

The Nung Ethnic
and
Autonomous Territory
of
Hai Ninh – Vietnam



Chief Editor Tran Duc Lai
Translated by Ngo Thanh Tung



**The Hai Ninh Veterans and Public Administration
Alumni Association-Vietnam**

The Nung Ethnic and Autonomous Territory of Hai Ninh – Vietnam

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*In memory of and grateful
commemoration to our late leader Vong A
Sang, the Nung Warriors who sacrificed
themselves for the nationalist cause, and
all the compatriots and their relatives who
lost their lives on their journey to freedom.*



Insignia of the Nung Hai Ninh Autonomous Territory.



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CONTENTS

Forewords (<i>Linh Quang Vien</i>).....	I
A Few Thoughts (<i>Hoang Gia Cau</i>)	V
Forewords (<i>Chau Cam Sang</i>)	VII
Preface (<i>Tran Duc Lai</i>).....	IX
PART ONE	1
Chapter 1: The origin of the Nung ethnic group, Hai Ninh Province	1
Chapter 2: The formation of the Hai Ninh Autonomous Territory.....	20
PART TWO	36
Chapter 1: Geography	36
Chapter 2: Humanities	42
A. Population	42
B. Organization and Activities	45
1. Administrative Management.....	45
2. Justice Organization.....	48
3. Transportation	49
4. Economy	52
5. Education and Information.....	59
6. Public Health and Sports.....	68
7. Security and Military.....	68
Chapter 3: Districts' Characteristics	77
- Moncay District	77
- Ha Coi District.....	88
- Dam Ha District.....	99
- Tien Yen District	102
- Binh Lieu District	111

- Dinh Lap District	116
- Ba Che District	118
- Van Hoa District	119

PART THREE: The Mass Evacuation to South Vietnam
(From Hai Ninh) 124

Chapter 1: Resettlement in the Song Mao Region, Binh
Thuan Province..... 128

1. Location of Hai Ninh District and the Town of
Song Mao 130
2. Climate and Weather..... 134
3. Culture..... 135
4. Economy 135
5. Military and Politics..... 136

Chapter 2 : Career Establishing at Saigon-Cholon 156

- a. Political Achievements..... 156
- b. Military Achievements..... 164
- c. Administrative Achievements 171
- d. Social Achievements..... 173
- e. Business and Trading Achievements 180

PART FOUR: After April 30, 1975..... 205

Chapter 1: Tragedy of Situation of South Vietnam Society ..
..... 211

- A. Tyrannical Governing Policy 211
- B. Vietnamese Gulags..... 214

Chapter 2: Those Who Fled and Those Who Stayed..... 220

- A. The Boat People 220
- B. Those Who Stayed..... 224

Chapter 3: Living Overseas 229

- A. Resettlements in Canada and Elsewhere..... 229
- B. Resettlements in the USA..... 234

APPENDICES

Colonel Vong A Sang:	
- Leader of Hai Ninh Autonomous Territory	263
- Republic of Vietnam Senator	
Vong A Sang's Biography	265
Lt Colonel Vong A Sang with Nung Warrior Traditional	
Beret.....	267
The Third Division March	268
Addendum 1:	
List of Students of the Military Cadres School.....	272
Addendum 2:	
List of Students of the Junior Military Academy...	274
Addendum 3:	
List of Students of the Teachers' School	280
Addendum 4:	
List of Students of the School of Public	
Administration	283
Addendum 5:	
List of Students of the National Military	
Academy	285
Addendum 6:	
List of Nung Officers	288
Addendum 7:	
List of Military, Public Administration Personnel,	
Former Prisoners of Communist Prison Camps,	
Overseas Resettlement.	294
Bibliography.....	303
Speech of Professor Nguyen Ly Tuong.....	306
Translator's Notes.....	318
List of Contributors.....	320

FOREWORDS

First of all, I would like to briefly introduce the Hai Ninh Province to our readers. On the map of Vietnam, Hai Ninh is a black dot at the easternmost Sino-Vietnamese border.



Comparatively small, the province of Hai Ninh has experienced many ups and downs. Originally under the Nguyen Dynasty, it was named “Phu” (large district) Hai Dong. Under the French rule, it was elevated to “Dao”, small province Hai Ninh, then “Tinh” (province) Hai Ninh.

Under the French, provinces having common borders with China were directly under the command of French Army officers ranking full colonel or higher, who held both administrative and military authorities. Therefore, Hai Ninh had another title: The First Military Territory of Hai Ninh (Premier Territoire Militaire de Hai Ninh).

The most glorious historical period of Hai Ninh Province was from 1947 to 1954. During those 8 years, Hai Ninh became the Nung Hai Ninh Autonomous Territory (NHNAT) under the brilliant leadership of Colonel Vong A Sang.

Regretfully, when Vietnam was partitioned in two parts, the map of Vietnam was modified by the Communists. Hai Ninh was demoted to the status of a small district, a subordinate part of Quang Ninh Province.

To the Vietnamese people and the Nung ethnic group in particular, Hai Ninh Province has always been recognized as a strategic strongpoint protecting the Vietnamese frontier. Facing the political situation of 1947, the people of Hai Ninh Province proved themselves able to provide security and prosperity for the territory during the entire 8 years, due to their capacity, man power and resources, while the whole country from North to South was engulfed in the flame of war.

Those achievements resulted from the work of the brilliant Nung leader of the Territory, Colonel Vong A Sang; the solid cooperation of soldiers and local residents buttressed his leaderships, but above all, from the anti-communist spirit of the tribal of people from all walks of life.

In regard to the residents, the military and civilian elements of the Territory were closely tied to the Nungs, a tribe of strong anti-communist spirit. Although the tribe inhabited three fourths of the total territory population, the Nungs lived in harmony with other ethnic groups.

With blood and tears, they had written their dramatic pages of history, since their immigration by waves from South China to Hai Ninh. They had to continuously confront oppression, threats, robberies, pillages, as well as in the later years, when they had to work together to build the autonomous territory, without being entangled into the fratricidal war for many years.

When the 1954 Geneva Accord partitioned the country into two, a million North Vietnamese left behind the Communist regime, determined to resettle in the South. More than 50,000 Nung people, one third of the Territory population (a large proportion compared to the total number of North Vietnamese evacuees), followed their leader to the South by their own means. Most of them then resettled at Song Mao, Binh Thuan Province (SVN). They set up a new district and bestowed it with the traditional name Hai Ninh.

During this trying stage, the Nung had to cope with economic and political adversaries, while actively contributing to the prosperity of the South. Numerous achievements have been recorded in the domains of politics, military and administration of the First Republic (1954-1963), especially of the Second Republic (1963-1975) of Vietnam.

Finally, in what became known as Black April, 1975, South Vietnam was occupied. Over 3 million Southerners had to pay an exorbitant price for their freedom. The Nungs, with their inherent solidarity and struggling determination once more succeeded in resettling in foreign countries, especially in the United States of America, the Los Angeles area, in particular. The Nung community not only stabilized their living conditions, but also had effective plans to secure the future of their descending generations here.

Such has been my impression after having the honor to read “The Nung Ethnic and Autonomous Territory of Hai

Ninh – Vietnam” written by a group of Nungs notables who have patiently worked for many recent months.

This was a complete research on the Nungs of Hai Ninh, beginning with their start-up as settlers until their territorial self-governing and before their evacuation to the South. Thereafter they were fleeing the country by boat, in the grandest exodus in Vietnam history. Every stage of activities in each district has been recorded in a lively, truthful style with concrete details. Therefore, we believe that the book is a valuable and useful work for those who wish to research the Territory history, particularly for younger generations.

With great honors, we would like to introduce this book to you.

Linh Quang Vien,
Lt General (rtd)
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces



A FEW THOUGHTS

I am greatly moved and happy after reading the historical summary of the Nung ethnic and Autonomous Territory of Hai Ninh, Vietnam written by the editors of the Hai Ninh Veterans and Public Administration Alumni Association. I am really moved by the huge information on the Nung group and Autonomous Territory of Hai Ninh. The book offers details on the origins and geography, humanity, customs and habits of the Nungs. It contains important historical data on the development and *raison d'être* of the Territory, which Emperor Bao Dai officially promulgated at Hanoi in 1949. The book also summarizes the living style and activities of the Nung communities and associations all over the globe. I am also very pleased to see that the book constitutes a map of standing points and a compass needle to determine the direction of progress of Nungs in the world community.



The book records the heroic past and bloody achievements and sacrifices of the Nungs since the establishment of the Nung Autonomous Territory to date. Undergoing painful events, the Nungs still boldly exist in the world. Together with the younger generations, we strive to sustain our struggle in order to cope with changes of the new world while preserving the spirit of solidarity and promoting traditional diligence and mutual assistance.

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