

THINKING ABOUT CONFUCIANISM OF VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Confucianism was formed and developed in China, later it spread to other countries in the region, especially East Asian cultural countries including Vietnam where it has influenced on the cultural and spiritual life of the peoples profoundly. Nguyen Ngoc Tho has discussed the Confucian influences on Vietnamese culture. According to Tho, "Confucianism is the most important source helping to shape the national traditional identity. I demonstrate that the interaction between the traditional culture of Vietnam and Chinese Confucianism has shown the strong refraction of Confucianism, and, at the same time, it has contributed greatly in shaping the characteristics of the modern culture of Vietnam." (Nguyen Ngoc Tho 2016, 645-646). However, we think that Vietnamese people did not receive Confucianism from the Chinese passively but rather we adopted, reformed, and more or less transformed it in order to make it fit into our traditions, practices, and customs. Confucian factors, i.e. the external factors and Vietnamese characteristics, the indigenous elements could co-exist so that they mutually integrate. In addition, as K.W.Taylor argued in his paper 'The Myth of Vietnamese Resistance to Chinese Domination' based on his books *The birth of Vietnam* (1983) and *A history of Vietnamese* (2013) published on VVFH Magazine, Volume 1, Issue 3 that Vietnam previously was established at the time of the Five Dynasties, which resulted in the ten kingdoms parceling out among themselves central and southern China; consequently Vietnam was the eleventh kingdom that had emerged when the Tang dynasty collapsed at the beginning of the 10th CE. He further stated that Vietnam used to be the southernmost province of the nine successive dynasties: Han, Wu, Jin, Liu-Song, Qi, Liang, Chen, Siu, and Tang, but it separated from China due to the lack of these dynasties' military prowess. Vietnamese spiritual culture is more likely the same as the version of Sinosphere than that of non-Sinitic Southeast Asian countries. According to Taylor, the Sino-Vietnamese relationship was a peaceful cultural contact as there was no cultural oppression. The Sino-Vietnamese acculturation was natural and self-willed. This was because Vietnamese leaders were wise and willing to adopt Chinese cultural and political patterns so that they could live in peace with their relatively giant but much more powerful neighbor. However, despite such circumstances, Vietnamese people have their own customs, traditions, and religion i.e. the worship of their ancestral spirits long before adopting Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism from China. On the other hand, when looking at apparent Confucian moments in precolonial Vietnam, Keith Taylor imposed a question: "Was there something in Vietnam called Confucianism?". He further added that Vietnamese absorbed Han rhetoric and terminology then modified them phonetically and semantically. Based on the historical-cultural background, this question should be revisited. This essay will argue that Vietnamese people have their own intellectual life and thoughts which we call "Viet Nho" or Vietnamese Confucianism. We will address the three constituents of Viet Nho: Independence Declaration of Vietnamese king, Humanity in Vietnamese Literature and

Patriotism of Vietnamese intellectuals.

KEYWORDS: *Confucianism, Vietnamese, Confucianism, Independence, Humanity, Patriotism*

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