

COMPLETION REPORT

Comparative study on Vietnamese and Japanese Dragon

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Vietnam, a member of ASEAN community, and Japan have been sharing Han-Chinese cultural ideology (Confucianism, Mahayana Buddhism etc.) and pre-modern history; therefore, a great number of common values could be found among the diverse differences. As a paddy-rice agricultural state of Southeast Asia, Vietnam has localized the Confucianism and absorbed into Southeast Asian culture. Beside the local uniqueness of Shintoism, Japan has shared the Confucianism, the Indian-originated Mahayana Buddhism and other East Asian philosophies; therefore, both Confucian and Buddhist philosophies should share many with other East Asian countries.

The semiotic research *Comparative study on Vietnamese and Japanese dragons* is to investigate and generalize the symbol of dragons in Vietnam and Japan, their Confucian and Buddhist absorption and separate impacts in each culture, from which the common and different values through the symbolic significances of the dragons are obviously generalized.

Applied fine arts are seen as the crystallization of the folk consciousness, they convey the full lively meaning of the state people and carry a part of historical and cultural legacies which produces the core orientation of future development. Regardless the origin of the birth, both Vietnamese and Japanese dragons have passed the similar historical periods since both nations share the same social destiny: formation, centralization and decentralization. During this long procedure, Vietnamese and Japanese dragons have absorbed into Buddhist philosophies, presenting to be the sacred guardian of Buddhist dharma and survivor/protector of human beings. This trend of dragon's liberation in contemporary East Asia has pushed the dragon nearer to the Southeast Asian holy naga snake.

Because of the specific historical background, Vietnamese Confucian hierarchical dragon, once strongly protected, has been weakened and abolished, the dragon has absorbed into many spiritual religions (Buddhism and Buddhism-based religions) and religious movements as well as shifted/transformed into many variants. The Vietnamese dragon has been feminized and decomposed its feudal hierarchy because of the local refraction. As a matter of fact, the Vietnamese dragon is still under the process of forming and has not ended yet, it has shown an important essence of Vietnamese ideology and cultural identities: open-mindedness and well-adapted and well-adjusted mechanism.

Japanese dragon was once solidly attached with the Confucian hierarchy and Buddhist sacred powers; therefore, the abolishment of feudal structure at pre-modern period gives ways to the prevailing Buddhist dragon and its implication. At pre-modern and modern ages, Japanese dragon has slightly drawn back to become a part of legacies or to transform into post-modernist icon in popular culture (tattooing, manga books, video games, J' fashion etc.). At a certain level, Japanese people have enjoyed flexibility and autonomy in adjusting the dragon's expression and significance as well as in shaping cultural identities.

After the process of decentralization, Vietnamese and Japanese dragons are strongly similar to the other classic imaginary figures such as vermilion bird, turtle, kirin/unicorn, tiger, fish etc, all are understood as symbols of luck, mysterious powers, Buddha and god's ambassadors, dharma/faith guardians and incarnation of human universal values (truth, goodness and beauty).

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Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

1. Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy, 2016

“Vietnamese and Japanese dragon under East Asian perspective”,

Author Nguyen Ngoc Tho

2. Journal of Science and Technology Development, VNU-HCM, 2016

“The dragon in Vietnamese and Japanese cultures”

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