Vu Khac Khoan **Narrator**

Sarah Mason Interviewer

June 22, 1979

Sarah Mason -SM Vu Khac Khoan -VK

SM: I'm talking to Vu Khac Khoan again on June 22nd, and the interviewer is Sarah Mason. I History think he's going to talk about the two smaller religious groups.

VK: Yes. Not small.

SM: Not small.

VK: Yes, not small. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, okay.

VK: Yes, involved in enough, you know, to . . . to make difficulty against the Communists now. [Chuckles]

SM: I see. Now.

VK: Yes, now.

SM: Yes.

VK: You know, really, these two groups are more . . . more political than religious.

SM: I see

VK: Yes.

SM: Are they more political than say the Buddhists or Catholics?

VK: Yes. Yes, more political.

SM: I see.

VK: Because they were created in the [unclear] to be against the French.

SM: I see.

VK: They began when the French came there first in South Vietnam. Because the French came in South Vietnam before the North.

SM: I see. Was that after the mid-nineteenth century or . . .?

VK: Yes. After, you know, 1862.

SM: After 1862.

VK: Yes, because in 1862 the French and the king of Vietnam, the emperor of Vietnam signed a treaty. A treaty.

SM: I see.

VK: And the Vietnam must, you know, give to the French all of the South.

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: But, you know, the French find that the South is not enough for them.

SM: [Chuckles] Never satisfied.

VK: [Chuckles] Yes. They took the North and after they took the Central.

SM: Oh.

VK: You know.

SM: Yes. What year did they take the North and Central?

VK: The North, oh, about 1875. 1874 or 1875.

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: And after some months, they took the Central.

SM: In the same year?

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes. I see.

VK: And so, you know, these two groups were in South Vietnam.

SM: I see.

VK: Yes, South Vietnam. The leaders were, you know, people in South Vietnam who were against the French. They used religion, you know, for the people, for the people to follow them.

SM: Ah ha.

VK: You know, and to . . . organize against the French. The proof is . . . there is proof for this because, you know, all the leaders were, you know, stopped by the French. History Proj

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Were arrested by the French and sent to jail.

SM: [Chuckles] I see.

VK: However, they still have some religious points.

SM: Yes.

VK: For the . . . [unclear] is quite similar to the Buddhism

SM: Oh.

you know, something different from the Buddhism. VK: Quite. There is, sure, some

SM: Yes.

VK: And the Buddhism, you know, Hoa Hao. But, you know, in my opinion, these differences come from, you know, the . . . the . . . because they are in the South, you know.

SM: Yes.

VK: From the, you know . . .

SM: So Buddhism itself might be a little different in the North than in the South?

VK: Mmmm . . . yes, maybe. You know.

SM: Yes.

VK: About the right . . . the writ, you know.

SM: Yes.

VK: About how to, you know, to pray Buddha.

SM: Yes.

VK: But in the essence, you know, in the base, it's the same.

SM: I see.

VK: They're the same.

istory Project **SM:** The same in Buddhism North and South or in the Hoa Hao?

VK: The . . .

SM: The rights are . . .?

VK: Both.

SM: Both, yes.

VK: And generally, the Buddhism in South Vietnam, Buddhism in general comes from, you know, the small wheel.

SM: Yes.

VK: And for the North, Buddhism comes from the, you know, the big wheel.

SM: Oh, so that's more similar to Chinese Mahayana?

VK: Yes. Yes. For the North, it's more similar to Chinese Buddhism, and even Japanese.

SM: Yes.

VK: But for the South, it's more similar to, you know, to the . . . [unclear], to, you know, Malaysia, to . . . yes, and Cambodia.

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: For the color of the dress . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: For example, the monks who are in the big wheel, you know, for the North.

SM: Yes.

VK: They adopt the color, the brown color for the dress.

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: And for the [unclear] the gray.

SM: Oh.

VK: But for the, you know, the small wheel, they adopt the yellow.

SM: Oh.

VK: There is no conflict.

SM: Yes.

ory project VK: There is no conflict. You cannot talk about conflict between, you know, these two branches of Buddhism.

SM: Yes.

VK: But differences.

SM: Yes.

VK: About the form of the writ, that's all. And for the Buddhism [unclear] they are close, you know, they are near the . . . the small wheel.

SM: Hmmm.

VK: Because they come from the South.

SM: Yes.

VK: But in the same time, more . . . not too much rigorous like, you know, people who follow the small wheel.

SM: I see.

VK: Rigorous.

SM: They're not so rigorous?

VK: Rigorous, you know . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. Because people, you know, who follow the small wheel . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: And especially the monks, they must follow, you know, very rigorous [unclear].

SM: I see. But the Hoa Hao is not as rigorous.

VK: Yes, it's not like this because, you know, there is another role, you know, to follow. Against French, and . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: And the Hoa Hao now, you know, occupy . . . they have [unclear] situation, I mean, geographical, you know.

SM: Yes.

VK: To the West. West . . . the West of the South. And, you know, very near to Cambodia.

SM: Oh, yes. I see.

VK: And the rice is very, very rich here.

SM: Oh.

VK: Very rich.

SM: Yes.

VK: And I think that it's the . . . this constitutes a difficulty for the Communists now.

SM: I see.

VK: Who want to get the rice, you know, from these towns.

SM: So most of their followers are in this area then?

VK: Yes, I think so. Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: For the Cao Dai, it's more general.

SM: Oh.

VK: We have the Cao Dai, you know, on . . . but the main land for Cao Dai still is the South, not the North, not the Central.

SM: I see.

VK: But there is Cao Dai people in the North and even in the Central. But few.

SM: Oh.

VK: They are few.

SM: I see, so both of them are concentrated in the South.

VK: Yes. Yes, because they are . . . they were, you know, the first who . . . who were, you know, against the French. Organizations against French of the [unclear].

SM: Oh, yes. So these are very old [unclear],

VK: [Unclear] old enough. Old enough.

SM: Yes.

VK: And for the Cao Dai, you know, there is something interesting I want to talk about, you know, the base of their . . . of this religion.

SM: Yes.

VK: In the point of view of, you know, religion, this religion, you know, is something like, you know, a mixture. You know.

SM: A mystery?

VK: Yes. No, not a mystery but a mixture. Mix, you know.

SM: Oh, a mixture. Yes.

VK: Yes. A mixture of, you know, quite all the religions.

SM: Quite . . . pardon?

VK: All the religions.

SM: All religions.

VK: Quite.

SM: Mmmm.

VK: They pray good, lots, they pray, you know, Buddha. They pray, you know, Christ.

SM: Oh.

VK: They pray, you know . . . you know, some . . . some Vietnamese poets.
SM: Oh.
VK: And they pray, you know, even the French poets.
SM: Oh.
VK: You know, Victor Hugo.
SM: Really?

VK: [Chuckles] That's, you know, that's very funny.

SM: [Chuckles] That's very interesting.

VK: I think that . . . yes. I think that is interesting.

SM: Yes.

VK: Because they want to get all the people.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And that when they pray, Victor Hugo or, you know, some Vietnamese poet or Christ or Buddha, all these people are for them men, but not, you know . . .

SM: Oh, they're not gods then.

VK: No. No.

SM: Yes. I see.

VK: And in my opinion, they are more political than, you know, religious. But they have, you know, a temple.

SM: Oh.

VK: In the town, in the province. Very big.

SM: Oh.

VK: I mean that with the temple.

SM: Yes.

VK: In a small town, you know, near Cambodia, near the . . . you know. The frontier.

SM: I see.

VK: And this town is Tay Ninh. Tay Ninh, in two words

SM: I see. Oh, so that one town is the headquarters then.

VK: Yes, the headquarters. And the headquarters for the Hoa Hao is Long Xuyen, for the Hoa Hao. It's Long Xuyen.

SM: Oh.

VK: This is for the Cao Dai.

SM: Okay.

VK: And this is for the Hoa Hao.

SM: Okay. Hmmm.

[Sounds of pages turning]

SM: Does it go into Cambodia, too? Or mainly in Vietnam?

VK: I don't think so. Just Vietnam.

SM: Yes.

VK: And for the Cao Dai, there is support, you know, the . . . the first, I think that the first politician, Vietnamese politician supported by them was the . . . the Prince Cuong De.

SM: Hmmm.

VK: Who was against the French.

SM: I see.

VK: And who was in Japan.

SM: Yes.

VK: He escaped, you know, Vietnam.

SM: I see.

VK: From Vietnam to go to Japan.

History Project **SM:** Yes, and he was the first political leader they supported?

VK: Ah . . . not the first, but almost the . .

SM: Yes.

VK: Because the movement against the French was lead first by the intellectuals.

SM: Yes.

VK: And these intellectuals are, you know, quite . . . everybody's quite . . . you know, Confucianist.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And for the Confucianism, you know, the first duty is the duty, you know, for the prince or the king. Yes.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: And so the intellectuals who were against the French wanted to choose a leader, you know, who can replace the . . . who can be, you know, emperor.

SM: Yes.

VK: And this is why they support Cuong De.

SM: I see.

VK: And the Cao Dai support Cuong De, too.

SM: Oh, the same person.

VK: And the more . . . the more, you know, the Vietnamese intellectuals who support Cuong De, after we have Ngo Dinh Diem . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: You know, the president. Yes, Ngo Dinh Diem supports Cuong De.
SM: Diem did?
VK: Diem, yes.
SM: Oh.

VK: And his wife. The Cao Dai, for the first time, support Diem.

SM: Oh. That's very interesting.

VK: Yes. But Diem, you know, has brothers . . . has, you know . . .

SM: Has what?

VK: Some brothers. And the people didn't like, you know, his brothers.

SM: Oh, yes. Yes

VK: Especially the, you know, the Ngo Dinh Thuc . . . and a bishop, too. And all . . . the whole family was, you know, Catholic.

SM: Yes.

VK: It's why, you know, there is no support, close, you know, no close support, you know, for the future . . . for the Cao Dai. For the first time they support Diem. But, you know, more and more the support is rather . . . diminished.

SM: Yes. I see.

VK: I think that now that if there is some people against, you know, Communists now, and who play an active role in Vietnam, you know, exclude . . . exclude the former military.

SM: Yes.

VK: We must count with, you know, Hoa Hao.

SM: Hmmm.

VK: Because the Hoa Hao, you know, occupy this province, this, you know . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: Who are very rich in rice. The Cao Dai, you know . . . I have no idea about their movement against the Communists. They are against but, you know, not active. And, you know, among . . . among the leaders of Cao Dai, there is, you know, a faction of, you know, [unclear].

SM: Of . . . pardon?

VK: [Unclear].

SM: Oh.

VK: Because of, you know, the base of their religion, they are something of a mixture.

SM: Yes.

VK: You know, they easily, you know [chuckles] become, you know, [unclear] between, you know.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And they do compromise.

SM: They do?

VK: Compromise, yes. Not like the Hoa Hao.

SM: Yes.

VK: The Hoa Hao are too . . . you know, more active and more, you know, [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: Oh, I think that . . . that's enough for these two. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes. Yes. Unless you want to just comment briefly on whether this has carried into Minnesota or you don't think it has?

VK: [Unclear]?

SM: The two groups.

VK: I don't think so.

VK: Hoa Hao or Cao Dai here, but, you know, as groups, no.

SM: They're not organized.

VK: As groups, no. I don't know. I don't know.

M: Yes. You wouldn't know if they were here.

K: [Chuckles] If they do some.

SM: Yes. [Chuckles] Maybe you want to just make some brief remarks about the role of women in Vietnamese society.

VK: Okay.

SM: Since you've made a paper longer, you don't need to go into so much detail here, but just a little idea of . .

VK: Yes. I think that the role the, you know, the Vietnamese woman in the Vietnamese society has some particular . . . some differences. You know, if you could compare, you know, this role and this position to the position and role of, you know, their sisters in the Western society.

SM: Oh, yes. And then [unclear] differences from Chinese and . . .?

VK: Ah . . . even from Chinese.

SM: Yes.

VK: Because in China they talk . . . you know, they talk about killing, you know, the daughters.

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: I don't know. Really, I don't know. I have no . . . you know, information about this.

SM: Yes.

VK: But they told me that in some places they kill, you know, the newborns. a Oral History Project

SM: Yes.

VK: If the newborn is a daughter.

SM: Yes. Usually if it is famine or, you know, hard times.

VK: Yes. Yes. Even . . . yes.

SM: But nevertheless they chose the . . .

VK: In South, I think.

SM: Yes.

VK: They get [unclear – hungry easily].

SM: Yes.

VK: And the women were considered by Chinese like a machine to, you know, to [unclear] you know.

SM: Yes.

VK: Not in Vietnam. Not because of the, you know, the . . . humanity that is in North Vietnam. No, I don't . . . I don't talk about this. But about a particular situation in Vietnam, I have talked about this in the, you know, in Historical Society about this.

SM: Yes.

VK: About the war. And about the needs of manpower in the fields.

SM: Yes.

VK: And even in the battle.

SM: Yes.

VK: And this wife, woman in Vietnam, gets more rights, you know.

SM: Yes.

VK: Than women in other [unclear] countries.

SM: I see. So you think it's related to the struggle. War and . . .

VK: Yes. Yes, against Chinese, against French, and . . .

SM: Oh.

VK: It's very interesting to know that first, you know, people who arose against, you know, the invaders, the Chinese, were, you know, women.

SM: Yes, it's very interesting.

VK: Yes. The three . . . the three women who were the leaders against, you know, Chinese. And the first.

SM: Hmmm.

VK: And for, you know, for the two sisters, you . . . you hear about the story of two sisters, the two sisters [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes. They . . . when they, you know, they arrived to maybe get out, you know, the Chinese.

SM: Yes.

VK: They became emperor. The two.

SM: Oh. Oh.

VK: In the same town, yes. And the first thing they have done is to talk to people that during two years you don't have tax, you know, to pay.

SM: Oh.

VK: That's very political.

SM: And how did they run the country? [Chuckles]

VK: [Chuckles]

SM: So they dropped the tax for two years?

VK: Yes, for two years. For two years.

SM: Oh. What century was this?

VK: Ah . . . let's see. About the first century, I think it was . . .

SM: About the first century. And that was the Trung sisters?

VK: Yes. Trung.

SM: Trung.

VK: Trung. T-R.

SM: Oh, Trung.

VK: Trung, yes.

SM: Yes. Trung.

yral History Rroject VK: The first . . . you know, the older, is Trung Trac. And the second one is Trung Nhi.

SM: Trung Nhi. It was Trung Trac and Trung Nhi.

VK: Yes. And the third

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Is Trieu.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes, Trieu.

SM: T-R-I-E-U.

VK: Yes. We call her, you know, Lady Trieu. Ba Trieu.

SM: I see.

VK: And after, you know, in the following centuries, you know, came men.

SM: Yes. Well, since that time, have women also been soldiers in the anti-French movements and so on?

VK: Against the French?

SM: Yes.

VK: You mean . . .?

SM: Have the Vietnamese women taken part in the movement against the French and all recent. et, calcold problems of the ca . .?

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Recently, too.

VK: Recently, yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: You know, I just [unclear] something at [unclear]

SM: Yes.

VK: For [unclear] you know, the capital [unclear]

SM: Yes.

VK: During the attack of the, you know, of 1968 . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: Against [unclear] and in the opinion of the author, I know her. It's a woman who writes.

SM: Oh. [Unclear].

VK: She talked about many, many, you know, women.

SM: Ah ha.

VK: You know, becoming soldiers. And they were very active Communists [unclear].

SM: They were active Communists?

VK: Yes. These girls, you know, they killed, you know, more than men.

SM: Oh. Hmmm. Were they . . .? Oh, yes. They would be mostly Communist.

VK: And against the French, we have many, many, you know, women. And these differences, you know, explain the rights, you know, of women in Vietnam.

SM: Yes.

VK: They deserve, you know, these rights.

SM: Yes. I see. [Unclear].

VK: Yes. And there is something very interesting also I want to talk about, you know, the [unclear] the [unclear] theater.

SM: Yes.

VK: All the plays, you know, the main characters are women.

SM: Oh.

VK: Are women.

SM: The male characters are played by women?

VK: The main, yes. Yes.

SM: Oh.

VK: And the main, you know, the main characters . . .

SM: Oh, the main characters.

VK: Yes, the important, you know. The first characters, you know.

SM: Oh. Oh, yes.

VK: Are female. Are female, yes.

SM: I see.

VK: And our literature has three, you know, great poems, long and great poems. And for all, you know, these three poems, the characters are female.

SM: Oh.

VK: Female, yes.

SM: Well, that's quite different.

VK: Yes.

SM: Than Chinese or . . . or the West, too.

VK: Yes. Now, for the West, yes. In Chinese there . . .

SM: There are some?

VK: Some.

SM: Yes.

VK: Yes, some.

SM: Yes. That's really interesting.

VK: You know, there is something I forgot to talk about, you know. At this meeting . . .

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SM: Yes.

VK: [Unclear] Historical Society about the rights of women.

SM: Oh.

VK: But, you know, in detail. Okay. If, you know, the husband . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: Are not . . . well, not polite, you know, with the daddy or mommy or, you know, of the wife

SM: With the who?

VK: Of the father and the mother of the wife.

SM: Oh.

VK: I mean the, you know, father-in-law, mother-in-law.

SM: Yes.

VK: The wife can get divorced.

SM: Oh. I see. Hmmm.

VK: [Chuckles] You know, it's a detail but, you know, it shows something about . . .

SM: Sure. Yes.

VK: Of course the role of men, you know, still is, you know, important. Because they . . . they must do a [unclear] and they much, you know, must be, you know . . . functional. But when they struggle in the country, the role of the, you know, the Vietnamese women, you know, becomes [unclear]. Because, in my opinion, at this moment, we need manpower [unclear].

is a time line SM: Oh, yes. So in the normal course of events, if there ever is a time like that. [Chuckles] The male would be somewhat dominant or . . .?

VK: Ah . . .

SM: In government and business and . . .?

VK: Yes, in normal . . .

SM: In normal times.

VK: Normal, yes, times.

SM: Yes.

VK: The women keep the house

SM: I see.

VK: And, you know, keep the money. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes. [Chuckles]

VK: Yes, that is very important in . . . you know.

SM: It's important, yes.

VK: For me, for example.

SM: Yes.

VK: I . . . in Vietnam when I get a paycheck, I give it to my wife.

SM: Yes.

VK: And that's my wife, you know, who . . . who rules, you know, the house.

SM: I see. That's a very important role.

VK: What to buy, what to . . . you know, to organize.

SM: So she controls the economics of the household.

VK: Yes. Yes.

to...ofdeid **SM:** Yes. So when war come then, they go out of the home to .

VK: Out of their homes.

SM: Yes.

VK: You know, before . . . before the arrival of the French, the women . . . women were, you know . . . used to . . . to get out of the house and to do, you know . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: Something like social like, you know. But since the arrival of the French, the customs changed. Changed.

SM: Oh.

VK: And the women became more, you know, in the house.

SM: Oh. What kind of things did they do before the French [unclear]?

VK: Ah . . . they can, you know, do commerce.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: Yes. And no, after the French, they . . . they do commerce also.

SM: Oh. Yes. But less?

VK: Ah . . . but before this, you know, it's . . .

SM: I see. So are women . . . many women in commerce in Vietnam?

VK: Oh, yes. Yes.

SM: I see. More so than here [unclear]? I mean, among American women now they're just beginning to . . . there are many women . . . business women.

VK: Yes.

SM: But they are . . . they feel they are only beginning to get high positions in business.

VK: Yes. There's now in Vietnam, you know, it's quite a custom that, you know . . .

SM: I see.

VK: The women, you know, do . . . can get [unclear] business.

SM: I see.

VK: Yes. And they are business person, you know. [Chuckles] Good business persons.

SM: Yes. I don't know which period to refer to, but have women been in universities teaching and this kind of thing?

VK: Oh, yes.

SM: And medical professions?

VK: Ah . . . let's see. We have, you know, before the fall of Saigon, it started now we have, you know, lawyers, Vietnamese lawyers.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Women. And writers, and, you know, [unclear], and . . . business persons, and . . .

SM: And medical professions, too?

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: You know, professors.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: In my conservatory there are . . . we have, you know, many professors of piano.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: My wife was a, you know, professor of piano.

SM: Of . . . pardon?

VK: My wife.

SM: Was professor of what?

VK: Yes, of piano.

SM: Oh, of piano.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

know VK: And my daughter, my first daughter, she used to, you know, to give some lessons to, you know, to young people and get some money. [Chuckles]

SM: I see. Yes.

VK: [Unclear]. Not my wife. My wife, you know, teach at home.

SM: Oh, I see. I see. So they do have a pretty equal or strong role in Vietnamese tradition.

VK: Yes [unclear].

SM: Oh. So women do have a rather strong role in Vietnamese tradition, from way back to the present, women have a fairly equal . . .

VK: Well, yes. I mean this [unclear] you know, in the old times . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: The position of women was very strong.

SM: Yes.

VK: And after . . . with, you know, the influence of French, worse than French, that it, you know, it is less than, a little bit.

SM: Ah.

VK: But for, you know, for a short time.

SM: Yes.

VK: And after they . . . they go to school. They go to . . . you know, to university. And more and more they . . . you know, they conquer, you know, their positions, their formal positions.

SM: I see.

VK: Before I left Saigon, our society is a society of equal rights between men and women.

SM: I see.

VK: In my . . . I teach, and so, you know, in the [unclear] university.

SM: Yes.

VK: And there, you know, I have many friends who are women.

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: Yes. Who teach like me.

SM: I see. What happened when the French came that suppressed the women's position?

 $\textbf{VK:}\ \text{No}\dots \text{not}\dots \text{not}$ really suppressed, but, you know, that's very difficult \dots very \dots you know \dots

SM: Very subtle kind of thing?

VK: Yes. Because of the tradition of French . . .

SM: Oh, I see

VK: They . . . you know, they consider the woman like, you know, the . . . the *beau* sex, you know, the beautiful, you know, sex . . .

SM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

VK: And when you . . . you are in the beautiful sex you do nothing.

SM: [Chuckles] Right.

VK: [Chuckles] Yes.

SM: I see.

VK: And for the man who, you know, who loves the French and who loves also the French tradition, and for the French, you know, for them, you know, *dames*.

SM: Yes.

VK: That means lady, *dame*. Comes from this, from what . . .

SM: Oh.

VK: And dame means, you know, okay, I respect you. You are very beautiful but stay there. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] Be a statue. I see.

VK: And this, you know, this idea, you know . . .

SM: And so influenced the thinking.

VK: Yes. Yes. But for the short time.

SM: Just for a short time.

VK: For a short time or so. Only ... [unclear] you know, the Vietnamese are the [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: Vietnamese women, you know, after a short time, you know, realized that they win nothing.

SM: [Chuckles] Right.

VK: But, you know, some, you know, some . . . some poetic image, that's all.

SM: Yes.

VK: And they . . . they go to school and they read, you know, French books.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: And more and more, you know, they . . . they know their rights. They become, you know, lawyers, [unclear] artists even and writers. And more and more they [unclear] their rights. The first wife of the [unclear]. You know [unclear]? [Unclear] is the [unclear] Vietnamese [unclear].

SM: Oh, yes. Yes.

VK: He was [unclear] you know, of the war.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: Yes. The national minister of defense. Yes.

SM: How do you spell his last name?

VK: [Unclear] is the . . .

[Pause]

SM: Oh. Yes. Oh, yes.

VK: Last name. You know, this last name is the same.

SM: That's his family name.

VK: Like mine.

SM: Oh, I see. It's . . .

me. VK: But, you know, it's . . . it's not changed because of the . . . he comes from the Center.

SM: Oh, I see.

VK: And I come from the North

SM: That would be Wu if he was from the . . .

VK: Yes.

SM: I see. And he pronounced it 'Vow'?

VK: 'Vowa'.

SM: 'Vowa'?

VK: Va, like, ah, ah, A. Va [unclear].

SM: Nguyen?

VK: [Unclear –sounds like 'win'].

SM: Win?

VK: Not win.

[Recording interruption]

SM: The first wife of [unclear].

VK: [Unclear] of [unclear].

SM: Yes.

nesota i istorical society rai. VK: You know, was a Communist, too.

SM: Oh.

VK: A leader.

SM: Yes.

VK: Her name is Nguyen.

SM: Nguyen.

VK: Tai.

SM: Tai.

VK: Minh. Hai. Nguyen Tai Minh Hai.

SM: Minh Hai.

VK: Yes. She was stopped by the French.

SM: She was what?

VK: She was arrested.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes, by the French.

SM: I see.

VK: And she was, you know, killed.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes.

SM: I see. So she was . . . well, are there many Communist leaders who are women in that period?

SM: Sure.

VK: Outside

SM: Yes.

VK: And in Vietnam, in South Vietnam we have, you know, a woman, too.

SM: Yes.

VK: Who was director of a newspaper . . . daily.

SM: Oh.

VK: The name of the newspaper is *Saigon Moi*. That means the *New Saigon*.

SM: New Saigon?

VK: Yes. And the name of the woman is Lady But Tra. But Tra.

SM: But Tra.

VK: Yes.

SM: But Tra.

VK: She is director.

SM: She's what?

VK: The director of [unclear].

SM: Oh.

VK: The [unclear] you know, editor.

SM: I see.

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Listorical Society VK: She's very good. Very good [unclear].

SM: Oh.

VK: And many, many, you know, we have now three . . . three female writers, Vietnamese . . .

SM: Here in Minnesota?

VK: No, not in Minnesota.

SM: Oh, in the United States?

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh. Are any in Minnesota?

VK: Ah . . . no. I'm sorry. [Chuckles] But, you know . . .

SM: It's a small number of people here.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. [Chuckles] You're sorry. [Chuckles] Well, that's quite a few though.

VK: Yes.

SM: Could you tell me their names, those three?

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Innesota Historical Society VK: Yes. You know, in Seattle we have one of my friends, Thuy.

SM: Thuy.

VK: Hum.

SM: Hum.

VK: Yes. And another is Joong [unclear].

SM: Joong.

VK: [Unclear]. And another is in France.

SM: Oh.

VK: Ming Duc.

SM: Ming Duc.

VK: Yes. Wai Ching.

SM: Ming Duc Wai Ching.

VK: Ching, yes

SM: And she's in France?

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes. Hmmm. What about the women in the group who has come to Minnesota? Do they have a harder time or easier time finding employment or adjusting or . . .?

VK: It depends for the job, you know.

SM: Yes. Right. Say for professionals? Are they . . .?

VK: Professionals, I think that [unclear].

SM: I guess it's hard for everybody. [Chuckles]

VK: Yes, there isn't . . . I know many, many of them who are . . . who work, you know, in some factory.

SM: Yes.

VK: And my daughter, my first daughter . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: She has a B.A. in business, in, you know, in Vietnam in the university, Buddhist university. And who is . . . she is working for the airline. [Unclear] Airline.

SM: Oh.

VK: She's at the registration.

SM: I see. So she could be doing something more in keeping with her training at some time . . .?

VK: Ah . . . no, you know, after . . . it is, you know . . .

SM: Or do you see her moving up from . . ?

VK: She . . . she didn't [unclear]. She didn't love the English at the . . .

SM: Oh, I see. Yes.

VK: In Vietnam.

SM: She did or didn't?

VK: Didn't.

SM: Didn't. Yes.

VK: But, you know, when . . . once here, she very quickly, you know, she . . .

SM: I see.

VK: She adapted, you know.

SM: Oh, so that's a very good job to get here.

VK: And now she's at the reservation.

SM: Yes.

VK: That means you must talk, you know. [Chuckles]

A Orall History Roll of the City of the Ci **SM:** Yes. She certainly must have learned it very quickly.

VK: A lot. [Chuckles] You know, with everybody, yes.

SM: Yes. Oh, yes.

VK: And my thoughts, my thought, you know, [unclear].

SM: Yes.

VK: Who is a daughter, too.

SM: Yes.

VK: Who has a B.A. in law in Vietnam.

SM: Oh.

VK: Yes, she continues, you know, the paralegal work here.

SM: I see.

VK: And she is now in California

SM: She's . . . she's studying or working in . . .?

VK: In California.

SM: Yes.

VK: Now she's just living in another state.

SM: Oh.

VK: To follow her husband.

SM: Oh, left California.

VK: Left here, you know.

SM: Or left Minnesota. Yes.

VK: Yes, for California.

SM: I see.

VK: To be with her husband.

SM: I see.

VK: Who is a chemist and she's now, you know, in search of a job there.

SM: I see.

VK: And she has, you know, a B.A. in law in Vietnam and a paralegal here.

SM: Yes.

VK: And to . . . to do, you know, to show you that, you know, for the job. I think that there is no difficulty for Vietnamese people.

SM: Yes. It's mainly a matter of learning English, I guess.

VK: Yes.

SM: How many students would you say that . . . Vietnamese students are there at the university. Do you know?

VK: How many?

SM: Yes.

VK: They talk about two hundred.

SM: About two hundred.

VK: Yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: And I plan to do something for them.

SM: Oh.

VK: To . . . you know, to maybe if, you know, the staff of the U permits, I can, you know, [unclear] some course.

SM: Yes.

VK: In Vietnamese.

SM: Oh, that would be a great idea.

VK: Yes, for . . . course for them.

SM: Yes.

VK: Because, you know, they . . . they have, you know, some . . . some course they must, you know . . .

SM: Yes.

VK: Must follow.

SM: Some requirements [unclear].

VK: Yes. Exclude their major.

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: Yes. Elective. Elective course here.

SM: Oh, I see. So they must have some electives.

VK: Yes, electives. Yes. Yes.

SM: And that could be a very good elective. Yes.

VK: Yes.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And like this, you know, they don't have to forget, you know, about our culture, our customs, our history.

SM: Sure.

VK: Because more and more, you know, young people have the tendency to forget.

SM: Yes. Is there anything for high school students or . . .?

VK: There is something. There is something.

SM: There is. Yes.

VK: But, you know, in the program of bilingual.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes, it's not enough. That's not enough.

or...? **SM:** No. It's not enough about the Vietnamese culture.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Well, that would be a really good thing to have.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Do you have some contacts over there or . . .?

VK: Not yet.

SM: Oh. Yes.

VK: We . . . you know, as the president of the Cultural, Vietnamese Cultural Association . . .

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: I discuss it with my, you know, my members, with Dr. [unclear] and the [unclear], yes.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And we plan to do something about this.

SM: Oh, yes. You might approach it through the history department or philosophy or . . .

VK: I . . . don't . . . I don't know yet.

SM: Yes. Yes.

VK: It might be . . . you know, belong to the Asian.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: Yes, [Asian] studies.

SM: Yes, right. Especially if it's in Vietnamese.

VK: Maybe . . . yes.

SM: Yes.

VK: I plan to . . . to give three courses.

SM: Yes.

VK: One for the history, one for the linguistic, and one for the literature.

SM: I see.

VK: I can give some, you know, some course of the Vietnamese literature.

SM: Oh, yes.

VK: And I can invite one of my friends, who is now in the South Illinois University, who is Dr. [unclear].

SM: [Unclear].

VK: Yes. You know about it? [Unclear].

SM: I think you might have mentioned him before.

VK: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. There is a new director of the Asian American . . . Asian Pacific American Learning Resource Center who might be someone you could talk to.

VK: Ah, yes.

SM: Did you meet him? He's Japanese.

VK: He's Japanese?

SM: Well, he's American, but was born in Japan.

VK: Yes. Yes. Yes.

SM: He is [unclear – sounds like Nobiya Tashida].

VK: [Unclear]?

SM: [Unclear]. He's a very nice person.

VK: Ah, yes.

SM: Yes, he's just starting next week. [Chuckles]

VK: Oh, yes?

SM: He's just arriving. He . . . I think he just finished a Ph.D. at UCLA . . . or not just finished, a few years ago. He's been teaching in the . . .

VK: He's now in the U?

SM: Yes. He's just coming this summer.

VK: Ah, yes.

SM: Yes. And I think he wants to set up an Asian studies program.

VK: Oh, yes. I can . . . I can talk to him about this then.

SM: Yes, I could tell him about you, too, if I see him.

VK: [Unclear].

SM: I met him just recently and he was over at the Historical Society, seems very nice.

VK: Yes.

SM: Well, is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven't covered or is this about enough for today? [Chuckles]

VK: [Chuckles] [Unclear]. I think that . . . that is . . . that's all.

SM: Yes.

VK: For the . . . the interview. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes. Well, I really appreciate your doing this.

VK: Thank you again.

SM: I think it's a great addition for our archives.

VK: [Chuckles] I want a copy. My . . .?

SM: Oh, sure. Yes.

VK: Okay.

SM: Yes, we can make a copy.

VK: After . . . you know. Yes.

SM: [Chuckles]

VK: I want to say thank you to . . . excuse me.

SM: Sarah Mason.

VK: Yes, to the lady. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles]

Oral History Roject ine Histor. VK: Who interviewed me, and to the Historical Society. And that's all. [Chuckles] Thank you.

SM: Thank you again.