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When Heroism is Not Enough: Three Women Warriors of Vietnam, Their Historians and World History

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Since the 1960s, when historians sought in earnest to give voice to women and other "people without a history," examinations of women in world history have taken a variety of paths. A few decades ago, the roles of women in the family or as participant/observers of imperialism were popular subjects of study. More recently scholars have examined the lives of women who took up arms or otherwise assumed martial roles most often ascribed to men. Women Samurai, Nigerian female warriors, Apache heroines, and women soldiers both in disguise and in open service in the armies of many nations are now recommended as subjects of study to students of world history.¹ There are dangers inherent in such an approach, because all too often the "valorization of women warriors" reflects a "tendency to place women in a larger historical narrative scripted by the actions and beliefs of men."² However, the lives of women warriors are of interest precisely because they offer an opportunity to study the histories of women warriors represented by academicians, poets, revolutionaries and scholars whose views of the "second sex" were shaped by changing forces such as rising patriarchal or feminist writing. In this context, the lives of three Vietnamese soldier-women, the two Trung sisters (Trung Trac and Trung Nhi) and [Triệu Thị Trinh](#) have much to offer. This subject is familiar to students of Vietnamese history, though its meaning remains contested.³ Both the subject and its contested meanings warrant attention as part of a larger discussion of the ways in which women warriors' lives have been represented by generations of scholars caught in the jaws of world historical processes working across time as well as frontiers.

The Two Trung Sisters (Hai Bò Trung)

Those with any acquaintance with the history of Vietnam are aware of 1,000 years of resistance to Chinese occupation of their lands (111 BCE to 939 CE). This storied tradition of resistance to foreign rule was central to modern Vietnam's struggle for independence and had great political potency when employed by modern Vietnam's anti-colonialist leaders, particularly communist writers. However, scholars of all political persuasions have long known that, from ancient times, the Vietnamese ruling class benefited from Chinese culture, including its linguistic and literary models and its superior military technology.⁴ With the center of Han Chinese authority so distant from the Việt homeland in the Red River Delta, some intermarriage, cultural exchange, and political collaboration was as inevitable as it was useful for the increasingly localized Chinese rulers and the Vietnamese elite. However, with the ebb and flow of later Chinese history, Chinese officials, with or without orders from afar, began to upset whatever balance had existed between assimilation and subjugation. By 39 CE, Chinese officials were actively seizing Vietnamese land from its aristocrats and may have encouraged the settlement of Chinese immigrants on that land to curb the power of the local nobility.⁵

These depredations led that same year to arguably the most famous revolt in Vietnamese history, one closely associated with the two Trung sisters, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi (c. 20-43

CE). These young women thereafter became known as the Two Sisters Trung or *Hai Bö Trung*. Both were credited with organizing dozens of clans in support of the revolt. According to legend, Trung Trac was briefly recognized as sovereign ruler (with Trung Thi mentioned as possibly having reigned as a co-Queen) until a massive, well-led Chinese force crushed the rebellion in 43 CE. Chinese sources boast that they captured and executed the two women, but Vietnamese lore holds that they committed suicide by throwing themselves into a river rather than be taken as prisoners.⁶

The Vietnamese soon built shrines to the memory of the Trung sisters. Their lives were and remain celebrated during an annual nationally observed holiday and have come to hold a treasured place in Vietnamese history.⁷ Some students of that history view these celebrations as honoring the unique and strong matriarchal influences they see embedded in ancient Việt and neighboring Cham society. They argue that Vietnam was a matriarchal state before the Chinese conquest and regard the Trung sisters as the embodiment of the relative freedom and equality enjoyed by women in early Southeast Asian societies. However, other scholars warn of the dangers inherent in limiting the history of Vietnamese women to such "reified forms" as "Confucian oppression," Vietnamese exceptionalism, or "Southeast Asian permissiveness" which reduces women to "markers of tradition" and "relegates women's experiences to their contribution to the meta-narrative of Vietnamese history."⁸ It is also not clear how liberated women of Vietnam may have been before the Chinese conquest. This productive discourse enriches our understanding of the origins and development of the place and role of women in Vietnamese society but does not alter the fact that, with the passage of time, the activities of the Trung sisters as women warriors became the target of vilification within the context of a Chinese-influenced, or Sinic, cultural sea-change.

Formal Chinese political domination of Vietnam ended in 939 CE, but its political influence waxed and waned for centuries thereafter. Eager to establish a social system and political administration as strong as their would-be rulers to the north, Vietnamese leaders sought to adopt Chinese political and social norms including Chinese forms of patriarchy. This process began long before the last Chinese effort to control Vietnamese affairs was defeated in 1427. In 1070, the first Temple of Literature was constructed and Confucian scholars began replacing Buddhist officer-holders. Since Buddhism and lay-Buddhist institutions offered women opportunities in the public sphere, the growing Confucian-Buddhist divide did not bode well for the status of women. As early as the 13th century, when Confucianism "had risen to pre-eminence,"⁹ Vietnamese writers found it difficult to honor the concept of women warriors that had become part of Vietnamese folklore. In an effort to undermine the significance of such legends, they held the Hai Bö Trung responsible for the failure of the revolt in which the women had participated. They argued that, at the decisive moment, Vietnamese rebels fled when they discovered their leaders were women. Since Vietnamese forces had been commanded by these women for some time before their final defeat, this retreat was likely due to the superior army brought against them by the able Chinese general Ma Yuan (In Vietnamese, MÙ Viên). Such logic, however, passed unobserved by scribes writing in defense of patriarchy, foreign or home-grown, in support of an evolving Sino-Vietnamese social order that privileged the male scholar-administrator.¹⁰

The patriotic narratives constructed around the rebellion of 39-43 by later generations of Vietnamese poets and historians sought to cast further shame upon the Hai Bö Trung. These works criticized them for taking up male roles and sought to undermine their bravery by feminizing them through references to their beauty: how could these attractive young women be warriors? Court historians further belittled the sisters' role by arguing that the participation of these women in the revolt was "merely" one of spousal piety, i. e. the women were avenging their rebel husbands' deaths at the hands of the Chinese as dutiful spouses, rather than acting as political leaders in their own right, as is suggested by a testament attributed to Trung Trac:

Foremost, I will avenge my country,

Second, I will restore the Hung^{royal} lineage,

Third, I will avenge the death of my husband,

Lastly, I vow that these goals will be accomplished.[11](#)

This view would seem to be validated by a 15th century poem that was one of 300 included in an anthology (*The Hong-duc Anthology of Poems in the National Language*) entitled "*Homage to the Trung Queens.*"

To slay the people's foe and wreak revenge,

Two sisters took up arms for their just cause,

One battle put Su Ting's scared wits to rout:

A hundred tribes rose up to guard Lingnan (South of the Mountains)

They climbed the throne, large bounties they bestowed.

They donned their crowns,, sweet blessings they conferred.

While stream and hills endure, their shrine shall stand,

a monument to peerless womanhood.[12](#)

Yet, it bears noting that this anthology was commissioned by King L^o Th^ai T^ang (r. 1433-1432 CE), the young second ruler of the Le dynasty, which was established in 1428 after putting an end Chinese interference in Vietnam. This poet-king had no personal affinity for the Confucian values favored by his brilliant father L^o L^oi (r. 1428-1433) and his own most able son, L^o Thanh T^ang (r. 1460-1497) and thus had to look elsewhere to cement support for his new kingdom. He also possessed what may have proved to have been a fatal attraction to women, insofar as it extended up to and including the wives of his courtiers.[13](#)^{13]} He thus had good reason to approve of the above evocation of royalist patriotism whether or not it trumped any indigenous or rising Chinese patriarchal values. This context suggests the high level of care that is required when handling the historical record of transitional periods. The need for care is illustrated by the manner in which most scholars and far too many instructional resources cite the following fifteenth century couplet as an example of the high status then afforded women warriors:

All the male heroes bowed their heads in submission;

Only the two sisters proudly stood up to avenge the country.[14](#)

When placed in the larger context of the literature and events of the period, this poem is more likely a reflection of contemporary elite expressions of disgust that "mere girls" had to take the role of men and had, as could be expected, failed at the task that was proper domain of men.[15](#)

Thanks to historian Keith Taylor, students can trace this contested discourse through a set of documents introduced and reproduced in a short appendix to his landmark work, *The Birth of Vietnam* (1983, reprinted 1991). These materials, together with those cited above, illustrate how Chinese-acculturated Vietnamese historians both praised the courage of the Trung sisters and structured a narrative that eventually cast Thi Sàch, Trung Trac's late husband, as the only true ruler during the brief moment of independence secured by the rebellion. In their version, there

was no reason to speculate whether the thousands of soldiers serving under the command of these women after Thi Sàch's death would have done so unless the Hai Bö Trung possessed some legitimacy as rulers as the folk legends suggested.¹⁶

That the ultimate diminution of the status of the Trung sisters was apparently part of a larger process of the patriarchal sinicization of early modern Vietnam is further suggested by the provisions of the 15th century L° Code, which attempted, insofar as the Chinese-acculturating Vietnamese court could risk popular resistance, to curtail the traditional property rights which Vietnamese women had heretofore enjoyed; it was not merely the Trung sisters who were to be marginalized by the evolving Chinese-style court but all women. The relevant portions of the L° Code and a discussion of its evolution in terms of the rights of women in the context of Vietnam and other cultures is provided by Merry E. Wiesner and others in *Discovering the Global Past: A Look at the Evidence* (2nd ed. 2002), though the interpretation of the L° Code offered therein has yet to win universal acceptance.¹⁷

Triệu Thị Trinh

The story of the Trung sisters is often conflated with that of Triệu Thị Trinh, also known as Triệu Âu or Bö Triệu (Lady Triệu), who is regarded by some as the Vietnamese equivalent of Joan of Arc. Unlike the Trung Sisters, Triệu Thị Trinh (c. 222-247) had little social status, having been orphaned as a young girl and forced to live with her brother and his wife, who may have been Chinese (symbolic of dominance of a growing Sino-Vietnamese community). According to legend, Triệu Thị Trinh killed her sister-in-law, who may have treated her as a mere servant. She then fled to the hills where she raised an army of at least a thousand men and women against the Chinese occupiers. This army won more than thirty battles against their Chinese overlords, which enabled her to establish a zone of independent territory for some time. Historian David Marr in *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945* (1981) notes that her image as warrior was so strong that she was remembered in the 18th century as "9 feet tall and able to walk 500 leagues in a single day."¹⁸ Folkloric illustrations show her leading troops in battle while dressed in golden armor, riding an elephant, with a sword in each hand, and her reportedly four foot long breasts tied to her torso to aid her swordplay. The most famous quotation attributed to her, variously interpreted, runs:

I want to rail against the wind and the tide,

Kill the whales in the sea,

Sweep the whole country,

To save the people from slavery,

*And I refuse to be enslaved.*¹⁹

Alternatively:

I'd like to ride storm,

Kill the sharks in the open sea,

Drive out the aggressors,

Re-conquer the country,

Undo the ties of serfdom,

And never bend my back to be the concubine

*of whatever man*²⁰

When the Chinese defeated [Triệu Thị Trinh](#)'s forces in 247 CE, she, like the Trung sisters, is believed to have committed suicide, either by having herself trampled by elephants or by jumping into a river. Like the Trung Sisters, her life is honored by celebrations, including that at her principal shrine at Na Triệu Temple in Thanh Hoa Province. Like them, her soldiering has been the subject of much revisionist writing at the hands of those historians of early modern Vietnam who had adopted Chinese social norms. They referred to her alleged virginity not as a function of the poverty of her marriage prospects as an orphaned servant in her brother's house nor even the result of a lack of beauty. Her unmarried state was instead attributed to her unfeminine, beastly, and aberrant behavior. They described her as fighting with her great breasts flying around her body, an image as frightening as it was improbable given her two-handed fighting style. They claimed this runaway servant was so afraid of the sight of dirt that she fled the scene of battle. They also asserted that she was finally defeated because her male opponents exposed their genitals. The same was said of how the Trung sisters met defeat.²¹ This behavior would have been odd for these veteran warriors of ancient battlefields littered with dismembered body parts and organs. Such revulsion was, however, quite to be expected from the crazed but beautiful women (one, a virgin) as constructed in the minds of male historians drawn from an elite struggling with the ambiguities inherent in championing both patriarchy and patriotism among a people who may have long accepted that women could play an active role in society and on the battlefield.

Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary Visions

Our current view of the Trung sisters and [Triệu Thị Trinh](#) as heroic warrior-leaders in their own right, a view held by most scholars and most available curriculum development materials,²² arises from a combination of activism and world events. In the 1920s, many Vietnamese were exposed to modern social norms that were a part of French education in Vietnam or, as with Ho Chi Minh, obtained directly via sojourns in France. Most were excited by the egalitarian values and social progressivism that were espoused by the French intellectual elite. Ho Chi Minh was to chastise his French socialist brethren for their failure to extend these values to the Vietnamese people and turned this failure into an anti-colonialist weapon as well as political goal.²³ By the 1930s, the equality of the sexes became a part of the platform of the Indochinese Communist Party.²⁴ Re-shaped and reinvigorated by communist writing, the legend of the Trung sisters was incorporated into a new narrative of Vietnamese resistance to foreign aggression in the form recognized today. Neil Jameson argued that Ho Chi Minh eventually achieved that same revered status.²⁵ The leadership, conviction of and sacrifices made by women in that effort were illuminated by *No Other Road to Take* (1976, 1991)²⁶ a memoir of Madame Nguyễn Thị Định, a Việt Minh²⁷ guerilla and logistics officer who ultimately rose to the rank of Việt Cộng²⁸ battalion commander during the American War in Vietnam (1959-1975).

Women in the struggle for national reunification and independence did not reach the leadership levels held by their counterparts in ancient history. Madame Nguyễn Thị Định was a National Liberation Front delegate to the U.S.-Vietnamese peace talks in Paris; and other women held high posts, particularly abroad, perhaps to maximize their political value; but they also held high office in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Most communist-led female soldiers were chiefly assigned to militia units and to logistic, agitprop, communications, medical and construction work where they made great contributions, at great cost, to the ultimate victory of their cause.

Most non-communists leaders like Bui Diêm, the Republic of Vietnam's Ambassador to the

United States (1968-1972), had known from their youth of the Trung sister's fame "as a part of the heroic flow of Vietnamese history" and also grasped the significance of their story as a rallying cry for freedom.²⁹ Yet, the Republic of Vietnam failed to do much more than subsidize beautiful female Bob Hope-USO style recruitment entertainers and create a small token female force, the little-known Tiger Battalion, which never saw combat. This failure contributed in no small measure to the Republic of Vietnam's defeat, both in the field as well as on the propaganda front: armed veteran female Việt Cộng excelled in recruitment, in part by shaming men into joining a fight in which women were already engaged. It is worth noting, however, that, Madame Ng^a Đờnh Nhu, considered the First Lady of the Republic of Vietnam from 1955 to 1963, once marked the Hai Bö Trung holiday by riding on an elephant in emulation of their service and sacrifice, a reminder that no Vietnamese political faction had a monopoly on the use of the past to serve the present. Indeed, their influence as a political symbol is not limited to Vietnam. Their equation with indigenous resistance to aggression is today a cornerstone of American policy analyses of Vietnam's potential value as a U. S. ally in a conflict with China.³⁰

Writing in 1972, analyst and historian William S. Turley observed that, while the roots of Vietnamese egalitarianism predated the founding of Vietnamese communism and could thus not be solely attributed to it, it was clear that the Vietnamese communists had "implemented its egalitarian doctrine energetically." They had "made great gains which were clearly spurred by the demands "associated with mobilization for war."³¹ Employing popular press sources, Christine M. Pothier has demonstrated that, while "women were far from standing on equal footing with men," the mobilization for war noted by Turley "had significantly raised gender consciousness among women to the point that many working for the revolution preferred the army over a safer, feminized war industry worker status akin to "Rosie the Riveter." Her sources suggest that "once the fighting had ceased, most had no intention of returning to the confines of their home."³²

Turley's research suggested that the status of these women in post-war Vietnam was likely to be fluid as the "image in the Party of sexual equality had not been "perfectly stable, or unchanging, suggesting equivocation among Party leaders and mutability in the interpretation and application of ideology in response to external circumstances or the Revolution's domestic unfolding."³³ He may have been right. Communist party organs complained about the post-reunification decline in women's membership on committees and managerial agencies, which they attributed to a tendency at every level "to look down on women cadres."³⁴ Turley certainly was right in regard to women warriors, though the decline in their prospects may have occurred for reasons that may have been as much structural as patriarchal or ideological. The male-dominated wartime leadership certainly maintained the Communist Party line on women's equality. Veterans and women's organizations intended to assist them proliferated. However, the authoritarian top-down approach they followed proved ineffective (ironically, this was the same model pursued in the U.S. with equally poor results).³⁵ That ineffectiveness is confirmed by Karen Turner's research into the fate of female Vietnamese soldiers in the last decades of the 20th century.³⁶ She found that while the victors in the war were publicly recognized and their service honored, their post-war lives were rife with hardship. Turner writes that:

The Vietnamese government has not provided adequate welfare for these veterans, who are ... facing enormous difficulties in starting their own families. In reaction to such difficulties, some veterans pay young men to impregnate them and live in isolated all-female communities with their children. While such single families are inconsistent with traditional morality in Vietnam, most Vietnamese have been willing to tolerate these families in recognition of the great sacrifices these veterans have made for their country.³⁷

That toleration was not immediately extended to women war-veteran writers, like Dương Thu

Huong (*Paradise of the Blind*, 1988), who was expelled from the Communist Party for criticizing, in life as well as work, the war-time self-seeking and post-war repression of dissent by the Communist authorities. L° Minh Khu° (whose first work in English was a 1997 collection of brilliant short stories, *The Stars the Earth the River*) was criticized for a story depicting a woman showing sympathy for a handsome captured South Vietnamese soldier and for elsewhere expressing wry observations on the greed and self interest of post-war Vietnamese society at large (see the short story, *Day on the Road*).³⁸

The dissent expressed by the once idealistic Duong Thu Huong and Minh Khu° has attracted the interest of American scholars, who inhabit a world divided between those who regard criticism of Vietnamese communist errors as "blaming the victim" and those who seek further rationale or justification for the American War in which these women fought. Wherever it may fit along this continuum, the best study of female Vietnamese veteran writing on the war successfully shows, like their American counterparts, Vietnamese soldier-writers came to despise the post-war selfishness within its "Marxist" society.³⁹ However, it interprets L° Minh Khu°'s attack on consumerism in *Day on the Road* as anti-Marxist and does not adequately address American veteran-writers' parallel criticism of their own post-war "Capitalist" society. The clearest common facet of fiction written by war veterans, male and female, is that few return from the battlefield to find the societies they defended worthy of their sacrifices.⁴⁰ S. Annand, an American Vietnam veteran and on-line reviewer of *The Earth the Stars, the River*, remarked in regard to his and the author's own military service, "We both showed misplaced patriotism and were used. Her regime was about as corrupt as ours at the time (I was sent by Nixon)."⁴¹

With globalization, the atmosphere of repression in Vietnam eased somewhat, L° Minh Khu° is now chief fiction editor at the Vietnam Writers' Association Publishing House in Hanoi, and the government has recently begun giving awards to dissident writers it once condemned. Yet, the resources available for women veterans and the overall status of women are now under threat due to the introduction of economic liberalization (called *Đổi mới* or renovation), which began in the mid-1980s. The first thorough study of gender outcomes in post-unification Vietnam, by David Goodkill in 1995, suggests that the post-reunification decline in the status of women was extensive and due to a variety of factors. One of these factors was tied to the rise of market economies in socialist states. Goodkill asserts that 20th century revolutionary socialists "offered promises of social advances of women," whose support they "openly sought" and the receipt of which "was often pivotal in the establishment of such regimes." He contends that Vietnam offers but one example of the general failure of these regimes to redeem these pledges. He attributes this failure to many causes; but chief among them was the decision of the Vietnamese leadership, shared by many outside as well as within the communist bloc even before *Đổi mới*, to "barter its commitment to social equality for greater economic efficiency." He concludes that, "as the central government has progressively withdrawn from organizing production, a more traditionally stratified division of labor has returned."⁴²

The *Đổi mới*-related state withdrawal from the public sector helps account for the decline in veterans' services noted by Karen Turner, but it may well be ushering in a shift in perception of women away from their hard won role as actors on the national stage toward the objectified and feminized role preferred by Vietnamese Confucian scholars of the past and struggled over by 20th century Vietnamese revolutionaries. Stephanie Fahey's research into pre- and post- *Đổi mới* Vietnam found images of women as war heroes "appearing alongside new images of women as objects of beauty to sell 'modern' commodities" and that, "while souvenir shops might sell wall hangings of the famous Trung sisters ... and the Women's Museum in Hanoi still displays photographs of female war heroes; in nearby streets, the magazine *Tien Phong* (*Pioneer*) reports on forthcoming beauty contests sponsored by foreign firms such as Kodak, Singapore Airlines, and Samsung." Drawing on this research, William Searle notes that "the contrast between the two very divergent images, those of self-sacrifice versus those of self-indulgence, and the evolving

transition between the two" as expressed by Vietnamese women writers "are fundamental to understanding Vietnam's recent past.⁴³ Will the image of Vietnamese women on the fashion runway replace that of the heroines who maintained the Ho Chi Minh Trail? As Vietnam grows more prosperous, will the Confucian-assisted "traditional" view of Vietnamese women as loyal and obedient housewives (which already motivates Korean men to come to Vietnam in search of spouses) gain traction?⁴⁴ Or will new economic opportunities spur the empowerment of Vietnamese women with the Hai Bö Trung featured as entrepreneurial spirit guides on corporate morale posters?

Nha Trang Pensinger argues that any ambiguity that appears to exist over the role of Vietnamese women as warriors/submissive wives is ephemeral; it has long since been resolved in favor of Confucian-style patriarchy. Referencing Vietnamese history since the Trung sisters and [Triệu Thị Trinh](#), she notes that it is only when "war, political, economic, and social upheavals created and perpetuated by men have rent the country" and weakened the patriarchal state that "Vietnamese women were permitted to reassert their pre-Confucian traditions of independence and resume their share in social responsibilities." The sacrifices of women in Vietnam's recent wars and reconstruction were so great that society could not but "look at women with less contempt and to recognize their contributions, though grudgingly."

However, the change in attitude is more on the surface than in substance. The elite tradition has taken such deep roots in the Vietnamese collective psyche over a period of almost two thousand years that society in general and men in particular continue to view women's active participation in the social sphere during hard times as part of their duty to help their men. As such, women's effort is not considered significant enough by and of itself to justify a radical change in the traditional concept of woman and her role. As long as this concept lingers, Vietnam is deprived of a wealth of needed talents and contributions.⁴⁵

Misrepresenting Athena in the Wider World

The shifts in the representations of warrior women over time by writers living through epochs of great social change and/or political upheaval are not unique to Vietnam. There are parallel examples of such developments elsewhere and rich resources with which to examine them, though they have to be handled with care. Popular works by anthropologists and historians, such as David Jones, *Women Warriors* (1997), Linda Grant DePauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present* (1998) and Antonia Fraser, *The Warrior Queens* (2002) are so committed to raising up or revising existing negative images of women warriors that their work is better evidence of shifting gender views rather than analyses of them. Too many of these studies rely on the same kind of unsubstantiated anecdotal evidence that writers in the past employed to cast discredit on women. Lytton Strachey, who is said to have invented the modern biography, sought to expose the dark underside he felt must exist among his less bohemian contemporaries. To do so, he employed unfounded critical anecdotes and outright falsehoods in an attempt to undermine the reputation of Florence Nightingale, a military reformer, as well as advocate for the modern professing of nursing. Strachey is now noted more for his style than his substance; but his assertions, particularly in regard to Nightingale's relations with men, are today still taken at face value, most recently by a British Broadcasting Corporation program on her life.⁴⁶ Nightingale always feared she would be considered a "dangerous woman"⁴⁷ and she was right. Most surveys of women "warrior queens" and their related curriculums⁴⁸ are thus best employed as fervid introductions to a subject that deserves closer and more careful study.

Balanced, user-friendly internet and print bibliographies exist to support the examination of one of the female warriors most mentioned in existing surveys and curriculum materials: Lakshmi

Bai, the Maharani of Jhansi.⁴⁹ The so-called "rebellious Rani" transitioned in British eyes from villainess of the War of 1857 to respected foe. She then re-emerges as a full-blown heroine of the Indian nationalist movement, whose leaders rarely made common cause with the traditional Indian aristocracy (and struggled with the status of their own female adherents) save on the ground of political expediency. There are also adequate materials to study the women of the Indian National Army, who posed challenges to Hindu conceptions of the feminine ideal,⁵⁰ much as Hannah Snell, who challenged the gender assumptions of the Royal Marines in India.⁵¹ Geraldine Forbes' essay on "Reading and Writing Indian Women: Fifty Years Since Independence, 1947-1997," is a must-read template for those seeking to explore shifts in the perceived roles of women activists and freedom fighters not merely in India, but elsewhere.⁵² Much can be said for Susan Mann's "**Myths of Asian Womanhood,**" delivered as her **presidential address at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies in 2002.**⁵³

During the Minamoto Shogunate (1182-1204 CE), Tomoe Gozen and several other Japanese women employed great skill as samurai. One, Nakano Takeko, had mastered the *naginata*, a staff tipped with a curved blade. While few such women saw combat, some acted as rulers in a violent age; and all were expected to act in defense of their home and clan. If and when they were widowed or retired, they traditionally became Buddhist nuns. Later shogunates used women of samurai families to build marriage alliances. Thereafter, in a parallel development with Vietnam's L° Code, they were deprived of their property and inheritance rights, though Matsudaira Teru Aizu Jōshitai (1832-1884) led a battalion-size women's auxiliary force during the siege of Aizuwakamatsu Castle. This female force included an infantry unit committed to her personal defense, called the Aizu Jōshitai. The category of *buke*, or women who fought as warriors, is explored in a useful question-and-answer format by sociologist S. Alexander Takeuchi.⁵⁴ There is a small but rich literature on this subject supported by curriculum development materials.⁵⁵

Conclusion

To bring this discussion full circle, attention must be paid to the parallels that exist in the changing representation of women warriors in Vietnam and their American counterparts, both in combat and in their respective gender wars at home. One significant difference is that pre-modern Vietnamese women warriors (and also those who fought as generals during the Täy Son Rebellion of 1771-1802)⁵⁶ fought as women, whereas prior to the 20th century, American women who served on the battlefield in combatant roles concealed their gender. The similarities, however, far outweigh the differences. The growing body of fictive literature by female Vietnamese and American war veterans reveals a multitude of common experiences among them (and among men as well).⁵⁷ Both the Vietnamese and American people may benefit from engaging in this literature. For young Vietnamese, the wars in 20th century Indochina are a distant memory. Americans should be reminded that the current American female near-equality on the battlefield (as demonstrated by the recent death of the first American Indian woman in combat in Iraq) was hard won.⁵⁸ The underrated *Roshomon*-style Gulf War film *Courage Under Fire* (1996) serves to remind us that it is not necessary to look very far back in time to find that, for women warriors, some battles have yet to be won.

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Endotes

¹ See Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igbo Land, 1900-1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005); Teena Apeles, *Women Warriors: Adventures from History's Greatest Female Fighters* (Emeryville, California: Seal Press, 2004); Kimberley Buchanan, *Apache Women Warriors* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Jeannine Davis-Kimball, *Warrior Women: An Archaeologist's Search for History's Hidden Heroines* (New York: Warner Books; Reprint edition, 2003); Yamakawa Kikue (trans. Kate Wildman Nakai), *Women of the Mito Domain: Recollections of Samurai Family Life* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001); Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* (Research Series (University of California, Berkeley International and Area Studies, 1982); Jessica Salmonson, *The Encyclopedia of Amazons: Women Warriors from Antiquity to the Modern Era* (New York: Paragon House, 1991); Lyn Webster Wilde, *On the Trail of the Women Warriors: The Amazons in Myth and History* (London: Constable and Robinson, 1999); and Batya Weinbaum, *Islands of Women and Amazons: Representations and Realities* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2000). Links to many sources discussing cross-dressing in war, from the 12th century *Ballad of Mulan* of Disney fame to Dorothy Lawrence, a soldier of the First World War, can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossdressing_during_wartime.

² Fanguin Du, "The Influence of Research Topics on Research on Women's History: a Survey of a Decade of Publications on the History of Women," in Fanguin Du, *Discovering Women's History: A Collection of Essays in the History of Chinese Women* (Tianji: Kexueyuan, 1996); 16 (in Chinese) cited in Susan Mann, "**Presidential Address: Myths of Asian Womanhood**," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Nov., 2000): 857.

³ Keith Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley: 1983, reprinted 1991) is the classic text, with William Duiker's *Sacred War Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam* (New York: McGraw-Hill: 1994) being the most accessible introduction for non-specialists. The University of California's "Vietnam Women's Studies Bibliography" at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/SSEAL/SoutheastAsia/seaviet.html> is particularly useful on this topic. The following works pursue the subject as their titles indicate: Susan Allen, *Women in Vietnam* (Hanoi: Swedish Institute of Development Authority, 1996); William Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000); Duong Van Mai Elliott, *The Sacred Willow: Four Generations in the Life of a Vietnamese Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Arlene Eisen, *Women and Revolution in Vietnam* (London: Zed Books, 1984); Le Thi Nham Tuyet, "Images of Vietnam in Mass Media," in *Some Research on Gender in Development II* (Hanoi: CGFED, 1996); Shawn McHale, "Printing and Power: Vietnamese Debates over Women's Place in Society 1918-1934," in K.W. Taylor, & John K. Whitmore, eds., *Essays into the Vietnamese Past* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell, 1995); Nha Trang Pensinger, (Cong Huyen Ton Nu Nha Trang), "The Makings of the National Heroine," *Vietnam Review*, Vol. 1 (Autumn-Winter 1996): 388-435 and "Women and Vietnamese Folklore" a presentation delivered at a panel discussion on "Southeast Asian Women Then and Now: A View from the Folklore of the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam" at the University of Hawaii, at Manoa, March 12, 1992 (available on her webpage at http://www.geocities.com/chtn_nhatrang/women.html); Christine M. Pothier, "Propagandist Representation of Vietnamese Women: A Comparative Study," *Review of Vietnamese Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2003), an article offered online as a publication of the Vietnamese Studies Internet Resource Center and currently available at <http://hmongstudies.com/PothierPaper2003.pdf>; Sandra Taylor, *Vietnamese Women at War* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999); William Turley, "Women in the Communist Revolution in Vietnam," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 12, no. 9 (September 1972): 798-805; Karen Gottschang Turner and Phan Thanh Hao, *Even the Women Must Fight: Memories of War from North Vietnam* (Toronto: John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1999).

⁴ Truong Buu Lam (ed.), *Borrowings and Adaptations in Vietnamese Culture* (Honolulu:

Southeast Asian Studies Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1987).

⁵ Nguyen Khac Vien, *Vietnam: A Long History* (Hanoi: The GIOI Publishers, 1993): 55.

⁶ An excellent well-illustrated introductory essay on the revolt, including the Chinese version of these events side-by-side with the Vietnamese accounts of the period, is provided at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trung_Sisters. For a compelling detailed narrative that reflects popular contemporary Vietnamese and American views of the Trung sisters, see <http://www.viettouch.com/trungsis>.

⁷ Neil Jameson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1995):8.

⁸ For the recent debate over the place of women in Vietnamese society, see the abstracts of a panel at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting in 2003 entitled "De-mystifying the Woman: Gender in Vietnamese History and Historiography," organized by Nhungh Tuyet Tran and with presentations by George Dutton, Nhungh Tuyet Tran and Wynn Wilcox at <http://international.ucla.edu/asia/article.asp?parentid=3469>.

⁹ Nguyen Khac Vien, *Vietnam*: 20-26.

¹⁰ Nha Trang Pensinger, (Cong Huyen Ton Nu Nha Trang), "The Makings of the National Heroine," *Vietnam Review* 1 (Autumn-Winter 1996): 388-435. Hopefully, the relevant passages of the "Dai Viet su ky toan thu [The Historical Records of Dai Viet by Le Van Huu of the 13th Century] which forms the evidentiary basis of these claims will be one of the documents included in George Dutton, Jayne Werner and John Whitmore, *The Sources of Vietnamese Tradition* forthcoming from Columbia University Press.

¹¹ The Vietnamese text is from a 17th century source, *Thein Nam Ngu Luc*, cited at <http://www.viettouch.com/trungsis/>.

¹² Cited in Huynh Sanh Th^ang (ed. And trans.), *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems* (Yale University Press, 1996): 30.

¹³ He died suddenly, and presumed poisoned, after visiting his late father's closest associate, with whose wife he may have been having an affair. The actual events are unknown, his poisoning may never had occurred, and the courtier, Nguyễn TrÙi, was a political rival who many may have wished to dispose of, poisoner or not.

¹⁴ Cited in Patricia Pelly, *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the Colonial Past* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2002): 179.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Keith Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley: 1983, reprinted 1991), Appendix K: 334-339).

¹⁷ [Merry E. Wiesner](#), [William Bruce Wheeler](#), [Franklin M. Doeringer](#), Melvin E, Page, *Discovering the Global Past: A Look at the Evidence, Vols. I and II* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1st ed., 1997), Vol. 2: 192-120. [Now in a 2006 edition].

¹⁸ David Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial 1920-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981): 198-199.

[29](#) This is the form that normally cited in American text, press and websites. See George J. Church, Lessons From a Lost War, *Time* (April 5, 1985) at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,966188-1,00.html>, p. 8.

[20](#) Nguyen Khac Vien, *Vietnam*: 26.

[21](#) Ibid.

[22](#) Curriculum materials on this subject include "I Will not bow My Head," a Middle School Lesson Plan at <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/toc-12.html> and "The Trung Sisters," Biographies in the World History Curriculum series at <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/Heroine10.html>. See also Dương Nga, Vietnamese Multicultural Learning Units for Use in the Classroom. Bilingual Education Resource Series. 1980 [lesson plan format, comprising appropriate background information, learning objectives, materials needed, activities, evaluation, and, in some cases, activity sheet masters for duplication and distribution to the students. The subject areas of the learning units include history, geography and other subjects Vietnamese heroines]. See also Carol Ledley, "An Annotated Bibliography of Women in Asia," that can be found at <http://www.icsd.k12.ny.us/highschool/library/asiarources.html>. The University of Hawaii Center for Southeast Asian Studies Outreach Program has place its indispensable guide to Vietnamese history with maps and exercises on-line at <http://www.hawaii.edu/cseas/pubs/vietnam/vietnam.html>.

[23](#) See Patricia Pelley, "History of Resistance and Resistance to History," in Keith Taylor and John K. Whitmore (eds.), *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts* (Ithaca, New York, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1995): 237-243. For the "modernism" expressed in Hồ Chí Minh's writings, see David Marr's essay, "Hồ Chí Minh's Declaration of Independence" in K.W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore (eds.), *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*: 221-231. William J. Duiker addresses the modernity and universalism in other key Vietnamese documents in his essay "What Is to Be Done? Hồ Chí Minh's Duong Cach Menh," also in K.W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore (eds.), *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*: 207-220.

[24](#) See Hồ Chí Minh's "Hồ Chí Minh, "Appeal Made on the Occasion of the Founding of the Communist Party of Indochina," 18 February 1930, in Bernard Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966* (New York, 1967): 129-131. Also available at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1930hochiminh.html>.

[25](#) Jameson, *Understanding Vietnam*: 359.

[26](#) Madame Nguyễn Thị Định, trans. Mai Elliot, *No Other Road to Take: Memoir of Mrs. Nguyen Thi Dinh*, (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University, Data Paper Number 102, Southeast Asia Program, Dept. of Asian Studies, 1976, 2nd ed, 1991).

[27](#) The term Việt Minh is an abbreviation of *Việt Nam Æông Lập Æòng Minh Hội*— "League for the Independence of Vietnam" a communist-led national front organization opposed to French colonialism.

[28](#) Việt Cộng is an abbreviation for the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (*trận Dân tộc Giải ph"ng miền Nam Việt Nam*), a broad-based, communist led organization composed of opponents of the AmericanÆbacked Republic of Vietnam.

[29](#) See Jameson, *Understanding Vietnam*: 187.

³⁰ Cited in Henry J. Kenny, *Shadow of the Dragon: Vietnam's Continuing Struggle with China and the Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy* (Dulles, Virginia: Brassey's, 2002): 26.

³¹ William s. Turley, ***Women in the Communist Revolution in Vietnam," Asian Survey***, Vol. 12, No. 9 (Sep., 1972): 793.

³² Christine M. Pothier, "Propagandist Representation of Vietnamese Women: A Comparative Study," *Review of Vietnamese Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2003), an article offered online as a publication of the Vietnamese Studies Internet Resource Center and currently available at <http://hmongstudies.com/PothierPaper2003.pdf>, page 15.

³³ William s. Turley, "***Women in the Communist Revolution in Vietnam:"*** 793

³⁴ It is not possible here to negotiate the complexities of post-war gender issues in Vietnam. However, see the discussion that follows which refers to David Goodkill, *Rising Gender Inequality in Vietnam Since Reunification* (Pacific Affairs, [Vol. 68, No. 3](#) (Autumn, 1995): 342-359.

³⁵ Gilbert, Marc Jason. "Lost Warriors: The Plight of Homeless Vietnam Veterans." In Robert Slabey, (ed.), *Viet Nam: From War to Peace*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 1996: 91-112.

³⁶ As the defeated Republic of Vietnam had no large contingent of female soldiers, the contributions to its war effort by women has been largely ignored, as have the fates of the Republic's male forces, whose cemeteries were razed and lives thwarted in many ways by the victorious communists. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many village women in the south were coerced into working on the Hồ Chí Minh Trail, where many died in U.S. attacks. Though not addressed in this essay, their sacrifices for their country should not be forgotten. There are those who argue that the "South Shall Rise Again" in Vietnam, but reconciliation is preferable in this writer's view to yet another round of triumphalism, a position taken by several of the Republic of Vietnam's former leaders, such as its flamboyant Air Force commander and Prime Minister, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ.

³⁷ Karen Turner, "War and the Rights of Motherhood: Vietnamese Women in the 1990s," *Asia Quarterly*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (Spring 2001) online at <http://www.asiaquarterly.com/content/view/157/40/>.

³⁸ For a discussion of both writers in this context, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C6%B0%C6%A1ng_Thu_H%C6%B0%C6%A1ngsee.

³⁹ See William Searle, "Women, Vietnamese, Other: The Depiction of Women in Vietnamese Short Fiction," in *War Literature and the Arts*, Vol. 13, nos. 1-2 (2001): 314-326. Available online at http://www.wlajournal.com/13_1-2/contents.htm.

⁴⁰ Dương Thu Hương's *Paradise of the Blind* and equally distinguished male veteran-writer Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* compares closely to W. D. Ehrhart's *Passing Time* (1968) and David Connolly's *Lost in America* (1994) in their alienation from their respective national leadership. Ninh's work shares much with Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story: A Novel* (reprint 2005).

⁴¹ S. Annand, "Was that what I was fighting for?" dated June 26, 2004 at <http://www.amazon.com/Stars-Earth-River-Stories-Vietnam/dp/1880684470>.

⁴² Goodkill, *Rising Gender Inequality in Vietnam Since Reunification*: 342-358.

⁴³ Searle, "Women, Vietnamese, Other": 326, is here referring to Vietnamese women's literature as a barometer of change. My thanks to him for the reference to Stephanie Fahey, "Vietnam's Women in the Renovation Era," in Krishna Sen and Maila Stivens (eds.), *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*. Krishna Sen and Maila Stivens (New York: Routledge, 1998), with which he closes his own essay.

⁴⁴ Norimitsu Onishi, "Korean Men Use Brokers to Find Brides in Vietnam," *The New York Times*, February 22, 2007, sec, A, 1:1. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/22/world/asia/22brides>.

⁴⁵ Nha Trang Pensinger (Nguyen Phuoc Cong Huyen Ton Nu Nha Trang). "Women and Vietnamese Folklore," a presentation delivered at a panel discussion on "Southeast Asian Women Then and Now: A View from the Folklore of the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam," at University of Hawaii at Manoa, March 12, 1992. Available at http://www.geocities.com/chtn_nhatrang/women.html. Pensinger, Nha Trang (Nguyen Phuoc Cong Huyen Ton Nu Nha Trang), "The Makings of the National Heroine." *Vietnam Review* 1 (Autumn-Winter 1996): 388-435.

⁴⁶ Strachey also attempted to cast doubts on Charles "Chinese" Gordon's sexuality by suggesting his innocent small sponsorship of an institution for homeless boys (which he rarely visited) as proof that Gordon was a pederast, despite his self-professed and widely witnessed maniacal religion-driven commitment to chastity. See *Eminent Victorians* (London: Oxford, 2003). See also "The BBC vs. Florence Nightingale ('Reputations: Florence Nightingale, Iron Maiden, BBC2, 17 July 2001')," at <http://www.florence-nightingale-avenging-angel.co.uk/bbc.htm>.

⁴⁷ Florence Nightingale to Louis Mallet, November 16, 1877 and n.d. 1878, The British Library, Additional Manuscripts, 45779, ff. 145-6. .

⁴⁸ See above, note 1. The author encourages the reader to take on the task of surveying the manifold reviews of these works which leave no doubt as to their accuracy and scholarship. Amazon.com reviews of these works make good reading when compared with formal academic reviews. Some of the latter reviewers are wholly uncritical of these works, while academic reviewers are uncharacteristically open about their concerns, making them all excellent resources for a seminar in textual deconstruction.

⁴⁹ Tapti Roy, *Raj of the Rani* (New Delhi, Penguin, 2006 and Joyce Lebra-Chapman, *The Rani of Jhansi* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986) are among the best analysis of shifting representations of the *Rani*. For an impressive on-line annotated bibliography and set of documents, see <http://www.copsey-family.org/~allenc/lakshmibai/documents.html>.

⁵⁰ Carol Hills and Daniel C. Silverman, "Nationalism and Feminism in Late Colonial India: The Rani of Jhansi Regiment, 1943-1945," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Oct., 1993): 741-760 and Satosh Singh, *Combatant Women: the Ultimate Warriors* (Jaipur, India : RBSA Publishers, 2005. See also profiles at http://www.s1942.org.sg/s1942/Indian_national_army/freedom.htm.

⁵¹ Matthew Stephens, *Hannah Snell: The Secret Life of a Female Marine, 1723-1792* (London: Ship Street Press, 1997).

⁵² Geraldine Forbes, "Reading and Writing Indian Women: Fifty Years Since Independence, 1947-1997," *Teaching About South Asia*, vol. 2, no.1 (Spring 2002) online at <http://www.mssu.edu/projectsouthasia/TSA/VIIN1/Forbes.htm>. See also Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist*

Review, 30 (Autumn 1988): 61-89.

[53](#) Susan Mann, "Myths of Asian Womanhood," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Nov., 2000): 835-862.

[54](#) Interview with Dr. Takeuchi dated 2004 at

http://www2.una.edu/Takeuchi/DrT_Jpn_Culture_files/Nihon_to_files/Female_samurai.htm.

[55](#) Yamakawa Kikue (trans. Kate Wildman Nakai), *Women of the Mito Domain: Recollections of Samurai Family Life* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001). Information and curriculum materials can be available at http://www.pbs.org/empires/japan/tokaido_6.html, and also <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/toc-08.html>. See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matsudaira_Teru.

[56](#) Michigan State University's "Windows on Asia" Vietnam section website at

<http://www.asianstudies.msu.edu/wbwoa/seasia/Vietnam/History/VietnameseIndependence.html> addresses the rebellion of the T y S n brothers against Chinese and local opponents. It elevates T y S n revolt and its women fighters to the status of revolutionaries. George Dutton, a critic of the modern construction of the Vietnamese past, takes the view that the men and women who participated in the rebellion were "exceptional" but its social norms and reforms were set within well-established parameters of Vietnamese society. See George Edison Dutton, *The Tay Son Uprising* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

[57](#) See the present author's review of the place of Vietnam in World History in *World History Connected*, Vol. 2. no. 2, part 2 at

http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/2.2/gilbert_II.html. The major role played by women in Vietnamese warfare was not confined to that country's struggles with the Chinese. Women generals served in the Tayson rebellion against Nguyen and Trinh lords in the late eighteenth century and provided volunteer (as well as coerced) labor charged with maintaining the Ho Chi Minh Trail, freeing thousands of male soldiers for combat operations. Fortunately, there exist two accessible works that can be used to draw students into a better understanding of the place of gender in the political struggles of the eras of de-colonization and the Cold War. As mentioned above, the late Madame Nguyen Thi Dinh's memoir, *No Other Road to Take: Memoir of Mrs. Nguyen Thi Dinh*, translated by Mai V. Elliott (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Asian Studies, 1976) illuminates the sacrifices that she, as a woman, was forced to make to fight against the French, and that also explores the sources of her hostility for Ngo Dinh Diem and his American supporters. Le Ly Haslip (with Jay Wurts), *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (New York: Plume, 1993) offers a view from many sides of the conflict, first that of a messenger for the Viet Cong, then as a victim of the impact of the war on Vietnamese culture, and later as an immigrant to America. It is often said that the first few pages of this work are perhaps the best ever written on the subject of the American War in Viet Nam. A moving glimpse of the place of women in Vietnamese folklore within and beyond patriarchy, in peace and war, is offered at http://www.geocities.com/chtn_nhatrang/women.html. Yet, it is rare for an American course addressing the wars in Viet Nam to devote much attention to American service women, rarer still Vietnamese women combatants, and rarest of all, Vietnamese war survivors and widows. However, the sources above, and the following titles, facilitate the discussion of these subjects in terms of world history: Linda Van Devanter's *Home Before Morning* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, reprint 2001), Keith Walker's *Piece of My Heart: Stories of Twenty-Six Women Who Served in Vietnam* (San Francisco: Presidio Press, reprint ed., 1997), Sandra C. Taylor's *Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1999) and Lady Borton's *After Sorrow* (New York: Viking, 1995). The 1998 film version of Taylor's work, *Long-Haired Warriors*, is available from the University of California Extension Center for Media and

Independent Learning, 2000 Center Street, Fourth Floor, Berkeley, California, 94704-1223, Phone: 510-642-0460). It can be usefully paired with Gillo Pontecorvo's 1967 film, *The Battle of Algiers*, as a study in "women's work" during a revolution. Students viewing both films can be asked to examine what role women played in these wars and at what cost, how Western perceptions of women's roles made women especially valuable in anti-colonial/revolutionary work, and how women, often wrongly, believed their participation in their people's wars would yield greater rights and opportunities (though lesser advances did usually follow, in Viet Nam, the U. S., and elsewhere). For an extensive bibliography on this subject with several web-links to other databases also devoted to "Women and the Vietnam War," see

<http://servercc.oakton.edu/~wittman/women.htm>.

⁵⁸ Pfc. Lori Piestewa, a Hopi Indian and a daughter of a Vietnam veteran. See Jeordan Legion, "Mom, soldier and Hopi Indian: 'She fought and died valiantly'"
<http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/iraq/heroes/piestewa.html>.

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