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### **Vietnamese Diasporic Citizenship**

This chapter explores diaspora citizenship through the case of Vietnam. There as elsewhere, nationality - in the strict sense of national belonging - is so closely bound up with citizenship and naturalisation that citizenship can be considered the legal expression of national belonging (Sutherland 2012a). In the Southeast Asian context, the practical and spiritual connotations of nationality and citizenship are very wide-ranging, as evidenced in the anthropological work of Aihwa Ong (1999) and Kate Jellema (2007) among others. Jellema (2007, 70) has used the term 'kinetic nationalism' to describe the Vietnamese state's readiness to countenance the long-distance belonging and periodic return of its diaspora as part of its nation-building project, one which is increasingly premised on the shared practice of ancestor worship as a source of national solidarity. This marks a new departure in the Socialist

Republic of Vietnam's (SRV) positioning of citizenship to appeal to its diaspora, and a greater readiness among some members of that diaspora to engage with an ideological foe. Vietnamese citizenship is thus clearly a site of struggle over its ideological, religious and ethnic parameters. The following chapter uses the concepts of territory, ideology and solidarity to illuminate different facets of citizenship in the Vietnamese case.

Evidently, the Vietnam War and its aftermath engendered huge hostility towards the reunified SRV among the Vietnamese diaspora, much of which had fled the country after the southern Republic of Vietnam's final defeat in April 1975. Archetypal examples of those enduring this 'traumatic dispersal' (Cohen 1997, 180) were ethnic Chinese established in Vietnam, expropriated entrepreneurs and enemies of the Communist regime. Many so-called 'boat people' set sail on treacherous journeys, some languishing for years in refugee camps in Hong Kong and elsewhere, others settling all over the world but especially in the United States, France, Australia, Canada and, to a lesser extent, Germany and the United Kingdom. The widespread welcome and positive media coverage accorded to Vietnamese 'boat people' arriving in the late 1970s contrasts with negative 'race tagging' and associations with violent crime from the mid-1980s onwards, which have been documented in Australia, Canada and Germany alike (Pfeifer 2001, Edwards *et al* 2000, 302, Bui 2003, 71). It should be noted, however, that parts of the Vietnamese diaspora were already well-established in France due to its colonisation of Indochina (Cooper 2001). Other groups originally came as 'contract workers' to Soviet satellite states and often endured a precarious, uncertain status

following the end of the Cold War and the demise of East Germany in particular (Sutherland 2007, 2010; Schwenkel 2012). Indeed, the Vietnamese government's own attitude to diaspora citizenship must be understood against the lasting impact of Cold War divisions on diasporic attitudes towards the Vietnamese nation-state and, by extension, its citizenship (Kwon 2010). There are similarities here with Germany, whose division into East and West strongly shaped the Federal Republic's attitude to its ethnic German diaspora both before and immediately following German reunification (Sutherland 2010).

Heonik Kwon (2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2010) has written widely on the significance of ghosts, particularly the restless, 'wandering souls' killed during the Vietnam War, in destabilising established Vietnamese state narratives of patriotic heroism and nationalist sacrifice; "the Vietnamese discourses about war ghosts abound with critical historical meanings, and they gain currency precisely because they relate to pressing moral and political issues in contemporary life" (Kwon 2008a, n.p.). Many ghosts of war dead have never been properly buried or enshrined in their descendants' home and thereby laid to rest according to popular Vietnamese rites. They are typically associated with civilians dying a sudden and violent death, US soldiers and those Vietnamese who fought for the defeated ARVN, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (commonly known as South Vietnam). This lack of commemoration lies in stark contrast to official cemeteries and memorials to the fallen 'heroes' and 'martyrs' of the victorious People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), underlining the link between ancestor worship and nation-building.

On the one hand, the Vietnamese state today is using the widespread practice of ancestor worship to foster national solidarity and draw in its diaspora. On the other, it continues to neglect the memory of spirits 'on the wrong side of history' and thus outside official nation-building narratives of Vietnamese resistance to foreign invasion. The chapter takes this as a starting point, using the work of Heonik Kwon to explore innovative readings of citizenship and nationhood in the twenty-first century.

Diasporas occupy a ghost-like presence at the margins of the nation-state, which can serve as a metaphor for how national belonging transcends state boundaries while simultaneously reaffirming the importance of the so-called 'homeland' to nation-building (Sutherland 2012b). The following analysis is concerned with diaspora citizenship as a tool of nation-building, which is understood as a form of state-led nationalism dedicated to maintaining the legitimacy of the nation-state construct. Clearly, there is a whole gamut of instrumental (Ong 1999), emotional or patriotic reasons why members of a diaspora might opt for citizenship of the homeland. From the state perspective, the very fact that this option is open to long-term expatriates reveals official state understandings of the national community, which evolve over time. For example, political exiles once shunned for ideological reasons may be brought back into the fold for pragmatic purposes (Shain 2005). Nowhere is this more obvious than in the SRV, where brutal camps designed to 're-educate' soldiers and sympathisers of the Republic of Vietnam (a.k.a South Vietnam) have given way to a series of measures designed to attract political exiles back to the homeland. Indeed, the Vietnamese Politburo's

resolution 36, issued in 2004, stated that “overseas Vietnamese are an integral part of the nation, entitled to state care and privileges” (Jellema 2007, 76). Capitalising on overseas Vietnamese’ sense of duty towards their ancestors is an important plank in government policy which, ironically, opens up a whole new set of spiritual solidarities that can be helpful in thinking about twenty-first century citizenship.

### **Territory**

In a study of national identity in Southeast Asia, Noburu Ishikawa (2010, 4) defines “national space [...] as an analytical interface where nation and state are contested, and as a point of articulation” between a community, an authority and a territory, which serves to legitimate the nation-state construct. This highlights how the association between people and their place of residence is itself constructed, and that asserting an even more tenuous link between an expatriate populace and their so-called ‘homeland’ is inherently problematic. Citizenship is another example of using a legal fiction - or legal construct - to link community, authority and territory. In the case of diaspora citizenship, “the state project of incorporating and homogenizing people under state territorialisation” (Ishikawa 2010, 6) extends the orbit of the homeland to expatriates using the criterion of ethnicity. Therefore, this disrupts the ideal correspondence between citizen, residence and nation that serves to legitimate the nation-state by introducing an additional ethnic route to citizenship. In so doing, it recognises a putative, enduring bond which can cross time and distance to justify the privileged inclusion of long-term expatriates and their descendants in the politics and economics of that nation-

state. As will be argued below, this form of citizenship is not deterritorialised because 'peripheries make the center' (Harms 2011, 10) in the sense that diasporas are deemed to strengthen the home territory by serving its interests.

The Vietnamese word for country or nation is 'dat nuoc', literally translated as land and water. The concept of state, 'nha nuoc', is a variation incorporating the word for house or home. These etymological roots themselves evoke the 'rootedness' that nationalists often use to describe the connection between a national collectivity and its homeland. Nation and territory are never coterminous and the diasporic citizen embodies this disjuncture. The phrase 'deterritorialised citizenship' seeks to capture how countries are recognising expatriates' important stake in their homeland's affairs (Dorais 2010). For example, in 2010 France created parliamentary seats for expatriates by dividing the world into eleven huge constituencies, and Uruguay has encouraged its own expatriate citizens to form Advisory Councils (cf. Barabantseva and Sutherland 2011). Similarly, the SRV has also sought to reconnect with its diaspora. However, the phrase 'deterritorialised citizenship' is something of a misnomer (*pace* Dorais 2010) in describing the reassertion of ethnic rootedness and loyalty to the homeland, because it underplays both the importance of that homeland as a driving force behind the revival and the maintenance of its interests as the ultimate *raison d'être* of state-diaspora ties (Sutherland 2012b). This phenomenon can also be considered a regressive move to the extent that it shifts the focus of nation-building away from those resident within a state's boundaries - including immigrants without citizenship

- to an imagined community of citizens bound only by their continued emotional, familial, political or financial investment in the homeland. Thus, diaspora citizenship is not only strongly focused on promoting the national territory, but it is also potentially regressive in doing so through ethnic affinity rather than actual residency.

Patrick McAllister has rightly pointed out that the Vietnamese word *nha*, defined above to mean a house or a family home, differs to the Vietnamese word for homeland or "natal or original home (que hương)" (McAllister 115 fn 12) from which Kate Jellema (2007, 70) derives her conception of kinetic nationalism. Drawing on ideas of both home and homeland, Vietnamese ancestor worship is closely bound up with rituals centred on the ancestral altar in the family home, and with a wider sense of belonging to one's native place. In turn, the Vietnamese government's promotion of ancestor worship as a shared Vietnamese characteristic uses both of these notions of home for the purpose of nation-building (McAllister 2012, 123). This is encapsulated in state-sponsored ceremonial offerings to various "fathers of the nation", ranging from ancient, semi-mythical kings to Ho Chi Minh. The ancestral home evokes both the altars found across Buddhist, Catholic and Cao Daist households and the wider notion of Vietnam as an ethnic homeland. Practices such as tending graves or summoning ancestors' spirits as part of Lunar New Year celebrations emphasise "the importance of the family, which include (sic) the dead as well as the living, and is part of the ongoing relationship between living and dead on which the happiness and well-being of both depend" (McAllister 2012, 121). Lunar New Year is also when Vietnam's urban

dwellers return to their rural village origins and is a popular time for expatriates to return to the 'homeland' and pay their respects to relatives, both alive and dead. Significantly, the wandering ghosts that are considered in the following section are placated at this important time, which is seen as auspicious for the coming year.

Understanding the interdependence of citizenship and nation-building, encapsulated in how the words 'nationality' and 'citizenship' have become synonymous, is crucial in explaining enduring citizenship ties between members of a diaspora and their 'homeland'. Indeed, why should long-term expatriates and their descendents, who have ostensibly made their home elsewhere, continue to influence domestic affairs in a country that is theirs only by dint of birth or descent? The answer must have something to do with enduring ethnic affinities and the sense of belonging conjured by the term 'homeland' itself, which provide the foundations for the political ideology of nationalism underlying every nation-state (Sutherland 2012a). As such, love and loyalty towards the homeland, however remembered, is easily politicised, viz. the practice of stripping political exiles of their citizenship as punishment for opposing the government (Shain 2005). This illustrates how citizenship functions as the legal expression of national belonging. For example, citizenship tests gauge applicants' general knowledge of state history and politics as a proxy for their degree of integration into a national community. From the state's point of view, citizenship legislation and the accompanying tests, oaths of loyalty and measures of distinction serve to support the legal fiction of a nation-state. In other words, equating citizenship to nationality - in



the strict sense of belonging to a national community - maintains the legitimacy of the nation-state construct.

For many residents of a nation-state and members of its diaspora alike, “their spatial identity or mental map differs from that of the national school atlas” (Ishikawa 2010, 232). From the perspective of nation-states, however, defining eligibility for citizenship is an important way of delimiting the boundaries of national belonging, and granting citizenship to members of a diaspora puts ethnicity at the heart of nationality. The following argument, therefore, is based on the premise that eligibility for citizenship symbolises a rite of passage into the national community in the eyes of the state. Whether eligibility is evidenced through satisfying residency requirements, passing a citizenship test, swearing an oath of loyalty, or demonstrating proficiency in an official language is itself highly revealing of how that national community is defined using ethnic and/or civic markers. As a corollary to this, the extension of citizenship to non-resident members of a diaspora reflects on a nation-state’s self-understanding. For example, ethnic German *Aussiedler* from Eastern Europe were initially welcomed ‘back’ to the Federal Republic of Germany, which understood itself to be a homeland for all dispersed and divided ethnic Germans, most recently due to the vagaries of the Second World War and the Cold War.

As Benedict Anderson (1991) and James Scott (2009) have shown, among many others, Southeast Asia provides a rich source of concepts and data with resonance beyond the region (King 2006). Anderson’s seminal text, *Imagined*

*Communities*, has been criticised for suggesting that the nation is imagined as a homogenous community, thereby detracting from hierarchies in ethnicity and power (Anderson 1991, 26; Kelly 1998). James Scott, by contrast, is at pains to decouple 'ethnic minorities' from the national majority which defines their marginal status. In a book tellingly entitled *Dependent Communities*, Caroline Hughes (2009, 197) discusses how "the task of elites is to create not only a narrative that can elicit allegiance, but a web of practical connections that links the state to society, in a manner that can give form to claims of central representation." For instance, the fledgling East Timorese state's failure to do this in the 2000s quickly led to disillusionment in some villages and attempts to bypass the state for direct access to international aid. In Cambodia, by contrast, the governing party has sought to connect with local needs and concerns through handouts and a dense local presence, including frequent village visits by prime minister Hun Sen himself, whose "own footsteps link the village to the nation" (Hughes 2009, 221). Hun Sen's visits are symbolically important too, in that his many speeches tell "stories of national development and progress that give substance to the imagined community of the nation" (Hughes 2009, 219). The Vietnamese case is no different, in that the state's evolving rhetoric towards its minorities (Pelley 1998), its immigrants and its diaspora testify to changing official attitudes towards national belonging and attendant citizenship regimes (Jellema 2007).

## **Ideology**

Alongside the emotional, familial, political or financial ties that bind members of a diaspora to their homeland, the Vietnamese case highlights an important

religious dimension to the phenomenon of 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1998, 58). A sense of spiritual confraternity is variously used by the incumbent, communist government (Jellema 2007), anti-communist religious leaders in the diaspora (Hoskins 2011, Ong and Meyer 2008), and Vietnamese villagers pursuing their own localised agendas (Roszko 2012) to evoke an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) in which national loyalties mix with religious observance (Hoskins 2011, 71). In the wake of Vietnam's economic liberalisation from the mid-1980s onwards, the Vietnamese Communist Party's (VCP) move away from condemning religious practice as 'superstitious' (*me tin*) has led to more open displays of spirituality (Taylor 2002, 2007; Endres 2011) and the revival of religious festivals. Indeed, the VCP itself has explicitly sought to link the widespread Vietnamese practice of ancestor worship to a sense of common national identity (Jellema 2007, 69). For instance, it has sponsored commemoration of the mythical Hung Kings as the ancestors and guardian spirits of the Vietnamese nation, with the prime minister attending annual temple ceremonies on what has been a national holiday since 2007. Importantly, this reconfiguration of Vietnamese national identity in spiritual terms is also designed to appeal to the Vietnamese diaspora.

Vietnam's economic liberalisation and its resumption of diplomatic relations with the USA in 1995 facilitated a rapprochement with some members of its diaspora, though attitudes towards the incumbent government still vary widely across generations and communities (Dorais 2010, Hoskins 2011). In an effort to deflect attention from the legacy of a conflict that was as much a civil war

as an international conflagration, the Vietnamese government has focused on the common popular practice of ancestor worship over ideological and religious divisions. This is ironic, since the post-colonial Democratic Republic of Vietnam (a.k.a. North Vietnam) and its unified successor (Pelley 2002, Ninh 2002, Roszko 2012) were long characterised by a "political campaign focused on substituting the commemoration of heroic war dead for the traditional cult of ancestors" (Kwon 2008a, n.p.). Only with the advent of economic liberalisation and the development of a "market economy with a socialist orientation" (Schwenkel and Leshkowich 2012, 384) did the VCP begin to relax control over spirit and ancestor worship, which soon began to flourish once more (Endres 2011). Philip Taylor's 2007 edited collection, entitled *Modernity and Re-enchantment*, deftly captures the links between economic and religious liberalisation, while Christina Schwenkel (2008) has shown that the nationalist commemoration of war dead also became more attuned to the sensitivities of global audiences, not least those of international tourists, governments and returning U.S. veterans of the Vietnam-American war. More recently, Schwenkel and Leshkowich (2012) have shown that, far from signalling a complete break with communism, what might be termed neoliberal ideas and practices have been adapted to established patterns of socialisation in the SRV. That is, the reframing of diaspora citizenship in contemporary Vietnam should be understood within an ongoing nation-building project aimed at maintaining state legitimacy and keeping the VCP in power. At the same time, it is interlinked with economic reform and the recalibration of official attitudes towards religious and spiritual observance, to

the point that ancestor worship is now officially promoted as a key unifying factor designed to draw the diaspora back to Vietnam.

What can we learn about diaspora citizenship from the Vietnamese case? Heonik Kwon (2008a, 2008b) has pointed to the potential for practices surrounding ancestor worship to overcome the divisions inherent in celebrating the northern Vietnamese army (PAVN) as heroes and martyrs, while forgetting or even erasing the memory of the defeated southern ARVN (Schwenkel 2009). This nationalist commemoration of victorious liberators has “relegated a significant part of genealogical memory to a politically engendered status of ghosts in the southern regions, one excluded from the new political community of the nation-state and, by extension, alienated from the family and community-based commemorations that were engulfed by the politics of national memory” (Kwon 2008a, n.p.). Yet the Vietnamese government’s turnaround in its attitude to ancestor worship has opened up a space for *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* - or coming to terms with the past - by allowing for national introspection on the Vietnam War as a civil war and not simply a struggle against the U.S. aggressor and its so-called ‘puppet regime’ in the South. Although still outside the official commemorative practices of the nation-state, the commemoration of ghosts and neglected ancestors allows for some recognition of the suffering of both sides in the civil war. This is most poignant in the case of families riven by conflict, in which photographs of soldiers who died on opposite sides can now take their place on the same family altar.

Rituals surrounding ancestor worship in Vietnam also pay due attention to the 'wandering souls' of ghosts who have died a violent death or were not afforded a proper burial by recognising their torment and seeking to placate them with offerings. In the case of war dead, these rituals do not distinguish by nationality, and fallen U.S. soldiers are thus included (Kwon 2008b). This is one way of coming to terms with the everyday experience of suffering which did not distinguish between civilian and soldier, ARVN or PAVN, Vietnamese or foreigner. As such, it is a radically different space for commemoration to the clear confines of nationalist political propaganda, which officially 'forgot' supporters of the losing side within its own reunified nation-state.

Heonik Kwon's focus on ritual attention to ghosts as an alternative to the official commemoration of heroes introduces a new dichotomy to the domestic politics of victor and traitor. Instead, ancestors safely returned to their rightful place in the family home are presented in opposition to the wandering ghosts beyond its threshold who have yet to find peace, but can be consoled by anyone regardless of national and ideological differences. This suggests a more inclusive and caring brotherhood of man, which does not spurn, blame or exclude wandering souls due to their predicament. There is evidently self-interest at play in discouraging them from bringing bad luck on a household or a shopkeeper, but also a heartening disregard for origin and creed, which rubs out the battle lines drawn by political propaganda. Thus, the Vietnamese government's promotion of ancestor worship as a unifying marker of Vietnamese-ness also holds strong analytical potential for reconfiguring the state's relationship towards its diaspora.

## **Solidarity**

The SRV's focus on ancestor worship is undoubtedly an instrumental attempt to bind together a national community beyond the state for the benefit of that state (Jellema 2007, 71), but it also points towards a less confrontational way of imagining the nation. The SRV paints the nation in conventional nationalist terms as a large family united by common ancestors - something which all filial Vietnamese are deemed to appreciate and support - and encourages members of a diaspora to honour their own ancestors and reconnect with the homeland at the same time. However, looking beyond the family/nation at how outsiders are treated, the corollary of ancestor worship is that wandering ghosts who are not securely anchored in a family are not ignored. Instead, their fate is remembered and they are ritually fed and consoled. There is sympathy for their plight "and these beings appear as close companions to the living in their arduous journey of life rather than a menacing force" (Kwon 2008a, n. p.). The VCP's current use of ancestor worship as a marker of Vietnamese-ness seeks to draw the diaspora into the national family fold, so it does not in itself transcend the cultural and ethnic markers of belonging which tend to denote nationality. However, there is potential to use the treatment of wandering ghosts in Vietnam as a metaphor for more progressive ways of imagining diasporic citizenship, and citizenship in general. Defining these as spirits "obliged to move between the periphery of this world and the fringe of another world [...] ontological refugees who are uprooted from home, which is a place where their memory can be settled" (Kwon 2008a, n.p.) highlights parallels with all those – exiles, diasporics, migrants, refugees – who do not fit

within a national community of citizens neatly bounded within a state, an ever less likely ideal in the age of migration (Castles and Miller 2003). The relationship between ghosts and the living is evidently one of great difference, of strangeness, unknowability and fear. Similarly, members of a diaspora often report feeling caught between two worlds, never accepted in their country of residence but never quite at home in the homeland (Topçu *et al* 2012). The ghost, the stranger and the foreigner all occupy a liminal space which defines the boundary between self and other, insider and outsider, citizen and alien.

The context in which contemporary nation-building evolves is crucial to understanding diaspora citizenship. The momentous events of the 2011 Arab Spring remind us that state legitimacy continues to rely on citizens' support. Citizenship is thus a crucial tool in the armoury of states concerned with maintaining and promoting a sense of national belonging in their populace. However, as Aihwa Ong (1999) has shown, citizenship has also become ever more "flexible" and commodified among those able to take advantage of globalised business and mobility. Citizenship can be bought by entrepreneurs intent on securing land rights or patronage in a third country, or by politicians seeking to protect themselves from the vagaries of their profession (Poethig 2006). In many cases, dual citizenship continues to carry a certain stigma from the perspective of states that associate citizenship with undivided allegiance, and from that of less wealthy compatriots who by necessity or loyalty do not seek to escape penury or persecution by moving abroad. Nevertheless, ever fewer countries now ban dual citizenship in principle, as



they recognise the potential benefits of a well-connected diaspora with a footprint in at least two countries. This is not new, given the cross-continental importance of remittances to countries such as the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Bangladesh or the Philippines, and the historical importance of diaspora support to fledgling nineteenth-century states like Greece (Barabantseva and Sutherland 2011). However, Vietnam's recent shift to so-called 'market socialism' is a particularly illuminating case of how economic reform, nation-building and religious revival have cross-fertilised to create a particularly propitious environment for the development of diaspora citizenship. This is not necessarily in opposition to an inclusive understanding of the nation-state encompassing all those resident in Vietnam, regardless of their ethnicity, but it does suggest a hierarchy of belonging in which ethnicity continues to play a key role.

Kwon (2008a, n.p.) argues that "ghosts, as a discursive phenomenon, are constitutive of the Vietnamese self-identity just as ancestors are" and that individuals' affinity with displaced ghosts may increase, the more they themselves have experienced disruption in their lives. "[T]he ritual action affirms the existing solidary relations between the living and the dead" (Kwon 2008, np), exemplified by the practice of kowtowing first to ancestors in the home, then taking a half turn to pay respects to those who have died 'in the street' (chet duong). When Vietnamese state policy relaxed in the 1990s, a rebuilt family altar was often complemented by an outside shrine destined for ghosts. According to Kwon, worshippers are thus implicitly acknowledging their past history of violence and praying for a more peaceful future;

“[Such] actions point to a particular vision of society – a society in which both natives and strangers have the right to dwell in the place. For the dead, this means that strangers to the political community of the nation can join the local ritual community of kinship as ancestors. Those who are not entitled to join this ritual unity can still benefit from the sites of consolation prepared in the exterior of the communal unity” (Kwon 2008a, np).

Transposed to the realm of citizenship, the diaspora corresponds to ‘strangers to the political community’, at least the substantial number that fled communist victory in 1975. Those in the ‘exterior of the communal unity’ are the migrants, refugees, denizens and other non-citizens who can be cared for and consoled. Thus, the SRV’s embrace of ancestor worship as a nation-building tool carries within it the possibility of a more inclusive understanding of a national community of citizens.

## **Conclusion**

The SRV’s promotion of ancestor worship as a unifying marker of Vietnameseness builds a bridge to the diaspora community, which also seeks to transcend ideological divisions. This approach is thus a clear example of a state positioning its understanding of national citizenship to respond to the demands and potential of a globally dispersed, diasporic community. However, this approach also entails struggle and contestation as the Vietnamese state renegotiates its relationship with both Vietnamese

spirituality and the enduring divisions - which it created - in commemorating the legacy of the Vietnam-American War. Just as the spirits of ancestors are traditionally called home to celebrate the Lunar New Year with their families, so the ancestors who fought on the losing side in Vietnam's civil war can now be called home to their family's ritual altar. In turn, ancestor worship is one way of calling the Vietnamese diaspora back to the homeland, if not to live, then to invest in both financially and emotionally. Ancestor worship's nation-building function finds a parallel in the state's official commemoration of ancient, legendary Hung kings as the nation's ancestors; a form of ancestor worship writ large (Sutherland 2010, 142). Similarly, contemporary diaspora citizenship is by no means deterritorialised, because it continues to be anchored in a putative allegiance to a nation-state, whether that is measured in financial or affective terms. In contrast to cases where citizenship is commodified, diaspora citizenship is also clearly ethnicised. That is, it extends eligibility beyond state boundaries by virtue of a single ethnic criterion of descent. Nevertheless, this reading of the Vietnamese 'imagined community' as ethnicised and hierarchical also contains an inkling of a more inclusive, egalitarian citizenship. Ironically, this is to be found in a spiritual world that has much in common with a perception of time as the 'simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present,' which Benedict Anderson (1991, 24) argues was superseded by the 'homogenous, empty time' of the national community.

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