

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.

SUSAN BAYLY is Reader in Historical Anthropology in the Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge University, and a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge. From 2001 to 2004 she was Editor of the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (formerly *Man*). Her previous publications include *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700–1900* (1989) and *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (1999).

Asian Voices
in a Postcolonial Age
Vietnam, India and Beyond

Susan Bayly



Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86885-3 — Asian Voices in a Post-Colonial Age
Susan Bayly
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521868853

© Susan Bayly 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-86885-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-68894-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of maps</i>	<i>page vi</i>
<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
1 Introduction	1
2 The modern intellectual family: separation, provision and nurture	24
3 Narrating family lives in present-day Hanoi	48
4 The pains and perils of intelligentsia life	74
5 Comparative modernities: India as a domain of socialist postcoloniality	98
6 Cosmopolitan spaces in revolutionary times	122
7 Vistas of modernity in the insurgent countryside	153
8 At home and beyond in the new socialist era	179
9 Conclusion	220
<i>Bibliography</i>	241
<i>Index</i>	270

Maps

- 1 Journeys recalled: Vietnam and the remembered socialist ecumene
- 2 Vietnam's inner frontiers during the 1946–54 anti-French resistance war
- 3 Vietnam today

Illustrations

Plates to be found between pages 121 and 122

- 1 Remembering a pre-modern hero: the Emperor Ly Thai To.
- 2 Hanoi's famous island pagoda seen from the former Indira Gandhi park.
- 3 Hanoi victory monument, erected on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the anti-French war.
- 4 'Resolved to die for the nation's eternal life'. Poster of Ho Chi Minh inspiring the liberators, marking the sixtieth anniversary of the onset of the anti-French war.
- 5 Another sixtieth anniversary poster: the anti-French resistance struggle commemorated in 2006.
- 6 Site of intelligentsia family commemorations: the Temple of Literature (Van Mieu).
- 7 From a Hanoi intellectual family's photo album: two small boys in imported baby suits *c.* 1937 (Private Collection).
- 8 Garments from the Rue Paul Bert 'where even the streets smelled French' (Private Collection).
- 9 A *lycée*-educated Hanoi mother in an *ao dai* (Vietnamese 'national dress') with her two small sons, *c.* 1939 (Private Collection).
- 10 Taking enlightened possession: Hanoi woman reading a *quoc ngu* (romanised Vietnamese) newspaper, *c.* 1941 (Private Collection).
- 11 A pen-holding intellectual and a trader (second from right) with other makers of the socialist nation. From the news-sheet *Viet Nam Doc Lap* (Independent Vietnam), June 1945.
- 12 'We're not buying!' Viet Minh poster with a 'buy native – boycott foreign luxuries' message. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
- 13 'Wherever you roam, go home for Wounded Serviceman's Day'. Viet Minh poster showing peasant traders taking part in a village commemoration. © The Trustees of the British Museum.
- 14 Intelligentsia life in the Viet Minh 'liberated territories'. Young women in khaki, *c.* 1951 (Private Collection).

viii List of illustrations

- 15 Western-style dress in the ‘liberated territories’, c. 1951 (Private Collection).
 - 16 Childhood in the ‘liberated territories’. A cadre’s son on a Viet Minh pack pony, c. 1949 (Private Collection).
 - 17 Revolutionary youth chorale performing in Interzone IV, c. 1949 (Private Collection).
 - 18 Another wartime musical performance (Private Collection).
 - 19 An intelligentsia family in post-liberation Hanoi, c. 1955 (Private Collection).
 - 20 Vietnam’s most famous image of the nation reunited in 1976. Courtesy of Chinh Tri Quoc Gia Publishing House.
 - 21 ‘The Party has brought enlightenment’. A work of revolutionary art by the contemporary painter Le Minh Chau. Courtesy of the artist.
 - 22 Beloved kinsman to the national family: President Ho Chi Minh’s image on display in Hanoi.
 - 23 Hero of the socialist ecumene. Hanoi memorial to the Cuban revolutionary José Martí Pérez (1853–95).
 - 24 Poster celebrating the work of peasants, soldiers and an educated ‘modern’ in shirt and spectacles.
 - 25 A socialist ‘friendship gift’. The Hanoi Children’s Culture Palace.
 - 26 Witnessing the nation’s birth. Detail from Van Tho’s panoramic painting of the declaration of national independence on 2 September 1945. Courtesy of the artist and the National Museum of Vietnamese History, Hanoi.
 - 27 The decorum of the *foule révolutionnaire*. Van Tho’s Independence Day painting was commissioned in 1979 for the National Museum of Vietnamese History.
 - 28 Commemorative poster showing the microphone through which ‘Bac Ho’ exchanged utterances with the crowd on Independence Day, 1945.
 - 29 A national giant entombed. The grave of Ho Chi Minh’s successor Le Duan in Mai Dich national cemetery; in the foreground, an incense burner and commemorative offering vessels.
 - 30 Hanoi’s Opera House, completed in 1911. To the right, a *doi moi* landmark: the Hilton hotel, opened in 1999.
- All photographs are by the author unless otherwise noted.

Acknowledgements

I am conscious of the many debts of gratitude I have incurred in the writing of this book. First and foremost, I have benefited immensely from the friendship and support I have experienced as a member of the Cambridge University Department of Social Anthropology. Our department's commitment to anthropology's rich intellectual diversity is distinctive in numerous ways, not least in its openness to engagement with other disciplines. Having started my life as a social and cultural historian, I have found this receptive approach an especially rewarding feature of departmental life, and a consistent stimulus in my attempts to develop the comparative and interdisciplinary dimensions of my work.

Many individuals have generously found the time to read preliminary versions of my text, though of course I alone am responsible for its remaining deficiencies. For their invaluable suggestions and the wealth of anthropological insight they have shared with me, I am particularly grateful to Caroline Humphrey, James Laidlaw, Alan Macfarlane, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Marilyn Strathern. I also warmly thank Hildegard Diemberger, Harri Englund, Leo Howe, Magnus Marsden, Yael Navaro-Yashin, David Sneath, and Sian Lazar for their penetrating comments. I have profited too from many stimulating conversations with past and current Cambridge students, especially Jacob Copeman, Mark Maclean, Markus Schlecker, Soumhya Venkatesan and Maya Warrior, and from the constructive comments of graduate seminar audiences at Harvard, LSE, SOAS, Cambridge and the National University of Singapore, as well as those of three anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press.

Historians both within and beyond Cambridge have also contributed much to the shaping of this project. My thanks go especially to Sugata Bose, and also to Sunil Amrith, Christopher Goscha, Gordon Johnson, Tim Harper, Agathe Larcher-Goscha, Julie Pham, Peter Reeves and Anthony Reid. I also warmly thank my Hanoi-based friends and colleagues Kirsten Endres, Andrew Hardy, Natasha Pairaudeau and William Smith.

x Acknowledgements

As a Fellow of Christ's College I have long benefited from interactions with lively scholars from many fields, among whom I must particularly mention my senior colleague Lucjan Lewitter. I am very appreciative too of all that David Reynolds has done in the role of sympathetic sounding board over many years. I thank Margaret Rigaud-Drayton for her patient help with my French and Mr Le Viet Hai and the college's other students from Hanoi for their tireless efforts to improve my Vietnamese. I am also grateful to the senior members of my department, together with the Master and Fellows of Christ's and also Professor Ludmilla Jordanova and the Cambridge University Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities for the hospitality they provided during visits to Cambridge by my friends and colleagues from the Hanoi social science community in 2004 and 2005. I also thank Peter Kornicki and Francesca Orsini for their help and support. My warm thanks too to Dr Katherine Prior; to Marigold Acland and Helen Waterhouse of Cambridge University Press; and to Su Ford, Jules Vines and Miranda Stock of my department for their highly professional research and technical support.

I gratefully acknowledge generous research and travel awards provided by the Cambridge University Evans Fund, the Cambridge University Travelling Expenses Fund, and the managers of the Christ's College George Kingsley Roth Fund and College Research Fund. A significant portion of this work draws on my research in India dating as far back as the 1970s. Space does not permit detailed acknowledgement of the many people who helped and supported me over all those years, but many of their names appear in my earlier writings and I retain an abiding sense of gratitude to them all.

As far as this book is concerned, my greatest debts are to the multitude of friends, scholars and officials in Vietnam whose many kindnesses made my Hanoi fieldwork both fruitful and unfailingly pleasurable. I warmly thank Dr Ha Huy Thanh and the Institute of Economics, National Centre for Social and Human Sciences of Vietnam, for assistance in securing my visas and for the privilege of affiliation to the Institute during my stays in Hanoi. I also greatly value my enduring association with the Department of Anthropology of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University; I warmly thank its Rector, staff and students for their enthusiasm for our shared goal of fostering links between our two academic communities.

I am deeply grateful to all the Hanoi people who welcomed me into their homes and generously shared their childhood and adult memories with me in the convivial company of their families, friends, students and co-workers. I can only hope that they find something of what they sought

to convey to me reflected in this work. Among individuals whose help made a critical difference to my research I particularly wish to express my affectionate esteem and most sincere thanks to Dr Truong Huyen Chi, together with Professor Nguyen Van Huy and the staff of the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, and also Ms Vu Hai Ha and the many other Hanoi scholars who have been generous supporters of this project. I also warmly thank the following distinguished artists for permitting me to reproduce their works: Mrs Vu Giang Huong, Mr Van Tho and Mr Le Minh Chau. I also thank the British Museum, London, and Dr Pham Quoc Quan, Director of the National Museum of Vietnamese History.

As always, my husband Christopher Bayly has sharpened my thinking, enlivened my spirits and sustained my morale at every stage; without his unflagging support and inspiring scholarly example, this work would never have been brought to fruition.

Among my Vietnamese friends, one in particular merits special mention. I am far from alone in my admiration for the boundless energy and matchless erudition of Professor Dang Phong of the Institute of Economics, Academy of Social Sciences of Vietnam. Without his generosity, advice and enthusiasm, my attempts to learn about the past and present lives of Hanoi intellectuals would have come to nothing. It is to him with the utmost respect and gratitude that I dedicate this book.