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978-0-521-68894-9 - Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age: Vietnam, India and Beyond

Susan Bayly

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Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age

This innovative study of intellectuals and their cosmopolitan life trajectories is based on anthropological and historical research in Vietnam and India, two great Asian societies with contrasting experiences of empire, decolonisation and the rise and fall of the twentieth-century socialist world system. Building on the author's long-standing research experience in India and on remarkable family narratives collected in the course of fieldwork in northern Vietnam, the book deals with epic events and complex social transformations from a perspective that emphasises the personal, the intimate and the familial. Its central theme is the extraordinary mobility of intelligentsia lives; the author worked with women as well as men whose critical career experiences have included development work and study sojourns in a host of overseas lands including the former Soviet Union and many former French colonies in north and sub-Saharan Africa. The role of the intellectual in the economic, social and cultural transformation of the postcolonial world has been widely acknowledged but rarely explored through in-depth ethnographic fieldwork methods. In identifying both parallels and contrasts between Hanoi's 'socialist moderns' and the family and career experiences of their Indian counterparts, the book makes a distinctive contribution to the study of colonial, socialist and post-socialist Asia.

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