

# Preface

Thirty years after the launch of economic liberalisation and global reintegration policies in the mid-1980s, Vietnamese are experiencing profound realignments in their social relationships. Revolutions in industry, consumption, exchange, and governance have transformed people's relations with each other and have fostered new social identities and networks. New media technologies, communications infrastructure, and education opportunities have widened cultural horizons and nurtured new ambitions and outlooks. Millions of Vietnamese are on the move as students, industrial workers, and marriage migrants have taken leave of home communities, and forged new links to people and places. In the process, divisions have opened up between city and countryside, the old and the young, and people of different regions and ethnicity. Vietnamese mobilise existing connections of various kinds to bridge the gaps, but also find themselves unequally situated to build new relationships or take advantage of new opportunities. Social relationships once considered backward or obsolete are being re-evaluated as resources for development, and practices and places that were once deemed marginal are assuming new centrality.

This book explores the dynamic processes of connection and disconnection that are remaking Vietnam's social landscape. It features essays by scholars from Vietnam and abroad who draw on research conducted in diverse Vietnamese localities. The essays were first presented as papers at a Vietnam Update conference held at The Australian National University (ANU) in December 2014. This is an annual conference series that discusses a theme of contemporary relevance to Vietnam's socioeconomic development. The theme selected for the 2014 Vietnam Update was 'connection and disconnection'. Conference presenters engaged with topics such as social capital, development from below, socially inclusive growth, and the new

subjectivities emerging in Vietnam's globalised, market-based society. The essays selected for inclusion in this book share a common research methodology and disciplinary approach. As ethnographic reflections on connection and disconnection, they offer a unique perspective on how Vietnamese in a great variety of circumstances relate to each other and redefine what it means to be Vietnamese.

The 2014 Vietnam Update conference was opened by ANU Chancellor Professor Gareth Evans. His informative speech reflected on changes in Vietnam and in Australia's relationship with Vietnam since 1990, when he presented a paper at the inaugural Vietnam Update in his capacity as Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs. Carl Thayer and Suiwah Leung provided an overview of recent political and economic developments to contextualise the thematic papers. Attending the 2014 Update were representatives of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Vietnam, the US Embassy in Vietnam, and the Japanese development agency. Many Australian aid-funded PhD scholarship students attended the Update, along with numerous other academics and students. The participants also included representatives of commercial, non-government, religious and community organisations, and many individual Vietnamese-Australians. The audience members took an active part in discussions, and their feedback to the presenters has been incorporated into the chapters in this volume.

The 2014 Vietnam Update was hosted by ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. The organising committee comprised ANU scholars David Marr, Li Tana, Ben Kerkvliet, Sango Mahanty, Greg Fealy, Peter Chaudhry, Ha Viet Quan, and myself. They took responsibility for paper selection, program design, and the funding and running of the conference. A large share of the conference organising work was shouldered by administrative staff in the Department of Political and Social Change of ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. The organisers wish to thank, in particular, Kerrie Hogan, Kate Hulm, Allison Ley, Phạm Thu Thủy, Luke Hambly, Melissa Orr, Daniel Striegl, Beverly Williams, and Sean Downes. They helped to ensure that the conference was well-attended, vibrant, friendly, and professionally run, as noted by many conference participants.

The Vietnam Update organisers would like to express our gratitude to the Australian Government Aid Program of the Department of Foreign Affairs for generously providing funding for the 2014 Vietnam Update. This support enabled us to fund the participation of a large number of paper presenters from Vietnam, along with other international specialists, and to help cover some of the costs of running the conference and publishing the results. Also making a significant financial contribution to the Update and the production of this book were the School of Culture, History and Language and ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. The series organisers are grateful to these sponsors for helping to disseminate this new research on Vietnam.

As editor of this book, I would like to thank the many individuals who contributed to its production. For their timely and constructive advice on the chapters, I thank the peer reviewers Philippe Le Failler, Ken Maclean, Erik Harms, Jean Michaud, Truong Huyen Chi, Keith Taylor, Kirin Narayan, David Chandler, Catherine Earl, Alexandra Winkels, Catherine Locke, Assa Doron, Martha Lincoln, Linh Khanh Nguyen, Oscar Salemin, Rupert Friederichsen, Oliver Tappe, John Marston, John Kleinen, Li Tana, Nir Avieli, and Margaret Bodemer. Diana Glazebrook did a magnificent job with the first round of copy-editing, and Duncan Beard provided prompt and professional assistance with editing and formatting the manuscript for publication. I thank the editorial board of the ANU Press Vietnam series for their support, encouragement, and critical advice in every stage of this book project. The board consists of Kim Huynh, Sango Mahanty, David Marr, Ben Kerkvliet, Li Tana, Judith Cameron, Nola Cooke, and Ashley Carruthers. Finally, my thanks go to Jim Fox for supporting the establishment of the Vietnam book series, and to Lorena Kanellopoulos, Sascha Villarosa, Emily Tinker, and all others at ANU Press for their help in bringing this book to fruition.

Philip Taylor  
Canberra  
December 2015

This text is taken from *Connected and Disconnected in Viet Nam: Remaking Social Relations in a Post-socialist Nation*, edited by Philip Taylor, published 2016 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.