

Jayawardene (Chapter 6, pp. 97–112) promotes a cultural agenda that stokes ethnocentrism, in spite of his efforts to keep monks apolitical. Grant is perceptive in his analyses of these men's writings, but his treatments are quite short. This is because, as Grant notes in his conclusion, these chapters are not meant as extensive treatments of these men's careers or their writings, but rather as case studies that demonstrate ways in which the phenomenon of regressive inversion operates (pp. 114–115).

As I mentioned, Grant's skill in his analysis of his chosen sutta dialogues makes his case for dialogical complexity interesting, but not convincing as a representation of a core Buddhism that can be applied to Sri Lankan religious and political figures. Scholars have long recognized that Buddhist texts and the meanings and values they hold have changed over time. Contrary to Grant's suggestion (p. 82), the colonial period was not the first time Buddhism seriously changed over the course of its history in Sri Lanka, and so a characterization of a single Buddhism through which the dynamic of regressive inversion could take place is suspect. An accurate understanding of local conceptions of Buddhism in Sri Lanka that could be put into the service of reducing ethnic tensions remains important, given the necessity of governments and NGOs to work with the Sri Lankan government as it deals with displaced Tamil populations in the aftermath of open conflict. Grant's concept of regressive inversion could offer a helpful way to understand claims to truth and power within the context of Buddhism, but more extensive connections to traditions of Buddhism as historical realities are needed. Beyond the larger theoretical issues raised above, one small way to move toward this goal of a more fully fleshed out portrait of regressive inversion in Sri Lanka would be a more substantial engagement with secondary literature; related to this, the book does not contain a bibliography, but only a "Further Reading" section. It should also be noted that Grant's analysis is limited to English-language sources.

Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age: Vietnam, India & Beyond.

By Susan Bayly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 281.

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Reviewed by Gerard Sages, Ohio University

E-mail gsages@yahoo.com

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Susan Bayly's *Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age* is a comparative study of the legacies of colonialism and socialism in Vietnam and India. For Bayly, the post-colonial elites of Vietnam and India were part of a "global socialist ecumene". Members of this ecumene shared a socialist language that, for Bayly, was less one of political or economic organization than "a set of broadly inclusive moral, emotional, and even aesthetic dispositions" (p. 9). They also shared lives characterized by rupture and movement, whether within the Indian sub-continent or across the network of socialist states in Europe, Asia, and Africa. In order to form understandings of these experiences of rupture, movement, and separation, Bayly concentrates on key sites such as the family, particularly children. This focus allows her to reveal that far from being the passive objects of processes of colonization, de-colonization, and the creation of socialist post-colonies, her "socialist moderns" were "active moral agents engaging reflectively and dynamically with the multiple pasts and presents which they have forged and shared" (p. 240).

Although *Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age* is conceived as a comparison of Vietnamese and Indian elites, readers should note that its focus is overwhelmingly on Vietnam, and more specifically on those French-educated Hanoi intellectuals who supported the Communist-led government after 1945. After introducing the book's themes in the first chapter, in Chapters 2 and 3 Bayly investigates how notions of family, nurturing, provision, and education structured experiences of separation and sacrifice for Hanoi intellectuals. In Chapter 4, she continues with a discussion of the problematic

ways in which intelligentsia identity has been created and categorized in Vietnam. Interestingly, Bayly argues that despite market-oriented reforms undertaken by Vietnam since 1986, the idioms and practices of socialism remain strongly embedded in the intimacies of intellectual family life. Chapter 5 shifts focus, finding compelling parallels in the professional and familial experiences of Indian intellectuals. Much like their Vietnamese counterparts, they were engaged in a developmental and emancipatory project, “selflessly and faithfully bringing the same universalising standards of technocratic skill and progressive social practice to the provincial environments in which they found themselves” (p. 105).

The following chapters return to the Vietnamese context. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to urban and rural spaces respectively, showing how Hanoi intellectuals represented themselves as active participants in the making and mapping of revolution and liberation in the spaces of Hanoi and the Communist-controlled rural “interzones” during the First Indochina War of 1946–1954. Thanks to her informants’ childhood stories, Bayly is able to call into question “any idea of simple two-sided power relations between the rural populace and the incoming ‘socialist moderns’ even though they all, children included, unmistakably embodied the new socialist order which the DRV authorities were seeking to bring into being in the interzones” (pp. 164–65). Chapter 8 analyzes the experiences of Vietnamese “experts” who served overseas after 1975 in terms of anthropological theories of gift and exchange. As with her analysis of socialist family relations, Bayly finds that notions of provision, nurturing, and service were central to both personal and national narratives of these experiences. Finally, Chapter 9 provides readers with a useful conclusion.

The strength of Bayly’s work lies in her ability to engage critically with a wide range of post-colonial scholarship, and its charm flows from the obvious warmth of the relations she developed with her informants. At the same time, Bayly’s training as a scholar of India and her theoretical concern with socialism and post-socialism necessarily shape her analysis. For example, what Bayly describes as socialist preoccupations with credentialized knowledge, service to society, and filial obligations have deep resonances with Vietnam’s pre-colonial culture. She nevertheless minimizes these historical roots, writing at one point that while her socialist moderns were impelled by a strong sense of filial obligation, one “should not think of this as Confucian or neo-Confucian ‘traditionalism’” (p. 64). Similarly, the more recent historical context of her informants’ stories could have been developed more effectively. Events like the land reform campaign, the division of the country in 1954, the suppression of intellectual dissent in the *Nhan Van-Giai Pham* affair, or reunification in 1975 appear as footnotes to seamless narratives of active socialist moderns and their sacrifices for family and for nation. More attention to history and a deeper, more critical contextualization of her informants’ stories would help shed light on the processes of memory and forgetting that make the construction of such narratives possible.

Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age is an engaging and original work of interest to scholars of both South and Southeast Asia. Bayly’s comparison of Indian and Hanoi intellectuals is novel and useful. It allows her to underline the active and extremely complex relationship that a liminal generation of Asian intellectuals had to its colonial and post-colonial pasts. It also reminds us of how the language of socialism has shaped the experience and memory of colonialism and post-colonialism, and indeed continues to shape a more or less post-socialist present. Finally, it makes accessible to an English-speaking audience the stories of a small group of women and men who will not be with us much longer. When I arrived to do my own research in Vietnam in 2000, I was lucky to meet and become friends with women and men much like the ones who populate the pages of Bayly’s monograph. And while the stories they told me were often idealized and certainly polished from countless retellings, it was impossible not to marvel at their experiences and at the sacrifices they had made in the name of creating a new and better society. Sadly, age is silencing these voices at the same time that socialist vocabularies are taking on decidedly neo-liberal inflections in both

Vietnam and India. *Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age* thus appears at an important moment, reminding us of the achievements of one remarkable generation, and providing perspective on a generation of Hanoi intellectuals to come.

Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature 1868–1937.

By Mark Silver. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008. Pp. xiii + 217.

ISBN 10: 0824831888; 13: 9780824831882.

Murder Most Modern: Detective Fiction and Japanese Culture.

By Sari Kawana. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Pp. x + 271.

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Reviewed by Jonathan Abel, Pennsylvania State University

E-mail jonathan.abel@psu.edu

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A sudden noise in the *genkan*. Tearing *shōji*. The scream of a *moga*. Such is the grist for the world's first truly global genre of literature, but, as the above Japanese words suggest, the generic form is always colored by a local twist of content and reference. If the situations and plot devices are familiar by now to readerships around the world, do details like the proper names of suspects, the shapes of weapons, and the varieties of crime scenes continue to justify histories of detective fiction through national perspectives? If we understand the universals, should we still care about the particulars? Two recent critical books on Japanese murder mysteries provide compelling arguments both for transnational approaches and for attention to local details. Along the way, Mark Silver's *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature 1868–1937* and Sari Kawana's *Murder Most Modern: Detective Fiction and Japanese Culture* also establish what may well be a new paradigm for the melding of Area Studies and Cultural Studies.

At the outset, the question is do we need two books about the same specialized topic published in the same year? The simple answer is that these are not two books about the same topic. While both examine Japanese detective fiction, their very different approaches give us two clearly distinct views of this genre. However, quickly resolving the question of “why more than one book?” still leaves the question of “why now?” looming. Both books appear to be responding to a longstanding problem with the study of literary cultures – the search for, and identification, fetishization, and concomitant canonization of high literature. All too often this scholarly pursuit (particularly in the realm of the modern period) ends in a forgetting of the popular roots and contexts of much high culture. Criticism of Japanese literature in English-language studies has long been a victim of this sort of practice and these two books are clearly launched against this trend. As such, they are representative of what may be the long-awaited third wave of scholarship on Japanese literature in English.

The two books represent a remarkable new foray into English-language studies about modern Japanese literature, a gambit into the realm of the popular. Safe as this venture may seem in retrospect, focused as it is on the wildly successful international genre of detective fiction, it is not without its dangers, mysteries, and newfound back alleys for masquerading, detecting, and recounting new narratives of Japanese literary history. As counterpoints to the by now well-trodden narratives focused on the rise of naturalism, realism, and the I-novel, these new studies destabilize notions of a linear or unified modern Japanese literary tradition as set forth in major first-wave works from Aston to Keene and continued in even the radical breaks of second-wave English-language criticism from Fowler and Fujii to Suzuki. If the earlier two paradigms focused attention on prioritizing or dismissing formal concepts like the West, modernity, and the self, the new paradigm evident