

Analysing Anh Hùng: The Hero as a Metaphor for Vietnamese Independence

This paper examines the concept of the hero in Vietnamese discourse as a metaphor for the independent Vietnamese nation, its people and its leaders. It focuses on how the concept continues to be used to legitimate the government's current policies and also keep alive the legacy of the independence struggle. The first part of the paper traces the use of the term in diverse Vietnamese contexts, from folk legend to socialist readings of the worker as hero or heroine. The second part then looks at the specific case of selected school history textbooks to show that it continues to play an important role in primary education. The third section places the heroic metaphor in the wider context of Vietnam's current opening up to international and regional organisations such as ASEAN, concluding that it is used much more widely in domestic Vietnamese discourse than in representations to the outside world. As such, it is an important contributor to current nation-building in Vietnam, but not a feature of post-colonial rhetoric on the international stage, which may bolster but not endanger domestic nation-building efforts.
