

ABOUT THE FORMATION OF THE VIETNAMESE (KINH) ETHNICITY

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The paper covers the problem of the Vietnamese (Kinh) ethnicity formation process through the recent research in the history of the Viet-Muong languages, creation myths, the analysis of ethnonyms and the data given in the Vietnamese medieval chronicles.

By the term “Vietnamese ethnicity formation” we mean the emergence of the clearly defined ethnic group with its certain attributes (ethnic consciousness, cultural, linguistic, socio-economic identity, etc.) which took place in Giao (Northern Vietnam) by the 10th century A.D. The main point of this process influenced by the Chinese expansion consists in the separation of the Kinh community from the Viet-Muong (Mon-Khmer) population. The period of Giao is, from our point of view, just the time when the people later named Vietnamese “had learned to articulate their non-Chinese identity in terms of China’s cultural heritage” (K.Taylor). The final result of this process is marked by the creation of the independent national state that can be considered as the first “take-off” of the newly formed ethnicity.

Thus the main conclusion of the undertaken analysis agrees with the opinion of those not numerous historians and anthropologists who consider the Vietnamese (Kinh) ethnicity as quite late (about 10th century A.D.) fusion of the earlier Southeast Asian substrata with the later Chinese elements.