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Mapping Time, Living Space
The Moral Cartography of Renovation in Late-Socialist Vietnam

Susan Bayly

Introduction

This is a paper about the mapping of personal and official histories in contemporary Vietnam. Building on ethnographic fieldwork in Hanoi, my concern is with sites where both the nation and its citizens enact the divergent chronologies and spatial positionings of the late-socialist world. The activities explored here include divinatory grave-site searches and geomantic house-sitings, and occasions when families and individuals share narrative knowledge of working or studying overseas.

My focus is the ethical entailments of such activities, including those relating to the delineation of Vietnamese national space, and the astrobiological reckonings for which one commissions a geomancer. The cases I have in mind include that of Mr Toan, a teacher in my fieldsite who had received frustratingly inconclusive advice from ordinary jobbing seers about his family's health and money problems. 'I felt it a lot', he said. 'It was pain in my heart' (*ruột đau*). What hurt was his sense of moral deficiency, his failure to meet need. But he found relief from a specialist in the geomantic arts, a *thầy phong thuỷ*, who traced the cause of his family's troubles to a house extension undertaken by his father twenty years ago, without a sanctioning leave-seeking, a *xin phép*, from the house-plot's place-god, its *thổ địa*.

There is also my friend Mr Phong, who speaks elegiacally of the beauty of his father's work as a French-trained map-maker, recruited to draw maps for the Viet Minh revolutionary army that defeated the French in 1954. 'Đẹp quá!' he said about the maps, 'So beautiful!' Đẹp can mean good looks, but also spiritual beauty and moral harmony. Auspicious numbers are things of beauty too. People buy 'beautiful numbers' (*số đẹp*) for their mobile phones, i.e. a sim-card

sequence in numerological resonance with the causal harmonies of earth and heaven. And specialists in the now actively revived science of *phong thuỷ* (geomancy) guide their clients in the selection of a house or tomb site with 'beautiful' geomantic properties, meaning an ideal placing between hills and flowing watercourses. For Mr Phong, both the act and the artefacts were beautiful. There was love and artistry like the icon-painter's dedicated spirituality in tracing out and bringing into view the beloved countenance of the national geobody (Winichakul 1994).

All cartography might, of course, be said to be both moral and political, as can be seen in accounts of the 'cartographies of power' (Clark 2003: 8) enacted in settings such as Stalin's Russia (Dobrenko and Naiman 2003). There are certainly objectifications of this kind in Vietnam, the most obvious instances being the ever-changing array of official posters and exhortation banners displayed in public spaces. These artefacts of the party-state at its most didactic project their messages in strongly cartographic terms, exalting love of homeland and of those who protect its frontiers, juxtaposing images of heroic soldier-citizens and flower-of-the-nation Youth Union (*Đoàn Thanh niên*) members with vivid representations of the national map.[1] One of the posters' recurring motifs is that of a gleaming industrial cityscape with grid-like streets and other tokens of topographic modernity, symbolizing national life as it should be lived by those embodying its values as disciplined spatial subjects. There are even special banners for display by designated 'spaces of modern civility' (*khu phố văn minh*), meaning neighbourhoods meeting exemplary standards of order and conduct.

Yet I believe the case of Vietnam shows that there is far more to cartography's ethical entailments than the projection of moralizing power/knowledge. Hanoians attach great importance to the ways actors and their affective collectivities engage with the world's mapped and mappable spaces, thereby showing themselves to be both achieving and ethically purposeful in the conduct of everyday life. Such modes of engagement include the ways demarcated space can be invested with meanings both intimate and exalting, as in the use of family photographs to recall and celebrate the traversing of near and distant revolutionary landscapes. And because calculation and exactitude in these matters have high value in Vietnam, the operations of geomancers and psychic grave-finders are also forms of moral cartography. These are widely esteemed as scientific pursuits in the value-laden sense in which positivistic modern science (*khoa học*) is understood in today's Vietnam.[2]

This is knowledge with distinctively moral entailments, of the kind deployed when clients use a chosen expert's skill and insight to make principled contact with a numinous and responsive geotemporal environment. My interest is thus in the importance of personal efficacy in the handling of spatial conditions and challenges; in the ethical reckonings made when cartographic skills are deployed for principled ends; and in the highly tangible ways such deployments reflect the intertwining of the temporal and geophysical.

The sites of these materializations include domestic ancestor altars and pagoda memorial walls, and other points where histories of kindred and

nationhood interpenetrate in forms both exalting and painful for those involved. Moral cartography is a notion premised on precise methodologies, with a focus on actors' own perceptions of what it is morally creditable to strive for in a world of ever-challenging spatial and temporal knowledge, including contexts of commercial supply and exchange.[3]

This means that when Soviet-trained geologists or astronomers take up the geomantic arts in later life, those with a reputation for skill and honest dealing are regarded as bringing into fruitful resonance two distinct yet compatible realms of super-morality: that of hard-science positivism, and that of the open-ended world of numinous space and landscape. It is accepted that money will change hands when such arts are deployed. But this is not problematic if such earnings are used creditably, as when a geomancer's modest charges are ploughed back into 'research' (*nghiên cứu*, meaning the search for improved skill and knowledge).

Hanoians themselves attach value to their own and other people's modes of cartographic reckoning, and view the geotemporal sciences as fields of ethical practice drawing virtue from their Vietnameseness, and from the interactions they allow with the world's cosmic harmonies. Their geospatial knowledge is deployed for aims considered good and even exalting, not as a disciplining or act of control. This is moral agency conceptualized as the promptings of a feeling heart. The notion here is of attunement to what is good to do or aspire to that comes from the promptings of conscience (*tâm*) and natural sentiment (*tình cảm*), the all-important capacity to engage feelingly with living and ancestral others.[4]

This is what I believe Mr Phong the cartographer's son was expressing about his father's maps: the idea of his own loving sentiment, and of his father's use of skill and knowledge as an act of loving care. 'That is how I felt', he said, using the emotive idiom 'feel-perceive' (*cảm thấy*), not the much colder 'feel-think' (*cảm nghĩ*). He was speaking of something inherently fine and handsome: an honourable use of scientific knowledge for unimpeachably virtuous ends. The maps were tools of victory, constructive inscriptions of what he and his countrymen had brought into being: a tracing out of the nation's true features as a liberated land hitherto demeaned by the colonizers' inscription practices, that is, by denying its true name *Việt Nam*, proudly displayed on his father's maps in place of the hated foreign designation *Indochine*.[5] Far from being contaminated by association with colonial power/knowledge, the maps were infused by his father's patriotic heart with the beauty one ascribes to a loved one's radiant countenance.

The pursuit of cartographic imperatives can thus enhance as well as flatten and conventionalize the affective contours of a complex world, and cartography need not refer only to operations in Euclidean space. My idea of the moral cartographer is of someone like E.P. Thompson's co-participant in a moral economy. In Thompson's formulation, the moral economy was a domain of ethical life in time, its interactions principled and intensely felt, never coldly instrumental.[6] The living of morally cartographic life is also an active bearing of

values, entailing purpose and sensibility even in mundane contexts such as the drawing of maps or the geomantic calculations involved in the auspicious positioning of tombs and house-plots. Cartography is therefore presented here as a matter of both temporal and geophysical siting, as in the deployment of skilled technique for the installation of the dead as an active presence on household ancestor altars. Such initiatives are often far from harmonious or gratifying, yet still expansive and ethically conceived. They also place strong emphasis on materiality in matters of geotemporal skill and knowledge, as in the case of ancestor altars and the pictures that furnish them.

Such objects act as connections or portals between different orders of past and present life. In so doing, they become far more than husk-like memory markers, in Pierre Nora's celebrated terms (1984). Yet, as I show below, Nora's *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) concept is still relevant to Vietnam. It is what the modern citizen knows the party-state has in mind as the proper way to regard a family ancestor altar or cemetery for the military war dead (*nghĩa trang*). Official ideology holds that such sites should be honoured and even sanctified, but not treated as points of access to responsive agency. Yet, as I show below, this is precisely what they have come to constitute, both in family life and in the party-state's increasingly sacralized celebrations of nationhood. Their existence in today's Vietnam thus throws up continual challenges for citizens whose lives as ethical agents entail a perpetual interplay of converging and contending cartographic imperatives.

Vietnam's Global Cartographies

With its record of rapid growth, high literacy and recent upgrading from 'developing' to 'middle income' in the World Bank's annual economic performance rankings, Vietnam is widely represented as second only to China among Asia's achieving late-socialist transition societies. Yet it has also been portrayed as a troubled 'country of memory' struggling with the unfinished business of its Cold War bifurcations and liberation wars.[7] Both versions of this transformation story prompt questions about time, maps and historicity. As citizens of one of the world's remaining Communist party-states, Vietnamese inhabit a world of multiple chronologies and spatial orders. It is from these interpenetrating sites and registers that they have negotiated the making and unmaking of what I have been calling the worldwide socialist ecumene (Bayly 2009).

Though much transformed in today's marketization era, the vision of a socialist ecumene in which Vietnam has played a role of heroic exemplification is still an active feature of collective and individual memory. Rather than focusing on official boundaries and demarcations, the idea of socialist ecumene focuses on notions of shared purpose and attainment, especially as manifested in the exemplary conduct and motivation of an achieving revolutionary citizenry. Its entailments are expressed in highly space- and time-conscious

terms, as can be seen in personal and official accounts of the sites where Vietnamese men and women of science acquired and imparted the skills of socialist modernity, both within and beyond the old arenas of COMECON 'friendship' exchange.[8]

These positionings in time and space are not experienced as neatly demarcated layerings between a marketized present and high-socialist past, but as an entanglement of multiple temporal and spatial registers. Those to be explored here involve the markers and chronologies of at least three interacting time modes: revolutionary-socialist, historicist-national, and personal-familial. By connecting these with the notion of moral cartography, I hope to show that the ethical concerns of 'market socialism' are being negotiated in Vietnam not only in temporal terms, but through evocations of purposefully achieving life in space.

Hanoi people enact the cartographies that matter to them in remarkably varied ways. While there are undoubtedly pluralities of a similar kind in other global settings, those of particular resonance in Hanoi are the trajectories people focus on in relating their key affective collectivities to the spaces of a precisely delineated geohistory. This includes the national and personal narratives that connect Vietnam with the wider socialist ecumene.

The idea that their country's twenty-year marketization process has differed greatly from other post-COMECON market transitions matters greatly in Vietnam.[9] There is a strong affective dimension to portrayals of the country's marketization as self-wrought and moral, like its revolution and liberation wars, in sharp contrast to the disasters now afflicting its 'friends' of the former socialist ecumene.

Russia is a key case in point. Its terrain is still a hallowed space of socialist memory. Every Vietnamese schoolchild learns about the Odessa Steps and Stalingrad. But in the moralizing geohistories through which Hanoians so often narrativize their sense of familial and national life, present-day Russians are to be pitied and mourned for as the victims of toxic neoliberalizers and kleptocrats, a people demoralized and in stasis, without the temporal anchorings and trajectories that both challenge and animate today's Vietnam. There are also potent space and time narratives about relations with Vietnam's powerful socialist 'elder sister' China, to which I return below.

In my current fieldwork site, an inner-city residential area I call Hồ Tây (West Lake), residents are keenly aware of the massive changes engendered by market opening. Yet they do not speak of market transition as a state of undifferentiated simultaneity. Just as there are many states and conditions of post-coloniality, there are many forms and modes of post-socialism. These include spaces of dynamism, which is how Vietnamese like to describe their own homeland, as opposed to other spaces of the former COMECON world where momentum and directionality can be thought of as blocked or immobilized.

Of course, these are highly flattering self-images finding, not at home but in the ex- Soviet states and 'satellites', modernities stagnating or insecurely attained. The resulting sense of place is very different from what has been

described in contexts where ex-revolutionaries have had to see other countries' socialist modernity as humiliatingly prior and superior to their own.[10]

The Vietnamese term for the marketization process is *đổi mới*, a 1980s neologism commonly translated as 'renovation'. It is not a term signalling the death or erasure of a discredited socialist past, but the revitalization of an enduring socialism: cosmopolitan, urbane and dynamic (Raman and West 2009). Yet today's renovation experience is also rooted in the ideas and practices of a moralized marketplace, as I explain below. Proclaiming the national roots of this space where needs are met and legitimate exchanges are enacted has become an important means of demonstrating that marketized Vietnam is not a mere dependent clone of its problematic 'elder sister', China.

The multiple time and space reckonings to be encountered in Hanoi include representations of Vietnam as a site of 'market-oriented' (*thị trường định hướng*), never 'capitalist', transformations. Even 'marketized' is unwelcome, suggesting outsiders directing the country's new course, rather than Vietnamese themselves setting the nation's chosen trajectory. Yet both official and personal time and space reckonings reflect the complexities arising from the country's confident but far from unproblematic engagements with today's wider world, especially the country's capitalist-tiger neighbours, where Vietnamese sojourners meet so many expressions of their ASEAN and WTO trading partners' capitalism-triumphant narratives.

The idea that the global capitalist order has displaced the great socialist trajectory of history unfolding progressively towards revolutionary end-time is clearly very different from the temporal reckoning still officially subscribed to in Vietnam. While energetically pursuing worldwide trade and diplomatic ties, the party-state continues to avow what the textbooks and state media call 'the everlasting vitality of Marxism'. There are also frequent exaltations of the grand landmarks and achievement markers of world Communism, both spatial and calendrical.

For Hồ Tây people, there are both tensions and intertwinings between these official sitings and temporalities and the lived experience of the personal and familial. So while certainly not suggesting any notion of unproblematic harmony between the pronouncements of state agencies and the geotemporal practices of community and family life, I do see a need to recognize the points where they meet and interpenetrate.

In pre-colonial times a typical peri-urban village with entrance gates and a community shrine-house (*đình*) for the local place gods, Hồ Tây is now a ward (*phường*) within one of the inner-city core-zones (*quan*). Most of its households descend from old West Lake fishing, market-gardening and craft-specialist lineages with strong connections to the Old Quarter market enclave.[11] Like other Hanoi neighbourhoods, Hồ Tây has undergone a feverish construction boom in recent years. Yet the relentless tearing down and in-filling are emphatically not a sign of detachment from place and roots: quite the reverse, even though West Lake is also a site of extensive in- and out-migration, with a

markedly supra-local and mobile sense of what it means to be an urban villager enacting a life of shared familial landmarks and achievement.[12]

The old Hồ Tây families still live where their forebears resided, though no longer in the tiny clay-walled houses of a generation ago. The remarkable changes experienced within living memory are charted in terms far more complex than those of a simple before- and after-marketization timeline. 'We lost it in the wars', people say of old houses, family treasures, and knowledge of where ancestral graves are located, meaning both the 1946–1954 anti-French liberation war with its punitive raids and house-burnings, and the bombings and mass evacuations of the 1962–1973 anti-US War. And in contrast to wartime as a brutal paring-away of vital anchorings, people point to the high-socialist period as a critical first stage on the way to today's dramatically different Hồ Tây life.

This emphasis on gains achieved in the planned-economy years may seem surprising since the country's now precarious tiger-economy status is so widely thought of as a product of rupture with the socialist past. Yet for all its energy-sapping queues and shortages, the planning or 'subsidy' (*bao cấp*) period is recalled as a time of dynamic translocality generating work options very different from those of the sclerotic local fishing and craft collectives.

It took effort and a clean political dossier (*lý lịch*) to gain a much sought-after labour posting to one of the industrialized COMECON countries. People are not sentimental about those gruelling work stints, though there is pride at the memory of a father or youthful self getting to grips with technological modernity in an East German steelworks or Russian mining town. But what made the stays so keenly sought after was the chance to source items both portable and super-desirable in commodity-starved 1980s Hanoi. Electric fans and winter wear were particularly sought after, exchangeable on a largely cashless basis for tin roofing, indoor taps and window glass.

The stories of those forays into the subsidy-era grey economy are now much reflected on, their recounting an exercise in the sharing and transmission of a sense of purposeful action and achievement. They are not told as tales of wheeler-dealer canniness, but as moral narratives about brave traversings of the socialist ecumene, followed by a happy return to home and family with honourable gains in hand.

The emphasis on homes upgraded is of key importance in these accounts. To improve or construct a home is a resonant act in Vietnam, much spoken of in the nuanced language of Vietnamese achievement thinking as an instance of attainment, *thành quả*.[13] This is not the word for more ordinary accomplishments, even of a very positive kind. However ardently prayed for, a child's exam success or business deal profitably concluded is mere *thành tích*, the word for targets met and routine wins or gains. *Thành quả* is special, implying fruitfulness of an exceptional and important kind.

The construction or refurbishment of houses is achievement in this special sense because it is morally essential provision or 'family work' (*việc gia đình*). It

is thus a manifestation of worth and capacity involving engagement with causal agency, both in the everyday sense of initiating consequential action in the mortal world, and in the wider sense of the material and non-material forces and agents shaping change and consequence in the interpenetrating realms of human, natural and cosmic reality.[14]

The awareness that human bodies, homes and graves are all critical sites of interface with the flows of causality in both agentive and unpersonified forms can now be openly acted on in Vietnam. This is done both practically and ritually: by means of careful geomantic siting and upkeep work at tombs and gravesites, and through acts of provisioning, such as the burning of paper votive goods (*vàng mã*) for the actively experiencing dead.

These are all important geotemporal actions. They bespeak a sense of what Mayfair Yang calls 'ritual territoriality' in her account of contested spatial use in China (2004). Yet the Vietnamese context does not present the same clear-cut division between the disenchanted spatialities of high-modernist state practice and what Yang calls the 'placeness' of families and rural communities. This reflects the extent to which both remembered and ongoing translocality pervades the processes of Vietnamese geotemporal life. When such actions are accomplished with spatial and calendrical precision in Vietnam, they suggest accuracy and care in a host of important ways, including those that can be proudly pointed to as embodiments of modernity and Vietnameseness. This entails a strong sense of 'our space and our sciences, not theirs', meaning most especially not those of the nation's ever-dangerous and difficult neighbour, China.

The fact that causality is legible to those with rigorous geotemporal knowledge is the essence of cartographic awareness in Vietnam (Kelley 2003). Death anniversaries and the phase-shift climacteric days of the waning and waxing moon (*ngày rằm*) are the key points of efficacy for engagement with those inhabiting the otherworld (*âm phủ*) where ancestral souls reside. Hồ Tây households ensure that the proper disciplining measures are taken for these important but risky interactions with the non-mortal world.[15] The realms of mortal and non-mortal life are thus spaces with boundaries and junction points that may be traversed by those performing appropriate ritual action in a manner correctly aligned with the flows and resonances of temporality.

For all the vigour of the high-socialist period's anti-'superstition' drives (*bài trừ mê tín dị đoan*), I do not know anyone in Hồ Tây who doubts that the world is numinous and suffused with responsive presence (*linh*: see Pham 2009; Kendall et al. 2010). They know it is important to choose an auspicious day and time when initiating excavation or building work. There is also *xin phép*, leave-seeking from the *thổ địa* (land gods), figures of vested authority with the power to punish those taking liberties with their terrain.

A key concern for many families today is the tracing of afflictions such as infertility to a specific geotemporal source. While the cause may turn out to be impersonally calendrical,[16] the source of bad occurrences will often be identified as the ire of an affronted *thần* divinity to whom reparations can be made

with the help of a suitably qualified specialist. Many such practitioners now operate openly in Vietnam. There are famous specialist masters (*thầy*) with elaborate websites and celebrity client lists, and modest providers for everyday spatial rites and land-god problems. Such problems are typically both geospatial and temporal because place-deities are vested with power through time: those they have reason to punish can expect a long chain of consequences stretching forward from generation to generation as the outcome of an original misdeed.

But while cartographically legible to those with the right gifts and knowledge, the traces of such enactment can be painfully hard to decode, as in the case of those who have to decide again and again to seek out further expertise when a long-running grave-search or other distressing cartography problem remains stubbornly unresolved. This leads many households to consult a specialist in one or both of the key siting arts: calendrical calculus divination (*tử vi* horoscopy) and geomancy (*phong thuỷ*, cosmic energy-flow mapping). Both are widely practised; both have become strongly scientized fields rooted in complementary systems of geotemporal expertise.[17] Both are known to be Chinese-derived, though they are spoken of as having been given new life and distinctiveness in Vietnam, with a suggestion of valuable heritage lost and wasted in China under Mao. As a result, it fell to Vietnam to infuse their practice with scientific rigour while indigenizing them as caring arts deployed with a feeling heart.

For my friend Mr Toan, far from being a reversion to a pre-socialist world of 'traditional' lore and custom, or a rejection of high-socialist scientific modernity, the rites and knowledge to which he now has access are both fulfilment and enhancement of that modernity. 'We only knew about ghosts then [*ma*]', he says of the time when his father's earnings in socialist East Germany paid for their house extension, a time when people could do their best to provide for their families' needs but had to do so with only limited knowledge of the arts and sciences to which a caring provider now has much fuller recourse. 'Now it's different', he said. 'Now we can read books' – he has a large collection of horoscopy and geomancy texts – 'and we can talk to masters and learn from films' – he meant his DVDs and downloads from websites showing psychics (*nhà ngoại cảm*) and *Kinh dịch* diviners at work.[18]

This is a key instance of moral cartography in action. Mr Toan reads the world around him in terms of interacting cartographic norms and registers both official and unofficial, knowing that a fully ethical life involves many different forms of geotemporal provision. To fulfil his duty of loving care to living and ancestral kin, there must always be expenditure of money and effort. Now that efficacious knowledge and skill can be readily accessed by those in need, it behooves a man of conscience to do what he can himself – buying the appropriate divination and geomancy manuals and learning to use their techniques for ordinary daily needs, and paying whatever he can for the best available expertise in matters beyond his own capacity and skill.

The Moral Cartography of Provision

No-one says they made big money in the 'subsidy' years. 'It wasn't doing business' (*kinh doanh*), people say of their grey-economy dealings – 'not like the Dresdeners'. Dresdener is Hanoi shorthand for the COMECON returnees reputed to have amassed real riches through dealings on a scale far greater than anything my informants own up to.

Everyone recognizes the showy onion-domed trophy houses that are the hallmark of the COMECON new rich. But even the glossiest of today's new-money Hồ Tây houses are not thought of as a Dresdener's parading of excess. In Hồ Tây, the upgrading of homes to a hygienic and 'civilized' (*văn minh*) standard is a matter of enduring community pride. Even in the *bao cấp* ('subsidy') years, it was an achievement consistent with the hallowed ideal of Vietnameseness as the classic multi-generation household living harmoniously beneath a single roof. No-one would call such an existence 'feudal' or amorally 'familistic'. Indeed, for a whole locality to live such a life, its households residing in solid structures rather than huts and fishermen's lean-tos, is to epitomize both enlightenment and productive rootedness in the national soil.

These attainments of the planning years are therefore recalled as manifestations of an achievement ideal much celebrated in Vietnam, both in revolutionary narratives and in accounts of today's market-era good life. This is material provision in forms bringing *văn minh* (civility/culturedness) to a formerly 'backward' (*lạc hậu*) existence (Kelley 2003).

The moral cartography of such transformations is often traced out in narrative, as when West Lake people share accounts of the changes their COMECON work sojourns brought about for their homes and families. On such occasions, ex-contract workers display their workplace merit awards and productivity certificates, and recall the wares brought back for swap or resale from Prague or Eisenhüttenstadt. Their accounts often move seamlessly from this world to the next, from provision for children and household in the here and now, to their protection and nurture through engagement with the supra-mundane.

Such narratives almost always include accounts of the key cartographic preoccupation of finding lost family graves. But they often begin with the household's first daring installation of a domestic ancestor altar, this too a critical dimension of Hanoians' present-day moral cartography. Like a well-tended set of family tombs in the patriline's ancestral village (*quê*), a properly furnished altar (*bàn thờ tổ tiên*) is an active portal in time and space, hence a critical meeting point of divergent geographies and temporalities.[19]

An altar's all-important ancestral photographs are often copies of a loved one's old state identity-card pictures: many households were too poor before marketization for the luxury of family photos, or lost those they had in wartime. Everyone recognizes that this presence of party-state iconography on ancestral spaces represents geographies that are this-worldly and resonant of official regimens and disciplines. Yet they are resonant too as embodiments of meaningful life and attainment on the part of ancestral kin. There is no sense of incongruity

when these and such state-issue items as regimental banners and workplace achievement certificates appear on household altars, often beneath brightly tinted oleographs of the Buddha in one of the numinous mountain landscapes where he is classically represented as eternal enlightener to all the world.

Equally prominent on many altars are portraits of the nation's quasi-sacralized founding father Ho Chi Minh (Malarney 1997). These are important images in the light of what the textbooks and state media now stress about Vietnam's current place on the world's geotemporal landscape, making much of its recent global attainment markers: the achievement of ASEAN, GATT and WTO membership; the securing of UNESCO listings for a growing number of natural and cultural heritage treasures. At the same time, the nation is still represented as being projected forward on a timeline framed in the evolutionist idiom of Marxist stage-theory, with Vietnam's history to be understood as a developmental trajectory from the feudal past to today's era of 'transition' (*thời kỳ quá độ*). Yet that march towards perfection need not be thought of as conflicting with what the markers of globalized attainment would appear to be saying about the nation's momentum in time and space. This is because it is humanized and Vietnamized through the exemplarship of Ho Chi Minh in his role as 'uncle' (*Bác*), elder kinsman of all the nation, a radiant maker and 'mirror' (*tấm gương*) of revolutionary morality and eternal nationhood, at once embodying and transcending all forms of mortal and progressive generational time.

In addition, both officially and in many families' home lives, there is also strong endorsement of what such altars' Buddhist iconography now signals. This is a composite of two interacting dimensional realms: one transcending mere mortal time; the other progressively salvationist, as widely expressed today through initiatives aimed at bringing the nation ever more fully into the fold of world Buddhism. These initiatives do not quite identify Buddhist belief as a fully-fledged national faith, but they do frame Vietnam's nationhood in terms of the decorously patriotic Buddhism now widely endorsed in public life. Such undertakings include the treatment of important Buddhist pagodas as hallowed national space, and the attendance of senior party-state officials at the installation of costly relics from the great overseas Buddhist holy places.[20]

Home Space and Geotemporal Provision

Within and beyond West Lake, household altars often have an even more complex geotemporal framing, their entwinings of globalized Buddhism and the party-state's iconography frequently enriched with yet another powerful presence. This is the stern-featured Trần Hưng Đạo, a real-life scholar-general exalted in the history books as the hero who repelled a thirteenth-century Mongol invasion force. But in Vietnam the national geobody is numinous as well as beloved, as are those who police its vulnerable margins and access points. So as deliverer and righteous orderer, Lord Trần is now revered as a

saint-like *thánh* divinity with the power to possess (*nhập*) mortal hosts (Pham 2009). He is thus a key figure in today's globally framed spiritualization of national space and history, his temples lavishly upgraded at state expense, and his images on household altars revered as empowering points of access to the nation's archaic geotemporal life.

The worship of Lord Trần is popular in Hồ Tây. Many residents perform the arduous New Year pilgrimage to his 'homeland' (*quê*) temples where devotees scramble to receive his auspicious investiture seals. These replicate the royal decrees which confirmed the rank of pre-modern court officials; they are now much sought after as good-luck tokens for aspiring career achievers (Pham 2009). This side of the Lord Trần rites is officially frowned on, but the visits are still praised as fulfilment of the same cartographic imperative that the schools' morality texts exalt in regard to visiting one's familial 'homeland' (*quê*). Such visits are always 'returns' (*về*), occasions of renewal that nurture filiality and rootedness: far from inculcating parochialism, such communion with the essences of home and ancestry equips the achieving citizen to set forth boldly and productively into the wider world.

In the early marketization years, there were no public announcements that family altars (*bàn thờ*) could be safely erected, or votive offerings openly made to ancestors. People say they simply knew. They began to see ritual items and reissued ceremonial instruction texts in other people's homes, and on sale in the market. They say their new means and the novel idioms of change in the official media made it feel 'natural' and in tune with official 'cultured-family' (*gia đình văn hóa*) policy to make such provision for home and kindred. Yet it was hard, people say, to chart the boundaries between the permissible and impermissible. One's kin in the countryside might feel safe maintaining a discreetly placed ancestor altar when it was still too risky to do so in a Hanoi state-allocation flat (*khu tập thể*). And when a household first installed its altar, the safe thing to do was to make it look like a site of reverent memory in Nora's sense, rather than a point of interaction with the responsive dead. Families did this by minimizing the scale of their food offerings, and by burning their votive papers at night so neighbours could not see the dead being actively engaged with.

It is at this point that people's narratives often turn to their present-day moves to provide for kin, including activities for which homes are their base and jumping-off point: the commissioning of geomantic tomb-sitings and house-assessments and searches for lost family graves (*đi tìm mộ*: 'tomb seeking'), often again with a translocal dimension, there being so many soldier sons and fathers lost on a far-off battlefield. These are precisely the points at which divergent cartographic imperatives converge and contend, as for example when a diviner identifies a lost kinsman as residing in one of the graves of unknown soldiers located in painfully large numbers in the country's many military cemeteries.

It is a terrible thing for the dead and their living kin to lack a point of regular contact and interaction, so such finds are a welcome outcome of family

grave searches. But they also require delicate negotiation, both with the authorities and the dead. While the site search itself is wholly creditable, a paradigmatic act of true feeling (*tình cảm*), seekers must not then signal that the moral maps they forge and enact as a family are superior to those created by the party-state in its own spirit of loving-duty (*nghĩa*) to the honoured dead. Their recovered kinsman must be asked, not told, about the journey his kin propose to make to bring the recovered remains back for burial in their ancestral village (*quê*).

Doing this – asking about his wishes with the aid of a reliable seer/psychic (*ngoại cảm*) – allows for the possibility that the lost son or father feels settled and content with the comrades he has been residing with. Raising this as a possibility shows that the family are sensitive and caring in their conduct of the search, that they have no selfish ends in view and do not think of the recovered dead 'superstitiously' as intercessors and boon-bringers, hence that they are modern and progressive people who recognize the big cartography of the patriotic nation, as well as that of their own familial spaces and trajectories.

Grave-seeking and geomantic house diagnostics are therefore key processes of emplacement through which householders must engage and bear witness to a very wide sense of cartographic morality as they engage the mesh of causality and temporal movement defined as *hạnh phúc*, happiness of a profound and far-reaching kind, not mere sensory gratification. West Lake people like to display their knowledge of the big-name grave-search and geomantic house-siting specialists. Those commanding particular respect are retired COMECON-trained physicists and geologists who have dedicated themselves in later life to what people speak of respectfully as 'research' (*nghiên cứu*) in the astrobiological fields, focusing on such key specialisms as horoscopy, geomantic calculation and *yin-yang* diagramming practices.

There are also psychic 'naturals' whose skills are in high demand. Those thought of as reputable, the sort of specialists a knowledgeable person can rightly be informed about, are adepts whose gifts have been subjected to forms of testing and scrutiny that they and their clients speak of as scientific and legitimating. This is an important context for the use of the term *nghiên cứu*, 'research'. What the word means in this case is the work of 'psy-capacity' specialists who usually do not have supra-normal powers themselves but are thought of as reputable experts with in-depth knowledge of psychic matters, hence the ability to spot cheats and frauds. Such expertise is often said to come from their scientific credentials and training in one of the former COMECON countries. It is widely known that paranormal research was a high-profile enterprise in old socialist scientific circles. Films of Soviet psy-power tests still circulate widely among Hanoians with an interest in the field of *tâm linh*, one of the key scientizing terms popularized in the early marketization years to denote spirituality in general, as well as the idea of engagement with non-corporeal forces and agencies in ways not smacking of superstitious trafficking in the black arts.

Cartographies of the Moralized Marketplace

So Vietnam is not straightforwardly post-socialist space, not only in relation to the mappings and temporalities still animating official discourse and iconography, but also in more personal and intimate contexts. For ordinary Hanoians too, the city is still a space of revolutionary and socialist tradition and memory, even in the midst of its profusion of new consumer-culture landmarks.

It is especially in domains of visuality that these interpenetrations are produced and experienced. In West Lake households, photographs are much employed as artefacts of critical memory, i.e. in practices of affective archiving enacted in the course of shared narrative occasions allowing for the pooling and transmission of family knowledge (Bayly 2007). Imparting and sharing such knowledge endows families with what such pictures refract and animate: their existence as affective moral entities, perpetually constituting and sustaining themselves through acts of enlightened provision and attainment.

To show how such enactments can embrace as well as transcend the times and spaces of the high-socialist era, I turn now to a set of fieldwork vignettes through which I shift focus from moral cartography as a broad conceptual field to the experiences of the individual moral cartographer.

'Ahhh… tradition! That's what we're losing! It's terrible – we're losing it all', said my friend Mr Chau, when we discussed a set of striking photographs of young Hanoi women taken in the Việt Bắc (the northern revolutionary warzone) in the early 1950s, during Vietnam's bitter nine-year anti-French resistance war. The photos are family treasures from the wartime period, when the women and their families had evacuated from French-occupied Hanoi to the 'liberated territories' under the authority of President Ho Chi Minh's Communist-led Viet Minh national liberation movement.[21]

In the pictures I showed Mr Chau, the women are in khaki battledress with guns on their hips, their hair cut short, looking to me quite unlike their elders, as seen in earlier photos of the young women's aunts and mothers in their super-respectable pre-war 1930s urban ladies' garb. So I had been thinking of the pictures as images of hyper-modernity narrativizing an amazing journey, both physically from Hanoi to the spaces of the new revolutionary proto-state, and morally, into the radically new world of the socialist ecumene.

Families' collections of such photos document their members' crossings and re-crossings of both national and supra-national space: their evacuations and returns during the French and anti-US wars; their wartime marriages, work and study stints in the states of the old socialist ecumene; their ambitious career moves in today's 'renovation' era. Their pictures are yet another instance of moral narrative projected onto a powerfully evoked geotemporal landscape. They too are enactments of moral cartography, narrativizations of a life lived with purpose: in the case of the women in khaki, that of a revolutionary future in the making. They show familial and national life conjoined, the act of traversing their homeland's liberated terrain itself a contribution to the nation's new life. This is socialist heritage of a very dynamic kind, fulfilled rather than

overridden as a life of service and purpose in today's world of globalized mass-market consumerism.

That fulfilment can come at a high cost – even a sense of distress and loss of the kind Mr Chau was expressing in his lament for lost tradition. He went on to decry the cheap Chinese-made household goods now flooding Vietnam's booming consumer markets. Yet it would be easy to turn these images of frontiers breached and vulnerable into a simplistic decline-and-fall/end-of-history view of contemporary Hanoi life. This is why I want to stress the subtle interplays between different temporal and spatial orders, and connect these with the experience of a moralized marketplace.

There is much to learn about time and space cartographies from focusing on pictures used in ritual contexts. When displayed on ancestral altars, photos of the dead become instantiations and sitings, not just remembrances, of the active and conscious dead. Given the distinctive ways the living and the dead interact and co-reside in Vietnam, I think Vietnamese filmed images are a more convincing case of what Barthes claimed in *Camera Lucida* (1982) for photos in general. I have in mind his notion of 'death in person' as an expression of the photo's capacity to access someone absent as a radiant living presence of 'true being' (1982: 12–15). In his famous account of his dead mother's picture, the image is an agent actively conjuring her as an emanation of her former bodily presence, his gaze linking her to him through time and space, as if – he says – by an umbilical cord: not as a mirror or resemblance, but as a radiated reality with actual affective force (1982: 81).

This is very suggestive for the complex of ritual practices giving Vietnamese pictorial materials their capacity to animate plural temporalities, doing so in ways that do not entail a demoralizing narrative of ruptures and discardings. But it is not only photos that achieve this. Another critical class of image with this kind of interactive presence is that of paper gift items for the dead – *vàng mã*. They too are a kind of space-time umbilical cord. They include the mass-produced 'hell money' which Kwon has documented so compellingly (2007); but there are also replica houses and clothes, and wonderful prestige items with world-famous brand names: cars, karaoke machines, mobile phones, home and office furnishings.

Through burning, *vàng mã* items pass to the realm where deceased kin reside, making the afterlife look as though it has become an arena of spectacularly visualized consumer culture.[22] But unlike what Hanoians speak of as rampant amoral capitalist excess both at home and abroad, their own votive giving is conducted in a moral and moderate marketplace: nurturing provision, the meeting of loved ones' needs, not vulgar display or an indulging of greed.

Much of the care expended on *vàng mã* votive paper provision relates to its time and space dimensions: a brother who died near the Chinese border in a US bombing raid on a winter night complains of cold in his sister's dreams, so requires a new blanket on his death-anniversary day. Another kinsman reports in a dream that he is tired of the army uniforms he has received since his death in 1968, and calls for an updated wardrobe. He is still the young man who died

on a distant battlefield in the far south; what the family now provide is the garb of today's twenty-year-olds.

So within and beyond the home, pictorial objects are used in two ways. One is as embodiments of the highly moral ways in which Vietnamese like to feel they are engaging with the crisis-hit world of marketization, as in the case of Mrs Kim, a retired kindergarten teacher who runs a small shop-house business selling votive paper items with her sister Mrs Lan. They dislike the idea of replica credit cards as a possible new product line. Replica cash is better in the afterlife, they say. They know about fraud and misused pin numbers: people know where they are making cash deposits in the Bank of the Dead. It is the way they like to run their own business: no website, no computerized accounts, not like the big businesses dealing in Chinese imports, unpredictably bouncing up and down in price and profitability; always the danger of fakes and frauds.

The big businesses running on that very different electronic-transaction basis include those dealing in other ritual goods such as the geomantic energy-concentrating spheres and amulets central to *phong thuỷ* (geomancy). Unlike these items and most non-ritual goods, paper votives are still Vietnamese-made, from known craft suppliers. Thus, as West Lake people see it, votive goods have nothing to do with the mad immoral world of Chinese and Taiwan-owned factories spewing out pollutants and poisoning the baby milk: the 2008 Chinese milk powder scandal is bitterly remembered.[23] Such iniquities kill both land and temporal order in terrible ways. Toxins leaching into the soil from unregulated factories stop bodies in their graves from decomposing: they mummify. When disinterred for secondary burial, they are still fleshed and unready, in painful stasis, so perhaps can never be moved on to the temporal and spatial sitings of proper ancestorhood.[24]

Paper votives are a produce line of which vendors often say, 'I sell by my conscience' (*có tâm; với cái tâm*, lit. 'with my feeling heart'). It is good for both sellers and purchasers that the goods and marketing outlets are simple, and that the selling takes place to meet need. Never for big profits, people say; the buyers always counselled to be caring yet abstemious; customers never pressed to buy two of something when they need only one because that's what the omen-dream said; paying suppliers in cash when they come with the new consignment, never on credit or electronically.

What is cheap in our world is transvalued into wealth in the cosmic beyond because of the special quality of the spaces and processes entailed in realm-to-realm movement (Kwon 2007). These are all respects in which buyers and sellers construct a moral cartography that is pervasive and valued in Vietnam: not in this case a matter of payment for refined geotemporal expertise, but a set of transactions in which the provision of replica brand-name goods for those residing in the death world takes place in a moralized marketplace framed as an exaltation of Vietnameseness: cosmopolitan and outward looking, yet still caring and morally sound.

The other way I see pictorial objects as makers and markers of moral cartography is in their channelling of movement between the spatial and temporal

realms I am defining as revolutionary-socialist, historicist-national, and personal-familial. We can see this with paper votives, and with the photos of family members as a focus for offering and communication with the dead at sites where time and space come together in the key affective arenas of family and nation.

It is not just in home spaces that deceased kin are invited to travel from the afterworld to their kinfolk's ancestor altars, to be appealed to for protective intercession and reported to about family achievements in ways updating rather than denying or disconnecting from the complex of socialist and other temporal spaces the family has lived and acted in. There is also the placing of deceased relations' photos on the walls of Buddhist pagodas (*chùa*), ideally near the images of deceased monks: the deceased resides in the pagoda space, listening to the monks' sermons and benefitting from their exemplarship.[25] In some pagodas President Ho Chi Minh can be seen among these images, a presence both reverenced and reverencing in the company of the monk effigies.

What then about the man who said 'ah, tradition'? Mr Chau, whose lament for lost ways and mores was sparked by my photos of the women in khaki, is Hanoi-born, a Party member in his late forties. He is Soviet-trained in a technical field, one of the last of the Russian- and Chinese-speaking generation of intelligentsia to have been selected for the old high-socialist era career route to success in state service. He is also one of the first Hanoi high-flyers to have done an MBA at a famous US university. I met him through Hồ Tây friends who thought I should meet what they call a 'real Old Quarter family', people with the polished comportment that Hanoians like to point to as the hallmark of their distinctively cultivated and upright way of life.

This is not, as they see it, privileged distinction in Bourdieu's terms, but a distillation of the best kind of patriotic yet cosmopolitan Vietnameseness, modern and science-loving in outlook, yet honourable, scrupulously filial and heritage-conscious. People say Mr Chau's family embody all these virtues, especially his redoubtable trader mother, her goods the wares of homeland and authenticity, her trading the act of a selfless provider, definitely not a parasitical capitalist.

The Old Quarter market zone looms large in Hanoi moral cartography, both for the Hồ Tây people who have long been suppliers of traders like Mr Chau's mother, and more widely. It is hallowed revolutionary space, its shop-house streets a redoubt of freedom fighters in the 1946–1954 anti-French resistance war. That is what I feel Mr Chau was referring to when he reflected on the women in khaki: 'So traditional – it takes me right back to my childhood. I think of my mother, her sisters. That's what we've lost. We're losing it.'

His mother never wore a khaki uniform. But he was seeing in those pictures an Old Quarter heritage consistent with what the revolutionary war art depicts: the patriotic modern as both provider and consumer of wholesome homeland goods, in a world of virtuous cosmopolitanism embodied in both people and things, including the comportment of a moralized marketplace.

Like many other self-styled 'old Hanoians', Mr Chau often speaks of alien goods and values as corroding the legacy of his mother's world. But in recognizing what it is about contemporary life he and many other Hanoi people find so troubling, we can see what makes their perception of today unlike any simple 'end of history' idea of the death or displacement of socialism. The painful paradox of Vietnam's contemporary marketization experience is that the giant predator economy most powerfully acting as an unstoppable quasi-colonizer on its doorstep is not a capitalist ASEAN power, but 'elder sister' China, the greatest surviving socialist ecumene party-state.

Mr Chau is not nostalgic about his pre-marketization childhood, with its ration queues and commodity shortages, but he does deplore the new Hanoi of trashy foreign things and mores. What he found in my photos was 'tradition' – *truyền thống* – in the sense of Vietnameseness proudly exalted in the world those ardent young fighters were selflessly contributing to: a revolutionary nationalist order with ample room in it for people with his background, its socialism made moral rather than coldly forensic through its acceptance of properly conducted commercial life as a form of provision for family and nation.

These visions of a moralized marketplace have been vital to the development of Vietnam's revolutionary nationhood, and its renovation experience. Revolutionary message art portrayed market life as a space for the exercise of national and supra-national virtue, rather than an arena of competition and class exploitation, a site where, properly regulated by the party-state, patriotic moderns of every productive class – peasant, worker, intellectual, soldier, and the virtuous non-profiteering trader – connect with the virtuous essences of home soil, engaging selflessly with the wider world where Vietnam's productive socialist cosmopolitans make friends and meet others' needs.

These ideas are ideally suited to the spatial and temporal self-positionings of the 'renovation' era, but are much more than a recently devised variant of contemporary Singapore-style Asian-values ideology. They have a strongly Marxian bent, though one at odds with Soviet and other anti-market discourses: closer to Maoism with its emphasis on the mobilization of culture rather than class division as the engine of revolutionary change in a context of anti-imperialism.

Place and Space Morality

Hồ Tây families like me to meet elderly resistance survivors, including the celebrity heroines who distinguished themselves in the anti-French and anti-US wars. This includes amazingly vigorous octogenarians like Mrs Hoa, an officially designated Heroine Mother: still proudly a modern and a revolutionary, a Party member who has made her household altar a site of all the spaces and temporalities she connects with. In its place of honour is President Ho Chi Minh. Below it are pictures of her parents, and the parents of her

patriot-martyr husband who died in the anti-US War. Her marriage story is a famous Hanoi resistance romance, as can be seen in her remarkable 1955 wedding photo: the bride with flowers, soldier-girl plaits and khaki uniform, standing shoulder to shoulder with her husband and their militia-boy comrades, a quartet of citizen-soldiers, in a space of unambiguous socialist temporality.

Like my elderly acquaintance Mrs Mai, in youth an iconoclastic Maoist and now an active lay Buddhist who regularly helps with installations of the dead on her pagoda's photo memorial wall, Mrs Hoa leads a much fuller ritual life than she had done in the high-socialist austerity years. Of such decisions, people do not say 'we're going back in time to a practice from our parents' day'. The photograph is modern and democratic, a progressive replacement for the use of the lacquered Chinese-calligraphy name-boards formerly used on ritual spaces, condemned as relics of 'feudalism' by the party-state.

Mrs Hoa keeps her altar 'warm', that is, active and dynamic, a place of interactive communion with the dead, but without a picture of her husband. He is one of the millions of war dead whose remains were never returned to their grieving families to be interred and resituated through secondary burial (Malarney 2001). It is an abiding sadness: he cannot come to co-reside within the altar space and partake of the food and other good things placed every day before her altar pictures. Yet he is still a presence. In place of his picture is his military death certificate. With its embossed seals and inscription of his rank, titles and status as a patriot-martyr, this artefact of the party-state at war provides a space for him in her daily act of *thắp hương* (incense-lighting), which connects and enacts her family's continuing trajectory through revolutionary-socialist, national and familial time.

One day, she told me, she and her daughters may commission a grave-finding (*đi tìm mộ*). But while grave-searches are very common now, they are not for everyone; there are many reasons why people hold off, why such 'family work' is invariably unfinished and ongoing. 'It was time', people say – 'my father came in a dream', 'I'd been yearning to do it'. But other family members may not share one's wish for deceased kin to live with the comforts they've now attained. My friend Chi and her widowed mother have relations in her father's ancestral village who have long resisted their wish to undertake a grave-site seeking for her war-martyr father. Important as such searches are in today's Vietnam, much discussed in families and the media as profoundly important fulfilment of both familial and national need, they can present problems of a highly painful kind.

The practice's complexities are strikingly reflected in the subtleties of language it entails. One speaks of 'tombs' (*mộ*) in contexts when foreigners might say either grave or 'site'. 'Never!' said a Hồ Tây householder, when I asked if people ever said they were looking for the 'place' where a lost kinsman's remains might lie, rather than seeking his 'tomb' as if there was already a marked and recognized burial place. 'We'd never say that, not even for a sailor drowned in the sea. It's never "place" (*chỗ*) or "burial-site" (*huyệt*) for dead people'. 'Place'

(*chỗ*) is static and atemporal, conveying nothing of the care the dead receive, nor their active existence as experiencing agents. *Huyệt* has connotations of digging or scraping; its use would imply an uncoffined body put like rubbish in the dirt. The essence of care is structure and entombment, both for the dead and for the living who must also dwell in structured space, in a site made and acted on with all the feeling and art at one's command.

Another tricky dimension of tomb-searching is the expertise required to achieve a successful end, with the commissioning of psychics as paid site-seekers the most hotly debated aspect of these initiatives in today's Hanoi. Yet Chi said the problem was not that people might call her uncles superstitious (*mê tín*) for doing a grave-search. What they feared was looking shabby and ungenerous if their own fathers were not furnished with new tombs too. They were also worried about disturbing the existing tombs' auspicious geomantic sitings. In the volatile world of renovation-era market life, this was a case of one strand of a family's cartographic practice cutting across the very different geo-spatial trajectory being charted by another branch of the same patriline.

The seeking out and identifying of lost family remains can thus involve a whole host of reckonings and movements to do with the often fraught and contested chartings and inscription practices I have been referring to as moral cartography. The skills and knowledge used are no less personal and affective for being spoken of in terms people think of as scientific and rationalizing, whether manifested as the kinds of mapping used in Western-style geographical reckonings, or in the form of today's neo-traditional geomantic art.

The initiatives of family and lineage 'work' (*việc gia đình* and *việc họ*), purposeful initiatives undertaken on behalf of close and more distant kin, are both enacted and archived by means of imaging. During the grave-findings and reinterments, every step in the finding and resituating of the missing dead is filmed by those attending. Families thus have extensive household photo albums of such undertakings, even those taking place in the military cemeteries' sad precincts of unknown soldiers' graves. One such occasion was the attempt to find the remains of my friend Mr Hien's wife's younger brother, lost in battle in the anti-US War. Their album's grave-search sequence shows their diviner Mr Lam performing his site-quest by means of duck-egg divination, a kind of dowsing: the concentrated cosmic-energy flows from the deceased's remains make the duck egg adhere to an upended chopstick.

Mr Lam is one of the 'special-capacity' practitioners currently under study at the quasi-official Hanoi Human Capacity Research Centre.[26] I know a number of its clients and some of the researchers who work with its affiliated psychics (*nhà ngoại cảm*) and diviners. The clients I know greatly approve of its scientific ethos and avowed mission to make research on psychic powers and skills a credible Vietnamese enterprise, indeed a national resource.

The Centre's services include the commissioning of geneticists to perform DNA tests on the human remains unearthed in psychic grave-searches, giving families an accuracy test for the diviners' readings. Its work has been the subject of much controversy, with some fascinating blogging between

defenders and hostile critics of its programmes of *tâm linh* (spirituality) research.[27] The sceptics meet vigorous ripostes from those arguing that *tâm linh* in the form of clairvoyance and divination is testable science, like traditional medicine as officially institutionalized in Vietnam and China. But it is central to the Centre's work to insist on the Vietnameseness of *tâm linh*, as manifested in practitioners' uncommercialized morals, as well as the scientifically verifiable nature of their work.

My friends the votive-sellers also have striking experiences of the spaces and moralities of the socialist ecumene and its painful afterlife. Showing me his pictures from a training stint in Moscow in 1992, their engineer brother Mr Duc told me about his research institute's secretary Natasha: 'Such a nice woman', he said, 'so well educated, so sad what happened to her'. It was the classic post-1989 Russian intelligentsia story: she had fallen into poverty as the value of her salary collapsed. His telling of the story made it a parable of familiality and the moral marketplace. Russians, he said – the old 'elder brothers' of the socialist ecumene – had lost or never learned the art of providing for kin and nation in a moralized world of trade. So he became the provider-brother, the rescuer and enlightener. When he found that Natasha's only idea of how to cope was by selling off her possessions one by one, he got her a job with one of present-day Russia's ultra-nationalist hate figures: a Vietnamese trader from the Cherkizovsky smuggled-goods market, itself a site of impassioned Russian cartographic moralizing, shut down by order of President Putin in 2009.[28]

'They were such a long time under their "subsidy" period', Duc said, meaning Russians. He spoke of them affectionately; he'd loved Moscow, never spoke of hostility on the streets or racist gang attacks. 'But so sad', he went on. 'They didn't know how to change their thinking – they couldn't catch up with modern life as fast as we did.'

So for Mr Duc there is both personal moral cartography and also profound moral meaning to be derived through an understanding of Vietnam's life, in relation to far richer and more powerful peoples and nations, in a world of profoundly different geospatial topographies and trajectories. He sees rescuing Natasha as a selfless meeting of need, and, I believe, a reason to take pride in what I am seeking to convey in this article. This is the idea of there being painful challenges but also profound advantages for those Vietnamese who have experienced, through engagements with an extraordinarily turbulent epoch of transformation, something I think they achieve and activate through the compelling and strongly visual cartographic regimens in which they all participate.

This is a sense of moral positioning in today's renovation life that is not post-socialist in any narrow or linear sense, and which instead entails the dynamics of what I have called a world of interacting temporalities and spatial sitings, embracing the ancestral past, the familial and national present, and even the uncertain and dangerous future. I have therefore sought to make a case for what I am calling moral cartography as a perspective to explore the ways Hanoi people perceive, negotiate and even creatively transform those challenging

pluralities. In seeing cartography as engagement with both temporal and geophysical siting, focusing on issues of materiality, like the ancestor altars and pictures that furnish them as portals between different orders of past and present life, and on the efficacy and expertise that a family and nation can and should deploy to ensure the well-being of those in their care, I call attention to initiatives that are often far from harmonious or gratifying. Yet they are still expansive and ethically conceived as the projects of actively initiating agents, pursuing their ends in a world of demarcated space, in arenas where it is assumed and even gloried in that science and moral concerns will continually meet and interact.

I believe too that this perspective provides a language, not just for Vietnam, but for other contexts where being cartographically aware and active is a highly significant dimension of people's engagements with moral challenges and entailments. I have therefore tried to explore both the dilemmas and the satisfactions to be experienced in actors' exercise of efficacy and purpose in this world of mapped and mappable space and landscape. They do so as geotemporal agents negotiating terrain they know to be numinous, geomantically alive and bio-humourally dynamic, yet also responsive and amenable to scientific mapping and delineation.

Acknowledgements

For valuable comments, I thank Caroline Humphrey, James Laidlaw, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Nicholas Long; also Professor C. Hann, Dr K. Endres and colleagues at the Max Planck Institute, Halle. Fieldwork was funded by ESRC award RES-000-22-4632 in support of a joint project with Dr Long on 'The Social Life of Achievement in Indonesia and Vietnam'; for past awards I thank ASEASUK and the Cambridge University Evans Fund.

Susan Bayly is Professor of Historical Anthropology (Emerita) in the Cambridge University Department of Social Anthropology, and a Life Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge. Her publications include *Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age: Vietnam, India and Beyond*; and *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the 18th Century to the Modern Age* (both with Cambridge University Press). She has conducted extensive on-site fieldwork in both India and Vietnam, focusing most recently on projects aimed at bringing the insights of visual anthropology into conversation with the anthropology of morality and ethics. Her research interests also include Asian post-socialism; theories of historical change; the interface between history and anthropology; and colonialism and its cultural afterlife in South and Southeast Asia.

Notes

An earlier version of this chapter was originally published as Bayly, Susan. 2013. 'Mapping Time, Living Space: The Moral Cartography of Renovation in Late-Socialist Vietnam', *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 31(2): 60–84.

1. There are also real-life topography exercises, many of them connected with Vietnam's title claims over one of the most fiercely contested of the Asia-Pacific region's hot-spot island groups: as in the 2011 *Guinness Book of Records* bid by 1,500 Youth Union volunteers, massed in a giant seafront formation to create the world's largest ever human personification of a national map. See http://www.tinmoi.vn/ban-do-viet-nam-xep-tu-so-nguoi-tham-gia-nhieu-nhat-10980623.html (accessed 25 June 2013); http://tinngan.vn/print-347921-Teen-Viet-va-tinh-yeu-voi-Hoang-Sa-Truong-Sa.html (accessed 25 June 2013).
2. Modern empirical science, *khoa học*, has strongly positive connotations in Vietnam. Galileo, Darwin, Edison and Marie Curie are known to every child as classroom emulation models, as are the Vietnamese scientific luminaries whose stories are told as parables of truth seeking, allied to the noble ends of meeting need and relieving suffering. The idea of science as an expression of Vietnameseness reflects a long history of state-led indigenization initiatives such as the hospital-based professionalization of 'Eastern' (*Đông y*) medicine, and the fostering of key fusion specialities such as electric acupuncture.
3. Representing what is moral and ethical in Vietnam involves idioms relating to both feeling and principle. Notions of goodness/beauty (*tốt*/*đẹp*) and feeling/conscience (*tình cảm*/*tâm*) are much used for what is creditable and worthy. *Đạo đức* (lit. 'way of virtue') can mean both morality and ethics (Malarney 1997; Rydstrom 2003), but in the sense of codes and maxims, as in the parable-like schemas taught in the 'morals education' syllabus (*giáo dục* đạo đức). These are presented as absolutes, with no suggestion of dilemmas or ambiguity in the way the well-conducted citizen should feel and behave. Like other forms of classroom achievement, morals (*đạo đức*) teaching is subject to rigorous quantification: 'morality' marks are awarded for daily conduct (cleanliness, respectfulness, 'community spirit', etc.), and also catechismally – through exams calling for accurate replication of the schemas' key principles.
4. See Marr 2000. What should be awakened/kindled (*khơi dậy*) at home from earliest childhood is what must be felt – not just enacted – e.g. in relations with elders and the heartfelt tending of tombs and ancestor altars; also how a bride should conduct herself in her marital home – evincing sensibility (*tình cảm*), i.e. a true and proper 'feel' for such things as the right foods and votive goods to provide on death anniversaries; also how a husband should 'educate' his wife in such matters: gently coaxing (*dạy dỗ*), or more forcefully directing (*dạy bảo*) if she is slow or deficient. The same applies to matters of citizenship, e.g. the loving care of key figures of the nation's ethical landscape, notably Heroine Mothers, discussed below. To be attuned to sensibility in morally significant contexts, the heart must be 'fed' (*nuôi dưỡng*) to develop a girl's or boy's version of feeling/sentiment (Rydstrom 2003). One cannot do right as a matter of 'rule' (*lấy lệ*): the power of reason (*lý trí*) is essential to humanity, but its use must be heart-prompted to live the proverbial good life as *sống có tình có nghĩa* ('life lived feelingly/ dutifully-ethically').
5. See Winichakul 1994 and Goscha 1995.
6. Thompson's original account emphasized qualities of feeling and refined ethical sensibility in its conceptions of legitimate market practice (1971: 98–102).
7. See http://data.worldbank.org/news/dev-economies-increase-share-of-global-output (accessed 25 June 2013); and Hue-Tam Ho Tai 2001; Kwon 2006, 2008.
8. COMECON was the Soviet bloc's official economic alliance system. The notion of Vietnamese scientists as heroes and benefactors is closely connected with memories of the country's overseas 'friendship' initiatives to 'needy' African states in the high-socialist era (1975 to 1992). The story of Vietnamese science is thus told triumphally, not as

tutelage received from its colonizers and socialist 'elder siblings' (China and the USSR), but as the fruitful work of a dynamic self-modernizing achiever nation (Bayly 2007). The works on topography, space-time and spatial selfhood I have found particularly illuminating are those of Humphrey 1995 and 2006; Verdery 2001; Katz 2005; Ssorin-Chaikov and Sosnina 2009 and Ssorin-Chaikov 2013; also Gonzalez 1995 and Crang and Thrift 2000; and for the notion of ecumene Pollock 1998. And see Feuchtwang 1974 and Bruun 1996.

9. Not least in its understandings of attainment and success. On Vietnam's marketization see Fforde and de Vylder 1996; Chan et al. 1999; McCargo 2004; Dang Phong [Đặng Phong] 2003.
10. And their own home-grown versions of post-socialist transformation as deficient and unfulfilled (Donham 1999; West 2009). The idea of a clear divide between a dynamic marketized Vietnam and a wider world of faltering post-socialisms provides a welcome antidote to the fear that Vietnam may always be a geotemporal underachiever, held back in the global race for growth and productivity by the minority ethnic groups (*dân tộc thiểu số*) who predominate in the country's poorest provinces. These communities' characteristic land-use modes – both upland slash-and-burn and the canoe-dependent livelihoods of the deltaic south – are often represented as problematically archaic and un-Vietnamese (Taylor 2004).
11. Now a popular tourist venue, the Old Quarter is still much frequented by Hanoians seeking the traditional products still supplied by its trader-producers: herbal medicines; fruit preserves (*mứt*); ritual items, including second-burial coffins and ancestor altars.
12. As in the pride taken by the elders in charge of Hồ Tây's 'communal house' in their official twinning arrangement with one of Hanoi's major Buddhist pagodas.
13. As in China: see Wilson 1997.
14. All the more for Hồ Tây residents because of the community's fishing tradition, the lives of fisherfolk having been so widely stigmatized as marginal, asocial and backward, in contrast to the true Vietnameseness of those living the fully civilized life of a rooted terrestrial environment. One of the key moral acts of the nation as moral agent is to build houses of 'loving dedication' (*nhà tình nghĩa*) for Heroine Mothers as honoured recipients of its care and gratitude.
15. As at the lunar New Year (*ngày Tết*) when householders burn brightly coloured votive paper horses: these translocate to become steeds for the otherworld's *quan lại* (officers) as they patrol the *yin-yang* border zone, ensuring that the dead travel a properly directed route to their sites of annual sojourn in the living world. Installed temporarily on descendants' ancestor altars, the dead are a welcome and necessary presence, yet one needing proper 'management' so they do not stray, becoming unsited and lost, a danger to the living and a threat to cosmic order.
16. For example, the kind of persistent ill-luck that occurs in an inauspicious *xấu* (ugly) year. From birth date onwards, the temporal framework of a mortal life is its sequence of prevailingly good, neutral and *xấu* years. The use of an almanac and the services of a good astrologer can reduce the dangers of such conjunctures, as can the rite known as 'fate-cutting'.
17. By scientized, I mean such things as the coining of new academic and official terms to communicate the idea of a scientifically accredited domain of spirituality (*tâm linh*), recognized by experts as a 'natural' human need, and an exalting expression of cultural attainment. Such legitimating references to the voice of modern science have been central to the ritual revival trends accompanying marketization. I also have in mind the now widely held view that because the spiritual is a legitimate field for scientific study, Vietnamese scientists should conduct research on what Western scholars call the paranormal, meaning lab-based study of the 'special capacities' of those now widely known *nhà ngoại cảm* (psychic), a hard-science neologism offering a welcome alternative to the many terms signalling 'superstition' and fakery in the high-socialist period (e.g. *thầy bói*: 'seer/fortune teller'). Compare Humphrey 2006.

18. And in some cases having their capacities tested in lab-science settings: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgLjIiI_pBo&feature=related (accessed 25 June 2013). *Kinh dịch* is the Vietnamese version of the ancient divination text widely known in the West as the *I Ching*.
19. It is before the household altar that one regularly performs the key act of incense-lighting (*thắp hương*), an essential precursor to ritual acts, though not itself a rite or ceremony (*lễ*) (Jellema 2007). There is no 'ritualized' way to enact *thắp hương*, beyond the expressive holding out of the glowing incense, its gleam the activating means to achieve connection with ancestors and other non-mortals, bringing them close (*gần*), meaning briefly but always repeatably translocated to our space of mortal existence from the non-mortal realms that adjoin yet are still distinct from our own.
20. Also rites of 'requiem' (*Lễ cầu siêu*) for the nation's war dead, conducted by Vietnamese and foreign monks including visiting dignitaries from the Dalai Lama's global network, now a regular feature of National War Martyrs and Invalids Day, an annual commemoration created in the revolutionary period: it is sometimes spoken of as a counterpart to the July *Tết Trung nguyên* ('ghost month') rites of succour for the unsited dead.
21. Reproduced in my book *Asian Voices* (2007) by kind permission of the Hanoi families with whom I conducted fieldwork, the photos provide rare glimpses of the personal side of Vietnamese wartime life.
22. As in Singapore and China where funerary offering is also widely practised (Feuchtwang 1993; Toulson 2012). The burning of death goods was yet another practice condemned as superstition (*mê tín dị đoan*) in the high-socialist period, though even Party members recall making comforts for the dead from old newspapers, burning them discreetly, out of the public eye.
23. See http://vnn.vietnamnet.vn/xahoi/2008/10/806682/ (accessed 25 June 2013).
24. This is a striking contrast to what modernity brings in Singapore, as documented by Toulson (2012): a speeding up, hence dangerous truncating, of the transformation process through which the unsettled recent dead become safely situated ancestors. In Vietnam, poisoned terrain has a toxifying effect with painful and malignant consequences for the living and the dead.
25. Money circulates in complex ways in these ritual contexts – clean unused currency for use on offering altars can be purchased at small outlets near pagodas, at an exchange rate of around twenty per cent. The donations required to install deceased kin on pagoda walls are logged by the volunteer congregants who perform such services in the fast-growing world of Hanoi lay Buddhist congregational activity (Soucy 2012).
26. *Trung tâm nghiên cứu tiềm năng con người*: see Schlecker and Endres 2011.
27. Given the vigour of this debate, and the importance of scientific validation to both sceptics and defenders of the *tâm linh* arts, one can dismiss any orientalist notion of Vietnam as a land of mystics where scientific modernity was never truly received or indigenized. This alliance between the divination arts and modern science is much approved of by those commissioning seers from the Capacity Centre, and a key feature of Hanoians' grave-seeking narratives is the rationality test, the moment when uncertainty is allayed through proof of the seer's powers: 'there really was a tree next to the road just as she said; we dug down and immediately found the bones'. Hence the attractiveness of the Centre as a place where modern science is harnessed to ensure that loving families can meet a need in ways that need not make a Hanoi modern ashamed or anxious, i.e. being in thrall to 'superstition' or gulled by fraud.
28. In Russian cartographic moralizing, the Cherkizovsky was a blot on the Moscow landscape, a nexus of every foreign-borne moral contaminant of the national geobody: Chechen mafia, Azeri oligarchs, East Asian drug traffickers.

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