
Preface

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This volume is the outcome of the International Conference “Vietnam–Indochina–Japan Relations during the Second World War—Documents and Interpretations” held on September 18 and 19, 2015 at the Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities. Its co-organizers were the latter University and the Graduate School and Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University. It was financially supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) and the Japan Foundation.

In the Opening and Preliminary Session, Prof. Nguyễn Văn Khánh (Rector of Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities) gave the opening remarks, and Mr. Jun Yanagi (Minister of the Embassy of Japan in Vietnam) and Mr. Toshiki Ando (Director of Japan Foundation Center for Cultural Exchange in Vietnam) gave the congratulatory addresses. Prof. Ken’ichiro Hirano (Toyo Bunko), Vice-Rector Nguyễn Văn Kim (Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities), and Prof. Masaya Shiraishi (Waseda University) gave keynote speeches.

Following the above session, the participants were separated into two rooms where 25 papers were presented altogether. In addition, another paper was contributed to the Conference whose author could not attend the meeting; that paper is also included in this volume.¹

More than one hundred researchers, students and journalists attended the two-day Conference and participated in the lively discussions. We are very glad that we could successfully organize the Conference for the following reasons:

First of all, on the occasion of the 70th year since the end of the Second World War, the holding of an international symposium of this kind was very meaningful. It was the right time for us to meet together in order to look back again into the history of our region and its countries during the War and to start afresh in order to further deepen our understanding of the topic.

We have now a relatively rich stock of existing literature which we can and indeed must consult. In addition, in recent years, we can get access to archival documents more easily than before. As a matter of fact, many of the papers presented at this Conference drew on archival and other primary sources which had not been fully utilized, while building on the achievements of preceding studies.² This en-

¹ One of the paper presenters at the Conference, Dr. Phạm Văn Thuý has asked the editors not to include his paper in this volume. Therefore, his paper entitled “For Better or For Worse: The Japanese Occupation and Economic Decolonization in Vietnam and Indonesia” is excluded. On the other hand, Prof. Nguyễn Văn Khánh contributed an extra paper after the Conference—“Japanese Agricultural Policy toward Vietnam during World War II”—which is included in the present volume.

² It was especially impressive that many of the younger Vietnamese researchers had utilized archival documents not only in Vietnam, but also in France and Japan.

abled the papers to acquire a more academic perspective, even though the interpretation varied depending on each author's point of view. This academic viewpoint was also seen in the discussions of commentators and other participants.

Secondly, the Conference was the first occasion where many specialists from various countries attended to discuss the common topic: the wartime Vietnam–French Indochina–Japan relations and socio-political changes in Indochina and Thailand. The paper presenters and other participants were not only from Vietnam and Japan, but Thailand, People's Republic of China, Taiwan, France, Czech Republic and the USA as well.

Until now, specialists in Japan, Vietnam and other countries have usually published in their own languages. Therefore, their work has not been widely shared beyond their respective linguistic areas.³ The Conference was really the first major attempt to break through this mutual isolation. We hope that the Conference would be a good starting point for the further deepening and widening of multinational exchanges among researchers with different linguistic backgrounds.⁴

Thirdly, many papers at the Conference tended to focus on political, diplomatic and military history, similar to the existing scholarship. Even so, some of them tried to shed new light on issues which preceding studies had not fully investigated. In addition, there were also a number of papers which focused on other aspects, such as economic, cultural and religious areas. This was a very encouraging development.

We expect that further excellent works will be published on a variety of issues in the coming years that will ultimately enrich our understanding of the history of these countries during the Second World War.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the paper contributors and other participants in the Conference, and those who helped us in the preparation and holding of the Conference, including the contributions of excellent interpreters and translators.

Many thanks are also extended to those who helped us in editing and publishing this monograph.

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³ Masaya Shiraishi, "Introduction" in his edited volume *Indochina, Thailand, Japan and France during World War II: Overview of Existing Literature and Related Documents for the Future Development of Researches*, Waseda Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Tokyo, March 2015, p. 2.

⁴ In order to facilitate the exchange, the Conference used three languages: Vietnamese, Japanese and English, with the assistance of excellent simultaneous interpreters.

⁵ The first publication was the monograph cited in note 3.

