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# Beyond Hanoi

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Vietnam Update Series

# Beyond Hanoi

## Local Government in Vietnam

*edited by* | **Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet**  
| **David G. Marr**

  
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# Preface

When the word “Vietnam” is mentioned, many people still think of a war that ended twenty-nine years ago. Yet Vietnam, the country, possesses the second largest population in Southeast Asia and ranks twelfth largest in the world. Surely it deserves to be approached on its own terms, not as a foreign memory.

A stern test of this prescription is to study governance in Vietnam. Undoubtedly, Vietnam’s entire political system was profoundly influenced by war and revolution from 1945 to the late 1970s. On the other hand, those western writers who labelled Vietnam “totalitarian” had very little to go on except their own Cold War ideological predilections, extrapolations from Stalin’s USSR, and Hanoi’s determination to portray Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party as infallible. Scholars who rejected the totalitarian epithet for Vietnam still found themselves severely limited as to sources that might support alternative models. Fieldwork was impossible, archives were closed, provincial newspapers inaccessible. By default, the utterances of central leaders and public intellectuals dominated writings on contemporary Vietnam. And governance — being inherently political — proved more difficult to research in practice than economic, social or cultural topics. Vietnam’s research conditions have improved substantially during the past decade, with scholars able to reside in the countryside, some archival materials rendered accessible, and back sets of hundreds of local periodicals readily available at the National Library in Hanoi. Of equal importance, a new generation of Vietnamese and foreign scholars has emerged and is making its mark in PhD theses and publications. Growing up after the war, these young men and women are looking at received wisdom critically, asking fresh questions, and eagerly taking advantage of the wider range of study opportunities. We

are delighted that a number of promising young scholars are represented in this book.

While governance is the context for this book, it is still only feasible in Vietnam to examine certain aspects rigorously. Several years ago we identified two propitious elements. The first was organizations that claim to speak on behalf of sectors of the public, represent their interests, provide linkages between citizens and government, and sometimes enable people to hold authorities accountable. At the Vietnam Update in Singapore in 2001, we brought together scholars who had broken new ground on this subject, and the results were published as *Getting Organized in Vietnam: Moving In and Around the Socialist State* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003).

The second element was local government and authority — the focus of this volume. When papers were originally tabled and discussed at the Vietnam Update in Canberra in 2002, we found it refreshing to be looking at a topic from the bottom up, rather than top down, as has so often been the case in the past. Papers also revealed interesting empirical differences by locality, especially as between rural and urban, lowland and upland, and north-centre-south. Everyone grappled with suitable translations for political concepts and administrative terminology, which led us to include a glossary of Vietnamese terms, and to symbolize the language complexity on the cover. We should also point out that the chapter by David Koh on Hanoi focuses on neighborhood and ward government, not the central state.

A number of individuals provided vital help with the 2002 Vietnam Update, the editing of chapters for this volume, or both. Bev Fraser and Oanh Collins have coordinated so many Update conferences so efficiently that participants are often blissfully unaware of how much work is involved. Stan Tan assisted with audio-visual equipment. Allison Ley edited the revised papers, Oanh Collins made the corrections, while Pham Thu Thuy compiled the glossary and the index. The Publications Unit of Singapore's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) manifested its usual professional talents and cordiality, notably the Managing Editor, Triena Ong, and the senior editor, Dayaneetha De Silva.

We would like to thank the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) for its financial support, and give special mention to Patricia Dodson for her abiding interest in a whole series of Vietnam



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# Abbreviations

AN	<i>L'Annam Nouveau</i>
AOM	Archives d'Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence)
BATK	<i>Bulletin Administratif du Tonkin</i>
BCDT	Bao Cao Dieu Tra (Inspection reports)
BDTQLHTXNN	Ban Dieu Tra Quan Ly Hop Tax Xa Nong Nghiep, tinh Hai Hung (Committee to Inspect Agricultural Cooperatives, Hai Hung province)
BEEPS	Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey
BNN	Ban Nong nghiep (Department of Agriculture)
BNV	Bo Noi Vu (Ministry of the Interior)
BOT	Build Operate Transfer companies
CG	Commission Guernut
CIEM	Central Institute for Economic Management
CRPTK	Chambre des Représentants du Peuple du Tonkin
CSOE	Central State-Owned Enterprise
ct.	carton
d	dossier
DCSVN	Dang Cong San Viet Nam
DOF	Department of Finance
DOI	Department of Industry
DPI	Department of Planning and Investment
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FPHD	Fonds de la Province de Ha Dong
FPND	Fonds de la Province de Nam Dinh
hs	ho so (file)
GDP	gross domestic product

HUNG	Huyen uy Ninh Giang (Party Committee of Ninh Giang District)
IFC	international financial corporation
INCOM	industry and commerce
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IZ	industrial zone
JV	joint venture
LLC	limited liability company
LSOE	local state-owned enterprise
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MPDF	Mekong Project Development Facility
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
N Ph	<i>Nam Phong</i> (Southern Wind)
NA3	Trung tam Luu tru Quoc gia So III (National Archive Centre No. III)
NF	Nouveau Fonds
NCHC	<i>Nghien cuu Hanh chinh</i> (Administrative Studies)
NCLS	<i>Nghien cuu Lich su</i> (Historical Studies)
NXB	nha xuất bản (publishing house)
p	phong (record group in archives)
PA	<i>Pacific Affairs</i>
PCOM	People's Committee
QH	Quoc Hoi (National Assembly)
RSTK	Résident/Résidence Supérieure du Tonkin
\$	piaster
SAARC	Small Area Administrative Representation Committee
SMCI	Standing Member of the Committee to Inspect Agricultural Cooperatives in Hai Hung province
SCCI	State Committee for Cooperation and Investment
SOE	state-owned enterprise
SOM	Section d'Outre-Mer des Archives Nationales
t/c	tap chi (journal)
t/c DTH	<i>Tap chi Dan Toc Hoc</i> (Journal of Ethnology)
t/c NCDNA	<i>Tap chi Nghien Cuu Dong Nam A</i> (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies)
TTg	Thu Tuong (Prime Minister)
TTLTUHD	Trung tam Luu tru Tinh uy Hai Duong (Archive Center of the Party Committee of Hai Duong Province)

TTLTUBNDHD	Trung tam Luu tru Uy ban Nhan dan Tinh Hai Duong (Archive Center of the People's Committee of Hai Duong Province)
TVE	town and village enterprise
UBCCRDWTW	Uy ban Cai cach Ruong dat Trung uong (Central Land Reform Committee)
UBHC	Uy ban Hanh chinh (Administrative Committee)
UBND	Uy ban Nhan dan (People's Committee)
UBNDNG	Uy ban Nhan dan Huyen Ninh Giang (People's Committee of Ninh Giang District)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VBES	Vietnam business environment survey
VCP	Vietnamese Communist Party
VNCKHTCNN	Vien Nghien cuu Khoa hoc To chu Nha nuoc (The Scientific Institute for Study of State Organization)
VNQDD	Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnam Nationalist Party)
vv	vinh vien (permanent)
WB	World Bank
WPB	Ward Party Branch
WPSC	Ward Party Standing Committee