

# Table of Contents

Foreword by Elizabeth F. Collins	xi
Introduction by Lady Borton	xix
<b>The Vietnamese Identity</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Nghĩa</i>	3
The Vietnamese Character	4
The Vietnamese “I” and “We”	7
The Vietnamese: A Warlike People?	8
Are There Differences in the Mentality of Northern and Southern Vietnamese?	9
On Naming a Child	11
The Traditional Village: For and Against	13
A Village Landscape	17
The Traditional Vietnamese House	18
The Communal House	22
The Head and the Heart of the Traditional Village	25
<b>The Four Facets of Vietnamese Culture</b>	<b>27</b>
The Four Facets of Vietnamese Culture	29
Back to the Source in Southeast Asia	32
In Việt Nam, Rice is the Source of Life	33
Myths Die Hard in Việt Nam	35
The Lord of the Sacred Drum Finally Regains His Artefact	37
The Worship of Mother Goddesses	38
Ancestor Worship	42
Village Alliances	44
Vietnamese Cultural Identity	46
A Hyphen between Two Worlds: Indian and Chinese Influences	47

Vietnamese Culture: Southeast Asian Roots Facing Chinese Confucianism	51
French Culture in Việt Nam Today	53
Franco-Vietnamese Karma	55
“Asian Values” and “Family Values”	57
Vietnamese Culture and <i>Đổi Mới</i>	58
<b>Việt Nam’s Confucian Heritage</b>	<b>61</b>
How to Translate “ <i>Văn Miếu</i> ”	63
Confucius Set Free	64
Filial Piety	66
Confucian Scholar-Administrators	67
Confucius and Machiavelli	69
Confucian Contempt for Commerce and Finance	71
Confucianism and the Vietnamese Revolution	73
Revolutionary Confucian Scholars	74
Confucian Scholars and Modernization	77
<b>Buddhism in Việt Nam</b>	<b>81</b>
The Layout of a Vietnamese Buddhist Pagoda	83
The Buddhist Goddess of Mercy	85
The Bearded Indian in Vietnamese Village Pagodas	86
Mount Yên Tử: The Cradle of Vietnamese Zen	88
<b>Exemplary Vietnamese</b>	<b>91</b>
The Trưng Sisters (Hai Bà Trưng)	93
Lady Triệu (Bà Triệu)	94
Lý Thường Kiệt	95
Chu Văn An: Spiritual Master	98
Trần Hưng Đạo	99
Nguyễn Trãi: Việt Nam’s Greatest Humanist?	102
Lê Lợi and Lam Kinh, Capital of an Ancient Kingdom	105
Quang Trung and His Unfulfilled Vision	107
Ngô Thì Nhậm: A Confucian Scholar’s Difficult Choice	110
Hoàng Diêu	112
Trương Vĩnh Ký: A Controversial Figure	114
Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh	118
Nguyễn Thái Học: Hero of Thổ Tang Village	120

Teachers at Private Schools in Huế	121
Nguyễn Văn Huyền: My History Teacher	123
Hồ Chí Minh and Western Cultural Values	125
<b>Vietnamese Literature: An Expression of the Nation's Spirit</b>	<b>133</b>
Nguyễn Du and <i>The Tale of Kiều</i> :	
The Brigand and the Courtesan	135
Nguyễn Trãi: One of Our Most Famous Poets	137
Hồ Xuân Hương: Eroticism and Poetry	139
Lê Quý Đôn	141
Madame Thanh Quan	143
Nguyễn Gia Thiều: Poet of Destiny and Sorrow	144
Nguyễn Công Trứ: The Poet of Poverty and "The Solitary Pine"	145
Cao Bá Quát: Việt Nam's Rebel Poet	148
Nguyễn Đình Chiểu: A Poet Blinded by Tears of Grief	151
Nguyễn Khuyến	153
Phạm Tất Đắc: His Incendiary Poem	154
Romantic Literary Currents in the 1930s	156
Tản Đà and Quang Dũng: Two Poets of the West Country	161
Hàn Mặc Tử: Finding Poetry in Suffering	164
Dương Quảng Hàm: The First Modern Literary	
History of Việt Nam	166
Women Writers Give Vietnamese Literature Some Oooh La La	167
<b>Culture and the Arts</b>	<b>171</b>
Vietnamese Lacquer: All Tradition Is Change	
through Acculturation	173
What do Vietnamese Water Puppets Say?	175
Ancient Graphic Arts of Việt Nam	176
Tradition and Revolution in Handicrafts	178
<i>Ca Trù</i> : Classical Arias—An Ancient Art Threatened	
with Extinction	180
<i>Tuồng</i> : Việt Nam's Classical Opera	182
<i>Chèo</i> : Popular Opera—An Art Unique to the	
Red River Delta	184
<i>Chèo</i> and <i>Cải Lương</i> (Renovated Theater): Conversations	
with Tào Mạt and Bửu Tiến	187
"Pre-War" Romantic Music Captures the Mood of an Era	191

Nam Sơn: A Meeting of East and West	194
The Four Pillars of Vietnamese Painting	196
<b>The Vietnamese Landscape and the Vietnamese Spirit</b>	<b>199</b>
Cao Bằng: Home of the Tày	201
From the Bronze Age to Medieval Doctors of Humanities	202
The North Country (Ancient Kinh Bắc)	204
Hà Nội: City of the Soaring Dragon	206
Old Hà Nội	209
At the Palace of the Trịnh Lords	210
The Cultivated Manners of Tràng An (Hà Nội)	213
Tết in Old Hà Nội and Tết Couplets	215
The East Country (Xứ Đông)	218
The West Country (Xứ Đoài)	220
The South Country (Sơn Nam)	221
Đội Tam: The Village of Drums	222
Tày Hamlet in Bắc Sơn District	223
Quảng Bình Province	226
Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh	228
A Quick Visit to Cochinchina	230
Caodaism and Its Beginnings in Tây Ninh Province	233
Poulo Condor (Côn Đảo)	237
<b>Vietnamese Women and Change</b>	<b>241</b>
Teeth Lacquering and Chewing Betel Quids	243
Women Conquer the World of Science	244
Who Designed the Áo Dài?	247
The Life of Single Women	248
Single Parenting	251
Vietnamese Youth and Virginity	252
<b>Đổi Mới (Renovation or Renewal) and Globalization</b>	<b>255</b>
Vietnamese Culture Facing Globalization	257
The Traditional Family under Fire	261
The Market Economy and Matrimony	263
Divorce as Seen in a District of Hà Nội	266
The Young and Our Traditions	268
The Cicada Generation	269

A Story of Tomatoes and Watercress	271
A Traditional Village Facing the Market Economy	273
A Pedicab Driver	275
Respect for Teachers Re-Emerges	277
The Fight against Corruption	279
Saying Hello to the Past	282
Appendices	285
About the Vietnamese Language	287
A Chronology of Vietnamese History	291
Henri Oger's <i>Mechanics and Crafts of the Vietnamese People</i> (1909): Sketches of Hanoians' Vibrant Life	301
Oger Drawings	309
Index	343

Short, clear introductions to the cultures of Southeast Asian nations are difficult to find. For years, I cobbled together collections of short articles and selections of literature for my university-level introduction to Southeast Asia and presented the historical framework in lecture. My goal was to entice students to investigate the material on their own or in a more advanced class.

On a trip to Việt Nam, an area outside my own research field in the Bahasa world of Indonesia and Malaysia, I had a chance to meet Hữu Ngọc and was given a copy of *Wandering through Vietnamese Culture*, a collection of his essays, which is over 1,200 pages. It served as a wonderful guide, containing answers to so many of the questions that had presented themselves. When Ohio University Press was considering publication of an excerpted version of *Wandering through Vietnamese Culture*, I was asked in my role as editor for the O-U Press's Southeast Asia Series to accept the Press's invitation to make the initial selection of essays.

Hữu Ngọc originally wrote his essays as newspaper columns for international readers who, living in Việt Nam, had some acquaintance with the country. Yet all of us working on this project,