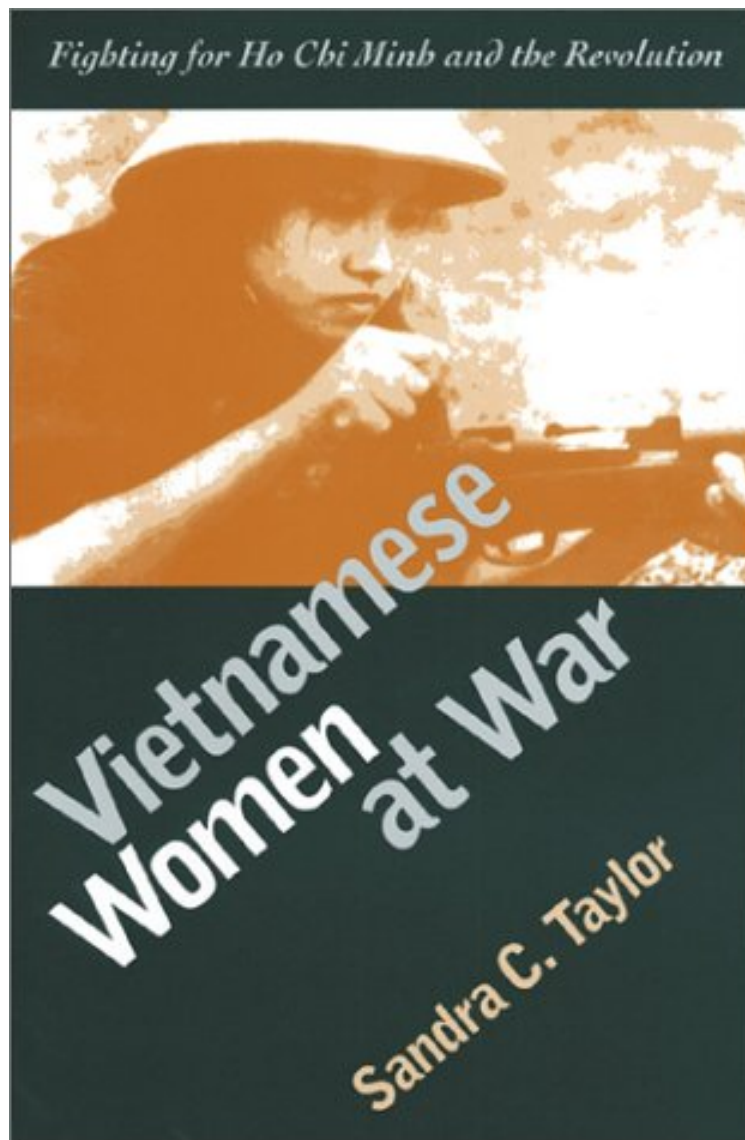


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Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution (Modern War Studies)

Sandra C. Taylor

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Sandra C. Taylor : Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution (Modern War Studies) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution (Modern War Studies):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very informative. By Jim DeFranzo - *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements; The Iraq War* Very informative. Contributes to appreciating women's roles in the Vietnam War. 25 of 37 people found the following review helpful. The History of Vietnam According to Whom? By P. Winston Women have always figured prominently in Vietnamese history and I approached this work with a great deal of positive anticipation. I was looking for something akin to Bruce Myle's *Night Witches*. This was an excellent account of Russian women combat pilots in WWII. Unfortunately Taylor's book fails on several fronts and I found its value to be very limited. Probably the first thing that stands out is the so-called photograph identified as that of a Captain William Robinson, allegedly shot down in the 1972-73 Christmas bombing. On page 110, Professor Taylor writes that this captain returned to Vietnam in 1985 to apologize. This same picture is identified in Rochester and Kiley's book *Honor Bound* as a helicopter NCO named William A. Robinson who was shot down on 20 September 1965 (pages 141-142). This would be the same A1C helicopter mechanic who was awarded the enlisted Air Force Cross for that mission. Robinson's team was attempting to rescue an American pilot when they were shot down. Nor can I find any verification of Mr. Robinson's "apology" in 1985. Discrepancies such as these do not do much to lend credibility to the rest of the text. What is particularly disturbing is the fact that Professor Taylor seems to have accepted the photograph presented by the Women's Museum in Hanoi at face value. It is next to impossible that a 22-year-old would have received the rank of captain anyway. Given several documented incidents of individuals passing themselves off as POW's and making fake apologies, one would have expected some documentation of an attempt to verify this information. Taylor indicates that she does not speak Vietnamese and that her interviews were done in the presence of government interpreters. One wonders how candid these interviews would be and in fact Professor Taylor indicates a certain reluctance on the part of those interviewed attributing it to Confucian principles of "right relationships" rather than the presence of government interpreters. On this issue, I remain skeptical. I have traveled to a few communist countries (Russia, China and Vietnam and the former East Germany). My experience has been a consistent pattern of enthusiastic efforts on the part of communists to correct me on points of history that are simply not credible. And I have no doubt these people genuinely believed what they were telling me and they were certainly not reticent. This was not the case in rare private meetings with "average citizens". If you are interested in how the North Vietnamese have reconstructed their history to fit political goals or are interested in the mechanics of propaganda, then this book may be of some interest. I have no doubt there were many patriotic North Vietnamese women who fought bravely, suffered and sacrificed much, particularly under French colonialism and later under Diem. Unfortunately their stories are subsumed in the same sort of revisionism seen in the Cultural Revolution in China. It is likely that the real story of women's participation in the Vietnam War will have to wait until Vietnam can become a freer society than it is today. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. An outstanding book, solidly researched. By Reina Pennington This outstanding book focuses on women's active participation in the wars in Vietnam. It would be useful just for the information about women as combatants and porters (belying the idea that women are incapable of enduring harsh field conditions or carrying heavy loads) but it is much more than that. Taylor's book is carefully researched using extensive interviews conducted by the author, Rand Corporation interviews, and archival materials. I find it interesting that a previous reviewer denigrated this book because it isn't more like Bruce Myles' deeply flawed *Night Witches*. Myles is the worst sort of popular history precisely because his writing is so engaging that most readers fail to question his accuracy. Myles' book is full of errors and misinformation. Like a good professional historian, Taylor notes the limitations of her sources and points out that her work is just a beginning for extended archival studies that have yet to be done. For more, see the review of this book on H-Net.

For as long as the Vietnamese people fought against foreign enemies, women were a vital part of that struggle. The victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu is said to have involved hundreds of thousands of women, and many of the names in Viet Cong unit rosters were female. These women were living out the ancient saying of their country, "When war comes, even women have to fight". Women from Hanoi and the countryside fought alongside their male counterparts in both the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese military in their wars against the South Vietnamese government and its French and American allies from 1945-1975. Sandra Taylor now draws on interviews with many of these women and on an array of archives to illuminate the motivations, experiences and contributions of these women, presenting not cold facts but real people. These women were the wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of men recruited into military service; and because the war lasted so long, women from more than one generation of the same family often participated in the struggle. Some learned to fire weapons and lay traps, or to serve as village patrol guards and intelligence agents, others were propagandists and recruiters or helped keep the supply lines flowing. Taylor relates how this war for liberation from foreign oppressors also liberated Vietnamese women from centuries of Confucian influence that had made them second-class citizens. She reveals that communism's promise of freedom from those structures influenced their involvement in the war, and also shares the irony that their sex gave them an advantage in battle or subterfuge over Western opponents blinded by gender stereotypes. As their country continues to modernize, "Vietnamese Women at War" preserves these women's stories before the war fades from memory. By showing that they were not victims of war but active participants, it offers a different perspective on that conflict. It is

a study which reveals much about gender roles and cultural differences and reminds us of the ever-present human dimensions of war.

"From the long-haired army that carried provisions through the jungles at Dien Bien Phu to the female tunnel rats at Cu Chi in the South, women were the unsung heroes of Vietnam's war of national liberation. Here, in this sympathetic and sometimes gripping account, is their untold story. Recommended."--William J. Duiker, author of *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam* "It was common knowledge among American soldiers in Vietnam that women were sometimes brave and even ferocious fighters for the North. Now at last in Sandra Taylor's fascinating *Vietnamese Women at War* this story has been told in depth. This book is a necessary piece in the complex puzzle of the Vietnam War."--Robert Olen Butler, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* "I am pleased to see more voices from Vietnamese women telling their own stories. As Sandra Taylor reveals, we don't see ourselves as victims but rather as victors and survivors, following in the footsteps of our ancestors and honoring a tradition that is 4,000 years old."--Le Ly Hayslip, author of *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* and *Child of War, Woman of Peace* "A thorough and thought-provoking account of one of the least-known chapters of the Viet Nam War. Taylor's study of the 'long haired warriors' is an essential introduction for students and promises to set the standard for years to come."--Robert Brigham, author of *The NLF's Foreign Relations and the Vietnam War* "A very valuable book for courses on the Vietnam War and in women's studies."--Marilyn B. Young, author of *The Vietnam War, 1945-1990*

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About the Author Sandra C. Taylor is professor of history at the University of Utah and author of *Jewel of the Desert: Japanese American Internment at Topaz*.