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## Volume One of “Asian Culture”

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## Volume One of "Asian Culture"

The Vietnamese Association for Asian Cultural Relations was founded by Dr. Nguyen Dang Thuc and kindred spirits who wished to make a contribution to the national consciousness of the new Vietnam. Their publications are: a Vietnamese monthly, a Chinese review published at irregular intervals, and a French and English quarterly. This last is called *Asian Culture* and began publication in the fall of 1958. It is now well on in its second year and time is more than ripe for a survey of its first year.

Of the 26 articles included in the first volume, two are reports on the activities of the Vietnamese Association for Asian Cultural Relations. The rest can be roughly categorized as follows: one article on art, one on linguistics, two on Chinese philosophy, two on communist-dominated countries, three on cultural history, three on cultural relations, four on sociology, eight on cultural ideology. Some of the categories need explaining. Under "cultural history" we classified articles on the interaction of cultures in Vietnam's past. We used the label "cultural relations" for articles on the interaction of cultures in contemporary Asia. The articles classified under "cultural ideology" are partly analytical, partly normative: analytical because they try to disentangle the inner structure of cultures, to bring to a focus the insights characteristic of eastern and western cultures; normative because they suggest orientations along which the evolution of Asian cultures—with emphasis on the Vietnamese national culture—should proceed. The categories overlap; they have been introduced merely to give an initial inkling of the nature of *Asian Culture*. We shall now add a few details.

The quarterly has three interrelated aims: to recover Vietnam's Asian heritage from the obscurity into which it has fallen because of the strong Western influences of the last few centuries, to help develop a new Vietnamese culture which will synthesize the best elements of all the cultures that have influenced Vietnam, to initiate and foster relations between Vietnam and the rest of Asia and, also, the rest of the world. The pursuit of this last aim is based on a conviction that the new Vietnamese synthesis must not be a mere fusion of history and archaeology but an evolving way of life: the new Vietnamese culture must be a living thing that grows through interaction with other cultures.

The quarterly, therefore, envisages a Vietnam open to outside influences. But this is to be a selective sort of openness. Communist influences, for instance, are to be fought since they will destroy the humane traditions of Asia as well as of the West. As for technology and industrialization: they are desirable and must be promoted with all deliberate speed, but they must also be handled with care. Modern science gives us new techniques; it cannot give us the ends for which

these techniques should be used. For example, psychological techniques can be used to heal mental illness; they can also be used for brain-washing. Scientific inventions can give a new fulness to human living; they can also be used to keep a totalitarian state in power. Industrialization should not be an end in itself but a means to the realization of higher values. A too impulsive carrying out of plans for industrialization can harm the very people for whose good industry is being introduced. Besides technological planning, therefore, there must be socio-economic and cultural planning.

The unifying principle in the new cultural synthesis is seen to be a humanism basic to both Asian and western cultures. This humanism is presented as rich and deep, allowing diversity even while it unifies.

This has been a rather disconnected sketch of themes that appear often in the pages of the first volume of *Asian Culture*. We do not mean to suggest that the quarterly hews to a party line; each contributor is responsible for his own article and individual viewpoints are presented. But it seems to us that many contributors tend to agree on the points we have sketched above.

The quarterly refuses to accept—or, rather, completely disregards—a dilemma often presented to “backward” countries by a certain segment of Western opinion. The dilemma can be expressed thus: A country must either give up its Asian culture or else remain perpetually unindustrialized. With true Asian all-inclusiveness, the quarterly takes it for granted that industrialization and acceptance of Western influences are not incompatible with an intensification of one’s Asian sense of values and Asian patterns of thought and feeling. But may we suggest that it is not all-inclusive enough? The ideological articles seem exclusively man-centered. The stress on humanism is indeed welcome, but if one delves deeply enough into man, he will find that the core of man is a reaching out for the transcendent and the infinite. This reaching out is not denied, but it is not mentioned; it is only hinted at once or twice. This seems strange since this restlessness after the infinite has always been part of the Asian consciousness.

On the whole, *Asian Culture* is interesting, at times absorbing.

ROQUE FERRIOLS

## *Mobilizing Community Resources*

The second national conference sponsored by the Philippine Association of Social Workers (PASW), held recently, had for its theme “The Role of the Social Worker in Mobilizing Community Resources”.