

**Susan Bayly: Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age. Vietnam, India and beyond, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 281 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Alexander Drost, Greifswald

In this historical and anthropological study of Asian lives, Susan Bayly encounters the entangled implications of colonial, postcolonial and socialist realities in the formation of a Vietnamese educated elite with connections to the global urban academic world against the backdrop of a domestic society in continuous transition. Based on oral narratives from academics and „other educated people“, the study delves into the memories of Hanoi families to unearth the essential structure and role of families in the transformation during the 20th century from the colonial past through the early years of independence to the development of a socialist state. Bayly pays considerable attention to the nuclear family and the role of its collective memory in maintaining the distinctive identity of tri thuc families – that saw themselves as the urban modern intelligentsia. She draws parallels between the affective behavior of nurturing and care within the family and the development of socialist structures in the country. Furthermore, while reflecting the global position of Vietnam amongst other post-colonies and as a member of COMECON, Bayly describes also the emergence of transnational spaces of participation in the socialist ecumene – a con-

stitutive element in national and tri thuc identity construction. Similarly important are the repercussions of this familistic understanding for social, political and historical developments in Vietnam. In this way, Bayly's, at first glance, narrow focus on tri thuc families succeeds in drawing a much broader Vietnamese worldview and a particularly Vietnamese view of interconnectedness defined by the socialist ecumene.

The characteristics and obstacles of the modern intellectual family in Vietnam were pictures before the historical and political canvas of Vietnam from the 1930 until recent. In this context, Bayly claims that the maintenance of a sense of belonging to an interconnected educated modern elite with ties that endured even prolonged periods of separation and overseas work represents the greatest triumph of intelligentsia family life. „In conditions of repeated and prolonged relocation and dispersal, my informants experienced variants of family life which often took very different forms from those depending on a separation between distinctly male and female spheres or functions within a conventionally structured domestic household“ (p. 25). For this reason, Bayly assigns separation an important role as an identity marker for the tri thuc.

Bayly describes further the imparting of particular identity markers for this milieu within intellectual families. Those were identified as „verbal skills“ (shifting verbal expressions from colonial French to Romanised Vietnamese) (p. 26) and later also „literacy“ (p. 30) as well as knowledge of traditions and history beyond ideological propaganda (p. 33). The „maintaining [of these] shared identity markers of

this kind of family, in the face of rapidly changing official attitudes to the pursuit of 'familistic' interests" (p. 27) determined the emergence of a certain sense of family. Especially the experiences of relocation and separation during the anti-French and the anti-US wars are reflected in the narratives of the continuation of family ties and kinship.

The role of women in the process of maintaining family ties and the protection of intelligentsias status in tri thuc families is particularly notable, considering the much-discussed „gendered occupational distinctions that have been characterized in a wide variety of south-east Asian contexts as relegating woman to a lowlier sphere of money-making and entrepreneurial activity“ (p. 45). In the case of Vietnamese woman who willingly supported the academic advancement of their men folk by doing military service or engaging in compulsory periods of factory employment in their stead, the efforts of the female elders are honourably recognized in numerous accounts and narratives by younger family members recorded by Bayly in interviews. Since Susan Bayly follows anthropological methods and research questions, this study not only provides a detailed reconstruction of individual memories but also carefully considers what „facts“ her informants present, how they present these, and their affective connection to the material presented. In this context, she is especially concerned with „familial feeling as an energising principle in the lives they have sought to lead as socialist world citizens and nation-builders, as well as contributors to their families' stock of cultural and moral capital“ (p. 45-46).

Besides family and kinship, friendships are considered as important ties, particularly in the socialist ecumene when Vietnamese people left their country to work in „brother/sister countries“ in the USSR, China, and Africa. Even the narrations of these connections reflect highly emotional relations (p. 46).

For all these narrations, the particular context they and their narrators were placed are important. Bayly listened to the narrated memories in an urban context which was a significant and characteristic feature of the intellectual family. Cosmopolitanism and culture are mirrored as constitutive parts of intellectual self-perception. Most of the interviews were carried out in the presence of several family members and also close friends. In this way, the experiences of cosmopolitanism during long-term stays in other countries within the socialist ecumene were combined with current experiences of separation expressed through the absence of younger members of the family. These „interconnected“ separation memories illustrate firstly that Hanoi intellectuals participated in a global „modern community“ of experts that made a crucial contribution to the development of their countries and secondly the difficulties in preserving essential family relations. One important mode of preservation can be recognized in the sharing of family narrations. For Bayly, this communicational habit is much more than the preservation of family tradition. The verbal transfer of information about kin and particularly their educational achievements is directed towards the nurturing and provisioning of younger family members. These reflective narratives were also very affective stories for which Bayly uses the term critical

memory. „Thus through these exercises of shared critical memory, I believe that my informants collectively pool, transmit and deploy the factual and emotional content of their narratives, experiencing them as a stock of resources to be accessed and used in a variety of ways, stockpiling and exchanging them, and exploring them in a range of intimate and more public settings“ (p. 54-55). The multilayered analytical task of this study becomes apparent, concentrating on facts from the memory, the presentation of the memory and its effects in the formation of the families life. The characteristic of being a „modern“ was essential to the Hanoi intelligentsia. To achieve this desirable condition, certain behaviour was expected of the youth. This involved leaving home for a „healthy external“ environment which included modern schools, youth organizations, and later also the educational institutions of COMECON states and other international „friends“. The stigma of being backward had to be avoided. Again, the global context of family life was an integral part of the lives of „modern“ intellectual Vietnamese families, whose forebears set the model of selfless service to society and the nation for those who followed.

After an overview of the present-day modern intellectual Vietnamese family, Bayly's account continues with the examination of the tri thuc position in the early years of independence and during the division period. The service of tri thuc families in the socialist revolution had a systemic ambivalence. On the one hand, elitism defined by talent and culturedness that could be used for individual development was condemned by the socialist moral standards and thus was regard with suspicion

by revolutionaries. On the other hand, the enduring concern of being a part of the modern world made Vietnamese intellectuals valued assets for the success of both the revolution and the development of the country. As post-colony, Vietnam faced the same prejudices of backwardness from developed countries as other post-colonies at that time. In this regard, the role of intellectuals in promoting literacy and learning as a means of creating a self-defined modernity can not be underestimated. Furthermore, Vietnamese intellectuals had also the task of providing counter-narratives to the demeaning accounts of developed states on Vietnam's lack of modernity as a post-colony.

Through the ambiguous position of intellectuals, Bayly draws attention to the fact that separation was not the only obstacle to family life. As a distinct higher social group, tri thuc families had to deal with considerable dangers. During the ‚social rectification‘ years many families bore the stigma of being ‚class enemies‘, and were often denied access to higher education or party membership, severing their human interactions and thus depriving them of the shared feelings which were constitutive for being a part of the Vietnamese society. The representation of intellectuals as bourgeois was synonymous with their exclusion from promotion or career advantages. Nevertheless, these trying times were not at all remembered as periods of suffering. The import of cultural materials from socialist friends after 1954 was acknowledged by the tri thuc as period of new culturedness, mainly influenced by Soviet contributions. It also formed the basis for new educational achievements and the modernization of Vietnamese society, equipping the educat-

ed with knowledge and training that could be deployed for the sake of the nation and elsewhere in the world.

In this way, as Bayly shows, the participation of modern educated Vietnamese in the socialist intellectual community and international development work made Vietnam a part of global modernity. This membership was continuously propagated by state officials as a means of countering notions of backwardness and 'third world' society. Furthermore, this responsibility was deeply felt by Vietnamese intelligentsia, as can be observed in the narratives of Bayly's interview partners. They stress the point of staying in service for the well being of the nation. This was the only way to escape the suspicion of being an 'enemy'. Furthermore, these statements clarify the use of cultural capital, which includes also the language skills and Francophone education of the pre-independence period, for the nation's benefit. For Bayly, the role of the intellectual family in Vietnam demonstrates that the complex nature of colonial, postcolonial and socialist developments cannot be described simplistically as a failure of global ideologies before the achievements of the late and post-socialist *doi moi* (renovation) period. The moral and cultural reference points of today's intellectuals are rooted in the preceding periods of this still socialist nation.

Anglophone Indian intellectuals constitute, according to Susan Bayly, a comparable unit of the socialist ecumene. In her opinion, these Anglophone intellectuals felt a similar sense of distinctiveness within the Indian society as intellectuals in Vietnam, and their maintenance of family ties, mobility and separations as well as understanding of service to the post-colonial

independent Indian nation greatly resembled the perceptions of the Vietnamese narrators in this study. Even though comparisons of Jawaharlal Nehru and Ho Chi Minh as friendly uncle figures as well as the comparison of the discrimination faced by the IAS officer and collector Mr. Raman with that experienced by Vietnamese intellectuals seem a little unconvincingly given the difference in the political systems, Bayly shows that the nuclear family life and the development of modern educated contributors to the Indian national benefit depended on the response to the ethno-culture of a localized world that could be overcome only by looking outward for another moral world – the socialist ecumene. This chapter also works against the notion of a „homogenizing of the two countries into an undifferentiated category of 'the post-colony'" (p. 98). For example, Indian intellectuals were actively involved in the development of the Indian nation through democratic and patriotic discussions; this free expression of thought was denied to the Vietnamese.

Since the narratives of the Vietnamese intelligentsia concentrated on times of transition, Susan Bayly depicts, in the sixth chapter of her study, the crossing of boundaries and the mapping of spaces to which her interview partner had an affective relation during the war of independence against the French colonizers. For these narratives and depictions in the context of change from colonial to post-colonial and socialist period as well as the relocations of Hanoi's intellectual families in this context, she employs the term *autocartography* to emphasize the individual and personal character of these spatial descriptions. Besides individual memories

relating to rural places and people in the interzones, which contributed considerably to the lives and identities of the intellectual family, Bayly discovers an essential cosmopolitan understanding of space. Since most of the narratives reflect a distinctive understanding of French culture and language and the French colonization, she shows how language and culture were recognized as modern and how these contribute complementarily to Vietnamese-ness. Furthermore, Bayly analyzes stories, images, museums and revolutionary spaces of the relocated Hanoi intellectuals as indicative of an awareness of participating in a cosmopolitan world of cultivation and civility. The socialist propaganda of a new revolutionary calendar which included internationally celebrated holidays as well as the French language skills contributed in this early phase of independence to a sense of being one of the global revolutionary modernities like Eastern Europe.

This linking of global revolutionary spaces is followed by an analysis of intelligentsia life in the rural interzones. As the narrations of Dr Tran and others reveal, intellectuals from Hanoi were engaged in manifold tasks for the revolution and faced difficulties of distinction. Nevertheless, since most intellectuals spent time in the service of the Viet Minh, their children stayed with rural families or, if privileged, were educated in Chinese school camps. Since ties, affection and nurturing are important characteristics of the Hanoi tri thuc families, it becomes obvious that the years in the interzones imposed a burden on maintaining relations within the family. This meant also, that it was a challenge for parents to give their children a sense of tri thuc identity, as this was passed on

through affection and care. The concentration on the Hanoi intelligentsia and the interactions and also differences between its members and the rural population is certainly a potential problem for this study. The concentration on one spatially and socially contained group memory in a heterogeneous society with about 54 ethnic groups and more importantly at least five social ranks of peasant, worker, soldier, trader and 'brain worker' propagated by socialist officials could have a distorted picture of the social and cultural development. To stress globality and cosmopolitanism for one quite small group in the capital does not reveal the true affiliation of the masses to these ideas and broader views of global interconnectedness.

However, as Bayly shows in her last chapter, participation in a global socialist ecumene became a common feature of many families, not just tri thuc in Vietnam. Particularly, the use of the population as a workforce in COMECON countries and in Africa is emblematic for the involvement of Vietnam in a common socialist moral world. Furthermore, as agents of modernity, Vietnamese experts themselves showed ability to help develop other post-colonies. The charitable nature of this assistance may be doubted although it is cast as such in the accounts of her interview partners. If nothing else, the tradition of family members spending time abroad also brought personal gain. These experiences also had and continue to have great value for the families, which explains why the importance of these family members is so manifest in the narrations of the interview partners.

Nevertheless, the memories of the last chapter reveal the traces of high mobility,

relocation, privations and modern education to be important markers of Hanoi intellectual families today.

The return from the interzones was remembered as a civilized transfer, through which the intelligentsia saw themselves as „equipped to become socialist gift-givers to those in need“. Aid is here bound up with the affective interaction of all participants. Many narrated memories about the development of a socialist society in 20th century Vietnam are certainly not exclusive to Vietnam, and periods of rectification were common to all socialist revolutions. But with the discussion of becoming a modern who participates in a global ecumene of common moral standards and thus with the implementation of colonial and post-colonial theory Susan Bayly's studies overcomes homogenizing accounts of post-colonial political, social and cultural development. Her approach furthermore describes innovative modes of access to global spaces which were created by the interaction with the outside world of a small locally bounded unit – the tri thuc family of Hanoi.

**Albert Gouaffo: Wissens- und Kulturtransfer im kolonialen Kontext. Das Beispiel Kamerun – Deutschland (1884–1919), Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann, 2007, 284 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Heinrich Hartmann, Berlin

Veränderten die deutschen Kolonien wissenschaftliche Paradigmen und Selbstinterpretationsmuster der deutschen Gesellschaft? Inwieweit prägten koloniale anthropologische Wissensbestände die deutsche Gesellschaft? Mit diesen weitreichenden Fragestellungen und dem Bestreben, das Eigene im Fremden zu lesen, beschreibt der Literaturwissenschaftler Albert Gouaffo den Transfer zwischen Kamerun und Deutschland in der Zeit der deutschen Kolonisierung. Er geht dabei davon aus, dass „die Darstellung von fremden Völkern und deren Kultur als interpretativer Annäherungsversuch zu verstehen [ist], weil Fremdverstehen immer vom Selbstverstehen abhängt“ (S. 19). Gouaffo nähert sich seinem Thema dabei von drei Seiten, indem er sich darum bemüht Akteure und Institutionen (1), die semiotische Konstruktion eines kolonialspezifischen Wissens und seiner Literarizität (2) sowie dessen theatrale Inszenierung für das deutsche Publikum im Kontext der Völkerschauen (3) darzustellen. Er stützt sich dabei auf Methoden der Transferforschung und Diskurs-, genauer Sozialdiskursanalyse. Nicht nur auf der methodischen Ebene gelingt es Gouaffo dabei