North and South Vietnamese youth had very different experiences of growing up during the Vietnamese War. This book gives a unique perspective on the conflict through the prism of adult–youth relations. By studying these relations, including educational systems, social organizations, and texts created by and for children during the war, Olga Dror analyses how the two societies dealt with their wartime experience and strove to shape their futures. She examines the socialization and politicization of Vietnamese children and teenagers, contrasting the North’s highly centralized agenda of indoctrination with the South, which had no such policy, and explores the results of these varied approaches. By considering the influence of Western culture on the youth of the South and of socialist culture on the youth of the North, we learn how the youth culture of both Vietnams diverged from their prewar paths and from each other.

**Olga Dror** is Associate Professor in the Department of History at Texas A&M University.
Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University

The Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute of Columbia University were inaugurated in 1962 to bring to a wider public the results of significant new research on modern and contemporary East Asia.

A list of titles in this series can be found at the back of the book.
Making Two Vietnams

War and Youth Identities, 1965–1975

Olga Dror

Texas A & M University
To all those who grew up in North Vietnam and in South Vietnam during the war.
Contents

List of figures viii
List of tables x
Acknowledgments xi
Introduction 1
1 Educational Systems of the DRV and the RVN 15
2 Social Organizations in the DRV and the RVN 73
3 Publication Policies and Venues in the DRV and the RVN 108
4 Educational and Social Narratives through the Texts in the DRV 168
5 Educational and Social Narratives through the Texts from the RVN 219
Conclusion 268
References 279
Index 308
Figures

0.1 Picture of a Boy. From *Tet nam Ga.* (New Year of a Rooster) (Hanoi: Kim Dong, 1969), 48.  page 1
1.1 Number of Pupils in Community Schools, 1965–73  63
1.2 Rate of Imprisonment in Cases, 1965–73  68
3.1 Number of Translations by Kim Dong Publishing House, 1961–75  125
3.2 Cartoon: Da Hoa, “Nguoi ta giet tre em nhu the nao?” (How Do People Kill Children?), *Hon tre* (Young Souls), December 15, 1964, 4.  146
3.3 Price of magazines, 1969–75  164
4.2 Cartoon: Dau Khac Binh, “Tranh do” (Picture-Puzzle), *Thieu nien tien phong* (Pioneer), May 17, 1974.  201
4.3 Picture of Le Van Tam from *Tuoi nho anh hung* (Heroic Childhood) (Hanoi: Kim Dong, 1965).  205
4.4 Picture of Nguyen Van Be with *Tien phong* (Vanguard) newspaper describing his heroic deeds and death. “Viet Cong Dead Hero is Alive.” *Viet Nam Bulletin* 1(6), June 1967, 121.  208
4.5 Trinh Duong and Ha Quang Phuong, “Em Bui Trung” (Young boy Bui Trung), *Vui he thang My* (Enjoy Summer, Triumph over Americans) (Hanoi: Kim Dong Publishing House, 1969), 13.  215
### List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1(a)</td>
<td>Cover of <em>Thang Bom</em> (Fellow Bom) magazine, 5 (April 5–11, 1970) (Saigon).</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1(b)</td>
<td>Cover of <em>Thieu nhi</em> (Adolescents and Children) magazine, 3 (August 29, 1971) (Saigon).</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Cover of <em>Ngan thong</em> (Pine Forest) magazine, Mai Khoi, “Nhìn nhung mua thu đi” (Watching the Autumn go By), 38 (November 20, 1972) (Saigon).</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables

1.1 Education System in the DRV, 1956–75  
1.2 Graduates and Enrollment in DRV Schools, 1970–1  
1.3 Population and Enrollment in RVN Schools, 1954–74  
1.4 Graduates and Enrollment in RVN Schools, 1967–8  
1.5 Number of Teenage Offenders Brought to Saigon Juvenile Court, 1965–73  
1.6 Major Offenses/Crime Cases by Minors Brought to Saigon Juvenile Court, 1965–71  
Acknowledgments

While military and political aspects of the wars in Vietnam have been written about on an astounding scale, the lives of civilians have been largely ignored. Coming from a family that had to endure the blockade of Leningrad by the Germans in World War II, I have always been interested in the experience of non-combatants in wartime. This initially led me to study and translate the account of the Battle of Hue during the 1968 Tet Offensive written in 1969 from a civilian perspective by a South Vietnamese female writer Nha Ca. I thought it important to remember the lives and deaths of South Vietnamese who are so often pushed aside from narratives of the war.

As I saw my son growing up, I thought how lucky he was that he had to live neither in Leningrad during the blockade nor in Vietnam during the war. Thinking about it, I was fascinated by trying to understand how young people in North and South Vietnams were growing up during the war. I wanted to create a comparative work that would consider to an equal extent the youth in both Vietnams at that time.

Thus, my family in Leningrad and my son in the United States have been an inspiration for this work. But, I would not be able to accomplish the project without the help of many people, especially Vietnamese. I have discussed different aspects of the project with hundreds of Vietnamese, in Vietnam and abroad, with those who fought on the communist side, the anti-communist side, or were not sure on whose side they were.

I cannot list all of them here, but I would like to thank some who especially helped with my project. I would like to thank Professor Phan Huy Le, who helped me with establishing necessary connections. I am in great debt to the incredibly helpful people of Kim Dong Publishing House in Hanoi, especially Nguyen Huy Thang and Le Phuong Lien, both of whom are not only administrators there but also writers and editors; to the poet Dinh Hai, who also worked at Kim Dong and did a lot to develop publications for young people and fostering young people’s writing skills that led to their publications; to late writer To Hoai who was one of the founders of Kim Dong; to Phong Nha, the composer and first

xi
xii Acknowledgments

editor of Thieu nien tien phong (Pioneer) newspaper in North Vietnam; to
Associate Editors of Thieu nien tien phong newspaper at different times
Nguyen Tran Chau and Pham Thanh Long; to the journalist Truong
Son; to the composer Pham Tuyen; to the poet and writer Hoang Cat; to
two of the DRV’s child-poets during the war: Tran Dang Khoa, now one
of the leading figures on the Voice of Vietnam Radio; and Nguyen Hong
Kien, an archaeologist now working in the Imperial Citadel Museum; and
also to former students of the DRV schools in China, in particular Tran
Khang Chien who shared with me not only his memories but also docu-
ments. Thai Thanh Duc Pho, a writer, who from 1969 to 1975 was an
editor in the Giai Phong Publishing House, located in Hanoi, but publish-
ing on behalf of the communists in South Vietnam, detailed to me the
mode of work of this legendary press. Without Chu Tuyet Lan’s help to
find people in and to retrieve documents from different institutions in
Vietnam this project would be only half-alive. She has been my angel in
Vietnam for many years.

From the South Vietnamese side, the writer Nhat Tien and the edu-
cator Bui Van Chuc, aka Quyen Di, who were among the most active
publishers for youth in the South, and former Minister of Education Tran
Ngoc Ninh were indispensable for my understanding of the situation at
the time. Poet Tran Da Tu was a great source for receiving information
and establishing connections with writers and publishers of the RVN.
Phan Cong Tam rendered me help in the same way but among former
politicians of the RVN. Bui Van Phu was very patient when I would
constantly run to him with my many questions.

I am also very grateful to the staff in the National Archives Center no. 2
in Ho Chi Minh City and no. 3 in Hanoi, as well as patient librarians who
were retrieving for me hundreds and hundreds of books and newspapers
at the National Library in Hanoi and in the General Science Library in Ho
Chi Minh City.

An earlier shorter version of the first chapter, without correctional
education, appeared in the Journal of Cold War Studies; parts of my article
in the Journal of Southeast Asian Studies are included in Chapters 3 and 5;
and a modified version of my article in the Journal of the History of
Childhood and Youth is included in Chapter 4. I especially appreciate
anonymous reviewers for each of the journals, whose comments signi-
cantly improved my work. I also relied on my other research which
I thank these journals for publishing my work and allowing me to use
these articles and I thank Kim Dong publishing house and Thieu nien tien
phong (Pioneer) newspaper for allowing me to use images from their
publications.
I am very grateful to Ross Yelsey, Publication Coordinator at the Weatherhead East Asia Institute of Columbia University, and to Lien-Hang Nguyen, a historian at Columbia University, for taking interest in my project and including it in the Institute’s series.

Lucy Rhymer, Editor at Cambridge University Press, and Lisa Carter, Editorial Assistant, have been very patient and generous with me, as have all the team at Cambridge University Press. I cannot express enough appreciation for the reviewers to whom the Press sent my manuscript. Their comments and encouragement were a tremendous help to me in completing this book.

The project was generously supported by several grants and fellowships from Texas A&M University: SEED Grant, College of Liberal Arts; Program to Enhance Scholarly and Creative Activities Grant; Fellowship from Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities and Research; Inaugural Class of Texas A&M University Arts & Humanities Fellow; and also a Faculty Development Leave, which, in combination with a fantastic year-long fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, enabled me to write this book.

Finally, I want to thank my husband Keith Taylor for always trying to bring out the best in me, for standing by me, reading each page of this project many times, and critiquing it. My son, Michael Dror, though not in scholarship, was and is an inspiration for everything I do in academia. I thank both of them with all my heart.

My deepest appreciation goes to those who shared with me their experiences and helped me to bring them into this book. While I cannot possibly mention all of them by name here, I dedicate this book to them.

All mistakes are mine.