



Redefining the Position of Daoism (Taoism) in Vietnamese History from the 2nd Century to the 9th Century

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/ARJASS/2020/v10i330151

Editor(s):

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Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/55603>

Original Research Article

Received 22 January 2020

Accepted 28 March 2020

Published 03 April 2020

ABSTRACT

Redefining the value of Taoism in Vietnam is a complex and difficult problem to evaluate thoroughly. This issue of defining and evaluation relates to historical document sources, archaeological relics still exist to this day and especially the influence of Taoism on beliefs life, religious life in particular and in the spiritual activities of Vietnamese people in general. Of the three religions of the Orient: Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Taoism is a religion that is difficult to study. Throughout the development process of the Vietnamese nation, along with Confucianism and Buddhism, Taoism has a significant influence on the spiritual life, tradition, and culture of the Vietnamese nation, especially in the spiritual life of the working people. However, research on this issue is still a very large gap, little attention of researchers. When studying Taoism in Vietnam, it is usually divided into stages, specifically: Taoism in Vietnam in the early period (from the 2nd century to the 9th century); Taoism under the Ly and Tran dynasties (the period when Taoism held the best position in history of Vietnam, often called the Royal Taoism); Taoism under the Le and Nguyen dynasties (the process of Taoism folkization through the worship of Mau Lieu Hanh). In this article, the author focuses on studying Taoism from the 2nd century to the 9th century. Because, at present, the historical documents on Taoism in this period are still quite vague, there

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are still many the debate broke out about the time when Taoism spread into Vietnam, the audience, Taoist missionaries have been to Vietnam, etc. Therefore, this article focuses on the process of Taoism propagating into Vietnam, identifying historical data that still exist today, Taoist figures have been to Vietnam.

Keywords: Position of taoism; vietnamese history; historical values; feudal dynasties; taoist figures.

1. INTRODUCTION

If the East is considered the great cradle of human civilization, China is one of the ancient, brilliant and rich cultural centers of that civilization. In particular, philosophy and religion have an important meaning in Chinese culture. Among the religions that contribute to the richness of Chinese culture is Taoism.

According to Vietnamese historical document sources, as well as the education of ancient Chinese philosophy in general and the Taoist philosophy in particular at Vietnamese universities, Vietnamese people have certain knowledge about Taoist and Taoism. According to historical document sources available in Vietnam, the Taoist and the Taoism were written as follows: In China during six or seven centuries before the Common Era, i.e., the Spring - Autumn period, and Warring States period, the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi were merely a kind of philosophy [1,2]. Taoist philosophers did not advocate mystical things. Facing wars and disorders, they chose a reclusive life to nourish their heavenly trueness. From the first century under the Eastern Han Dynasty, Chang Daoling transformed the esoteric teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi to a religion called Taoism [3,1,2]. Thus, between Taoists and Taoism, there are fundamental differences in their origins. If Taoist appeared around the 6th century BC, Taoism appeared around the 2nd century AD. Such, Taoism is an ancient religion that has existed for a long time in Chinese history. It has overcome the challenges of space and time and exists to this day.

In terms of space, at the time of its birth, Taoism had a certain influence from Sichuan and Ha Dong regions and spread to the Truong Giang basin and spread throughout the vast Chinese country [4]. Historically, Taoism has also interacted with many different cultures and left a mark in many East Asian countries (Japan, Korea, Vietnam, etc). Its influence can be seen in the beliefs, religions, and rituals of many generations of people, over the centuries [5]. In time, Taoism has existed for nearly two thousand

years and it still continues its development path, even though its existence is not as "dense" as it was at the beginning [5,2]. In the process of survival and development, although Taoism has never become the dominant ideology in Chinese society like Confucianism and Buddhism (if any, in the Tang Dynasty), but its role in life Chinese society is very big, especially among working people and is seen by the Chinese as a "treasure" of China [5].

Taoism was introduced into Vietnam very early. In terms of specific timing, there has not been any accurate historical source. But, from the widely accepted viewpoint, Taoism was introduced into our country after Confucianism and Buddhism [3,1,6,2]. Taoism in Vietnam, had period become an independent religion like under the Ly and Tran dynasties. But then, the phenomenon of merging Taoism with Buddhism and Confucianism took place. In the Le Dynasty, Taoism quickly combined with Buddhism, most of the Taoist place of worship and practice became Buddhist temples, Taoist scriptures turn into Buddhist scriptures, Taoist hermit quit cultivation. By the Nguyen Dynasty, when Confucianism became the dominant ideology in society and the Nguyen Dynasty had honored Confucianism as the "state religion", Taoism almost disappeared in the religious life of Vietnamese people. Taoism has not been mentioned much by people [7,8].

Throughout the development process of the Vietnamese nation, along with Confucianism and Buddhism, Taoism has been a significant influence on the spiritual, traditional and cultural life of the Vietnamese nation, especially in the life of the Vietnamese working people [2]. In the early days of spreading into Vietnam, Taoism found the analogy had long been established in the beliefs of Vietnamese people. The cult of magic, sorcery, enchantments, Feng shui, divination, etc of the ancient Vietnamese became a fertile ground for the sowing of Taoism. "Therefore, it is easy to understand why Taoism, first of all, the witch Taoism penetrated quickly and merged so easily with the ancient magic tradition that there were no boundaries" [7]. "It's like having a familiar land, people don't study but already know all" [3].

For the past many years, the study of Taoism as the existence of Taoism in Vietnam, the manifestations of Taoism in the spiritual and cultural life of Vietnam, the values that Taoism brings to its culture Vietnam is more modest than Buddhism and Confucianism. Therefore, the situation of studying Taoism in Vietnam is still in difficulty, causing many researchers to refer many Vietnamese folk beliefs to Taoism; In contrast, those who like charms, magic, divination, fengshui, etc. not understand what Taoism is. This has created many obstacles in the study of Taoism in Vietnam, as well as the connection of Vietnamese culture in general and religious activities in particular with Taoism.

The nation's cultural history is closely linked to the process of national construction and defense of the Vietnamese people. As the economy is growing, the nations of the world get closer, the national culture is becoming the center of attention. Documents of the Communist Party of Vietnam, policies of the Government of Vietnam have repeatedly affirmed the role and importance of the goal of "building an advanced culture imbued with national identity" [9]. Therefore, the study of the topic: "Redefine the position of Daoism (Taoism) in Vietnamese history" is necessary for us to understand more social concepts and phenomena, etc. Since then, understand more about the origin, characteristics of ideology, folk beliefs in Vietnam; traditional cultural values that ancestors have worked hard to build. Through this research, it contributes a part to the awareness of more positive factors and good traditional values of the nation in the cause of building up Vietnamese culture in the renovation period.

2. FACTORS OF INDIGENOUS BELIEFS BEFORE TAOISM WAS INTRODUCED TO VIETNAM

Vietnam has been being a multi-ethnic country, whose economy is dominated by wet-rice agriculture. That economy has survived very long [10]. Archaeological studies in recent years have made that clear. Many archaeologists believe that the northern upland region is one of the primitive centers of today's rice plants. The excavation of the Man Bac cemetery confirmed that residents of Vietnam during the Hung Vuong era had an intersection between indigenous Malay breeds and Mongolia migrants from the southern Yangtze River [10,11,12]. Archaeological results have found grains, rice husks, and burnt rice.

Thus, from ancient times, ancient Vietnamese people were mostly farmers, dependent mainly on nature, under the control of nature, so there appeared a natural god system (natural god) before there had had World religions that came to Vietnam [13,14]. That divine system has been worshiped by Vietnamese people throughout Vietnamese villages and communes [15,16,17]. To this day, we can identify the system of these gods through festivals, through the worship of gods at communal house, temple, "am" (like the temple but is a small scale, about 5 to 7 square meters wide) and shrines that no other locality in the country does not have. The system is extremely rich and complex [18].

According to archaeological results unearthed from bronze drums, stone relics [11] show that the starting image of the Vietnamese gods system was the tree spirit, the rock god, the river god, then the snake god, the god of turtles, the bird god, etc was the divine force that will later be called the natural gods.

According to many researchers [12,13], ancient Southeast Asia was an immense forest, with rivers and streams flowing through, as important transport circuits to exchange among ethnic groups. There, there is the custom of worshiping trees, worshiping rocks, worshiping rivers and streams [15,19]. The custom of worshiping trees is expressed through images of women and girls on trees or making children sick and illness. In order to avoid such catastrophes, people often burned a doll in the form of a baby in order to serve the women and girls (called "hìnhnhânthế mạng") [20,15]. This practice exists to this day and is propagated not only to cases of illness, but also to those believed to be negative, or in case of an accident or other risks.

In many ancient Vietnamese villages, even recently, there have been still incensed bowls placed on ancient trees, so the proverb has the phrase "god of the banyan tree, the ghost of storax tree". Trees were the main source of living, so the myth of the universe tree arises - the universe came from a large tree. We see this in the epic "đềđất, đênuớc" (drop the land, drop water) of Muong people, and in many legends of different ethnic groups of Vietnam. The cosmic tree also imprinted in the "Nêu" tree in the Lunar New Year of the Vietnamese, buffalo stabbing ceremony in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, etc [19,21,22].

From the worship of natural phenomena, Vietnamese people converted to worshiping

animals. The two most popular animals in Southeast Asia myth were birds and snakes. Along with the process of divinizing natural phenomena, Vietnamese people have also carried out the deification of the animals they worship: the bird into Fairy, the snake into the Dragon [12], by combining birds with humans and snakes with crocodiles, etc. The Dragon was the lord of the river, the Fairy is the lord of the forest and, in turn, was present in Vietnamese legends before taking on the Chinese form. These later phenomena were later present in Taoist temples in Vietnam [2,18].

From the gathering period, entering the agricultural stage is a new development stage, from which there also arises a change in ideology. It was the phenomenon of worship of natural phenomena related to agriculture [12,13]. When people have been agriculture, nature will involve people like flesh and blood [23,24,25]. There were two natural phenomena that determine people's lives: sunshine and rain. The sunshine was brought by the sun, in the South, the worship of heaven is common for all the people, formerly known as Mrs. Heaven. Later, due to Chinese influence, the concept of "trongnam, khinhnu" (respect men, despise women), especially the concept of "Thiêntử" (son of the Mr. Heaven) of Confucianism, was changed to Mr. Heaven; only "Thiêntử" were allowed to worship the Mr. Heavens, the people worship the Mr. Heavens was illegal [6,26,27]. Opposite to Heaven was Land, later also due to the influence of Confucianism, the Mrs. Land became the Mr. Land (ThổĐja - Tu Di Gong) - a very typical Chinese name [4,28,29,30].

Water is the most important factor in agriculture. In order to have enough water for cultivation, irrigation needs: cloud, rain, thunder, lightning - the natural phenomena necessary to create water, so Ba May (Mrs. Cloud), Ba Mua (Mrs. Rain), Ba Sam (Mrs. Thunder) and Ba Chop (Mrs. Lightning) were worshiped [23,24]. Later, when Buddhism was introduced and developed in our country, all four of them became Buddhas and transformed into "TứPháp" (Four-Dharma) system with Chinese names: Ba May became Phap Van worshiped at Dau pagoda, Ba Mua became Phap Vu worshiped at Dau pagoda, Ba Sam became PhapLoi worshiped at Ba Tuong pagoda and Ba Chop became PhapDien worshiped at Ba Tuong pagoda. The king, mandarins of the dynasties had to pray to the ladies to expect good rain and wind, good crops [12]. When agriculture shifted to wet rice farming,

considering wet rice cultivation as the dominant field in agriculture, making a great decision on the survival of humans, the whole belief transformed for the last time and made the face of rich beliefs like today.

Thus, in the existing forms of indigenous beliefs, we saw that the ancient Vietnamese people worshiped the gods, especially the natural gods [24]. Therefore, when Taoism was introduced to Vietnam with a diverse system of gods such as the god of the sky, the god of the land, the mountain god, the river god, etc. it was easily accepted and worship by Vietnamese. One of the more fundamental reasons why Taoism easily penetrates into Vietnam was that the Taoism cultivation method is very close to the very mysterious beliefs of the Vietnamese people [2,25]. Therefore, when penetrating into our country, Taoism quickly found the similar beliefs that had long been available for its "sowing" [7,31,32].

3. TAOISM IN VIETNAM: FROM THE 2ND CENTURY TO THE 9TH CENTURY

At present, the current historical documents do not allow us to confirm with certainty that Taoism was present in Vietnam at a specific time. However, what most researchers postulate is that Taoism entered Vietnam after Confucianism and Buddhism [3,1,6,2]. Surveying and comparing ancient Chinese bibliographies and Vietnamese ancient documents we can find out how Taoism was propagated into Vietnam. But, in any way, the subject receiving Taoism was still two main objects: the intellectuals and the ordinary people in ancient Vietnamese society at that time.

About the time Taoism was propagated into Vietnam, perhaps at the waning time of the Eastern Han Dynasty [2], but its influence was very limited. According to the old Chinese history, in the Han Dynasty of the 7th year of QuangHoa (184), Thai Binh Dao leader was Truong Giac launched the Hoang Can uprising in Trung Nguyen (History of Chinese Culture., 1999). That year in Giao Chi (Jiaozi) district also had a revolt of the people, the leader of the revolt called himself "General of heaven" but later was suppressed [12]. After the defeat of Hoang Can uprising, the Trung Nguyen area occurred a continuous punishment. At that time, Si Nhiep - a Confucian scholar, came to accept Thai Thu in Giao Chi (Jiaozi), his younger brother Si Nhat also took over Thai Thu in Hop Pho, Cuu Chan

and Nam Hai districts. They kept Giao Chau safe through the chaos, praised by the people [12].

At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, there were many soldiers from China who came here to take refuge. One of the characters during this period was Truong Tan, Dai Viet Su KyToan Thu wrote: "Tan received his position in the 6th Kien An [221] of the Han Dynasty. Tan liked the demons and gods, often wearing red scarves, play the harp, burning incense, reading Taoist books, and saying that he could help with the teaching. After being killed by General Khu Canh" [12]. However, to confirm whether Truong Tan was a Taoism believer did not or he was just a "Phuong si", it takes time to continue studying.

Another character to mention this period was Dong Phung (Feng). According to Dai Viet Su KyToàn Thu, wrote: "The 40th year [226] (Han Hau Chua Thien, Kien Hung in the fourth year; Ngo Ton Quyen, Hoang Vu in the fifth year), King (Si Nhiep) died. Before being sick, having died for three days, Fairy people is Dong Phung (Feng), put a pill in the mouth of king, then shook his head and moved, briefly king opened his eyes and moved his hands, his face recovered gradually, the next day, he could stand up, could speak again for 4 days, then returned to normal" [12]. Thus, there was no doubt that Dong Phung (Feng) came to Dau (Thuan Thanh, BacNinh province today), about 226 or earlier but no more than 187 (the year of Si Nhiep of taking control of the Giao Chi (Jiaozhi)). Si Nhiep period was the time when the Three Kingdoms period started, the was "Si Phu" (Confucian followers) came down to Giao Chi (Jiaozhi) district for thanks to quite a lot of Si Nhiep, including Dong Phung (Feng). But need to be clear, Dong Feng was not a Taoism of the Five Scouts of the Martyrs (NgũĐầuMễĐạo), he was a disciple, a member of the Phuong Tien Dao (Phuong Si), a master of medicine and cultivate immortality because he saved the king from death, so he was worshiped, the body eventually turned into fairy. This has been just a Taoism legend but can at least prove that Taoism elements were transmitted to Vietnam from the end of the Han Dynasty.

At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, not only Dong Feng fled to Giao Chi (Jiaozhi), but also Mau Tu (Miao Zi). Mau Tu was a master of scriptures, no matter what books he liked to read; whatever books he had read, even Mau Tu had read a book about a fairy, he did not believe but he kept reading [4]. At that time, after the Emperor's death (Han Linh De), the nation was in turmoil, only Giao Chau was peaceful, talented

people in the North went there to take refuge. Many elves used the confiscation of immortality, the people at that time were participation very crowded. Mau Tu often took out "NguKinh" (5 Confucian scriptures) to make it difficult for them, contemporary wizards often did not dare to confront them. But it should be added that Miao Zi is not a complete believer, he is influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In particular, the influence of Taoism accounts for a smaller part [2].

A typical Taoism figure of this period was Cat Hong, which was also mentioned. According to Nguyen DuyHinh (2003), at the beginning of the Tan (Xun) Dynasty, Cat Hong refused to accept the great official of the Tan (Xun) Dynasty intended to confer the title of Tan KyThuongThi Dai Truoc, asked to come to Giao Chau (Jiaozhi) to receive a small official, Cau Lau district command (now under My Van district, Hung Yen province) for opportunities to practice knitting and to participate in the promotion of Taoism. But according to scholar VuongKha, based on the story of the Cat Hong story and the Chinese Autobiography, it was recorded: "In Dong Xun period, there was a famous Taoist practitioner of Jiang Dong was Cat Hong, at the end of his life, he only liked practice knitting prescription drugs, he heard that there were "dansa" (knitting medicine) in Giao Chi, so he asked to be a commandant of Cau Lau district, took his children and grandchildren to the south, went to Guangzhou, was retained by Nhac Su Dang Nhac, and stayed at La Phu Mountain, Guangdong, wrote books, practiced single, died in Tan Khang De Kien Nguyen (343)" [14]. Based on that basis, scholar VuongKha said that Cat Hong did not come to Cau Lau to practice knitting. But the ancients said that Cat Hong had been here, Dan Phuong district where was Cat Hong went through, saved the practice knitting. Thach That district had a single practice relic of Cat Hong, so the two districts have built "am": Nguyen Duong "am" to commemorate Cat Hong. Although affirming or not asserting whether Cat Hong came to Giao Chau or not, it can prove that there was a Taoismpractitioner coming to practice knitting in Vietnam at that time.

At the end of Dong Tan Dynasty, Ton An, leader of Ngu Du Me Dao launched the rebellious followers in Giang Dong, controlling all eight districts and keep in Dong Cung cave. Later, when Ton An failed and died, his brother-in-law was Lu Tuan fled to Guangzhou. In the sixth Luc Hy (410), Lu Tuan again started to fight to the North, the following year the defeat fled to Giao

Chau (Jiaozhi). There was a Vietnamese named Li Thoat who helped Lu Tuan to attack Long Bien district, but was defeated by Thu Su of Giao Chau was Do Tue Do, Lu Tuan jumped into the river to commit suicide. Dai Viet Su KyToan Thu wrote: "Tan Hoi, 411, (Tan NghiaHy in the 7th year). In summer, April, son of Thai Thu of Vinh Gia district was Lu Tuan fled to Giao Chau. Before that, when Thu Su Do Vien died, King Tan let his son was Do Tue Do instead did Thu Su. King Tan's decree has not arrived yet, Lu Tuan raided Hop Pho and headed for Giao Chau. Do Tue Do brought soldiers to attack Lu Tuan at Thach Ky, Lu Tuan was defeated" [12].

Thus, Lu Tuan and his followers were followers of NguDau Me Dao. A question arises as to why Lu Tuan was favored by Li Thoat was a Giao Chi people and the ethnic minorities in that area supported when Lu Tuan was defeated. In fact, Li Thoat was also a follower of folk Taoism. During the Wei Dynasty, Jin Dynasty, the North and the South dynasties, all parts of China had activities of the folk Taoism group showing respect to the forerunner "Li Bat Bach", their leaders all named Li Thoat and Li Wang (Li Hong) [2]. Li Thoat of Giao Chau mentioned above may be a leader of the Taoism folk, because of its beliefs close to NguDau Me Dao, so it was possible to rally the ethnic minorities in that area to supported Lu Tuan.

From about the fifth century onwards, new Taoism was spread more and more strongly in our country, especially in the Tang Dynasty. King Xuanzong (reigned 712-756) of the Tang Dynasty, confident that he was the descendant of Laozi, issued a decree to search for all existing Taoist texts throughout the empire. The collection of these Taoist texts during Kaiyuan era (713-741) of the Tang dynasty was called Sandong Qionggang (Exquisite Compendium of the Three Grottoes) or Kaiyuan Daozang (Daozang of the Kaiyuan era) of about three thousand seven hundred volumes which are no longer extant (History of Chinese Culture., 1999). At that time, the feudal government of the North tended to unify the mandarins with the Taoist forces. The mandarins not only assumed the full power of politics but also held the spiritual side of people. This is considered to be an extremely sophisticated rule of Chinese feudal dynasties (probably starting from the Tang dynasty) [2]. It can be affirmed that, from the fifth century onwards, Taoism was actually used by the government of the feudal dynasties of China.

In 865, under the Tang dynasty (618-907), GaoPian (Cao Bien) intruded into Vietnam to suppress the Vietnamese resistance. As a noted magician and geomancer, he tried his best to destroy dragon veins and Vietnam's sacred places so that Vietnam would no longer have talents or heroes and Vietnam would be under the yoke of Chinese domination forever [12].

4. CONCLUSION

Taoism significantly influenced Chinese culture from the Shang Dynasty forward. The recognition that all things and all people are connected is expressed in the development of the arts, which reflect the people's understanding of their place in the universe and their obligation to each other. During the Tang Dynasty, Taoism became the state religion under the reign of Emperor Xuanzong because he believed it would create a harmonious balance in his subjects and, for a while, he was correct. Xuanzong's rule is still considered one of the most prosperous and stable in the history of China and the high point of the Tang Dynasty.

Taoism has been nominated as a state religion a number of times throughout China's history but the majority preferred the teachings of Confucius (or, at times is Buddhism), most likely because of the rituals of these beliefs which provide a structure Taoism lacks. Today, Taoism is recognized as one of the great world religions and continues to be practiced by people in China and throughout the world.

In the process of development, Taoism has had a great spread to many East Asian countries, including Vietnam. The influence of Taoism on Vietnam is undeniable. However, in the early period (about a thousand years), due to a lack of historical data, the assessment of Taoist influence was inadequate. However, the initial research will also give readers a more complete view of Taoism in Vietnam in the early period; premise for the brilliant development of Taoism under the Ly and Tran Dynasties.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

I confirm that the paper is original unpublished work, not submitted or to be submitted for consideration elsewhere. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards in academic research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was supported by University of Transport and Communications, Vietnam (UTC).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
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