daily News, 08 January 1966, p. 2

⁶¹ Henry Ther, "This and That", *SGDN*, 18 January 18, 1966, p. 5.

⁶² "Away from girl into hands of police", *SGDN*, January 08, 1966, p. 2.

From the above, evidently, there was some attempt by the RVN to define its own regime in contrast to the colonial period. This can be seen in the change of street names that is often associated with the change of regimes to assert a new regime's independence. Other attempts to define the RVN included the extensive construction of school buildings, as part of the attempt to standardize the schooling experience for citizens in the new republic. But otherwise, old buildings were put to new uses. For instance, the Opera House came to house the Government Assembly.

Chợ Lớn in the RVN, 1955 – 1975

In April to May 1955, fighting broke out on the streets of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, as Ngô Đình Diệm attempted to wrest control of the two cities, from the stranglehold of Lê Văn Viễn (more commonly known as Bảy Viễn, 1904 – 1970). Bảy Viễn was the leader of the quasi-criminal Bình Xuyên, who was given multiple concessions by the French, and later, by emperor and president of Associated State of Việt Nam, Bảo Đại. The Bình Xuyên ran the vice trade, operating the profitable casino, *Le Grande Monde* (Great World, 大世界), and later, Bảo Đại sold them the right to run the Sài Gòn police force.⁶³ This made the Bình Xuyên the de facto leaders of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. In his bid for state-consolidation, Diệm had to contend with the Bình Xuyên, amongst the other power stakeholders in southern Việt Nam. Door-to-door fighting took place on the streets of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, and with Diệm eventually triumphing over the private army of Bình Xuyên. Diệm's success came at a high cost – the two cities lay in a pile of rubble.

Nevertheless, Chợ Lớn rose from the ashes of its destruction and rebuilt itself. Chợ Lớn was restored to its former economic glory through the efforts of individual members of the Chinese community. Small and large business owners alike worked to restore the face of

⁶³ Jessica Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and 1950s Southern Vietnam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 137-138.

Chợ Lớn's streetscape, as a testimony to the resilience of individuals in the changing political contexts. New business openings characterized the early years of the RVN. Chợ Lớn's multiple dailies were replete with personal advertisements congratulating one's business associate and acquaintances on the opening of new businesses. While some businesses opened for the first time, several businesses also moved to larger premises due to business expansion. Before long, the main thoroughfares of Chợ Lớn were bustling again, with wares from different parts of the world stocking these shophouses. Pedestrian traffic could browse these myriad offerings, or wholesale buyers could purchase these wares for re-distribution to the rest of the RVN, or to the former French Indochina cities of Phnom Penh and Vientiane.

In the early years of the RVN, Chợ Lớn's toponymics underwent changes alike its sister city, Sài Gòn. Many streets in Chợ Lớn were renamed, to conform with the RVN's vision for the nation. For example, the long Boulevard Gallieni, named after a French military commander and administrator, was renamed Trần Hưng Đạo, after the famous thirteenth century Trần dynasty prince and military commander. Some other streets named after epochs and figures in Vietnamese history. Rue Chasseloup Laubat was re-named Hồng Bàng boulevard, named after the first Vietnamese dynasty, according to Vietnamese historiography; what the Chinese community dubbed Sailor street (水兵街) was re-named Đồng Khanh street after a nineteenth century Nguyễn Dynasty emperor. The RVN's practice of re-naming Chợ Lớn streets was consistent with its practice in Sài Gòn, and on the street names of Chợ Lớn, the top-down attempts at nation-building could be observed. This top-down process of street name changes took some getting used to by the community. While advertisements in Chinese-language like *Báo Thế Giới* (世界報) and *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* (遠東日報) followed the official given street names, many of these official street names were also accompanied by parentheses filled with the more commonly known names, to provide guidance to readers who might be unfamiliar with this new convention. For instance, more

than one decade after the founding of the RVN, in Da Luotian restaurant (大羅天酒樓)'s advertisements for its annual mooncake sales on 7 September 1966 in *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao*, they directed their customers to their premises at 31 Lai Weng street (Lại Ông street), its official address. However in parenthesis, they put their old address, Ox Horn Street (牛角街).⁶⁴ Prominent landmarks were also used to guide Chợ Lớn inhabitants to the different establishments. For example, one of the multiple private language schools which opened to cater to the growing demand, Huixuan English School (惠宣英文學院), was located on 120 Triệu Quang Phục street (趙光復街). To give eager learners a better idea of where it was, it was pointed out in parenthesis that it was opposite Huanggong Theater (皇宮戲院).⁶⁵

Despite the predominance of private endeavors in the building of Chợ Lớn during the colonial period, the city of Chợ Lớn followed a grid-like urban plan, not unlike Sài Gòn. The two main thoroughfares, which formed the spine of the city were mile long. Trần Hưng Đạo, which continues as Đồng Khanh, and running parallel it – Nguyễn Trãi. Connecting these two wide boulevards were several narrow streets, for instance, Triệu Quang Phục, Lương Nhữ Hộc, and Ngô Quyền. These some five meter wide streets were lined with shops, temples, schools, and congregation buildings. Amidst this grid-like urban plan, there were two centers of gravity within Chợ Lớn – its economic center, and its politico-cultural center.

The Bình Tây market remained Chợ Lớn's economic center of gravity during the RVN. Located at the junction of Chu Văn An and Tháp Mười streets, and known to locals as Chợ Lớn, or big market, it was a warehouse packed to the rafters with wholesale goods from within and without the RVN. The Bình Tây market was a microcosm of Chợ Lớn's role as a node within the transnational Chinese network. Goods from within the RVN, and former French Indochina would arrive in Bình Tây market. From here, they would be exported to

⁶⁴ *YT*, September 07, 1966, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *YT*, January 06, 1960, p. 4.

Chợ Lớn's partners, like Hong Kong and Singapore. Some examples of goods from Chợ Lớn, Cambodia and Laos were rice and sugar.⁶⁶ In exchange, goods like traditional Chinese medicine and books arrived from Chợ Lớn's trade partners, and was redistributed to smaller retailers in Chợ Lớn, other parts of the RVN, and Phnom Penh and Vientiane.

Surrounding this economic center of gravity were streets lined with smaller specialized wholesale retailers. For example, located a short walk away, and parallel to Chu Văn An street, was Hải Thượng Lãn Ông street, where wholesale retailers of traditional medicine congregated. Gunny sacks of herbs like ginger and angelica sinensis often lined the narrow sidewalks of Hải Thượng Lãn Ông street. Individual consumers in Chợ Lớn, or traditional medicine hall proprietors within and without Chợ Lớn were invited to smell and assess the quality of the goods on sale, and purchase them as retail or wholesale. Those interested in more exotic herbs would enter the threshold, and be shown expensive herbs like premium ginseng or top-grade bird's nest.⁶⁷ Some of these wholesale retailers include Weitang Bookshop (偉堂書局), which placed advertisements in November 1959 for wholesale and retail of 1960 calendars, in anticipation of the new year.⁶⁸

While Bình Tây market and the wide array of wholesale retailers defined the economic center of Chợ Lớn, it also encouraged the growth of subsidiary industries, which supported these commercial exchanges. A supporting range of shops catering to consumer culture developed around this economic center, and these included restaurants, and cinemas, supporting the endeavors of retailers and customers alike. For instance, one of the largest restaurants in Chợ Lớn, the Aihua Restaurant (愛華酒家), was located several blocks from Bình Tây market. Perched atop Kaixuan Pawnshop, and located on 430 Đồng Khanh Street,

⁶⁶ Takashi Hamashita, "Geopolitics of Hong Kong Economy: Port City, Migration and Home Remittance in 19th – 20th Centuries, in *Rethinking Hong Kong*, pp. 132- 133.

⁶⁷ "Top Grade Bird's Nest for Sale", *YT*, June 04, 1959, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *BTG*, November 03, 1959, p. 4.

this three-storey high grand restaurant was a preferred location for major celebrations.⁶⁹ For instance, the Heshan Native Place Association (旅越鶴山同鄉會) chose to celebrate the Tombsweeping Festival (清明節) there on 12 April 1959.⁷⁰ For a retailer who was looking to take some pastries home to his family at the end of the day, one could also visit Raoshunxing Pastry (饒順興餅家) for some savory delights, like different styles of mooncakes, including Teochew-style, and Hong Kong style mooncakes.⁷¹ On the wide streets of Đồng Khanh boulevard, street vendors also offered a wide array of food and drinks for the shopkeepers of Binh Tây, who were looking for a more economical option.

The cultural center of Chợ Lớn was located around one kilometer northwest of its economic center, away from the waterways, and centered around Nguyễn Trãi, Lương Nhữ Học, Lão Tử and Châu Văn Liêm streets. During the RVN, the congregation buildings were the bastions of historic continuity, and remained the politico-cultural heart of Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn. Reprising their historic role, congregation buildings became community centers. However, compelled to change with the times, they also expanded upon their historic functions, and kept up with changes in consumer demand for culture. There were activities for different segments of their community: youth attended school within the premises of their congregation building; adults could enjoy some of the Cantonese opera performances which were held on special occasions; community elders would lead their community in the celebration of community festivals. One such instance was the Cantonese congregation building on Nguyễn Trãi street. Parents sent their children to attend the Suicheng school, which was located within the congregation building. Also, while community elders led the celebration of Mazu festival in April 1959, expressing their

⁶⁹ *YT*, September 13, 1959, p. 4.

⁷⁰ *YT*, April 05, 1959, p. 2.

⁷¹ *YT*, August 27, 1959, p. 3.

gratitude to her for her protection of the community, adults were treated to a Cantonese opera performed by Da Shunian Cantonese Opera Troupe (大順年粵劇團).⁷²

Despite the historic continuities evident in the centrality of some of Chợ Lớn's institutions, changes were also afoot, as there was the rise of new institutions within Chợ Lớn, which reflected the growing reach of the RVN state and nation-building and the effect of globalization and the Cold War. This was also reflected in changes to their location within the urban landscape. In the earlier years, the physical proximity of many services reflected the closeness of the community. It limited the need for individual members of the community to venture beyond the few blocks that defined their community space. However, during the RVN, some new institutions developed, which marked a break from this pattern, as their physical location was not situated close to Chợ Lớn's traditional politico-cultural center of gravity. These new institutions, which appealed to age, class, occupation, and other common interests represents a departure from tightknit communities, and created new connections that went beyond one's community.

Labor associations, sports associations, and mutual interests associations were formed during the RVN. These associations fostered new links, which cut across ethnic and community lines, but concomitantly, also overlapped with pre-existing connections within the Chinese community. One such example was the union of women working in the numerous cabarets in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. With the increasing American presence in southern Việt Nam, new industries developed to cater to changing consumer demands. The numerous cabarets which opened up in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn like the Liuguo Cabaret (六國舞廳), and the Jindu Cabaret (金都舞廳) provided entertainment to American forces on rest and recreation in Sài Gòn, Chợ Lớn, and the other major cities in southern Việt Nam. This could be seen in Lê Lý Hayslip's memoir, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*. She

⁷² YT, April 29, 1959, p. 4.

noted that in 1964, “the American buildup made that city more profitable place to work”. Consequently, her sister worked in Đà Nẵng as a “Saigon tea girl”.⁷³ Inspired by the movement to form labor associations, some of the women working in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn cabarets formed a union, under the umbrella union of Catholic Worker’s Union.⁷⁴ These new connections were reflected within the urban landscape of the twin cities. They disrupted the centrality of the traditional centers of gravity. One such example of the changing effects of nation-building and its effects on the spatial re-organization of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn was the Dental Workers’ Association. Encouraged by the establishment of a General Workers’ Union located on 14 Lý Văn Duyệt street in Sài Gòn, Dental Workers’ set up a union. In an attempt to participate in this action, which cuts across ethnic lines, Chợ Lớn’s dental workers set up a Chợ Lớn branch of the Dental Workers’ Association on 42 Santuo street (傘佗街) under the leadership of Huang Xiangqing (黃祥卿). In his advertisement, he exhorted fellow dental workers to join up in the Chợ Lớn branch of the union.⁷⁵ In the above examples, occupations often created connections across ethnic lines, but this was layered upon pre-existing connections amongst the Chinese. Nevertheless, the rise of new occupations and labor associations had the effect of decentralizing the Chinese community. This was reflected in changes of Chợ Lớn’s urban geography.

The effects of RVN nation-building was comprehensive, and the spatial re-orientation in Chợ Lớn was not limited to adults. State penetration extended to Chợ Lớn youth. New schools and youth sports associations were scattered across Chợ Lớn, leading youths to venture beyond the vicinity of their congregations. One such example was the Jingwu (精武體育社) located on Hải Thượng Lãn Ông street, which highlights the challenges of congregations, their attempts to modernize, and the limits of their influence. The Jingwu

⁷³ Lê Lý Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, p. 169.

⁷⁴ *YT*, December 14, 1959, p. 4.

⁷⁵ *YT*, January 07, 1960, p. 2.

Sports Association was set up by the Cantonese congregation, to modernize itself, and fulfill the changing needs of Cantonese youth for a means to occupy their free time after school. Located some one kilometer from the Suicheng congregation building, this was a departure from confining the public activities of youth to the congregation. By contrast, this was near the economic heart of Chợ Lớn – Bình Tây market. Situated in an ornate building with its own coat of arms, this two storey building was where youth played sports like basketball and Judo after school.⁷⁶ After practice, they could detour to Aihua restaurant, or some of the other surrounding food stores for a snack, before returning to their homes. The location of Jingwu Sports Association brought youth away from the small block around Nguyễn Trãi street, where their congregation was located, and into contact with the hustle and bustle of Chợ Lớn. This was another instance of the spatial re-orientation in Chợ Lớn, which was the result of the congregations' agencies in maintaining their hold over their community's youth, and the challenges this posed. The RVN's nation-building projects led to minor spatial shifts within the RVN, whereby previously well-defined urban space now exhibited a more mixed use.

Despite the destruction of Chợ Lớn following the heavy street fighting between Diệm's supporters, and Bảy Viên's private army, Chợ Lớn rose from the ashes of the fire fight. Private endeavors, confident in Chợ Lớn's future, rebuilt the city from rubble. Yet, there were changes in Chợ Lớn's urban landscape. While its traditional centers of gravity remained, the effects of the RVN's nation-building projects were reaching into Chợ Lớn, disrupting its spatial organization. Changing toponyms, establishment of new institutions associated with the RVN effected changes to the face of Chợ Lớn. Contestations between state and community could be observed in changes to Chợ Lớn's urban landscape.

⁷⁶ *YT*, October 26, 1959, p. 8; *YT*, January 01, 1960, p. 4; *BTG*, June 23, 1959, p. 1.

遠東日報

CHU-SHENG HO WEN-YU CHAI-SUOK 102 HUI BAILO KHONGTU CHOLON VIETNAM CABLE EXORIENT TEL: 38455

詹森總統談越戰 強調不會敗退

曾關懷到與強國發生戰爭危險 對在越使用戰術性核武器僅作支吾答覆

【紐約訊】美國總統詹森在昨日(廿日)與記者會談及越戰時，對在越使用戰術性核武器僅作支吾答覆。詹森在會談中，曾關懷到與強國發生戰爭的危險，並表示美國將採取一切必要措施，以維護其在東南亞的利益。

檢討越南和戰問題 詹森指出極峰會議主要議題

並聽取越南成立民主政府計劃行動 將防越邊境五國惟不防越戰區

【華盛頓廿日電】美國總統詹森在昨日(廿日)與記者會談時，指出極峰會議的主要議題，將是檢討越南和戰問題。詹森表示，美國將聽取越南成立民主政府的計劃行動，並防越邊境五國，惟不防越戰區。

馬尼拉海峽會議 菲第一夫人 任招待委員會主席

詹森夫人陪同 詹森訪菲五國

【馬尼拉廿日電】菲律賓第一夫人貝妮多·阿奎諾在昨日(廿日)宣佈，將擔任馬尼拉海峽會議招待委員會的主席。詹森夫人將陪同詹森總統訪問菲律賓、泰國、緬甸、寮國及柬埔寨五國。



一校員在泰國人校制政府...

英外相將向聯大建議 越南和平新計劃

主調日內瓦會協議雙方撤軍 河內對此建議表示冷淡

【倫敦廿日電】英國外交部長艾登在昨日(廿日)表示，他將向聯合國大會建議一項新的越南和平計劃。該計劃的主要內容是，在日內瓦會議協議的基礎上，雙方撤軍。艾登表示，河內對此建議表示冷淡。

抵抗共黨顛覆應有的認識

【本報訊】在當前國際形勢下，我們必須有正確的認識，以抵抗共黨的顛覆。共黨在國際上正積極進行擴張，我們必須加強團結，共同維護國家的獨立和主權。

全球回國僑生 組團回粵軍團 聯合中僑團慶祝活動

【本報訊】全球回國僑生組團回粵軍團，聯合中僑團慶祝活動。僑生們在回國途中，將舉行各種慶祝活動，以表達對祖國的熱愛和對和平的嚮往。

美派兩要員 來越南調查 有關適用基金問題

【華盛頓廿日電】美國政府已派兩名要員前往越南，調查有關適用基金的問題。這兩名要員將與越南政府官員進行會談，以了解當地的經濟狀況和資金使用情況。

我國數十節國慶大會 將在總統府廣場舉行

【本報訊】我國今年的國慶大會，將於總統府廣場舉行。屆時將有數十個節慶活動，包括遊行、音樂會和文藝表演等，以慶祝國家的獨立和繁榮。

謀打開越局談商 詹森與字諱可能在紐約會談

詹森與字諱可能在紐約會談 詹森亦與東歐外長展開接觸

【紐約廿日電】美國總統詹森與北越領導人字諱可能在紐約進行會談，以謀打開越局。此外，詹森亦將與東歐國家的外長展開接觸，以尋求國際支持。

英工黨大會通過動議 縮減亞洲區軍費

【倫敦廿日電】英國工黨大會昨日通過一項動議，要求縮減亞洲地區的軍費。這項動議引起了國際社會的廣泛關注，因為這被視為英國在亞洲軍事政策上的重大轉變。

泰國美軍基地工人 一週三處罷工

【曼谷廿日電】泰國美軍基地的工人昨日舉行罷工，這是該基地工人一週內第三次罷工。罷工導致基地運作受到嚴重影響，引起了泰國政府的關注。

寶島近事

紅衛兵要繼鬥爭 彭真與陸定一 毛共新設立法機關 土管對港澳的政策 再僱用菲工人 權須提供適當保證 菲軍在菲東政公司 權須提供適當保證 菲軍在菲東政公司 權須提供適當保證

略戰新究研正方軍美 區河公湄制控強加 發出地基岸海由將軍美 輸運上河原平查檢常經

【本報訊】美國軍事專家正研究新的戰略，以加強對湄公河三角洲的控制。美國將軍將由海基發出，經常檢查平原河上運輸。這項研究旨在提高美國在該地區的軍事影響力。

請向水災難民伸出同情之手

【本報訊】在當前水災嚴重的地區，我們應該向災民伸出同情之手，提供必要的幫助和支持。這不僅是道德的責任，也是維護社會和諧的必然要求。

Human Geography of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn

In historian Keith Taylor's article, "Surface Orientations", he points out that historians of Việt Nam need to be aware of the changing meaning of Vietnamese-ness, which depends on both time and place. There were often contesting concepts of Vietnamese-ness, and there were "different ways of acting Vietnamese in different times and places without a logic connecting them as one event."⁷⁷ While there were changes in nuances of the concepts of Vietnamese-ness, the southern Vietnamese concept of Vietnamese-ness was distinct from the northern Vietnamese concept of Vietnamese-ness, and this was reflected in the human geography of southern Việt Nam beginning in the seventeenth century. While religious and ethnic homogeneity was a feature of northern Vietnamese identity, religious and ethnic plurality was a defining feature of southern Vietnamese identity.⁷⁸ In contrast to northern Việt Nam, which was *kinh*-dominated, and believed in a mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, southern Việt Nam was marked by diverse groups of inhabitants including Chams, Khmers, *kinh* and starting in the seventeenth century – Chinese. Each group also brought their own beliefs and cultures, which often intermixed to form the different syncretic practices, which marked southern Việt Nam's religious and cultural landscape.

The human geography of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn reflected this alternative vision of Vietnamese-ness, albeit with some variations, due to their urban context. Some of these unique features include a higher concentration of *kinh* and Chinese relative to countryside populations, and a focus on commercial activities. In Alain Marsot's study of the Chinese in French Indochina, he posits that Chinese migration into Southeast Asia between the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries "greatly contributed to the process of urbanization" in Southeast Asia. In particular, it led to the rise of Chinese-dominated cities, including Singapore and the

⁷⁷ Keith Taylor, "Surface Orientations in Vietnam: Beyond Histories of Nation and Region", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, p. 951.

⁷⁸ Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance*, p. 17.

subject of his study – Chợ Lớn.⁷⁹ He credits the Chinese for the founding of Chợ Lớn in 1778.⁸⁰ These cities and its Chinese migrants, had the function of upkeeping Chinese trade circulations between Southeast Asia, South China, and Hong Kong starting from the nineteenth century.⁸¹ Shifting Vietnamese political centers of gravity, French colonization, and Cold War divisions heightened this initial process.

Human Geography of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, 1800 – 1900

Sài Gòn, and southern Việt Nam were the power base of the Nguyễn Dynasty's founder, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh. Consequently, Gia Định, of which the city of Sài Gòn later became prominent. Alongside the development of the city's infrastructure, there was also steady population increase. On the eve of French arrival in Sài Gòn, the twin cities were already well-developed international cities (go research on the different city types), with markets, schools, and different community institutions, and protected by a walled city.

Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn had a higher concentration of population relative to the rural areas. In the *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí (Encyclopedia of Đại Nam)*, which records comprehensive geographical information in early Nguyễn Dynasty Việt Nam, there were more than 28,200 đình during Gia Long's period. But some half a century later, there were 32,826 đình. While the đình numbers are not a comprehensive population census, it is evident that there was a ten percent increase in the population over half a century.⁸² While this population increase does not indicate a great immigration to Gia Định, this statistic is better understood within the context of population figures in neighboring provinces. An Giang province – located southwest of Gia Định province – had a population of 25,645 đình, but by

⁷⁹ Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam*, p. 173.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁸² *ĐNNTC (Tập V)*, p. 211. In traditional Vietnamese population census, only taxable males are included in the census.

1880s, the population of đing had dropped to 15,065.⁸³ This large population drop puts the corresponding population increase in Gia Định in perspective. Gia Định could have been the recipient of migration, or natural population growth, or a combination of both.

Following the fighting, and the French victory at Sài Gòn, whereby Cochinchina became a French colony, there appeared to have been population growth in the Gia Định region, as the French rebuilt the city in the image of Paris. According to an 1880s narrative about the French in Indochina, it claims that the “colony of Saigon has a population ... of one million five hundred and fifty thousand souls”. There was probably a degree of hyperbole in this narrative, as this seemed unlikely as an actual population figure, but this quotation can be read to mean that Sài Gòn was populous. The same narrative also observed that there were some 60,000 Chinese living in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn and most of them worked as laborers in fields like dock workers, and in plantations.⁸⁴ These numbers seem consistent with corresponding population estimates of Chinese inhabitants in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn.

Ethnic plurality was a feature of southern Việt Nam. However, there was a slight difference between the urban and rural context. While there was more plurality in the rural parts of southern Việt Nam, *kinh* and Chinese tended to gather in the main towns of the different cities. In particular, Chinese presence was keenly felt in the different towns, as they ran the little convenience shops, which supplied townfolk with sundries.

This phenomenon was replicated on a grander scale in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, whereby *kinh* and Chinese were dominant, while other groups like the Chams and Khmer became more invisible in the streetscapes. This phenomenon was observed by a British traveller, Frank Vincent, who visited Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn in the 1870s. He pointed out that the “population of Chalen [sic] consists mostly of Chinese; the remainder are Annamites,

⁸³ ĐNNTC, V, p. 167.

⁸⁴ No author, *The French in Indo-China: With a Narrative of Garnier's Explorations in Cochinchina, Annam, and Tonquin* (New York: Nelson, 1884), pp. 229-30.

with a few Cambodians.”⁸⁵ In their place, there were other foreigners during the Nguyễn dynasty, for instance, Indians, who functioned as moneylenders in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn.⁸⁶ Cosmopolitanism was a feature of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn during the Nguyễn Dynasty.

Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn’s cosmopolitanism became more pronounced with the advent of French colonialism in the 1860s. Foreigners from places like France, British, Germany, and the foreign legion became increasingly familiar to the streets of Sài Gòn. A late-nineteenth century British traveler to Sài Gòn, James Scott notes that there “is only one French mercantile firm in all of Saigon; the rest are all Germans, or other foreigners, but principally Germans.”⁸⁷ French presence in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn had the impact of shaping the face of the twin cities. While Chợ Lớn was part of the transnational Chinese trade network prior to French presence, colonialism had the impact of creating additional links and additional dimensions to this transnational Chinese trade network.

Aside from difference in population composition, there was also a difference in the industries that Sài Gòn/Chợ Lớn inhabitants engaged in, vis-à-vis their rural counterparts. Agriculture was the primary industry for the countryside inhabitants in southern Việt Nam, much alike the rest of Việt Nam. A key difference between southern Việt Nam and northern Việt Nam is that those engaged in agriculture tended to be working for large, absentee landlords, who lived in major towns like Cần Thơ, but more predominantly, in Sài Gòn.

While there was some agriculture within the twin cities of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, majority of their inhabitants worked to keep the commercial pulse of the twin cities beating. Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn was built on the sweat of the many laborers, who broke their backs, carrying the goods which flowed through the cities. They could be seen on the docks, moving

⁸⁵ Frank Vincent, *The Land of the White Elephant: Sights and Scenes in South-Eastern Asia: A Personal Narrative of Travel and Adventure in Farther India, Embracing the Countries of Burma, Siam, and Cochinchina, 1871-2* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1873), p. 303.

⁸⁶ Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam*, p. v.

⁸⁷ James G Scott, *France and Tongking: A Narrative of the Campaign of 1884 and the Occupation of Further India* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1885), p. 309.

the goods off ships, balancing these sacks on gangplanks, and transferring them into the warehouses. There were a host of other laborers, for instance, the different domestic workers who worked in the houses of the European leisure classes, or the houses of rich Chinese.

Between the laborers, and the fabulously wealthy, were a middle class. Some of them were small merchants, while others filled occupations like teaching, translators, administrators. And at the top of the colonial town and commercial town were the rich, who were rich absentee landlords, or the big business leaders of Chợ Lớn, who often also doubled as the leaders of the community.

The Changing Face of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, 1900 – 1955

The late-nineteenth century was a harbinger of things to come. Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn in the early-to-mid twentieth century experienced a population explosion under the auspices of French colonialism. In effect, the changing face of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn developed in parallel with other colonial cities, and Sài Gòn, in particular, was often mentioned in conjunction with the British colonial jewel, Singapore. Some facets of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn include the increasing Chinese populations, and their visibility on the streetscapes of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn.

According to a short reportage published in the periodical *Việt Báo* in 1945, which discussed the dominance of the Chinese in Việt Nam, Chinese population was a dominant factor in southern Việt Nam in the 1930s. Population changes amongst the Chinese in the 1930s indicated that the migration patterns of Chinese in southern Việt Nam were somewhat tied to the availability of economic opportunities. For instance, during the years of the Great Depression, there was a decrease of migration. In 1940 and 1941, there were more Chinese leaving Việt Nam than Chinese entering. There were some 300,000 Chinese living in southern Việt Nam. According to this same article, the Chinese had a stranglehold on

commerce in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn.⁸⁸ Evidently, Chinese migration in Southeast Asia was fluid and depending on changing political challenges and economic opportunities.

From the 1900s to 1955, there was generally an increase in population particularly within the urban setting. According to statistics collected by USAID, in 1943, there were 5,578,000 living in southern Việt Nam, of which almost half a million lived in Sài Gòn. By 1951, this figure had tripled to 1,600,000, despite modest population increase in southern Việt Nam. Some 30% of the population lived in Sài Gòn.⁸⁹ In particular, following the Geneva Accord, which allowed two years of free migration between northern Việt Nam and southern Việt Nam, many inhabitants of northern Việt Nam moved southward and resettled in southern Việt Nam. In this wave of migration, many Chinese moved from northern Vietnamese cities of Hà Nội and Hải Phòng and resettled in Chợ Lớn and some of the resettlement villages located outside of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn.

1955 – 1975

These population patterns of population growth and increasing urbanization continued into the RVN. In a population study produced in 1972, Việt Nam under de facto RVN control had an estimated population of eighteen million in 1971, growing at a rate of 2.6% per year. The number and percentage of city and town dwellers had also grown from some four million in 1968, representing 25% of the population under de facto RVN control to 40% in 1972.⁹⁰ Rural inhabitants moved to cities and towns in large numbers, attracted by cities' "educational facilities, running water and electricity", amongst other factors like job opportunities, sophisticated entertainment, and cities' relative safety.⁹¹ There was a similar

⁸⁸ “Thế-Lực của Huê-Kiều tại Việt-Nam: Tình-hình chung các Huê-Kiều tại V.N.” (The Strength of the Chinese in Việt Nam: General situation of the Chinese in Việt Nam), *Việt Báo* (1945), pp. 3, 30.

⁸⁹ USAID Vietnam, *Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1965-1969*, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Nguyễn Ngọc Bích, *An Annotated Atlas of the Republic of Viet-Nam* (Washington D.C.: Embassy of Viet-Nam, 1972), pp. 29-30.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

growth in the RVN's Chinese population. In 1957, there were around one million Chinese, and this number grew to 1.2 million in 1972.⁹²

Sài Gòn was by far the most populous city, and its population grew through the RVN's two decades. In 1958, greater Sài Gòn had 1.2 million habitants. This number more than doubled to three million in 1971.⁹³ Of the Chinese minority living in the RVN, two-thirds of them lived in Chợ Lớn. While the Chinese minority represented less than ten percent of the RVN's total population, some 800,000 lived in greater Sài Gòn. This made the Chinese presence significant in greater Sài Gòn, as they represented more than a quarter of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn's inhabitants.⁹⁴

Concluding Remarks

There was some separation between Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, particularly in their permanent structures – a legacy of the colonial era. During the colonial era, Sài Gòn's permanent structures were planned to fulfill the needs of the colonial government. By contrast, construction in Chợ Lớn was left to its own residents. One of the main separations between a Chinese and a Vietnamese in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn during the colonial era was probably the experience of education. But otherwise, it appears that wealth created a greater difference in the lived experience during the colonial era.

This pattern appears to have continued into the RVN, but there were greater attempts at integrating the Chinese into the RVN through the physical structures in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn. For instance, Chinese schools were no longer as distinctive with their Vietnamized names, and teenaged Chinese were expected to enroll in Vietnamese-language universities in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn if they wanted to continue their tertiary education within the RVN. Like

⁹² Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam*, p. 5; Bích, *An Annotated Atlas of the Republic of Viet-Nam*, p. 39.

⁹³ Bích, *An Annotated Atlas of the Republic of Viet-Nam*, p. 31.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

colonial Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn, it appears that what characterized one’s lived experience in the cities depended on the financial resources available. Inhabitants of different ethnicities with well-lined pockets – including Vietnamese – could now enjoy colonial legacies like the Sporting Club, but the poor inhabitants of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn continued to make the streets their source of livelihood, and it also became their homes.

The Battle for Minds:

Education in Chợ Lớn during the Republic of Việt Nam, 1955 – 1975

“We must actively guide our youth (away from social ills).”¹

On the front page of *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao* (遠東日報, *Far East Daily*), one of Chợ Lớn’s leading daily newspapers, the editor, Zhu Wenyi (朱聞義), the nephew of *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao*’s founder, Zhu Jixing (朱繼興),² declared in his weekly column that Chinese youth morality was becoming a pressing issue in the 1960s. In the same column, he also discussed communities’ duties to guide young Chinese youth into productive channels. Zhu’s concerns were not new. Concern about the community’s young was long-standing, and began almost as soon as Chinese communities settled in Việt Nam. Education was the Chinese community’s monopoly during the colonial period. Chinese communities set up their own schools to address the unique needs of the young in their community. However, during the Republic of Việt Nam (RVN, 1955 – 1975) Chinese individuals found themselves sucked into a maelstrom caused by contestations between Chinese communities and the RVN state. Education became a battleground between communities and the RVN. This chapter discusses education in Chợ Lớn, covering a spread from pre-school education to adult education. Education is an important aspect of everyday life in Chợ Lớn. It was a major component of everyday life amongst Chợ Lớn’s younger inhabitants, and it continues to play a role for adults, in the form of enrichment and self-improvement classes. Through the lenses of education, I examine the contestation between the RVN, and Chinese

¹ Zhu Wenyi, “Morality of Youth” *YT*, January 4, 1960, p. 1.

² Man Man (漫漫), *The Tragedy of Sài Gòn’s Overseas Chinese Newspapers* (西貢僑報的滄桑劫難) (Taipei: Xinyue Publications, 2012), pp. 34-35.

communities, as each sought to fulfill their own agendas of nation-building and community-building as well as of individuals' agency to navigate around these agendas to their best interests.

This chapter begins with a historical overview of education amongst Chinese communities, beginning in the colonial period. It then segues into education during the RVN. I examine the developments in five different segments in the education sector: pre-school education, elementary education, middle schools, tertiary education, and adult education. The dynamics between state, communities, and individuals vary greatly in the different segments of education. Broadly, Chinese community-driven initiatives and the private sector reigned supreme in pre-school education and adult education. In the intervening years when nation and communities locked horns, community efforts had the upper hand in the lower levels of education, but conceded all authority for tertiary education. Communities and state bowed out of adult education amongst Chinese communities, where private enterprise prevailed.



The Guanzhao School in Sài Gòn for the Cantonese Community, 2013

Researching Education in Chợ Lớn and the Republic of Việt Nam

There are few historical studies of education in Việt Nam, be it in Chợ Lớn, or Việt Nam more broadly. The RVN period is no exception. This chapter is built primarily on the work of Gail Kelly and Tracy Barrett. While neither focus on education in Chợ Lớn during the RVN, collectively, Kelly and Barrett give the broader historical context of education in Việt Nam. Kelly's *French Colonial Education: Essays on Vietnam and West Africa* takes a comparative perspective on French colonial education. Her chapters on Việt Nam provide a keen insight into the dynamics of education in colonial Việt Nam, which appeared to be an afterthought in France's *mission civilatrice*. Barrett's book chapter complements Kelly's study, as it gives the missing Chinese dimension in education during the colonial period. My chapter builds on this conversation, through a discussion of the state of education during the RVN. It highlights the growing role of the state in education, which had previously been the exclusive domain of Chinese communities during the colonial period.

Research for this chapter relies heavily on Chợ Lớn periodicals and is supplemented by materials on the general state of education in the RVN. In the Chợ Lớn periodicals, I read the local news section for tidbits and reports on various school functions. I used the advertisement section of the different periodicals for insight into the personnel of the Chinese education system, their board of members. Advertisements also gave particular insight into the private sector of Chinese education. To compare the schooling experience between Chinese schools and RVN schools, I also used RVN daily papers like *Saigon Daily News*. I supplemented these qualitative studies with different quantitative studies by the Republic of Việt Nam Department of Statistics, and various US governmental publications on the state of RVN education.

Education is an important field of study for Chinese communities for several reasons. For the parents, education of their children often involved a costly financial investment and decisions about tertiary education. For community leaders, engagement in education involved hours spent at meetings, individual donations, and fundraisers. Aside from planning, education also had an impact on everyday life, particularly in the experience of growing up. Schoolgoing took up a significant portion of young Chợ Lớn inhabitants' time. Schoolgoers spent half the day in the numerous schools interspersed in Chợ Lớn. After school and on weekends, they either participated in enrichment activities hosted by schools, or attended enrichment lessons like language and music classes. Official and unofficial avenues for education took up a major component of everyday life. Education also had a role to play for select adults residents – there were many advertisements in Chợ Lớn dailies for adult education. Education was significant in Chợ Lớn everyday life.

While education was significant in Chợ Lớn everyday life, there is a caveat to this chapter – education was only important in the everyday life of middle-class Chợ Lớn inhabitants and their offspring. Although there was financial assistance to aid needy but worthy students, these instances were the exception rather than the rule. Consequently, this chapter reflects the everyday reality of a particular subset of Chợ Lớn Chinese. Attending classes or practicing sports on weekends was a luxury that working class Chinese in Chợ Lớn could ill afford. Instead their reality involved back-breaking labor as mill workers and dock workers, or roaming the streets as itinerant youths.

To better understand the developments in state and society relationships in the field of education, I will begin with an overview of education in Chợ Lớn Chinese communities up to the RVN.

Education in Chợ Lớn from the precolonial period to the RVN, 1800s – 1955

In the historical context, education was a key concern for Chinese communities, who were motivated by the perpetuation of culture. In Tracy Barrett's study of Chinese communities in colonial Indochina, she refers to schools "as a bulwark ... for the preservation of native place identity and culture."³ In this regard, Chợ Lớn Chinese were alike their counterparts in other parts of Southeast Asia. Following the building of native-place congregation halls, schools were one of the first institutions set up in Chợ Lớn. According to Tracy Barrett, the Chinese congregations had an extensive school system that penetrated as far as the rural areas.⁴

Prior to advent of French colonialism in Indochina, the onus of providing education fell squarely upon the shoulders of community. Even with the onset of colonialism in the later nineteenth century, there was little colonial intervention amongst the Chợ Lớn Chinese, even as there was increased colonial imperative to provide education to *kinh* under the auspices of *mission civilatrice*.⁵ In this regard, Barrett's study of Chinese education during the colonial period is illuminating. According to her, there was very little effort on the part of the colonial administration to provide education to Chinese communities, who then provided education to their young. During the colonial period, education amongst Chinese communities was transnational in nature.

In those years, education in the Chinese community exhibited the transnational nature of the community, which attempted to use education to situate itself in a position of strength. Due to a dearth of higher education available in French Indochina, Chợ Lớn Chinese sent their children

³ Tracy Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indo-China* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. 148.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵ Gail Kelly, *French Colonial Education: Essays on Vietnam and West Africa* (New York: AMS Press 2000).

to Britain, or America, or Japan, as opposed to France.⁶ In other instances, the Chinese community often recruited teachers from China to staff their community schools.⁷ This reflects their beliefs on the future of the world, whereby being Francophone or participation in the Francophone world would have limited opportunities, as opposed to aligning their interests to Britain, China, or the rising imperial power – Japan.⁸ This is in contrast with Vietnamese education, whereby integration into the Francophone world represented the apex of education.⁹

Chợ Lớn Chinese's pursuit of activities aligned with their best interests led to colonial entanglement. Perturbed by Chinese indifference to the Francophone world, there was impetus on the part of the colonial administration to bring their Chinese middlemen into the Francophone world, starting with education. Consequently, some of the first institutions of Sino-French collaboration were schools. To that end, the French set up the École Pavie in Hà Nội in 1904, and later, in 1908, they set up the Lycée Franco-Chinois in Chợ Lớn.¹⁰ From the outset, the latter was a joint venture between the colonial administration, and the Chinese community. While colonial authorities spearheaded the idea, the Chinese community provided the bulk of the funds through community fundraisers and increased taxation.¹¹ While the École Pavie was closed down in 1908 due to its role in anti-French movements, the Lycée Franco-Chinois extended beyond the colonial period and continued as a cornerstone in Chinese education in Chợ Lớn during the RVN.

While the Lycée Franco-Chinois was a remarkable example of state-society cooperation, or as Barrett prefers – a “stalwart of Franco-Chinese cooperation” – there was limited state

⁶ Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia*, p. 140.

⁷ “Obituary: Female Educator Yao Shaozhu Passes Away”, *BTG*, April 02, 1959, p. 1

⁸ Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia*, p. 146.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁰ Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia*, pp. 130-148.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

involvement in the provision of education in colonial Chợ Lớn. The onus of development and expansion of education fell squarely upon Chinese communities. Congregations and name-place associations set up schools for their communities. Schools offered a formal curriculum, intended to be on par with offerings in China, so that graduates could attend tertiary education in China. As communal endeavors, they highlighted the contours of the Chợ Lớn community.

Sponsorships were extended to congregations' young, therefore creating exclusive communities in the formative years. Such sponsorship not only made education in public institutions free, but also included room and board. In Barrett's chapter on education during the colonial period, one of the Lycée Franco-Chinois' financial challenge was sponsoring students attending the school.¹²

In the colonial period, communities bore the brunt of educating their young with limited state support. While communities were tasked with raising the resources for education, it also meant that they were given opportunities to consolidate their hold on their communities. Consequently, education in Chợ Lớn during the colonial period highlighted the faultlines within Chợ Lớn's Chinese communities. The different native-place congregations often jostled with one another for the upper-hand vis-à-vis each other

Education in Chợ Lớn during the Republic of Việt Nam, 1955 – 1975

While education was always a key concern for Chinese communities, there was a broader expansion of such concern about education during the RVN. This was reflected in Chinese periodicals like *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao*, which had a weekly column devoted to the subject, perhaps reflecting global trends, with growing concern about education at different levels. For example, one columnist, Xue Fang (雪芳), discussed the importance of early childhood education and the

¹² Ibid., p. 143.

techniques of building a better rapport with their children.¹³ In particular, the topics of childcare and family-related issues were discussed on the Sunday paper, when families had the time to take in their daily dose of news. Consequently, there was a rapid expansion of education infrastructure during the RVN. While there were just a handful of schools in Chợ Lớn prior to the RVN, by 1960, at least eighty two Chinese schools approved by the RVN Ministry of Education spread out in the Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn area.¹⁴ These schools ranged from a preschool on 17 Hùng Vương street, to the several elementary schools on the different side streets of Chợ Lớn, like Nguyễn Công Trữ street, to the relatively smaller number of middle schools, mostly set up under the auspices of the congregations.¹⁵ However, this expansion in education infrastructure was not unfettered vis-à-vis the colonial era. The Chinese communities' initiative at providing education and molding the minds of their young ran up against the state and nation-building imperatives of the RVN. This section examines this tug-of-war between community and state, as education became a battlefield for both parties. I also highlight some key developments in education during the RVN.

Expansion of Education

Beginning in 1955, there was an expansion of education in the RVN, and this national development also occurred in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, which witnessed a disproportionately greater expansion in education provision. Sài Gòn reprised its colonial role of being the center of education for the different parts of Việt Nam. In particular, the educational offerings at the tertiary level were plentiful and varied. There were universities for law, music, and institutions like the National Institution for Administration. Tertiary education institutions sprouted, as part

¹³ Xue Fang, "Understanding Your Child", *YT*, January 03, 1960, p. 5.

¹⁴ "Vietnam Education Ministry Approves Chinese Schools", *YT*, January 13, 1960, p. 4.

¹⁵ "Vietnam Education Ministry Approves Chinese Schools", *YT*, January 13, 1960, p. 4.

of postcolonial nation-building imperatives. In a USAID briefing material, it was stated, “[p]roviding education, especially at the elementary level, was recognized to have a high political significance in pacification as well as a positive, long-range influence in Nation-building (sic)”¹⁶ To that end, a Department of Education was formed in the mid-1950s to plan the expansion of education. Some tertiary institutions that opened enrollment in 1950s were the Superior School of Public works, the National Superior School of Fine Arts and the Superior School of Architecture.¹⁷ The expansion in education was intended to train a new generation of technocrats, to fill the different positions (now vacated by French colonials) positions to run the administrative machinery of the various RVN government units. The expansion of education was a key state building initiative and was intended to sever the colonial relationship, whereby the best and brightest students had gone to France for access to the full range of disciplines in French universities.

While such developments were initially concentrated in the capital of the RVN – Sài Gòn – initially, in the later years of the RVN, starting from the 1960s, there was a growing decentralization of higher education. Developments in education provision also spread to major cities of the different provinces, like Cần Thơ, Huế, and Nha Trang. Huế University was set up in 1956 to serve central Vietnamese students, while Cần Thơ University was set up later in 1967 to serve the Mekong region.¹⁸ Aside from tertiary education, there was also a broad expansion of education, as new elementary, middle, and high schools now proliferated in the towns of southern Việt Nam in the later years of the RVN.

There were parallel developments in Chinese schools in the RVN. There were now Chinese schools in major towns in the different provinces, like Cần Thơ, Rạch Giá, and Sóc

¹⁶ USAID/Vietnam Office of Education Briefing Materials (1969), no page numbers.

¹⁷ No author, *Education in Vietnam* (Saigon: Review Horizons, 1956), pp. 11-12.

¹⁸ USAID/Vietnam Office of Education Briefing Materials (1969), no page numbers.

Trăng to name a few.¹⁹ Continuing a historic trend, funding for such endeavors fell squarely upon the shoulders of the Chinese community.

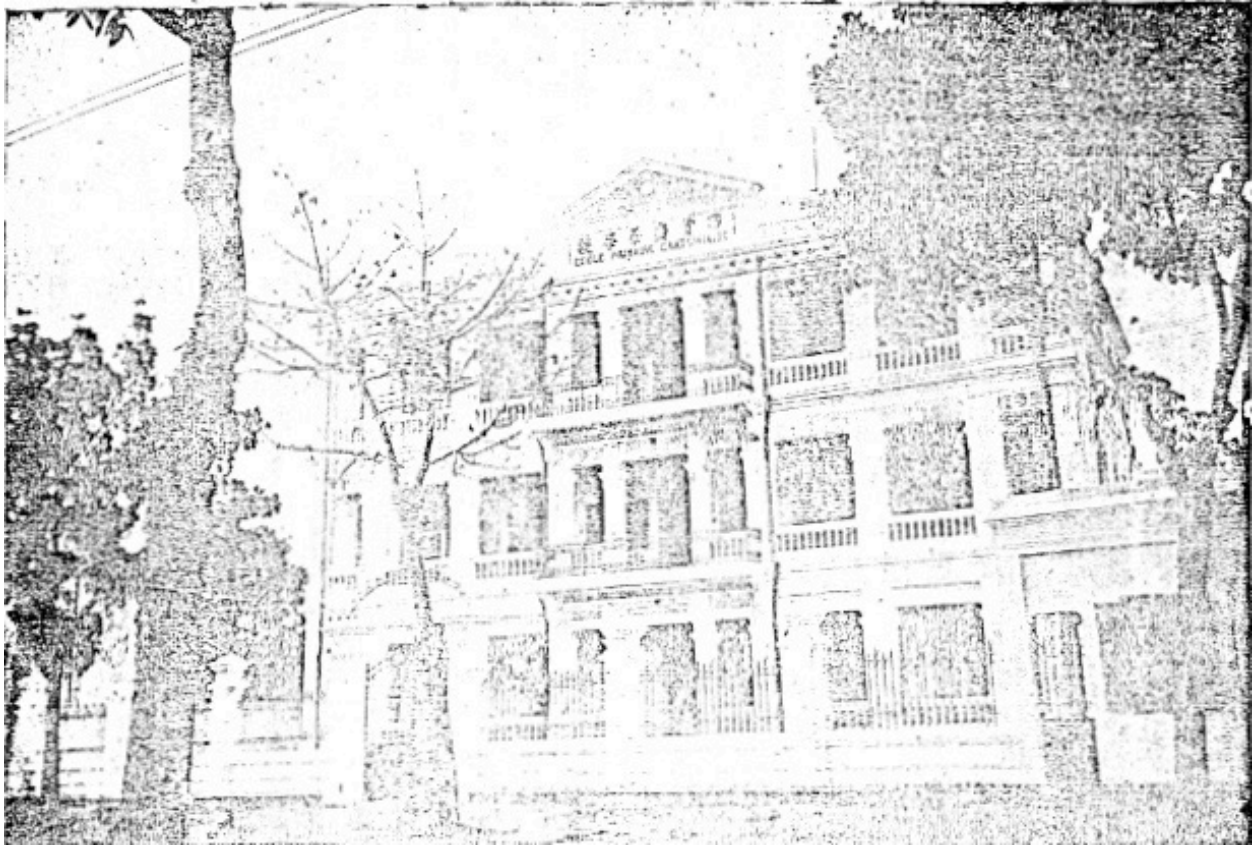
In this regard, there was a very uneven level of funding between Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn schools, and schools outside the twin cities, reflecting the centrality of Chợ Lớn amongst Chinese communities in Indochina. Appeals for funding appeared often in the local section of the news. The nature of these requests differed greatly, indicating the differing level of education infrastructure available in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, as opposed to the infrastructure available in the other RVN cities. Prominent schools in Chợ Lớn, like the Chongzheng School (崇正學校), which catered to the Hakka community, were often the beneficiaries of the largess of Chợ Lớn's wealthy members and did not need to actively conduct fundraisers. For instance, in the obituary for Guo Yibin, a number of well-wishers donated over 42000 Vietnamese Dollars as a means of conveying their condolences to the grieving family. The Guo family, in turn, donated this sum of money to various community organizations in Chợ Lớn, including 10000 Vietnamese Dollars to the Chongzheng Hospital (崇正醫院), and 5000 Vietnamese Dollars to the Chongzheng School.²⁰ This was not an isolated incident: The Shuren School (樹人學校) also received a donation of 10000 Vietnamese Dollars upon the passing of Old Madam Yu (余夫人), the mother of Xu Chengyue (許成約) and Xu Chengtai (許成泰).²¹ In the various donations advertisements, wealthy individuals sought to build their social capital through donations to various public institutions. In these advertisements, Chợ Lớn institutions were most often funded. A recurring "thank you" advertisement that appeared almost daily was the one collectively run by the major Chinese hospitals in Chợ Lớn. For instance, the six major Chinese hospitals in Chợ Lớn, Fushan

¹⁹ "News from Different Schools in the Provinces", *YT*, January 08, 1960, p. 2.

²⁰ "Obituary: Guo Yibin", *YT*, March 11, 1959, p. 3.

²¹ "Obituary: Old Madam Yu", *YT*, February 02, 1959, p. 3

Hospital (福善醫院), Zhongzheng Hospital (中正醫院), Guangzhao Hosiptal (廣肇醫院), Liuyi Hospital (六邑醫院), Hainan Hospital (海南醫院), and Chongzheng Hospital (崇正醫院) thanked Madam Lin Yugui (林玉桂) for donating the condolence funds for the passing of her husband, Lin Tianzhu (林天助).²² Collections accumulated at weddings, and deaths from individual seeking to build social relations with the wedding couple’s families or the bereaved family often wound up funding Chợ Lớn’s community institutions – its schools, social clubs, congregation facilities, and hospitals.



Shuren School (樹人學校)

²² “Thank You for Your Donation”, *YT*, October 10, 1966, p. 4.

The funding opportunities for non-Chợ Lớn institutions were few and far between. Chinese schools in the cities outside of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn had to make appeals in the Chợ Lớn dailies for funding for basic facilities. For instance, in October 1966, there were at least two appeals from Chinese schools in Quảng Ngãi province and Rạch Giá province. Quảng Ngãi’s Qide School (啟德學校) and Rạch Giá’s Mingde School (明德學校) made appeals in *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* for “passionate individuals” to make donations for much-needed expansion of school premises.²³ It appeared that only individuals who originated from outside of Chợ Lớn would voluntarily donate to non-Chợ Lớn institutions. Even so, the majority of their donations were now geared towards creating a base of goodwill in Chợ Lớn and building their social capital within the heart of Chinese communities in former colonial Indochina. One such example was the donations from the passing of Old Madam Lin (林太君), the mother of Yang Jinqin (楊金卿), Yang Jinhua (楊金華), and Yang Jinshun (楊金順). Of the 55000 Vietnamese Dollars that they donated from the condolence funds, 10000 Vietnamese Dollars was donated to Zhizhi School (致知學校) in Bạc Liêu, probably indicating the connections their family shared with Bạc Liêu. Nevertheless, the remaining 45000 Vietnamese was donated to seven Chinese hospitals scattered across Chợ Lớn.²⁴

The expansion of education in Chợ Lớn occurred as a result of both community endeavors and private enterprise, with the latter representing a departure from the colonial period. While Chinese communities stepped up their efforts to build more schools to accommodate their growing numbers, the number of private schools also burgeoned. Private schools addressed the varied education needs of affluent Chợ Lớn inhabitants, which ranged

²³ “Quảng Ngãi Qide School in Urgent Need of Funds”, *YT*, October 14, 1966, p. 5; “Rạch Giá Mingde School raised insufficient funds for expansion”, *YT*, October 17, 1966, p. 8.

²⁴ “Donations”, *YT*, October 21, 1966, p. 8.

from enrichment classes for their preschool offspring to professional courses for adults. For instance, Madam Guo Ying, a Paris-trained seamstress, opened a tailoring school in Chợ Lớn diagonally across the street from a major landmark, Xuangong Theater (璇宮戲院), with the purpose of instructing students in “world-class Parisian tailoring techniques”.²⁵

It is important to note that public and private enterprise often co-mingled, and some public schools often offered private lessons in afterhours. One example is Bochuan school (博川學校) established in 1956 for Chinese who originated from Jiangxi Province in China. Located within the premises of the Jiangxi Native-Place Association on 736 Nguyễn Bàng street, Bochuan school offered kindergarten and elementary school classes by day, but offered English and French language courses and nursing classes in the evenings at a fee.²⁶

Key Developments

There were several key developments in education in addition to the general expansion of education during the RVN. The RVN took great interest in incorporating education as part of their state-building plans. This led to greater scrutiny of legacy education institutions, in Chợ Lớn and more broadly also in schools under the RVN’s de facto control. This was contested by individual and community interests, which sought to tap into transnational opportunities during the Cold War.

During the RVN, there was greater state control and penetration in education. Legacy education institutions were a threat to the RVN’s nation-building. State challenges to education

²⁵ “Advertisement: Heping Women’s Tailoring School”, *BTG*, October 09, 1959, p. 13.

²⁶ “Bochuan School”, *YT* May 25, 1959, p. 2; “Bochuan School”, *BTG*, August 03, 1959, p. 4; “Bochuan School English Classes”, *BTG* October 04, 1959, p. 2; “Vietnam Education Ministry Approves Chinese Schools”, *YT*, January 13, 1960, p. 4; “Bochuan School Nursing Classes”, *YT*, January 14, 1960, p. 2; “Bochuan School French Classes”, *YT*, September 30, 1959, p. 2.

were not unique to the Chinese community, as the state sought to curtail alternative offerings in education, and sought to standardize the education system in the RVN. It appeared that French schools posed a greater threat to regimes' attempts at state consolidation. In a short snippet in *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* on 21 October 1966, it was reported that one of the RVN's Ministry of Education's challenges was restricting the influence of the bastions of colonial education – French schools. It appeared that these colonial legacies – French schools, still had a significant appeal to parents, who elected to enroll their children in these schools. This represented a challenge to the national schools system that the RVN set up in its first decade of administration.²⁷ While a large number of the Chinese schools passed the Ministry of Education's requirements, and gained its approval to continue operations, it appeared that French schools loomed as a greater threat to the state's nation-building program.

State intervention in Chinese schools waxed and waned, depending on the regimes in power and their varying priorities. For Chinese communities the First Republic (1955 – 1963) is characterized by the greatest degree of state scrutiny, as it is often associated with being the high point of anti-Chinese policies. After the *laissez faire* attitude of the French, the different Chinese schools in Chợ Lớn found themselves adjusting to the new reality of the new RVN state's attempts to flex its muscles in the different institutions in Việt Nam. One of the first measures was an attempt to blur these distinct ethnic lines, and to blend the distinct Chinese education system into the new national landscape. The RVN Ministry of Education enacted a policy, which required Chinese schools to change their names into Vietnamese sounding names, to blend into the national landscape, and efface their distinctiveness. This policy was reiterated in *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* on 27 February 1959, reminding schools which have yet to do so to complete the

²⁷ “The State Cannot Allow an Alternative System of Education”, *YT*, October 21, 1966, p. 4.

paperwork altering their school names at RVN Ministry of Education location in Sài Gòn.²⁸ The symbolic change of school names was the first of a series of measures by the state to assert its presence, and to craft a unity out of this patchwork of players, who shared the collective space of the RVN. At different levels of education, legacy education institutions experienced the RVN's projection of hard and soft power.

The RVN education scene was a departure from colonial times as they developed transnational connections in the “free world” as opposed to the colonial world. These connections were episodic in nature, rather than systematic in nature, and were part of a broader program of cultural exchanges within the “free world”. In the education system, this meant that students met school-going peers from other parts of “free Asia” like Korea, Japan, and Philippines etc.

While these state attempts to integrate communities were sometimes welcomed, Chinese communities and individuals also continued to pursue alternative options. Historically, education was a means for Chinese communities to create and maintain transnational connections. During the RVN, the flows of these transnational networks changed because of the Cold War context and its restrictions of historical transnational networks. Chinese education networks shifted their orientation from China to other loci of education. This led to the rise of a better-articulated Overseas Chinese world.

The following sections will explore these key developments during the RVN, and examine how these factors interacted at the different levels of education. Broadly speaking, while communities continued to dominate up to middle school, they relinquished their hold over tertiary education.

²⁸ “Ministry of Education Orders Sài Gòn-Chợ Lớn Chinese Schools to Alter School Names”, *YT*, February 27, 1959, p. 4.

Community Dominance: Preschool and Elementary Education

In preschool to elementary school education, the main actors were private education addressing the needs of affluent parents, and Chinese communities continuing their historic role in providing public elementary school education. While private education did not contend with state intervention, public education encountered limited state intervention in the form of Vietnamese language classes and exertions of soft power. Preschool education and elementary education was largely in the hands of individual parents and communities.

Preschool education was the result of the needs of individual parents and private education that catered to these needs, with some participation from community schools. Based on the English classes advertised in Chợ Lớn periodicals, there are several plausible explanations for new directions in the Chợ Lớn private education sector. It is plausible that there was a critical mass of parents, eager to prepare their young for the new realities of the RVN. It is also plausible that the private education sector adjusted their offerings to the changing context in the RVN. Regardless of what led to such changes, in the realm of preschool education the state did not contest for young minds. For preschool children, their education occurred within the confines of Chinese communities and their experience depended upon their parents' financial resources. was firmly in the hands of their parents and depended on their parents' financial resources.

In private preschool education, giving children a headstart in language learning was the key concern while it is unclear what was taught in public preschools. There was a plethora of language schools offering classes for young children at the age of three, and some of the languages offered included French, English, Vietnamese, and Chinese. For instance, affluent parents interested in private English lessons for their children from ages four to eleven, could engage the services of an (unnamed) American female teacher from two hundred dollars a month

for older children, to three hundred and fifty dollars a month for younger children.²⁹ Public schools also offered preschool classes and some instances of them are the Chongzheng School (崇正學校) and the Guangshun Elementary School on 27 Ngô Quyền street.³⁰ While preschool was uncontested, elementary, middle, high school, and tertiary education was a battlefield between community and nation – a battlefield that individual parents had to navigate.

Contestation between state and community for the minds started in elementary school. This occurred from six years of age to the early teens. The state's presence was mainly limited to Vietnamese language classes, and soft coercion in elementary schools.

Formal elementary education remained a community initiative with limited state intervention. Broadly, Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn and the RVN had continued concern with instilling a strong community identity amongst the young, through the means of formal education. While there is no hard data with regards to where parents sent their children, it is possible to infer that there was a trend towards sending one's children to one's congregation school. This conclusion can be drawn from the distinct pattern in the placement of advertisements in the different daily periodicals circulating in Chợ Lớn and its environs. Businesses, including schools, advertised strategically, and targeted their advertisements towards their communities. This facet highlights some of the lines of fragmentation, which continued in the postcolonial period, amongst Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn and Indochina. Congregations advertised heavily in their community newspapers. For instance, schools like Qiongfufu school (瓊付學校) that were part of the Hokkien community (福建幫) featured heavily in the *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao*. Similarly, schools part of the Cantonese community, like the

²⁹ “English Lessons for Children”, *YT*, January 03, 1960, p. 2.

³⁰ “Chongzheng School Enrolling Students”, *YT*, February 15, 1959, p. 2; “Guangshun School Enrolling Students”, *YT*, February 18, 1959, p. 6.

Guangzhao school, had a greater presence in the paper that was favored by the Cantonese community, the Yazhou Ribao (亞洲日報, *Asia Daily*). While these advertising patterns are not conclusive proof that parents indeed sent their children to community schools, it is highly probably that most parents followed historical precedent, and enrolled their children in their own community schools at the elementary and middle school levels. This was probably the combined effect of following historical precedent, and also the information available to parents, due to the nature of periodicals in Chợ Lớn, which follows the contours of community fragmentations.

Aside from the initiative of individual parents, there were also efforts amongst community leaders, to maintain the integrity of their communities. While it is unclear if it was intended to be a means of uplifting one's community members, as part of longstanding philanthropic traditions, or a means of solidifying control over community, one's community identity was nurtured under such programs. Congregation schools – some of the finest, storied education institutions in Chợ Lớn, often offered scholarships to community children who were “needy but worthy”. For instance, one of the smaller sub-groups, the Sanshui Native Place Association (三水同鄉會), set up bursaries, such that needy students belonging to that group may attend school with financial assistance.³¹ In a similar move, Bochuan School allows one hundred students from the Jiujiang Native Place Association (九江同鄉會) to attend its school *gratis*. It also offered reduced school fees to sixty of the most academically-inclined from other native places.³² This was one of the ways by which Chinese communities continued to pursue and protect individual community interests within Chợ Lớn and the RVN.

Attempts by communities and individuals to keep community and ethnic identity intact increasingly ran up against the state. In elementary school, Vietnamese language lessons was the

³¹ “Sanshui Native Place Association Sets Up Bursaries”, *YT*, February 20, 1959, p. 3.

³² “Bochuan School”, *BTG*, August 03, 1959, p. 4

main means by which the state exerted itself. For instance, in 1959, the state mandated that Chinese elementary and middle schools add three extra hours of Vietnamese language instruction every week.³³ This was however not a particularly onerous requirement. Vietnamese language requirements and Vietnamese language acquisition presents a mixed picture. While it started as a state requirement to foster national integration, it was not always antagonistic towards community and individual interests. Likewise, it is important to keep in mind that the different community leaders' desires might have run parallel, or counter individual agency. In some cases, segments of the Chinese community saw advantages of applying themselves to learning more Vietnamese. Individuals also saw benefits behind learning Vietnamese, as it increased their opportunities in the Republic.

For younger schoolgoers, Vietnamese language lessons were not the only means the state asserted its will. The state also used soft power, encouraging voluntary participation in various national events, intended to foster Sino-Vietnamese interactions, and create greater societal integration. These events brought together different segments of the young living in the segmented RVN nation. Some instances of such events include national schools competitions, and events of cultural and national importance. For instance, Children's Day, an invented event occurring on Fourth April, was observed by schoolgoers, regardless of the education system. In the Chinese schools, schoolgoers celebrated this event by exchanging gifts with each other. Such invented national traditions have the effect of crafting commonalities of experience, regardless of one's communities.³⁴

The above were more covert forms of building the nation through soft coercion. There were also more overt, soft forms in which the RVN sought to meld the disparate parts of society.

³³ "Private Schools to Teach More Hours of Vietnamese", *YT*, August 31, 1959, p. 3.

³⁴ "Children's Day", *BTG*, April 04, 1959, p. 1.

Elementary schools in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn were often invited to actively participate in events of national importance, i.e. the RVN's National Day celebrations on 26 October. In the 1959 National Day celebrations, the various Chinese schools in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn pooled together to participate in the National Day float parade. They put a float, alongside many other prominent Sài Gòn schools like Chu Văn An Middle School. For schoolgoers who did not participate, they got to participate in this event in another manner. Apart from being given the day off school, they could also take in the spectacle, as the parade made its way through Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, going through important thoroughfares like Nguyễn Trãi street, Hồng Bàng street, and Đồng Khanh street.³⁵ From the balconies of apartments overlooking the streets of Chợ Lớn, these young impressionable minds observed the theatrics of the nation.

The RVN's attempts at exerting its presence in the lives of young schoolgoers through hard and soft exercises of its power did not go unchallenged in the private realm. Outside of the school system, parents pursued strategies that were intended to orient their offspring towards the world, where they could participate in the transnational Chinese world and the world beyond it. This relationship is not completely antagonistic towards RVN attempts at nation-building, and is better understood as individual and community efforts to hedge their bets, and to leverage on their unique status, whereby they could benefit both as RVN citizens, and as members of the transnational Chinese world.

The above is evident from the after-school offerings available. There were ample courses on offer for students aged six to twelve. Courses ranged from (increasingly popular) English lessons, Vietnamese lessons, and lessons on various aspects of Chinese culture, like Chinese calligraphy, painting, and of course, Chinese language lessons. For instance, the Zhengxin school, located at 76 Nguyễn Trãi street offered Chinese abacus lessons to students on Sundays

³⁵ "Floats around Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn Last Night for National Day", *BTG*, October 27, 1959, p. 4.

as a form of afterschool enrichment.³⁶ For the more well-heeled parents, they might have been tempted to hire private tutors for their children. A female French-national teacher, who used to teach in French public schools advertised her private French tuition services, indicating there was a market amongst parents.³⁷ These developments in Chợ Lớn occurred as part of developments in private education initiatives, which were probably in response to a growing demand for an education sector that could cater to the new demands of the changing economy and political situation. The twin cities of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn became the center of education, drawing the young from various regions of the RVN and former French Indochina for school.

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 電話：三六六二一
 班別：辨音速成班（教章氏、國際音標）
 初、中、高、深造班
 開學日期：十月三日晚（星期一）
 校長：阮世雙
 主任：盧維榮

首都英文商業專科學校 夜學招生
 為栽培各公私機構之翻譯人員特設
 夜通譯員訓練班
 本班課程以英語為主，專授各公共機構、辦公室、及商場上一切所需用之英語，包括傳話訓練之口譯及文件上之筆譯，各學員須具備聽、講、及寫普通之中、英、越文程度。
 另招 華氏國際辨音一月速成班、
 初班、中班、高班、深造班
 開課：十月三日晚
 校址：堤岸阮秀街七九三至七九九號
 許可證 2197 KTHV/KHT/M
 簡章備索 校長：何十華

廣雅高級中學 法文夜學專科班
 夜學新拼音班 新一上級
 開課日期：拾月三日
 續招日夜學原有各級插班生
 主任：嚴鼎新
 校長：阮世雙
 地址：堤岸大馬路四七九至四八一號（廣雅中學舊址對面）

Three advertisements in *YT* for evening schools in Chợ Lớn³⁸

³⁶ “Zhengxin School Sunday Classes”, *YT*, September 14, 1966, p. 2.

³⁷ “Private French Tuition”, *YT*, September 14, 1966, p. 5.

³⁸ *YT*, October 08, 1966, p. 2

Growing State and Community Contestation: Middle and High School Education

While there were some efforts, both on the part of the state on one side, and on the part of individuals and community on the other side to contest for the minds of young Chinese in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn from ages three to twelve, these contestations were limited, relative to the older age groups, whereby both parties stepped up their efforts in the battlefield for youthful minds. The experience of education is more varied, for youths, from ages twelve to eighteen. Nation-building initiatives, the transnational cultural world, both touched upon the school-going experience for teenaged students. This created fluid identities and multiple loyalties, which was to define their lives. Additionally, this formative period of their lives meant that many teenagers who went to the same schools formed lifelong bonds, which were to transcend beyond the confines of national borders, and extend beyond the rise and fall of nations.

In everyday life of teenaged school-goers in Chợ Lớn, the presence of the state was increasingly felt. The nation made its presence more keenly felt, both in the curriculum, and in non-curriculum activities. Collectively, the middle and high school experience was intended to inculcate these impressionable minds with the concept of the RVN nation. For instance, there were national schools sports meets, in which students were encouraged to participate in, and the results of sports meets often took up much column space in the Chợ Lớn daily papers. There was also an increase in the number of hours of Vietnamese language instruction, as students with aspirations to higher education within the RVN tertiary education system had to prepare themselves to enter universities, where the language of instruction was Vietnamese. In addition to sports, and language instruction, the RVN also sought to foster in students a sense of shared identity, through lessons on Vietnamese history, and by extension, a shared sense of history, and

a nation within the RVN. Some of the stories that were told include the great exploits of thirteenth-century General Trần Hưng Đạo.³⁹

These developments – contestations between nation-building and community-building agendas – occurred with the Cold War forming the backdrop. The Cold War context gave rise to different opportunities, for nation-builders and for community-builders. It fostered cultural exchange amongst youth within the confines of the ‘free world’. But the contours of these networks differed remarkably. While there was now increased international exchange between the RVN and nations in the ‘free world’, Chinese networks reshaped themselves to these new boundaries, and also took opportunities to re-affirm old networks, and form new networks. Consequently, a Chinese youth attending a Chinese school in Chợ Lớn and a youth attending a non-Chinese school in Sài Gòn had different schoolgoing experiences, which were invisibly shaped by the Cold War context.

Broadly, within the RVN, youths in the Sài Gòn (and other non-Chinese) school system had opportunities for international contact with school-going youths in other parts of the "free world". This contact was particularly strong amongst American's East Asian allies. Two such countries were Japan and South Korea. In the two decades of the RVN's existence, there were multiple cultural exchanges between student groups of countries within the "Free World". For instance, in June 1959, a group of Korean students visited the RVN. The purpose of their visit was to “foster bilateral friendship”, and they also put on a Korean cultural performance, to introduce RVN students to Korean culture. Such visits had the effect of increasing the exposure of Sài Gòn teenagers to the greater world. It realized the ‘free world’ for Vietnamese teenagers, as they engaged in face-to-face interactions with their peers from the ‘free world’, which they learned about in school. To finish their tour of the ‘free world’, the Korean students also visited

³⁹ “Trần Hưng Đạo Celebrations”, *YT*, September 23, 1959, p. 3.

the Republic of China, and Philippines in this same tour, highlighting some of the Cold War cultural networks targeted at winning youthful hearts and minds.⁴⁰ Such exchanges were not unilateral; Japan, one of the earlier centers of tertiary education in Asia, also started offering scholarships to students in (“free”) Southeast Asia starting in 1960.⁴¹ These exchanges actualized the ‘free world’ and created cultural exchanges during the formative teenage years of Sài Gòn youth.

The lived experience of Chợ Lớn ran parallel to their Sài Gòn peers’ experience, but with variations. Within the broader framework of “Free World” Asian cultural exchanges, cultural exchanges between Chợ Lớn and other ‘Free World’ Asia countries ran along the historical grooves that were shaped by the flows of the transnational Chinese world. These cultural exchanges, however, took a different form from prior historical exchanges, and reshaped the transnational Chinese world.

Prior to the advent of the Cold War, a vibrant transnational Chinese world existed, but its form differed remarkably from the transnational Chinese world during the Cold War. Starting from the 1800s, when there was massive Chinese migration into Southeast Asia, leading to a nascent transnational Chinese world, with a strong focus on economic exchanges. Economic exchanges flowing from the different hinterland cities like Phnom Penh, Vientiane and Cần Thơ flowing into hub cities like Sài Gòn and Singapore shaped the transnational Chinese world, and fostered relationships through economic exchanges, such as the rice trade, or the traditional Chinese medicine trade. Relationships were built along these economic pathways. While economic exchange was the dominant good flowing along these pathways, culture and ideas also moved along these pathways in the nineteenth century. Many ideas about the future were

⁴⁰ “Korean Students to Visit Republic of China, Republic of Vietnam, and Philippines”, *BTG*, June 08, 1959, p. 1.

⁴¹ “Japan to Provide Scholarships for Students in Southeast Asia for Higher Education”, *BTG*, May 04, 1959, p. 1.

fomenting in the different Chinese communities spread across the world, and mixed and mingled along these pathways. For instance, Chinese communities in America were strong proponents of self-determination, and made generous donations to the revolutionary groups in China in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. There was a process of exchange between hub cities like Hong Kong, the heart of these networks – China, and different hub cities like Sài Gòn, Singapore and San Francisco in the transnational Chinese world. The movement of ideas often took a concrete form – educators from China often moved to overseas Chinese communities to teach in the newly-established community schools, strengthening the networks in the transnational Chinese world.

During the Cold War, the transnational Chinese network transformed, limited by national and Cold War concerns. But the Cold War and cultural programs sponsored by the US also led to new opportunities for new developments in the transnational Chinese world. A key limitation was the severance of the People's Republic of China as the terminus of this network. In its place the Republic of China became the new political hub of this network, while Hong Kong became the new cultural hub of this transnational Chinese network. This had the effect of radically changing flows in the transnational Chinese network, and altering its form. For instance, cultural and intellectual exchanges were no longer concerned with the decay of China, and methods for its salvation in face of imperialism; at least at a superficial level, there was now concern with combating the spread of communism, and the preservation of Chinese culture as a weapon against communism. The severance of connections with the People's Republic of China also meant the severance of many Chinese communities' attachment to their ancestral homes, as a return to roots was no longer possible in the current political situation. In its place, there was an increasing willingness to lay down roots in their new countries, while cultivating political

connections with the ROC and cultural connections with Hong Kong. Consequently, the nature of cultural exchange also altered. In place of serious discussions about the place of culture in society, and the role of communities in China's future, more light-hearted topics like tourist attractions in Hong Kong and Republic of China replaced such discussions. For instance, there was a short article on the beauty of Alishan, a mountain, and tourist attraction in the Republic of China.⁴² Such topics discussing variations of Chinese lives across the transnational Chinese world highlighted similarities and varieties of lived experience, and expanded the consciousness of newspaper readers, allowing them to imagine these connections through the vivid descriptions of other Chinese communities' places of domicile.⁴³

The new iteration of the transnational Chinese network had an impact on the everyday lived experienced of teenaged students in Chợ Lớn, which set their lives apart from their schoolgoing peers in Sài Gòn. While their counterparts in Sài Gòn met with Korean peers, Chinese teenagers in the Chinese school system in (particularly) Chợ Lớn and other hinterland cities like Cần Thơ would meet with their Chinese-speaking peers in other Chinese communities in Malaya (and later, Singapore), Taiwan, or Hong Kong. While these cultural exchanges were episodic in nature, they had the function of giving teenagers glimpses of their counterparts' lives, laying the foundation for future connections. These experiences also had the function of easing the transition for some of these students, who later opted to attend Chinese universities in Hong Kong, Singapore, Macau and Taiwan. The Cold War had the effect of facilitating intra-Asian cultural flows within "free Asia". Interestingly, within the broader development of heightened intra-Asian cultural interactions, historical networks would also shape such cultural interactions.

⁴² "The Beauty of Alishan", *BTG*, July 11, 1959, p. 2.

⁴³ "Education in the Different Parts of the World", *YT*, September 15, 1966, p. 3.

This led to a different lived experience of the Cold War for schoolgoing teenagers in Chợ Lớn and Sài Gòn.

In the examples above, the RVN state seized the opportunities offered by the Cold War context, to build its alternative vision of the Vietnamese state, which was outward-looking, sharing connections with its ‘free Asia’ counterparts, under sponsorship of the US. Interestingly, Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn subverted these opportunities, to create their own parallel experience, strengthening transnational Chinese networks in the process. Hence, there was a parallel process of community-building in Chợ Lớn, by the different congregations, while the RVN state pursued its nation-building goals.

State Dominance and Transnational Contestations: Tertiary Education

At the tertiary level, the education scene in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn became even more varied. Here, the congregations reached the limits of their influence – there were no Chinese universities in Chợ Lớn. Historically, parents who wanted to their children to finish out their education in the Chinese education track would send their children to China. But with the Cold War, Chinese universities in Macau, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan were established in the 1950s and 1960s,⁴⁴ to fill the space left vacant by the severance of this part of the transnational Chinese world. However, the Chinese education track was not the only option; parents could enroll their children in the Vietnamese university education system, or send them further to France, the United Kingdom, or USA.

At the university level, integration into Vietnamese society became key. There were both private and state-sponsored universities, but lessons were conducted in Vietnamese, and students in Chinese schools had to switch tracks, and adapt to the Vietnamese education system. Chinese

⁴⁴ “Chinese Education for the Chinese Diaspora”, *BTG*, April 22, 1959, p. 1.

communities run out of options, in their contestation against the state. But the RVN state had to contend with other state and non-state players within the transnational Chinese network, and also the individual agency of parents, who might opt to take their children out of the system. However, this challenge was not unique to Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn – Vietnamese parents who sought to expand their children’s opportunities might also pursue these education opportunities.

For the small percentage of Chợ Lớn youth with the opportunity to attend RVN universities, university represents a more extended engagement with their Vietnamese peers. While they would have had interactions with Vietnamese students enrolled in the Chinese schools, or episodic interactions with their Vietnamese counterparts in nation-building events organized for schools, Chinese students were largely able to keep within their enclaves. At the university level, Chinese students increasingly had to break out of their enclaves, and engage with their Vietnamese peers, outside of superficial interactions.

In place of community initiatives, the RVN had to contend with other states in the transnational Chinese world. In this regards, the ROC was most concerned about holding on to the “third column” – its overseas citizens. While Hong Kong, Singapore and Macau Chinese universities advertised in the Chợ Lớn dailies, it appears that they were more concerned with student enrollment, and the tuition benefits associated with that. Outside of the Chinese education system, universities from the United Kingdom and the United States also advertised their programs, with similar economic motivations as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Macau.

During the Cold War, the ROC stepped in to fill the role vacated by the PRC, in the field of university education. Prior to the closure of that avenue, Chinese teenagers would go to mainland China to finish their education. With the exclusion of the PRC from ‘Free Asia’, and

the ROC sliding into the role of political leader of the transnational Chinese world, it also took over some of mainland China's historic roles. This includes the provision of education. Previously, Chinese teachers would leave the mainland, and staff some of the schools in Southeast Asia, as a result of individuals in search of opportunities, and also the different Chinese schools within the network seeking to preserve their culture. During the RVN, this pattern was continued, but the ROC now became the source of Chinese teachers in Southeast Asia and beyond. The ROC's assertion and claims to political leadership did not go unchallenged. In Peter Kwong's study of Chinatown New York, some of the congregations in Chinatown pushed back, and lobbied for their right to be affiliated to the PRC, albeit to no avail.⁴⁵ Regardless, the ROC embarked on an ambitious project of education expansion. In 1949, with the split of political authority between the ROC and the PRC, some followed Chiang Kaishek to the island of Taiwan.

The ROC took its role as the political leader of the transnational Chinese world seriously. Oftentimes, they reserved places in their universities for their overseas citizens, and provided scholarships for them to attend university. For instance, in 1959, four ROC universities started special pre-university classes for Overseas Chinese students from Hong Kong, Macau, and other regions with Chinese. These programs, offered by National Taiwan University (台灣大學), National Chengchi University (政治大學), National Cheng Kung University (成功大學), and National Taiwan Normal University (師範大學), were intended to prepare overseas Chinese students for tertiary education in ROC.⁴⁶ This represented serious contestations with the RVN state, as both states jostled for the hearts and minds of teenagers. Furthermore, in limiting the

⁴⁵ Peter Kwong, *Chinatown, New York: Labor and Politics, 1930 – 1950* (New York: New Press, 2001).

⁴⁶ "Four Taiwanese Universities to have Pre-University Classes for Overseas Chinese Students", *BTG*, June 28, 1959, p. 4.

financial barriers to participation in the transnational Chinese network, the ROC made their universities a very compelling choice for parents who had the desire, but not the economic means to enroll their children at universities. This furthered the appeal of this proposition to parents, who intended to maximize the benefits of their participation in the transnational Chinese world. In the field of education, it is evident that the transnational Chinese world was bi-directional – while Chinese communities and individuals attempted to tap into the network, the centers of the transnational Chinese world also sought to tighten these networks, through such outreach initiatives.

Unlike Chinese universities in ROC, the challenge posed by other Chinese universities in other Chinese cities to the RVN state was not unique to the Chinese community, but also to the more general (privileged) populace in the RVN. The RVN state had to contend with well-heeled parents (both Chinese and non-Chinese), who had the economic resources to send their children overseas, with the intention of giving their children access to global networks. The only factor that separated the economic elite in the Chinese community and other economic elite in the RVN was the level of advertisement from universities in the Chinese networks. Universities in Macau and Hong Kong advertised in the *Chợ Lớn* dailies, in an attempt to capture some enrollment from overseas Chinese. In September 1966, the Macau Overseas Chinese University (澳門華僑大學) and the Hong Kong Correspondence School (香港函授學院) bought a joint advertisement in *Yuen Tuong*, to seek enrollment from students in the RVN.⁴⁷ Foreign universities, which were not part of the transnational Chinese network, also appealed to parents. For instance, the Anglo-Chinese English school (中英英文學校) advertised its ties with California universities. It offered the opportunity for its graduates to register at select California universities without taking

⁴⁷ “Macau and Hong Kong Schools Enrolling Students”, *YT*, September 07, 1966, p. 2.

entrance examinations.⁴⁸ For the financial elite (regardless of ethnicity), individual initiative played a pivotal role in the shaping of young minds.

State and community initiatives only account for part of the picture; individual initiatives, shaped by historical factors, also accounted for the everyday lives of teenaged schoolgoers in Chợ Lớn. In making the important decision of their children's education, parents often followed familiar pathways. While Sài Gòn became a hub for higher education in the RVN, Chợ Lớn developed into a parallel hub for Chinese education in non-Communist Indochina. Although Chợ Lớn was not the terminus for university education, its role as a Chinese education hub for Indochina gave it a cosmopolitan flavor – parents in Vientiane and Phnom Penh often sent their teenaged children to attend the schools in Chợ Lớn. During the French colonial period, there was very limited investment in education infrastructure in both Laos and Cambodia, particularly relative to Việt Nam. Consequently, there was a dearth of higher education. Elite in Laos and Cambodia attended school in Sài Gòn or Hà Nội. Following familiar education pathways, affluent Chinese parents sent their young overseas to attend high schools. For those who chose the colonial option, their children rubbed shoulders with the likes of Cambodia's Prince Sihanouk in Sài Gòn. But for Chinese parents who preferred to socialize their children in Chinese culture, the high schools in Chợ Lớn were an excellent option – they offered sufficient proximity, whilst inculcating the offspring of Chinese parents in Laos and Cambodia with desired values. The Cold War was important in re-shaping transnational Chinese networks, but the familiar, historical pathways carved out in transnational Chinese networks remained salient.

The RVN's monopoly on tertiary education was contested, particularly by wealthy citizens, both Chinese and otherwise. Chinese parents with the means and/or desire for their children to tap into the transnational Chinese world had the option of sending their children to

⁴⁸ “Anglo-Chinese English School has Ties with California Universities”, *BTG*, April 01, 1959, p. 1.

the various Chinese universities in East and Southeast Asia. There were a number of Chinese language universities in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Macau. Chinese universities in these different countries advertised their schools in the different Chợ Lớn dailies. As the new leader of this transnational Chinese world, Taiwan also offered scholarships to the brightest students, such that students with the abilities and the desire, but not the means, were able to pursue their tertiary education in the different universities in Taiwan. Taiwan's status attracted enough overseas Chinese students, to the extent that overseas Chinese students formed their own student associations. One such association formed a female overseas Chinese students basketball team, and made plans to visit different countries in Southeast Asia for friendly basketball matches during their summer vacation.⁴⁹ Such associations are a testament to the popularity of sending one's offspring overseas for tertiary education. In addition to the transnational Chinese world, affluent parents also had the option of sending their children to universities in France, UK, and USA.

Sending their children overseas to study also had the effect of tightening networks for Chợ Lớn parents. Many Chợ Lớn teenagers in college overseas formed friendships, and these relationships augmented the prior transnational relationship that their parents had. In some cases, some Chợ Lớn teenagers overseas fell in love and married local classmates. This inadvertently forged even stronger transnational relationships for some Chợ Lớn families. The created extended familial transnational connections. For instance, prominent and long-time Chợ Lớn newspaper journalist Zhao Zhi Ang's (趙志昂) daughter, Zhao Fuyun (趙馥雲), was married in Taipei's Guting Catholic church (古亭天主教堂) to Wang Hongsheng's (王鴻聲) son, Wang Jiacheng (王家誠). Their wedding was graced by the presence of Taipei Normal University's

⁴⁹ "Overseas Chinese Female Students in Taiwan Form Basketball Team", *BTG*, June 24, 1959, p. 1.

President, Du Yunzhai (杜元載).⁵⁰ Such marriages strengthened bonds in the transnational Chinese world network for particular individuals.

Coping with a Changing World: Private Enterprise and Adult Education

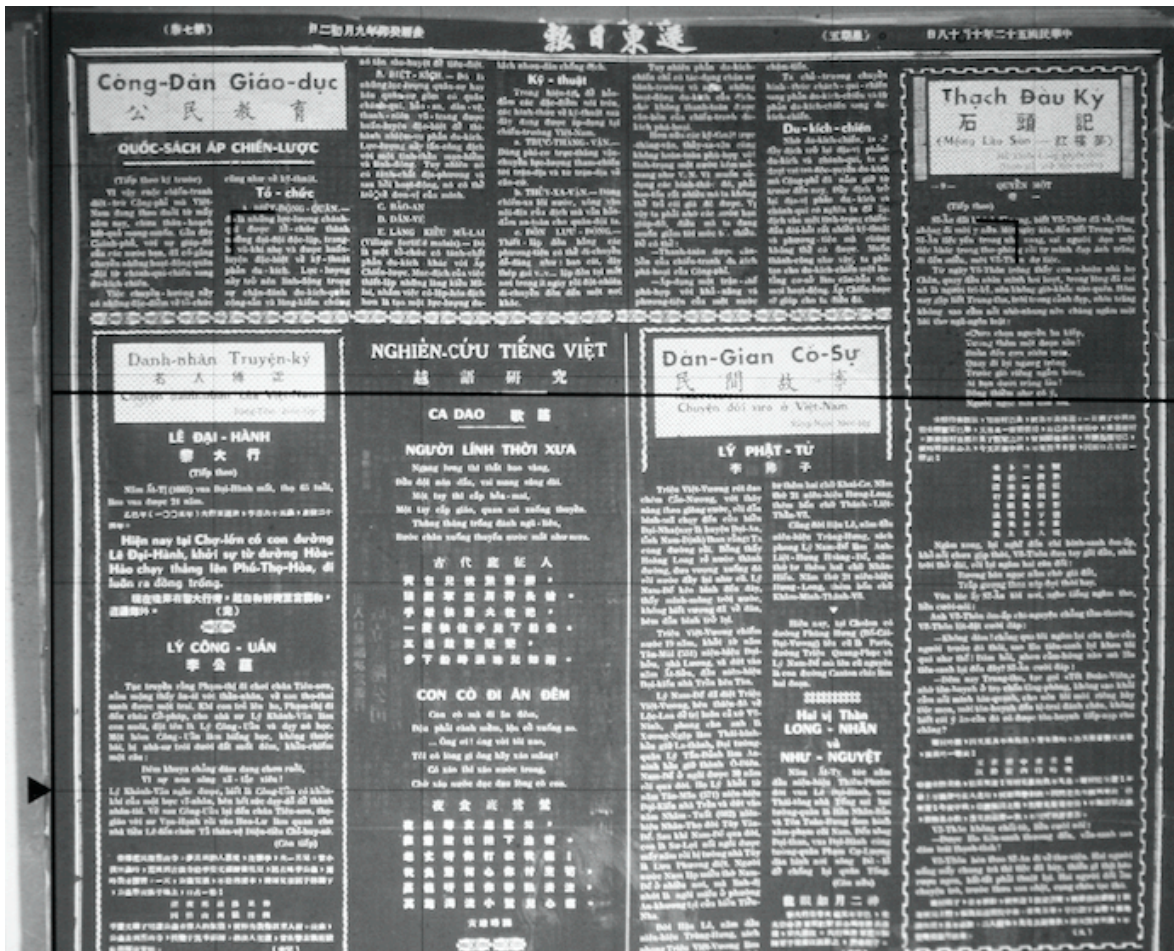
Adult education was outside the purview of the RVN government, and a bustling private education enterprise rose to help equip Chợ Lớn Chinese with the skills needed for the changing employment opportunities. The different schools taught various languages in the evening and also other skills like accountancy and shorthand. While many of these were profit-driven private enterprises, using public school premises, some of the Chợ Lớn educators also offered classes *gratis* to adult learners. Collectively these efforts helped Chợ Lớn Chinese adapt to the changing geopolitical context.

A shortlived policy towards the end of Diệm's regime represented the RVN state's only attempt to further integrate Chinese through regulations of Chinese periodicals. During Diệm's eight years in office, there were several aforementioned measures to integrate the Chinese in Chợ Lớn into the RVN. In 1963, his directives extended to the Chợ Lớn Chinese papers, as he required that one-third of each Chinese periodicals' contents contain the Vietnamese language.⁵¹ While it is unclear if the method of implementation originated from the Chinese dailies' initiative, or Diệm's directives, Chinese editors dealt with this requirement through a page-long Vietnamese lesson once a week. This had the effect of introducing Vietnamese to the Chợ Lớn dailies' adult readers, and bring Vietnamese into their homes. For instance, on 14 October 1963, the entire seven was dedicated to Vietnamese language. Some of the topics included citizen's education (Công-Dân Giáo Dục/公民教育) written in Vietnamese. There was also a song in

⁵⁰ "Chinese Journalist Zhao Zhi Ang Pens Reflections on Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn", *BTG*, October 20, 1959, p. 1; "Wedding Notice: Wang Hongsheng's Son and Zhao Zhi Ang's Daughter", *BTG*, June 20, 1959, p. 4.

⁵¹ Man Man, *Tragedy of Sài Gòn's Chinese Newspapers*, p. 54.

Vietnamese, with word-for-word Chinese translations. To increase the cultural literacy of Chợ Lớn Chinese readers, there were also articles on historical heroes Trần Hưng Đạo and Lê Thái Tổ in Vietnamese. And finally, to facilitate Chinese readers' Vietnamese learning, there was also an excerpt "Notes of the Stone" (Thạch Đầu Ký/石頭記) from the popular eighteenth century Chinese novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber* (紅樓夢).⁵² This episode of a Vietnamese state presence in one's home was rather limited and ended with Diệm's assassination.



Vietnamese language articles in YT page seven, October 18, 1963

⁵² "No title", YT, October 18, 1963, p. 7.

Outside of one's home, adult education was a booming industry in Chợ Lớn and gave grown Chinese the opportunity to train their minds and also to better prepare themselves for the challenges of the new economy. There was a wide array of classes available, ranging from language classes like English, French, Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese to other classes imparting practical skills. Adult language classes were orientated towards helping their students advance in their careers. For instance, Chợ Lớn's Huaxing School (華興學院) collaborated with an accountancy school to offer crash courses on bookkeeping in the Vietnamese language.⁵³ Some other courses targeted women, offering them instructions in the "womanly arts". For instance, the School of Home Economics offered classes in sewing, cooking and crafts, skills needed by the "modern woman" (時代女性).⁵⁴ The Peizheng school (培正學校) also offered a range of classes in more technical subjects like mathematics, physics and chemistry for adult learners who were seeking a career change.⁵⁵

Adult education amongst Chợ Lớn Chinese highlights several interesting facets of a minority navigating the new terrain of the RVN state in the Cold War. In a thought piece entitled "In Search of the History of the Chinese in South Vietnam, 1945-1975", Li Tana argues that this was a period of greater assimilation, as Chinese living in southern Việt Nam sought to integrate themselves into their host society. She uses cooperation in various industries like the rice trade and scrap metal trade to make her argument, while disabusing claims that this period of Vietnamese history was characterized by Chinese establishing their own enclaves in differentiation from Vietnamese.⁵⁶ Adult education produces a more mixed picture. While the number of Vietnamese language classes on offer supports Li's argument, a better way to

⁵³ "Vietnamese Language Classes", *YT*, September 14, 1966, p. 3.

⁵⁴ "School of Home Economics", *YT*, October 04, 1966, p. 5.

⁵⁵ "Peizheng School", *YT*, September 10, 1966, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Li Tana, "In Search of the History of the Chinese in South Vietnam, 1945-1975", in *The Chinese/Vietnamese Diaspora: Revisiting the Boat People*, ed. Chan Yuk Wah (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 52-61.

understand this phenomena is to see it as a community trying to hedge its bets by cultivating multiple loyalties that would enable them to succeed in the RVN as well as beyond.

Adult classes were offered by the private education sector, but there were also some free classes, although these were few and far between. Private education was offered either by independent private schools or they were offered by the private portion of public schools. For instance, the Yi An School (義安學校) was set up to serve the Chaozhou community. However it had an evening school portion that offered Vietnamese lessons for a fee. Some of its classes included Vietnamese phonetics and Vietnamese for bookkeeping.⁵⁷ Others were smaller private outfits, in some cases amounting to a one-person language center. For instance, Tian Kong (天空) advertised Vietnamese language evening classes for the mere price of \$50, and interested applicants were to register at Tongyi Bookshop (統一書局).⁵⁸ There were also complimentary classes offered, and these were often sponsored either by individuals or organizations. For instance, Shuren School (樹人學校) offered night classes to improve Chinese literacy of poorer adults. This program was sponsored by the ROC's ruling Nationalist Party (KMT) in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn. The ROC also paid the salaries of the teachers at Shuren School to teach these complimentary night classes.⁵⁹ From the above selection, it is important to note that while there were public, community-funded schools to provide affordable education to the young in Chợ Lớn Chinese communities, these public schools also had a private component catering to paying adults. Also, the ROC continued to exert its presence amongst its de facto overseas citizens by sponsoring adult education classes that would help integrate them in the transnational Chinese world.

⁵⁷ “Yi An Vietnamese Language School”, *YT*, March 21, 1959, p. 2.

⁵⁸ “Vietnamese Evening Classes”, *YT*, February 18, 1959, p. 5.

⁵⁹ *Shuren School Year Book* (樹人學校年刊), no page numbers.

It is unclear if adults were attempting to take Vietnamese language classes to better integrate themselves with Vietnamese society, as suggested by Li, or if they were taking it for the opportunities that Vietnamese language proficiency presented. In the cases of some of the other languages available, this case was clearer. In the earlier years, from 1950s to 1960s, legacy foreign languages like French were offered with some regularity for evening classes. But with the growing US presence in Việt Nam and the employment opportunities associated with their involvement, the private education sector shifted their class offerings to respond to the new geopolitical circumstances. From the mid-1960s onwards, there were more English classes to address the opportunities made available by American companies setting up offices in Sài Gòn. For instance, in a 1966 advertisement, Guangya High School (廣雅高級中學) offered the full range of English classes, running from beginner to advanced English, and English for different needs, e.g. conversational English, English grammar and a crash course on English phonetics.⁶⁰ For students who were unable to attend classes during evenings, there were also English lessons available on weekends at Zheng Xin school (正心學校).⁶¹ By contrast, the number of French language classes went into decline, as it was no longer as useful.

Adult education also took place within the confines of one's own home. This was evident from some of the books on offer. For instance, World Books (世界書局) advertised its selection of self-help books. Some titles included *Self-Learning Typing in a Month* (自學打字一月通) in addition to a range of Chinese-Vietnamese dictionaries ranging from new editions, regular editions, to those with a greater focus on business terms.⁶²

⁶⁰ "English Language Night School", *YT*, September 07, 1966, p. 2.

⁶¹ "Zhengxin School Weekend English", *YT*, September 07, 1966, p. 3.

⁶² "Good News for Learning", *YT*, July 05, 1959, p. 4.

In adult education, the private sector responded rapidly to the changing geopolitical context and offered classes that were most appropriate for the needs of the time. The adaptability of private education in Chợ Lớn meant that Chinese adults could equip themselves with the skills required to secure new employment opportunities, be it as business partners with *kinh* in Sài Gòn or as employees in American firms. Furthermore, the ROC also attempted to cultivate goodwill as it provided adults opportunities for free Chinese education. Collectively, this put Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn in an excellent position to address the vagaries of the Cold War.

Concluding Remarks

Education was central to the lives of Chợ Lớn's inhabitants in different ways. This chapter on Chinese education in Chợ Lớn illustrates the complex relationship between RVN nation-building, Chinese community-building, and individual initiative, and how these different initiatives interacted during the Cold War. While some of these interests were complementary, there were also at times at odds with each other. Generally at the level of elementary education, Chinese communities and individuals had near-monopoly over education, but the state dominated in the more advanced stages of education. Nevertheless, Chinese communities and individuals were able to co-opt some of the state's strategies, and enhance their networks within the transnational Chinese world.

Apart from giving important insight into Chợ Lớn everyday life, my study of education also illuminates on Chợ Lớn's role in the transnational Chinese world, and the transnational Chinese world's changing form during the Cold War. Despite the changes in political regime, Chợ Lớn continued its historic role as the center of gravity for colonial Indochina. During the Cold War, transnational Chinese interactions also changed in form: cultural exchanges, student

exchanges now augmented previously economically-dominated exchanges. Also, in the field of education, while some Chợ Lớn inhabitants sought to foster closer networks with ROC and Hong Kong, these new centers also sought out closer ties with these hubs of Overseas Chinese.

This chapter examined how state and community contested over the minds of Chinese communities. The next chapter will examine how these two actors battled for the bodies of Chinese communities. Using sports as a lens, I will study how the RVN state and Chinese communities competed over disciplining bodies and inserting their presence into the social time of Chinese.

State and Community Contestations in Social Time:

Sports in Chợ Lớn, 1955 – 1975

“Promote Physical Education, Unite Overseas Chinese Youth”¹

In the colonial period, neither the state nor communities were concerned with social time in everyday life. However during the Republic of Việt Nam (RVN, 1955 – 1975), social time turned into a battleground between state and community. Social time – the time Chợ Lớn inhabitants spent outside of work and school in public spaces – became an opportunity for both community and state to exert their influence. As the state found this new avenue for its state-building endeavor, community institutions also evolved from their more restricted historical roles and expanded their reach into the social lives of their communities to keep up with the state. In this chapter, using the theme of sports, I will examine contestations between the state and community, as they both sought to increase their presence in everyday life of individuals and win the battle for “hearts and minds” through the training of bodies.

Beginning in 1955, there was an uptick in sports participation, which became a key tool for the state to expand into the social time of its citizens, and to imprint its national vision on individual bodies. Social time was used to create a nation in multiple ways. There were national school sports meets, national sports meets, international friendly matches. Various institutions also sponsored sports teams. Schools offered instructions in various sports. Professional organizations like the Army of the Republic of Việt Nam (ARVN) had soccer teams. This national incursion into what used to be the native place congregations’ domain led the different communities to evolve and to expand their function to include sports in order to contest in the

¹ “Notice from Jiangang Overseas Chinese Youth Sports Club”, *YT*, April 09, 1959, p. 2.

realm of social time. Starting in 1956, different communities introduced sports clubs, and offered an array of sports including badminton, table tennis and judo etc. However, there are many obstacles to researching the topic of sports, because it is a recent historical field, and thus there is limited prior research on the subject and limited information on the topic. This chapter represents an early work, contributing to this new, but important historical field that will give insight into biopolitics of contesting nations.

Researching Sports

There is limited secondary literature on sports in Việt Nam, with no monographs on the topic. The history of sports is a new historical field that emerged in the last two decades. Consequently, its adoption in the different historical fields has been slow.

There is now growing attention to the history of sports in Southeast Asia with some journal articles and one monograph on sport in Laos. For instance, Peng Han Lim and Mohd Salleh Aman wrote a journal article on the history of the South East Asian Peninsular games and the Cold War politics surrounding the games, in addition to the effect of international sports on building national identity in the participating states.² Simon Creak's monograph highlights the lack of attention to sports, particularly in Southeast Asia, and argues that "physical culture, particularly sport, is among the most important means of substantializing notions of the body, masculinity, and the nation in modern societies."³

The study of sports in Việt Nam is even more limited. To date, there are no monographs on the topic. However, there are is a book chapter, a journal article, and a pamphlet, which are

² Peng Han Lim and Mohd Salleh Aman, "The History of the South East Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games, 1959 – 1975: Celebrating Sports and Imagining Nation Building in a Period of Wars, Shifting Boundaries and Economic Uncertainty", *The International Journal of the History of Sport* (July, 2015): 1-24.

³ Simon Creak, *Embodied Nation: Sport, Masculinity, and the Making of Modern Laos* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), p. 12.

illuminating. Tracey Barrett's *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indochina* has a chapter on recreation in colonial Việt Nam. In her chapter, sports in amongst Chinese communities in colonial Chợ Lớn were limited to the upper classes of society.⁴ Prominent Chinese leaders would be members of the esteemed *Cercle Sportif Saigonnais* (Saigon Sports Circle). According to Barrett, regardless of whether they played sports, they joined the *Cercle Sportif Saigonnais* for the associated prestige and exclusivity. An anonymous writer in 2015 submitted a short article "Sports in the Time of War" to *Vietnam*, depicting the practice of sports amongst American troops in Việt Nam and how the practice of sports connected troops to home in the USA. Some sports practised included basketball, and American football.⁵

Despite the limited secondary research on sports, sports was an important aspect in the RVN, as evident from its coverage in the dailies in different languages. In the English language *Saigon Daily News*, there would be daily coverage of sports news. In the Chinese dailies, sports news of local interest would appear a number of times a week in the local page, with international sporting events sometimes finding a small spot on the front page. This chapter was written with the snippets found in Chợ Lớn dailies and some supplements from dailies in other languages. It was also wrought together from pamphlets like *Cercle Sportif Saigonnais*, and snippets of autobiographies and social histories.

History of Sports in Việt Nam

Modern sports has a short recorded history in Việt Nam. During the colonial period, it was a pursuit intended for Europeans residing in Indochina and, more particularly, in colonial

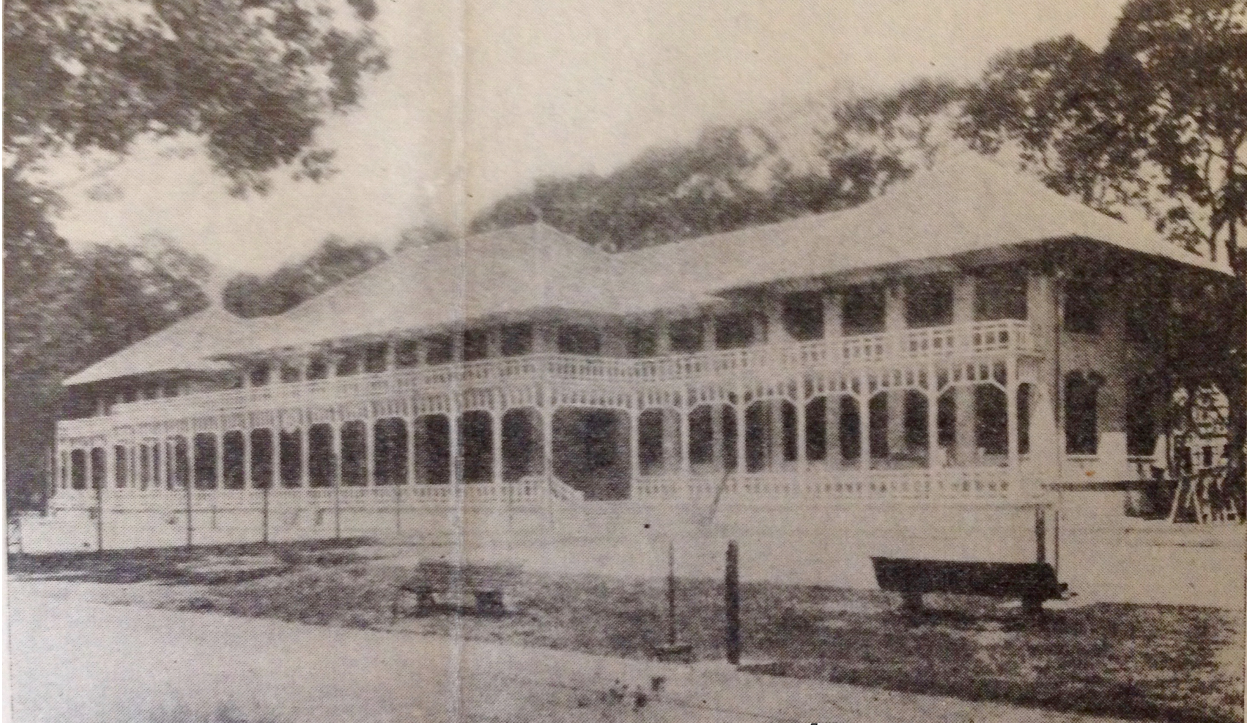
⁴ Tracy Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indo-China* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 196-213.

⁵ Anonymous, "Sports in a Time of War", *Vietnam* 28: 1, June 2015, pp. 40-47.

cities like Sài Gòn and Hà Nội. During the Second Indochina War, sports was one of the nation-building tools of the RVN state. There was an expansion of sporting infrastructure in the area under the RVN's de facto control and a general burgeoning of sporting activities, dominating the social time of its citizens.

Sports in colonial Sài Gòn was meant to aliment lives of European interlopers, creating a home away from home. Hence, the colonial Indochinese sports scene closely resembled the sports scene back in the metropole. Sports available in Sài Gòn included fencing, cycling, tennis, and swimming. There were also some sporting competitions, like the Tour Cycliste d'Indochine (Indochina Cycle Race), modeled after the principles of the Tour de France. It is telling that sports like cycling, tennis, and fencing have limited considerations to local contexts. These sports transplantation from their European context to the Indochinese context indicate there was no coherent plan for sports, apart from the purpose of helping European sojourners find familiarity in their new environments. Evelyne Combeau-Mari's study of sport in the French colonies supports this historical development. While French colonial sport policy was intended to assimilate certain members of the colonies, there was also concern to not over-militarize native populations. Hence while sport was introduced to certain schools and present in segregated social clubs, native participation in sports was viewed with wariness.⁶ Regardless of its foreign import, it appears that sports caught on for some, as there were non-European participants in sports like tennis and cycling. A key institution in colonial Indochina associated with sports was the *Cercle Sportif Saigonnais*, an exclusive club where the who's who of colonial Indochina traded gossip over volleys in the tennis courts.

⁶ Evelyne Combeau-Mari, "Sport in the French Colonies (1880 – 1962): A Case Study", *Journal of Sport History* (Spring 2006), pp. 27-57.



Le Cercle Sportif Saigonnais, 1926⁷

The RVN's two decades represent a new era for sports in southern Việt Nam, marking the birth of using sports as a tool for nation-building. Starting in the 1955, there was more sporting infrastructure, and sporting events filled the social life of RVN inhabitants. Social time was spent either as sports practitioners and/or as spectators. Even the most disinterested RVN inhabitant had to contend with daily news filled with sporting news, both local and international. While most of the international sports teams visiting the RVN came from Asia, in one unusual instance, the Peruvian Soccer Team visited the RVN for friendly soccer matches in February 1960.⁸ Pools were built and sports halls opened up in the different clubs in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. National organizations had their own professional sports teams, and schools organized sports teams to compete in national competitions. The range of sports available also expanded. Badminton, table tennis, judo, track and field, to name a few, were practiced during the RVN,

⁷ From front page of no author, *Cercle Sportif Saigonnais* (Saigon: I.N.D.E.O, 1962).

⁸ "Peru Soccer Team to visit Việt Nam", *YT*, February 02, 1960, p. 5.

reflecting the adaption of sports to local context. This represented a shift away from colonial sports like cycling and tennis, which fell out of the limelight during these two decades. Sports was widespread and reached a wide spectrum of the RVN's middle class.

This chapter will first discuss the sporting experience amongst the RVN's schooling population, before exploring the sporting experience amongst the RVN's adult population. While there will be a brief discussion of the sports scene in Sài Gòn, the majority of the chapter will focus on sports in Chợ Lớn's Chinese communities. Sports amongst *kinh* in Sài Gòn is covered in brief, mainly to serve as a comparison to the sporting experience with Chinese living in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn.

Proliferation of Sports during the RVN

The Confucius Study Group (孔學會) was set up for the intention of studying Confucius' works. The Việt Nam chapter of Confucius Study Group was part of a broader East Asia initiative, which was comprised chapters in Korea, the Republic of China, Hong Kong, etc. While the Confucius Study Group was ostensibly dedicated to study, it could not escape the fervor of this zeitgeist – sports. Consequently, in a short news feature in *Báo Thế Giới* (世界報, *World News*) on 20 April 1959, it was reported that the Việt Nam Confucius Study Group intended to build a swimming pool and a basketball court in its premises and also introduce classes like judo and sword-fighting.⁹

This little snippet highlights the growth of sports in the RVN. Sports proliferated in the RVN in several ways. To support the level of sporting activity, there was an expansion of sporting infrastructure. This in turn was supported by both public and private funds. In the public

⁹ “Việt Nam Confucius Study Group Builds Temple, School, and Association”, *BTG*, April 20, 1959, p. 1.

expansion of sporting infrastructure, the state supported the construction of various sporting structures. These construction projects came to fruition in 1959 – a year characterized by a slew of openings. Some examples include the Republic Stadium and the Republic Pool located in Sài Gòn.¹⁰ The Republic Stadium became the site of national school sports meets and also hosted international sporting matches.¹¹ Outside the heart of Sài Gòn, there was also a growth of sporting facilities. The Datong Swimming Pool (大同泳池) on 27 Nguyễn Văn Học in Gia Định advertised itself as “ideal for swimming” on *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao* on 09 September 1959, with separate swimming facilities for men and women.¹² The Zhiling Swimming Pool (芝陵游泳池), also in Gia Định, opened in early 1960.¹³

While public funds were responsible for the construction of major sports facilities in Sài Gòn, private contributions funded the building of smaller multi-purpose sports halls in Chợ Lớn. These sports halls were the homes of Chợ Lớn Chinese sports clubs, which were closely associated with the different native-place communities. The majority of these sports clubs were founded in the early years of the RVN. The four major sports clubs in Chợ Lớn were the Lizhi Sports Club, the Jingwu Sports Club (both founded in 1956), with Yi’an Sports Club and the Chongzheng Sports club established later in 1959.¹⁴ These elegant buildings spread out across Chợ Lớn and were built with the generous contributions of Chợ Lớn’s wealthier residents.¹⁵

The growth of sports in Chợ Lớn extended to Chinese communities in the different provinces under the RVN’s control. During the First Republic, Chinese sports clubs were also founded in the provinces. For instance, the Overseas Chinese Youth Sports Club (僑青體育會)

¹⁰ “Opening of Republic Pool”, *YT*, April 10, 1959, p. 4.

¹¹ Kong Yiyi (孔乙巳), “Republic Sports Stadium”, *YT*, October 08, 1959, p. 2.

¹² “Datong Swimming Pool”, *YT*, September 09, 1959, p2.

¹³ Huang Yurun (黃玉潤), “Opening of Zhiling Swimming Pool”, *YT*, January 27, 1960, p. 5.

¹⁴ Xiong Jinglun (熊敬倫), “Congratulations: Chongzheng and Qiaoqing Sports Clubs Obtained Approval”, *YT*, October 19, 1959, p. 4.

¹⁵ “Thank You for Your Donation: Death of He Jin’an (何錦安)”, *YT*, October 06, 1966, p. 5.

in Vĩnh Bình province was founded in 1956.¹⁶ However, these sports clubs differed slightly from the Chinese sports clubs in Chợ Lớn. While Chợ Lớn had a significant Chinese population to support several sports clubs that reflected native place divisions in Chợ Lớn, there was generally just one or two Chinese sports clubs representing each major town. For instance, the sports club representing Cần Thơ was the Cần Thơ chapter of Overseas Chinese Youth Sports Club (芹苴華僑體育會). These provincial sports clubs were often under-funded relative to their Chợ Lớn counterparts and relied heavily on the generosity of individuals.¹⁷

The construction of these sports facilities affected a wide segment of Chợ Lớn society, because major sporting events were celebrated with great fanfare and attracted crowds beyond those with an interest in sports. Sports had the inadvertent effect of occupying Chợ Lớn residents' social time regardless of their attitudes towards sport. Stadiums and pools were often sites of spectacle. In anticipation of an international sporting event to be held in the Republic Stadium in late November 1959, where 30,000 spectators were expected, in mid-November there was an advertisement on *Yuen Tuong* for vendors to sell items like iced drinks, snacks, fruits, and ice cream.¹⁸ This little snippet gives an insight into the excitement associated with major sporting events in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. Sporting facilities often also doubled as entertainment venues. Shortly after its grand opening, the Republic Pool also hosted other events like the Mid-Autumn festival in September 1959.¹⁹

Aside from the frenetic pace of sporting facility construction, there was also a rapid expansion of sporting organizations. Aside from schools and Chinese communities having sports associations, sports clubs were also organized along professional lines. In June 1959, the Sài Gòn

¹⁶ “Congratulations: Election of Third Vĩnh Bình Overseas Chinese Sports Club”, *YT*, May 17, 1959, p. 4.

¹⁷ “Thank you from Cần Thơ Overseas Chinese Youth Sports Club”, *YT*, May 13, 1959, p. 4.

¹⁸ “Seeking Vendors”, *YT*, November 16, 1959, p. 4.

¹⁹ “Republic Swimming Pool: Shanghai Night”, *YT*, September 11, 1959, p. 2.

Bus Company established a soccer team, with the eponymous “Bus Soccer Team”; the Military General Staff also fielded one of the RVN’s most formidable soccer teams.²⁰ Some of these sports teams were large to the extent that there were several divisions for each sport to accommodate different skill levels. For instance, the Lizhi Sports Association sent their B team in a friendly match against Jianqiang Sports Association (健強體育會), easily defeating the latter.²¹ Associations were also formed for different sports. For instance, the Việt Nam Badminton Association was formed in late 1959.²²



Lizhi Sports Club (勵志體育會), 2013

²⁰ “Sài Gòn Bus Company Establishes Soccer Team”, *BTG*, June 23, 1959, p. 1.

²¹ “Lizhi Defeats Jianqiang in Table Tennis Friendly”, *BTG*, May 30, 1959, p. 4.

²² “Establishment of Việt Nam Badminton Association”, *YT*, November 16, 1959, p. 2.

Sports manifested itself most significantly in RVN social time through sporting competitions. There were multiple sporting competitions ranging from friendly competitions between clubs in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, to major national competitions like the Annual Capital Sports Meet in October,²³ to international events like the Japanese soccer team visiting Sài Gòn in September 1959 for two friendly matches in the Army Stadium.²⁴ Nary a week went by without reportages of sports matches.

The proliferation of sports during the RVN is the zeitgeist of the mid-twentieth century. Sports became a new channel for fostering interactions between RVN nationals and also connected RVN nationals with other residents in “free” Asia. Major international competitions like the South East Asia Peninsular Games (SEAP) were inaugurated in 1959, the Asia Sports Meet was founded in 1961, and there were also sport-specific regional competitions like the Asia Football Cup.²⁵

The following sections will examine state and community contestations amongst RVN Chinese communities through sports. I will first examine these contestations amongst Chợ Lớn schooling population and then turn my attention to how this process played out with Chợ Lớn adult residents. While there will be some observations about the sports scene in the RVN generally, and also sports amongst Chinese communities outside Chợ Lớn, the majority of this chapter will focus on Chợ Lớn. My focus on the broader developments of the RVN sports scene is intended to highlight similarities and differences of lived experience between Sài Gòn’s *kinh* residents and Chợ Lớn’s Chinese residents. Studying sports amongst Chinese communities in Indochina also gives another look at the role of Chợ Lớn in Indochina.

²³ “Annual Sports Meet Next Month”, *YT*, September 28, 1966, p. 8.

²⁴ “Japan Soccer Team Arrives in Sài Gòn”, *BTG*, September 13, 1959, p. 1.

²⁵ “Fifth Asian Sports Meet”, *YT*, September 15, 1966, p. 2; “RVN Soccer Team Defeats Singapore in Asia Football Cup”, *BTG*, May 11, 1959, p. 1.

Disciplining the Body: Youth Sports in the RVN

Education was a holistic process during the RVN, which not only sought to mold minds, but also discipline bodies and shape temperaments. Outside of the formal curriculum, schools offered a range of afterschool activities, with clubs catering to different interests. These included sports and interest clubs like Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, and art clubs, to mention a few. Activity clubs like Boy Scouts and Girl Guides highlight the Cold War context of education in RVN. US-led transnational organizations like the Boy Scouts represented a form of ‘soft power’ and, as Misha Honeck argues, “the projection of American power through the lens of the (American) nation’s foremost youth organization”.²⁶ It is evident in *Báo Thế Giới* that as early as 1959, middle schools offered Boy Scouts as an afterschool activity. In the article, it was reported that the RVN Overseas chapter of Boy Scouts would join the broader Việt Nam Boy Scouts Association. This article suggests that the Boy Scouts was extensive enough in the RVN to foster different chapters and a broader country-wide organization.²⁷

While school clubs were extensive, sports played a more significant role in the lives of youth in Chợ Lớn and took up the time not filled by school. Sports was practised both within and outside the education system; large sports clubs offered a plethora of activities to discipline the bodies of Chợ Lớn’s young. The recreation time of youth, both Chinese and otherwise, became an avenue for the RVN to exert its vision. The RVN sought to create a nation through the use of national sporting meets, connecting RVN youth from the different provinces with each other and realizing the nation in a very tangible manner, as youth interacted with their fellow nationals through sport. While the RVN was pursuing its nation-building goals through sports, Chinese

²⁶ Misha Honeck, “An Empire of Youth: American Boy Scouts in the World”, *Bulletin of the GHI*, 52 (Spring 2013), p. 97.

²⁷ “Overseas Chinese Boy Scouts to Join Việt Nam Boy Scouts Association”, *BTG*, September 11, 1959, p. 4.

communities also used sports to strengthen community bonds and further community goals, like fostering transnational Chinese networks. These contestations occurred with the Cold War as the backdrop. Sport represented a serious challenge by the RVN state and forced community organizations to evolve from their traditional functions and keep abreast with these rapid developments. There was often both contestation with the state's attempts to reach social time and also participation in the state's nation-building projects in sports. I will first examine sports' role in the lives of elementary schoolgoers, before delving into the world of youth sports in the RVN with a particular focus on Chợ Lớn.

Sports in Schools

Sports did not play an extensive role in the lives of elementary school children, but the discipline of the body started at a young age. As part of the school curriculum, physical education became part and parcel of everyday life for elementary school-goers. This involved calisthenics movements and marching exercises that were intended to discipline bodies.²⁸ From the ages of six to twelve, young Chợ Lớn school-goers experienced a commonality of body discipline as their fellow *kinh* school-goers. While such exercises appeared banal, they played a key role. William McNeil suggests that a process of “muscular bonding” occurs when individuals stepped together in time, and this played a significant role in “human sociality”.²⁹ The everyday discipline of the body has an important role at this young age. Community and nation were able to create sociality and impart messages through such common activities. In Michael Billig's *Banal Nationalism*, he argues that citizenry is “found in the embodied habits of

²⁸ Wang Juerong (王爵榮), “Bo Ai School's Fifth Year”, *YT*, October 25, 1960, p. 6.

²⁹ William McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995).

social life”.³⁰ Hence, these everyday acts of discipline had the effect of imprinting community and nation into these young bodies.



Schoolgoers in Morning Drill³¹

Sports amongst youth was a more complex scenario, as different institutions sought to exert their influence on youth. Aside from school sports clubs, there were also sports clubs associated with different communities. Community sports clubs were not age-restricted and provided an avenue for youth and (younger) adult residents in Chợ Lớn to mingle in their social time, creating more means for connections outside of private life. I will first attend to sports in schools before examining community sports clubs and their implications for community-building and state-building.

³⁰ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), p. 8.

³¹ Wang Juerong (王爵榮), “Bo Ai School’s Fifth Year”, *YT*, October 25, 1960, p. 6.

Sports in school is not easy to characterize – school sports clubs participated enthusiastically in national school sports competitions, but they also strengthened networks with Chinese communities both within and outside the RVN. While there was participation in the nation-building process, there were also attempts to create more connections in the transnational Chinese world. This was not an either/or situation, but one in which young Chinese developed multiple identities in their social time.

Starting from 1956 and accompanying the expansion in education was the start of national schools sports. The RVN organized annual national sports meets, which included a full range of sports ranging from track and field to different ball sports like basketball and football to different racket sports like badminton and table tennis.³² One such national sports competition is the annual Capital Sports Championship (都城運動大會), where track and field events were the headliners.³³ Different sports also had their own versions of national competitions. For instance for basketball, there was the National Day Basketball Championship (國慶盃籃球賽), which reportedly attracted participation from multiple teams.³⁴ At these national school championships, Chợ Lớn youth came into contact with fellow youths from Sài Gòn and other parts of the RVN. In the Third Annual National Sports Meet held in Sài Gòn's Republic Sports Stadium, over thirty districts sent athletes to participate in this grand affair, which welcomed over two thousand participants. In order to accommodate for the influx of athletes from the different regions into the twin cities of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, Great World was turned into a temporary dormitory for youth athletes. Great World was an entertainment complex in Chợ Lớn that was famous for activities like gambling and cabaret girls. Sports turned this institution of questionable repute

³² “National Sports Meet Next Month”, *YT*, October 29, 1959.

³³ “This Year's Capital Sports Championship”, *YT*, October 7, 1966, p. 4.

³⁴ “National Day Basketball Championship will Decide Match-Up”, *YT*, October 4, 1966, p. 4.

into a site for the healthy cultivation of youth. The Third Annual National Sports Meet shows the collaborative nature of national sports events. Although the RVN spearheaded the event, Chợ Lớn also turned over its space to ensure the event's success.³⁵

In these sports meets, Chợ Lớn youth ventured into Sài Gòn space and Sài Gòn youth entered Chợ Lớn space. National sporting competitions thus created mutual spaces and opportunities for Chinese youth to meet their *kinh* counterparts over shared interests. While these meetings might have been brief and these interactions superficial and fleeting, they also formed the foundation for potential future interactions between Chinese and Vietnamese residing in the space of the twin cities of Chợ Lớn and Sài Gòn.

In addition to the intermingling of Chợ Lớn and Sài Gòn youth, national schools sports competitions also gave Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn youth opportunities to interact with their peers in other provinces under the RVN's control. Sports meets brought young athletes from the provinces to Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn and made the intangible concept of a nation real in the form of national sports competitions. Furthermore, competitions also gave Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn's young residents the opportunity to visit other parts of the RVN. Some of these annual sports meets were held in different parts of the RVN; the Second Annual National Sports Meet was held in Nha Trang. In visiting these different towns in the RVN, Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn youth ventured out of their local context and experienced the RVN in the form of different towns in the provinces. School sports had the effect of creating a new circulation – the movement of young school-going athletes in the RVN.³⁶

While Chợ Lớn schools actively supported the RVN's nation-building program in sports, Chinese communities used sports to strengthen networks with Chinese communities within the

³⁵ "Great World to be Turned Temporarily into Youth Sports Center," *YT*, September 28, 1959, p. 2.

³⁶ "Third Annual National Sports Meet", *BTG*, August 12, 1959, p. 1.

RVN and beyond. Sports became a new means to introduce young Chợ Lớn Chinese to Chinese networks. This occurred within the confines of aforementioned community-sponsored sports clubs like Jingwu Sports Club and Yi'an Sports Club et. al. The next section will discuss sports in community clubs.

Contestations in Social Life: Community Sports Clubs

Faced with increased state intervention in social life and the state's expanding attention to social time, different communities founded community sports clubs to keep themselves relevant to younger members of their community. Moreover, they also used sports as a means of nurturing historic Chinese networks. Chinese community sports clubs facilitated a different pathway for the circulation of young athletes. Chinese youth participated in friendly matches against Chinese communities located in other provinces under RVN control or in Phnom Penh and Vientiane. They also played host to visiting Chinese athletes from towns like Cần Thơ and Rạch Giá. As the RVN used sports as a means of nation-building, Chinese communities also used sports as a means of strengthening community ties both within and beyond the nation. In Chợ Lớn community sports clubs, it is difficult to separate out the activities of youth from young adults. Hence this experience was relevant to Chợ Lớn's younger residents – schoolgoers and younger adults just starting out in life. This will be compared and contrasted against the *kinh* experience with sports.

The majority of the Chợ Lớn community sports clubs were set up in the 1950s and early 1960s and they were extensions of their communities and existing community structures. In other words, at the management level, they were led by community leaders and pursued goals beneficial to Chinese communities. While the extent of community leaders' involvement at a

day-to-day level is unclear, community sports clubs functioned with the support of community leaders. This support manifested itself in different forms – it drew upon the social capital and the financial capital of Chợ Lớn’s community leaders. One such example is Ma Guoxuan (馬國宣), the honorary chair of the Yi’an Sports Club’s Fourth Management Committee.³⁷ The Yi’an Sports Club was set up in 1956 and associated with the Chaozhou community, a unique dialect-identity group from the province of Guangdong. Ma was a prominent member of the Chaozhou community and held multiple key portfolios in Chợ Lớn. Ma was the chair of the Zhongzheng Hospital (中正醫院), one of the four major Chinese hospitals in Chợ Lớn and the chair of the Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn Chinese Chamber of Commerce (西堤中華理事總會), to name a few of his key positions.³⁸ As a prominent community member, he lent his reputation in several situations that required mediation. In the 1959 RVN elections, the Vietnamese-Chinese Association (越華會) acted as an intermediary between *kinh* candidates and the Chinese electorate. Vietnamese-Chinese Association president, Huang Nanxiong (黃南雄), and vice-president Ma held an information sessions at Chợ Lớn’s Majesty Theater (豪華戲院).³⁹ When Dr. Lin Dinghong (林鼎宏), a Shanghai-trained doctor who made his rounds in Indochina and Hong Kong, set up a clinic in Chợ Lớn’s Mencius Street, Ma (along with several others) also endorsed his skill in an advertisement in the pages of *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao*.⁴⁰ Ma was not an exception – Yang Chaokun,

³⁷ “Congratulations: Du Yixian (杜與賢) and Chen Bingkun (陳炳焜)”, *YT* April 19, 1959, p. 4

³⁸ “Ma Guoxuan Beseeches Overseas Chinese for Donations”, *YT*, March 1, 1959, p. 4; “Reader’s Opinion: Guangqun Team should be Allowed to Play Against Hufeng”, *BTG*, September 24, 1959, p. 1.

³⁹ “Vietnamese-Chinese Association Will Hold Information Session at Majesty Theater about Upcoming Elections”, *BTG*, August 08, 1959, p. 1.

⁴⁰ “Recommending: Dr Lin Dinghong”, *YT*, November 06, 1959, p. 4.

a Fujian businessman, who helmed the Lizhi Sports Club, also chaired Fushan Hospital's management committee.⁴¹

While community leaders did not participate in sporting events, they used sports as a means of steering their community and furthering their vision of Chinese communities under their leadership. Central tenets of their vision included fostering community bonds and keeping Chinese communities' access to the ever-changing transnational Chinese networks. This was very similar to the RVN's use of sports in nation-building: connecting its citizens within the RVN and connecting its citizens with the "free" world. The latter will be discussed briefly as a means of comparing and contrasting Chợ Lớn's experience with sports during the RVN.

Strengthening Community beyond Colonialism: Chinese Communities in RVN and Indochina

Sports served similar functions for both the RVN and Chinese communities, and both parties adopted similar strategies to achieve the goal of strengthening community bonds amongst younger residents.

The RVN used sports as a means of extending its reach into the social time and social life of younger residents. After their daily work, Sài Gòn's residents continued to mingle with their co-workers in organized sports. For instance, as aforementioned, bus workers in Sài Gòn could participate in the Bus Workers Football Club (巴士隊), police officers could vie for starting position in the Police Football Club (警察隊). The different branches of the government could also settle their differences on the football field, as the Air Force, General Staff, and the Treasury

⁴¹ "Lizhi Sports Club Third Anniversary Commemorative Journal," *YT*, April 16, 1959, p. 4; "Yang Chaokun donates \$20,000 Each to Two Hospitals", *BTG*, May 05, 1959, p. 1.

also had their own football divisions.⁴² Sports often functioned as an extension of professional life, and the state used sports as a means of making further claims into an individual's time.

The types of national sports competitions were also indicative of the state's increasing presence in social time. National sports competitions often occurred on national holidays and had the double function of occupying leisure time while reinforcing the nation through rituals. For instance, there was no shortage of sporting events celebrating the RVN's National Day on 26 October. For the more cerebral spectators, there was the Vietnam National Day Chess Competition.⁴³ For spectators who preferred more fast-paced action, there was the annual National Day Cup for basketball.⁴⁴ While the efficacy of such nation-building measures are quite impossible to determine, it represents the state's attempts to create an "imagined community" through ritual in leisure time.

Chinese communities also used sports to foster closer connections, creating communities within the nation and beyond the nation. While community sports clubs often participated in RVN sports initiatives, there was also an alternative sporting scene amongst Chinese communities.

To keep communities intact, community leaders' strategies in sports were very similar to the RVN. Chợ Lớn often bustled with major sporting events when Chinese athletes from RVN and beyond gathered for competitions. These competitions were also held on days significant for Chinese communities. While the RVN held a sports competition on national day, Chợ Lớn Chinese had their own diplomatically-named Double National Days Cup (雙慶杯) celebrating the national days of both the Republic of China on 10 October and the Republic of Việt Nam.

⁴² "Hong Kong Jiezhì Football Club (jiezhì) Visits Sài Gòn for Three Matches", *YT*, January 01, 1960, p. 8.

⁴³ Nguyễn Văn Can (阮文燦), "Vietnam National Day Chess Competition", *YT*, November 7, 1959, p. 6.

⁴⁴ "Jingwu Sports Club Wins National Day Cup", *YT*, October 29, 1959, p. 2.

This friendly invitational competition was held on 7 October at the sporting facilities of Bo Ai School in Chợ Lớn.⁴⁵

The Chinese communities' sports scene also resulted in the movement of athletes across the RVN and former Indochina. But the pathways they took were slightly different from those of *kinh* athletes. Like school athletes, sports took Chinese community club athletes out of Chợ Lớn and into towns with significant Chinese populations. It also brought Chinese athletes out of these towns, and into Chợ Lớn. This connection was novel. In February 1959, two Chợ Lớn sports teams visited Việt Nam for sporting competitions. The Jingwu Sports Club men's and women's basketball team visited central Việt Nam for a basketball tournament; the Huaqiao Sports Club (華僑體育會) football division went to Cần Thơ for a football match.⁴⁶ Some teams also went on extended tours of the RVN in the name of sports. For instance, the Cần Thơ Overseas Chinese Sports Club basketball team (both male and female) visited Chợ Lớn, Nha Trang, Đà Lạt, and Phan Thiết in May 1959. The purpose of their multi-city tour was to have friendly basketball matches with the different Chinese sports teams in these cities. For instance, in Chợ Lớn they played against Jingwu Sports Club and Lizhi Sports Club, and in Da Lat they played against Zhonghua Sports Club (中華體育會). These trips were sponsored by individuals like Chợ Lớn's Ou Guang (歐光) and Cần Thơ's Guan Qingnan (關慶南).⁴⁷ Chinese communities borrowed strategies from the RVN's nation-building through sports and built a sense of community amongst younger members of Chinese communities.

As the broader Chinese community persisted beyond the French colonial period, the ties created during the colonial period continued into the RVN period, and sports became a new

⁴⁵ "Double National Days Cup", *YT*, October 7, 1966, p. 8.

⁴⁶ "Jingwu Basketball Team Visits Central Việt Nam", *YT*, February 05, 1959, p. 2.

⁴⁷ "Thank You from Cần Thơ Overseas Chinese Sports Club", *YT*, May 13, 1959, p. 4.

avenue for perpetuation of these ties. In late December 1959, there was an announcement in *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao* about martial arts competition in January 1960 over two weekends. Martial artists from Laos and Cambodian were invited to participate in this competition.⁴⁸ This limited example evidently shows that the new territorial boundaries between the RVN, Laos and Cambodia were irrelevant to the historic ties shared by Chinese communities in former French Indochina.

In addition to competitions bringing younger community members together, sports did not exist in a vacuum, but was integrated with a key process amongst Chinese communities – fundraising. Sports clubs were often the recipients of the largess of affluent individuals. Donations to sports clubs helped individuals translate their excess financial capital into social capital. For instance, He Jin’An (何錦安) was the owner of Yonghe Wood Factory, Mainland Import-Export Company and shareholder of Diamond Milk Company. He also sat on the management committee of Jingwu Sports Club. At his passing on 28 September 1966, his funeral elicited generous donations from the Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn Chinese community.⁴⁹ From the collections at his funeral, his family donated \$100,000 to various organizations, including the major Chinese hospitals in Chợ Lớn, a school, and Jingwu Sports Club.⁵⁰ By making donations to the different institutions, the He family was able to generate social capital with their excess wealth.

Sports clubs were not merely recipients of donations. Sports clubs also contributed to fundraising and furthering their integration with Chinese communities. On 17 May 1959, four major Chợ Lớn sports clubs, Guangzhao, Jingwu, Lizhi, and Yi’an met up to discuss the details of coordinating a charity basketball competition. They intended to raise funds for Zhongzheng

⁴⁸ “Martial Arts Competition”, *YT*, December 23, 1959, p. 4.

⁴⁹ “Condolences on Behalf: He Jin’an”, *YT*, October 01, 1966, p. 5.

⁵⁰ “Thank You for Your Donation”, *YT*, October 06, 1966, p. 5.

Hospital. While this is a fairly innocuous activity, it demonstrates how sports was used to inculcate desirable values in younger community members. While sports was used by community elders to keep themselves relevant to their younger members, it also served the dual function of imparting ideals like philanthropy and giving back to community institutions.⁵¹

While the above examples displayed attempts to keep broader Chinese community ties intact in response to the RVN's state at creating a nation, it is a fallacy that there were no factions. It is better to understand Chinese communities in the RVN as communities within communities, whereby different associations, for instance native-place associations, last names associations or regional associations led to tensions within the broader Chinese community. The different Chinese communities used sports to keep their communities intact, and the sporting landscape reflected the faultlines within the broader Chinese community.

In the colonial period, Chợ Lớn native place congregations were the focal point of Chinese communities in colonial Indochina and sat atop the totem pole of Chinese communities in colonial Indochina. Chợ Lớn congregations dictated the actions of smaller related congregations in towns like Phnom Penh and Vientiane. While it is unclear from current scholarship if there were regional ties during the colonial period, sporting events reported in Chinese periodicals suggest that Chinese communities were growing regional ties. South of Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, the southern region held their own Unity Cup, whereby sports teams from the southern provinces sent their athletes to participate in various sporting competitions. In one instance in 1959, sports teams from the southern provinces gathered in Cần Thơ on the fourth day of the Lunar New Year for the Unity Cup. According to reports, there was even a “grand opening ceremony” to commemorate the event, which was held in conjunction with the lunar

⁵¹ “Four Sports Associations Discuss Charity Basketball Competition with Zhongzheng Hospital”, *BTG*, May 17, 1959, p. 1.

new year vacation.⁵² This was one of several regional competitions. Some five months later in July 1959 Chinese communities in the Mekong Delta region also held a table tennis competition, attracting seven teams based in the southern region.⁵³ In addition, there were also central region and western region competitions.⁵⁴ Major regional competitions were not the only rallying point for Chinese communities outside of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn; sports clubs outside of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn also paid courtesy visits to each other. In September 1966, the Rạch Gia Jianli Basketball Team (健力籃球隊) traveled to Cần Thơ for a friendly basketball match at Mingde School (明德學校).⁵⁵

This move towards greater regional ties between Chinese communities possibly upset the traditional balance of power as it bypassed Chợ Lớn and its authority. The different regions had their own variant of national competitions. As aforementioned, the central region hosted regional tournaments for sports like basketball, table tennis and badminton. For instance, there was the annual Unity Cup, which was hosted by different towns in southern Việt Nam. In its second iteration, it was hosted by Rạch Giá.⁵⁶ Such moves towards stronger ties within the region might have caused some tensions between Chợ Lớn Chinese communities and other Chinese communities. In the fourth annual Central District basketball tournament – the Quảng Ngãi Cup – Chợ Lớn sports clubs declined the invitation to participate in this competition.⁵⁷ The reasons for their refusal to participate were not stated, but it is plausible that this was a protest against the growing regional ties between Chinese communities.

⁵² “Southern Region Unity Cup will Hold Opening Ceremony on the Fourth Day of the Lunar New Year”, *YT*, February 05, 1959.

⁵³ “Seven Teams from Southern Region Meet at Cần Thơ for Table Tennis Tournament”, *BTG*, July 15, 1959, p. 1.

⁵⁴ “Badminton Tournament in Central Việt Nam”, *BTG*, October 06, 1959, p. 1; “Twelve Provinces in Western Division Hold Table Tennis Tournament”, *BTG*, July 05, 1959, p. 4.

⁵⁵ “Rạch Gia Jianli Basketball Team Visits Cần Thơ”, *YT*, September 28, 1966, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Kong Yi Yi, “Di Shi Hosts Unity Cup”, *YT*, February 02, 1960, p. 5.

⁵⁷ “Chợ Lớn Sports Clubs Decline Invite to Participate in Quảng Ngãi Cup”, *BTG*, April 26, 1959, p. 4.

While Chinese communities outside Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn made a move to strengthen their connections, native place congregations also used sports to strengthen their connections. Native place congregations held their own sports competitions, intended for members of their native-place community. This included members from the different regions. One such instance is the Chongzheng Cup (崇正杯) for table tennis, started for the purpose of “encouraging Chinese youths’ enthusiasm towards table tennis”. The Chongzheng congregation is associated with the Hakka community, a dialect community based in southern China. In planning the Chongzheng Cup table tennis competition, several prominent Hakka members were involved. For instance, members of Chongzheng School’s (崇正學校) management committee, chairman Yu Qiu (余秋), president Qiu Guanghua (丘廣華) and Zhang Lu (張祿), management committee members from the smaller native place associations like Dapu Native Place Association’s (大埔同鄉會) Li Hanguang (李漢光) and Meixian Native Place Association’s (梅縣同鄉會) Lin Yingfu (林應富) were all honorary consultants to the project.⁵⁸ This competition, held later in July, was attended by Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn sports clubs like Lizhi, Jianqing (健青), Andong (安東) and Overseas Chinese. Overseas Chinese Sports Club from Cần Thơ also attended the event.⁵⁹ While the broader Chinese community used sports as a means to contest against the state’s expansion into social time, Chinese native place congregations also used sports to keep their communities intact vis-à-vis other Chinese congregations.

The state used sports in its nation-building project and gave it inroads into its citizens’ social time. While Chinese congregations were heavily involved in the lives of their community members, social time and social life was one neglected aspect. Consequently, during the RVN,

⁵⁸ “Chongzheng Sports Association Plans Annual Table Tennis Tournament”, *BTG*, May 24, 1959, p. 4.

⁵⁹ “End of Chongzheng Cup Yesterday”, *BTG*, July 29, 1959, p. 1.

Chinese communities had to continue their engagement with their communities through sports. While congregations used sports to keep themselves relevant to their younger members, historical fault lines persisted, and there were also new development of growing regional ties amongst Chinese communities outside of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn.

There is an important caveat in the above discussion. While I discussed the individual dynamics of Chinese sports clubs and *kinh* sports clubs, it is important to note that there were no ethnic barriers to joining either. Chinese sports clubs were predominantly Chinese and had management committees with prominent Chinese community leaders, while the *kinh* sports clubs were led by Vietnamese. But the Jingwu Sports Club also boasted of members who were Chinese, French, and *kinh*.⁶⁰ Similarly, a look at some of the participants in the Sài Gòn Sports Club (*Cercle Sportif Saigonnais*) suggests that there was a similar dynamic. The latter seems to have had Vietnamese members, but also members of various foreign nationalities.

The next section will discuss sports and transnationalism. I will examine the different transnational pathways for the RVN and Chinese communities' sports scenes and what can be learnt from these different pathways.

Sports and Transnationalism in the Cold War

Sports was very much the zeitgeist of the mid-twentieth century. Sports did not remain in the domestic realm – it was an international phenomenon. During the Cold War, international sports operated within the boundaries of the “free” world, and international sports was used to pursue Cold War agendas of fostering closer relations amongst allies. This was reflected in international sports within “free” Asia where international sports took off. At the highest level, there were regional competitions for a wide range of sports, whereby different countries

⁶⁰ “Jingwu Sports Club Adds Judo Classes”, *BTG*, April 20, 1959, p. 4; No author, *Cercle Sportif Saigonnais*.

competed against each other for a medal tally. Some of these examples include the Asian Games started in 1951 and the Southeast Asia Peninsular (SEAP) Games started in 1959.⁶¹ At the level of individual sports, there were also regional competitions like the Asia Cup for football. In addition to major competitions, there were also several friendly international matches. For instance, the Japan football team visited Sài Gòn in September 1959 for two friendly matches in the Army Stadium enroute back to Japan after their participation in the Malaysia Cup.⁶² Chợ Lớn dailies were replete with reports of visits from international teams for friendly matches in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. In this section, I argue that while the Cold War fostered intra-Asian cultural connections, Chinese communities used sports to create a transnational Chinese cultural world within the parameters defined by the Cold War context.

Cold War and International Sports in the RVN

During the Nguyễn Dynasty and Việt Nam's colonial period, southern Việt Nam was its gateway to the world. Southern Việt Nam was characterized by its heterogeneity, its embrace of foreignness, and its connection to the region.⁶³ The Cold War had the effect of perpetuating these unique characteristics of southern Việt Nam, albeit with some variations from historic international relations. While the RVN continued having ties with areas like Singapore and Japan, countries like Philippines and Korea, as US allies, became the RVN's new partners. During the Cold War, sports was used to foster international relations amongst the US allies.

At a more organized level, there were regional competitions and national competitions where neighboring countries were invited to participate. Such competitions reflected the state of

⁶¹ Lim and Mohd Salleh, "The History of the SEAP Games".

⁶² "Japan Football Team Arrives in Sài Gòn", *BTG*, September 13, 1959, p. 1.

⁶³ Li Tana, "A View from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37, 1 (February 2006), pp. 83-102.

the Cold War political landscape. One such instance is the biennial Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games, inaugurated in Bangkok, Thailand in December 1959. The SEAP Games were a multi-sport competition, one of the most important competitions in Southeast Asia to date. Lim Peng Han and Mohd Salleh Aman's article on the Southeast Asian Peninsular Games argues that the games had the effect of "creating a sense of regional cooperation during periods of war", but I argue that it was an excellent reflection of the regional political landscape. The list of participant countries for this regional competition was telling. Despite being a regional competition, only the United States' allies participated in this competition during the Cold War. For instance, in the second SEAP Games held in Rangoon in 1961, Burma, Singapore, Malaya, Laos, Cambodia and Việt Nam were the participants. Indonesia was only added in later years. In 1961, it was excluded because of Indonesia's strong position on non-alignment.⁶⁴ In these competitions, the RVN participated with enthusiasm. In the inaugural SEAP Games, the RVN sent sixty athletes, participating in six events: football, table tennis, basketball, bicycle, tennis, and swimming.⁶⁵

In addition to multi-sport competitions, there were also single-sport competitions within the Southeast Asia region. Two popular sport for region-wide competitions were basketball and football. The Malaya Cup was one such competition for football. The 1959 Malaya Cup it was well-attended by football players from Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Republic of Korea.⁶⁶ The RVN did not merely send its athletes to various neighboring countries for competitions but also played host on occasion. For instance, in celebration of the RVN's national day, the RVN hosted an international football competition, the Việt Nam National Day Cup (越南國慶杯). The

⁶⁴ Lim and Mohd Salleh, "The History of the SEAP Games".

⁶⁵ "Việt Nam to Participate in Six Events in this Year's Southeast Asia Games", *BTG*, June 14, 1959, p. 1.

⁶⁶ "Malaya Invites RVN for Football Championships", *BTG*, July 03, 1959, p. 1.

countries invited to participate were Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan.⁶⁷

While the above involved national teams, individual teams in “free” Asia also made international trips from time to time for friendly sports matches. For instance, the Jiezhi Football Club (傑志足球隊) from Hong Kong visited Sài Gòn for three football matches. Arriving on New Year’s Day 1960 with a team of twenty athletes, they spent a week in Sài Gòn. During their week in Sài Gòn, they were the foreign participants of a local football competition involving the Treasury Club, the Police Club, the Bus Workers Club, the Sài Gòn Club, the Youth Club, Army Club, Airforce Club, and the General Staff Club. Hong Kong’s Jiezhi Football Club went head-to-head against the Police Club, Youth Club and General Staff Club during this local tournament.⁶⁸ Jiezhi Football Club was not the only club that visited Sài Gòn for friendly competitions; in the previous year, another Hong Kong football club, the Dongfang Football Club (東方足球隊) also indicated its interest in visiting Sài Gòn to test its mettle against the Sài Gòn football clubs.⁶⁹ The Dongfang Football Club’s visit in June was eagerly anticipated, as one of Asia’s football stars, Li Huitang (李惠堂) played for them. Football fans in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn eagerly awaited his performance.⁷⁰

Although there was a lot of friendly competition, more heated encounters could sometimes occur amongst the different nations. Lim and Mohd Salleh’s article argues that sports had the effect of creating national identity, and rituals in competitions aided in this process. In some of these international matches, competitiveness led to the question of identity. In one particular instance, the RVN national football team complained bitterly about Singapore’s use of

⁶⁷ “Malaysia has Agreed to Participate in Việt Nam National Day Football Cup”, *YT*, September 16, 1966, p. 5.

⁶⁸ “Hong Kong Jiezhi Football Club Visits Sài Gòn for Three Matches”, *YT*, January 01, 1960, p. 8.

⁶⁹ “Hong Kong Dongfang Football Club Plans to visit Sài Gòn for Friendly”, *BTG*, May 24, 1959, p. 1.

⁷⁰ “Hong Kong’s Dongfang Football Club will Visit Việt Nam Earlier”, *BTG*, June 17, 1959, p. 1.

British soldiers for the Asia Soccer Cup.⁷¹ Following their protest, the RVN national football team went on to “soundly defeat” the Singapore team and proceeded to win the central division of the Asia Soccer Cup hosted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya before returning to Sài Gòn victorious.⁷² Evidently, much was at stake – national teams felt the need to question the use of ringers in other teams. Faced with another national team in the international sports arena, individual newly-independent nations and the athletes representing them started to form an identity, as they represented the abstract notion of the nation in various competitions in the region.

International sports also had the effect of fostering closer ties between Chinese sports groups and *kinh* sports groups in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn. With the rise of sports, RVN sports clubs introduced more international sports. One such new sport was Judo, the Japanese martial art. The Jingwu Sports Club in Chợ Lớn decided to add Judo classes in 1959. To start these classes, Jingwu pooled resources with Sài Gòn Sports Club to hire a 23 year old Japanese Judo instructor, Kazuo Ishikawa (石川和雄), who was a third degree black belt holder in Judo.⁷³ Judo gained some traction in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn. In the Cercle Sportif Saigonnais alone, Kazuo instructed sixty-eight adults and one hundred and twenty youths (eighty-seven Vietnamese and one hundred and one foreigners) in 1961. In the same year, the Việt Nam Judo Federation was also set up.⁷⁴

Sports during the Cold War reflected the geopolitical realities of the time period. Within “free” Asia, international sports had the effect of fostering closer ties amongst the United States’ allies in the region. This happened either at the larger scale of organized regional competitions like the SEAP Games, or at a smaller scale of individual countries paying courtesy calls to

⁷¹ “Việt Nam Protests Asia Cup”, *BTG*, April 19, 1959, p. 1.

⁷² “Việt Nam Football Team Defeats Singapore in Asia Cup”, *BTG*, May 11, 1959, p. 1.

⁷³ “Jingwu Sports Club Starts Judo Classes”, *BTG*, April 20, 1959; “Jingwu Sports Club Hires Japanese Judo Instructor”, *BTG*, September 22, 1959, p. 4.

⁷⁴ No author, *Cercle Sportif Saigonnais*, pp. 29 – 30.

countries firmly in the United States' camp. International sports had the function of creating new international connections while also severing historic connections. One obvious omission from the RVN's sporting international relations was the People's Republic of China. The Chinese mainland was in turn replaced with the Republic of China based on the island of Taiwan. Indonesia was also conspicuously absent in these international sporting exchanges in the early years of the RVN as a result of Indonesia's then-strong stance in the Non-Aligned Movement led by President Sukarno.⁷⁵ The Cold War made strange bedfellows. In one peculiar instance, the Peruvian Football Team traveled almost 12,000 miles to visit the RVN for a friendly match.⁷⁶

Collectively, the international dimension of sport gave the RVN further opportunity to foster national identity. Faced with other nations in sports fields, athletes could realize the abstract notion of a nation. Additionally, the Cold War context also created citizenship in "free" Asia. As RVN's citizens came into contact with these visiting teams, or read about the heroics of their national athletes in international competitions, they also encountered the "free" world and became part of the "free" world in their social time and social life.

Sports and the Transnational Chinese World

Operating within the confines of the Cold War, Chinese communities in the RVN and within "free" Asia used sports to create add new dimensions to the transnational Chinese world. Although constrained by the Cold War, the international sports scene amongst Chinese communities in "free" Asia flowed along historical grooves cut by historical connections from the pre-colonial era to the colonial period. This section will argue that Chinese communities used sports to further develop historical relations based on economic, cultural and social ties.

⁷⁵ Lim and Mohd Salleh, "The History of the SEAP Games".

⁷⁶ "Peru Football Team to Visit Việt Nam", *YT*, February 02, 1960, p. 5.

International sports gave Chinese communities within “free” Asia the opportunity to further develop their transnational ties. While the different nations in “free” Asia were paying courtesy calls to neighboring countries through sports, individual sports clubs in Chinese communities across “free” Asia took the opportunity to cultivate relations in social time. For instance, Singapore’s Nanyang University sent a team of twenty-five athletes to RVN’s Chinese communities. Singapore’s Nanyang University is Southeast Asia’s first Chinese university and one of the few Chinese universities in Asia following the closure of the PRC during the Cold War. In December 1959 – January 1960, Nanyang University sports teams made a two-week long visit to the RVN, participating in friendly matches and also touring outside Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn. The Nanyang University contingent, comprising of badminton, basketball, and table tennis athletes – arrived in Sài Gòn on 22 December 1959 to great fanfare. They were hosted by the Lizhi Sports Club in Chợ Lớn.⁷⁷ During their stay, they participated in matches against RVN Chinese and also non-Chinese teams. In Sài Gòn, their basketball team participated in a local tournament on Christmas 1959 where both Chinese and non-Chinese teams competed against each other. While the Lizhi team went up against the Guangzhao team, the Nanyang University team played against the Airforce team. The Nanyang University team’s resounding victory (75-50) against “Việt Nam’s elite team” made frontpage news on *BTG*.⁷⁸ Following this tournament with both Chinese and non-Chinese athletes, the Nanyang basketball team participated in another Chợ Lớn tournament that only involved Chinese teams. In the New Year Cup, the Nanyang University team encountered the Lizhi Sports Club, Jingwu Sports Club and Guangzhao Sports

⁷⁷ “Nanyang University Athletes to Arrive Tomorrow”, *BTG*, December 21, 1959, p. 4.

⁷⁸ “Nanyang Basketball Team Wins Match against Airforce Team”, *BTG*, December 26, 1959, p. 1.

Club in the premises of Lizhi Sports Club. Guangzhao's basketball team emerged victorious in this competition.⁷⁹

The transnational Chinese network was fairly extensive and penetrated beyond the capitals of newly-independent countries. Historically only major Chinese cities like Singapore, Chợ Lớn and Hong Kong were part of this transnational economic network. However, during the Cold War this transnational network expanded and reached into smaller Chinese communities in “free” Asia. This was reflected on the itineraries of some Chinese sports teams. The Nanyang University team did not merely stop in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn. Following their ten-day stay in Chợ Lớn, the contingent also traveled to Cần Thơ and Bạc Liêu for friendly matches. Their visits were eagerly welcomed by Chinese sports clubs there, which were both starved for some international sports action. The last time Cần Thơ was visited by an international team had been several months before, when Hufeng Basketball Team from Taiwan had visited.⁸⁰

Singapore's Chinese communities were not the only ones who sent their teams visiting the region's Chinese communities. Teams in the ROC, Hong Kong and Thailand also made their rounds, competing in friendly matches against Chinese teams. Some of the teams that made their rounds in Chợ Lớn included Hong Kong's Dongfang Football Club, which visited Chợ Lớn after a trip to Laos, ROC's Hufeng Basketball Club (虎風籃球隊) and Bangkok's Weide Women's Basketball Team (唯德女隊).⁸¹ In turn, Chợ Lớn sports clubs also did their part by organizing regional friendly competitions, in which Chinese teams from the region were invited to

⁷⁹ “Basketball Match between Việt Nam and Singapore”, *YT*, January 01, 1960, p. 4.

⁸⁰ “Nanyang Team will go to Bạc Liêu and Cần Thơ”, *YT*, January 03, 1960, p. 2.

⁸¹ “Hong Kong's Dongfang Football Club will Arrive in Sài Gòn Earlier”, *BTG*, June 17 1959, p. 1; “Hufeng Basketball Team has yet to Arrive in Sài Gòn”, *BTG*, August 07, 1959, p. 1; “Bangkok's Weide Women's Basketball Team will Arrive Tomorrow”, *BTG*, August 19, 1959, p. 4.

participate. For instance, Chợ Lớn's Lizhi Sports Club hosted a multi-country badminton tournament and invited teams from Singapore, ROC, the Philippines and Cambodia.⁸²

While such courtesy visits from Chinese sports teams in the region were often cause for fanfare in Chợ Lớn, occasionally they also the cause for conflict in Chợ Lớn's Chinese communities. One instance was when the ROC's Hufeng Basketball Team visited Chợ Lớn for a round of matches in September 1959. The Hufeng Basketball Team is the ROC's Air Force team. As part of their trip for a friendly match against the RVN's Air Force team, they also played a friendly charity match against Jingwu Sports Club to raise funds for Zhongzheng Hospital. Although this was a friendly match, it was also the cause of contention in Chợ Lớn. A reader of *BTG* sent a letter to the editor, beseeching the broader Chinese community to let the Guangzhao basketball team represent Chợ Lớn instead of Jingwu Sports Club. He argued that the Guangzhao basketball team was a superior team, having defeated RVN, Korean and Thai teams in a match the Yi'An Sports Club had organized in the previous year.⁸³

The incident highlights several dimensions of the function of sports in the transnational Chinese world. Hufeng's visit to the RVN was ostensibly a state-to-state visit, whereby the ROC Air Force team competed against the RVN Air Force team to nurture a relationship between two "free" Asia military forces. However the Hufeng team also used this opportunity to build relations with the Chợ Lớn Chinese community. In addition to participating in a friendly match, this match was intended to be a showcase to fundraise for Zhongzheng Hospital. Hence the Hufeng Team fostered relations within the transnational Chinese world in a social capital building exercise through philanthropy. The contentiousness of this event also highlights the fact

⁸² "Lizhi Sports Club Holds Regional Badminton Tournament", *BTG*, October 13, 1959, p. 1.

⁸³ Chen Youbei (臣又貝), "Reader's Opinion: Guangzhao Sports Club should Compete against Hufeng", *BTG*, September 24, 1959, p. 1.

that there were tensions within the RVN Chinese community. In the transnational Chinese world, relations between different Chinese communities was very complex and fraught with tensions.

Chinese communities with an interest in sports could also participate in the transnational Chinese sports scene through periodicals. Match reports in Chinese dailies were often accompanied with short introductions to the sports scenes in other Chinese communities. For instance, in the write-up about Hong Kong's Dongfang Football Club's visit to Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn, there was also a short piece about the different football clubs in Hong Kong like Nanhua Football Club (南華隊), the Bus Workers Football Club (巴士隊), and the Hong Kong football scene.⁸⁴ More famous athletes often got an article dedicated to them. One such example is the ROC's basketball player, Chen Zulie (陳祖烈), who represented the ROC in the Basketball World Championship and earned a short feature in *YT*.⁸⁵ Through periodicals, readers could vicariously participate in the exploits of famous Chinese athletes and get acquainted with their exploits. This gave non-athletic sports aficionados the opportunity to create imaginary communities with other Chinese living in “free” Asia.

The mid-twentieth century was an exciting time for international sports in Asia with the beginning of multi-sport regional competitions modeled after the modern Olympic Games. While international sports became a new dimension for newly-independent postcolonial nations to build relations, it also reflected the geopolitical realities of the Cold War. However, within the confines of the Cold War, Chinese communities used international sports as a way to further their historic connections that were built on social, cultural, and (predominantly) economic exchanges in history.

⁸⁴ “Hong Kong's Dongfang Football Club Defeated in Sài Gòn Visit”, *BTG*, June 29, 1959, p. 1.

⁸⁵ “ROC Basketball Legend: Chen Zulie”, *YT*, October 06, 1966, p. 2.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter focused on sports and its function in the RVN. Through my reading of Chinese periodicals, I argue that the RVN state used sport as the new tool to introduce nation-building into the social time and social lives of its citizens. Through the use of rituals, like organizing major, nation-wide sporting competitions on important national holidays, the state was able to project itself in more avenues of everyday life.

Sports held a certain appeal for the RVN's younger residents. Consequently, Chinese congregations had to expand their functions and set up sports clubs catered to younger Chinese. This led to a mushrooming number of Chinese sports clubs within and outside Chợ Lớn. Chinese communities effectively used some of the RVN state's nation-building tools to build community ties. The dynamics of Chinese sports clubs also gave insight into some new developments amongst Chinese communities in former French Indochina.

International sports during the Cold War and the RVN's participation also highlighted how international sports had to adapt to the geopolitical constraints of the Cold War. While the Cold War fostered new international ties, it also severed some historic ties that Việt Nam shared with some of its neighbors. Within these geopolitical constraints, the transnational Chinese network was able to use sports as a means of building new connections between new cities, and add depth to older connections. There is a lot of potential for further research into the topic of cultural exchanges during the Cold War, and how historic international relations within the region shifted to accommodate the new geopolitical realities.

Sport was chosen for this chapter due to its extensive coverage in Chinese dailies. However, there is also potential for further research into other activities intended for further inroads into social life. For instance, during the RVN, there was a bustling film industry and

copious film production by the state. This chapter represents but one instance of nation-building and its effect on different groups in the RVN.

While this chapter focused on the mixed group of youth and young adult and how the state and communities attempted to influence their social time and social lives, the next chapter will focus on young Chinese adults and how they were socialized in their everyday life.

Adulthood in Chợ Lớn:

Everyday Socialization in Work, Private Life, and Leisure, 1955 – 1975

“I am severing father-son ties with my unfilial son, Li Xiguang (李錫光). Henceforth I will no longer be associated with him.”

~ Li Yingqi (李應啟)¹

“Huang Chengzu (黃成祖) no longer works for us. We (Jiabo Foreign Goods Company, 加波洋行) are not associated with him. Please do not make payments to him.”

~ Jiabo Foreign Goods Company²

This chapter will turn to young adulthood. The above personal advertisements encapsulate how individuals put their private life on public display. This chapter shall analyze these personal advertisements and their insight into everyday life and its implications. The former was a disownment notice by Li Yingqi, severing his ties to his son, Li Xiguang, and by extensions, his responsibilities towards his son. The latter is a notice by Jiabo Foreign Goods Company, dissociating themselves from a former employee, Huang Chengzu, and renouncing their responsibilities to him. Engagement notices, marriage notices, divorce notices, death notices, business notices, and a whole slew of congratulations and condolences associated with these life events filled (and funded) pages of Chợ Lớn dailies. Private life had implications for social life, as families were corporate units. Businesses passed down from fathers to sons, and individual members' private lives, public behavior had implications for a family's fortune. This chapter will examine everyday life in adulthood, through the themes of work, private life, and leisure. These themes allow me to explore how younger adults in Chợ Lớn attempted to find their place in community, society, nation, and world, and in turn, how these different forces exerted themselves in their everyday lives.

¹ “Severing Father-Son Ties”, *YT*, May 13, 1959, p. 4.

² “Notice From Jiabo Foreign Goods Company”, *YT*, December 16, 1959, p. 4.

Adulthood in Chợ Lớn was defined by socialization, whereby young adults were initiated into multiple Chinese networks, but concurrently experienced the changing geopolitical realities. As adults came of age, their seniors introduced them into the different social networks and showed them the ropes of accruing social capital (to be further explained in this chapter), as evident from Chợ Lớn dailies. Private life was made public, and private sphere and public sphere mingled in the pages of the periodicals. Engagements, marriages, divorces, births, deaths and new business notices filled the pages of Chợ Lớn dailies, alerting readers of personal life events of community members. While such personal advertisements appeared perfunctory, they formed the backbone of social networks amongst Chinese communities. My study of social networks as young adults made their first tentative steps into the world fills an important lacuna in studies of Chinese business networks.

Social networks did not exist in isolation from economy and cultural networks. Economic and cultural networks were in fact built upon social networks, making such social networks a key to understanding the transnational Chinese world. In Clifton Barton's ethnography of the circulation of Chinese credit in Chợ Lớn up to 1962, he emphasizes the importance of one's reputation in the procurement of credit.³ In studies about Chinese business networks in Asia and beyond, the key term emphasized is *guanxi* (關係), or connections, and how these connections were built through *xinyong* (信用 trust). However, there is very little attention to how such connections were built. My study of the Chợ Lớn Chinese looks at the innocuous and mundane everyday means by which power and connections were built and fostered in Chinese networks. This chapter's focus on younger adults up to around forty examines how adults were introduced to these networks in their everyday lives.

³ Clifton Barton, "Credit and Commercial Control: The Strategies and Methods of Chinese Businesses in South Vietnam" (PhD Dissertation: Cornell University, 1977).

Researching Adulthood in Chợ Lớn during the Republic of Việt Nam

My research builds on the work of Clifton Barton. Barton's doctoral dissertation written 1977 is an excellent monograph on Chinese businessmen in Chợ Lớn. He examines how credit flowed amongst Chinese businesses, from producers to merchants, and how loans were made and credit was obtained. In his monograph, he argues that the "*sun yung*" (*xinyong*, trustworthiness),⁴ one's credibility, was "a person's total reputation for trustworthiness [and] ... a statement of a person's social and psychological characteristics" in addition to economic reliability.⁵ While Barton focuses on the flow of credit in RVN Chợ Lớn, my research addresses how social networks and social capital is built.

For this chapter, I relied heavily on the advertisements – both commercial and personal – for insight into adulthood in Chợ Lớn. This was supplemented by relevant editorials and cultural artifacts like serialized novels, film reviews and trivia about popular actors and actresses. Commercial advertisements refer to products on offer, ranging from films being screened, opening of new stores, products that recently arrived in Chợ Lớn et al. Personal advertisements ranged from engagement announcements to divorce announcements and birth announcements to death announcements. It also includes a whole array of congratulatory and condolence messages that well-wishers purchased in the Chợ Lớn dailies. Collectively, these fill about half of the Chợ Lớn dailies and also funded the operations of these newspapers.

⁴ Sun yung is the Cantonese pronunciation of *xinyong*, the more commonly-used nomenclature in scholarship on Chinese business networks.

⁵ Barton, "Credit and Commercial Control: The Strategies and Methods of Chinese Businesses in South Vietnam", p. 152.

Social Networks and Social Capital in RVN Chinese Communities

In Chợ Lớn dailies, building social networks and accumulating social capital was a driving force behind most personal advertisements. Important life events of prominent individuals were opportunities for others of lower social standing to strengthen their connection, by taking out an advertisement to congratulate or express their condolences to these prominent community members. It was also an opportunity for business associates to reaffirm their ties with wealthy individuals. One such example of the former is the passing of Guo Xiangyi (郭象益, also known as Guo Lanxiang 郭蘭香), who was the head of the Chaozhou community in Cà Mau in the Mekong Delta. He also served in the management committees of Cà Mau province's Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Cà Mau province's Sino-Việt Association, and Xingdong School (興東學校).⁶ Guo was born in 1879, and died in Cà Mau city on 06 January 1960. His demise prompted an outpouring of condolatory messages from afar and filled *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* for almost a week. Well-wishers sent their condolences to his sons, Guo Songde (郭松德), Guo Songzhong (郭松鍾) and Guo Songgen (郭松根), from Su Rongyu (蘇榮裕) and Su Yuxing (蘇育興) of Bình Dương,⁷ the Gongsheng Transportation company from Trà Vinh,⁸ to distant relatives from Sài Gòn.⁹ Condolences also poured in from other sectors. From the press, *YT*'s editor, Zhu Wenyi (朱聞義) placed an advertisement,¹⁰ and other journalists Zhong Qijie (鍾器楷), Zhang Guanchang (張冠昌) and Zeng Qingjie (曾慶傑) took out a separate

⁶ "Condolences on Behalf: Passing of Guo Xiangyi", *YT*, January 08, 1960, p. 4.

⁷ "Condolences from Su Rongyu and Su Yuxing: Passing of Guo Xiangyi", *YT*, January 10, 1960, p. 4.

⁸ "Condolences from Gongsheng Transportation Company: Passing of Guo Songgen's Father Guo Xiangyi", *YT*, January 1960, p. 3.

⁹ "Condolences from the Wu Family: Passing of Guo Xiangyi", *YT*, January 11, 1960, p. 4.

¹⁰ "Condolences from Zhu Wenyi: Passing of Guo Xiangyi", *YT*, January 08, 1960, p. 4.

advertisement expressing a similar sentiment.¹¹ In education, Wang Juerong (王爵榮) and Chen Peishou (陳培壽) from Bo Ai School (博愛學院) sent Guo Songgen their condolences over his father's death.¹² Although Guo Xiangyi was from Cà Mau, and was located in the periphery of the locus of Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn, his prominence prompted important individuals from various sectors to express their public condolences in personal advertisements in Chợ Lớn dailies. The private lives of prominent people were often public, and became an opportunity for many in the community to strengthen ties through their public participation in private events.

Social network did not merely entail lip service; oftentimes, it also involved a financial exchange to strengthen such a social network. For instance, when Mai Jinming (麥錦明) died, there were generous donations from individuals conveying their condolences. While the sum of money donated was not disclosed, nor were the names of contributors given, at least \$30,000 was collected, as his widow Liu Jiao (劉嬌) donated \$30,000 to the six major Chợ Lớn hospitals.¹³ Liu Jiao's donations highlight the importance of social capital.

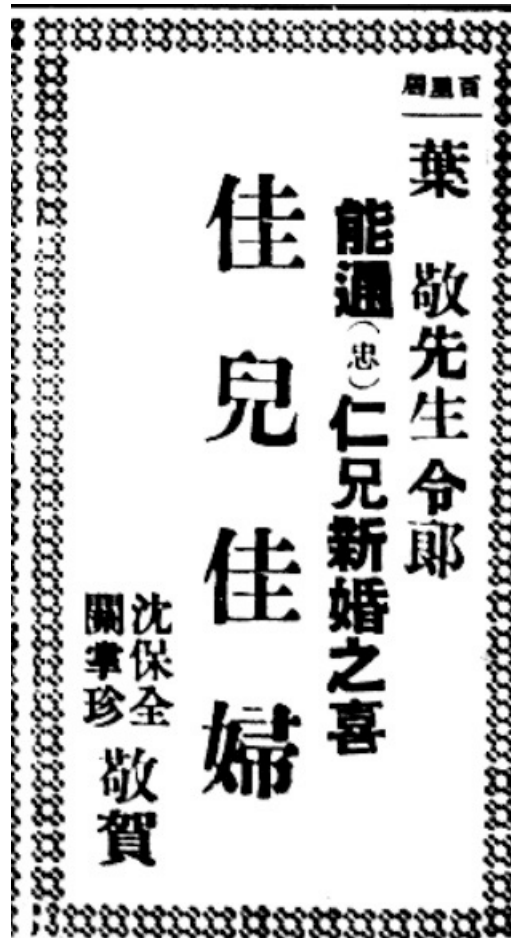
Social capital was a central tenet of networks in RVN Chinese communities, and contributed to one's overall status. This could be accrued in various ways. In the above example of obituary messages, one could gain some social capital with the deceased's family. More broadly, an individual could gain social capital through displays of philanthropy. Liu Jiao's donations to the Chinese public hospitals helped the Mai family gain social capital within RVN Chinese communities, a common strategy for individuals with excess financial capital to make donations to public institutions. In addition to hospitals, schools were popular public institutions

¹¹ "Condolences from Zhong Qijie, Zhang Guanchang and Zeng Qingjie: Passing of Guo Xiangyi", *YT*, January 09, p. 4.

¹² "Condolences from Wang Juerong and Chen Peishou: Passing of Guo Songgen's Father Guo Xiangyi", *YT*, January 14, 1960, p. 3.

¹³ "Thank You for Your Donations: Mai Jinming's Widow Liu Jiao", *YT*, October 14, 1966, p. 5.

for such donations. For instance, the marriage of Tan Langbai's (潭浪白) son, Tan Guoxiong (譚國雄), monetary gifts from individuals congratulating the family on this joyous event amounted to \$190,000. While senior Tan's exact business is unclear, he was wealthy and had international connections, because the occasion attracted congratulatory messages from Taipei and Kaohsiung's Nanya Commerce Private Limited (南亞貿易有限公司).¹⁴ He also donated the full sum to various hospitals, to disaster relief for a flood in the southwestern Mekong region, and also to Qui Nhon's Chongren School (崇仁學校).¹⁵



A congratulatory advertisement for a wedding in *YT* on 08 October 1966

¹⁴ "Congratulations: Wedding of Tan Langbai's son Tan Guoxiong from Nanya Commerce Private Limited", *YT*, October 01, 1966, p. 8.

¹⁵ "Thank You for Tan Langbai's Donations", *YT*, October 08, 1966, p. 5.

The donation of time was another means of acquiring and boosting social capital, such as sitting in various management committees often boosted one's social capital. For instance, Professor Ye Quanhua (葉傳華) of Hội An sat on four different management committees: Liyi Middle School (禮義中學), Chinese Affairs Association (中華經事總會), Kejia/Hakka Congregation (客家幫), and Liyi Sports Club (禮義體育會).¹⁶ In the case of prominent individuals, social capital worked both ways. While sitting on management committee and donating their time gave them social capital, they also lent their social capital to smaller organizations to grant them more legitimacy. For instance, in the case of Liyi Middle School, Ye was the honorary president, suggesting that he did not play a role in day-to-day operations, but lent his reputation to the school.

Young adults in Chợ Lớn were introduced to these concepts in their everyday life, as they started their own journeys. Like other Chinese societies in the world, there was a direct correlation between age and social status amongst the Chợ Lớn Chinese. Hence young adults were by default situated low on the totem pole, and had limited social status and social networks. The following sections on young adulthood gives insight into how neophytes were introduced to the different Chinese networks, and were given a helping hand in gaining social capital, and by extension, a foothold into Chinese networks. Here the RVN state fades away, but my analysis the relative reach of community and state in young adulthood.

Young Adulthood in Chợ Lớn

The everyday life of adults in Chợ Lớn could be divided into work, family and leisure. While family life remained private, it often entered the public sphere in the form of editorials in

¹⁶ "Obituary on Behalf: Passing of Ye Chuanhua's Mother", *YT*, October 19, 1966, p. 8.

the newspapers and tracts on how families should operate. Chợ Lớn dailies ran articles on topics such as raising children, the role of women in families, et al. These topics were often covered from a variety of viewpoints by various columnists and usually took up a whole page. One such instance is an article by Xue Fang (薛舫), titled “Understanding Your Child”, which introduced new insights in childhood development entailing a better understanding of young children. This article was directed at women, reinforcing the traditional role of women in raising children in families.¹⁷ Chợ Lớn dailies had a great interest in shaping what occurred behind the closed doors of families and using the public sphere to influence private life.

In daily life, work took up much of the day as well as most of the week. Business hours usually ranged from eight or nine in the morning to five or six in the evening. As a legacy of the colonial period, there was also a two hour siesta from noon to two in many businesses, as is evident from hours of certain dental offices and clinics. In dentist Tan Yuehan’s (潭越漢) moving notice, he indicated his opening hours from eight in the morning to six in the evening, with a siesta from noon to two.¹⁸

The state tried to exert its will in the medical field. The Chợ Lớn Chinese hospitals were set up during the colonial period as part of the Chinese communities’ efforts to address community health. In January 1960, in compliance with a request of the RVN state, Chợ Lớn’s hospitals adjusted their operating hours to fall in line with the state hospitals’ working hours.¹⁹ In everyday work life, the state did attempt to spread their reach in public institutions through regulation of opening hours; otherwise, it had a limited impact on everyday work hours.

¹⁷ Xue Fang, “Understanding Your Child”, *YT*, January 03, 1960, p. 5.

¹⁸ “Dentist: Tan Yuehan”, *BTG*, October 18, 1959, p. 4.

¹⁹ “Zhongzheng Hospital and other Chinese Hospitals will Conform to RVN-regulated Opening Hours”, *YT*, January 30, 1960, p. 2.

The amount of time that one spent at work depended on one's chosen profession and one's position as well. For instance, businesses in food and beverage and in the entertainment sector had longer hours. The New York Bar Restaurant was open from eight in the morning and closed half an hour before midnight.²⁰ Private schools also offered adult education classes scheduled around those working hours. For instance, the Ruifang Overseas Chinese School (瑞芳華僑學校) offered English night classes that started at eight in the evening.²¹ In the evenings, an adult could be engaged in different occupation-related activities, like trade union dinners, or sports practices in work-related clubs. One's sports options have already been covered in chapter three, and adult education options were discussed in chapter two. For those who were not inclined towards the pursuit of group hobbies or further learning, Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn offered unprecedented choices in individual entertainment – there were more than a dozen cinemas, nightclubs, and restaurants. Film buffs, gourmards and music and dance aficionados had plenty of options in the two cities.

The Gregorian calendar and the RVN's use of it also had an impact on the weekly schedules of Chợ Lớn's residents. While Monday to Saturday was dedicated to work, Sunday was a day of leisure and rest for most Chinese. Sunday was often reserved for family life and family activities. This can be observed in the Chợ Lớn dailies in a few ways. In dating the periodicals, there were two separate systems of dates, which were both used in periodicals. The Gregorian calendar co-existed with the lunar or rural calendar (農曆). For instance, 01 November 1966 was also known as the *Bingwu* year (丙午年), ninth month, and nineteenth day by the rural calendar.²² The concept of a weekly routine was also evident from the nature of the

²⁰ “New York Bar Restaurant”, *SGDN*, January 06, 1966, p. 8.

²¹ “Ruifang Overseas Chinese School Evening English Classes”, *BTG*, October 06, 1959, p. 2.

²² *YT*, November 01, 1966.

articles printed. In both the *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao* and the *Báo Thế Giới*, articles during the weekday tended to be more sombre. In *Báo Thế Giới*, the Monday column was usually devoted to topics pertaining to women and family. The Tuesday column dealt with education. The Wednesday column sought to convey the latest research on medical knowledge. Thursday columns prepared readers for weekends out with its movie reviews while Friday and Saturday columns dealt with topics like movies, entertainment and weekend events. A similar weekly rhythm was also evident in *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao*. The Saturday column usually had a serialized novel, advertisement for films and other film-related news.

Outside the confines of one's home, there were many options for weekend entertainment. The Sài Gòn Entertainment Center had been a source of family fun since 10 January 1959 and offered various rides like carnival games and carousels. While the Sài Gòn Entertainment Center was open everyday, it had extended hours on weekends from eight in the morning to midnight. For families who preferred food over entertainment, they could also head over to the restaurant at Đồng Khanh hotel, which had a wide array of dim sum options and was famous for its pig trotters. The Đồng Khanh then turned into a dancehall for afternoon dance and evening dance on Sundays.²³

In the annual rhythm of life, there was contestation between the RVN state's concept of time and Chinese communities' experience with time. Despite the switch to the Gregorian calendar, the rural calendar continued to exert its importance in the lives of Chợ Lớn's residents. The rural calendar was consulted for the key life events of individuals and in the celebration of events unique to the Chợ Lớn Chinese community. For instance, the rural calendar was consulted for marriages. The eighth month in the rural calendar is often associated with good fortune and was a popular month for marriages, with the number of marriages occurring then more than

²³ "Đồng Khanh Hotel", *YT*, October 15, 1966, p. 5.

double the number of any other month. Conversely, the seventh month in the rural calendar is often associated with the opening of the gates of hell and hence inauspicious for marriage. The RVN state did disrupt this experience of time on occasion through its nation-building initiatives. The RVN state attempted to insert itself into the Chinese community's annual rhythm through events like festivals commemorating Vietnamese heroes Trần Hưng Đạo and Lê Lợi on 22 August annually.²⁴ Additionally, celebrations of the RVN national day entered Chợ Lớn space as floats would parade down main thoroughfares in Chợ Lớn like Đồng Khanh street.²⁵ The RVN state was not the only state that attempted to insert itself into the annual rhythm of life. The Republic of China (ROC) state also entered Chinese communities' consciousness. 23 January was "Freedom Day" against communism, and in 1959, this was commemorated with celebrations in Daguangming Theater (大光明戲院). Chợ Lớn Chinese also telegraphed their "best wishes" to ROC President Chiang's efforts in anti-communism.²⁶ In RVN Chinese communities' experience with the annual rhythm of life, there were now two contesting regimes of time.

Work: Changes and Continuities and Socialization at Work

With the founding of the RVN and increasing United States presence in the southern half of Việt Nam by the early 1960s, the employment landscape changed. Many new middle-class jobs were created, both in association with the formation of the new state and also to serve the needs of the US presence. Southern Việt Nam had always been an important economic center for French Indochina. As discussed in Chapter 1, Sài Gòn was the home to haute culture. Rue Catinant was home to boutiques selling imported goods. Alongside these boutiques were important financial institutions. For instance, the regal Bank of Indochina building along the Sài

²⁴ "Commemorating Trần Hưng Đạo and Lê Lợi", *YT*, October 02, 1966, p. 4.

²⁵ "Việt Nam National Day Celebrations", *YT*, October 16, 1966, p. 5.

²⁶ "Overseas Chinese Wire President Chiang on Freedom Day", *YT*, January 23, 1959, p. 2.

Sài Gòn river was also home to the Rice Exchange. According to French traveler Gontran de Porcins' observations:

However different Cholon and Saigon are from each other, they are nevertheless commercially interdependent. From Cholon comes rice, from Saigon manufactured products. The Chinese businessman who has his warehouses in Cholon is to be found in Saigon every morning, at the stroke of eleven, on the sidewalk near the Bank of Indo-China, for the Rice Exchange.²⁷

During the RVN there was an expansion of employment in several sectors: finance, education, travel, consumer goods, services etc., which gave rise to new opportunities for Chợ Lớn's Chinese residents. Despite the changing employment landscape, continuities remained.

The early years of the RVN was marked by an inflight of capital, businesses, and people from northern Việt Nam following the 1954 Geneva Accords and the southward migration of many well-heeled individuals and their families. In Sài Gòn, and later in Chợ Lớn, there were many new shops opening, as these migrants from the north relocated their businesses, sparking a vibrancy in the two cities' economy. One such instance was the medical practice of Dr. Chen Jisheng (陳紀笙), who used to be a physician in mainland China and had emigrated to Hải Phòng before moving to Chợ Lớn in 1955. Dr. Chen set up his medical practice at 434A Armand Rousseau street (孟魯蘇) in Chợ Lớn. His reputation as a physician was endorsed by Chợ Lớn notables like *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao* editor, Zhu Wenyi, amongst other prominent members of Chợ Lớn society, e.g. other medical practitioners.²⁸ The case of Dr. Chen is an example of how one's social networks were related to one's economic prospects, and integration into another location in the transnational Chinese network depended on such connections. Dr. Chen was not the only migrant who attempted to make inroads into Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn society. In the food and beverages industry, pastry shop Dongxing Yuan (東興園) claimed it was renowned in Hà Nội

²⁷ Gontran de Porcins, *From a Chinese City* (Palo Alto: Trackless Sands Press, 1997), p. 161.

²⁸ "Recommendation: Dr. Chen Jisheng", *YT*, January 21, 1959, p. 2.

for over eighty-four years and had 19 now moved to Sài Gòn's 37 Phan Chu Trinh street with a branch in Chợ Lớn's 328 Đồng Khanh street and authorized retailers spread across Sài Gòn, Chợ Lớn, Nha Trang and Buôn Ma Thuột.²⁹

This economic vibrancy continued into the early 1960s when there was a confidence in the RVN's viability, as evident from the multinational companies that increased their investment in the RVN. In the financial services sector, banks expanded their operations. In the early years of the RVN, while financial houses from the colonial period like the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank and the Chartered Bank continued their presence in Sài Gòn, there were also new banks appearing in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn.³⁰ For instance, the ROC's Bank of China opened its doors in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn in 1957.³¹ Realizing the potential of tapping into Chợ Lớn, the Chartered Bank expanded its operations by hiring a Chinese manager, Chen Ding (陳定), to handle Chinese clientele.³² Other sectors also expanded. For instance, at the apex of consumer services, travel and commercial air travel was advertised in the Chợ Lớn dailies and consequently spawned off more employment opportunities. Cathay Pacific, Bangkok Airways, and Việt Nam Airlines all advertised their flights in *YT*. Cathay Pacific offered flights to Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangkok and Manila.³³ The ROC's Civil Air Transport, which connected Sài Gòn to Seoul, Tokyo, Okinawa, Taipei, Manila, Hong Kong and Bangkok, advertised multiple openings for laborers and ticketing agents. For the latter, the positions required fluency in English and Vietnamese languages.³⁴ This economic expansion led to a different offering of employment opportunities.

²⁹ "Dongxing Yuan Mooncakes", *YT*, September 04, 1959, p. 3.

³⁰ *An Official Guide to Eastern Asia*, v. 5., p. 177; "The Chartered Bank", *BK*, June 01, 1957, p. 10; "The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation", *BK*, November 01, 1957, p. 20.

³¹ "Bank of China", *BK*, March 01, 1957, p. 4.

³² "Congratulations: Chen Ding on Becoming the Chinese Manager at Chartered Bank", *YT*, January 13, 1960, p. 7.

³³ "Cathay Pacific", *YT*, March 10, 1959, p. 3.

³⁴ "Hiring: Laborers", *YT*, October 22, 1966, p. 5; "Hiring: Ticketing Agents", *YT*, October 22, 1966, p. 5.

Chinese businesses in Chợ Lớn also flourished in this environment and focused on providing consumer goods and services. The traditional Chinese medicine industry and education industry expanded during this period. Traditional Chinese medicine (including medicinal halls and clinics) and private education were responsible for half the commercial advertisements in *YT*. In the eight-page daily, half of the second page was usually dedicated to the different schools and new courses on offer in Chợ Lớn. Page seven would usually be taken out by the different Chinese medical practices and traditional Chinese medicine shops spread across Chợ Lớn. Other businesses in the consumer industry – from clothing stores to restaurants – also expanded. For instance, in September 1966, there was a notice about the opening of Zhonghua Bar (中華大酒吧) on Chợ Lớn’s 131 Đồng Khanh street.³⁵ In the same month, Rongxing Clothing store (榮興衫褲行) also took out an advertisement notifying their loyal customers that they were moving to a new and larger premise due to their “excellent business”, which led to “expanded operations.”³⁶

The expansion of the consumer goods industry went beyond traditional businesses, as new consumer goods flooded the Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn shops in the 1960s. Radios, televisions, and cooking pots were advertised to homes,³⁷ while air-conditioners and refrigerators were marketed to businesses.³⁸ Consumer goods in the 1960s were different from consumer goods in the 1950s. While ships brimming with items like top-grade bird’s nests, vinyls and books from Hong Kong caused excitement when they docked in the wharfs in the 1950s,³⁹ freighters arriving from Japan laden with consumer electronics were momentous events for shoppers in the 1960s.⁴⁰ Collectively, this created new economic opportunities for Chợ Lớn’s Chinese communities – for

³⁵ “Congratulations: Opening of Zhonghua Bar”, *YT*, September 16, 1966, p. 4.

³⁶ “Moving Notice: Rongxing Clothing”, *YT*, September 13, 1966, p. 4.

³⁷ “Notice: Toshiba-branded Goods have Arrived”, *YT*, October 14, 1966, p. 4.

³⁸ “Hitachi Airconditioner”, *YT*, October 04, 1966, p. 4. This advertisement specifically suggested that the Hitachi Airconditioner is appropriate for offices, theaters, restaurants, banks, beauty salons and hotels.

³⁹ “Zhang Min’an Department Store (張民安百貨商店)”, *YT*, January 01, 1959, p. 8.

⁴⁰ “Freighter from Japan is Due to Arrive on Tenth”, *YT*, October 05, 1966, p. 5.

those who preferred to run businesses, they now had new avenues. For those who preferred a desk job, there were also new positions available.

Chợ Lớn Chinese were perfectly positioned to capitalize on these new employment opportunities. In small businesses, Chinese communities had the capital, experience and networks to tap into these new opportunities. This was evident from some Japanese companies' advertisements in *YT*. Japanese companies grew in presence during the RVN, offering the gamut of consumer electronics and other consumer goods like ink, paper etc. Participation in some of the Chinese community's business customs seemed to be good form for Japanese businesses. For instance, at the passing of businessmen Shang Zhiming (尚志明) and Shang Zhirong's (尚志榮) mother, a Japanese cotton company felt compelled to take out an advertisement conveying their condolences.⁴¹

For those who had little interest in running businesses, they were also excellent candidates for the new jobs available in the RVN. For instance, one employment advertisement for an unnamed import-export firm was seeking an accountant with fluency in "Mandarin, French and Vietnamese".⁴² Chợ Lớn's wide offering of language classes available at affordable rates meant that its residents had the opportunity to acquire the skill set needed to fulfill these jobs.

What was the effect of work on everyday life? Work was often an all-consuming activity; while business hours of stores were not long, there was a plethora of social activities after sundown, which required one's participation to run a successful business. During the RVN, there was a growth in the number of professional organizations, and these labor organizations involved monthly meetings and annual extravaganzas. One such professional organization was the

⁴¹ "Condolences: Passing of Shang Zhiming and Shang Zhirong's Mother", *YT*, October 01, 1966, p. 5.

⁴² "Hiring: Accountant", *YT*, December 18, 1959, p. 4.

Chinese Journalists Association, which had an annual gala on first September. This annual event was attended not only by journalists, but also by workers associated with the publication process – salesmen, printers, etc.⁴³

The above annual event can function as an excellent example of how such events socialized young Chợ Lớn adults starting out in their careers. The annual event for 1959 was held at Yadong restaurant and involved entertainment and a raffle.⁴⁴ Planning for this event started one month prior and involved the election of a planning committee. The planning committee, totalling nineteen members, was composed of younger journalists like Xiong Jinglun (熊景倫), Wang Shirong (王世榮), Xu Zhuoran (許卓然), et. al.⁴⁵ To ensure the success of this event, there was a lot of legwork involved. Committee members first had to seek approval from Sài Gòn mayor, Nguyễn Phúc Hải (阮富海); thereafter they had to seek sponsorships for prizes. Some of their sponsors ranged from large companies like cigarette factories to small businesses like family-owned watch shops and from wealthy individuals to social organizations like the Overseas Chinese Table Tennis Association (華僑乒乓球會). Sponsorship of this event went beyond Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn and also came in from Mỹ Tho and Đà Lạt.⁴⁶ This work-related event gave neophytes the opportunity to build connections with different strata of society and younger journalists the chance to dabble with Chinese networks outside the capital.

Belonging to a labor union or a type of guild appeared to be the rule rather than the exception and had the effect of creating connections based on employment. For instance, there were six major labor unions in Chợ Lớn: paper making workers, ice cream and canning workers,

⁴³ “Preparations in Place for Chinese Journalists Celebration”, *YT*, August 19, 1959, p. 4; “Celebration of Journalist Day”, *BTG*, August 28, 1959, p. 4; “Chinese Newspapers Journalists Annual Gathering”, *YT*, September 01, 1959, p. 2.

⁴⁴ “Chinese Newspapers Journalists Annual Gathering”, *YT*, September 01, 1959, p. 2.

⁴⁵ “Chinese Newspaper Journalists Union Prepare to Celebrate Journalist Day”, *BTG*, August 10, 1959, p. 1.

⁴⁶ “Celebration of Journalist Day”, *BTG*, August 28, 1959, p. 4.

printing press workers, water transportation workers, rice mill workers, and military warehouse workers.⁴⁷ Some of the other, somewhat oddball associations included the Việt Nam Teahouse Association and the Capital Cabaret Girls Union.⁴⁸ Smaller unions like the latter would join larger unions for more effective organization. In the case of the Capital Cabaret Girls Union, they were subsumed under the Catholic Workers Union.⁴⁹ The interests of a collective had the effect of fostering connections. For instance, in the case of dental workers, there were initially two separate unions, one for *kinh* workers and one for Chinese workers. Recognizing the importance of forming a stronger collective, the Việt Nam Dental Workers Union started up a branch in Chợ Lớn and exhorted workers in Chợ Lớn's dental industry to join forces with their fellow workers.⁵⁰ Work had the effect of connecting people from disparate backgrounds.

"A Woman's Highest Title is Wife":⁵¹ Women and the Workforce

While there is little information about female participation in the workforce, the early-twentieth century heralded increased opportunities for women in the workforce. This was also true for French Indochina, where some women moved out of the household and entered the public sphere as active participants. In Hue Tam Ho Tai's study of colonial Sài Gòn, the main protagonist was a female revolutionary, Nguyễn Trung Nguyệt (Bảo Lương), who was tried for her participation in the assassination of a wayward and abusive fellow radical on Barbier Street. The study examines how gender dynamics were re-negotiated alongside the radicalization of

⁴⁷ "Six Major Labor Unions in Chợ Lớn have Settled Wage Disputes", *YT*, September 07, 1966, p. 5.

⁴⁸ "Cabaret Girls in Capital Form Union", *YT*, December 14, 1959, p. 4; "Notice from Việt Nam Teahouse Association", *YT*, July 03, 1959, p. 2.

⁴⁹ "Cabaret Girls in Capital Form Union", *YT*, December 14, 1959, p. 4.

⁵⁰ "Notice from Chợ Lớn Branch of Dental Workers", *YT*, January 07, 1960, p. 2.

⁵¹ "A Woman's Highest Title is Wife", *YT*, September 23, 1966, p. 3.

society and culture and how women participated actively in fostering revolution and dissent against French colonial rule.⁵²

Female participation in the public sphere was not restricted to *kinh* women in Sài Gòn. Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn also saw changes in the workforce. During the colonial period, in addition to Chinese laborers who traveled to Chợ Lớn for work, there were also middle-class professionals who uprooted themselves and resettled in Chinese communities that interspersed Southeast Asia. Some of these professionals include doctors (as discussed above) and teachers. While Chinese communities in the nineteenth century were overwhelmingly comprised of males with no intentions of settling, there was an increased number of Chinese women moving to these communities as prospective brides. Not all women came to Chợ Lớn to stay in the private sphere. Women also ventured along these transnational pathways and were pioneers paving the way for others. One such example is Madam Yao Shaozhu (姚少竹), who passed away in March/April 1959. She had moved from mainland China to Chợ Lớn and worked as a teacher in the Chợ Lớn schools. During her lifetime, not only did she donate generously to education, but she was also a strong advocate of women's rights, culminating in the widespread recognition of 08 March as Women's Day amongst Chinese communities.⁵³

During the RVN, women continued increasing their public presence through their workforce participation. In some professions that represented continuity, women continued to be teachers, doctors (for women's health issues). In one unique example, a woman became the founder of a newspaper. During the RVN, there were also new occupations available, and these included secretaries at offices and employment in the food and beverages and entertainment industries. These new fields also gave rise to new businesses founded by women and catering to

⁵² Hue Tam Ho Tai, *Passion, Betrayal and Revolution in Colonial Saigon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

⁵³ "Obituary: Veteran Female Educator Yao Shaozhu", *BTG*, April 02, 1959, p. 1.

women. In Chợ Lớn Chinese communities, women started to gain some presence in the public sphere, and yet female presence in public life was complicated and embodied some changes and continuities to gender dynamics.

Women started to make their presence known in the public sphere through participation in the workforce as middle-class professionals. The case of Madam Zhang Ruifang, who founded a daily periodical, *Women's Daily* (婦女日報), in 1946 “in response to Sun Yatsen’s call to revolution and beliefs in the role of women in society” deserves some discussion for its implications of shifting gender dynamics in Chợ Lớn.⁵⁴ Her periodical was radical for its time, as it disrupted the male monopoly on the press. It featured important international news and had a greater focus on women’s issues in editorials. However, due to its niche focus, it was not very popular and had to rebrand itself as a more gender-neutral *Báo Thế Giới* (*BTG*, *World News*) featuring similar content.⁵⁵ *BTG*’s existence suggested that female literacy had reached a critical mass and that there was significant female readership amongst RVN Chinese communities. According to Zhang, the paper was well-received by female students, factory workers, school teachers, and housewives, and in its heyday it sold over 10,000 copies.⁵⁶ The *Báo Thế Giới* is also unique in the nature of its personal advertisements. Divorce notices, although rare and usually taken out by wives, also appeared on *BTG*. This suggests that there was a growing body of women with some financial means who were making their presence known in the public sphere.

During the RVN there were slightly more women in the workforce in their traditional occupations and there was some social advancement for a few women to play significant roles in

⁵⁴ “On the Fourteenth Anniversary of *Báo Thế Giới*”, *BTG*, October 09, 1959, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Man Man (漫漫), *The Tragedy of Sài Gòn’s Overseas Chinese Newspapers* (西貢僑報的滄桑劫難) (Taipei: Xinyue Publications, 2012)

⁵⁶ “On the Fourteenth Anniversary of *Báo Thế Giới*”, *BTG*, October 09, 1959, p. 1.

the upper echelons in Chợ Lớn. However this was still limited. Women continued to be teachers and doctors. Dr. Jiang Huan (江環) had a clinic on 1220 Hàm Nghi street.⁵⁷ Li Liangchen (李良臣) took out an advertisement to thank Dr. Yi Xiaocheng (易孝誠) for treating his mother after old Madam Li fell.⁵⁸ Women also got a toehold into some of the many management committees in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. For instance, Madam Chen Shishi (陳氏十) was in charge of finance in the Sài Gòn Commerce Association.⁵⁹ This represented a minute, yet noteworthy increase of female presence in professions.

Changes to the RVN economy led to new, increased and best employment opportunities for women. Many of these jobs were in the service industry and office work which required secretarial talents. These new occupations ranged from dancers in cabarets, to flight attendants on the different airlines, to various desk jobs. As mentioned, in the case of cabaret dancers, the number was large enough for them to form a union in December 1959.⁶⁰ Đồng Khanh Cabaret itself featured no fewer than twenty women.⁶¹ The entertainment industry in RVN cities grew with increased US presence over the course of the sixties. Bars in Sài Gòn, e.g. the Ocean Bar on Nguyễn Hậu and Trami Bar on 154 Trần Hưng Đạo streets advertised “charming and lovely hostesses”.⁶² Le Lý Hayslip’s memoir, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, has the author also working as a hostess in Đà Nẵng for a Korean-run cabaret.

There was also new demand for women with language skills and secretarial talents. Within Chợ Lớn itself, Chinese businesses sought out qualified women as secretaries. One employment advertisement by Daxing Printing Press sought a female employee with the

⁵⁷ “Dr. Jiang Huan”, *YT*, September 08, 1966, p. 7.

⁵⁸ “Thank You: Dr. Yi Xiaocheng”, *YT*, July 06, 1959, p. 4.

⁵⁹ “Congratulations: Establishment of Sài Gòn Commerce Association”, *YT*, December 13, 1959, p. 4.

⁶⁰ “Cabaret Girls in Capital Form Union”, *YT*, December 14, 1959, p. 4.

⁶¹ “Đồng Khanh Cabaret”, *YT*, August 15, 1959, p. 2.

⁶² “Ocean Bar”, *SGDN*, January 06, 1966, p. 8; “Trami Bar”, *SGDN*, January 06, 1966, p. 8.

following qualifications: under thirty years of age, knows Vietnamese, English or French and is able to type for its operations.⁶³ An undisclosed company located in Sài Gòn also cast its net wide by posting employment notice in *YT*, seeking female secretaries who were between eighteen and twenty-eight, with middle school qualifications and fluency in Mandarin, English, and Vietnamese languages.⁶⁴ Some other positions included sales positions at department stores, where a pleasant demeanor was the main requirement.⁶⁵

Increased female workforce participation had the effect of spawning supporting industries to train women and increase their employability. The service industry led to the opening of several beauty parlors in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn. In Chợ Lớn alone there were at least five different beauty parlors offering services ranging from a hair perm for \$100 at Xishi Hair Salon to breast augmentation at Marie Claude Beauty Parlor.⁶⁶ Other businesses included tailoring schools, like Madam Guo Ying's (郭英) Heping Women's Tailoring School (和平女子裁剪學校). Madam Guo Ying advertised herself as a graduate of a Parisian tailoring institute, with a specialization in women and children's clothing.⁶⁷ There were also schools for the "feminine arts," instructing household skills like cooking. A Madam Luo Yuzhi (羅玉芝) also advertised herself as a Parisian graduate and offered instructions in an array of cuisines, reflecting the changing times: Western food, Western pastries, Chinese food, Vietnamese food et al.⁶⁸ Her school was probably useful for women with foreign partners, or for women who sought employment in one of the restaurants offering this array of cuisines. Another school styled itself

⁶³ "Urgently Seeking Female Employee", *YT*, October 14, 1966, p. 4.

⁶⁴ "Hiring: Female Secretaries", *YT*, October 14, 1966, p. 4.

⁶⁵ "Việt Nam Department Store", *YT*, January 11, 1960, p. 4.

⁶⁶ "Xishi Hair Salon", *YT*, November 03, p. 4; "Marie Claude Beauty Parlor", *YT*, April 01, 1960, p. 3.

⁶⁷ "Heping Women's Tailoring School", *BTG*, October 09, 1959, p. 13.

⁶⁸ "School for Feminine Arts", *YT*, October 09, 1966, p. 5.

less specifically as a school of home economics, taught skills like “sewing and cooking” and suggested that these were essential for “all modern women” (時代女性).⁶⁹

The female presence in the workforce did not imply a radical alteration to the status quo for gender roles. As evident from the examples above, labor was compartmentalized. The age requirements of office jobs suggests that these positions were intended for unmarried young women. Even for women who kept their jobs after marriage, there were newspaper columns discussing their household roles, should they choose to keep their jobs. One columnist concluded in 1966 that a woman who chose to keep working should not neglect her household duties in turn.⁷⁰ Another journalist chimed in on the topic one week later and suggested that regardless of a woman’s achievements, “a woman’s greatest title is wife”.⁷¹ These commentaries highlighted some of the social anxieties associated with these re-negotiations of gender roles and also suggest that, while women’s participation in the public sphere increased, the expectations of a woman’s roles in the private realm remained unchanged.

Private Life on Public Display: Engagement, Marriage, Divorce

Engagement, marriage, divorce (in rare cases), and birth of a child were the most significant events in the private life of young adults. For affluent and/or prominent members of Chợ Lớn, such private milestones were often public affairs in the form of personal advertisements in Chợ Lớn dailies. Often, such personal advertisements were young Chinese residents’ first introduction to Chợ Lớn society. The congratulatory messages associated with such announcements also provide excellent insight on the importance of building social capital and on the pecking order in Chợ Lớn.

⁶⁹ “Seeking Students: School of Home Economics”, *YT*, October 04, 1966, p. 5.

⁷⁰ “Women: To Work or Stay At Home”, *YT*, September 19, 1966, p. 2.

⁷¹ “A Woman’s Greatest Title is Wife”, *YT*, September 23, 1966, p. 3.

Marriage and engagement announcements were formulaic and involved buying an advertisement, whereby press workers would simply insert names within a template. The text of this template usually reflected the mores of mid-twentieth century Chợ Lớn. In a typical announcement, the couple would announce their mutual interest in each other and point out that they obtained the blessings of their parents for this union. This formulaic announcement combined the new concept of romantic love in society with respect for the traditional practice of parental sanction for a union. Fathers' names were usually included in such advertisements. Violations of such mores sometimes led to public punitive actions by disgruntled parents. While these instances were few and far between, there were some examples. On March 17, 1959, Zeng Nian (曾年) took out an advertisement in *YT*, publicly disowning his second daughter, Zeng Yu (曾玉). Zeng Yu, who was eighteen at that time, had eloped with her lover against parental wishes. Consequently, Zeng Nian severed all ties with her and denied any further responsibility for her.⁷²

Taking out a marriage advertisement in the Chợ Lớn dailies was the privilege of affluent members of Chinese communities. However amongst the middle-class there was also a wide spectrum of wealth. Wealthier Chinese seemed to have splurged on engagement notices, while community members with smaller coffers bought a simple marriage advertisement. The simpler marriage announcements of less affluent Chợ Lớn Chinese would typically point out that the wedding ceremony was to be a “simple ceremony with only family and close friends”, accompanied by an apology for not having the affair at a grander scale. These advertisements would often pass un-noticed by other members of the Chợ Lớn community and would garner no reactions in the form of congratulatory notes.

⁷² “Notice: Zeng Nian Disowns Daughter”, *YT*, March 17, 1959, p. 4.

代 訃

前新安中華學校創辦人
歷任新安中華學校董事
歷任新安廣肇幫理事長
廣安省幫產管理委員
廣農來電轉行東主

鄧公諱振河老先生痛於中華民國五十五年十月二十四日下午七時(農曆九月十一日戌時)壽終堤岸福壽醫院生於前清光緒癸巳年十一月二十五日卯時享壽積閱七十有七謹於十月二十八日上午十二時(農曆九月十五日)由鄧府(隆安省黎文悅街十八號)發引出殯卜葬於慶厚廣肇義地凡屬鄧府世鄉親誼屆時敬希前往執紼藉表哀思謹代訃

聞

治喪處：
隆安黎文悅街
十八號廣農來

代 訃 人

甘陳陳陳尤文范袁古廖唐黃丘許黃
金章耿步明國林國永才壽駿挑升
川煥光欽平高祥慶省祥洋壽駿挑升
黎陳胡張黃黃黃蔡陳黎黎黎黎黃黃
發顯叙勳百煥友蕭少錦炳存
發顯新新新南城然清魁海宏新南光

黃劉劉王楊楊安新黎民丘黎傅王鄭黎
日日德振錫興新中春成學
線福南興碧恩啟行華旅林欽國登華均

啓 全

An obituary taken out on behalf of the deceased's family in *YT* on October 28, 1966

Marriage: Social Networks, Social Capital, and Business Networks

Nevertheless, marriage announcements were important to Chợ Lớn residents as they not only publicly introduced one's offspring to Chinese communities but also signified the joining of two family networks. One's private life had social implications and hence did not remain solely in the private domain. Families can be thought of as corporate units with collective responsibilities, and the joining of families had similar implications as creating a joint stock company. Examining disownment notices compared to the dissolution of business partnerships supports this point. Li Weiqing's (李維頃) disownment notice of his son Li Qingzhu (李慶竹) accused his son of theft from the family. After his declaration of the dissolution of their father-son relationship, he renounced his responsibilities to the younger Li and beseeched friends and relatives to render no aid to Qingzhu on his account.⁷³ The senior Li's actions were very effective, because two days later, as likewise announced in the same paper, Li Junior returned to the household and they were reconciled.⁷⁴ Three months later, Li Senior passed away.⁷⁵ The language used in disavowing familial ties is very similar to the language used in the dissolution of business partnerships. For instance, when Sun Can (孫燦) quit his job and sold his shares to

⁷³ "Notice: Li Weiqing Disowns Son", *YT*, April 15, 1959, p. 4.

⁷⁴ "Notice: Li Weiqing", *YT*, April 17, 1959, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Obituary: Li Weiqing", *YT*, July 31, 1959, p. 2.

Liancheng Pawnshop (連城鏢行), he took out a personal advertisement declaring that he would no longer be associated with the business.⁷⁶ In the above discussion, it is evident that one's total reputation in society was very important and one's associations often reflected on an individual's total reputation. Hence, it was important to announce new association and to dissociate one from old, unsavory associations. In Chinese communities, private life and public sphere were often intertwined. Li Junior learned this aspect of socialization the hard way after a very public shaming by his father.

The marriages of the offspring of Chợ Lớn's more prominent or affluent members highlights the function of social capital as an indicator of social standing. For example, while Chen Wensong's (陳文松) precise line of work in Chợ Lớn is unclear, he most likely ran a business and was closely associated with the media. When his son, Chen Kehu (陳克胡), got married on 25 September 1966 to Huang Chaozhi's (黃超之) daughter, Huang Liyun (黃麗雲), the event attracted a voluminous number of congratulatory notes.⁷⁷ *YT* editor Zhu Wenyi used up some advertising space in his daily to congratulate the two families on their union.⁷⁸ There were close to twenty such congratulatory advertisements and they ran from 25 September up to 02 October.⁷⁹ These congratulatory messages were not merely empty gestures. Donations to the wedding totaled \$200,000. Due to Chen's prominence, various individuals used this joyous occasion to build their social relations with him. On Chen's part, instead of keeping this hefty sum, he continued to build his social capital by donating this entire sum to seven public

⁷⁶ "Sun Can Disassociates from Liancheng Pawnshop", *YT*, April 01, 1959, p. 4.

⁷⁷ "Wedding: Cheng Wensong's Son and Huang Chaozhi's Daughter", *YT*, September 09, 1966, p. 8.

⁷⁸ "Congratulations: Wedding of Chen Wensong's son and Huang Chaozhi's Daughter", *YT*, September 25, 1966, p. 5.

⁷⁹ "Congratulations: Wedding of Chen Wensong's son and Huang Chaozhi's Daughter", *YT*, October 02, 1966, p. 4.

hospitals.⁸⁰ Although this was Chen Kehu's wedding, as a junior member of the community, his private life event was secondary to his father's social position. At the same time, his father also debuted Chen Junior to Chợ Lớn and added his son's name to his sizable donation to Chợ Lớn's public institutions.

The wedding of Chen Wensong's son and Huang Chaozhi's daughter also highlights the inner workings of Chợ Lớn society. At the upper echolons of Chợ Lớn Chinese society, prominent families often intermarried and strengthened their respective networks. The bride's father, Huang Chaozhi, was a consultant of the Huang Last Name Association (黃氏宗鄉會), and her brother Huang Boyun (黃勃雲) was owner of the Yong'an Import Export firm (永安出入口股份有限公司) located in Sài Gòn.⁸¹ The wedding of the couple amplified the networks of their respective families' business as well as social networks.

Building upon the idea of private life events being an opportunity for building business connections, congratulatory messages were often associated with one's industry. Cai Qiding (蔡其定) and Cai Qishun (蔡其順) ran a traditional Chinese medicinal hall, Wanshengtang (萬生堂) in Đà Nẵng. When their nephew, Lin Shaojiang (林紹江), got married, they received congratulatory advertisements from others in the same profession.⁸² For instance, Chợ Lớn's Huang Shigong Medicinal Factory (黃石公藥廠) bought a congratulatory advertisement on 16 March 1959, congratulating them on this joyous occasion. The next day, Wanfu Medicinal Factory (萬福藥廠) also bought a congratulatory advertisement conveying similar sentiments.⁸³

These factories were probably suppliers to the Cai brothers of Đà Nẵng and hence felt compelled

⁸⁰ "Thank You for Your Support for My Son's Wedding", *YT*, October 06, 1966, p. 4.

⁸¹ "Congratulations: Wedding of Huang Chaozhi's Daughter and Huang Boyun's Sister", *YT*, October 02, 1966, p. 5; "Congratulations: Opening of Huang Boyun's Yong'an Import Export Firm", *YT*, October 18, 1966, p. 4.

⁸² "Congratulations: Wedding of Lin Shaojiang", *YT*, March 16, 1959, p. 4.

⁸³ "Congratulations: Wedding of Lin Shaojiang", *YT*, March 17, 1959, p. 4.

to use this private occasion to re-affirm their business network. Despite the factories' location in Chợ Lớn, their owners felt compelled to follow social protocol and publicly celebrate the private joys of their clients in Đà Nẵng.

Marriage, Everyday Life and Chinese Networks

Publicizing one's private life event spread far and wide beyond Chợ Lớn and as such highlights both the importance of Chợ Lớn in the transnational Chinese networks and how individuals further from the center continued to keep up with this practice to stay relevant within the network. For instance, several couples living in various provinces in Laos advertised their marriage in Chợ Lớn. Li Guoqiang (李國強) and Zou Xiuying (鄒秀英) from Vientiane, as well as Fang Wusheng (方悟生) and Guo Xiaoyu (郭笑玉) from Pakse separately advertised their weddings in *YT*.⁸⁴ Former Chợ Lớn inhabitants who now lived in faraway foreign countries also advertised their marriage in *YT*, perhaps to keep the door open for their return. For instance, Xu Bozhi's (許柏芝) son, Xu Shunchang (許舜昌), got married in Hong Kong. The elder Xu thanked well-wishers for their kind sentiments with regards to his son's wedding.⁸⁵

Examining the origin cities of the wedding parties also confirms the efficacy of Chợ Lớn's community-building exercises discussed in Chapters Two and Three. While marriages outside one's native locale were rare, such marriage notices were posted from time to time. For instance, Wang Yaoquan (王耀權) from Chợ Lớn and Liu Liping (劉麗萍) from Phan Thiết placed a personal advertisement on 05 January 1959, announcing their wedding on 08 January 1959. While it is unclear how they met, it is plausible that various community-building exercises

⁸⁴ "Wedding: Li Guoqiang and Zou Xiuying", *YT*, March 14, 1959, p. 2; "Wedding: Fang Wusheng and Guo Xiaoyu", *YT*, January 14, 1960, p. 3.

⁸⁵ "Thank You from Xu Bozhi", *YT*, December 23, 1959, p. 4.

that attempted to tighten Chợ Lớn's connections with Chinese communities within and outside the RVN gave rise to opportunities for individuals in the transnational Chinese world to meet.⁸⁶

Marriage notices also demonstrate the confluence of education and transnationalism and their deep impact on everyday life. Prominent Chợ Lớn journalist Zhao Zhi'ang's (趙志昂) daughter Zhao Fuyun (趙馥雲) married Wang Hongsheng's (王鴻聲) son, Wang Jiacheng (王家誠). Zhao Fuyun and Wang Jiacheng were married in a church in Taipei on 05 June, and their wedding was presided over by the National Taiwan Normal University provost, Du Yuanzai (杜元載).⁸⁷ Their wedding notice suggests that Zhao Senior sent his daughter to attend tertiary education in Taipei, opting to enter the transnational Chinese education network. At college, Fuyun met Jiacheng, who was a native to the Republic of China (ROC), creating a marriage that transversed the South China Sea. This marriage demonstrates that community-building and transnationalism could have a deep impact on important life events like marriage. In addition to gaining a son-in-law, Zhao Zhiang also earned social capital from the event, as he tapped into an important transnational connection through his daughter's marriage.

Subverting Marriage Networking? Women in the Public Sphere

Using private life events as a means of building social networks to complement business ties was often the domain of older males. Recognizing the function of using the public sphere for the maintenance of networks, this process was later appropriated by women, possibly in an attempt to increase their presence in the public sphere. In the 1960s, there were several

⁸⁶ "Wedding: Wang Yaoquan and Liu Liping", *YT*, January 05, 1959, p. 4.

⁸⁷ "Wedding: Zhao Zhiang's Daughter and Huang Hongsheng's Son", *BTG*, June 20, 1959, p. 4.

congratulatory advertisements taken out by women to congratulate their friend or colleague on their marriage.

Marriage notices for women varied from formulaic wedding congratulatory notices, and some of these differences are key to understanding women's agency. On 14 October 1966, Zhou Wenli (周文立), Zhou Yumei (周玉梅) and Zhou Limei (周麗梅) took out a congratulation notice for Lin Xiulian on her marriage. In this notice, Lin Xiulian was central to the advertisement.⁸⁸ Neither her father nor her new husband were mentioned. This was a departure from other congratulatory notices, whereby the advertisement purchaser obtained social capital by congratulating a prominent community member. Congratulatory messages of this nature suggest that women were exercising their agency and putting themselves in the public sphere. The congratulatory message for Chen Yuying's (陳玉英) marriage supports this hypothesis. When Chen Yuying got married, her sisters took out a congratulatory advertisement in *YT*. This public announcement would have not have given her sisters any social capital. Hence, accruing social capital was not the motivation behind such an advertisement. A more probable motivation was highlighting women in the public sphere, without their fathers or husbands.⁸⁹

Nevertheless one should not overstate women's prominence in the public sphere. Relative to the number of congratulatory messages taken out by men, the ones featuring women were few and far. It is also important to note the identity of Zhou Yumei. Zhou Yumei was a female journalist, married to a fellow journalist, Zhou Wenli.⁹⁰ In a number of these congratulatory messages, she often participated as part of a group of journalists sending their well-wishes to

⁸⁸ "Congratulations: Wedding of Lin Xiulian", *YT*, October 14, 1966, p. 8.

⁸⁹ "Congratulations: Wedding of Chen Yuying", *YT*, October 03, 1966, p. 4.

⁹⁰ "Congratulations: Wedding of Zhou Wenli and Zhou Yumei", *BTG*, November 15, 1959, p. 4.

their colleagues or prominent community members.⁹¹ Her work in the press gave her the necessary access in order to shift some of the spotlight in the public sphere on women, but this was also often undertaken in conjunction with her husband.

Divorce Notices: Managing Domestic Discord in the Public Sphere

Divorce notices appear to be unique to Chợ Lớn dailies and give a lens into how Chợ Lớn communities managed domestic discord and its social implications. While many of these divorce notices were cordial, several divorce notices were fairly acrimonious and were useful in understanding some of Chợ Lớn society's unwritten rules. The phenomenon also highlights how public institutions like native place congregations often had a role to play in the domestic realm.

Cordial divorce notices were often simple, whereby both parties would state the dissolution of their household, alongside their names. For instance, Xu Ting (徐亭) and Tang Yuchan (唐玉嬋) bought a divorce notice on 08 June 1959 in *BTG* and simply notified the public of their household's dissolution.⁹² Such notices seemed necessary, as the family was like a corporate unit, and like a business partnership where relationships were severed, the severance of the marriage unit had to be declared to society. Nevertheless, divorce and domestic discord was taken seriously, and Chợ Lớn communities at times intervened to avert the ultimate step. On 20 November 1959, Huang Hanping and Gao Qun took out an advertisement announcing divorce. But in a turnabout, some three weeks later, they announced their reconciliation and the resumption of their marriage, following "mediation by friends and family".⁹³

⁹¹ "Congratulations: Engagement of Chen Jixin (陳紀新) and Wang Peishan (王佩珊)", *YT*, September 27, 1966, p. 3.

⁹² "Divorce Notice: Xu Ting and Tang Yuchan", *BTG*, June 08, 1959, p. 4.

⁹³ "Divorce Notice: Huang Hanping and Gao Qun", *BTG*, November 20, 1959, p. 4; "Reconciliation: Huang Hanping and Gao Qun", *BTG*, December 15, 1959, p. 4.

Acrimonious divorce notices reflected social mores and the role of public institutions in private life. In public shaming, the acceptable grounds for divorce differed, depending on whether it was the husband or the wife seeking the divorce. In Zhong Mao's (鍾毛) public shaming of his wife, Cai Xiuqing (蔡秀卿), he declared that she "committed infidelity" (不守婦道) and was also guilty of "disrespecting her elders" (目無尊長). To add to her list of alleged sins, she also had stolen from the household before disappearing. He issued an ultimatum that she show up within seven days of the notice at the Sixth District's Police Department to sign the divorce papers, failing which he would take her to court.⁹⁴

A wife seeking divorce appeared to have the greater burden and had to present an airtight argument for the grounds of seeking divorce. In a wife's public shaming of her husband, the weightiest accusation involved a husband failing his financial responsibilities to his family, with absenteeism being a distant second reason and related to the first. For instance, Peng Nianhua (彭念華) left home for a month. Consequently, his wife, Guan Yuyun (關玉雲), had to take out a notice informing him that he had three days to respond to the divorce warning. However she was careful to sign off the notice as "loving wife" (愛妻).⁹⁵ In a more scathing divorce notice, Wang Ermei (王二妹) built an argument for divorce against her missing husband Lan Shao (藍紹). She first highlighted his volatile temper and his tendency towards domestic abuse. These accusations were designed to diminish his overall reputation, but by themselves were insufficient grounds for divorce. His greatest failing was his financial irresponsibility, which led mother and child to "fend for themselves". She also pointed out that she sought arbitration with the community head and had no further recourse. She left the door open, however, as she was willing to discuss

⁹⁴ "Notice to Cai Xiuqing", *YT*, October 13, 1959, p. 4.

⁹⁵ "Divorce Warning: Peng Nianhua and Guan Yuyun", *YT*, February 22, 1959, p. 2.

reconciliation if he showed up within one week of the notice.⁹⁶ Women seeking divorce from their husbands faced several obstacles and only had a few valid arguments for seeking divorce. Furthermore, they had to go through the additional step of seeking mediation from their native place congregations before being allowed to pursue a divorce. This demonstrates the continued hold of public community institutions and their importance in domestic life.

Engagements, marriages and divorces highlight how Chợ Lớn society functioned. Engagements and marriages of the offspring of prominent community members turned into opportunities for building social networks and accruing social capital. While they were the opportunity to debut young adults to Chợ Lớn society, the newly-weds played a secondary role to their parents in the public sphere. During the Second Republic (1967 – 1975), women also tried to use marriage congratulatory notices to shift some of the spotlight on themselves in the public sphere. In key life events, the state was absent but community-building was effective to an extent. There were now marriages that crossed the boundaries of state and nation.

Leisure: Consuming Transnationalism

“The Weekend is a Bustling Time”⁹⁷

~Shan Ren (山人)

Shan Ren was a journalist in Chợ Lớn and observed that on the weekends in Chợ Lớn, there was a particular bustle – Chinese communities took their leisure very seriously. Outside of work and work-related commitments, leisure engaged the remainder of everyday life. For young adults interested in enrichment, attending evening classes was an option, as discussed in chapter two. For the more athletically inclined, sports also occupied young adults in their social time, as

⁹⁶ “Notice to Husband Lan Shao”, *YT*, October 20, 1959, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Shan Ren, *Shan Ren's Reflections* (應毋庸議隨筆), (Cholon: Jiahua Printing Press, year unknown), p. 14.

discussed in chapter three. In addition, there were other options, divided between public entertainment that involved going out and private entertainment within the confines of one's home. In leisure young adults encountered the transnational Chinese world and made imaginary connections with others located in the transnational Chinese world through a sharing of culture.

There were several forms of public entertainment. Eating out, dancing in the afternoon, going to theme parks and movie theaters, visiting circuses and Chinese operas were some of them.⁹⁸ I shall focus on the latter two.

Chinese operas were a traditional form of entertainment in Chợ Lớn and ranged from smaller, free performances sponsored by native place congregations to sold out large events featuring famous opera stars. Chinese opera troupes were hired from time to time to perform at special events, and sponsoring organizations used them to strengthen ties with its members by providing entertainment. For instance, on the major community event – the Tianhou Festival (天后聖誕) – the Suicheng *huiguan* engaged a, Cantonese Opera Troupe from Hong Kong, Dashunnian (大順年), to perform for its congregation. The performers included Guan Haishan (關海山), Chu Xiangyun (楚湘雲), Ren Jianxun (任建勳), and they performed classics like the Six Warring States (六國大封相), a Cantonese opera written in the Qing dynasty about the Warring States period. This free event was attended by families.⁹⁹ Watching Chinese opera required some level of cultural literacy to understand the performance. As a family activity, this gave young Chinese the opportunity to explain to their children some of the classic opera texts. In this instance, the Suicheng *huiguan* was able to engage in a community-building exercise in their members' leisure activities.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 14 – 15.

⁹⁹ “Suicheng Huiguan to Celebrate Tianhou Festival”, *YT*, April 29, 1959, p. 4; “Tianhou Festival Celebrations”, *BTG*, April 30, 1959, p. 4.

Chợ Lớn was also a pitstop for famous Chinese opera troupes from Hong Kong, the most famous of which would perform to sold out performances. When the who's who of Cantonese opera visited Chợ Lớn in late October 1959 and performed at the Huanggong Theater (皇宮大戲院), they had to put on two more performances that weekend to satisfy their yearning fans. Ticket prices went for \$10, \$15 and \$20. Several of these performers would go on to be recognized as the Chinese opera actresses of the century – Fang Yanfen (芳艷芬), Ren Jianhui (任劍輝), Bai Xuexian (白雪仙), etc.¹⁰⁰ According to Shan Ren, Cantonese opera was a favorite activity of ladies' day out. Ladies would bring their children for an opera and thereafter take a meal of noodles and dumplings at a restaurant nearby.¹⁰¹ The country tours of Chinese opera troupes from Hong Kong highlights the movement of culture through the transnational Chinese world, and by going to the opera on a weekend, young Chinese were consuming transnational Chinese culture.

A newer and more popular form of public entertainment in Chợ Lớn was going to the movies. Based on a count in 1959, there were 120 theaters in the area under RVN control, and in the Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn area alone there were fifty-five.¹⁰² In Chợ Lớn these grand structures were landmarks for the Chợ Lớn community. When advertising their locations, businesses tended to direct readers by using landmarks, and theaters often served as such prominent guideposts. For instance, in Guan Quanhui's (關權輝) advertisement for Vietnamese language classes at Huaxing School (華興學院), the advertisement indicated in parentheses that the school was located “near Huanggong Theater”.¹⁰³ Similarly, when Xiecheng Real Estate Agency (協成

¹⁰⁰ “Notice from Actors”, *YT*, October 31, 1959, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ Shan Ren, *Shan Ren's Memoirs*, p. 15.

¹⁰² “RVN has 120 Movie Theaters”, *BTG*, July 05, 1959, p. 1.

¹⁰³ “Vietnamese Language Classes”, *YT*, September 14, 1966, p. 3.

舖屋地產介紹所) moved to larger premises, the advertisement indicated that their new office was “diagonally opposite Zhonghua Theater” (中華戲院).¹⁰⁴ Theaters were not only packed into Chợ Lớn, but they were also found in Sài Gòn. The popularity of films also led *BTG* to change its columns. From April 1959, the Thursday column was devoted to movie specials, while the Saturday column was devoted to weekend entertainment. Some of their movie specials copied feeds from Hong Kong.¹⁰⁵

Movies screened in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn came from France, the United States, and Hong Kong and were listed on page four of *Yuen Tuong*. For instance, on 05 November 1966, there were three films advertised in *YT* – the Hong Kong comedy *Sweet and Wild* (野姑娘), a Hong Kong swordfighting film, *Frontier Hero* (邊城之俠), and a French film, *Fantomas*.¹⁰⁶ New screenings were usually advertised in the papers. In reading the film review section in Chợ Lớn dailies, the audience for US and French films is rather unclear. However it is certain that Hong Kong films had a loyal following that crossed ethnic barriers and attracted Chinese and *kinh* film buffs alike. General Lâm Quang Thi fondly recalls in his memoir how he brought his family to Chợ Lớn to watch a Hong Kong swordfighting film during his week of rest and recreation in Sài Gòn, as his children loved that particular film genre.¹⁰⁷

Amongst the films from Hong Kong, there was a wide range of genres catering to different age groups and different segments of society. The genres were family-friendly drama, romance, swordfighting, and comedy. In Shan Ren’s memoir, youth enjoyed sneaking into swordfighting movies with their pals and recreating these fight scenes during their free time. Romance films were well-attended by ladies, who viewed them with their girlfriends or with

¹⁰⁴ “Notice: Moving of Xiechen Real Estate Agency”, *YT*, January 11, 1960, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ “Thursday Column”, *BTG*, April 09, 1959, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *YT*, November 05, 1966, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Lâm Quang Thi, *Twenty-Five Year Century* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2001).

their lovers. More wholesome dramas with a moral were attended by families, as they offered something for everyone.¹⁰⁸ Based on some of the advertisements in the dailies, some of these films were immensely popular. For instance, the comedy *Sweet and Wild* was going on to its second week of screening and it was still sold out in multiple theaters.¹⁰⁹

++++光聲準標。氣冷佳最++++

勝利
Cinema
VICTORY
Five Conditions

+++酒總片名。府首片國+++

榮獲 邵氏製片廠破天荒
全越 精製特選出席本屆
首輪 獨家映演
獨映 特權
獻映 閃電
以手 閃電
電趕 閃電
法抵 閃電
運優 閃電
先堤 閃電
映！ 閃電

亞細亞 第一部 正風俠 宗掌武 產武俠 第一 亞細亞 影國展

門功宗產第亞精
大生掌武第一洲製
名死風俠部影特
片決輕正國展選
片決輕正國展選

金飾佩佩鄭 女獎余全武上
俠大飾華岳 巨氏許進部
醉演 星：格

保羅任作 編劇導演 絕無花假

早加例明
場開假天




俠醉大

新定座票房 由下午二時至八時
工作時間：夜八時至

週又 滿上 週末 逢上
上才定加滿週又
策是座滿上末逢

過未從西 人確俠大 片讚齊觀
！見來堪！超的醉！佳聲衆

勝雲觀粵國狂天
利集衆語語滿大

An advertisement for a sword-fighting film in *YT* on October 08, 1966

¹⁰⁸ Shan Ren, *Shan Ren's Memoirs*, pp. 14 – 15.

¹⁰⁹ “Sweet and Wild”, *YT*, November 05, 1966, p. 4.

While going to the movies appears to be an innocuous form of entertainment, it had an influence on its audience and also political implications. In Sun Wanning's edited volume about the contemporary Chinese mediasphere, she argues that media images have the effect of fostering familiarity in its audience, allowing them to imagine familiarity in foreign worlds and acquainting them with other landscapes.¹¹⁰ Hong Kong films had that effect on its Chinese viewers. Contemporary films helped acquaint Chinese viewers with different cities in the transnational Chinese world, principally Hong Kong. Swordfighting films helped viewers familiarize themselves with their ethnic brethren. For instance, Hong Kong film stars visited Chợ Lớn occasionally to acquaint themselves with their Chợ Lớn fans. In May 1959, two Hong Kong actresses, Lin Cui (林翠) and Li Mei (李湄), visited Chợ Lớn. Li Mei even performed a song and dance routine at the Daguangming Theater, much to the delight of her fans.¹¹¹

Film was not devoid of political implications, highlighting the Cold War context and its ramifications for everyday life. Although these films were from Hong Kong, an actor's or actress' known political sympathy would determine whether a film could be screened in Chợ Lớn. In August 1959, a number of Cantonese films were banned from being screened in Chợ Lớn, because the Vietnam News Department had issues with the political persuasion of some film actors.¹¹² By contrast, avowed advocates of the "free world" were given a free pass in Chợ Lớn. For instance, a "freedom-loving patriotic artist," actress Li Mei, participated in a range of activities in Chợ Lớn. She hosted a friendly basketball match and also lent her presence to a

¹¹⁰ Sun Wanning, *Media and the Chinese Diaspora: Community, Communications and Commerce* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹¹¹ "Hong Kong Stars Sojourn in Chợ Lớn", *BTG*, May 11, 1959, p. 1.

¹¹² "Censorship of Certain Cantonese Films", *BTG*, August 06, 1959, p. 1.

fundraiser for a children's cancer fund.¹¹³ Hence the transnational Chinese cultural world operated during the Cold War under the duress of censorship.

Penetrating the Household: Entertainment behind Closed Doors

The transnational Chinese world did not stop outside individuals' homes. Newspapers carrying serialized novels and non-fiction pieces continued to create these imaginary cultural connections within the private sphere. Radios and record players, which became more common during the RVN period, constituted another means for integrating Chợ Lớn Chinese into the transnational Chinese world.

Chợ Lớn Chinese were able to keep up with the latest literary developments in the ROC and in Hong Kong through serialized novel. Popular novelists in the ROC and Hong Kong often had their novels serialized in Chợ Lớn dailies. Some examples include Hong Kong novelist Louis Cha's (金庸) *Blade Dance of the Two Lovers* (鴛鴦刀), Hong Kong novelist Ni Kuang's (倪匡) *Two Swords* (玲瓏雙劍), and ROC novelist Chiung Yao's (瓊瑤) *Boat* (船).¹¹⁴ Louis Cha's novels blend the swordfighting genre with historical fiction. The latter appealed to shared history and cultural memory, making these tales particularly gripping for Chợ Lớn readers.

In addition to serialized novels, various non-fiction articles occasionally featured different cities in the transnational Chinese world. For instance, Yang Qingyang was a former resident of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn but started living in Hong Kong. In late 1959, *YT* commissioned him to write a piece about the sights and sounds of Hong Kong, and his non-fiction piece was published on 01 December 1959. *YT* was not alone in such reportages about Hong Kong. *BTG*

¹¹³ "Hong Kong Actress Li Mei Participates in Charitable Events", *BTG*, May 14, 1959, p. 1; "Li Mei Hosts Basketball Friendly", *BTG*, May 15, 1959, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ "Serialized Novel: Two Swords", *YT*, October 07, 1966, p. 6.

also ran a short feature article about Hong Kong in May 1959, detailing some of Hong Kong's latest developments.¹¹⁵ Outside of Hong Kong, there was also interest in recent developments in Chinese communities within the RVN. For instance, there was a lengthy feature on 19 October 1966 about the recent developments in the Overseas Chinese associations in Đà Lạt.¹¹⁶

For those with little inclination for reading at home, radios and record players made their way into homes during the RVN. Radio broadcasts were a site of contestation between state and transnationalism. For the most part, the transnational Chinese world had a monopoly over the radiowaves. On the daily radio broadcast advertised in *BTG*, a Cantonese broadcast of news would start at one-thirty, followed by Free China radio at two, then English news at two-fifteen, to be succeeded by another round of Cantonese news at two-thirty.¹¹⁷ Radio broadcasts were also a way for Chợ Lớn to keep pace with developments in the ROC. For instance, there was a live broadcast of the ROC's national day events on the Guangyi radio channel.¹¹⁸ In response to their lack of penetration through radiowaves, the Voice of Việt Nam launched a new program on 29 July 1959, the Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Exchange.¹¹⁹

One area where the transnational Chinese cultural world did not have a stranglehold was music. Music appeared to have been more universal, based on the different records advertised in the Chợ Lớn dailies. While records from Hong Kong and ROC formed the majority, music was also imported from France and USA. Due to the rising popularity of dance in Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn, various dance tunes like the Cha Cha and the Tango were in demand, as was Hawaiian

¹¹⁵ "Recent Images of Hong Kong and Tokyo", *BTG*, May 09, 1959, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ "Recent Developments in Đà Lạt Overseas Chinese Associations", *YT*, October 19, 1966, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ "Radio Broadcast", *BTG*, April 02, 1959, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ "Guangyi Radio to Broadcast ROC National Day Celebrations", *YT*, October 07, 1966, p. 5.

¹¹⁹ "Launch of Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Exchange on Radio", *BTG*, July 28, 1959, p. 1.

guitar music. These musical tastes existed alongside the records of popular Chinese singers like Ge Lan (葛蘭).¹²⁰

In the leisure time of Chợ Lớn's Chinese residents, the transnational Chinese world had a stranglehold. Chinese operas and Hong Kong movies occupied their leisure time spent outside their homes, while serialized novels and the radio reinforced the connections between Chinese living in different parts of the transnational Chinese world.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I examined three key aspects of young adulthood amongst Chợ Lớn Chinese: work, private life, and leisure. While work gave Chợ Lớn Chinese opportunities to connect with their *kinh* counterparts in Sài Gòn through collective interests, the state's presence ended at work. In the more private domains of private life and leisure, community and the transnational Chinese world played more significant roles in the lives of young Chinese. Through these three themes, I also studied how young Chinese adults were socialized into transnational Chinese networks at work and life. In leisure, I also discussed the dominance of the Chinese transnational world and their near-monopoly of leisure options in Chợ Lớn society. In young adulthood, the state's presence diminished while community and the transnational Chinese world dominated everyday life.

¹²⁰ "Jiayou Music", *YT*, January 08, 1960, p. 2; "W. K. Ly Co.", *YT*, October 20, 1959, p. 4.

Conclusion

My dissertation examined how state and communities competed with one another in various facets of everyday life amongst the Chinese middle-class in Chợ Lớn, and how individuals negotiated these contestations as young adults. Contestations occurred in school and at work, yet also during one's leisure; in public, and also in the confines of one's own home. As individual Chinese negotiated these contestations, identity and loyalties were constantly re-negotiated. One's choice depended on the context of these contestations, one's occupation and interests. Through the study of everyday life, I also explored some of the changes and continuities within Chợ Lớn's Chinese communities in different aspects like gender relations, occupations, and recreation. Chợ Lớn's role as a node in the transnational Chinese world also reflected how people, culture and information moved through these networks within the constraints of the Cold War, and how these flows were received at one point on the network – Chợ Lớn.

State and Community Contestations: Public Life and Private Life

The RVN state concentrated its nation-building projects on Chinese teenagers who attended schools and RVN universities. Nation-building projects not only introduced a state presence during school time, but it also extended to the social time of Chinese teenagers. The state was able to be omnipresent in classes during the day and also in sports and other afterschool activities, thus including itself in both the discipline of the mind and the body. Some tools included daily rituals like flag-raising ceremonies, daily calisthenics, and annual rituals like National Day celebrations, which were public spectacles that entered the streets of Chợ Lớn and invited the participation of Chinese teenagers. The RVN's nation-building attempts at

monopolizing teenagers' social time inspired Chợ Lớn's community organizations to expand beyond their traditional purview to include social activities.

In response to the RVN's nation-building projects, the numerous Chinese sports clubs in the RVN founded in the 1950s and 1960s represented Chinese communities' belated contest for their members' social time. This borrowed tool proved useful for Chinese communities – clubs became another social space for different age groups to mingle in a social setting, fostering stronger ties amongst community members. Furthermore, while the RVN used international sports to define its identity and gain legitimacy and also foster ties with its partners, Chinese communities subverted this nation-building tool to enhance its own community-building. Friendly sporting exchanges between the different Chinese communities within the RVN and in 'free' Asia strengthened ties between Chinese communities in Asia, from Hong Kong to Singapore to the RVN.

Although the RVN state attempted to intervene in Chinese bodies and minds through education and sports, it only had some success in the workplace and the public sphere. Relative to the colonial period, there were more opportunities for Chinese to interact with their *kinh* counterparts in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn. Teenaged Chinese schoolgoers interacted with their *kinh* counterparts at national sports meets, and teenaged Chinese with sufficient Vietnamese fluency attended universities in the RVN. Adult Chinese who opted for the newly-available occupations in the public sector and in the private sector also worked alongside *kinh* colleagues. And in some instances, their mutual work interests led to labor organizations that crossed ethnic lines.

However, in private life and social time, the strongest connection was with one's community and culture. In the evenings after work, Chợ Lớn's inhabitants would read serialized novels by Hong Kong and ROC writers in their daily papers or listen to radio broadcasts with

Chinese operas or news from the ROC. On weekends, they would watch Hong Kong movies in the different Chợ Lớn theaters and had family lunches in one of the many Chợ Lớn restaurants. At community festivals like the Mid-Autumn Festival or the Tianhou Festival, Chợ Lớn families would attend temple fairs and operas. In marriage, while marriages between Chinese and *kinh* occurred, they were more likely to marry a fellow Chinese. And in death, Chinese were buried in their communal cemeteries. The state's reach did not go beyond closed doors or enter cemeteries.

Chinese Communities in the RVN (and Cambodia and Laos): Changes and Continuities

During the colonial period, Chợ Lớn functioned as a hub for the different Chinese communities in French Indochina. While Chợ Lớn continued to be a hub for Chinese communities in the RVN, there were also shifts in the dynamics.

The network shared by Chinese communities in French Indochina persisted beyond the end of colonialism and the rise of new states. Information, goods, and people moved seamlessly across these boundaries amongst the Chinese communities. The *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* had distributors in Laos and Cambodia and every Vietnamese town under RVN control with a significant Chinese population.¹ Families spread across these three states of former Indochina. For instance, Feng Zifei (馮子飛) retired to Phnom Penh, but he had been actively involved in Chợ Lớn's Guangzhao *huiguan* in his younger years and played a leadership role in the association responsible for the Suicheng cemetery. His children continued to reside in Chợ Lớn to run the family business, Jiansheng Hao (建生號).²

¹ "Happy New Year", *YT*, January 01, 1960, p. 6. This congratulatory advertisement was taken out by *YT*'s distributors, stretching from Nha Trang to Trà Vinh.

² "Obituary: Feng Zifei", *YT*, November 24, 1959, p. 4; "Obituary: Feng Zifei", *YT*, December 09, 1959, p. 4.

While these networks continued to transcend newly-drawn borders, there were shifts in the dynamics of Chinese communities. There was a rise of regional cooperation amongst the different Chinese communities outside of Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn. This transcended the native-place ties, which had traditionally connected communities in towns outside the center. As discussed in Chapter 3, communities organized events like Central division sporting competitions for Chinese sports clubs within the region. The rise of regional ties was viewed with skepticism by the Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn communities. On the other hand, the Chợ Lớn Chinese communities also used sports to strengthen their ties with other native-place communities outside of the capital by organizing sporting competitions for participants from the same native-place. This linked a Chợ Lớn resident originally from Chaozhou to a Hà Giang resident originally from Chaozhou in novel ways.

Within Chinese communities itself, there were changes in workplace options and gender relations. The RVN's administrative apparatus created new jobs as did foreign investments in the RVN and the US presence. Adult private education offerings in Chợ Lớn prepared Chợ Lớn's residents for the new economy. Women also entered the workforce in greater numbers, but worked in service industries. New businesses run by women also catered to the needs of women in the workforce. While some women attempted to enter male-dominated spaces, this did not necessarily redefine gender roles in Chợ Lớn. Sentiments in the editorials suggested that there was anxiety about women entering the workforce and a desire for gender roles to be maintained at home.

Understanding Social Networks and Social Capital in Chinese Communities

My study of everyday life in Chợ Lớn examined how networks worked at the micro level, and contributes to understanding how Chinese networks functioned. Here, social networks were key to Chinese networks: a person's character, their personal relations, their engagement with a business partner's personal life events and their activities in the public sphere factored into the sum total of their reliability as potential business partners. For instance, when Hà Nội Chinese resettled in Chợ Lớn from 1954 to 1956, having prominent Chợ Lớn individuals vouch for their skills and their character was key to their integration into Chợ Lớn.

Within social networks, social capital played a central role. In studies of Overseas Chinese, philanthropy is often understood as conforming to the mores of giving back to the community. Social capital is a more effective way of understanding this phenomenon however, as it broadens the top-down focus, and instead traces the flow of social capital through society, both bottom-up and top-down. For instance, taking out an advertisement to congratulate a prominent individual on their son's wedding helped build social capital with a key member of society, as did the act of contributing funds to their parent's funeral. In turn, prominent individuals could increase their social capital by donating these monetary gifts to public institutions like hospitals and schools.

While my study examines how social capital and social networks functioned in Chợ Lớn, there was evidence that social networks existed and social capital equally flowed along the transnational Chinese networks. Savvy foreign businesses like the multiple Japanese companies in Chợ Lớn were also clued into these flows and followed the model for better business.

Chợ Lớn and the Transnational Chinese World in the Cold War

The declaration of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the Cold War were key events in the transnational Chinese world. Previously, Chinese communities were oriented towards the mainland, with Hong Kong functioning as its main gateway. The rise of two rival political centers of authority, the PRC and the Republic of China (ROC) led to divided allegiances in Overseas Chinese communities across the world. This altered the networks and some of the information and people moving within them.

The middle-class Chinese mostly discussed in this dissertation usually aligned themselves with the ROC. Consequently, newspaper editors, teachers came from the ROC to publish newspapers in Chợ Lớn and to teach in its schools; school materials like textbooks were shipped from the ROC and taught in the different Chinese schools in areas under RVN control. For instance, Liu Risheng (劉日昇), one of the editors for Thành Công Nhật Báo (成功日報) was the former editor of ROC's Dahua Ribao (大華日報).³ Furthermore, people in Chợ Lớn sent telegrams to congratulate ROC leader Chiang Kai-shek on his birthday, and some Chợ Lớn teenagers attended the ROC's newly-established universities in Taiwan.

Hong Kong evolved from being a gateway to the mainland to a stand-alone cultural center in the transnational Chinese world. Films, literature, Chinese medicine and opera troupes moved from Hong Kong across different parts of the transnational Chinese world. Opera troupes from Hong Kong performed at sold out events in Chợ Lớn just as newspaper readers in Chợ Lớn were also savvy to the sports scene in Hong Kong.

While the Cold War closed some of the traditional pathways, it also enriched the networks within the transnational Chinese world. Cultural exchanges within 'free' Asia increased

³ Man Man (漫漫), *The Tragedy of Sài Gòn's Overseas Chinese Newspapers* (西貢僑報的滄桑劫難) (Taipei: Xinyue Publications, 2012), p. 96.

as sports teams visited each other for friendly matches, musicians made tours around cities in ‘free’ Asia, and artists held exhibitions in Sài Gòn, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. This enhanced the cultural dimension of the transnational Chinese world.

Chợ Lớn continued to be a major center for Chinese communities in former French Indochina. Goods that reached the Sài Gòn harbor were transferred to warehouses in Chợ Lớn and were sold wholesale in Chợ Lớn markets like Bình Tây market before being retailed in the different towns, from Cần Thơ to Savannakhet in Laos or Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Joyous events like marriages, or somber ones deaths in Cambodia continued to be advertised in the Chợ Lớn dailies. Devoting a study to Chợ Lớn as a major node in transnational Chinese networks is as important as studying other major Chinese communities in cities of similar stature like San Francisco, Singapore, Bangkok, et. al.

Areas for Further Research

This dissertation suggests several opportunities for further research in several fields. Chapters 2 and 3 were limited explorations into education and sports respectively. These chapters could be further developed into monograph-length studies for a more systematic inquiry into the changes in education and sports policy. My study focused on how the RVN’s nation-building project affected Chinese communities, but it could be expanded to include the RVN’s general nation-building in the fields of education and sports. This would further understanding of the RVN over regime changes from the first republic under Ngô Đình Diệm to the second republic from 1967 to 1975, and how Chinese communities adjusted themselves to political changes and the new restraints that they entailed.

Comparisons between Chợ Lớn dailies discussed in this dissertation, and Sài Gòn dailies in other languages like the English-language *Saigon Daily News*, or Vietnamese-language *Chính Luận* (*Right Reason*) and *Xây Dựng* (*Construction*) also point to an area for further research.⁴ Comparisons of these contemporaneous dailies in different languages will provide insight into commonalities and differences of lived experience during the RVN for a more holistic view of everyday life. A study with a narrow focus including dailies in several languages will achieve this.

Finally, there is room for further research on the circulation of cultural products within the transnational Chinese world during the Cold War. Films, books and music were moving along these channels. Films, serialized novels, books are not neutral items. While this side of the iron curtain touted its ‘democracy’, there were limits to public discourse in the Chinese newspapers. Overstepping these boundaries led to shut downs of Chinese periodicals, which occurred from time to time. However editors of Chợ Lớn’s dailies found ways to subvert the censors. In Man Man’s memoir about Chinese journalists in Chợ Lớn during the RVN, he recounted an incident whereby individual journalists sometimes subverted censorship by serializing left-leaning novels in the dailies. These cultural circulations can be further analyzed for a better understanding of the transnational Chinese world and some of its flows within the limits of the Cold War.

⁴ Trương Ngọc Tường, Nguyễn Ngọc Phan eds., *Báo Chí ở Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* (Newspapers in Ho Chi Minh City) (Ho Chi Minh City: NXB Tổng Hợp TP HCM, NXB Văn Hoá Sài Gòn, 2007), p. 288.

Epilogue: Everyday Life in a Time of War

Sài Gòn in the late-1960s to 1975:

In cities like Saigon, Da Nang and Qui Nhon, refugee ghettos housed huge numbers of Vietnamese in hovels made of garbage.⁵

Saigon itself was becoming a garbage heap rising out of a cloud of smog.⁶

~ Nick Turse

06 January 1966, *Saigon Daily News*.⁷

Vũ Nhất Huy (Từ Chung), editor of *Chính Luận (Right Reason)* was shot in front of his house on 30 December 1965 by the Việt Công and died from his wounds.

14 October 1966, *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao*.⁸

Bomb in Trash Can near Fushou Elementary School (富壽小學) Kills Two, Injures Nine

In April 1959, the Republic Swimming Pool opened on 344 Lê Văn Duyệt to great fanfare.⁹

Some five months later, it transformed into the venue for Mid-Autumn Festival extravaganza (中秋節), an important festival in several East Asian cultures. The theme for the night was

“Shanghai Night”, where attendees dressed up in their finest clothing. Children ran the streets with lanterns in hand.¹⁰ Mooncakes – the pastry associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival – from the various restaurants, hotels and specialty pastries shops filled the advertisement pages in Chợ Lớn dailies. Anle Pastries (安樂餅家), which had branches in Phnom Penh, Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn announced their mooncake sales. Similarly, Wenhexing (文合興) advertised their half-century trademarked mooncakes handcrafted by “famous Hong Kong and Macau chefs”.¹¹

⁵ Nick Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013), p. 144.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁷ “Death of Tu Chung: Blow to Press Freedom in Asia”, *SGDN*, January 06, 1966, p. 2.

⁸ “Bomb Near Fushou Elementary School”, *YT*, October 14, 1966, p. 5.

⁹ “Opening of Republic Pool”, *YT*, April 11, 1959, p. 2.

¹⁰ Xiu Ping (秀屏), “Scenes of Mid-Autumn Festival in Sài Gòn – Chợ Lớn”, *YT*, September 14, 1959, p. 2.

¹¹ “Anle Pastries Selling Mooncakes”, *BTG*, August 23, 1959, p. 4; “Wenhexing Mooncakes”, *YT*, August 30, 1959, p. 3.

Some seven years later in Chợ Lớn, the atmosphere at the Mid-Autumn Festival had altered. The event was still ushered in with mooncakes, and lion dance troupes were hired to put up rousing performances to celebrate the event.¹² However, this event operated under some new constraints. The mooncakes could only be made, through RVN economic planning, which ensured that the supplies of flour and sugar needed to produce these pastries were available at a reasonable price. Inflation from the war was starting to be felt in everyday life.¹³ This was reflected in advertisements as well. *Đông Khanh* hotel and restaurant, which also sold mooncakes, alerted buyers that they only had 300 packages of mooncakes available for sale at the price of \$200 per package. This was probably both a supply problem and a demand problem. On the supply side, there were limits to the number of mooncakes they could produce. Demand was also probably sluggish, because to make the sale, they had to offer several giveaway items. With every purchase, a buyer would receive a package of laundry powder, a bag of branded tea, and two bottles of soda. *Đông Khanh* took pains to mention that they were persisting with the giveaway items, despite the “expensive” cost of soda this year.¹⁴ The mooncake shortage and the price of mooncakes had implications for social networks in Chợ Lớn. While mooncakes were occasionally purchased for personal consumption, they were more often purchased as gifts. In *Aihua* restaurant’s (愛華酒家) advertisement for its mooncakes, one of the selling points was “excellent for gift-giving”.¹⁵ In addition to taking out advertisements congratulating prominent individuals on important life events, gift-giving was another means through which social networks were maintained. War had affected one of the cogs in the social network machinery.

¹² “Tomorrow’s Mid-Autumn Festival Celebrations”, *YT*, September 28, 1966, p. 4.

¹³ “Economic Department Monitoring Supplies for Mooncakes to Combat Inflation”, *YT*, September 28, 1966, p. 8.

¹⁴ “*Đông Khanh* Restaurant and Hotel”, *YT*, September 28, 1966, p. 3.

¹⁵ “*Aihua* Restaurant: Famous Mooncakes”, *YT*, September 27, 1966, p. 6.

This Mid-Autumn Festival also had a more somber undertone. There was a donation drive during this event, inviting individuals to generously make donations for orphans, such that they may also get to enjoy this day.¹⁶ While it is unclear why or how they become orphans, it is probable that the growing war had claimed more victims. Community leaders, schoolteachers and journalists were assassinated. Some were killed by bombs planted outside their offices. Others were shot leaving their homes. In 1965 alone, Guan Xiushan (關秀山), the founder and principal of Yixuan Middle School (逸仙中學), Pan Wenyuan (潘文遠), the managing editor of Yuenan Kuaibao (越南快報) and Pan Zhanyun (潘展雲), a teacher at Yixian Middle School were assassinated.¹⁷ As the war intensified, the list of intellectuals and prominent individuals (alongside countless nameless individuals) who fell victim to this bloody conflict grew. Sài Gòn and Chợ Lớn were increasingly drawn into the conflict. People were seeking refuge in the two cities, but the city was not entirely safe either. Bombs were planted in the city, and places like elementary schools were not spared from the war.

War had found itself into factories, offices and elementary schools. In the later years of the RVN, war was the poignant reality of everyday life.

¹⁶ “Orphans get Mid-Autumn Gifts”, *YT*, September 26, 1966, p. 4.

¹⁷ Man Man, *Tragedy of Sài Gòn’s Overseas Chinese Newspapers*, pp. 108-112.