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**Japanese studies and necessary experience for change in
Vietnam**
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JAPANESE STUDIES AND LEARNING ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES FOR RENOVATION IN VIETNAM

Abstract

“Transfer of Japan Technology and Management to the Asean countries” (edited by Shoichoi Yamashita) is a book that mainly talk about the cases of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. In 1995, Vietnam became the seventh member of ASEAN.

Japanese studies have strongly developed in Vietnam. Learning experiences are extremely important and necessary. It may have effective contributions to the process of Renovation Policy in Vietnam.

JAPANESE STUDIES AND LEARNING ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES FOR RENOVATION IN VIETNAM

By Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Lich,

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*Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Malaysian and Japanese collaegues,
Dear Asean friends,*

First of all, I would like to thank Professor Doctor Shaharil Talib, executive director of Asia-Europe Institute, all members of Organisation Committee of the Workshop: “*New Perspective on Intra-Asian Epistemologies*”, who have created opportunity for me to come to University of Malaya and to participate to the Workshop and to have this presentation, namely “Japanese Studies and Experiences for Renovation Policy in Vietnam”.

I. Vietnam and Japan with various similarities and long-standing cultural and economic relations. Japan is presently one of the most important partners of Vietnam.

According to documents dated from seventh and eighth centuries, in China during Tang dynasty, Vietnamese and Japanese had came into contact with each other. In seventeenth century, in Bakufu Tokugawa, which is known under the name of Shuinsen (in Vietnamese: Chau An thuyen– Japanese trade ship that could go abroad only be permission from government Bakufu Tokugawa), Vietnam was the biggest fellow trader of Japan in Southeast Asian region. During 30 years from 1604 (sixteen and four) to 1634 (sixteen thirty four), 126 (one hundred and twenty six merchant ships made landfall in different harbours of Vietnam, while only 43 came to

Cambodia, 56 came to Siam (Thailand), and 53 came to Luzon (The Philippines) (Iwao Seiichi. *Shuinsen boeki-shino kenkyu*. Yoshikawa Kobunkan. 1985).

In twentieth century, exchange relations between Vietnam and Japan have fluctuated. In the Pacific war period, economic and commercial relations between the two countries were notable in comparison with the ones between Japan and other Asean countries. However, these relations, referred to as “extraordinary” occurred in the circumstances of war. (Nihon Choki Toeki Soran, Somucho Tokeiyoku)

We have just celebrated the 30-year official diplomatic relationship between Vietnam and Japan (September 21, 1973 – September 21, 2003). These 30 years reach to fruitful cultural exchange relations between the two countries.

The second half of 19th century of Vietnamese modern history has known many renovation campaigns, which promoted the movement of learning experiences from the Japanese Meiji Restoration (from 1868 till 1912).

The first campaign took place from the end of 1860s till 1880s, when Vietnam was under French domination.

The second campaign was carried out in the first decade of twentieth century with Yusin Restoration. But the campaign was rapidly repressed by French colonialists. At the same time, Toyu campaign, called “Go to the East”, was lead by Phan Boi Chau. From 1905 till 1908, more than 200 students went to Japan for the purposes of learning experiences. But the campaign was also unsuccessful due to French repression.

The third campaign is referred to as “Doi Moi”, promoted at the end of 1986. “Doi moi” is the word used by Vietnamese. In fact, it should be understood as *restoration* or *renovation*. Until now, the Doi Moi policy has been put into practice for 17 years, and as you know, it is well oriented and has its initial success and achievements.

Japan plays an important role in Vietnamese Doi Moi process. For more than 10 years, Japan is the biggest country from which Vietnam received ODA (Official Development Aids), with the amount of 927.8 billions of Yen (approximately equal to 8 millions dollars). Japan is also a biggest fellow trade with exchange of bilateral trade in 2002 to more than 5 billions USD and the third FDI of Vietnam (with totally 369 projects, of which the capital reaches to 4,2 billions, 3 billions of this capital is already invested with efficiency.)

II. Cooperation in education between Vietnam and Japan at Vietnam National University of HCMC.

From the 1990s until now, cooperation in education and training between Vietnam and Japan has rapidly developed.

1. According to documents from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of Japan, Japan yearly grants hundreds of scholarships to Vietnamese students who come to study in Japanese universities. In 1998, there are 264 scholarships, in 2002 443 scholarships. Until 2002, there are 1115 Vietnamese students who come to study in Japan, the eighth largest number after China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, United States etc.
2. According to statistics that we are informed, there are 13 universities in Japan with Vietnamese language and Vietnamese culture teaching. Furthermore, Japanese Association for Vietnamese Studies gathers more than 100 researchers.

They frequently contact and have exchanges with Vietnamese colleagues for the purposes of research.

3. Since 1990, there have been 1000 of Japanese participations that come to study at Vietnam National University in HCMC. For only the first six month of 2003, we welcomed 150 students who study in our Department.

III. Japanese Studies in Vietnam develop considerably, contribute greatly to the renovation process in Vietnam and strengthen bilateral relations between Vietnam and Japan.

We can assert that, up to 1990, there hasn't been any university or center of Japanese language or Japanese Studies in HCMC. In some textbooks of Modern History used in Vietnamese universities, only some few short chapters about Meiji Restoration was introduced.

In 1991, Department of Oriental Studies was founded in Open University of HCMC. In this Department, in spite of its name, courses of Japanese and Chinese languages were held. In 1994, the Department of Oriental Studies of University of HCMC was founded under the decision of the Ministry of Education and Training. Japanese studies branch has become therefore one of important training branches of the Department and has contributed actively to 4 year undergraduate academic programs. Approximately 50% of Japanese language program were assumed by Vietnamese and Japanese teachers. Other 50% included compulsory fundamental subjects, as described by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. These subjects included History, Culture, Economy, International relationship of Japan. Excellent students at their fourth school year can be selected for final dissertation. They usually graduated with high result.

Thank to the initial results in Japanese Studies branch in Vietnam, during the official visit of VCP General Secretary Do Muoi in Japan in 1995, Japanese government sighed Non refunded Aids for the University. According to this two well-equipped laboratories of 50 millions yen were given to the University. These laboratories are very helpful not only for students of Department of Oriental studies, but for other discipline's students as well.

Besides, the Center for Southern studies was founded by University of HCMC and sponsored by the association of Japanese peoples who had been working from 1941 till 1945 at Nanyo Hakgyo in HCMC. Until now, the Center stills remain its activities as an organisation belonging to University of HCMC, although the sponsorship ceased.

During training in Japanese studies, we have always received emthusiastic and efficient support from Japanese government, from Ministry of Education of Japan through General Consulate of Japan in HCMC and from university, companies, educational and cultural organisations of Japan, and also Japanese friends who love Vietnam.

Up to now, University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) – Vietnam National University in HCMC have trained two open program promotions of Bachelors of Arts in Oriental studies, which include 350 students. 200 among them graduated from Japanese Studies. At the same time, seven regular program promotions of Japanese studies include 1650 students. Among them, 1000 are from Japanese studies session.

In addition, although Oriental studies branch is one of the newest training branches, but it rapidly becomes a prestigious branch, which takes great attention from society and students. Department of Oriental studies recruits every year hundreds of students. The number of students of Japanese studies is always the biggest, and they are always the best ones to be selected. After graduation, some of the best students can be kept to be teachers or to be sent to Japan for studying there. Most of students, after graduation, work in government offices, Japanese companies in the South of Vietnam. Based on the knowledge of Japan they collected during training, these active and young man powers have contributed much to strengthening bilateral relationship between Vietnam and Japan.

Moreover, in 1993 the University of Foreign Languages and Information Technologies of HCMC (HUFLIT) opened the department of Linguistic and Oriental Cultures, which includes Japanese studies. Most of lecturers in the department are invited from USSH.

In 1998, the department of Asian studies, including Japanese studies was founded in Hong Bang University.

Recently, In Dong Nai province, the Department of Oriental studies in Lac Hong University also came into being.

In conclusion, Japanese studies in the above-mentioned universities all aim at providing Vietnamese students with basic knowledge on Japanese language, on Nation, People, History, Economy and International relationship of Japan. Studying curriculums with various subjects are worked out by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. Students therefore do not specialize in all fields but oriented in one of the following fields: Japanese language, Japanese history and culture, Japanese economy and society and International relations of Japan.

Another trend is that short term courses of Japanese (about three months) with different levels are also held in most of Foreign languages Centers of Vietnam National University – HCMC (formerly University of HCMC), of Training Teachers' College, of other universities and colleges such as Sakura Japanese school, Nikko Japanese school and Thanh Binh computer – foreign language school. Each Japanese language program receives hundreds of students. Until June 2003, there are totally 26 Japanese centers with nearly 8000 students and learners from HCMC.

Interuniversity exchange program include not only the two above mentioned domains. Japan has been admired by Vietnamese people for its position as the second most powerful economy in the world and the most in Asia. Vietnamese students and intellectuals also pay much attention to modern communicative and educational system in Japan. For recent years, hundreds of Vietnamese students have come to study in Japan. Many of them graduated and returned to Vietnam for working. In Vietnam National University in HCMC, there are 2 teachers with Ph. D degrees and many with Master degree who graduated from Japan, and now contribute their active part to the development of their Department or university as directors or dean of Department

Conclusion

In 1997, Vietnam joined in APEC. It marks an advanced step on the road of integration of Vietnam to the work and region. Recently, Asean countries and the three East Asian countries (Japan, China, and Korea) accelerate the process of

cooperation Asean and 3 Extra-Asean cooperation. Asean and APEC are both creating good opportunities for economic cooperation between Eastern and Southeast Asian countries.

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