

France in Indochina: Colonial Encounters

By Nicola Cooper

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Valorised as 'la perle de l'ExtrÍme Orient', Indochina was France's rival to Britain's 'jewel in the crown'. Advanced, worthy, and accorded special status, it was a showcase of success, but also a site of disaster. Given the current scholarly interest in reassessing colonial attitudes and in francophone culture, this book fills an important gap by focusing upon the neglected French colonial discourses at the height of the French imperial encounter with Indochina.

The period of French colonial rule in Indochina spanned some ninety years and not only did it witness France's Fourth Republic's first experience (and loss) of colonial war, it also exemplified the often contradictory representations and perceptions of imperial identity, colonialism and the legacy of the 1789 Revolution. Framed by political, ideological and historical developments and debates, each chapter develops an intriguing socio-cultural account of France's own understanding of its role in Indochina and its relationship with the colony. The author brings together striking images from colonial expositions, metropolitan fiction, travel journalism, world exhibitions, popular song, gendered and familial representations as well as film to reveal the confusion over imperial identity that prevailed in France until the eve of the Second World War.

This authoritative work provides an important re-evaluation of French Indochina and its legacy. Its interdisciplinary approach will be of interest to a broad readership: students of French history, colonial and postcolonial studies, cultural studies, literature, sociology and race.

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Review

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About the Author

Nicola Cooper is Lecturer in French, at Bristol University.

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