

MATERIALS ON VIETNAM – APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY OF VIETNAMESE STUDIES

HỒ SĨ QUÝ^(),
PHÙNG ĐIỀU ANH^(*)*

The 4th International Conference of Vietnamese Studies was hold in Hanoi from November 26th to 28th, 2012 by Vietnam Academy of Social and Sciences and National University Hanoi. This big and prestige forum is hold every four year with the participation of Vietnamese and international scientists. This year, there were more than 1,000 scientists from 36 countries and regions; nearly 400 writings and 1,000 opinions of 15 panels were discussed about following topics:

- Sustainable growth is the basic topic discussed in most of departments. It focuses on such fields as economy, society, environment, law, culture, art, nations and religion, education, science and technology, urban, rural as well as international relations,...*
- International integration is the topic that groups cover through issues of area as well as international integration of Vietnam.*
- Sustainable growth and deeply international integration of Vietnamese Studies are shown through researches on history, nations and culture of international researchers in the field of Vietnamese Studies.*

Among 15 panels, the panel 15 “Materials on Vietnam –Approach and Methodology of Vietnamese Studies” has attracted the participation and opinions of many local and international scientists.

Proudly introduce with readers the Summary Reports of the panel 15 at the plenary session in November, 28th 2012.

^(*) Prof. PhD., Director of Institute of Social Sciences Information – Chief of the panel 15.

^(**) MA., Institute of Social Sciences Information - Assistant of the panel 15.

Among 53 writings received by the panel 15, 23 of them were reported and presented within 3 meeting days and 9 writings were presented by foreign scientists. Topics of this year conference were interesting during 6 sessions, and issues were basically relevant to Vietnam studies. The presentations were received the attention as well as questions, arguments or sharing between scholars. Some writings were even received 5 to 6 questions and feedback. The main results of discussing session are summarized as following:

1. Researches on Vietnamese Studies in foreign countries

Some authors has evaluated the meaning of doing researches on Japanese documents about Vietnam and then learning about the start of Vietnamese Studies in Japan. A writing has concluded that Vietnamese Studies has closely connected with Matsumoto Nobujihiro (松本信広) since 1930s of last century in Japan. Matsumoto was influenced by French nationalists in Paris and Hanoi then become the one who raised the trend of researching a new object as Vietnam. This trend has created many valuable products.

Following this tradition, the modern way of researching on Vietnam with the source of Japanese books are quite diversified. Many scholars became famous with the research works on Vietnamese Studies. There have been 562 scientific articles and 128 books on Vietnamese Studies published in Japanese since 1986 to 2011. The exact figures need to be re - checked but the

demand on understanding Vietnam as well as developing all relations with Vietnam is certainly confirmed.

In last 10 years, the number of scientific articles and research works on Vietnam of Japanese scholars has been dramatically increased. They also directly do investigation in some places of Vietnam such as Hội An (Quảng Nam), Vạc Village (Nghệ An), Bách Cốc (Nam Định) or Cổ Loa (Hanoi) so on. The results achieved high evaluation in all aspects, including the policy advisory for Japanese and Vietnamese Government.

Above opinions are from PhD. candidate Petra Karlova (Waseda University - Japan); Professor Imai Akio, University of Tokyo Foreign Language; PhD. candidate Sato Thuy Uyên (Kansai University - Japan) and PhD. candidate Đào Thu Vân (Kanazawa University - Japan).

2. Materials on cultural issues and cultural exchange

There are 2 research works about Hochiminh's Thought of the panel 15. One of them is done through the viewpoint of comparative politics. Associate Professor – Ph.D Grace Cheng suggested that this approach will point out the special characteristics and features of Hochiminh in comparison with Western politics and ideologists. Hochiminh's freedom is the ideas of humanity together with the struggle for national independence and happiness. As a result, this approach has attracted the attention of many scholars.

Based on researches on documents in Phan language, some researchers have pictured the relationship between Iran and Vietnam in the early days of epoch through the trading between Sassanid Empire of Persia and the kingdom of Champa from year 226 to year 651. The marks of this relationship could be found out through documents in Iran as well as South Central Coast of Vietnam. This interesting issue, however, requires further research.

An author has started analyzing the changing progress of phonetics of 123 Vietnamese words in the 18th century in paper *Research of some XVIII Century's Vietnamese words found on Korean old book – I Jae Nan Ko*. This seems bringing many meaningful results for the researches in Vietnamese phonetics as well as the cultural relationship between Vietnam and South Korea.

There is the comparison between the features of archaeological artifacts belonged to Đông Sơn Culture and those belonged to Guang Xi Province of China. A scholar, therefore, has emphasized that there was a special relationship between Northern area of Vietnam and Guang Xi of China since the End of Stone Age. It is the similarity between Nguom and Son Vi culture which allows to generate new assumptions of the culture expansion.

These are opinions of Associate Professor – Ph.D Trình Năng Chung from Institute of Archeology, Associate Professor – Ph.D Đỗ Thu Hà of National University, Hanoi, Ph.D Park Ji Hoon from Hanoi University, Professor Thành

Duy of Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and Associate Professor – Ph.D Grace Cheng of Hawaii University.

3. Social and Cultural Issues through surveys on Han Nom and Chau ban documents

Researches on “Chau ban” of Nguyễn Dynasty are to find out marks, concepts and ideas about the Đông Du Movement in the early of the 20th century. It is a new and special topic which does not receive much attention before. A scholar of the Panel 15 has figured out the deeper and diversified knowledge about Đông Du movement as well as Phan Bội Châu and Phan Chu Trinh through Chau ban documents. The research results have not perfectly reached the expectation of scholars but they saw it as a new approach which should receive more attention of Vietnamese Studies.

Research on 24 filial exemplars according to the standards of Vietnamese Confucianism through *Survey on “Revision of The Twenty-four Filial Exemplars”* (補正二十四孝傳衍義譌) in comparison with other Chinese documents is an elaborate research work done by Ph.D candidate Sato Thụy Uyên. The achieved results have basically clarified the characteristics of humanity in Vietnamese culture as well as some features of Nom letters in the end of the 19th century.

Another research work has pictured *The relationship between Vietnam and China in the 19th century* through reviewing the Han Nom documents about the diaries of Nguyễn Dynasty's ambassadors in Qing Dynasty. Also, the documents in

Chinese Nom language around this topic are quite plentiful. Researchers could see the clearer relationship between these two countries was not serious or against as previous dynasties through the concepts of these diaries such as promotion requirements or offers, and longevity celebration.

By using the Sino Vietnamese language with many Vietnamese characteristics, author has assumed that the system of Chinese character for Vietnamese existed in Vietnam. This assumption raised high attention and received discussion.

Those are opinions of MA. Nguyễn Quang Hà, Thang Long-Ha Noi Imperial Citadel, MA. Hoàng Phương Mai of Institute of Han Nom Studies and Ph.D candidate Sato Thụy Uyên from Kansai University, Associate Professor – Dr. Vương Toàn of Institute of Social Sciences and Information, Associate Professor – Ph.D Lê Văn Toàn of The Hồ Chí Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration...

4. Materials on Vietnamese Studies and role of archival documents during researches on Vietnamese Studies

There are lots of research works around this topic and it has even become the hot topic discussed in the panel 15. Both local and foreign researchers emphasized that the documents at level I are original documents which are stored at research centers and are valuable reference for scientific researches. However, researchers do not pay any attention to them without any reason.

Also, many scientific works were under evaluated due to using the secondary documents even they are very valuable.

Writings pointed out the specific profiles which could be easily met demands of researchers and society. However, there is not any individual or organizations who offer a proper research method. For example:

- The management of Nguyễn Dynasty (1802 – 1945) with many significant mechanism such as promotions, revoke the mandatory of officials, salary and bonus, supervisor, awards and punishment including allowance for officials travelling Paracel Islands ^(*).

- Regimes and policies about land management of dynasties in the feudal history of Vietnam.

- The documents about the history of military during the colonial period are quite diversified and plentiful but most of researchers only use the “*History of French Indochina military*” written by French military scholar published in July of 1930 instead of original documents ^(**).

- The administrative organization of Hanoi and whole country were controlled by the two leading offices as City Committee and Municipality. The documents about these two offices’ functions and its rooting organization

^(*) See: *Bulletin administratif de Annam*. No.1. 1939.

^(**) See: *Histoire militaire de l’Indochine de l’Indochine française des débuts à nos jours* (juillet 1930). Imprimerie Extrême-Orient, 1930, 542 pages.

through periods are also particularly plenteous.

- There are quite lots of documents written about some changes of administrative organization of France in Hanoi (1947 – 1954) and the appearance of An Dan Committee as well as Viet – France Commission or Council of Viet – French. Yet researchers on Hanoi do not refer to this information.

- Organization of Vietnamese Government had many changes such as “split – merge” or “merge – split” of offices, administrative units after 1945. Lots of documents writing about experiences learned from these events but just been seldom referred.

Some writings have repeated the recommendation of 191 poems in Chinese, 3500 units sculptured in Thái Hòa Palace located in Huế City, versions of the Lục Vân Tiên story (Nom characters) stored in Vietnam and foreign countries. The traditional literature sources of Vietnam studies also have thousands documents, hundreds of rare and valuable fonts and many types of unrivaled documents in 4 national Archives Centers belonged to Library of Institute of Social Sciences. Many social, cultural and historical issues of the past have been offered solution or answers through these sources of documents. However, there are limitations in unlocking passwords or digitalizing these documents which do not support the professional researches. There are, for example, 160,000 profiles about education and medication in the period of 1861 to 1954 kept in National Archive Center I. Also,

there are Bulletin about Nguyen Dynast, Hue ancient capital, and documents about the achievements in Red River Delta’s water treatment of Gia Long Dynasty, Minh Mệnh Dynasty and Tự Đức Dynasty.

They are experiences, lesions, proof and even signals which directly support sovereignty protection ^(*) and build up country based on current conditions.

They are opinions of Nguyễn Khắc Thuần from Binh Duong University, MA. Nguyễn Phước Hải Trung from Hue World Heritage, Ph.D Vũ Thị Minh Hương from State Records Management and Archives Department of Vietnam, MA. Phạm Xuân Hoàng from Institute of Social Sciences Information, Ph.D Olivier Tessier from French School of the Far East and Associate Professor – Dr. Nguyễn Trần Cầu from Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology.

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Above concepts are major issues discussed in 6 sessions of meeting in the panel 15. The general feedback that we received after meetings is the satisfaction of authors. Some of them, however, could not give more opinions due to the time limitation. It will be the recommendation or ideas for new researches which aim to be more interesting and in depth in next conference.

^(*) See: La Mémoire sur la Cochinchine de Jean Baptiste Chaigneau. *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Huê*. - 4-6/1923, No 2, tome. X. - pp.253-283.