

Chapter 1

Introduction



Liam C. Kelley, Jamie Gillen, and Le Ha Phan

1.1 Introduction

For decades now many scholars in the social sciences and humanities have critiqued themselves and others for perpetuating a colonial mindset in research writing and knowledge production about ‘the West’ and ‘the rest’ (see, for example, Alatas 1987; Canagarajah 1999; Chen 2010; Chakrabarty 2000; Connell 2007). Likewise, for decades now many scholars working in “the West” who research about other parts of the world have been lamenting the ways that their work supposedly perpetuates imperial forms of knowledge that their disciplines, including the discipline of area studies, purportedly inherited from colonial and imperial regimes of knowledge production (Breidlid 2013; Phillipson 1992; etc.). At the same time, some scholars have heralded the dawn of a new era of knowledge production in “Asia” when such compromised forms of knowledge may be replaced by ways of knowing that are potentially locally-grounded and free of racist and imperialist connotations (for example, cf Chen 2010; Goh 2011; Jackson 2019; Chua et al. 2019).

As scholars have debated over the future of knowledge production in and about Asian societies, we can see that the statements and positionings mentioned above have emanated from long-established centers of knowledge production in Asia and

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the West. In the same vein, we can see these statements as an effort to, if not gatekeep, then to at least guide the direction of knowledge production by those who are already at the top of a higher education hierarchy. Meanwhile, as these discussions have been carried out in scholarly forums, a group of scholars from around the world have annually met for more than a decade now and have formed a community of researchers that does not fit in either of the seemingly clearly defined camps above, but instead, can be seen as the products of a new era when knowledge production has become increasingly globalized and decentralized. They have done this at a conference called *Engaging With Vietnam: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* and this volume highlights representative essays from that conference series.

Engaging With Vietnam was founded in 2009 by then Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Monash University (Australia) Phan Le Ha, now Senior Professor in the Sultan Hassan al-Bolkiah Institute of Education at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. However, to understand its true origins, we need to go back a bit further, to the 1990s. In the late 1990s, Hà Nội-based Phan Le Ha went to Monash University in Australia to pursue her post-graduate studies. This was a time when a new generation of young Vietnamese first started to study overseas. This generation was “new” in the sense that they came of age in a “new” Vietnam, a Vietnam that was “opening” to the world in many ways with the economic reform policy of *Đổi Mới* in 1986, the enthusiasms and anxieties about globalization and its implications for Vietnam’s national cultural identity, the normalization of diplomatic relations with the U.S. in 1995, and the joining of ASEAN in that same year.

As Le Ha and her classmates faced the many changes that started to take place during their university years in the mid-1990s, they did so with their feet resting firmly on a solid educational foundation. In particular, Le Ha and her classmates were all trained in what we can call the Socialist educational system of post-war Vietnam. While the post-war years were extremely challenging at an economic level, education remained a priority for all involved, and as the changes of the 1990s brought new forms of knowledge and new opportunities to Vietnam, the university-age population was ready and fully equipped intellectually to take those opportunities and run with them. Indeed, as Le Ha went overseas to continue her studies, her peers created careers for themselves at home that had never existed before in Vietnam, from establishing international law firms to building multi-national telecommunications companies.

From this position of success and confidence, Le Ha then went overseas to study and often encountered forms of knowledge about Vietnam that had been developed by foreign experts. In countries like Australia, where Le Ha studied in the late 1990s and early 2000s and later worked for nearly a decade, as well as in France and the U.S., there was a long history of knowledge production about Vietnam by scholars who knew Vietnamese and who had spent a considerable amount of time in the country. While such scholars had produced many important works of scholarship, Le Ha nonetheless kept encountering ideas about Vietnam in the writings of foreign scholars that were persistently outdated and/or biased. At the same time, she also came into contact with new scholarly knowledge produced on Vietnam and its *Đổi Mới* milestone; however, she found herself disappointed with a tendency among some foreign scholars to treat the many changes as well as the spirit of a “new”

Vietnam rather negatively and even condescendingly. Accounts of what Vietnamese of her generation experienced, appreciated, and were a part of were missing in these writings.

It was in this context that Le Ha initiated the *Engaging With Vietnam: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue Conference* series (henceforth EWV). Further, the use of the term, “dialogue,” here was very intentional, as the purpose of the conference was not to develop and enforce one form of knowledge, but to create a space where people with different types of knowledge and from different knowledge production trajectories and paths could meet, interact, question others and themselves, and learn. After holding the first conference at Monash University in February 2010, a second conference was held later that same year at Vietnam National University in Hà Nội. This change of location initiated a key practice of the conference, that it “moves” from location to location, and in so doing, alternates between Vietnam and places overseas. With Liam C. Kelley, currently, Associate Professor in the Institute of Asian Studies at Universiti Brunei Darussalam, joining as co-organizer in 2012 when he was an Associate Professor in the History Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, EWV held its 4th conference in Honolulu, in collaboration with the East-West Center. To date, the EWV conference has been held in multiple locations in Vietnam, Australia, the United States, and the Netherlands. This movement of the conference is intended to enhance the “engagement” that takes place at the event.

The main name of the conference, “Engaging With Vietnam,” is meant to be multifaceted. On the one hand, the conference engages with Vietnam, the place, in that every two years it is held there and it attracts many scholars and upcoming researchers from Vietnam. On the other hand, the main purpose of the conference is really to engage with Vietnam as a concept or idea, and all of the ideas and discourses and intellectual developments associated with it. Indeed, the issue of knowledge production is always at the core of EWV conferences. The realization that people know Vietnam in different ways and (re)produce different forms of knowledge based on those different ways of knowing is what led Phan Le Ha to begin a dialogue in the first place, and the themes of the conference over the years have repeatedly emphasized various aspects of knowledge production.

The first two conferences in Melbourne and Hà Nội took “Engaging With Vietnam” as their theme. The themes of the subsequent conferences have been as follows: “Beyond the East–West Dichotomy: Implications for Research and Knowledge Production” (Hà Nội, 2011), “Vietnam Beyond the Boundaries” (Honolulu, 2012), “Integrating Knowledge: The Multiple Ways of Knowing Vietnam” (Thái Nguyên, 2013), “Frontiers and Peripheries: Vietnam Deconstructed and Reconnected” (Eugene, Oregon, 2014), “Knowledge Journeys and Journeying Knowledge” (Hà Nội and Bắc Ninh, 2015), “Engaging With Vietnam through Scholarship and the Arts” (Honolulu, 2016), “Touring Vietnam: Exploring ‘Development,’ ‘Tourism’ and ‘Sustainability’ from Multi-disciplinary and Multi-directional Perspectives” (Hồ Chí Minh City, Bình Dương, and An Giang, 2017), “Beyond Dichotomies: Vietnam from Multiple Perspectives” (Hồ Chí Minh City and Phan Thiết, 2018), “Vietnam in Europe, Europe in Vietnam: Identity, Transnationality, and Mobility of People, Ideas and Practices across Time and Space” (Leiden, 2019), “Engaging with Vietnam

and ASEAN: Mobilities and Identities in an Age of Global Transformation” (Virtual from Kyoto, 2021).

1.2 New Trajectories to Knowledge Production

When the first EWV conferences were held, they were largely attended by established scholars and Vietnamese graduate students in Australia. This was a logical development because as late as a decade ago scholarship about Vietnam was predominantly the preserve of scholars working at Vietnamese universities in Vietnam and a small coterie of specialists outside of the country who produced knowledge as part of the larger enterprise of area studies. Over the past decade, that structure of knowledge production has changed dramatically. Indeed, today the production of knowledge about Vietnam has greatly expanded and diversified such that one can find people pursuing research on Vietnam from a much wider range of contexts than was the case as late as a decade ago. This change has occurred for various reasons, but the processes of globalization, the internationalization of higher education, and expanded access to information through the Internet are all key factors. It is no longer necessary to be in a certain place or to follow a set path, to research and produce knowledge about Vietnam. This has been glaringly evident at EWV conferences, as each conference has attracted scholars from ever more new contexts in this changing world of scholarship and knowledge production.

We gradually noticed this development at the early conferences, but it became more obvious at the 5th conference in 2013 in Thái Nguyên. Among the participants were Vietnamese graduate students who were pursuing Master’s and Ph.D. degrees in various subjects in English-language medium courses in Thailand, South Korea, Brunei, and Taiwan, for example. This points to an extremely important development. While, as we have already noted at the outset of this essay, scholars have debated about the future of knowledge production in Asian societies, these debates and underlying statements have stemmed from long-established centers of knowledge production in Asia and the West. We can also see these debates and statements as an intent to shape, lead and guide the direction of knowledge production by those who are already at the top of a higher education hierarchy. Meanwhile, at EWV conferences, we have witnessed so many young scholars “on the ground” who have taken charge of knowledge production themselves and are pursuing it through new channels, paths, and deliberations. Those new channels, paths, and deliberations are, again, the product of new developments, especially the internationalization of higher education, educational mobilities, and the rise to global dominance of the English language (for a detailed discussion see Phan and Doan 2020). In the years since we first noticed participants from these new academic spaces, this trend has only increased, such that now EWV conferences attract participants from an ever-widening group of universities, but universities that share the trait of not being “traditional” centers of knowledge production about Vietnam, or in some cases, Asia either.

More recently, in holding the 11th EWV conference in the Netherlands in 2019, we have begun to witness another new trend, and that is the emergence of a new generation of scholars from across Europe. Although these scholars are all working in Vietnam, they have followed diverse academic trajectories. First, there are Vietnamese who are pursuing graduate studies across the European continent. Further, they are doing so at universities that have established area studies traditions, such as in Paris, Hamburg, and Leiden, but also at universities in countries that have not traditionally contributed to the body of knowledge on Vietnam, such as Poland, Portugal, and Italy. Second, there are the descendants of Vietnamese migrants to countries like Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary who are pursuing graduate studies and investigating their immigrant societies and the relationships those societies have with Vietnam. Third, there are Europeans and others who have become interested in Vietnam because of the presence of Vietnamese communities in their home societies.

At the same time that Vietnamese have traveled overseas to pursue further studies, the academic world in Vietnam has changed dramatically. Whereas the most vibrant centers of higher education 12 years ago were in Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City, the years since that time have witnessed provincial universities aggressively reform and multiple new private universities emerge. EWV has supported these developments by holding conferences not only at institutions like Vietnam National University in both Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City, but also at provincial universities like Thái Nguyên University, and private universities like the Hà Nội University of Business and Technology, and the University of Phan Thiết, while also collaborating with Thủ Dầu Một University and An Giang Province. Through these interactions, EWV has gained the participation of an ever-expanding group of Vietnamese scholars who are part of the world of higher education growth and development in Vietnam today.

Related to the changes taking place in higher education globally, we have also witnessed a diversification of the academic bases of overseas Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese scholars at EWV. Whereas in the first few years of the conference, overseas Vietnamese and “Western” participants at EWV were normally based at universities in Western countries, now they can be based anywhere, from Japan to Italy to South Korea to Bulgaria to Qatar to Brunei Darussalam.

Finally, one other development that has been both important for, and unique to, EWV is the participation of independent scholars and artists. While the internationalization of higher education has transformed the landscape for the official production of academic knowledge, the digital revolution and globalization have created opportunities for independent scholars to pursue their research on Vietnam. EWV has always welcomed the work of such scholars, and over the years has had the good fortune of being able to learn from the work of these dedicated researchers. In addition, EWV has also always sought to bridge the artificial divide between academia and the arts, by including performances, exhibitions, and discussions about the arts in each conference. As a result, artists from around the world have also contributed significantly to the conference series, thereby adding yet another unique dimension to the knowledge that EWV annually produces.

1.3 New Topics

Given the new and diverse trajectories that participants at EWV have followed, it is understandable that the topics they address are also diverse. While scholars theoretically have the freedom to research whatever they want, in practicality the choice of research topics can be heavily influenced by various factors and calculations. This is particularly the case for graduate students and their choice of dissertation research. So, for instance, if someone joins a Ph.D. program in History at a university in North America to work under a specialist on Vietnam, that person will most likely formulate a research project that speaks to the extant body of English-language scholarship on Vietnamese history, and which will also take into account research trends in the larger academic environment to best position oneself to be able to obtain gainful employment upon completing the doctoral degree.

If, however, that same student knows Chinese and studies in Taiwan or China, the student may study under a scholar who is not an expert on Vietnam and may develop a research topic that is informed more by the Chinese-language sources that serve as the basis of the dissertation, with less consideration for trends or debates in the English-language scholarship on Vietnam or in the academic world in “the West” more generally.

Finally, if that same student studies in an English-medium program in Macau or Portugal, s/he might develop a topic that is related to the history of diplomatic and trade relations between Portugal and Vietnam, and might connect his/her research to a niche sub-field of international historical scholarship on the comparative history of Iberian imperialisms. Such a topic might be considered “peripheral” or even “old-fashioned” by some, but it would be appreciated by a small community of scholars across the globe.

What one researches is, therefore, to some extent determined by where one researches; and today research on Vietnam is being conducted in many more places than was the case just 10 or 20 years ago. In addition to this factor, there is another element that we need to consider, and that is the question of who people research under or with. For a young person in Vietnam who wishes to pursue an MA and/or a Ph.D. overseas, his or her biggest concern may be to find a disciplinary expert on his/her proposed research topic. Such a person may or may not be an expert on Vietnam. Indeed, as the number of Vietnamese pursuing doctoral degrees in both Vietnam and overseas has expanded dramatically in the past 20 years, and as non-Vietnamese in various places across the globe have become interested in researching Vietnam-related topics, the range of experts that have become involved in their production of knowledge about Vietnam has also expanded. In other words, knowledge about Vietnam is today not the monopoly of a group of people who self-recognize as Vietnam experts.

Finally, one other important aspect about the work being produced about Vietnam today is that developments in Vietnam have driven interest in certain topics, and this has led to the emergence of new bodies of knowledge that differ from the foci of longer-established fields. Education is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Over

the past 30 years, there have been tremendous changes that have been brought to the world of education in Vietnam, particularly higher education. For Vietnamese who work in higher education, or for young Vietnamese seeking to pursue an MA and/or a Ph.D., understanding these changes and their ramifications is a topic of obvious interest and need. This has been extremely evident at EWV. In each of the 12 conferences held to date, there has been a significant group of participants who focus on topics relating to education. Further, those topics have changed over time as the educational landscape in Vietnam has developed and transformed.

So, for instance, while in 2009 it was common to find participants studying about TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) education in Vietnam, by 2019, after a decade that saw the emergence of private universities and joint programs with international universities, more participants were looking at the internationalization of education in Vietnam as well as the increasingly important role of English and English-medium-instruction in Vietnam's education system. By contrast, such topics have not garnered as much attention from established Vietnam experts around the globe. Instead, such scholars have largely continued to pursue research that has evolved out of interests and practices that predate the massive educational transformations that are taking place in Vietnam today. In other words, over the past twenty years, Vietnam has changed much faster and more dramatically than the research interests of established Vietnam experts around the globe, and this has been evident at every EWV conference held to date.

1.4 Trajectories and Their Hierarchies

These new trajectories followed by EWV participants and their topics of research exist in a world of global knowledge production that is hierarchical. Whether we like it or not, many people perceive that “Western” knowledge occupies the top of that hierarchy and that certain trajectories are preferable to others. A Ph.D. from a North American university can garner more prestige in many settings than an equivalent degree from a university in Thailand or Singapore or South Korea. A dissertation topic that engages with the latest theorizations of globalization can likewise garner more respect for its author than a dissertation that documents the history of trade relations between Portugal and Vietnam in the 1730s. People think this way because the “Western model” of higher education has been granted a place of prominence in our imaginations (Phan 2017), however, what the participants at EWV over the past 12 years have demonstrated to us is that these types of assumptions need to be questioned. Nonetheless, such perceptions can be difficult to move beyond, particularly when we are the products of the global educational hierarchy.

To illustrate this point, we would like to take the liberty of indulging ourselves and talking a bit about the trajectories of the editors of this volume, as this will help illustrate the types of changes that are now underway. Liam Kelley's academic career originally followed a very traditional Western area studies approach. After obtaining proficiency in Chinese by studying in Taiwan, he pursued graduate studies

in Chinese and Southeast Asian history at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the 1990s, where he studied under experts on both Chinese and Vietnamese history. There he also studied the Vietnamese language and made his first visit to the country in 1996. Having earlier studied Russian for his undergraduate degree in the 1980s, Liam experienced something reminiscent of the divided Cold War world of that earlier period in researching Vietnamese history in the 1990s. In particular, “Vietnam” was a place that people from “the West” studied, as they built their careers in their home country based on the knowledge that they produced about that foreign society. In the process, such scholars might have some interactions with colleagues in Vietnam, but the knowledge production process was largely one-sided.

As mentioned above, Phan Le Ha was among the first post-Đổi Mới Vietnamese scholars to follow a new trajectory. Growing up in Hà Nội, and having obtained BA degrees in International Relations/International Studies and English, respectively, in 1998, Le Ha went to Monash University in Australia to pursue post-graduate studies in Education, focusing first on TESOL and then extending to Applied Linguistics and the Sociology of Education. At Monash, Le Ha studied under scholars who were experts of TESOL and Applied Linguistics but were who not specialists in Vietnam by any means. In some ways, one could argue that Le Ha’s move from “developing” Vietnam to “developed” Australia was a classic Cold War-era trajectory that various Western countries had long supported to “modernize” knowledge among people from non-Western countries. However, Le Ha took control of that trajectory and has been seen by her peers as an internationally recognized scholar of the highest caliber on such topics as English as an international language and the internationalization of higher education in global contexts. Yes, Le Ha is “Vietnamese,” and yes, sometimes she writes about “Vietnam” in her research and therefore produces knowledge about Vietnam, however, her status is not limited to that of a “Vietnam expert,” nor is her contribution limited to the role of delivering “advanced knowledge” to a “developing” society.

Then we have the third editor of this volume, Jamie Gillen. Jamie is Senior Lecturer and Director of the Global Studies Programme at The University of Auckland, and formerly a lecturer in the Geography Department at Singapore National University. He has also served as a co-convenor of EWV conferences. Growing up outside of Washington DC, Jamie studied marketing management at university because, as he confesses, he did not have any particular interests and thought a business major would provide the best chance at getting a job after graduation. That seemingly solid plan, however, did not pan out. After graduating from university in 1999, Jamie found himself moving from one temporary job to another in the Washington, DC area, uninterested in the work and confused about why he had chosen a business path. At the same time, he also started to think about how much he had enjoyed a world regional geography course that he took during his sophomore year, as well as a semester spent as an exchange student in southern Switzerland. He realized that he was much more interested in the world at large than the world of business.

Through research, Jamie discovered that the field of human geography was very strong at the University of Kentucky, so he applied there and was accepted. His MA research was on tourism in U.S. cities, however, in the summer of 2002, he went

on a study abroad trip with some former professors around Asia, and Vietnam was his favorite place among all of the countries he traveled to. Interested in continuing to research tourism, he decided to pursue a Ph.D. and conduct research on the tourism industry in Vietnam. At that time, in 2003, the University of Colorado had a Vietnamese language instructor and a renowned expert on tourism in China. Jamie applied, was accepted, and that launched him on the path of researching and producing knowledge about Vietnam. He conducted research in Vietnam on a Fulbright Fellowship and went on to work closely with colleagues in Vietnam from his base for several years at the National University of Singapore.

Liam's trajectory is the "traditional" means by which knowledge in "the West" was created about other parts of the world. Le Ha's trajectory partially followed a Cold War era "developmental" or "modernization" trajectory that was aimed at making "the rest" more like "the West," but the endpoint of her trajectory is novel. Finally, Jamie's trajectory is new and was made possible by various developments. Globalization, for instance, led many American universities in the 1990s to seek to diversify their course offerings, and as a result, by the early 2000s, one could find experts on foreign societies on virtually every campus. This, we would argue, started to democratize knowledge production about the world. It became no longer essential to follow the path that Liam took through universities with established area studies credentials. Instead, it was now possible to "piece together" the necessary human, institutional, and scholarly resources in diverse and creative ways.

Over the past two decades, the type of trajectory that Jamie followed has become globalized. Indeed, it has become the new normal. Similarly, the endpoint of Le Ha's trajectory has likewise become a new norm. It is no longer an expectation that international students will return to their home country upon the completion of their degrees. Instead, the world is their oyster, and they can end up working and producing knowledge virtually anywhere.

1.5 Vietnam at the Vanguard

It is because of all the issues discussed above that we are labeling this volume "Vietnam at the Vanguard." Here we are again employing the name "Vietnam" as a multifaceted signifier. In particular, we are arguing that participants at EWV over the past decade, as well as their topics of research, constitute the vanguard of new developments in global higher education. These developments are particularly affecting Vietnam and the people around the world who study it, in all of its complex and global forms. Simply put, the participants at EWV represent the fact that knowledge about Vietnam is being produced today by an ever-diverse range of scholars, and that the topics that they are examining likewise reflect not only the diverse trajectories of these scholars but also the fact that a transforming Vietnam has made evident new issues that demand our scholarly attention, from the internationalization of education in Vietnam to the presence of Vietnamese migrant workers in the UK.

That knowledge is now getting produced by so many people who are on so many different trajectories leads to obvious challenges. First and foremost is the question of standards of knowledge. For academic training in Vietnamese universities and the area studies model in “the West,” one must be guided along the academic trajectory by experts in one’s area of interest. This is how the integrity of knowledge is supposedly ensured. However, these are not the conditions under which many scholars gain their training and expertise today. Instead, like the case of Jamie studying under an expert on tourism in China, today a Vietnamese student who researches gender roles in contemporary Vietnam might gain his or her training under a leading sociologist in Canada who is an expert on gender among indigenous peoples. In such a situation, the Vietnamese student will have to be his/her own expert on Vietnam, just as Jamie had to be. But can one be an expert in such contexts? Or is it only possible to ensure the quality of one’s scholarship by having a Vietnam specialist supervise or advise the project?

In reality, this is not an either/or question, as one can argue that it depends entirely on the individual. If one seeks out knowledge and the help of others, one can potentially ensure the solidity of one’s knowledge. However, it is also possible in the increasingly globalized world of knowledge production about Vietnam to be unaware of issues that have been addressed by earlier scholars. In the pre-digital age of the not-so-distant past, a certain degree of intellectual “gatekeeping” was possible as scholarly knowledge was produced through a limited number of publication channels that scholars in a given field could keep track of. Today it is much more difficult to keep abreast of the knowledge that is being produced, let alone to somehow control it. This is what makes EWV particularly valuable for its participants as it brings together people with different forms of expertise and provides a forum for them to test their ideas.

While the diversity of academic trajectories creates challenges today, particularly for young scholars, to establish the key knowledge for their research, the work of new generations of scholars today should lead scholars of earlier generations to pause and reflect on their ideas about what knowledge about Vietnam can and should be produced. The “Western” scholarly enterprise is often driven by discipline-based progress: you learn what a discipline has covered and achieved, and then you offer a contribution that moves the discipline forward, be it theoretically or empirically. However, what discipline is a Vietnamese doctoral student studying anthropology in Japan supposed to advance? The ideas in Anglo-European anthropological scholarship? The work of Japanese anthropologists? The work of Vietnamese anthropologists? All of the above?

Further, in the current world of globalized knowledge production, scholars can possess aims other than advancing a discipline. Some of the most fascinating presentations at EWV in recent years have been by individuals who have been engaged in passion projects. While not professional academics, these individuals nonetheless conduct extensive research. And while they do not package their project in ways that can make a contribution to issues in a discipline, and therefore find themselves excluded from other professional scholarly settings, their work is fresh and insightful

and is now possible because of the globalizing changes and digital developments of the past 20 years.

1.6 Themes of *Vietnam at the Vanguard*

This volume is divided into three parts, each of which highlights topics that have organically formed key components of EWV conferences over the years. While the themes of the conferences are deliberately left broad to enable as diverse a range of participants as possible, the topics that participants present on have nonetheless naturally congealed around certain interests, and we have seen these shared interests repeated at multiple conferences (Please visit the conference website to view the programs of past conferences: engagingwithvietnam.org). One clear concern of scholars is to determine what it means to be a Vietnamese today both in and outside of Vietnam, given the tremendous changes that globalization has brought over the past 30 years, and Part I of this volume presents papers that address those issues. While the present is always of interest, there is consistently a strong contingent of participants at EWV who research the past, as well as “traditional” cultural practices. More specifically, these scholars are interested in examining the past from new perspectives and in understanding how “traditional” culture is being transformed, constructed, and/or re-imagined in the age of globalization. Part II of this volume contains representative papers of these perennial topics of interest at EWV. Finally, as mentioned above, education has been a key topic of interest at EWV from the outset, and Part III of this volume presents representative papers of the type of inquiry that scholars are currently engaging in.

While traditional cultural practices, higher education reform, and global Vietnamese communities may seem unrelated, these topics have been addressed by multiple participants at virtually every EWV conference. As such, the parts of this volume faithfully represent the organic divisions of knowledge that we have witnessed at EWV conferences over the past decade. Further, the authors in this volume likewise faithfully represent the range of scholars who regularly participate in EWV conferences. Were we to explain in detail the trajectories to knowledge production about Vietnam of these authors, we would find many of the elements discussed above regarding the new paths to knowledge that have emerged in the past 10 or 20 years. In other words, the contents of this volume reflect the types of knowledge about Vietnam that is being produced and the scholars who are producing it in this new world of globalized knowledge production.

Part I of the volume is entitled “Shaping Vietnamese Communities in a Globalized World.” It contains four chapters that deal with either global Vietnamese communities or globally-inflected efforts in Vietnam to shape communities. Further, like the EWV conference series, the chapters in this part move back and forth between Vietnam and other countries to engage with the global reach of what it means to be Vietnamese today and to encourage readers to view Vietnam and Vietnamese in a global context. This part begins with a chapter by Max Müller on the life trajectories of a group of

German-born children of Vietnamese immigrants (Chap. 2). Müller walks readers through his fieldwork in Vietnam to describe the tensions between a “Vietnamese-ness” that remains highly gendered and ageist in Vietnam and a German-influenced “Vietnameseness” that while less discriminatory toward women risks being diluted through “mất gốc”, or losing one’s roots. This chapter is followed by the work of two Germany-based scholars, Mirjam Le and Franziska Nicolaisen, who survey recent macro-, meso-, and micro-scale protest movements unfolding throughout Vietnam to argue for a more sophisticated notion of civil society that falls outside of traditional “Western” conceptualizations but which is nonetheless shaped by civil society in global democratic contexts (Chap. 3). Giang T. T. Tran then takes us outside of Vietnam to examine the efforts to shape the sense of community among multiple generations in refugee families in Melbourne, Australia (Chap. 4). Although parents wish for their children to retain Vietnamese identity and cultural values like harmony and family solidarity, the author shows that the results are mixed as young people grow up under far different circumstances than their parents did in Vietnam. The final chapter of the first part then returns to Vietnam to look at another effort to shape a community. In this chapter, Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy focuses on the case of a historically important community in Vinh to express how new formulations of “Vietnameseness” are created through selective collaboration with local political actors (Chap. 5).

While Part I examines issues of Vietnameseness both inside and outside of Vietnam, Part II, “History, Community, and Cultural Practices across Time and Space,” looks at the various ways that the past and its cultural practices are perceived and engaged with by people in the present or shed light on the historical roots of our globalized world and its values. Dinh Hong Hai and Liam C. Kelley, for instance, examine contemporary identity projects in Vietnam and China that make appeals to the same ancient past, projects that are the product of the transnational flow of ideas (Chap. 6). Will Pore, meanwhile, takes us into the meditations of early-twentieth-century Vietnamese and Korean intellectuals who pondered issues of cosmopolitanism and the ethics of place, issues that are by no means alien to us today (Chap. 7). Finally, Jerema Słowiak looks at Polish aid to North Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s (Chap. 8). His documentation of the transnational flow of goods during the Vietnam War again alerts us to the history of the global structures that our current age is built upon.

These three chapters focused on history are then followed by three that examine cultural practices, and again, that do so from the perspective of our globalized world. In the first chapter in this section, Dang Thi Phuong Anh writes about kite-flying as a new form of intangible cultural heritage. Once confined to village life in northern Vietnam the practice has now taken root in the Vietnamese national heritage industry and elevated a local activity to the realm of the global (Chap. 9). Tran Thi An’s exposition on the flowering of the worshipping practices of the Four Ladyship Saints throughout Vietnam is a consequence of a relaxing of the state’s rules toward organized religion after the reform era and the increased wealth among Vietnamese who now use their extra expendable income to travel to and adorn houses of worship with their attention and money (Chap. 10). Finally, Myriam Dao takes us on a journey

through the various communities that have embraced the Vietnamese divinatory arts across time, from past to present, and space, from Vietnam to France (Chap. 11).

Part III, “Higher Education, Society, and the Global Stage,” focuses on two very important aspects of Vietnam’s contemporary higher education: research capacity building and internationalization, both of which are considered to be key in Vietnam’s integration to the global stage of knowledge production and the international university ranking exercise. Chapter 12 by Huong Thi Lan Nguyen and Timothy Marjoribanks is based on the premise that establishing and sustaining a research culture is vital for universities these days, globally, and in Vietnam. The authors then offer a detailed discussion of how Vietnam could cultivate a research culture via a leadership conceptual framework.

As we are completing this volume, the COVID-19 pandemic is still escalating in many parts of the world, including Vietnam. The pandemic has caused tremendous damage globally and the internationalization of higher education—the by default aspiration for global higher education systems—has been severely affected everywhere. For the past year, the world and global higher education have seen pauses in international student mobilities and university after university struggling to find new ways to operate as their business-as-usual internationalization is going downhill. In this very context, in the final chapter (Chap. 13), Thanh Phung and Phan Le Ha invite readers to rethink higher education and internationalization and to imagine a new vision for the internationalization of higher education in Vietnam. By (re)theorizing the concept of *internationalization at home*, these authors encourage readers to engage with new meanings of home and place, and a *new* Vietnam as a home for place-based internationalization amid (im)mobilities and global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe such engagement echoes the spirit that *Vietnam at the Vanguard* captures and presents.

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