

Japanese Studies in Vietnam: Achievements and Prospects

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Preface

Japan has developed from the ravages of the Second World War to the second strongest industrial-economic power in the world. A number of Southeast Asian countries, of which Vietnam is one, today owe much to Japan for their development, and it is very likely that Japan's impact on Asian development will continue to increase. Many researchers are of the opinion that there is a growing need to reconsider the country's plan of action to meet the possible changes in the international sphere. It is expected that Japan will continue to drive the world economy and play a more significant role in the global contest in the coming decades.

There is no denying the fact that Vietnam and Japan have had a relation for a long time and this relation has developed much faster since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1973. Together with the development of the Vietnam-Japan relation, the demand for understanding Japan among the Vietnamese people, particularly government officials, scholars, researchers, and students have been increased to a considerable extent. The development of Japanese studies in Vietnam has helped very much in enhancing the knowledge on Japan for the Vietnamese people and providing useful academic foundation for the Vietnamese Authorities in policy-making process. However, beside the achievements, Japanese studies in Vietnam have also faced some difficulties and obstacles, which should be overcome so as to further stimulate their development.

This paper will, therefore, focus on analyzing the development of Japanese studies in Vietnam in connection with the development of the Vietnam-Japan relation.

I. Some remarks about Vietnam-Japan relations

Vietnam and Japan both have had over a thousand years of historical development, many similarities in customs and religions, and have been impacted by the Eastern culture, especially the Chinese culture.

It can be said that the Vietnam-Japan relation has existed for a very long time. In the fifteenth century, there were Japanese traders coming to do business in Vietnam. They gathered and formed a Japanese town in Hoi An, Quang Nam province, in the central part of Vietnam. Hoi An became the biggest sea port of Vietnam, playing the role of a trading center between Japan and Southeast Asian countries at that time. The Hoi An ancient town today is still maintaining many traces of the economic and cultural exchanges between Vietnam and Japan.

Due to some certain historical reasons, the closing door of Japan in 1635 interrupted the economic and cultural exchange activities between the two countries. This situation remained until the end of the nineteenth century.

- Turning into the twentieth century, Vietnam-Japan exchange relations were continued, but since then these relations have had an additional bold political aspect. Japan became the empire. Vietnam was under the rule of France. It was in 1905 (in the midst of the Russo-Japanese War) that Phan Boi Chau, one of the most distinguished leaders of Vietnamese nationalism, arrived in Japan. He soon started a movement of Dong Du (visit-to-the East), i.e. a movement of young Vietnamese to study in Japan. Phan Boi Chau wanted to train young Vietnamese people for future revolutionary cadres in anti-colonial struggles. Responding to Phan Boi Chau's appeal, many young Vietnamese came to Japan with revolutionary spirit. The number of Vietnamese students in Japan reached nearly 200 in 1908. But the French authorities in Indochina intensified suppressive policy against Vietnamese nationalist movements from the same year, and as a part of it, they asked the Japanese government to interfere in anti-French movements of Vietnamese students in Japan. Because Japan signed an agreement with France in the previous year (1907) in which the Japanese government promised to respect French colonial interests in Indochina, it was obliged to put a pressure upon Phan Boi Chau and his followers in Japan. Thus, the Dong Du movement was terminated by 1909, although a few students remained in Japan to continue their studies in ordinary colleges and universities.

- From 1910 to the end of the Second World War was the darkest period in the Vietnam-Japan relation. Particularly, during the Second World War, Japan aggressed Vietnam and exploited seriously the Vietnamese people.

- From after the end of the Second World War to 1973, Japan only had relation with the Sai Gon regime. During the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, an increasing number of students from the southern part of Vietnam, such as Saigon, Hue, and Da Nang arrived in Japan as the war became fierce there. In the years of 1974 and 1975 just before the liberation of Saigon, there existed about 1,000 Vietnamese students in Japan. Most of them came to Japan with their families' finance and sought for better chances of good education in such fields as agriculture, engineering, economics, mathematics, physics, international relations, etc. Many of them joined a movement of Vietnamese students in Japan for the peace and reunification of Vietnam. In comparison with the relatively big number of Vietnamese students in Japan, there were very few young Japanese of undergraduate and graduate levels who stayed in Vietnam (both in the south and in the north) for study during the Vietnam War period. In addition, there existed a Japanese school in Sai Gon, which had a few dozens of children of kindergarten, elementary, and junior high levels, whose parents were working in the Japanese Embassy and aid organizations as well as Japanese companies. The school was however closed down in 1975, while almost all of the Japanese residents in southern Vietnam returned home by the time of liberation.

- The Vietnam-Japan relation has only really developed much faster since 1973 when the diplomatic relation between Vietnam and Japan was established. The period from 1973 up to now can be divided into three small periods: From 1973-1978; from 1979-1991; and from 1992 up to now. The Vietnam-Japan relations have experienced ups and downs for the past more than 30 years due to economic and political changes in each period. During these periods, the Vietnam-Japan relation has overcome a number of obstacles to become much more effective contributing to the development of both countries.

- From 1972–1978: This is an initial period of setting up the Vietnam-Japan diplomatic relation. The relation between the two countries in this period was mainly in the field of trade, but the total value of trade was very modest. Japan's ODA for Vietnam was also small and mainly in the form of soft loan.

- From 1979–1991: In this period, the Vietnam-Japan relation was frozen. When Vietnam engaged in Cambodia, Japan decided to stop providing ODA for Vietnam. This situation lasts until the Vietnamese troops started to withdraw from Cambodia and the Agreement on Peace for Cambodia was signed in 1991.

- From 1992 up to now: the Vietnam-Japan relation has been really revitalized starting by a negotiation to initiate Japan's ODA for Vietnam. The talk round resulted to that in November 1992. The two countries signed an agreement on the Japan's aid of US\$365.8 million; this opened a new page of Japan-Vietnam relations of which economic relation is the most important field.

Over the past more than years, Japan has become the greatest partner in Vietnam's external economic relations. It topped the list of Vietnam's export markets and ranked the third among those exporting goods to Vietnam. It is also the third foreign investors in Vietnam having the highest number of FDI projects realized in Vietnam. As a result, the Vietnam-Japan economic relation has made significant contributions to the two countries' development in the trend of globalization and international integration.

a. Japanese ODA for Vietnam

Japan is the greatest ODA donor to Vietnam and giving active support to the cause of the national construction by specific and effective activities. This is indicated by the following figures:

Table 1. Japan's ODA for Vietnam from 1992 to 2004

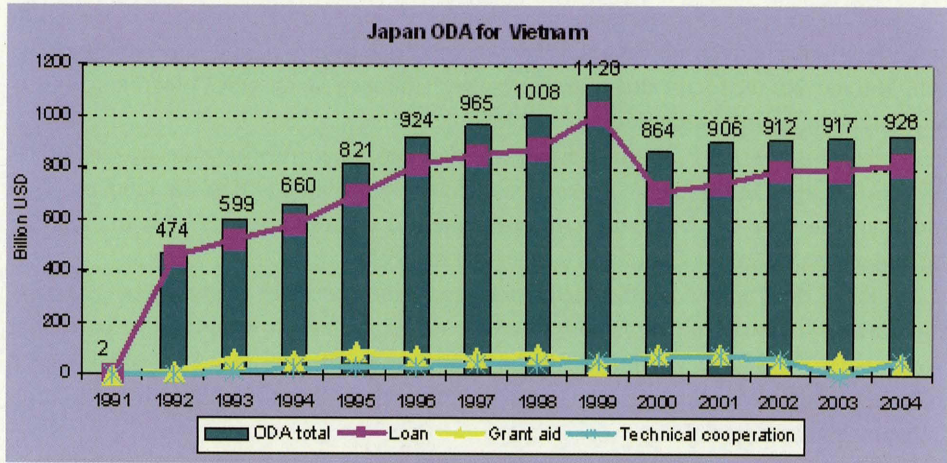
Fiscal year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Total	474.19	598.90	660.47	821.48	923.87	965.19	1,008.22
Loan	455.00	523.04	580.00	700.00	810.00	850.00	880.00
Grant aid	15.87	62.70	56.72	89.08	80.35	72.97	81.86
Tech cooperation	3.32	13.16	23.75	32.40	33.52	42.22	46.36
		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total		1,119.9	864.03	905.94	912.65	917.38	926.00
Loan		1012.81	709.04	743.14	793.30	793.30	820.00
Grant aid		46.41	80.67	83.71	52.27	57.00	50.23
Tech cooperation		60.70	74.32	79.09	67.08		55.77

Source: Embassy of Japan in Vietnam

· The accumulated amount of Japan's ODA for Vietnam from 1991 to 2004 is JPY 1,108.1 billion, of which the loan is JPY 967 billion, grant aid is JPY 81.1 billion and technical cooperation is JPY 60 billion.

· Japan ODA for Vietnam makes up 26.5% of the total ODA for Vietnam in 2004. (The total ODA for Vietnam in USD is 3.4 billion, of this Japan ODA is USD 0.9 billion.)

Japan's ODA-funded programs are mainly focused on:



Graph 1. Japan ODA for Vietnam. See Table 1.

+ Growth Acceleration

To speed up the economic growth, the role of “motive for growth” (private sector and foreign direct investment - FDI), proper “systems and policies” and the backgrounds for economic activities such as infrastructure and human resource are very essential. Therefore, the Japanese Government pays special attention to

- Human resource development and construction of schools, especially building the market economy and legal cooperation.
- Development of economic infrastructure, especially energy and communication and transport.
- Agricultural and rural development, especially construction of agricultural infrastructures and technology transfer in farming.

+ Improvement of social and living environments

It is not right that economic growth can completely solve out all matters related to social and living environments. In some cases, it even makes these worse. According to social and humanity views, the improvement of social and living environments is very important. Moreover, it will create basic conditions for economic development in future. Being aware of this, Japanese Government attaches special importance to

- support hunger elimination and poverty alleviation
- education and healthcare
- provincial and city development
- environment protection (forest, urban environment, prevention against industrial pollution).

+ Regime establishment

Establishing a regime as a background for social and economic development plays a vital role in the process of developing the economy and improving the living and social

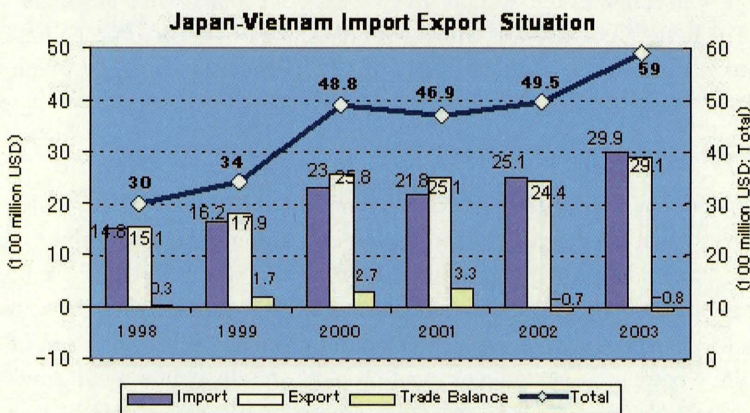
environments. Japanese Government is assisting to complete the legal system, restructure the bureaucratic apparatus and reform the financial system of Vietnam.

b. Vietnam-Japan trade relation

In recent years, the two-way trade value between Vietnam and Japan continues to grow. This trend is shown in the following table and chart:

Table 2. The Trade Value between Vietnam and Japan (100 million yen)

Year	Export	Import	Total value	Change (%)	Trade surplus or deficit
1994	1,379	659	2,038	7.6	720
1995	1,615	864	2,479	21.64	751
1996	2,195	1,240	3,435	38.56	955
1997	2,695	1,549	4,194	22.10	1,096
1998	2,289	1,738	4,027	-3.98	551
1999	2,230	1,851	4,081	1.34	379
2000	2,846	2,129	4,975	21.98	717
2001	US\$2.509 bil.	US\$2.215 bil.	US\$4.724 bil.	- 4.3	US\$294 million
2002	US\$2.234 bil.	US\$2.358 bil.	US\$4,592 bil.	-11	US\$76 million



Graph 2. Japan-Vietnam Export Situation. See Table 2.

2001

- The export to Japan was 2.51 billion dollars; The import from Japan was 2.18 billion dollars; the trade balance was in the surplus (for Vietnam) of 0.33 billion dollars.
- The trade with Japan shared 15% of the total trade amount of Vietnam making Japan as the biggest trade partner of Vietnam. (Japan was the biggest export country with 16.7% share and the second biggest import country with 13.5% share.)

2002

- The export to Japan was 2.44 billion dollars (3.9% down compared to that

of 2001). The main export products were such as aquatic products, textile, sewing products and crude oil.

- The import from Japan was 2.51 billion dollars (15.1% up compared to that of 2001). The main import products were machinery/equipment and accessory, iron/steel, Computer and accessory.

- The trade balance was in deficit (for Vietnam) of 70 million dollars for the first time since 1990, however, Japan was still the biggest trade partner to Vietnam. (Japan was third biggest import country with the share of 12.7% in the total import amount and was the biggest export country with 14.6% share.)

2003

- The export to Japan was 2.91 billion dollars (19.3% up compared to that of the corresponding period of 2002). The main export products were aquatic products, crude oil and textile, sewing products.

- The import from Japan was 2.99 billion dollars (19.1% up compared to that of the corresponding period of 2002). The main import products were as in the previous year, i.e. machinery/equipment and accessory, iron/steel, Computer and accessory.

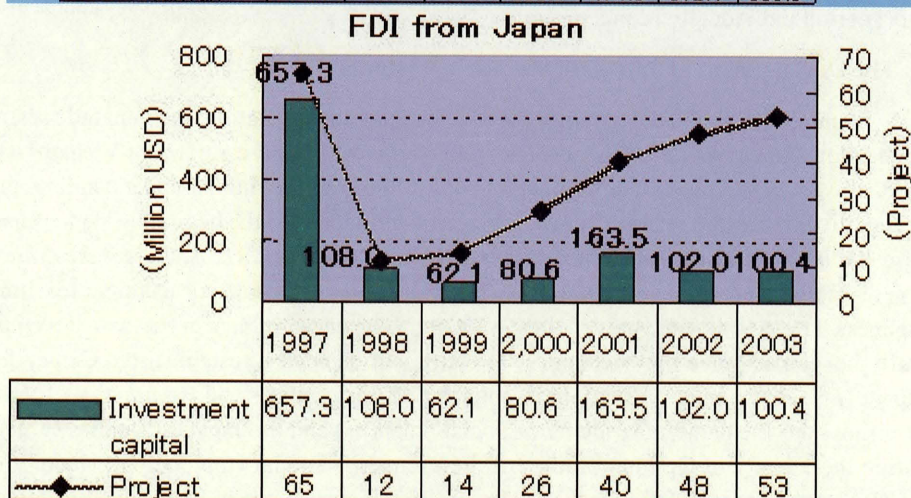
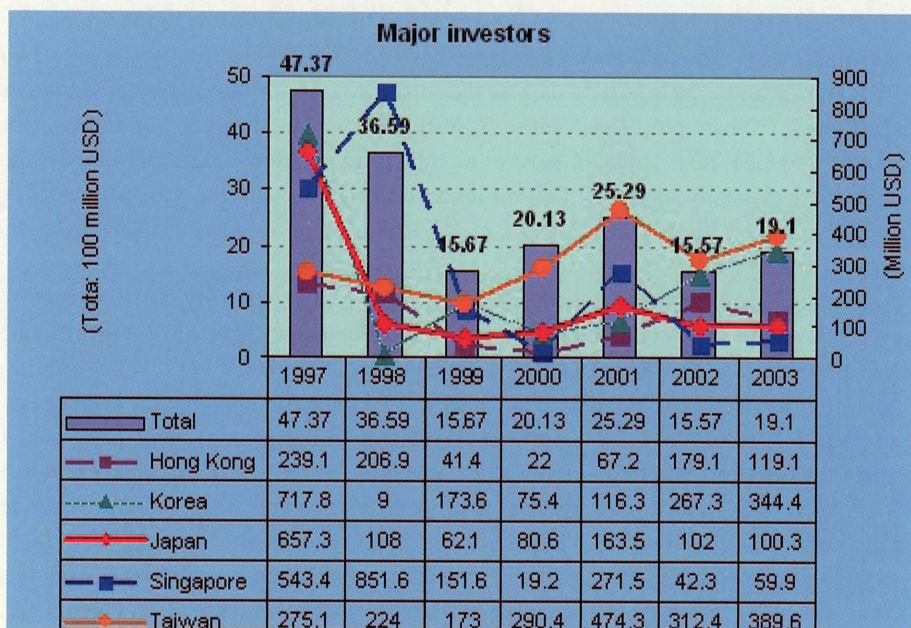
- The trade balance was in deficit (for Vietnam) of 80 million dollars (for Vietnam).

- Japan was the second biggest export country with the share of 14.6% (The biggest country was China with the share of 19.8%). For the import, Japan stood at the second with the share of 12% (China stands the first with the share of 12.5%).

c. Japan-Vietnam investment relation

After 1995, the FDI of Japan to Vietnam rapidly increased with the major Japanese manufacturers such as cement, electric appliances, automobiles, motorbikes, computer and its accessories due to the high appreciation of Yen which forced the companies to shift their production overseas, and infrastructure improvement with the expansion of ODA flow to Vietnam. In 1996, the depreciation of Yen and sever recession of Japanese economy drew back large scale investment projects and the medium and small scale investment projects such as metal products/machinery, textile, sewing products and sundry goods took place (mainly in industrial parks (IP) and export processing zone (EPZ)). In 1998–1999, impacted by the financial crisis, the FDI flow from Japan declined rapidly with much less new investment projects. However, 2001 Japan's FDI to Vietnam started showing a recovery. From 1988 to 2003, the accumulated total investment amount from Japan is 4.48 billion dollars making Japan the third biggest investor to Vietnam. However, Japan is the first investor in terms of implementing base (3.93 billion dollars).

The country's evidence of economic renovation and development shows Japan and other investors through their foreign direct investment (FDI) have given significant contributions to the robust growth of domestic industries as well as of Vietnam economy. Japanese private companies increasingly invest in Vietnam. Many Japanese giants are now present in Vietnam such as Honda, Toyota, Sony, Matsushita Denki, Yamaha, Nippon Denki, and Seiko... Japanese investors, on the whole, see a higher rate of successful



projects than that of others.

In other fields such as cultural exchange and education, the Vietnam-Japan relation has also obtained good results. Vietnam has become a destination for a great number of Japanese tourists. A larger number of Vietnamese students and scholars have been sent to Japan for training and academic exchange.

For example, at the end of 2004, there are about 1,500 Vietnamese students in Japan. The number of students who receive the Monbu-Kagakusho (ministry of education and sciences) scholarship has increased. The Gaimusho (ministry of foreign affairs) has newly started its own scholarship program to invite and train young Vietnamese in MA

and MBA courses of Japanese universities, as a part of their efforts to support Vietnam's transformation to market-oriented economy.

Some Japanese institutions, such as the Japan Institute of International Affairs and the Institute of Developing Economies, have regularly invited junior researchers from Vietnam to conduct researches for several months in Japan. Some Japanese foundations, such as JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Sciences) and the Japan Foundation, have also provided Vietnamese researchers with fellowship to stay in Japan for several months.

The number of Japanese students in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City is also increasing. Many of them are students to learn the Vietnamese language. Now almost all of major Japanese companies have young employees who speak Vietnamese very well.

In addition to young Japanese who study the Vietnamese language for business and other purposes, there exist also a substantial number of Japanese students who stay in Vietnam for academic and research purposes. It is quite usual that young Japanese in BA, MA and Ph.D. programs stay in Vietnam for a year or so to study in Vietnamese colleges and institutions and conduct researches in various parts of Vietnam.

We have now various types of exchange programs between Japanese and Vietnamese colleges. Through those arrangements, many young Japanese visit Vietnam for a short period individually or in a group.

II. The Development of Japanese Studies in Vietnam

In parallel with the development of the Vietnam-Japan relation, the demand for understanding Japan has also been increasing in Vietnam. Japanese studies in Vietnam has gradually developed and made significant contributions to the mutual understanding and cooperative friendship relation between Vietnam and Japan. At the beginning stage, Japanese studies in Vietnam just existed dispersedly. Until the early 1990s, there were quite a few researchers undertaking research on Japan at some institutions or lecturers teaching Japanese language at some universities in Vietnam. Japanese studies in Vietnam have just really developed since the Vietnamese Government decided to establish the Center for Japanese Studies within the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities of Vietnam (now the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences) and the Japanese studies subject within the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Vietnam National University in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in 1993. Since then, Japanese studies in Vietnam have developed very fast. This is represented in the following main points:

1. The number of institutions, scholars, researchers, and students who are interested in Japanese studies or learning Japanese language has increased to a considerable extent

It can be said that Japanese studies in Vietnam have started since the 1950s. The first research unit engaged partly in Japanese studies has been in operation since 1953 within the Vietnam Committee of Social Science. After that some more units engaged partly in Japanese studies were established in 1955, 1960, 1972, 1981, 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1995 giving total of 15 units¹. However, it should be noted that from the 1950s to the 1980s

¹ *Japanese Studies in South and Southeast Asia-Japanese Studies Series XXX*, Vol. 2, the Japan Foundation, December 1999, p. 135.

there were not any research unit fully specializing on Japanese studies in Vietnam. The existed research units had just engaged partly in Japanese studies. Some of them even had only one researcher who was interested in studying some concrete aspects of Japan like Japanese history or Japanese literature. For example a researcher of the Institute of history under the Vietnam Committee of Social Sciences studying Japanese history in the pre-modern period, or a researcher of the Institute of World Economics studying the Japanese economic miracle in the 1960s and 1970s.

Thus, Japanese studies in Vietnam before 1990 has not yet developed. This was because of the fact that before that time, external studies had not yet paid much attention in Vietnam in general, and the Vietnam-Japan relation did also not well developed in particular.

However, after the re-normalization of the Vietnam-Japan relation in 1992, Japanese studies in Vietnam have developed very well. In September 1993, the Vietnamese Government decided to establish a Center for Japanese Studies (CJS) in the National Center for Social Sciences of Vietnam. This Center is developed from a Department of Japanese studies under the Asia-Pacific Studies which was set up in 1986. The main function of the CJS is to undertake comprehensive research on Japan in all aspects, including Japanese history, culture, politics, society, economics, and the Vietnam-Japan relation with the aim to provide the Vietnamese Government with academic foundation for policy-making process and the Vietnamese people with better knowledge on Japan. Beside the CJS, divisions for Japanese studies have also established in the Faculty of Oriental Studies of National University of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city in 1994 and 1995. The main function of these divisions is to train undergraduate and postgraduate students majoring in Japanese studies. In addition, the number of institutions and research centers who have departments or divisions undertaking research on Japan has also increased.

In order to set up a network for Japanese studies in Vietnam, the Coordinating Council for Japanese Studies (CCJS) was set up in 1994. The CCJS consist of members of various institutions and research Centers on Japanese studies through out Vietnam with the aim to cooperate with each other in joint research projects, conferences, and share information on Japanese studies.

In connection with the development of institutions specializing on Japanese studies, the number of scholars, researchers and students who are interested in Japanese studies have also increased very fast. For example, the staff of the CJS has increased from less than 10 in 1994 to more than 30 in 2005. The number of students who study Japanese language as the first foreign language in universities or foreign language centers has increased to a huge number, especially in recent years. Within the CJS itself now there are 5 evening Japanese language classes at 4 levels (A, B, C, and D).

In 1996, the Center for Japanese Studies undertook a survey on Japanese studies in Vietnam under the support from the Japan Foundation and the Embassy of Japan in Vietnam. According to this survey, the actual number of researcher and scholars involved in Japanese studies was 95 people as of 1995. Among those, 31.6% are in the range of age from 30 to 39, 24.2% from 40 to 49. These figures are almost the same the figures for other Asian countries 27.1% and 34% respectively. Regarding sex, the number of male

researchers is greater than the number of female ones.

From the data mentioned above, it could be seen that Japanese studies in Vietnam are undertaken by the middle-age generation. Thus, it can be said that there is a shortfall in creating the coming generation of Japanese studies specialists.

Regarding the level of education, the number of people who hold Ph.D. degree is about 41%; the rest are holding MA or BA degree.

Most researchers entering the field of Japanese studies are trained in different subject areas. Some of the main disciplines are history (29 people), economics (25 people), international studies (7 people), and foreign language (6 people). Most researchers who are now undertaking research on Japan received their latest degree BA, MA, or Ph.D. in the 1980s or 1990s from different disciplines rather than Japanese studies. Only after 4 years of establishing the division of Japanese studies at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, there are Japanese specialists who have really been trained in Japanese studies. But due to the constrain in recruiting new members in the institutions on Japanese studies, not many Japanese studies trained students have been recruited to these institutions. Most of them have to take other kind of jobs sometime not having relation with their academic discipline.

2. The increasing number of books and articles on or related to Japan written and published by Vietnamese scholars or translated from foreign books into Vietnamese

From nearly a zero number in the early 1990s, books and articles on or related to Japan written and published by Vietnamese scholars have been increasing year by year. These books and articles are the outcomes of the projects on or related to Japanese studies. Taking for example the Center for Japanese studies alone, during the last 10 years, there have been more than 40 titles of books being published. These books cover all fields of Japanese studies, including history, politics, society, economics, culture, and the Vietnam-Japan relation. The titles of these books are given in the enclosed list. In addition, there are also many books on Japanese studies written and published by other institutions like the Institute of World Economics, the Central Institute of Economic Management, the Trade University, etc. I do not have the exact figure of these books. Regarding the articles on Japanese studies, there have been a large number of them printed in many academic reviews in Vietnam such as the Japanese and Northeast Asian Studies Review, the World Economics and International Reviews and the Vietnam Asia Pacific Economic Review. The Japanese and Northeast Asian Studies Review has been published since 1995, initially semi-annually, then quarterly, and now bimonthly. The accumulated number of articles on Japanese studies published in this Review is 690 as of December 2004.

In addition to the books and articles written and published by Vietnamese authors, there have also been books written in foreign languages translated and published in Vietnamese. These kinds of books are often supported by some foundations in Japan such as the Toyota Foundation and the Japan Foundation.

3. The increasing number of books and other research materials available for reference in libraries of institutions and universities in Vietnam

It can be said that reference materials are very important for undertaking research

in general and for Japanese study in particular. Thanks to the financial supports from the Vietnamese Government and foundations and institutions in Japan, books and materials on Japanese studies in Vietnam have been increasing year to year. The library of Center for Japanese studies alone now has more than 15,000 book heads. About one third of them are in Japanese, the remaining are in English or other languages.

Beside books, other research materials like newspapers, magazines, newsletters and periodicals in both Vietnamese and foreign languages are also very available for reference.

The third source of reference is the access to the Internet. This source of reference is just taken into consideration in recent years. It is a little bit late compared with in other countries due to the constraint in the Government policy. But currently, getting into the Internet is much faster in Vietnam, making significant contribution and creates favorable conditions to the research work of researchers.

4. The cumulative number of research projects undertaken or seminars and conferences held on or related to Japanese studies

Since its establishment, each year the Center for Japanese Studies alone undertakes at least 5 projects on Japanese studies. These projects are of three levels: the State level, the Ministerial level, and the Institutional level. Over the past 10 years, there have been 3 State level projects, 25 Ministerial level projects, and more than 100 Institutional level projects being undertaken. Some of these projects are supported by foundations in Japan like the Japan Foundation or the Sumitomo Foundation. The others are undertaken by the fund coming from the Vietnamese Government budget. Beside, there are also a number of projects undertaken by other institutions or joint research projects among some institutions. The outcomes of each projects are often a book, some articles, and some policy recommendations made to the Vietnamese authorities for policy-making process regarding the Vietnam's external relation and the Vietnam-Japan relation in particular.

Contributions of the undertaken research projects can be summarized as follows:

- Making clear some issues in the Japan's economic development strategies, Japanese economic structure and its changes since the end of the Second World War, the Japanese financial system and its current reform; many experiences lessons from Japan have been drawn out for Vietnam to refer in the process of building a market economy oriented toward socialism.

- Analyzing and making clear some major issues in the Japanese society nowadays. These include the Japanese social welfare system, policies and measures to solve social problems in Japan, the relationship between economic growth and rich-poor differentiation in Japan. Making clear successes as well as failures of the Japanese-styled model of social welfare.

- Analyzing and making clear the Japanese political system, Japan's diplomatic and security policy providing useful academic arguments for the Vietnamese authorities in the policy-making process, particularly the diplomatic policies with Japan.

- Studying the Japanese culture and educational system in order to make clear the main characteristics, development stages, and contributions of culture and education to-

ward the success of Japan; deeply studying some concrete aspects of the Japanese culture, way of life, educational system and educational reform.

- Analyzing the main characteristics and changes in Japan's history periods and religions; deeply studying some concrete issues such as the village regime, village law and the Shinto.

- Studying comprehensively the Vietnam-Japan relations over the past more than 30 years, providing academic foundation for Vietnam's external policy-making process, particularly policies towards Japan.

In addition to the research projects, seminars or conferences on Japanese studies are often held each year. There have been some big international conferences with the participants from various countries in East Asia being held such as the conference on "*Studying Experiences and Methodologies in Japanese Studies*" in 1995, "*Social and Cultural Changes in the Process of Moving to the Market Economy of Some Asian Countries*" in 1998, "*Vietnam-Japan Relation: Past, Present, and Future*" in 2003.

In short, over the past more than 10 years, Japanese studies in Vietnam have obtained considerable achievements. The achievements of Japanese studies in Vietnam have been the results of efforts by the Vietnamese Government in terms of guideline and financial support, the Vietnamese scholars and researchers for their effective studies, and the help and support from the Japanese side such as research grants from Japanese-studies-supported foundations and research materials donated by Japanese institutions and Japanese scholars. However, we should stress that there has been a dialectic relation between the development of the Vietnam-Japan relation and the development of Japanese studies in Vietnam. The former has created a favorable condition and motive force for the later to develop. Meanwhile, the development of the later has made considerable contributions to the mutual understanding and cooperative relationship between the people of the two countries so as to push up further the development of the former.

III. Obstacles and limitations

Although Japanese studies in Vietnam have obtained considerable achievements, there remain some obstacles and limitations.

(1) The number of scholars and researchers who can use Japanese language in their research are still limited. Those who are good at Japanese language are often not good at Japanese studies. In contrast, those who have experiences and are interested in Japanese studies are often not good at Japanese language. Their research results have been based mainly on translated or written materials in other languages like English. These kinds of references sometimes not necessary reflect the viewpoints of the Japanese people. Their research results are, therefore, may be distorted.

(2) The financial budget allocating for academic research in Vietnam in general and for Japanese studies in particular is still very modest. It does not allow the researchers to have enough funds to conduct surveys or holding appropriate seminars or roundtable discussions concerning their research topics, etc. Their research results are, therefore, sometime not very reliable.

(3) Income of Vietnamese researchers and lecturers is still very low. Many people, although their main job is undertaking research, have to take the so-called left-hand profession to earn living for themselves and their family. Their time reserving for doing research is, therefore, limited. This will certainly have negative impacts on their research results.

(4) Although Japanese studies in Vietnam have received considerable support from Japan, such supports are still very modest. Some Japanese-studies-supported foundations could only provide a maximum of several thousands U.S. dollar per one research project, and there are quite few projects being granted each year. Japan's ODA has not yet come to institutions or scholars specializing in Japanese studies like the Center for Japanese Studies.

IV. Prospects

Japanese Studies in Vietnam has great potential for development. There is already a strong Center for Japanese Studies, many qualified researchers and scholars, good Japanese resources collections and strong government support. In such favorable conditions, it is our hope that Japanese Studies in Vietnam will have a very bright future. This expectation is based on the following points:

Firstly, the Vietnam-Japan relation is continued to strengthen and further develop. It can be said that in the context of localization and globalization, under the impacts of the external policies of both countries, and based on the achievements so far, the Vietnam-Japan relations will further develop in all aspects.

- In the economic field, Japan has attached importance to Vietnam's economic sector. According to Japan, Vietnam is a country of peace and stability. For Japanese economists, especially Japanese businesspeople, the first condition for doing business is a stable environment, and Vietnam is considered to have the most stable environment now. Japan has promised Vietnam to continue to provide official development assistance, to promote investment and to encourage more Japanese businesspeople to visit. According to Japanese leaders and businesspeople, Japan's investment in Vietnam will continue to increase. At present, the FDI trend in Asia appears favorable to Vietnam, as Japanese companies highly appreciate the potentials of Vietnam, ranking Vietnam fourth after America, China and Thailand. Japan-Vietnam Investment Protection Agreement (signed on November 2003), Vietnam-Japan Joint Initiatives (signed on December 2003) and Cooperate Initiatives with Vietnam proposed by Japan's economy and industry minister during his visit to Vietnam in January 2004. In relation to trade, Japan considers Vietnam an important market, and hopes to further promote the two countries' trade. Japan and Vietnam have finished bilateral negotiations on Vietnam's entry into the WTO. These are good signals in the economic relation between Vietnam and Japan

- In the diplomatic and political field, Vietnam-Japan relations have been built on a firm foundation of confidence and long-lasting ties. The two sides agreed on the need to increase the exchange of high-level and parliamentary delegations and to promote popular exchanges, including cultural and tourist co-operation. The two countries have seen good development of their political relations.

- In the cultural exchange field, Japan also recognized Vietnam's willingness to strengthen relations in cultural and other areas. Japan is also interested in tourism. At present, many Japanese hope to visit Vietnam. The number of Japanese tourists visiting Vietnam in 2004 was 30% more than the figure of 2003. It is a considerable growth.

Secondly, although it is still very young, the Center for Japanese Studies (CJS) has already had experiences of more than 10 years undertaking research on Japan. CJS is the only governmental institution for Japanese Studies in Vietnam. It plays the role of a central institution for cooperating and coordinating researchers, scholars and institutions both in Vietnam and in other countries for research activities on Japan. The Center now has good experts in Japanese studies; some of them are holding a Ph.D. in Japanese Studies. They can undertake well research projects either individually or jointly. They also participate in training students on Japanese studies and giving lectures at various universities, institutions, and schools throughout Vietnam so as to provide better knowledge on Japan for the Vietnamese people. CJS is now planning to open a Ph.D. course in Japanese studies. Therefore, in the near future, Japanese studies specialists who hold Ph.D. degrees will certainly increase making further contributions to the development of Japanese studies in Vietnam.

Thirdly, together with the development of the Vietnam-Japan relation, the number of students who studying Japanese language in Vietnam has increased to a considerable extent over the past few years. For example, the number of Vietnamese studying the Japanese language rose from 10,106 in 1998 to more than 18,000 in 2003. Since 2003, Japanese has been taught as an elective at a number of high schools in Vietnam. With such an increasing number of Vietnamese people who know Japanese language, we can be sure that Japanese studies in Vietnam will have better condition to develop in the near future.

Finally, in order to further stimulate the development of Japanese studies in Vietnam, the Vietnamese government, institutions and universities have been implementing appropriate measures such as allocating more fund for research projects, training and re-training both Japanese language and academic disciplines for researchers by both domestically and externally, and providing Japanese studies institutions with modern equipment and technologies. The Center for Japanese Studies itself will be allocated more office space and new equipment at a newly built building in some months. In addition, new research resources such as access to the Internet, local area networks, and electronic libraries are being paid much attention to build in Vietnam these days.

With such supports in the years to come, it is our hope that Japanese studies in Vietnam will have a bright future.

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