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STAYS ALIVE  
WHEN ITS  
CULTURE IS  
ALIVE.**

**HOPE NEVER DIES  
IN THE  
INDOMITABLE  
VIETNAMESE MIND**

- **SACEI Newsletter** updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.
- It serves as a **LINK** between **SACEI** members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.

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# SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



**To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture**

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## Roots of South Vietnamese Nationalism (Part 2)

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### 9. Nguyễn Đình Chiểu (1822-1888)

Many groups were formed under various banners to fight the French, such as, "Pacify the French; Wipe out Heresy," "Royalist National Salvation," and "People Self Defense." Nguyễn Đình Chiểu was the most ardent and vocal advocate who heaped scorn over those who did not fight the French. (44)

Born in Gia Định/Saigon, he passed the regional imperial examination exam in 1843 and was traveling to Huế for the metropolitan examination in 1846 when he was struck with a viral infection that left him blind. He returned to Gia Định to open a school and write poetry. *Lục Văn Tiên*, a poetic work partly based on his life, remains one of the most celebrated works in Vietnamese literature.

When the French invaded Vietnam in 1859, he resettled to Bến Tre province, seventy kilometers south of Saigon in the Mekong delta. Unable to physically participate in the anti-colonialist movement because of his blindness, he used his pen to support the fight which he considered "righteous," but in violation of king Tự Đức's order. He did not cooperate with the French regime and even shunned it. He refused to use anything the French brought to Vietnam, including soap. He was the first poet known for his nationalist and anti-colonialist writings.



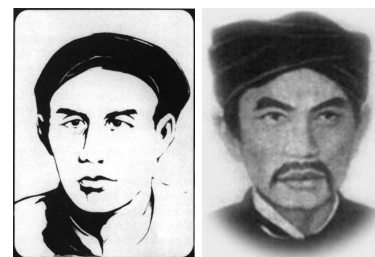
### 10. Trương Định (1820-1864) and Nguyễn Trung Trực (1839-1868)

The Huế government was slow in organizing the country's defense; it was only after the Saigon fell to the French that southerners were urged to mobilize and fight against them and rewards bestowed to fighters. Localities and persons mobilizing the largest number of recruits would receive the greatest honors and awards with the goal of threatening the invaders so that they "knew no tranquility as long as they remained in Vietnam."

Response, although enthusiastic in the beginning was not as sustained and durable as when Nguyễn Ánh asked for help. The best known guerilla fighter was Trương Định (or Trương Công Định or Quan Định). Born in central Vietnam in 1820, he followed his father to Gia Định when the latter moved there. Raised under a strict military tradition--his father was an officer in the imperial army--he was fond of military arts and techniques. He married the daughter of a wealthy land owner in Định Tường and used her money to finance a *đồn điền* (45) for impoverished people. As a result, Huế gave him the title of deputy regimental commander; he turned out to be a good leader.

Once Saigon fell and its commander Võ Duy Ninh committed suicide, royal troops fled in disarray. Trương Định began organizing the resistance using his plantation men to which he added soldiers of the defeated royal army. With only 1,000 men at his disposition, he gave the French plenty of troubles because of his knowledge of the terrain. Huế then granted him the title of deputy commander. In 1861, he had retaken Qui Sơn and his troops jumped to 6,000. He instilled discipline and organization in his army and the Huế court, happy with his work, promoted him to commander of all southern nghĩa quân (righteous soldiers).

He used guerilla tactics to frustrate the invaders. The rebels were called the "invisible enemy" for



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they seemed to be "everywhere and nowhere." Trương Định had decided to wage a "protracted resistance" to the invaders. From his headquarters in Gò Công, an eastern coastal province forty kilometers from Saigon, he appealed to his countrymen to resist against the French. In February 1863, Admiral Bonard was able to dislodge him from his hideout. Forced to flee, he lost many soldiers and a large amount of weaponry. On 19 August, 1863, betrayed by a former rebel soldier, he was ambushed and wounded. Facing imminent capture, he killed himself. (46)

### *Roots of S. VN Nationalism...*

Ambushes were still carried out by other rebel groups in Châu Đốc in 1867. Nguyễn Trung Trực was a fisherman who led militia forces against French forces in the regions of Tân An (now Long An) and Rạch Giá (Kiên Giang province). A partisan leader, he was a former supporter of Trương Định. His most impressive achievement was the sinking of the French transport ship L'Espérance on the Nhật Tảo canal on 10 December, 1861.

The Nhật Tảo canal connects the eastern and western Vàm Co Rivers allowing rice transportation from the town of Mỹ Tho in the rice producing Mekong delta to Saigon-Gia Định. He divided his men into three groups. The first group attacked a nearby pro-French village to lure French forces into an ambush. He led the second group to attack the ship and sink it while the third group was designed to block French reinforcements and to provide support. Truc and his men boarded the vessel and fought the French with knives and bayonets and was able to sink the L'Espérance.

Continuing his attack on the French, he attacked the fort of Kiên Giang in mid-1868 killing the province chief and thirty soldiers. (47) The French captured and executed him on 27 October, 1868.

Following Truc's execution, Tự Đức composed the poem, although Truc had disobeyed his edict, which is to lay down arms and not to fight the French. Tự Đức felt that Truc was a brave and "righteous" person. Such a person could be used as an example for others:

"How fearsome was that fisherman!

His great talent is admired by all! Burning the French ship at Nhật Tảo village, Leveling the French ramparts at Kiên Giang, Opposing the common enemies of people and king. Having sworn to risk his life for the country, His memory will be rewarded for one thousand years.

What an example of our righteous and faithful people." (48)

### **11. Trương Vĩnh Ký (1837-1898) and Huỳnh Tịnh Của (1834-1907)**

Trương Vĩnh Ký, born in Bến Tre province of Vĩnh Long, was only eight when his father, a military commander, died. A Catholic priest who had been sheltered by the boy's father, adopted him, sent him to a mission school in Cambodia (1848-1851) and then to a seminary in Penang, Malaysia (1851-1858) where the gifted boy learned fourteen foreign languages. He then returned to Vietnam following the death of his mother just as the French invasion began.

He began teaching in 1862 and the following year accompanied Phan Thanh Giản to Paris as an official translator. He used the occasion to visit Spain, Portugal, and Italy. On his return, he continued his teaching at the school of interpreters where he served as director from 1866 to 1868. In 1868, he became the editor-in-chief of the Gia Định Báo, the only quốc ngữ newspaper in Vietnam. He served French administrators in various capacities during the 1870's and 1880's.

Over the next three decades, he and Huỳnh Tịnh Của wrote textbooks, dictionaries, essays on a variety of fields from history, literature, morality to grammar and pedagogy and promoted the quốc ngữ as the national language. They transformed the quoc from a relatively rudimentary tool for transcription into a means for writing the contemporary spoken vernacular, which turned out to be one of their greatest achievements in Vietnamese history. (49) Huỳnh Tịnh Của was from Bà Rịa, about seventy kilometers east of Saigon. He went to France with Phan Thanh Giản and was an editor of Gia Định Báo.

As the quốc ngữ allows the Vietnamese to express themselves, their feelings and their soul, the lack of a national language de-identified them and prevented them from feeling themselves as part of a same nation. From 111 BC to 939 AD (and long after that date), under Chinese domination, the Vietnamese were forced to speak and write in Chinese. Although they had their own dialect, they were not allowed to express themselves through that dialect. They probably talked between themselves in their dialect, but communication between them and their Chinese rulers was done in Chinese. Even after they recovered their independence, they continued (by tradition or lack of creativity) to speak and write in Chinese



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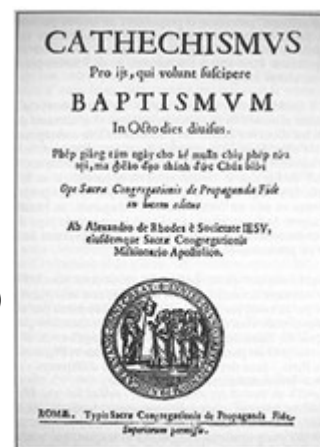
and followed Chinese rites and tradition. Of course, they used Chinese Confucianism as part of their tradition. When Nguyễn Ánh reunified the country in 1802, he could turn to westernization as a role model. He had enrolled many Frenchmen who had helped him during the war of against the Tây Sơn. Alas, he turned right back in the hands of the Chinese, reestablished Confucianism and Chinese rites, laws, and tradition and built a new palatial complex in Huế, which was a replica of the Chinese Forbidden City. Chinese language remained the official language at the court.

Somehow, between all these changes, the Vietnamese dialect persisted and was spoken by the common people who were not rich enough to put themselves through private schools. There was no public school at that time and only well-off people could afford to send their children (mostly males) to private teachers for schooling. Because the Vietnamese dialect had no alphabet, some people used the Chinese alphabet to translate the sounds of the Vietnamese dialect into words. The end result was *nôm*, a transcribed Vietnamese language using Chinese alphabet. *Nôm* never gained foothold in Vietnam because it required the person to understand Chinese to understand *nôm*. For the common people, it was another experimentation of erudite men gone wrong.

Then in the fifteenth century, came European priests who wanted to teach their religion to the illiterate masses in Vietnam. Without a written language, preaching and converting people became difficult. Some tried to translate the dialect, which sounded like tweeting bird song to European ears, using Roman alphabet. The culmination of their work--called quốc ngữ--was done by Father Alexandre de Rhodes who published in 1651 in Rome the first catechism in quốc ngữ. However, since Vietnamese kings viewed the act of evangelization akin to an attempt to destabilize the kings' regime, the priests and their quốc ngữ were not well regarded in Vietnam and expelled out of the country. The Confucian local kings who saw themselves as representatives of the Heavenly King demanded obedience from the local people. European priests, on the other hand, taught local people to only obey God and to disregard local traditions that did not fit well with the Catholic religion. Priests who also worked in tandem with their own governments were seen as people who lay the groundwork of the conquest of the country.

Quốc ngữ, therefore, was not recognized until Trương Vĩnh Ký and Huỳnh Tịnh Của promoted it in the late nineteenth century. They translated *nôm* and Chinese into quốc ngữ and produced four collections of short stories that defined a modern Vietnamese prose style. They laid the foundation on which others would use to make quốc ngữ the Vietnamese national language. (50)

For all these achievements, Ký was offered a French citizenship. He steadfastly refused it claiming he rather remained a Vietnamese. This meant turning away the perks that came with French citizenship, including pay raises and high positions in the French government. Ký could read and write twenty-four languages and was named one of the 18 world scientists of the nineteenth century. He received many awards and commendations from many countries including Vietnam, Cambodia, France. Having traveled to Malaysia, he was instrumental in introducing many tropical fruit trees like rambutan, durian,... from Southeast Asian countries into Vietnam and expanded the planting of fruit trees in the Mekong delta.



Latin-Vietnamese catechism  
by Alexandre de Rhodes

## 12. Phan Châu Trinh (1872-1926)

The two revolutionaries at the time were Phan Bội Châu and Phan Châu Trinh. Although they shared the same last name Phan, they were not blood related. Châu was born in Nghệ An, North Vietnam while Trinh was from Quảng Nam, Central Vietnam. Although educated under the old mandarin system, they both promoted a new and free educational system. The similarity between the two Phan ended there.

The son of a wealthy land owner and scholar, Phan Châu Trinh became an orphan at the age of 13 and was educated by his elder brother in classics. He achieved his mandarin degree in 1901, but resigned his mandarin post four years later convinced that monarchy and mandarinism were the causes of Vietnam's downfall. Trinh argued that an intelligent monarch could not do everything by himself, while the ignorant monarch would commit cruelties and prohibit learned people from participating in national affairs. (51) He traveled to Japan in 1906 with Phan Bội Châu to learn about Japanese education and political system in view of Japan's military successes against China and Russia.

It was there that Trinh realized that he and Châu differed on the means and ways to recover Vietnam's independence from France. While Châu advocated armed uprising against the French and soliciting military help from the Japanese, Trinh opposed

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PHAN CHÂU TRINH





both violence and turning to other countries for support. He instead believed that independence could be achieved by educating the common people and by appealing to French democratic principles. (52) *Roots of S. VN Nationalism...*

He returned home committed to found in Hanoi in 1907 the Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục or Tonkin Free School (53) with the goal of promoting literacy in the Vietnamese alphabet and spreading information about history, literature, science and hygiene. He promoted classes, public lectures, publications, and even campaigns, like the one on hair cutting. Vietnamese men at that time used to let their hair grow, which they wore in chignon tied at the back of the neck. Trinh advocated cutting them short: "Clip away, clip away," which not only got rid of a health hazard (lice) and made people look nice, but also allegorically would cut links to the past. Cutting one's hair, which was a violation of the Confucian code of filial piety, carried with it the idea of breaking with tradition. For without it, there would be no chance for improvement or getting independence.

The campaign took its own course and sent young men to many corners of the city with scissors in hands offering free haircuts while singing the verses

*"Comb in the left hand,  
Scissors in the right.  
Clip away, clip away!  
...Off with stupidity,  
off with foolishness"* (54)

Using these simple experiments, Trinh tried to promote a new way of thinking; he thought that making a simple physical change could lead to psychological change and a feeling of empowerment. Once empowered, the Vietnamese could get rid of the French. As he was a charismatic teacher, his speeches at the school were extremely popular and attracted a large audience.

And for the first time in Vietnamese history, school was opened equally to boys and girls and there were even four female teachers on the teaching staff. In the past, boys went to school while girls stayed home and learned cooking and doing housework. What was also unusual was that the education was free: even peasants could enroll their children to school. This was a novelty, a change unheard of in Vietnam that occurred overnight and was promoted by private citizens. It was a revolution that even frightened the French. Curriculum changes but especially Phan Bội Châu's advocacy of armed uprising against the French along with irresponsible behavior of Vietnamese magistrates caused peasant riots which led French officials to close the school in 1908, one year after its opening.

Following the insurrection, Trinh was sent to Poulo Condore Island, a penitentiary two hundred kilometers southeast of Vũng Tàu. Thanks to the intervention of the French League for Human Rights, he was released in 1910 and sent to Mỹ Tho for continuing in-house incarceration. At his request, the French agreed to expatriate him to France where he lived in exile for fourteen years. He continued to call for colonial policy reforms in Vietnam. Due to illnesses, he returned to Vietnam in 1925 to a hero's welcome. (55) During the last months of his life, he continued to stress education and non violence as means of fighting for independence.

He died on 26 March, 1926 of tuberculosis in a Saigon hospital. A state funeral (quốc tang) was planned on 4 April for this "morally upright patriot" (chí sĩ yêu nước). At 06:00 that morning, 60,000 mourners in ranks of four began the long march from downtown Saigon to the cemetery near Tân Sơn Nhứt airport. Ahead of the casket were ten well-organized groups of students, workers, women, and members of the Vietnam Youth Party, followed by the horse-drawn hearse and rows and rows of mourners. Nearly two hundred laudatory banners in Chinese, nôm, and quốc ngữ dominated the gravesite. At least sixteen localities around Vietnam have observed the funeral of Phan Châu Trinh by closing shops, wearing arm bands, going to the local temple, taking part of the day off... Some principals expelled students for these activities or even for wearing a black armband to go to school. (56)

Phan Châu Trinh and Phan Bội Châu were the last two non-communist nationalists educated under the Confucian system who fought for the independence in Vietnam. After them, came a group of young revolutionaries who were educated under the French system.

### 13. Bùi Quang Chiêu (1872-1945)

Bùi Quang Chiêu, born in Bến Tre in the Mekong delta, went to France in 1890 to study agriculture. On his return to Saigon in 1897, he was employed by the French as an agricultural expert in Indochina. His business initiatives helped build the first Vietnamese bank and the first Vietnamese-owned rice mills to compete with the Chinese businesses that monopolized the rice trade.



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In 1917, he became the editor of *La Tribune Indigène*, a mouthpiece of Chiểu and his Constitutionalist Party. The latter called for political, economic, and social reforms within the existing structure of the colonial government. Although the call stalled, it did increase Vietnamese representation from six to ten, the French representation from twelve to fourteen, and expanded the number of Vietnamese eligible to vote from 2,000 to 20,000. Young members of this party later formed the Young Annam movement, which turned out to be more radical than the Constitutionlists.

He was killed by the communists in 1945. (57)

### *Roots of S. VN Nationalism...*

#### **14. Nguyễn An Ninh (1900-1943) and Trần Văn Thạch (1905-1945)**

Born in 1900 in a Saigon suburb, Nguyễn An Ninh studied at the prestigious French lycée Chasseloup Laubat in Saigon, which he completed in 1917. His father was a landowner who supported the Reform Movement and was an important fundraiser on behalf of Phan Bội Châu in the southern provinces of Vietnam. After working for a few months for the *Courier Saigonais*, Ninh went to Hanoi to study Medicine. (58) Once in Hanoi, he changed his mind and switched to law before finally deciding to go to France for further studies in 1920. His father took him to the Lê Văn Duyệt shrine and asked him to pledge never to forget his duty to his country. After years of hard work, he received a Bachelor degree in Law from Paris University in 1923. By that time he was exposed to ideas of anarchism that circulated widely in Europe.

Upon his return to Saigon, as he made speeches to promote his anti-French ideas, he was called to the governor's office to explain his position. Cognac, the French governor in Indochina warned him,

"There must be no intellectuals in this country. The country is too simple. If you want to look for intellectuals, go to Moscow. Be assured that the seeds you are trying to sow will never bear fruits."



Ninh then founded *La Cloche Félée* (Cracked Bell) to express his own views and to advance his ideas. Unlike his elders who suggested continuity, moderation and compromise with the French system, Ninh emphasized the need for a new moral order. In the first issue of *La Cloche Félée* on 10 December, 1923, he blasted those who sang praise of French domination and wrote, "The notion of European prestige is based neither on moral nor on intellectual superiority but on skin color." (59)

He urged youths to break with the past in order to free themselves from both the tyranny of old Confucian ideas and French collaboration. He contrasted French ideals against its humanitarian record in colonial Vietnam. He was able to publish only 19 issues from December until 14 July, 1923 when the newspaper had to close because of lack of paying readership.

Ninh called mandarins and civil servants "slaves in gowns of brocade and embroidered shoes" who just wanted to perpetuate the status quo. The latter were afraid of chaos and tried to justify the presence of French domination. As old Confucians, they valued order before liberty. Ninh on the other hand, viewed bureaucratism as something that killed free thought and free will and led to sclerosis of the minds and eventually to communism. He advised young men to leave home, which was by itself a revolutionary idea at the time and to reject their parents' old ideas. Ninh represented the radical youth oriented movement of the South.

He viewed national independence as an extension of personal freedom. Liberty was for him more than a political status. Although in the beginning, he rejected the idea of defense, he later saw revolutionary violence as inevitable.

He was, however, more of a thinker than a man of action, although he often suggested that action was important. He was more concerned about theories than action and therefore was not concerned with issues of organization.

Ninh was sentenced to jail for two years. He was imprisoned four other times before dying at a Côn Sơn jail in 1942 after four years of incarceration.

#### **15. President Ngô Đình Diệm (1901-1963)**

Born in 1901 in the village of Phú Cầm, central Vietnam, Diệm studied in a private school founded by his father and later entered the School of Law and Administration, a French institution designed to train native bureaucrats. Bảo Đại on his return to Vietnam in 1933 named Diệm as his Minister of Interior. Diệm who realized that the French did not want to invest real power in a Vietnamese legislature, resigned in disgust after three months. The French stripped him of his decorations and titles and put him under surveillance. In 1942, Diệm missed out on another chance of becoming a prime minister under the

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### Roots of S. VN Nationalism... Japanese.

The first and only encounter--recorded in Karnow's book--between Ngô Đình Diệm and Hồ Chí Minh, the future leaders of South and North Vietnam, respectively, occurred in 1945 after Hồ's soldiers captured Diệm. Hồ tried to court Diệm to join Hồ's administration. Diệm answered, "You are a criminal who has burned and destroyed the country, and you have held me prisoner" and added that he had killed and betrayed hundreds more, including Diệm's brother, Khôi and his son. Diệm continued knowing full well that his life was in the hands of Hồ,

*"You speak a language without conscience. I work for the good of the nation, but I cannot be influenced by pressure. I am a free man. Look at me in the face. Am I a man who fears oppression or death?"* (60)

Hồ released him, although the communist party condemned him to death in absentia. In 1950, Diệm embarked on a long tour in Europe and America, which culminated in him being named by Bảo Đại as prime minister of Vietnam in 1954.

Although historians loved to write that Diệm surrounded himself exclusively with members of his family, only Nhu was his closest adviser. By 1955, Diệm had only four brothers left. The eldest Ngô Đình Khôi had been murdered by the Viet Cong in 1945. Ngô Đình Luyện, the youngest one played a major part in Diệm's ascension to power but faded away thereafter. Ngô Đình Thục, the bishop of Vĩnh Long although instrumental in introducing him to U.S. Catholics, had distanced himself from the daily running of the Saigon government. Ngô Đình Cẩn was more interested in his fiefdom in central Vietnam than in Saigon politics.

Nhu was the "Political Counselor" and very often the right handyman of the president. He also formed an embryonic political party which later became the Cần Lao party. As Diệm's intelligence and security chief, Nhu was Diệm's eyes and ears, his chief source of intelligence and his hatchet man. He controlled access to Diệm isolating him from other sources of advice and information.

The other person who wielded more power than her official positions was Nhu's wife, Trần Lệ Xuân or "Spring Tears." She was a petite (5'2"), fiery, totally frank lady with a well proportioned figure. She was elected State representative and formed the Paramilitary Women of Vietnam allowing women to participate in village defense forces. In 1958, she helped pass the family laws, which made adultery a prison offense and outlawed polygamy and concubinage. She promoted other bills that banned prostitution, contraceptives, abortion and dancing. (61) By promoting and fighting for women's rights in a male dominated society, she lifted them out of their secondary position in society, something that was unheard of for centuries. Although politically prominent, she was self destructive. In the end, her outbursts and uncontrolled discourses further angered the public toward the regime. (62)

The US-Vietnamese relationship was a difficult and rocky one, made worse by the different and at times adversarial positions taken by the U.S. President and Congress. It was due mainly to a misunderstanding between the two sides. While the Americans wanted to offer an American solution, Diệm preferred a Vietnamese approach to Vietnam's problem. They lay the conflict. Although the relationship was neither a colonial one nor an alliance of equals, it more approached the former than the latter as time went by. (63)

Diệm regarded the U.S. as an indispensable but far from ideal patron. Coming from a culture that was steeped in a tradition of resistance against outsiders--a defining characteristic of Vietnamese nationalism--he believed he knew what was best for the country and had no intention of bowing. He disliked his reliance on foreign power and was acutely aware of the puppet image he projected,

*"If you ordered Vietnam around like a puppet on a string, how will you be different--except in degree--from the French?"* he once asked Marguerite Higgins. (64)

As a nationalist, he had a messianic sense of mission. From an early age, he believed he was "predestined for leadership." He therefore tried hard to assert his independence towards the Americans. He knew that by collaborating, he would lose the legitimate claim to "just cause" (chính nghĩa). And without just cause, he would not be able to rally people around him to fight the communists. For Diệm, the Vietnamese communists were bogus patriots. They were the servants of Peking and Moscow and followed a foreign ideology that was alien to the national character and the traditions of the country. They were traitors for having hijacked the movement for national liberation and hiding their agendas. They also collaborated with the French in wiping out all the non-communist nationalists in 1945. The problem was that the Ngôs were never relentless in their propaganda attacks against the communists. They assumed that every country in the world would see and condemn the obvious northern invasion. Diệm, therefore, was obsessed with the specter of collaboration, which the Americans did



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not understand. He expected them to treat the alliance as a partnership instead of a patron-client relationship. He justified the partnership on the basis that the South Vietnamese bore the brunt of communist attacks and human losses.

### *Roots of S. VN Nationalism...*

What the Ngos wanted was aid without conditions or strings attached. They considered ideas that Washington push on the regime as interference. The same could be said about the call to liberalize the regime. They argued that the communist regime would not be defeated because freedom of press and political freedom were established in South Vietnam. They also thought that the people should play an active role in building the country. These ideas put the Ngos squarely at odds with the Americans who wanted the regime to emphasize what it could do for the people and not vice versa. (65)

The Americans, on the other hand, viewed Diem as a man out of his time, a "power hungry autocrat" who was the heir to a dying tradition. He was described as being attached to "the ancient society of Annam: high aristocracy, closed castes, intellectual hierarchies, its cohesive families..." Diem was indeed a conservative person who felt intense pride in his country's history and its Confucian tradition. (66)

Yet Diem was not a patriot without a program, nor was he an old fashioned "Oriental" despot. He is better described as a conservative modernizer. Diem's thought was forward looking and concerned with change. He knew the country needed a "social revolution" that would reform every field in the society. His government was engaged in a battle against three enemies: "Communism, Underdevelopment, and Disunity," or sometimes "Colonialism, Feudalism, and Communism." To solve these problems, neither liberal capitalism nor communism would do. Capitalism would call for individual freedom above collective community and usher an era of reckless commercialism. Communism turned people into cogs in a machine and ignored human dignity. Saigon saw salvation as a "third way" between capitalism and communism, a model that could achieve industrial revolution without the evil consequences of the first two. (67)

To transform the country, instead of relying on foreign aid, Diem would like to mobilize the labor of all classes of the nation. The process would ennoble those engaged in it. The nation's struggle in turn would help to create modern citizens and a modern state. When the Ngos spoke of "human dignity," they meant the inner life of the people--the development of character. When they talked about "democracy," they defined it as a politically engaged and unified population rather than individual rights for it was the time to build the nation instead of individualism. There would be time for these rights later on. Although they sought to enroll people in the task of nation building, they intended to keep a firm hand on the tiller as they guided the process. They wanted to build the state from the ground up but exercised strong leadership from the top down. (68)

Diem suggested a limited brand of democracy where the rights of the individual although important did not take precedent over the state. He advised people to sacrifice and "tighten their belts" in order to achieve economic independence in South Vietnam. He also embarked on improving national education. From 1954 to 1960, he built almost five thousand elementary and secondary schools raising the national total from 1,780 to 6,674. During the same period, enrollment jumped from 443,865 to 1.5 million. He thought that for a country which just emerged from colonialism with an infantile political experience and an absent economy, certain rights should be curbed. Although this nation building goal seemed to be good for an emerging third world country that was at the same time battling insurgency, it was not enough for the Americans. (69)

From 1957, USIS (United States Information Service) tried to introduce American culture and society to the Vietnamese by extolling the virtues of U.S. democracy: high standards of living, personal freedoms, and cultural progress. This strategy may have created positive attitudes about the U.S., but did not improve Diem's standing with his people. (70) American aid was not offered in such a way to promote sustained economic development in South Vietnam. From 1957 to 1960, American aid contributed to the building of 47,000 square meters of movie theaters, but only 6,500 square meters of hospitals and 3,500 square meters of rice mills. American aid did raise the standard of living, but did not contribute to the long term development of a strong and stable Vietnam. The U.S. cultural campaign thus undermined the Diem administration. By underlining the enormous material and moral contribution of the U.S., USIS demonstrated Diem's subservience to the "American imperialists" and gave additional ammunition to communist propaganda. (71)

While Diem called on all South Vietnamese to sacrifice for the cause of Vietnamese independence, the U.S. suggested that everyone in a capitalist society could be wealthy and happy. These contradictory messages undermined Diem's nation building policy and created unnecessary rifts and acrimony between U.S. and Vietnamese officials at a time when Diem needed his American "friends" the most. (72)

The political vacuum created by his death and the ineptitude of the generals who followed him rehabilitated Diem in the eyes of Saigonese. By dying in martyrdom, which he courted since he took over the country in the 1950's, Diem had assured himself a heroic place in the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese. By dying, he had left the country a heroic legacy that can be traced back to Nguyễn Hoàng, Nguyễn Ánh, Lê Văn Duyệt, Võ Tánh, Phan Thanh Giản, Phan Châu Trinh and the likes. All these people were part of the South Vietnamese pantheon of heroes--the culture of the South.

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## Roots of S. VN Nationalism...

### 16. The Heroes

Then there were five generals (Nguyễn Khoa Nam, Lê Văn Hưng, Lê Nguyên Vỹ, Trần Văn Hai, and Phạm Văn Phú) and scores of other officers and officials who immolated themselves on the last day of the war rather than surrendering to the enemy. They felt that they could not surrender to evil people who killed their own people to achieve their ends and did not deserve to win. By sacrificing themselves, they expressed the feeling that life without freedom was not worth living. Their stories are recounted in chapter 7.



### 17. The South Vietnamese

During the war, they fought long and hard against the communists from 1955 to 1975. They gave their lives to their country and to freedom. More than 300,000 southern soldiers died along with 600,000 civilians. The country was devastated and the number of refugees swelled the population of the cities where they took refuge to be at least protected against the VC atrocities and the shelling and bombing. More than 60,000 people were executed after 1975 by the communists for "anti-revolutionary" crimes.

Despite living in a deeply divided society that was under siege during the two decades of its existence, they chose to fight for the freedom of South Vietnam. Nguyễn Văn Hiếu served for years in the ARVN despite being officially blind in one eye because he believed in the anti-communist cause. Ngô Văn Sơn fought on despite receiving several battle wounds. For Nguyễn Văn Thịnh, service in the army was the highest calling of a patriot, even though the RVN had imprisoned two of his brothers for their political activities. (73)

After the war, more than one million soldiers and officers were sent to re-education camps--euphemism for concentration camps--where they were beaten, starved, oppressed, denied rights and medical treatments and forced to do hard manual labor under starvation diet. More than 200,000 officers and officials were jailed more than four years. (74) Two million people were sent to the new economic zones (NEZ), which were the civilian equivalent of the re-education camps. They were dropped in forested or inhospitable areas and told to build housing for themselves and cultivate the lands for a living. Within a year, most NEZ failed and the people escaped back to where they came from, except they had to live outdoors or with their relatives since their former dwellings had been confiscated and given to incoming northerners. (75)

After 1975, despite the communists' imposition of the voucher system for everything from food, rice, gas fuel to cooking oil, southerners engaged in "bourgeois" trade for their own survival. Thousands of small businesses, petty dealers, and vendors kept goods moving in Saigon. Hanoi reacted violently and froze the goods and assets of thirty thousand businesses. Still the South resisted collectivization of agriculture (1977) and nationalization of urban commerce (1978), policies--imposed by Hanoi--that caused great upheavals and economic losses. Productions went down causing famine in many areas. Exhortations to sacrifices and produce goods failed to mobilize the populace. These policies were gradually withdrawn in 1980 in Saigon and the Mekong delta. Private commerce was allowed in certain areas. Gradually the free market oriented attitude caught on and changed Hanoi's attitude and thinking and ushered economic changes that led to the doi moi policy (renovation inspired by the Soviet perestroika).

Decades later, southern peasants who helped get the economy in order were noted to have a capacity for innovation, technological knowhow and entrepreneurship that allowed them to resist Hanoi's rules. The South objected to and did away with the voucher system for rice purchase. It broke out of the centralized subsidy system and pulled the rest of the nation into renovation. Hanoi followed Saigon's lead; selling land and houses, building hotels, opening dancing clubs, studying English. The resistance was active: the voucher system for purchasing rice and meat was first eliminated in Long An in the Mekong delta. Individuals could buy and sell food commodities at market prices. Relatives abroad could send money and goods



Nguyễn Văn Hiếu

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back home. Gold shops were allowed to open. Southerners had displayed a lot of flexibility in defining liberalism. Saigon along with the southern provinces was seen as both a "heroic resistor and a long standing modern, arguably of the highest values in Vietnamese communist discourse." (76)

### *Roots of S. VN Nationalism...*

#### **18. The diaspora**

Forced to flee from their own homeland, they faced untold difficulties from saving money, hiding from the Cong An (secret police), bribing them, braving storms, hunger, and pirates to facing survival in refugee camps, compassion fatigue, language problems, retraining and discrimination in the new countries. Overall more than two million people survived the ordeal and were resettled in third countries that became their second "birth" countries. Untold numbers of others did not make for various reasons: imprisonment by the Công An, death at seas or in the hands of pirates. It was estimated that about a quarter to one half of the people who tried to escape did not make it or roughly 500,000 to one million people. This largest exodus of all times constituted the severest judgment the Vietnamese had expressed against the communists who took over the country. (77) As a result, Hanoi had attempted to deface or topple the memorials these refugees had built to commemorate their passages and stay in these "secondary" or temporary countries, like Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines...

The Việt Kiều (overseas Vietnamese) had to reinvent themselves in order to survive and thrive in the new countries that are politically and socially different than Vietnam. They represent a new way of being Vietnamese--pioneers in free and richly developed countries. (78) Like Nguyễn Hoàng who turned away from the old Thăng Long (present day Hanoi) monarchy in 1600, they too had to turn their backs to Hanoi and the communists. They landed worldwide in more than 60 countries and participated in a new world of options and choices where talent and ability counted more than dogmatism and party membership. At the intersection of the old and new world, they resolutely embraced free market economy which was more in synch with their progressive mentality.

This does not mean that they had cut off or forgotten their roots. On the contrary, they still cared for their loved ones and sent back billions of dollars yearly to support them and rebuild the country. In 2013, they had sent 10 billion dollars. (79)

#### **19. The senior challengers**

Undaunted by fear, imprisonment or death, many non-communist southerners stood up and challenged the oppressive regime. They had been asking for freedom and human rights since 1975 when these demands were in their infancy under the communist system: having been in and out of jails for so many times and for so long that they had become the old challengers. Among the thousand jailed, four of them stood out: Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, Father Nguyễn Văn Lý, Dr. Nguyễn Đăng Quế, and Lý Tổng. They had been imprisoned for years and even decades and tortured for demanding basic human rights in Vietnam.

Thích Quảng Độ, a leader of the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) in Saigon, who protested against Hanoi's infringement on religious rights was jailed by the communists in 1977, tortured, tried but released in 1978. The UBCV was declared illegal by Hanoi and Độ was exiled to Thái Bình Province in North Vietnam in 1982. Venerable Độ took upon himself to return to Saigon in 1992. Two years later, he wrote to Đỗ Mười, Party Secretary General about the persecution of UBCV. He was confined in 1995 for writing the letter then sent to jail. Released in 1998, he was periodically detained, interrogated, and lived under house arrest since. He was named one of the 15 Champions of World Democracy in 2008.

Father Nguyễn Văn Lý was jailed from 1977 to 1978 then again from 1983 to 1992 for "opposing the revolution and destroying the people's unity." In 2001, he was sentenced to 15 years in jail for again speaking out against the government. He was, however, released in 2004. As a member of the pro-democracy movement, he was again jailed in 2007 and sentenced to eight years in jail. He tried to respond to the charges but was mouth-gagged in court by the communist Công An. (80)

Dr. Nguyễn Đăng Quế is an endocrinologist and a human rights fighter. He was jailed in 1978 for criticizing the government. After his release, he continued to call for social reform, for which he was jailed from 1990 to 1998. He remained under "virtual house arrest" until 2003 when he was jailed a third time. His sentence was commuted in 2005. Dr. Quế has been awarded the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award in 1995.

Lý Tổng is labeled by some as an "extreme anticommunist," although many have approved his commitment and dedication to his cause. He was a South Vietnamese Air Force pilot who was hit by a Soviet anti-aircraft missile during a combat conflict in 1975. Jailed by the communists for five years, he escaped by way of Cambodia to Singapore where he petitioned the U.S. for political asylum. He came to the U.S. in 1984 and returned to Saigon to drop leaflets from an airplane above Saigon calling for the people to rise against the communists in 1992. He jumped out of the airplane but was caught. Sentenced for 20 years in jail, he was released in 1998 under outside pressure. He returned to the U.S. and dropped leaflets over Havana in 2000 calling

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**Roots of S. VN Nationalism...** for a people's insurrection against Castro. He again dropped leaflets over Saigon in 2000 but was able to fly back to Thailand where he was sentenced for eight years. Hanoi requested he be extradited to Vietnam to face charges. The Thai Appeal Court instead freed him calling his action a political one. (81)

Even communists demonstrated against the Hanoi government. In 1998, thousands of Viet Cong leaders--General Trần Văn Trà and former commanders of the forces in the Mekong delta--marched in Saigon demanding government's reforms. (82)

### CHARACTERISTICS OF SOUTHERN NATIONALISM

#### A. Southern culture of enterprise, commerce, and human rights

During the war, westerners have raised questions about South Vietnamese nationalism, which was thought to be at best soft or non-existent based on the fact that they did not fight as hard as they should have. To link battle losses to a lack of mental vigor or nationalism is to make an erroneous assumption. To equate battle wins with a well-grounded nationalism is to make another false assumption. For battlefield victories or losses depend on many more factors than just plain nationalism. Likewise a protracted struggle does not always equate with victory--the South Vietnamese courageously waged a long battle, but eventually lost the war. A fighter under an oppressive communist regime sometimes could be forced to fight with a gun pointed at his head. It has been reported that Viet Cong (VC) were often chained to their guns and forced to fight or die. Was this nationalism, heroism, or just plain murder? Was Hitler a nationalist or a criminal?

Although important, nationalism was just one of the many factors that could affect the outcome of the war. It is less important now than before, especially when cruelty, oppression, dictatorship were the motivating factors behind the nationalistic screen. One ponders if a regime could be called nationalistic if it killed all its critics in order to steal the power? Or if it sent more than one million of its 20 million people to their death to achieve hegemony? (83) What is the difference between sacrificing or sending to a certain death one million people to win a war and the Khmer Rouge's outright killing of two million people for example? Are the Nazi, Lenin-Stalin, and Hô regimes nationalistic or sadistically dangerous regimes?

These are some of the most important heroes in southern history. Although there are many more, it is difficult to list and document all of them. Of each hero listed above, there are thousands more who have labored unselfishly and in obscurity to bring the country to where it is today. Our heart goes to these people who did the best under the circumstances to advance the country one way or another and to leave South Vietnam a better living place for the following generations.

Throughout the centuries, the South Vietnamese had shown their unique brand of nationalism, sacrifice, and dedication to their Mother country from fighting against the French, the central government, communism to sacrificing themselves for their Mother country and their ultimate cause. The pictures of five generals and scores of others who killed themselves instead of surrendering to the communists amply demonstrated the vigor of their nationalism and their *chinh nghĩa* (just cause). The fact they had lost the 1955-1975 war did not mean the end of their fight for freedom. History--especially Vietnamese history--is a long series of protracted struggles and each struggle is bound to lead them closer to their ultimate goal. They and their descendants will fight for freedom and human rights of their country.

Bathed in a Confucian Buddhist environment, southern nationalism may not seem to be as bold, assertive, and vigorous as it could be. Although tame and soft, it is vibrant among southerners and richer with time. South Vietnamese heroes were present throughout the centuries and had fought to defend their ancestral land. They more than anyone else had done everything they could to define and promote Vietnamese-ness.

The main nationalistic root (111 BC-1600 AD) was all about building a new nation and resistance to the Chinese. When the northern root slowly died out after 1600, southern nationalists continued their fight against the Siamese, the Chams, the Khmers, the Tây Sơn, the French, the Americans, and the communists. They had built throughout the centuries a vibrant and rich southern society that continued to thrive until today despite communist control.

Southern culture and nationalism are thus based on commerce, enterprise, and human rights. Its characteristics are:

1. It is multi-cultural, multi-streamed, and anchored in the past; it is an extension of the main nationalistic stream of the Trưng sisters, Lý Thường Kiệt, Trần Hưng Đạo, Ngô Quyền...
2. After 1600, it is based on South Vietnamese culture, especially the Mekong delta, which is older than communism---an imported western and alien ideology.
3. It is soft because of its Confucian-Buddhist tenets and centers on respect of law and freedom. The fact it is soft and compassionate does not mean it cannot or does not want to fight.

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4. Spontaneous and individualistic, it could involve the whole nation; it is based on modernism, commerce and trade with neighboring countries, and geared toward improving the well-being of the general population. It looks toward the future.
5. It is relatively free compared to other cultures of the time because it values freedom. The South Vietnamese believe that without freedom and transparency, there could not be free commerce and trade and resulting increase in people's economic well-being.
6. Overall, it characterizes a southern way of being nationalist and Vietnamese.

### *Roots of S. VN Nationalism...*

#### **B. Northern culture of oppression and domination**

The communists came out of nowhere and with crafty designs stole the nationalist mantle and "drove" the French and Americans out of the country. The fourth Vietnam War (1954-1975) was simply a brutal conquest of the South by the North craftily hidden behind a veil of nationalism. This explains the post war oppression, corruption, decay of moral values, and persistent lack of freedom and human rights. The communist brand of nationalism is opportunistic, ruthless, anarchic, foreign and not based on Vietnamese culture.

Hồ might have been a communist hero: he had always aspired to be in the same league as Lenin and Karl Marx. Never had he dreamed of being in the same group as the Trưng sisters, Trần Hưng Đạo or Ngô Quyền. He rarely mentioned them, but ingratiated himself with communist leaders like Lenin, Stalin, or Mao. In the center of Hanoi, stood a full sized bronze statue of Lenin--the only one left worldwide--instead of one of the many Vietnamese heroes. Lind wrote,

*"Ho owed little to Vietnamese tradition and almost everything to his foreign models, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao...Ho was and is the center of a cult of personality, just as Lenin, Stalin, and Mao had been...Ho's grim tomb in Hanoi was modeled after Lenin's tomb in Moscow. In death as in life, Ho would be a minor clone of the major communist tyrants."* (84)

We, therefore, challenge the assertion that the U.S.-South Vietnamese lost the war because of Hanoi's unwavering commitment for independence. The so called "fight for independence" was based on three false assumptions:

1. The communists have always painted the U.S. as the new imperialist. Although the South Vietnamese viewed with dissent and sometimes scorn at the heavy-handed approach of their American "friends," the U.S. were far from being imperialists like the Chinese, French, or North Vietnamese communists. They were more interested in "strategic positioning,"--which they relented if risks outweighed benefits--than in the "geographic occupation" of the country. The Hanoi regime, on the other hand, is considered to be an imperialist regime because it occupied South Vietnam by force and against the will of the South Vietnamese and in full violation of the 1954 Geneva Accords and the 1973 Paris Accords. Hanoi, not only occupied South Vietnam, it also occupied Laos and Cambodia, which are Hanoi's satellites. The South Vietnamese, despite fighting hard were bound by their fear of communists--especially their ruthlessness. Hồ Chí Minh did not hesitate to liquidate any adversaries they deemed dangerous. (85) Being not as ruthless as the Hanoi communists, the South Vietnamese were bound to lose.

General Võ Nguyên Giáp, that cynical former school teacher who became Defense Minister of the Hanoi communist regime had molded his army into ruthless bands of killers. He also drafted children into his army causing them to commit some of the most gruesome atrocities during the war. *"By Nuremberg standards, Giáp should have been tried for war crimes."* (86)

Giáp was reported to have said,

*"The enemy [meaning South Vietnam and the West] ...does not possess...the psychological and political means to fight a long drawn-out war."* (87) He knew very well that the American public would "demand an end to the useless bloodshed of its legislature will insist on knowing how long it will have to vote astronomical credits without a clear-cut victory in sight." (88)

Instead of the U.S. being the new imperialist, communist North Vietnam was the real imperialist as it conquered South Vietnam by force and submitted Laos and Cambodia to its will. It has total control of the whole Indochina.

2. The communists painted the war as one waged against Americans. On the contrary, the war was initiated by Hanoi to take over the whole country, thus away from the South Vietnamese. The U.S. did not lose any land at all, only the South Vietnamese did. Jamieson said it best,

*"The war was, after all, in Vietnam; it was fought mainly by Vietnamese against other Vietnamese--over the nature of the Vietnamese society."* (89)

The Vietnamese fought a civil war--the fourth in their entire history, which would determine whether democracy or com-

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munism should prevail politically over the Vietnamese soil. Once the Vietnam War is looked under this angle, the picture becomes clearer. First, South Vietnam had lost more than 300,000 soldiers and 465,000 civilians (90) and the South Vietnamese countryside, Saigon, Huế, and other cities bore the scars of the war. They fought to defend their land against northern invaders. Second, the three million Vietnamese scattered worldwide are a permanent and definite proof that the war had been waged against them. Third, the present communist occupation of South Vietnam is another telltale sign of the northern invasion. All the major government positions and businesses in Saigon were controlled or owned by northerners. And finally, the Hanoi government is still single-handedly hanging in power refusing to share power with any political group, other than the communist party. It is one of the only four remaining communist countries in the world.

### *Roots of S. VN Nationalism...*

3. The communists painted the war as a fight for independence. The war was simply a *brutal invasion* of the South by the North, not a fight for independence. Saigon simply fell "to a more brutal tyranny that was more effective, in part, because it was more brutal." (91) In no time, was there any insurrection of the people against the government of South Vietnam. The war was waged with the only purpose of controlling and submitting the South Vietnamese as well as ushering a worldwide communist empire: it was simply an arrogant assertion of the northern military might.

By expanding the spread of communism, Ho and his minions proved to the world they were Soviet and Chinese puppets instead of working for the economic and spiritual well-being of the Vietnamese. They then enslaved the southerners and plunged the country into famine and economic morass that lasted more than a decade. The communist state became a corrupt and oppressive state--probably the most oppressive state in Vietnamese history.

Other causes of the Saigon downfall include: misinterpretation of the nature of the struggle in Vietnam, underestimation of the enemy, overestimation of U.S. political stamina and military effectiveness, and absence of a competitive South Vietnam. (92) Last but not least, at no time was it "the policy of the American side to "win" the war...Total victory was banned." (93) Was fighting in these conditions worth fighting? The South Vietnamese fought on... no matter what.

### CONCLUSION

This study evaluates the roots of South Vietnamese nationalism and its effects on the collapse of South Vietnam and its identity. Although softer than northern aggressiveness, southern nationalism had been present throughout the centuries and is grounded on Vietnamese-ness and "Just cause." It is based on laws and national culture and reflects the soul of the South Vietnamese. Its "softness" and respect for rules of laws, which are its forte may have been a factor in the downfall of Saigon.

As the South Vietnamese have struggled for a thousand years to get rid of the Chinese yoke, it seems normal for them to oppose any regime that is foreign and unnatural to them. Throughout the centuries, they have shown an unwavering commitment to independence and freedom.

South Vietnam has a long history of fighting and protecting its country, of fighting against invaders, and of deep nationalism. Not to recognize that particular brand of nationalism is not to understand South Vietnam's history.

Part of this paper has been presented at the Sixth Triennial Vietnam Symposium at the Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University on 28 March, 2008.

### Notes

44. Jamieson NL. *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley, California University Press. 1993: 44-45.
45. plantation like system where owners worked part time for the militia--government forces--and part time for themselves. They were protected by the militia and could hire workers to work on their lands.
46. McLeod MW. *The Vietnamese Response*: 61-65.
47. Ibid, 67.
48. Ibid, 73.
49. Taylor, *History*: 466-468.
50. Jamieson NL. *Understanding Vietnam*, 69-71.
51. Bui Ngoc Son, 446.
52. Taylor, *History*: 488-489. The mandarin exam relied on a private and elitist educational system, which only the well-off people could afford. Since there was no public school before 1907, poor people could not afford to send their children to private teachers for schooling. This was the main reason why Phan Châu Trinh and others decided to found the first free, public and non-governmental school--Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục--to educate the mass.
53. Đông Kinh was the name of Hanoi at that time. It became Tonkin for the French who used it to designate the whole North Vietnam instead of the town itself. Đông Kinh is also the Vietnamese name of Tokyo, the culture of which they would like to imitate. Nghĩa Thục means communal school.
54. Jamieson NL, *Understanding Vietnam*, 60.

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55. Bui Ngoc Son, 442.
56. Marr, *Tradition*: 19-23.
57. Taylor, *History*, 497-500.
58. Since the seat of the French government in colonial Indochina was located in Hanoi--Cochinchina (South Vietnam) was a colony at that time--all the Universities were set up in Hanoi. Students throughout Indochina had to travel to Hanoi to get higher education.
59. Tai Ho Hue Tam. *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press. 1992: 72-73, 130-131.
60. Karnow, *Vietnam*: 216-217.
61. Higgins M. *Our Vietnam Nightmare*: 61-73.
62. Catton PE. *Diem's Final Failure*: 14-17.
63. Ibid, 18-23.
64. Higgins M. *Our Vietnam Nightmare*, 168.
65. Catton PE. *Diem*, 26-34.
66. Higgins, 166.
67. Catton, 35-37.
68. Ibid, 41-50.
69. Masur MB. *Hearts and Minds*: 35, 37, 54.
70. Ibid, 77, 87, 90.
71. Ibid, 141, 143-145.
72. Ibid, 223.
73. Brigham RK. *ARVN. Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army*: xi.
74. Wiest A. *Vietnam's Forgotten Army*: xv.
75. Vo NM. *The Bamboo Gulag*. Jefferson, NC, McFarland. 2004: 188-197.
76. Taylor P. *Fragments of the Present*. Honolulu, Hawaii University Press. 2001: 81-83, 87.
77. Kamm H. *Dragon Ascending: Vietnam and the Vietnamese*. New York, Arcade. 1996: 179.
78. Vo NM. *The Vietnamese Boat People*: 173-192.
79. Sidel M. Vietnamese American Diaspora Philanthropy to Vietnam. May 2007: [http://www.tpi.org/downloads/pdfs/Vietnam\\_Diaspora\\_Philanthropy\\_Final.pdf](http://www.tpi.org/downloads/pdfs/Vietnam_Diaspora_Philanthropy_Final.pdf) (Accessed 2-5-2009).
80. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nguyen\\_Van\\_Ly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nguyen_Van_Ly)
81. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ly\\_Tong](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ly_Tong)
82. Jamieson NL. *Understanding Vietnam*. 1993: 373-374.
83. Hanoi had sent so many youths to their death that many of them were as young as fifteen years of age. "On many of these child-soldiers American leaflets were found urging them to desert." See: Netto. *Duc: A Reporter's love for the wounded people of Vietnam*. 108.
84. Lind M. *Vietnam: The Necessary War*: 2.
85. Kamm H. *Dragon Ascending*, 173; Nguyễn Duy Hinh, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 26: Bùi Quang Chiêu, founder of the Constitutionalist Party; Nguyễn Văn Sâm, Imperial Delegate to Cochinchina; Scholar Phạm Quỳnh; Ngô Đình Khôi, President Diệm's brother; Tạ Thu Thâu, Trotskyist leader were some of those liquidated by the communists.
86. Netto: 71, 102
87. Fall, Bernard. *The Two Vietnams*: 119. Bernard Fall was a Frenchman who fought in the French Resistance against the Nazis and served in the French Army before moving to the U.S. as a graduate student. He later became a full professor at Howard University in Washington, DC. He died while stepping on a land mine in Vietnam.
88. Quoted in Netto 72
89. Jamieson, ix.
90. Sorley L. *A Better War*: 383.
91. Lind M, 245.
92. Record J. *The Wrong War*: xv-xvii.
93. Dawson A. *55 Days*: 22.

## Human Rights Lawyers Beaten by Bikers

<http://vietnamrightnow.com/2015/11/human-rights-lawyers-seriously-attacked/>

Two lawyers have been ambushed and beaten up by assailants riding motorcycles, after taking up the case of a teenager who died in police custody.

Tran Thu Nam and Le Luan said they were driving from the home of the victim's mother when they were intercepted by eight masked men on motorcycles.

They tried to run away into a nearby paddy field but were caught and beaten.

Both sustained injuries, with Mr Nam suffering cuts to his head and face.

They said they had recognised one of the assailants as a local police officer.

The lawyers have been providing free legal assistance to the family of Do Dang Du, a 17-year-old boy who was taken to hospital in a coma, and later died, after being held in police custody for two months on a charge of petty theft.

There have been allegations that Du sustained his injuries during beatings by the police.



## Dinh Quang Le: Artist

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/02/arts/international/the-artistdinh-q-le-expands-his-gaze-to-worlds-beyond-vietnam.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=c-column-middle-span-region&region=c-column-middle-span-region&WT.nav=c-column-middle-span-region>

Le is a Vietnamese-American fine arts photographer, best known for his woven-photographs.

Dinh Q. Lê was born in 1968 in Ha Tien, Vietnam, close to the Cambodian border. His family immigrated to Los Angeles after the Cambodians invaded Ha Tien in 1978. After Lê received BFA degree in photography from University of California, Santa Barbara, inspired and taught by his aunt during childhood, he started his first photo-weavings using a traditional technique. He continued this skillful presentation while earning his MFA degree from The School of Visual Arts in New York. His artwork includes installation, video, sculpture, and urban intervention. Dinh Q. Lê spends time in both Vietnam and Los Angeles producing his work.

Dinh Q. Lê has received several awards and grants, including a Gunk Foundation Public Project Grant in 1998; an NEA Fellowship in Photography 1994; The Dupont Fellowship in 1994; The Aaron Siskind Fellowship in 1992 and the Prince Claus Fund Award in 2010. (Wikipedia)



## Jackpot: by Dustin Nguyen

Submitted by Bill Laurie

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/oscars-vietnam-submits-jackpot-foreign-828815>

The film is based on an inspiring true story and directed by Dustin Nguyen, one of the former child stars of the original '21 Jump Street.'

Vietnam has picked *Jackpot* (*Trung So*), an uplifting comedy-drama from Vietnamese-American director **Dustin Nguyen**, as its contender for this year's foreign language Academy Award.

The film stars **Ninh Duong Lan Ngoc**, **Chi Tai** and Nguyen. Nguyen is best known in the U.S. as one of the former child stars of the original *21 Jump Street*.

*Jackpot* is based on the real-life story of a poor, southern Vietnamese lottery ticket seller named Lanh. One day in 2011, Lanh made a casual verbal agreement to sell some tickets to a deliveryman who promised to pay and pick them up later. Lanh later learned that one of the tickets she had set aside for the driver, which he hadn't yet paid for, had won \$300,000. Instead of cashing it in herself, she tracked down the unknowing driver to inform him of his good fortune and hand over the winner.

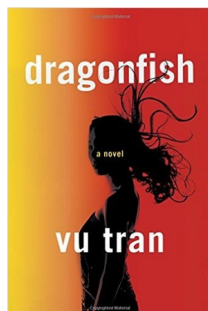
"This event was in the local news and drew many reactions," Nguyen tells *THR*. "Some praised her for her honesty; some said she was stupid and should have kept it for herself."



## Dragon Fish: Vu Tran

Robert, an Oakland cop, still can't let go of Suzy, the enigmatic Vietnamese wife who left him two years ago. Now she's disappeared from her new husband, Sonny, a violent Vietnamese smuggler and gambler who's black-mailing Robert into finding her for him. As he pursues her through the sleek and seamy gambling dens of Las Vegas, shadowed by Sonny's sadistic son, "Junior," and assisted by unexpected and reluctant allies.

Vu Tran has written a thrilling and cinematic work of sophisticated suspense and haunting lyricism, set in motion by characters who can neither trust each other nor trust themselves. This remarkable debut is a noir page-turner resonant with the lasting reverberations of lives lost and lives remade a generation ago.



Available on Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com/Dragonfish-Novel-Vu-Tran/dp/0393077802/>

## Birds of Paradise Lost: Andrew Lam

The thirteen stories in *Birds of Paradise Lost* shimmer with humor and pathos as they chronicle the anguish and joy and bravery of America's newest Americans, the troubled lives of those who fled Vietnam and remade themselves in the San Francisco Bay Area. The past—memories of war and its aftermath, of murder, arrest, re-education camps and new economic zones, of escape and shipwreck and atrocity—is ever present in these wise and compassionate stories. It plays itself out in surprising ways in the lives of people who thought they had moved beyond the nightmares of war and exodus.



Available on Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com/Birds-Paradise-Lost-Andrew-Lam/dp/1597092681/>



## Peru by Thang Nguyen





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