

## FOR MAXIMUM EXPLOITATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES ON VIETNAMESE STUDIES

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### 1. Introduction

It is such a long evolution from private and separate researches on Vietnam to a full system of specific and interdisciplinary researches on the thing so-called Vietnamese Studies by specialists. This is also a process to define Vietnam's position and its role in the whole world. One discipline has appeared from the formation of nominal phrase *études vietnamiennes* to the use of *vietnamologie* with its derived term *vietnamologue* in French.

The number of foreign scientists who research on Vietnam is increasing incredibly nowadays. Many valuable research works are from former Soviet – Russia, China, the United States, and recently from Japan, South Korea in comparison with the majority is from France before the year of 1954.

There are also many researching organizations related to Vietnamese studies with a variety of scientific publications. To get an maximum exploitation of information resources on

Vietnamese studies from diversified resources of materials, we need information resource analysis and database management system based on the spirit of sharing and cooperation towards integration for development.

To make this, it is very vital to reach a mutual agreement among different information centers & scientific libraries through the general program of the Vietnamese Studies branch.

### 2. Situation of scientific researches

Vietnam's country and people has attracted many foreign researchers for a long time. At the beginning, their purpose might be only to conquer and dominate this country, and to exchange trade with its inhabitants as well. However, many results of their researches, especially valuable scientific researches and assessments on natural and historical conditions, on cultural life, e.g. tradition custom and habits, superstitions, languages etc. do not

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easily go down in value until nowadays and in the future, not depending completely on personal purposes. At least, some assessments in time have firmed the ground for a cognitive process later on.

Vietnam has been known better now with the favour of the world by its great achievements in the renovation. More and more the overseas, including visitors, workers, and compatriots have come for visit the Fatherland. The Vietnamese study has attracted more domestic and foreign researchers while the Vietnamese language has obtained higher position in the world.

Starting from the lack of definition of Vietnam country in the global map and the “tacit understanding” within the research circles about its language to be of the Chinese (!?), the Vietnamese studies has recently become a fast-developing aspect with various purposes.

2.1. Taking account of the date of declaration and publication, some French works took implicitly its value of pioneers, or became historical landmark and are used as primitive references in this field. Numerous materials (heritage of FFEO) are preserved at the Library of Social Sciences.

Nowadays, the historical value of some French works published around one century ago are recognized in such fields as linguistics and teaching of ethnic minority languages: *Etude sur deux dialectes de l'Indochine: Les Tiams et les Sliengs (Cochinchine et Cambodge)* by A. Morice. - P.: Maisonneuve and

Cie, Libraires-Editeurs, 1875 ; *Sách học tiếng Mường*, Nazareth, 1888,...

In general, most of French researches relate to Indochina. In exploiting this document, we need to recognize old geographical names in French domination and to find new toponyms if necessary, e.g. *Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchine, etc.*

It is noticeable that at beginning, *Annam* refers only to *the Center*, but later, to the whole country of *Vietnam*. For example:

- L'Empire d'*Annam* et le peuple *annamite* : aperçu sur la géographie, les productions, l'industrie les mœurs et les coutumes de l'*Annam* / J. Silvestre. - P. : Félix Alcan, 1889.

- La question du Tonkin : l'*Annam* et les *Annamites*, histoire, institutions, mœurs, origines et développement de la question du Tonkin, politique de la France, de l'Angleterre, de la Chine, le protectorat français / Paul Deschanel. - P. : Berger Levrault et Cie, 1883.

- Le rituel funéraire des *Annamites* : étude d'ethnographie religieuse / par Gustave Dumoutier.- Hanoi : Typo-Lithographique Schneider. - 1902.

By derivation, the French word *annamite* was neuter at beginning, but it becomes derogatory nowadays by deterioration (Dictionnaire Hachette encyclopédique 2000, p. 71).

In addition, in the old time (and until nowadays sometimes, especially in local use), the *Tay* (belonging to Tai – Kadai languages) was called by *Thô*. However, since the demographical survey on April 01, 1974, *Thô* has reserved to official

common denomination of the new ethnic group (belonging to Việt - Muong languages) reassembling some little groups: Tày Pọng + Đan Lai + Ly Hà + Kẹo + Mọn + Cuối + Họ. Therefore, the librarian needs to make distinction in classifying documentaries relating to the ethnic group named *Thô*.

The French works deal with various fields. On social sciences and humanities, there are some researches on history, archaeology, sociology (villages and communes), psychology, culture (customs and habits), religion, folklore, ethnic groups and languages, etc.

Among the famous authors, there are A. G. Haudricourt with his very profound ethno-linguistic researches, Bonifacy with his handbook of Indochinese ethnography, L. Sabatier with his works on folklore and F. M. Savina with his dictionaries relating to divers ethnic groups...

We also realize that L. Cadière (1869-1955) was one of few pioneers in Vietnamese studies from the beginning of XX<sup>th</sup> century. He was appointed vicar priest and after that, he came Vietnam in 1882. Apart from his pastoral activities, he also made researches on various fields, including archaeology, ethnography, linguistics, religious science, botany, etc. Consequently, he was regarded as one of the scholars by his presentations about Hue city to foreigners (1).

It is inevitable for us to indicate G. Condominas, one of the masters on ethnography in the world, a great friend of many scholars in Vietnam as well as

one relative of the Mnong Gar people at Sar Luk village (Highland).

In review of one century for scientific researches of EFEO (1990-2000), the place where many Vietnamese scholars began their scientific lives in various fields, e.g. epigraphy and history of Trần Văn Giáp (1886-1973), philology and traditional medicine of Trần Hàm Tấn (1887-1957), epigraphy and history of Nguyễn Văn Tố (1889

Recently, the representative office of EFEO has re-established (2) in Hanoi with regular collections of works in result of its research projects.

About French institutions relative to Vietnamese studies, we can not miss the CRLAO (Centre de recherches linguistiques sur l'Asie orientale), LASEMA (Laboratoire Asie du Sud-Est et Monde austronésien), and EHESS (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) belonging to the CNRS. At the Université Paris VII, there is the Department of Vietnamese Studies under the Faculty of East-Asian Languages and Civilization, etc. Moreover, we also know some centres having great archives relating to Vietnam at Aix-en-Provence or the National Library, etc.

We can deal with the articles and books of some French historians who are very well-known to Vietnamese people as Charles Fourniau, Alain Ruscio, etc. Particularly, Georges Boudarel (1926-2003), called informally "Brother Buda-rên", or more simply, "Buda" by his close Vietnamese friends and Vietnamese studies scholars even has a

great number of works on Vietnamese country, people and history.

In some other countries, e.g. the former Soviet Union (Russia nowadays), there are even an official branch concerning the Vietnamese and other languages of Vietnam with various research works from the Institute of Oriental Studies, the Institute of Asian Ethnic Minority Studies, the Institute of International Relations, the Institute of Oriental Languages, the Faculty of Oriental Studies, etc. Among them, research and criticism works of N. I. Nikulin on Vietnamese contemporary literature are highly appreciated.

In the United States, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) has been dealing with ethnic minority languages for a long time. Recently, there is the Institute of Vietnamese Studies (Viện Việt học), established in 2000.

A wide range of books of American researcher on Vietnamese ethnic minorities' languages and on the US – Vietnam war are published because of its special relation with our country. Apart from this matter, research in the library of Institute of Vietnamese Studies also relates to other fields, such as literature, culture, peasants, history, classic cuisine, etc.

This library keeps a great number of works published in the West, including analysis of the President Ho Chi Minh, e.g. Ho Chi Minh. – Madrid: 1970; Vision Accomplished? The Enigma of Ho Chi Minh. – New York: 1971, as well as of the Indochina colonisation of France, e.g. Vietnam: The French in Indochina: With a Narrative of Garnier's

Explorations in Cochinchina, Annam, and Tonquin. – London: 1984.

These studies on Vietnam could be published in *Vietnamese Studies Newsletter* with an Internet site in construction:

<http://site.yahoo.com/vstudies/vsirnewup.html>

We often receive from the famous Centre *tricontinental* - <http://www.cetri.be/>, Belgium quarterly publications (*Publication trimestrielle*). A summary in French or English favors its readers. For example: *Socialisme et marché: Chine, Vietnam, Cuba* (Vol.VIII 2001/1), *Des points de vue du Sud sur des dimensions cruciales de la mondialisation, du développement et des rapports Nord-Sud: analyses critiques et alternatives*, etc.

Recently, the project VNRP (Vietnam-Netherlands Research Programme) has pointed out the attention of researchers in this country attached to economic renovations, agricultural development and environment, etc.

In Denmark, almost the research on Vietnam is published by the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (in NIAS Press).

In Japan, among experts on Vietnamese studies, the Prof. Yoshiharu Tsuboi at Waseda University, Kenji Tomita at Osaka University is highly appreciated.

In *Singapore*, among its works, the Institute of Southeast Asia Studies – ISEAS makes some publications in collaboration with foreign publisher, e.g. ISEAS Singapore University Press & NIAS Press (Denmark), etc.

In *Indonesia*, there is the Research Center for Regional Resource belonging to the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Jakarta.

In *Australia*, the famous name of an experienced expert on Vietnam, the Prof. Carlyle Thayer of the Institute of National Defense at Canberra is known widely. This analyst is the author of many books and articles on Vietnam. He is also the Director of Forum of National Defense Studies of New South Wales University.

Foreign research circles on Vietnamese studies pay attention to various issues, e.g. archaeology, ethnology (as there are 54 ethnic groups in this country, in which the Vietnamese is chosen as the “common language” and its writing as “national writing”), (from ancient to modern) history, languages, literature, folklore, superstitions-religions, economy, laws, etc

Since a few recent centuries, there are more and more the European researchers on Vietnamese studies so that the EUROVIET Conference (held in 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2008) has become a forum with the aim to calling for the attention to this matter of European scholars as well as other continents participants. The Aids Fund favorable to researchers was formed not only in States United, Japan, France, Great Britain but also in Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, etc.

Almost foreign researchers started their works on Vietnamese even before their national strategies of teaching

Vietnamese at school. In fact, Prof. *Serge Genest*, the Head of teachers and researchers group on modern Asia at Laval University (Canada) was absolutely right in his comment: “The significant changes in Vietnam make numerous people who want to put in touch with this country. In either culture exchanges or trade exchanges, we all need to have certain, even limited knowledge about their popular languages” for the common goal of relation development with members of different culture background (Avant-propos, *Parlons vietnamien*. G rac, Universit  Laval, 1995). At the sight of linguistic contacts and cultural exchanges, this is a very interesting phenomenon but yet occurred in the history of Vietnamese language and cultural exchanges between this country and the world. This also became one of the promotion elements of main disciplines of Vietnamese studies to reserve its worthy status, even in foreign countries.

In Vietnam, the Institute of Vietnamese Studies and Development Science belonging to the Hanoi National University was founded on the basis of the Center of Cooperation for Vietnamese Studies (created in 1998, at the former Hanoi University), according to the interdisciplinary orientation.

Concerning on Vietnamese Studies teaching, after the start of teaching this field at the Hanoi College of Training Teachers in 2002 (as a main subject and an official faculty founded on September

27, 2005), its formation code was opened at 16 colleges and universities in the academic year 2005-2006, 20 in 2006-2007 and at 76 in 2007-2008.

The 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Vietnamese Studies was held on July 15-17, 1998 in Hanoi. The number of participants is even more than its expectation, especially of foreign researchers. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference was organized on July 14-16, 2004 in Ho Chi Minh City. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference recently organized on December 5-7, 2008 in Hanoi has become an interesting appointment of the research circles in this field.

### 3. Information resources on Vietnamese Studies

To favor the information exploitation on this matter, the librarian circles need to build a common subject relative to information resources from various documental sources (inside or outside the country, from different organizations and individuals) on *Vietnam and Vietnamese Studies*.

In her paper at the EUROVIET (Aix-en-Provence, May 1995), Christiane Pasquel Rageau evoked the opinion of C. B. Maybon (BEFEO, 1910) whose *bibliographie annamite* (6/350 pages only) in *Tableau de la Cochinchine* published in 1862 of M. A. Bellecom could be appreciated as the first bibliography about Indochina and Vietnam.

Several years later, the *Bibliographie annamite, livres, recueils, périodiques,*

*manuscripts* in hundred pages, was published by the *Revue Maritime et Coloniale* in 1866.

In XX<sup>th</sup> century in France, there were:

- Gaspardone Emile. *Bibliographie annamite*, BEFEO, 1934, pp.1-173.
- Nguyen The Anh. *Bibliographie critique sur les relations entre le Vietnam et l'Occident*. Paris, 1967, 310p.
- Nguyễn Đình Thi & Trần Ngọc Bích. *Bibliographie vietnamienne*. Editions Sudestasié, T.I, 1975, 237p., T.II, 1982, 294p.
- Chantal Descour -Gatin & Hugues Villiers. *Guide de Recherche sur le Vietnam*. Paris, 1983, 259p.
- *Fonds VIETNAM de la Bibliothèque du Ce DRASEMI* . Catalogue réalisé par Nelly Krowolski et Nguyen Tung. CNRS, Valbonne, 1985, 712p.

At the Institute of Social Sciences Information, a bibliographical work gathering about 7000 - 8000 cards (7 bibliographical elements) describes documentaries on Vietnamese studies. It results from various bibliographical activities in 1999. Unfortunately, this Institute has not favorable conditions to build timely database yet.

Also at this time, a couple of French researchers fulfilled their bibliographical works relative to Vietnamese history and civilization:

- *Référence bibliographiques d'histoire et civilisation du Vietnam/* Philippe Langlet, Quach Thanh Tam. P., 2003, 305p.

Recently, *Thư viện Trẻ* (Young Library) has restarted its Index Vietnam - <http://indexvietnam.thuvientre.com> - database indexing Vietnamese periodicals (newspapers and reviews) gathering about 8,000 bibliographical citations from the articles published from 2000 up to now in Vietnamese periodicals. By experimentation from 2006, Index Vietnam is the first database indexing the Vietnamese periodicals that is easy to search online by Internet. The new version of Index Vietnam applies Web 2.0 technology. *Thư viện Trẻ* also informed that it is ready to advise the libraries to build the similar tools. The scientific libraries in Vietnam must regard this matter as a great subject that comprises of concrete headings.

In general, at a scientific library, the subject *Vietnam and Vietnamese Studies* should include:

1. Vietnam – Homeland:
  - Natural geography and environment
  - History
  - ...
2. Vietnam – Man:
  - Society
  - Culture
  - Psychology
  - Superstitions and religions
  - ...
3. Vietnam - Ethnic groups:
  - The Kinh (Viet)
  - Ethnic minorities

4. Vietnam – Languages:

- The Kinh (Vietnamese)
- Ethnic minority languages:
- ...

#### 4. Conclusion

Nowadays, information users inside and outside the country need an electronic address available to give domestic and foreign researchers a panorama on the current situation for better heritage, repetition avoidance and for giving an outline of the future of Vietnamese studies in the country and in the world.

Beside user attraction, each scientific library needs specified information resource in service for particular scientific research and graduate/postgraduate study on Vietnamese studies to exist in unification but impossibly merge with the aim to maintain the diversity in variation.

This specificity can be displayed by precious documentary sources on specific fields which are corresponding to the background of research and training institution. These sources depend on the institute's superiority or its priority rights compared with other libraries that have only incomplete collections (of books and periodicals).

Obviously, it is very necessary to keep information resources in good storage conditions and to analyze them upon modern data processing for the easiest (or the most friendly) access of the users, in preference to storing them in library, even in electronic stocks. In

other words, these well-collected-and-preserved information sources become available in maximum services for all research and training activities concerning the Vietnamese studies.

We have no choice but apply all the most popular library standards for the goal of global information – library integration and development, especially to take advantage of available information sources towards the easiest sharing.

On this occasion, I would like to share with an “eldest” expert his thought on our need of the Center which is the most favorable for all the researches (and I should add that of the most complete and update documentation resources necessary to research and training works) on Vietnamese studies in this

country, not anywhere else in the world. And we are pleased to announce that the Institute of Vietnamese Studies and Development Science will assume this great and significant role.

## References

1. See some articles published by Đào Hùng, *Xưa và nay*, n. 6/1995 and by Nguyễn Đắc Xuân, *Lao động* 23/6/1994.
2. According to the governmental Agreement signed in February 10, 1993.
3. See: *Câu chuyện đời người của một nhà Việt học*  
<http://www.tuoitre.com.vn/Tianyon/Indexed.aspx?ChannelID=10&ArticleID=244280>