

96/100

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1166 words

Part 1

Out of all the personal accounts of the Vietnam War that make up the first section of the book "Patriots, The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides," by Christian Appy, the one that had the greatest impact on me was told by Phan Xuan Sinh, titled "All My Ancestors are Buried Here." Sinh was a soldier in the South Vietnamese Army, fighting not because he believed in the cause or wanted to be a hero, but because he was a victim of tragic circumstance, drafted by his country the way so many young American men were drafted to fight in Vietnam for something most of them knew nothing about. In his story, Sinh talks about a few of the nameless victims of the war – the innocent citizens of Vietnam. The part of Sinh's story that had the greatest impact on me was when he talked about an elderly couple who were living in a free fire zone. Sinh and the American pilot he was working with that day evacuated the couple to safety, only to realize several weeks later that they had returned. When Sinh asked the man why, he replied, "All my ancestors are buried here and this is our land. We are not going to leave." Although the assigned text for this class does not discuss this topic, I did some further research on my own and found that a very sacred Vietnamese tradition is that of ancestral worship. The Vietnamese believe that by looking after and worshipping their ancestors, who traditionally are buried on the family's property, they were keeping their spirit alive and enabling them to live eternally in an immortal state. The book "Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam" talks in depth about the sacredness of family land to the Vietnamese people due to their ancestors being buried there, and states "The Vietnamese worshipped their ancestors as the source of their lives, their fortune and their civilization," (FitzGerald, Frances. "Chapter 1." Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam. New York: Vintage, 1989. 5. Google Scholar. Web. 14 Apr. 2012). Although this is a single retelling of one family's experience, it illustrates the depth and complexity of so many of the underlying issues during the Vietnam War that America was too arrogant and ethnocentric to validate. This elderly couple who would rather die than sentence their ancestors to an eternal life of unrest demonstrates the commitment the Vietnamese people had to their beliefs and traditions, and shows how foolish it was for America to choose Vietnam as our test subject in nation building, and that trying to mold Vietnam into our ideal of a western free world was doomed from the start. As the Herring text states, "Lacking knowledge of Vietnamese history and culture, Americans failed to comprehend the perhaps insuperable difficulties of nation building in an area with only the most fragile basis for nationhood," (Herring, pg. 86). Although it is impossible to know for certain if Phan Xuan Sinh is reliable in his recollection of events during his service in the Vietnam War or if emotions have clouded his objectivity, due to Vietnam being a collectivist culture that values caring for others above ones' self, and Sinh's insistence on telling his story in Vietnamese, I feel that his story is believable. It must have been incredibly painful for him to share

#1 Great work in an academic paper
#2 AWK wording didn't say to do this, but I know you did that your "extra"
#3 Just be careful that you cause you to not answer my questions.

- have you read it?

- impressive support & use of Herring text