# Molding the East Asian Dragons: The Creation and Transformation of Various Ecological and Political Discourses

**NGUYEN Ngoc Tho and**
**PHAN Thi Thu Hien**

JDTREA 2023,2(2): 73–99

**Original Articles**

Correspondence to
**NGUYEN Ngoc Tho**
Vietnam National University, Vietnam
**ngoctho@hcmussh.edu.vn**

ORCID
**NGUYEN Ngoc Tho**
**https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9386-0509**
**PHAN Thi Thu Hien**
**https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9562-112X**

Nguyen Ngoc Tho is an Associate Professor of Cultural Studies and is the Dean of Faculty of Cultural Studies at USSH, Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City. He was a visiting scholar at Sun Yat-sen University, the Harvard Yenching Institute, Harvard University's Asia Centre, Boston University, and Brandeis University. He is the author of six books and over 40 journal articles.

Phan Thi Thu Hien is a Professor of Literature and is a senior faculty member of Cultural Studies at USSH, Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City. She was a visiting scholar at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Republic of Korea, and University of Hong Kong and has authored 25 books and over 50 journal articles.

*Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia* Vol. 2. Issue 2 (March 2023): 73–99
© 2023 by the Daesoon Academy of Sciences, Daejin University, Korea

https://doi.org/10.25050/JDTREA.2023.2.2.73

**Day of submission:** 2023.01.13.
**Completion of review:** 2023.02.28.
**Final decision for acceptance:** 2023.03.20.

P-ISSN: 2799-3949
E-ISSN: 2799-4252

## Abstract

The dragon is a special imaginary figure created by the people of East Asia. Its archetypes appeared primarily as totemic symbols of different tribes and groups in the region. The formation of early dynasties probably generated the molding of the dragon symbol. Dragon symbols carried deep imprints of nature. They concealed alternative messages of how ancient people at different locations dealt with or interacted with nature. Under pressure to standardize in the medieval and late imperial periods, the popular dragon had to transform physically and ideologically. It became imposed, unified, and framed, conveying ideas of caste classification and power, and losing itsecological implications. The dragon transitioned from a semi-ecological domain into a total social caste system.

However, many people considered the "standardized" dragon as the symbol of the oppressor. Because of continuous orthopraxy and calls for imperial reverence, especially under orthopractic agenda and the surveillance of local elites, the popularized dragon was imbued within local artworks or hidden under the sanctity of Buddhas or popular gods in order to survive. Through disguise, the popular dragon partially maintained its ecological narratives. When the imperial dynasties ended in East Asia (1910 in Korea, 1911 in China, 1945 in Vietnam), the dragon was dramatically decentralized. However, trends of re-standardization and re-centralization have emerged recently in China, as the country rises in the global arena. In this newly-emerging "re-orthopraxy", the dragon has been superimposed with a more externally political discourse ("soft power" in international relations) rather than the old-style standardization for internal centralization in the late imperial period. In the contemporary world, science and technology have advanced humanity's ability to improve the world; however, it seems that people have abused science and technology to control nature, consequently damaging the environment (pollution, global warming, etc.). The dragon symbol needs to be re-defined, "re-molded", re-evaluated and reinterpreted accordingly, especially under the newly-emerging lens—the New Confucian "anthropocosmic" view.

**Keywords:** : Dragon; East Asia; standardization; ecology; New Confucianism

## Introduction[1]

2012 was the Year of the Dragon according to the East Asian zodiac. That year, the Chinese government introduced a stamp featuring a dragon. The dragon was depicted facing the viewers. Its mouth was wide open, its fangs ready to bite, and its claws (five in each foot) preparing to attack. The stamp surprised the public and sparked debate among Chinese commoners and scholars about the design of the dragon. Many scholars and people preferred an image of a friendlier and more humane dragon instead. The image of the dragon on the stamp, on the other hand, displeased many East Asians who were familiar with the hierarchical order and imperial power embodied in the Chinese dragons. It raised new questions among East Asian scholars. Has the de-centralized Chinese dragon of the post-war era been "recentralized" recently? What message does the "recentralized" dragon convey to its East Asian neighbors and the world as China rises in the twenty-first century?

Studies on the Chinese dragon (a prominent representative of East Asian dragons) have been conducted mainly by Chinese scholars. Their research focused on Chinese dragons as a symbol of national identity and Chineseness; therefore, the scholars formed the center-periphery split structure between standard and non-standard dragon features. Such ideas can be found in the works of Sun Zuoyun (1960), Li Ting (1963), Liu Dunyuan (1978) Yuan Dexing (1978), Wang Changzheng (1985), Yu Ziliu (1985), Wei Yanan (1986), Xu Huadang (1988), Qiu Pu (1988), Wang Weiti (1990, 2000), Zhong Tao (1991), Chen Shuxiang (1993), Zhang Daoyi, Pang Jin (1993,2000), Hao Chun, Gao Zhanxiang (1999), Wang Dayou (2000), Wang Dong (2000), Ji Chengming (2001), Ye Yingsui (2001), Wei Zhiqiang (2003), Wang Shuqiang, Feng Dajian (2012), and others (Wang 2000). On the other hand, some scholars focused on the diversity of East Asian dragons as well as their diverse origins. For example, Wen Yiduo (1942, 1993), and other scholars particularly stressed the Hundred-Viet/Baiyueh origin of Chinese dragons. Previously, two Russian writers, D.V. Deopik (1993) and N. I. Niculin (2006) also confirmed the Hundred-Viet/Baiyueh's contribution to the shaping of the Chinese dragon (Trần 2004).

In the West, a few scholars have published works that have taken anthropological or artistic perspective on the Chinese dragons. The few scholars who have published works about Chinese dragons include Schuyler V. R. Cammann's *China's Dragon Robes* (1952), L. Newton Hayes's *The Chinese Dragon* (1973), Peggy Goldstein's *Long is a Dragon* (1991), Tao T. Liu's *Dragons, Gods, and Spirits from China* (1994); Valery M. Garrett's *Chinese Dragon Robes* (1998), Andrew Chittick's "Dragon Boats and Serpent Prows: Naval Warfare and the Political Culture of China's Southern Borderlands" (2015), and Martin Arnold's *The Dragon: Fear and Power* (2018). However, the discourse about Chinese and East Asian dragons is still a new issue in Western academic circles. Western peoples have their own dragon symbols which normally convey negative implications, but this article will limit itself to analysis on East Asian dragons.

The primordial East Asian dragon carries an ecological narrative. East Asian dragons are said to originate from ancestors questioning and doubting these creatures' "mysterious" nature. A Chinese writer, Ning Yegao, called this "the vague thinking" [模糊思维]. It appears when people witness their natural environment changing unexpectedly (Ning 1999, 23). Accordingly, people composed the symbol of the dragon as an imaginary "god" who could represent themselves in dealings with the upheavals of the natural world. As a result, the traditional dragon is supposed to excel at swimming, diving, running, flying, transforming, sanctifying, and so on. By installing and absorbing both secular components and sacred powers, the dragon has become the "king" of all creatures.

As society evolves and forms social caste systems, people cultivated and modified the dragon to include more social features in which many were mutually opposed and destructive, making the dragon symbol an "arena" of both natural and social discourse.

Pre-imperial Chinese dynasties (Xia, Shang, and Zhou) successfully applied the agenda of "conquering, admitting and subjugating new cultures." The rulers generously accepted partially the symbolic figures of lands and tribes they reached. For example, archaeologists found pighead figures in Hongshan culture in northeastern China and crocodile-like and snake-like figures in areas that reach from the Lower Yangtze River to North Vietnam. The symbolic figures have been recognized as proto- dragons (Nguyen 2016). Remnants of these archetypes still remain in some specific categories of dragons nowadays, such as the snake-like dragon, fish-like dragon, crocodile-like dragon, bull or buffalo-like dragon, tiger-like dragon, horse-like dragon, dog-like dragon, bird-like dragon, bear-like dragon, and tree-like dragons, in the genealogy of East Asian dragons.

Because of the centralization of Huaxia Chinese civilization, all components of symbolic figures were put into a larger and systematic structure to standardize the mold of dragons. All of those animal-like dragons were alternatively scanned and selected for their progressive parts which largely represented the bureaucratic interests. The Chinese dragon continued to evolve inside the framed model during imperial periods, finally molding the "standard" dragon comprising three main parts and nine similarities [三停九似]. In the Song Dynasty, Luo Yuan said that the Chinese dragon was made up by nine components: deer horns, a camel head, rabbit eyes, a snake body, a pearl-like belly, fish scales, tiger legs, eagle claws, and cow ears. Accordingly, the standard dragon has a total of 117 scales. Of the 117 scales, 81 are yang scales (9 x 9, symbolizing the good features) and 36 yin scales (9 x 4, the negative features). Both yin and yang components make the dragon in line with the mysterious circulation of heaven and earth, thus innately conveying sacred power. The Chinese dragon was much modified and standardized in the Song and Ming dynasties and was continuously nurtured and castigated by pre-modern local elites because of Confucian orthodoxy.

One of the other sources that contributed to how East Asian dragons were molded is Indian tradition. Many Indian primary figures were adopted and localized in China. Bi'an (狴犴, bệ ngạn in Vietnamese), one of nine children of the dragon, is the Chinese version of the Indian Rahu symbol. Similarly, many Indian Buddhist elements were absorbed and localized within the molding of Chinese dragons.

## Standardizing the Dragon: The Imperial Orthopraxy

If the early period of the evolution of Chinese dragons was identified with the bottom-up methodology of building, the late imperial periods witnessed the strong top-down standardization and imperial superimposition on the symbol as a means of organizing and controlling society. The concept of "standardizing", as defined by James Watson (1985, 323), is the way "[t]he state, aided by a literate elite, sought to bring locals under its influence by co-opting certain popular local deities and guaranteeing that they carried 'all the right messages[:]...civilization, order, and loyalty to the state'." The late imperial Chinese states strongly supported standardized cults, rituals, and symbols, believing that ritual orthopraxy could serve as a powerful force for cultural homogenization (von Glahn 2004, 251–253). Stephan Feuchtwang (1992, 57–8) called this action an "imperial metaphor," and E. Thompson dubbed it the "symbolic control" (Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 18). In Chinese culture, the standardized dragon functions similarly to a god. Paul Katz emphasized that "cultural integration in China was attained via the standardization of culture, here defined as the promotion of approved deities [...] by state authorities and local elites" (Katz 2007, 71–90).

Claiming to be "orthodox" is a vital part of Chinese popular culture. Rawski (1985) stressed that Chinese culture had become highly integrated partly because of the efficacy of its educational values. Symbolic practices are a key means of cultural integration that are strongly fostered for political purposes by the state and its agents. State-sanctioned symbols "produced a high degree of cultural unity, transcending social differences in mythic interpretation and variant local ritual practice" (Sutton 2007, 5). As a matter of fact, the overwhelming political and social narratives of the dragon symbol restrained and hindered the deployment of its ecological implications throughout almost the entirety of the imperial periods.

However, standardization has been demonstrated as an interactive procedure in which different groups interpret symbols according to their general understanding and their own interests. David Faure (1999, 278) argued that standardization was "a channel whereby knowledge of state practices and institutions entered villages." Elites and religious specialists hold rituals to assert the legitimacy of their own interests, even when confronted with state hegemony. Philip Kuhn (1980) affirmed that local elites got enough capacity to create and maintain their influence in the local communities. Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin (1990), in their support of Max Weber's theory, stated that local elites used their own wisdom to maintain their dynamics within the local background necessary to link and mediate the gap between the imperial palace and the commoners. Both Joanna Meskill (1979) and Keith Schoppa (1982) praised the active role of local elites in maximizing the interest of local commoners. However, there were a number of cultural elites who were instrumental in promoting orthopraxy as a mechanism of control (Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 131). As a matter of fact, "the key to being Chinese is acceptance of external ritual form, not adherence to an internal, conceptual orthodoxy" (Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 9–10).

Therefore, to a certain extent, the symbol of the dragon represents "a symbol of submission to authority" (Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 43). The emperors diminished the original dragon and reconstructed ones that met their own interests of power (see also Hao 1999, 10–11). This statement matches the idea of Victor Turner who asserted that the symbols were probably used as means and tools to control society (Turner 1967). Such orthopraxy was most forceful during the Ming dynasty as one still can see its legacy in contemporary society. The emperor himself completely possessed the "mature" and "pure" dragon which grew fully five claws on each foot while under the mandarin bureaucratic system, Buddhas and gods had to share the immature and impure dragons with three or four claws. As a result, commoners confronted the emperor wherever they saw the symbols of the dragon. They were even prohibited to point the eyes or draw the legs if they planned to depict "a dragon", which is reflected in the idiom, "Yegong hao long" (葉公好龍, Mr. Ye loves the dragon). The idiom tells the story of Mr. Ye, a local officer who loves dragons. He ordered soldiers to decorate his house with different dragon motifs. This aspiration of Mr. Ye moved the Jade Emperor of Heaven. He appointed the Dragon King to appear in Mr. Ye's dream to show his gratitude. Mr. Ye, despite his strong admiration of the dragon symbol, turned out to be so frightened that he ordered his soldiers to annihilate all decorative motifs of the dragon symbol. He finally realized that he could admire, love and desire the dragon, but could never touch it.

The royal courts of China, Vietnam and Korea regularly held dragon-boat competitions as means to demonstrate their military power. According to Andrew Chittick, Song China and Lý Vietnam during the tenth to twelfth centuries annually organized the event as a significant part of military and political culture. The Chinese persistently decorated the boats with dragon designs while in Vietnam, by comparison, "the more diverse earlier decorative practices were retained and adapted to local preferences" (Chittick 2015, 148–149, 156).

In Korea, it was the identical "familism" which alienated and further promoted Confucian virtues and orthopraxy in Korean culture (Lee 2003, 133–141; Kim 1991, 134), thus the traditional Korean dragon largely reflects Confucian hierarchy and social order. It was believed that the well-known myth *Dragon of the East Sea to Protect Korea* recalled the wish of becoming the East Sea guardian dragon of the great king Munmu in early Korean history. Furthermore, the dragon was closely attached to the birth of national founders; therefore, it has become a feudal symbol (Tcho 2007, 99).

Japanese culture is a mixture of both indigenous tradition and Chinese Confucian values. Confucian ethics can be found in Japan's earliest history, such as the *Kojiki* (712 CE) and the *Nihon Shoki* (720 CE). Imperial Confucianism was "less emphasized in Japan during the Tokugawa period" (see Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 3, 13, 31, 40). As the O Yo-mei school (Wang Yang-ming) strongly developed during late imperial periods, Japanese Confucianism became entirely secularized. The Japanese dragon was thus greatly de-centralized and de-Confucianized. It enjoyed a freer style in both physical appearance and hidden significance.

Joseph Buttinger (1958; 1972) called Vietnam "a smaller dragon", implying that Vietnamese culture was deeply influenced by Chinese Confucian ideology. Standardization (and/or orthopraxy) was also promoted by local bureaucratic systems during feudal dynasties; however, such aspect was not as strong as in China or Korea. Keith Taylor's research on Cao Biền (高駢, Gao Pian), a Chinese governor during the period of Tang rule (ninth century ACE.), found that he strongly promoted the Confucian education in Vietnam. It laid a radical Confucian foundation in the country that later became central for the building of independent dynasties later. However, during the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, the Đinh, Tiền Lê, Lý and Trần dynasties unified the country and ruled under Buddhist rather than Confucian ideology (Taylor 1976, 149–181). The Ming invasion and rule between 1407–1428 further grounded Chinese-styled Confucian education in Vietnam and helped develop Vietnamese Confucianism (see McHale 2002, 398; Whitmore 2010, 107). However, the state of Confucianism had weakened in Vietnam, since the Vietnamese "adopted shallow versions of Confucianism rather than internalizing it" (McHale 2002, 409–10, 416). John Whitmore asserted that while the Vietnamese "dealt with in Confucian terms, does not hide the non-Confucian nature of the society it describes" (Whitmore 1976, 200). In Vietnam, Confucianism is not seen as a Chinese tradition but rather as a native expression of Vietnamese values (Richey 2013, 60). As a matter of fact, standardization (and/or orthopraxy) was not strong in Vietnamese culture. As a result, Vietnamese culture is quite diverse, including how dragons are portrayed.

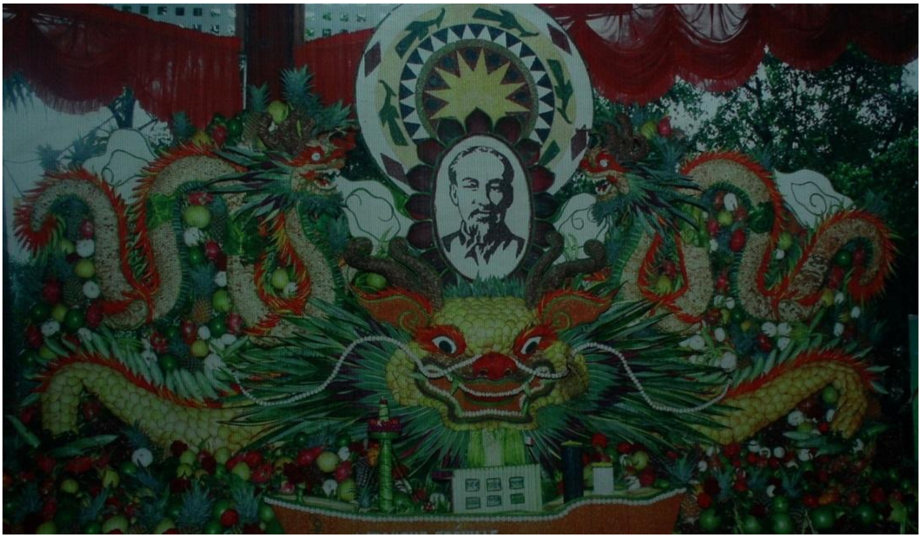

Figure 1. The decorative display in Southern Fruits Festival in Suối Tiên Theme Park (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam) in 2012 (vnexpress.net)

## Various Reactive Narratives of Related Social Groups

Commoners did not completely submit to the symbolic hierarchy embodied in the dragons as emperors and bureaucrats had expected. Arthur Wolf (1974) stated that there was "a vast gulf between the religion of the elite and that of the peasantry" (cited in Weller 1987, 3). Local commoners gained support from local elites in many cases and responded wisely to the orthopractic process to take back their interests. As late imperial dynasties strengthened their standardization missions, the struggles became more and more serious. Commoners managed to design and utilize the symbol of the dragon as a way to show their militancy and solidarity. The upper class had to accept it in order to reach a balance in dealing with both the royal order and commoners. Gilbert Rozman pointed out in his research that Chinese Confucianism has actually included at least five components: imperial Confucianism, reform Confucianism, Confucianism of social elites who do not hold high government positions, merchant Confucianism, and mass Confucianism (Rozman, ed. 1991, 161; also cited in Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 40, and Tucker 2004, 17–18). The compromised solutions (if any) were usually settled within the sphere of mass Confucianism. Chinese traditional arts and culture were thus being refreshed and renewed, making Chinese tradition one of the most creative civilizations of the world.

Since dragons were engrossed by the emperors, and a hierarchical system was applied to the symbol, Chinese commoners took their efforts to compose various creative forms of dragons, such as kui long (夔龍, quỳ long), chi long (螭龍, li long), zhu long

(竹龍, bamboo dragon, trúc long), and mei long (梅龍, apricot dragon/mai long). Physically, these popular "immature" dragons "lack" some radical parts (such as legs, claws, and muscles); therefore, they were allowed to be used widely. In comparison with the "mature" imperial and bureaucratic ones, the popular dragons embody largely decorative values rather than socio-political narratives. In certain cases, these decorative dragons were manipulated by the imperial palace and bureaucratic systems for their own uses.

The people of Yuecheng District, Zhaoqing city of Canton province (China) reserve their highest reverence to the local goddess, the Mother Dragon (龍母娘娘). The goddess took shape from a historical event that happened during the early Qin dynasty (early second century BCE). When the Qin Emperor wanted to pacify the lands south of the Five Mountains (五嶺山, present-day Guangxi, Guangdong and North Vietnam), he confronted the local Hundred-Viet people (百越民族) who resisted him. However, the Qin army defeated the local Hundred-Viet people and started ruling their territory. Yi Husong (易乎宋), the leader of local Hundred-Viet armies, was killed. Since then, the local people deified her as a goddess who controlled the Xi-jiang River (Western River). Her master temple was built in town known today as Yue-cheng (悦城). Modern visitors arriving at the temple are told the story of Mother Dragon and her five little dragons resisting the attacks from Qin imperial troops. Such spirit not only praises local identity but also attests to the anti-centralization and anti-orthopraxy pressures by the local traditions (see Ye and Jiang 2003).

In *the Journey to the West* (西遊記) by Wu Cheng'en (吳承恩, Ming Dynasty), one of the Dragon King's sons were defeated by the Monkey King. He transformed into a horse to escort Master Xuanzang to the land of the Buddha in "the West". Similarly, one can easily find various images of dragons in local Buddhist and Taoist temples in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam nowadays. Attaching symbolism to religious traditions was a creative way for commoners to maintain the symbol of the dragon.

Recently, Dr. Du and Dr. Liu from Jiangxi presented at Harvard (in February 28, 2019) on a case study at D Village, south of Nanchang city. Villagers took advantage of local history and cultural resources to renovate and perform the collective bench dragon dance with a hundred performers and a thousand participants. Accordingly, the villagers wrapped up their narrative of anti-imposition on their land ownership by the local authority and state-sponsored developers. The symbol of the dragon and local deity were used as a form of disguised "tool" for their upward resistance and village solidarity. Unfortunately, corruption was found among the village leaders those who leveraged the organization of the dance in order to exchange gifts. This led to the suspension of the event in 2017.

In Korea, the dragon joined the Buddhist world since the Three Kingdoms Period (57 BCE –668 CE) and was officially worshipped as a god during the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392) (Tcho 2007, 93–99). The Korean commoners were more motivated by local familism and imported Confucian hierarchy. Alexander Woodside said the Koreans tried to differentiate themselves from China "by stressing much more clearly the distinction between sons of primary and secondary wives in descent groups" (Woodside 1998, 197). They actually tightened the Confucian application in their practical society which ensured a strong and stable cornerstone for Confucian hierarchy. Their respect for the symbol of the dragon strongly represented their desires and interests. Once they confronted the crisis of moral misuse by members of the upper classes (i.e., the kings, Yangban families, and local authorities), the dragon became the symbol of resistance. Both the Vietnamese and Koreans expressed a determination to oppose any textual imperialism in Chinese courts histories that demeaned the importance of the Vietnamese and Korean political centers. As such, recording history became a major form of oppositional "boundary maintenance" by Vietnamese and Korean state centers and their elites against Chinese hegemony (Woodside 1998, 199). However, there are no stories about the symbol of the dragon representing a form of bottom-up resistance or mobilization in Korean culture, except when people utilized the image of the Guardian Dragon being arrested by the Chinese Marshall Su Dingfang (蘇定方) in Baekje kingdom during an attack from the Chinese Tang Dynasty (Yoon 1999, 133).

The dragon is depicted negatively in a Japanese Buddhist story. As a part of the Japanese dragon culture, the dragon contains the significances of victory and righteousness. A Japanese esoteric Buddhist myth tells a story of the Immovable Buddha, Acala (不動明王) swallowing the rivalry sword. Legend has it that Acala fought 95 heterodox species that had incarnated into the "wisdom-fire sword" (智火之劍). After the heterodox species turned into the wisdom-fire sword, he turned into Dragon King Furikara (俱利伽羅龍), used his four claws to seize tightly the sword of heterodox species and swallowed it, therefore defeating them (Nguyen 2016).

Japanese dragons are identified as less orthopractic symbols in East Asia. In Japanese, the dragon is called Ryu which was borrowed from the Chinese in the late Nara period. Because of its geographical location and natural environment, Japan was minimally involved in the standardization process. Instead, the Japanese tended to absorb natural catastrophes (such as volcanoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis) into the symbol, making the dragon a reflective figure of both good and bad natural phenomena. As the de-sinicization spirit grew stronger in late feudal periods, more and more Japanese people considered the dragon as an evil symbol (Nguyen 2016). In Japanese mythology, the hero, Susanoo, slaughtered the fierce Yamato-no-Orochi dragon to stop its attacks on the islands.

During the Heian period, the Kyohime Temple recorded in Great Japan's Fawa Experience (大日本國法華經驗記) has also shown these features of Japanese dragons. The Edo paintings at Dojo Temple (道成寺) tell the story of a female dragon, named Princess Kiyo (清姬), being angered because Anchin (安珍), a monk she pursued, disappeared. A similar version is found in a Heian period story. It said that once the female dragon, Princess Kiyo, fell in love with Anchin, but he rejected her. Kiyohime turned into a dragon to frighten Anchin, forcing him to hide inside the iron bell in the Dojo Temple. He was finally burned by her anger (see Great Japan's Fawa Experience『大日本國 法華驗記』).

As stated above, pre-colonial Vietnam was not a strong Confucian state, and the Confucian orthopraxy was not effective. Confucianism had to compete with native non-Confucian traditions (as described by Whitmore 1976, 200). Furthermore, Vietnam is bordered by Laos and Cambodia, two Indianized Southeast Asian states, and had indirect contacts with Indian culture via Indian monks and masters. Vietnam's contact with religious figures and its neighbors diversified its traditional culture. In the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, Vietnamese royal and bureaucratic dragons looked more like Indian naga snakes than Confucian dragons (See Viện Nghệ thuật 1973; Trần 2012; Lee 2013, 345). Confucianism rapidly developed in the fifteenth century (under the Le Dynasty); however, it declined in the mid-sixteenth century because Vietnam split into two (Tonkin and Cochinchina), a division which lasted until the late eighteenth century. The Nguyen Dynasty (1802–1945) tried to recover Chinese-style Confucianism; however, Western intervention in Vietnamese politics prevented the movement. Since 1858, French colonialism in Vietnam nearly put an end to the long-standing orthopraxization of dragons. Recently, Tran Trong Duong, a cultural researcher in Hanoi, discovered that the popularly-known dragon structure was an Indian creature (Makara) that dated back to the seventeenth century in But Thap Temple (Trần 2012). Many presumably-certified Confucian objects have also been re-classified as local or Indianized remnants.

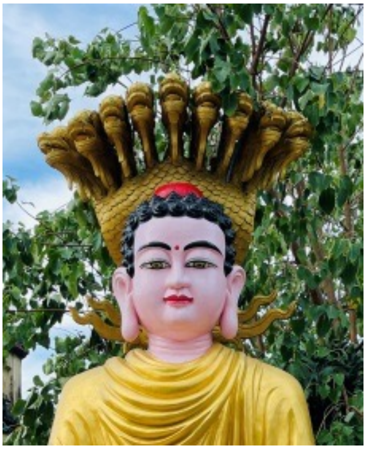

Figure 2. Nine-headed dragon protecting the Buddha, which resonates with local Khmer Theravada Buddhism. (Nguyen 2016)

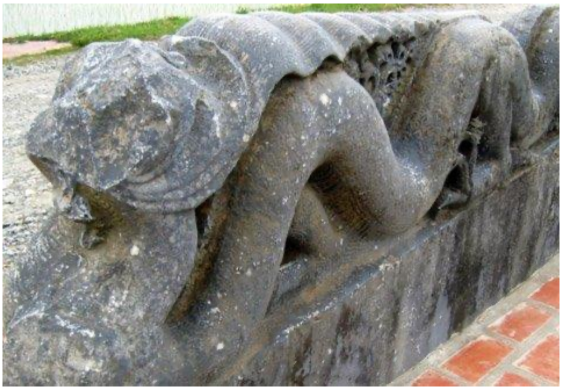

Figure 3. The Chinese army previously severed the dragon's head
(vietnamnet.vn)

## Re-defining and Re-interpreting the Dragon in the New Era of the "Ecological Turn"

The creation of symbols is a systematically structural process in which human beings construct symbols to carry certain implications subjected to the change of time and space. In their daily lives, people tend to frame events and things into certain symbols to make their own narratives and interpretations. Ferdinand de Saussure (2011 [1959]) clarified that a symbol includes the structure of two radical components, the signifier and the signified. Claude Levi-Strauss suggested the concept of "binary opposites" to interpret symbols (Levi-Strauss 1964). As a matter of fact, symbols are closely associated with human beings' political lives, family rituals, rites of passage, and so on (Weber 1916; Parsons 1951; Geertz 1993; Howe 2009). Victor Turner viewed it from a different perspective. He rejected the idea that symbols worked as the patterns carrying social features and social consciousness. He asserted that symbols were used as means and tools to control society (Turner 1967). Schneider especially stressed on the "dynamic" of culture and hence indirectly affirmed the changeability of the symbols (Schneider 1980). Truthfully, regardless of their diverse typology and interpretative significances, symbols always originate from nature and are associated with specific forms of social discourse. They can be interpreted only in their own specific contexts.

A sustainable symbol must be embedded in a well-defined environment and carry shared values in its meanings. To re-interpret the symbol of the dragon, we probably need a diverse toolkit, such as core concepts, reasonable approaches, good environmental backgrounds, and basic interpretation mechanisms to achieve progress. Fortunately, the new Confucian vision in the early twenty-first century and postmodernist viewpoint can provide a radical means and methodology for this mission.

As a symbol, the dragon has been continuously modified and “superscribed”[2] with ideas or implications that reflect the transformations of the temporary society even though state-sponsored standardization has never ended. Consequently, the interpretation of the dragon symbol ought to be contextual. According to Antonio Gramsci, it is definitely not the case that culture “persists through time, handed down from one generation to another” (cited in Phạm 2009, 176). Robert Weller, a well-known anthropologist, emphasized the importance of context-based interpretation and re-interpretation on socially oriented issues in China and East Asia (Weller 1987, 7). Similarly, Thomas Gold in his consideration about identity asserted that “cultural identity […] was not uniform over time or place” (Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 41). Previously in a publication on the context-based interpretation of religious practices, Clifford Geertz stated that religion as a symbolic system could not exist apart from a cultural context. According to him, symbols “shape and are shaped by worldviews and ethos”, and people's worldview and ethos, their cosmology and their spiritual practices are as mutually confirming entities expressed in symbols and ritual (also cited in Tucker 2004, 22, 23).

Therefore, identity is an ongoing tradition which opens various platforms for researchers and readers of different backgrounds and different generations. Symbolic meanings derive from social backgrounds that are constantly produced and reproduced, negotiated, and constructed (see further Stoller 1989; Eipper 1998). Tu Weiming’s [杜维明] analysis on the new vision of Confucianism in the early twenty-first century also posisted that “Confucians insist that we begin our journey of self-realization with the acknowledgment that we are concrete living human beings embedded in the world here and now” (Tu 2004, 489). Phạm Quỳnh Phương in her research on the historical symbol Trần Hưng Đạo in Vietnamese tradition once dubbed that “although culture might be a collective representation, it is neither a homogenous thing nor a mere social unifier or value enhancer in the Durkheimian sense” (Phạm 2009, 15–16). Truthfully, as more narratives have been continuously attached to the dragon, we can suggest re-defining and re-interpreting the symbol in our era.

One striking idea that may stimulate new ways of interpreting dragons is Tu Weiming’s concepts of “anthropocosmic” and “the ecological turn” of the new wave of Confucianism: the transformed interpretation of the ancient Chinese philosophy, “Tianrenheyi, or the unity of Heaven and Humanity as a whole” (天人合一). Accordingly, Confucian humanism is definitely not secular nor transcendent. Instead, it carries an “anthropocosmic vision” and “emphatically rejects anthropocentrism” (Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 18; Tu 1998, 17–19; Taylor 1998, 44–45; Tu 2004, 480, 489). Fan Ruiping called this vision “a weak anthropocentric account of man and nature and that such an account is cosmic-principle-oriented” (Fan 2005, 107). From an anthropocosmic point of view, the relationship of heaven, earth and humans is dynamic and mutually reinforcing (McBeath and McBeath 2014, 24; Fan 2005, 105–122) or interactive. The concept of the vitalism of the earth and the co-creativity of humans was emphasized in which the creativity of Heaven in the Confucian cosmological worldview is paralleled by the vitalism of the natural world (see Tucker 2004 25). From that standpoint, Tu further suggested that human beings should reserve their sensitivity, sympathy, and empathy toward nature as well as human society. “Human beings, as co-creators of the cosmic order, are responsible not only for themselves but also for Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things” (Tu 2004, 494).

Rodney Taylor called for preserving harmonious relationships with the natural world, with a focus on nonhuman animals (Taylor 1986, 237–63). Tucker went further that “humans are embedded in and dependent on the larger dynamics of nature” (Tucker 2004, 20, and asserted that *Tianrenheyi* in a global ethic that will counteract the ecological crisis (Tucker 1998, 187–210; cited in McBeath and McBeath 2014, 24). Such an “anthropocosmic” point, if viewed, likely reminds us of the past symbols of the dragon itself before the process of standardization in which ecological imprints played a basic role in the ways dragons were shaped and interpreted. The long-standing process of orthopraxy brought the dragon away from its primary status. One cannot deny the fact that the most standard dragons still carry forms of both ecological and social discourse; however, the latter has been so strongly emphasized that it could restrain any contiguity between the dragon symbol and human desires to obtain a harmonious life with nature. As long as the superimposed implications have not been deconstructed the symbol of the dragon will die out in the daily life of the modern community. Many people hoped and believed that the disappearance of feudal regimes in East Asia would restore the ecological narratives embodied in the dragon symbol; however, recent state-sponsored dragon stamps in China might suggest the opposite direction. Therefore, the restoration of the dragon’s ecological imbuement will be best performed under the “anthropocosmic” vision of new Confucian philosophy. Such a vision can be manipulated as the main philosophical core for the building, the usage, and the interpretation of the dragon in modern East Asia.

Well-known scholars Liang Shuming (梁漱溟 1979, 200–1), Mou Zongshan (牟宗三), Tang Junyi (唐君毅), and Feng Youlan (馮友蘭) (see Tu 2004, 480–508) as well as current researchers Tu Weiming, Mary Evelyn Tucker, Wang Gungwu, Robert Weller, Adam Seligman, and others (see Kelly 1998, 93–119) are positively working towards restoring the innately harmonious relationship between human and nature. Some of them suggested the idea that Confucian spirituality ought to be appreciated to ensure the fundamental balance of human-nature relationship (see Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, Tu 2004, Tucker 2004). The symbol of the dragon should be rebuilt in such a context in which the dragon preserves its authentic response to nature and further develops updated forms of social discourse which are happening in specific times and places. Social discourse can be changed due to the pluralism in human society; however, the dragon as a natural response is a core value of the symbol must be protected from being distorted. As the dragon's imprints of nature are promoted, its spiritual power is thus respected in both rational or religious ways. In other words, the deep imbuement of the dragon in the spiritual world could help maintain the basic essence of the dragon symbol and keep it associated with the daily life of commoners.

In order to create a flexible and liberal value system of the dragon symbol, we should apply the post-modernist point of view in re-defining, re-molding and re-interpreting it. George De Vos noted Durkheim's view that modernization indispensably secularized all practices, therefore, people "must look to some source other than the supernatural for the embodiment of the sacred" (Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 12). The "source" that De Vos mentioned cannot be a thoroughly science-based point of view since contemporary human beings are suffering due to the serious damage that nature has underwent. Shih Chih-yu once wrote,

> Confucianism actually encourages eremitism if state authority deviates from the spirit of the Dao, the essence of which can be sensed only by the individual. In other words, the freedom from overall obligation to people holding office may have given the Chinese a higher degree of liberty in making judgments independent of their social status (Shih 1995, 126; also cited in Kelly 1998, 96).

We can pursue post-modernist viewpoints in re-defining the dragon if the symbol is definitely decentralized and removed from orthopraxy.

In a statement regarding the freedom and liberalization in re-defining and re-interpreting human practices in the New Confucian period in China and East Asia, Theodore De Bary and Wing-tsit Chan said that it was not necessarily needed in terms of political ideology but in terms of self-cultivation (cited in Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman 1992, 130). Before that, Mou Zongshan, a New Confucian scholar, considered modern Confucianism as "a reformed moral metaphysics"; Confucian scholars cared more about human values and "are occupied with figuring out how these values can lead to human flourishing". Such an ideology is named "concern-consciousness" (cited in Berthrong 1998, 188). New Confucian "anthropocosmic" vision will strongly motivate the de-politicalization of the symbol of the dragon. As Berthrong wrote, modern scholars are actively screening and evaluating to check what should be preserved or modified, versus what should be abandoned (Berthrong 1998, 191–192). Presently, in making the dragons, local artists in East Asia do not care about old-fashioned orthodox features. Instead, they deliberately focus on the structure, the physical appearance and the aesthetics of the dragons to meet the commercialized demands of the market. In most cases, the dragons are made with four-clawed legs. "It is because making a three-clawed dragon does not qualify the aesthetic criteria while the five-claw structure is too complicated and ugly", an ethnic Chinese man said when carving a dragon for the local Beidi Temple [北帝廟] in Vinh Chau town, Soc Trang province of Vietnam (personal interview, 2016). A similar explanation was expressed by another local Chinese in Tanjung Pinang, Indonesia (personal interview, 2017). Truthfully, the modern East Asian dragon-makers are relatively liberal in their mindset; they are not imposed by any hierarchical norms and values.

The dragon is a regional symbol of East Asia and the world; therefore, we must preserve the universal lens to re-define and re-interpret it. The founding of the traditional dragon obviously showed a diverse contribution of the archetypes even though it was then reframed and standardized by imperial Chinese emperors more than any other state in East Asia. Confucianism has been recognized as a special philosophical system carrying universal values, thus Confucian practices carry regional and international commonalities. As Tu, Hejtmanek and Wachman (1992, 95) stated, the standardized kinship groups and ancestor worship patterns or rituals acted as "the glue that helps hold Sinitic societies together", and creates "the illusion of unity and interpretive agreement". It is unfair and inhumane to assert common practices on any single state. In the new era, it is the universal values (especially the "anthropocosmis" concept). The symbol of the dragon should be read as a companion to our ordeals with nature. The "anthropocosmic" vision will actively play an important role in abolishing ethnocentrism or any transformed imperial agitation (if any) in the symbol of East Asian dragon. The dragon must be modified to its regional commonalities and universal values rather than having an emphasis on any specific national identity. As long as people know the history of how the symbol of the dragon was formed and developed, they will learn that the Chinese traditionally framed, molded and standardized the symbol of the dragon during their imperial dynasties; therefore, it is unnecessary to make any further assertion about that.

If universal values can be grouped as "the notion" of the symbol of the dragon, and New Confucian "anthropocosmic" vision be identified as a special form of "ritual", then, in applying the point of view of Seligman and Weller (2012), a postmodern liberal mind in shaping, using and interpreting the dragon will directly create and promote common "shared experience" between different classes of people in one country and between peoples of different countries who own the symbol of dragon. As Mary Evelyn Tucker said, "the rituals reflect the patterned structures of the natural world and bind humans to one another, to the ancestral world, and to the cosmos at large" (Tucker 2004, 25). The vitality and significance of the dragon in this "ecological turn" period are easily handled if peoples are actively engaging in making and sharing the experience.

## Conclusion

The dragon reflects the mutual relationship between human beings and nature as well as a spiritual response to nature's impacts on human lives. The orthopractic history of the East Asian dragon shows that as long as the dragon was forcibly imposed in centralization and standardization processes by imperial forces, it was taken further away from its ontological stance, thus causing the constraint and abolishment of its ecological narratives. The more forms of political discourse that were superimposed on the symbol of the dragon, the more classification and tension were constructed between the states and peoples. The dragon thus became a tool of political propaganda rather than a symbol. The recovery and revitalization of the dragon symbol today must be aligned with the new vision on the relationship of human beings and nature (at least in East Asia), the New Confucian "anthropocosmic" viewpoint, to ensure the consistency of its ontological foundation. Such a vision has been built up by twenty- first-century scholars in accordance with the application of universal cosmology and postmodern liberalism. The dragon-molding methodology should be embodied in a more pro-nature and pro-aesthetics mindset which reasonably allows people to shape, define, use, and interpret the symbol of the dragon in an active way. The notion of the dragon, despite the continuous changes driven by imperial political narratives, is widely shared from a postmodernist viewpoint. We further need to establish an "anthoropocosmic" vision as a special form of "ritual perception" in order to create a sharing, sympathetic and mutual respect among the peoples of East Asia. Given the fact that the symbol used to be superscribed with the imperial Chinese state values and interests, the modern people optimistically yearn for the manifestation of the so-called "East-Asianness" feature or even universal essence of the symbol of the dragon.

## Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

## Notes

[1] The early version of this article was presented at *Taiwanese Philosophy and the Preservation of Confucian Tradition International Conference* which was held from 17-18 October 2019, 2019 at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia (unpublished).

[2] The term was used by Prasenjit Duara (1988, 778-95).

## References

Arnold, Martin 2018 — *The Dragon: Fear and Power*. London, UK: Reaktion Books.

Berthrong, John H. 1998 — *Concerning creativity: A comparison of Chu Hsi, Whitehead, and Neville*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Buttinger, Joseph 1958 — *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*. New York, NY: Praeger.

1972 — *A Dragon Defiant: A Short History of Vietnam*. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers.

Chen, Shuxiang 1993 — "Huangmei Discovers a Neolithic Cobblestone Sculpture of a Giant Dragon." *China Cultural Relics News*. AUG 22. [Chinese Language Text] 陳樹祥, 「黃梅發現新石器時代卵石擺塑巨龍」, 《中國文物報》, 北京.

Chittick, Andrew 2015 — "Dragon Boats and Serpent Prows: Naval Warfare and the Political Culture of China's Southern Borderlands", *Imperial China and Its Southern Neighbours*, ed. Victor H. Mair and Liam Kelley, 140–60. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Deopik, D.V. 1993 — "Vietnam as Part of Southeast Asia." In *Traditional Vietnam*. [Russian Language Text] **Деопик. Д. В. *Вьетнам как часть Юго-восточной Азии.* В: *Традиционный Вьетнам.* М., с.** 11–23.

Duara, Prasenjit 1988 — "Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War." *Journal of Asian Studies* 47(4): 778–95. https://doi.org/10.2307/2057852

Eipper, Chistopher 1998 — "Anthropology and Cultural Studies: Difference, Ethnography and Theory." *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 9: 310–26. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1835-9310.1998.tb00201.x

Esherick, Joseph and Rankin, Mary eds. 1990 — *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Fan, Ruiping
2005
“A Reconstructionist Confucian Account of Environmentalism: Toward a Human Sagely Dominion Over Nature.” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 32(1): 105–122. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6253.2005.00178.x

Faure, David
1999
“The Emperor in the Village: Representing the State in South China.” In *State and Court Ritual in China*, edited by Joseph McDermott, 267–98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Feuchtwang, Stephan
1992
*Popular Religion in China: The Imperial Metaphor*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Geertz, Clifford
1993
*The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. London: Fontana Press.

von Glahn, Richard
2004
*The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hao, Chun
1999
*Prosperity Brought by the Dragon and the Phoenix*. Jinan: Shan dong jiao yu chu ban she [Chinese Language Text] 浩春，《龍鳳呈祥》，濟南：山東教育出版社.

Hayes, L. Newton
1973 [1922]
*The Chinese Dragon*. Shanghai: Commercial Press, Ltd./Ann Arbor, Michigan, University Microfilms.

Howe, James
2009
*Chiefs, Scribes, and Ethnographers: Kuna Culture from Inside and Out*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Ji, Chengming
2002
*The customs of dragon worship in China*. Tianjin: Tianjin Classics Publishing House. [Chinese Language Text] 吉成名，《中國崇龍習俗》，天津：天津古籍出版 社.

Katz, R. Paul
2007
“Orthopraxy and heteropraxy beyond the state: Standardizing ritual in Chinese society,” *Modern China* 33 (1): 72-90. https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700406294769

Kelly, David
1998
“The Chinese search for freedom as a universal value”, *Asian freedoms: the idea of freedom in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. David Kelly and Anthony Reid, 93-119. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Kim, Jae-un 1992 *The Koreans: Their Mind and Behavior*, translated by Kim Kyong-dong. Seoul: Kyobo Book Centre.

Kuhn, Philip 1980 *Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure*, 1796-1864. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lee, Khoon Choy 2013 *Golden Dragon and Purple Phoenix: The Chinese and Their Multi-Ethnic Descendants in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: World Scientific.

Lee, Kwang-kyu 2003 *Korean Traditional Culture*. Seoul: Jimoondang.

Levi-Strauss, Claude 1964 *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John Weightman and Doreen Weightman. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Liang, Shuming 1979 *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* [Chinese Language Text] *Dongxi Wenhua Jiqi*, reprint, 200-201. Taipei: Wenxue Publishers.

Li, Ting 1963 "The Origin of Dragon-Worship." *Academic Research* [Chinese Language Text] 李梃, 「龍崇拜的起源」, 《學術研究》, 第9期.

Liu, Dunyuan 1978 "Some Mythological Issues in Mawangdui Silk Paintings of the Western Han Dynasty." *Wenshizhe*. [Chinese Language Text] 刘敦愿. 马王堆西汉帛画中的若干神话问题., 文史哲 (4): 1.

McBeath, Gerald A. and Jenifer Huang McBeath et al. Ed.2014 "Confucianism as an Environmental Ethic." In *Environmental education in China*, 16–29. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar.

McHale, Shawn 2002 "Mapping a Vietnamese Confucian Past and its Transition to Modernity." In *Rethinking Confucianism: Past and present in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman, John B. Duncan, and Herman Ooms, 397–430. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series.

Meskill, Joanna 1979 A Chinese Pioneer Family: The Lins of Wu-feng, Taiwan, 1729—1895. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

| | |
|---|---|
| Nguyễn, Ngọc Thơ<br>2016 | *The Symbol of Dragon in East Asia*. Hanoi: Publishing House. National Politics. [Vietnamese Language Text] *Hình tượng rồng trong văn hóa phương Đông*. Hà Nội: NXB. Chính trị Quốc gia. |
| Niculin, N. I.<br>2006 | *The Mainstream of Vietnamese Culture Hanoi: Publishing House. National Politics*. [Vietnamese Language Text]. Dòng chảy văn hóa Việt Nam, selected and introduced by Hồ Sĩ Vịnh and Nguyễn Hữu Sơn. Hà Nội: NXB Văn Hoá Thông Tin. |
| Ning Yegao, Xia Guozhen<br>1999 | *Chinese auspicious culture.* Beijing: Zhongyang minzu taxue chubanshe [Chinese Language Text] 寧業高-夏國珍《中國吉祥文化》, 北京: 中央民族 大學出版社. |
| Pang, Jin<br>1993 | “Eight Thousand Years of Chinese Dragon Culture” Beijing: People's Daily Publishing House: Xinhua Bookstore Distribution [Chinese Language Text] 龐進 《八千年 中國龍文化》, 北京: 人民日報出版社: 新華書店經銷. |
| 2007 | *Chinese Dragon Culture*. Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing House. [Chinese Language Text] 龐進 《中國龍文化》, 重慶: 重慶出版社. |
| Parsons, Talcott<br>1951 | *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. |
| Phạm, Quỳnh Phương<br>2009 | *Hero and Deity: Tran Hung Dao and the Resurgence of Popular Religion in Vietnam*. Bangkok: Mekong Press. |
| Phạm, Hoàng Quân<br>2018 | “The Chinese are systematically printing and reading Vietnamese history” [Vietnamese Language Text] “Người Trung Quốc đang in và đọc sử Việt một cách hệ thống”. DEC 22. Available from https://tuoitre.vn/nguoi-trung-quoc-dang-in-va-doc-su-viet-mot-cach-he-thong-0181222115217466.htm |
| Qiu, Pu<br>1988 | “Discourse on Dragons.” *Folklore Forum* [Chinese Language Text] 秋浦, <說龍>, 民間文學論壇, 第1期. |
| Rawski, Evelyn S.<br>1985 | “Economic and Social Foundations of Late Imperial Culture,” in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. |

Richey, Jeffrey L. 2013 *Confucius in East Asia: Confucianism's History in China, Korea, Japan, and Viet Nam*. Michigan: Association for Asian Studies.

Rozman, Gilbert ed. 1991 *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Saussure, Ferdinand de 1959/2011 *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Haun Saussy. New York: Columbia University Press.

Schneider, David 1980 *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*, 2nd edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Schoppa, Keith 1982 *Chinese Elites and Political Change: Zheijang Province in the Early 20th Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Seligman, Adam and Weller, Robert 2012 *Rethinking Pluralism: Ritual, Experience, and Ambiguity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shih, Chih-yu 1995 *State and Society in China's Political Economy: The Cultural Dynamics of Socialist Reform*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Stoller, Paul 1989 *The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Anthropology*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Sun Zuoyunn 1960 "Dunhuang's Mysterious Monsters." *Archeology*. [Chinese Language Text] 孫作雲, 「敦煌畫中的神怪畫」, 《考古》, 6期.

Sutton, Donald S. 2007 "Introduction to the Special Issue: Ritual, Cultural Standardization, and Orthopraxy in China: Reconsidering James L. Watson's ideas." *Modern China* 33(1): 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700406294914

Tao Tao Liu 1983 *Dragons, Gods & Spirits from Chinese Mythology*. New York: Schocken Books.

Taylor, Keith 1976 "The Rise of Đại Việt and the Establishment of Thăng-long." In *Explorations in the Early Southeast Asian History: The Oigins of Southeast Asian Statecraft*, ed. Kenneth R. Hall and John K. Whitmore, 149–181. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan.

Taylor, L. Rodney
1986 “Of Animals and Man: The Confucian Perspectives.” In *Animal Sacrifices: Religious Perspective on the Use of Animals in Science*, edited by Tom Reagan, 237–63. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

1998 “Companionship with the World: Roots and Branches of a Confucian Ecology”, *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*, edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong, 37–58. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Tcho, Hye-Young
2007 “The Dragon in Buddhist Korean Temples”, *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture* 8: 93–114.

The Association of Premodern Japanese History
2006 *Illustrated books of Japanese customary history*. Japanese book publishing [Japanese Language Text] 『日本風俗歷史畫報』 Vol.2, 日本圖書出版.

Trần Đức Anh Sơn
2012 “Thousand Years of Finding the Traces of Flying Dragons.” Saigon businessman Spring weekend. [Vietnamese Language Text] “Ngàn năm tìm lại dấu rồng bay”, Doanh nhân Sài Gòn Cuối tuần Xuân. http://giacngo.vn/PrintView.aspx?Language=vi&ID=5EC04B.

Trần Ngọc Thêm
2004 *Discovering Vietnamese Cultural Identities*. Hochimin: Publishing house [Vietnamese Language Text] Tìm về bản sắc văn hóa Việt Nam, NXB. Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.

Trần Ngọc Thêm and Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ
2011 “The Origin of the Dragon Seen from Cultural Studies.” *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*. [Vietnamese Language Text] “Nguồn gốc con rồng nhìn từ văn hóa học”, *Tập san KHXH&NV*.

Tu, Weiming
1998 “Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality”, *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*, edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong, 3–22. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

2004 “The Ecological Turn in New Confucian Humanism: Implications for China and the World.” In *Confucian Spirituality*, Vol 2, edited by Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, 480–508. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

Tu, Weiming, Milan Hejtmanek and Alan Wachman, 1992
*The Confucian World Observed: Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Tucker, Mary Evelyn 2004
"Introduction", *Confucian Spirituality*, Vol 2, ed. Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker 1–27. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

Turner, Victor 1967
*The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Viện, Nghệ thuật 1973
*Lý Dynasty's Arts*. Culture Publishing House. [Vietnamese Language Text] *Mỹ thuật thời Lý*. NXB Văn hóa.

Wang, Changzheng 1985
"Research on Dragons." *A Forum on Folk Literature* 6 [Chinese Language Text] 王昌正, 「龍的研究」, 《民間文學論壇》, 第6期.

Wang, Dayou 1988
*The Origins of Dragon and Phoenix Culture*. Beijing: Beijing Arts and Crafts Publishing House [Chinese Language Text] 王大有, 《龍鳳文化源流》, 北京: 北京工藝美術出版社.

Wang, Dong 2000
*New Developments in Chinese Dragons: Theories on the Divine Dragons of China*. Beijing: Peking University Press [Chinese Language Text] 王東, 《中國龍的新發現: 中華神龍論》, 北京: 北京大學出版社.

Wang, Shuqiang and Dajian Feng 2012
*Dragon Writing: Research on the Dragon Culture of China*. Tianjin: Nankai University Press [Chinese Language Text] 王樹強, 馮大建, 《龍文: 中國龍文化研究》, 天津: 南開大學出版社.

Watson, James 1985
"Standardizing the Gods: The Promotion of Tien'hou ("Empress of Heaven") along the South China Coast, 960–1960." In *Village Life in Hong Kong: Politics, Gender, and Ritual in the New Territories*, ed. James Watson and Rubie. S. Watson. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Wang, Weiti 1990
*Dragon Tracks*. Dalian: Dalian Publishing House [Chinese Language Text] 王維堤, 《龍的踪跡》, 大連: 大連出版社.

2000 *Dragon and Phoenix Culture*. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House [Chinese Language Text] 王維堤，《龍鳳文化》, 上海: 上海古籍出版社.

Weber, Max 1916 *Essays on Art*. New York, NY: W. E. Rudge.

Wei, Yanan 1986 “Tracing the Origins of the 'Dragon' Mysteries: Professor Su Bingqi Discusses New Archaeological Discoveries in Western Liaoning.” *Xinmin Evening News* [Chinese Language Text] 魏亞南，「逆原追根“龍”謎-蘇秉琦教授談遼西 考古新發現」，《新民晚報》北京.

Wei, Zhiqiang 2003 *The Dragon Culture and Dragon Movements of China*. Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House [Chinese Language Text] 衛志強，《中國龍文化 與龍運動》, 天津: 天津古籍出版社.

Weller, Robert 1987 *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*. London: Macmillan/ Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Wen, Yiduo 1942 “From Human-Headed Snake-body Images to the Discussion of Dragons and Totems.” *Journal of the Humanities* [Chinese Language Text] 聞一多，「從人首蛇身像談到龍 與圖騰」，《人文科學學報》 第2期.

Whitmore, John K. 1976 “The Vietnamese Confucian scholar’s view of his country’s early history.”, In *Explorations in the early Southeast Asian history: The origins of Southeast Asian statecraft*, edited by Kenneth R. Hall and John K. Whitmore, 193–203. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan.

2010 “Paperwork: the Rise of the New Literati and Ministerial Power and the Effort Toward Legibility in Đại Việt.” In *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China factor*, edited by Geoff Wade and Sun Laichen, 104–125: 107. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

Wolter, O.W. 1996 “What Else May Ngo Si Lien Mean? A Matter of Distinctions in the Fifteenth Century”, in *Sojourners and Settlers:*

*Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, edited by Anthony Reid and Kristine Alilunas Rodgers, 94–114. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Wolf, Arthur *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Woodside, Alexander 1998 “Territorial Order and Collective-Identity Tensions in Confucian Asia: China, Vietnam, Korea”, *Daedalus* 127(3): 191–220. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027512

Xu, Huadang 1988 *The Dragons of China*. Beijing: China Light Industry Press House: Xinhua Bookstore Distribution Beijing Branch Office [Chinese Language Text] 徐華鐺, 《中國的龍》, 北京: 輕工業出版社: 新華書店 北京發行所發行.

Ye, Chunsheng and Mingzhi Jiang 2003 *Yuecheng Dragon-Mother Culture*. Beijing: China Tourism Press. [Chinese Language Text] 叶春生, 蒋明智, 葉應燧, 《悦城龙母文化》, 北京: 中國旅遊出版社.

Ye, Yingsui 2001 *Chinese auspicious pictures*. Beijing: China Tourism Press. [Chinese Language Text] 葉應燧, 《中華吉祥圖》, 北京: 中國旅遊出版社.

Yoon, Yul-Soo 1999 *The Legend of Immortality*. Seoul: Daewonsa. [Korean Language Text] 윤열수, 『불멸의 신화』, 서울: 대원사.

Yuan, Dexing 1978 *Chinese Historical Heritage* [Chinese Language Text] 袁德星, 《中華歷史文物》, 高雄: 河洛圖書出版社.

Yu, Ziliu 1985 *The Root of the Dragon: Five Thousand Years of Chinese History*. Hongkong: The Commercial Press [Chinese Language Text] 余紫榴 《龍的根: 中國史話五千年》, 香港: 商務印書館香港分館.

Zhang, Daoyi 1999 *Auspicious Ruyi (Special Research on Folk Arts)*. Taipei: Taiwan Hansheng Magazine [Chinese Language Text] 《吉祥如意》 (民藝專題研究), 台北: 台灣漢聲雜誌社出版.

Zhong, Tao 1991 *Research on Chinese Dragon Boat Culture*. Guizhou: Guizhou People Publishing House Books Publishing Company [Chinese Language Text] 鐘濤 《中華龍舟 文化研究》, 貴州: 貴州人民出版社.

| | |
|---|---|
| Photos | vnexpress.net<br>vietnamnet.vn |