

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF VIETNAM RURAL STUDIES IN JAPAN

INTRODUCTION

The study of Vietnam in Japan grew out of the discipline of Asian history pioneered by such leaders in the field as Yamamoto Tatsuro, Matsumoto Nobuhiro, and Fujiwara Riichiro, who began their research before World War II collecting source materials while studying at the *École Française d'Extrême Orient* in Hanoi. These three scholars were not only involved in the mainstream study of historiography popular at the time centered on official documents compiled by the various states of Asia, not only searched for sources to be used in compilation documents by governments, but also collected and analyzed such private sector materials as family genealogies and real estate documents existing in rural Vietnam, an activity that began putting area studies into academic perspective [Yamamoto 1940, 370–83; 1961, 1030–50]. After the War, the three traveled to various research institutes in Europe, copying the sources they found related to Vietnam to use in their seminars on Vietnamese history and compile into research publications centering around the empirical approach to history. Thanks to these pioneers, interest in Vietnamese studies, particularly its historical aspects, grew in Japan, as the number of specialists increased to rival that of their

counterparts over the whole of Europe [Furuta 2000, 227–40].

The study of Vietnam in the post-World War II era was greatly stimulated by the Vietnam War, which drew the interest of Japanese scholars to the degree of resistance displayed by the Vietnamese towards their French, then American, invaders, resulting in the viewpoint that it was the village community which provided the wherewithal to resist and rise victoriously over outside intervention. The study of rural Vietnam at that time was, due to the difficulty of conducting fieldwork under wartime conditions, based on survey reports done during the French colonial period and took up the origins of the village community and greatly influenced many areas of research through the debate over the idea of “moral economy” [Scott 1976, 1999; Popkin 1979]. However, Vietnamese area studies rose and fall with the vagaries of the War, and along with the end of hostilities in 1975, international scholarly interest quickly waned.

Japan was one exception, however, as the study of Vietnamese source materials continued as a part of the field of Asian history, “due to its academic purity [i.e., lack of substance],” according to one opinion [Furuta 2000, 233]. Vietnamese studies during the 1970s were greatly effected by the War, and even the “pure” historical research could not escape its influence. The focus soon turned from Vietnam as a region on the periphery of the Chinese world to its unique social and cultural attributes, as a re-reading of the related Chinese sources revealed a period of Vietnamese autonomy during the Han-Viet era [Goto Kinpei 1975] and the existence of a unique customary law, which had sprung from the introduction of the Chinese penal code during the formation of premodern dynasties modeled after the Chinese system [Katakura Minoru 1987].

Furthermore, during the time after the War when the collection of source materials in Vietnam proper became nearly impossible, sources were brought from various repositories in Europe and drew the attention of Japanese researchers, resulting in the discovery of such documents as *địa bạ* (village tax ledger) documents they included. Based on a detailed study of these ledgers in the comparative light of the results obtained by French colonial geographical and Japanese Asian rural studies, Sakurai Yumio [1987], who was influenced enough by the moral economy debate to shift his purview of Vietnam history from the state to the local level, proposed a process by which the premodern Vietnamese village was formed, arguing that the basis of the rural community was the communal ownership of land.

RESEARCH TRENDS SINCE THE DOI MOI ERA

Between the mid-1970s and mid-80s, political conditions placed severe limits on the amount of exchange carried on between Japan and Vietnam. However, from 1986 on, as Vietnam entered its era of “*Doi Moi*,” characterized by the development of a market economy and reentry into international society, relations between the two countries gradually expanded until 1994, when the United States finally lifted its economic embargo and enabled increased opportunities to study and do fieldwork in Vietnam. This was accompanied by the expansion in Japanese academia of Vietnamese studies in such fields as ethnology, sociology and agricultural science, as Vietnam came to be looked upon as “virgin territory” in Asian studies, leading to an increase of both degree dissertations and specialized research publications on the subject in recent years. This review will be mainly concerned with introducing the work done in Japan on rural Vietnam since 1997 under Doi-Moi, leaving the period before that to the able reviews already contained in [Takada 1998] and [Shimao & Sakurai 1999].

Fieldwork Results

When the 1990s rolled around and Japanese researchers were freed from the confines of their armchairs to begin genuine fieldwork in Vietnam, interdisciplinary projects, including the natural sciences, were chosen, not only for their scholarly appeal, but also because they were the most expedient means to get into Vietnam proper, due to the difficulty of gaining government permission to study on an individual basis.

To begin with, the ongoing Bach Coc survey in Nam Dinh Province headed by Sakurai since 1993, which was modeled after the Don Daeng village survey in Thailand, raised the consciousness among young students of regional studies not only towards methodology but also the necessity of a broad interdisciplinary approach to rural studies. The findings of the project have been published in *Thông tin Bách Cốc* by the Vietnam Rural Studies Association (Hội Nghiên cứu Làng xã Việt Nam) and include survey records and collected source materials with heavy emphasis on historical study, reflecting Sakurai’s leadership [Yanagisawa 2003a]. A similar project is being carried out in the southern Mekong Delta [Takada 1996–98].

Individual contributions to the field in form of both research articles and translations of anthropological studies are published

through the journal, *Betonamu no Shakai to Bunka* (Society and culture of Vietnam) (ISBN4-938718-75-8).

Many Japanese scholars participated in the 2nd International Conference of Vietnamese Studies held in Ho Chi Minh City in 2004, mostly presenting papers in Vietnamese, the trademark of expertise in the field of rural studies as of late. However, Japanese remains the *lingua franca* for the scholarly research published in Japan, like in most other fields dealing with foreign countries. Under such conditions, Suenari Michio [2006] was forced to compile a Vietnamese language edition of a bibliography of anthropological studies done in Japan.

Two Trends in the Study of the Vietnamese Village

Before World War II, Japan as part of its idea of an East Asian co-prosperity sphere set up an economic investigation bureau and research institute, which, as one of their tasks, translated into Japanese the survey reports and related research done by the French on the social and economic conditions of their colonies in Indochina. The Vietnamese village that appeared in this body of literature first drew the attention of Japanese researchers as (1) possessing a strong communal character reminiscent of the regional and social organization of the late premodern Japanese village, and (2) the source from which sprang the will and power to resist and overcome military invasion by both France and the United States.

Then from the mid-1990s on, the rural community once again gained the spotlight in Vietnamese studies from the following two viewpoints. The first involved focusing on changes which occurred over time in the historical view of development up to the formation of the nation-state in Vietnam operating under a socialist system. The second was concerned with placing Vietnam within the comparative context of village society throughout East and Southeast Asia, including Japan. While both approaches continued to emphasize the communal character of rural Vietnam, the first tended to stress social organization as it related to the origins and continuity of that communal character, while the second emphasized such cultural aspects as kinship, religious beliefs and ritual organization.

The first viewpoint took as its main objective the Vietnamese village as a “cooperative organization” (*hợp tác xã*), and defined the land it cultivated, called *công điền công thổ* (public paddy, public land), as communally shared. Since the percentage occupied by such communally shared land was larger in the north than in the south, it has been

concluded that the former has a stronger communal character than the latter. Sakurai [1987] focused on this phenomenon and concluded that the source of the village community was its system of communal land ownership. From the founding of the People's Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north in 1945 through the land reforms implemented from the late 1950s on, land ownership was shifted to a collective, group-oriented system. These "cooperative organizations" (*Hợp tác xã*) not only became the basic units of production, but also served as rural administrative and social units, taking the place of "traditional communes" (*xã*) under the socialist regime. With the unification of north and south after the PDR's victory over the United States, the cooperative organization (*Hợp tác xã*) was introduced into the south as a means of reorganizing it into a socialist society, but the experiment failed, and in the north, despite the abandonment of group-oriented agriculture under Doi-Moi, the cooperative remained in the form of the more traditional village community to *hợp tác xã* organization, which has become the main zone in which research on rural Vietnamese society is now conducted. However, with respect to the south, where it is said that the communal character of the village is far weaker than up north in the Red River Delta, resulting in hardly any development toward the *hợp tác xã* form, the first viewpoint had to be abandoned for the second comparative, cultural anthropological approach.

RECENT RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE DOI-MOI

Since Vietnam was traditionally a society extremely diverse in both geography and ethnicity, the terminology referring to "village" is just as rich and diverse [Woodruff 1960, 36], but with national unification and the local administrative system that was established along with it, the village unit has come to be known uniformly throughout the country as *xã* (commune).

Vietnam is a country comprised of 54 officially designated ethnic groups, but over 90% of its population belongs to only one, the Kinh (or Viet) people. The Kinh people originated in the Red River Delta and gradually moved south into the midland coastal area inhabited by the Cham people, then expanded further south into the Mekong Delta, the environs of the Khmer people. The country then became divided between the delta-dwelling Kinh-dominated population, the Tay-Thai peoples in the northern mountains, and the Malayo-Polynesian peoples in the midland mountains. Therefore, for research purposes, the general

model for the Vietnamese village community was developed by scholars doing fieldwork among the Kinh people in the northern and southern delta regions, while the research done among the mountain minorities tended to emphasize the theme of ethnicity.

Furthermore, despite the fact that foreign researchers have been permitted to do fieldwork in Vietnam since the mid-90s, there are still certain areas in which research remains nearly impossible, resulting in a regional bias to the work that has been done under the Doi-Moi regime. That is to say, the Red River Delta has been well-studied, while the midlands and south have not; and limitations still abound with respect to fieldwork being done on such topics as religion and ethnic problems, resulting in a paucity of research there as well.

The Red River Delta

As the birthplace of Vietnam's majority ethnic group, the Kinh, the Red River Delta's rural society boasts a very long history and thus has become the major "type" among researchers of what exactly the traditional Vietnamese village is, dominating the research literature to date, in terms of both quantity and quality.

One example is the previously mentioned Bach Coc project, which studies *hợp tác xã* from the perspective of the continuation of the village community under a socialist regime, which in the process has produced a new generation of rural studies experts.

It was the leader of the project, Sakurai Yumio, who first noticed that a modern agricultural cooperative and the old village of Bách Cốc overlapped on the same site, thus leading him to the question of the historical relationship between the two. The project also produced the research done by Yanagisawa Masayuki [2000] tracing the organizational transformation of the agricultural cooperative in response to the political and economic conditions brought about by Doi-Moi, showing that the cooperative became an intermediary between individual peasants cultivators and the market economy and took advantage of group-oriented production to distribute profits among its members on an equal basis.

On a more historical level, there is research based on surveys from the Red River Delta investigating the *hợp tác xã* not only in its economic function, but also its existence as a representative of the village community as a whole.

Iwai Misaki [2001a] studied how the cooperative was formed beginning in the 1950s as a production unit from the "traditional"

village/hamlet (*làng, xóm*) and as a village administrative unit (*xã*), concluding that in the process, the cooperative transcended its production role to take on public service and social welfare functions. She also examined how these functions were transformed under Doi-Moi. Iwai has shown that since the cooperative was not set up coercively by the socialist state, but rather formed gradually from the existing village community, peasants have come to share the idea of “the collective” (*tập thể*) as the basis of production and distribution founded on equality. In a separate paper she offered the example of a cooperative taking on a social welfare role in the construction of a group-oriented child-care facility designed to lighten the load of mothers-cum-cultivators [Iwai 1999a].

Miyazawa Chihiro [1999b] traced the changes that have occurred in the socioeconomic aspects of the village since the beginning of the 20th century, concluding that the “subsistence ethic” propounded in the “moral economy” debate as the organizational principle of the village community is still very important in Vietnam and also became the foundation for building that country’s socialist system. While village society under the colonial regime was held together by communal land, communal customary law (*hương ước*) and rituals based on equality according to age-ranking under socialism equality was transformed into egalitarianism within the cooperative, which even today plays an administrative role in maintaining the egalitarian character of the whole village community.

The *hợp tác xã* that were set up in the Red River Delta by the government exhibited very diverse forms both regionally and historically, reflecting the complexity of the Delta’s rural society; however, from 1996 on, they were placed in the context of economic cooperatives, a new definition that entailed both rapid disassembly and rebuilding of existing organizations. The research on this phenomenon was done by Harada Yukino [2002], who gave examples of cooperatives that were identical to administrative villages, and Okae Takashi [2004], who described the new economic role of cooperatives in financial terms. Such approaches also reflect a trend away from trying to study these organizations within the context of the origins and development of agrarian communities in the direction of analyzing them from the perspective of political economy.

The Red River Delta villages inhabited by descendents of the Kinh people have maintained a rigid traditional social structure of patrilineal groups involved in communal land ownership, legal institutions (*hương ước*), and ritual centered on the Dinh.

Suenari Michio [1998b] studied the Kinh village from a comparative anthropological viewpoint based on the large body of research that exists on the regions of East Asia, resulting in the first systematic analysis of Kinh kinship. In his work, Suenari used oral historical records collected from direct interviews and field notes to reconstruct both village history and religious life, leaving a valuable body of reference materials for novices and veteran researchers alike.

One indication of the patrilineal character of Kinh society is the way Vietnamese kinship terminology distinguishes between patrilineal descent and non-patrilineal descent with terms “inside” (*nội*) and “outside” (*ngoài*), respectively. Nevertheless, Suenari has noticed a difference between Vietnamese patrilineal groups (*đông họ*) and those in China in both ideational and real terms, and in the important role played by *ngoài* groups in both ancestor worship and inheritance, leading him to term Vietnamese patrilineal descent as “paternal kindredness.”

Concerning the diverse workings of *đông họ* and its lack of dominance over kinship relations, Miyazawa has offered the explanation that (1) the formation of kinship groups depends more on the immediate feelings or personal preferences (*tình cảm*) of the parties concerned rather than on Confucianist norms and ideals and (2) the system follows the typical Southeast Asian pattern of dual descent in matters of inheritance and ritual.

Based on the genealogies, tombstone epigraphy and surveys of village ritual houses (*dinh*) collected by the Bach Coc Project, Shimao described the reorganization process of kinship bonds symbolized by the compilation of genealogies and the building and repair of ritual houses, concluding that since there is proof that the reestablishment of kinship bonds was conducted repeatedly over time, the Vietnamese kinship structure should be regarded as neither permanent nor perpetual.

One of the essential duties of Kinh villagers is to gather at the local Dinh and worship the gods that protect their community. Suenari [2005] compared the differences in the character of such gods in Vietnam and China, offering the possibility that the difference may stem from the higher level of autonomy enjoyed by the Vietnamese village.

Nagasaka Yasuyo [2000] took up the phenomenon of the village community being reproduced or extrapolated in urban areas, describing a Dinh that was built in French colonial Hanoi and how residents who migrated from the countryside established new communities of fellow “homevillagers” in the city.

The Southern Regions

Kinh villages in southern Vietnam, the oldest of which were formed only about 300 years ago, do not exhibit the historical depth of their northern counterparts socially or culturally. In particular, the villages that were opened in the Mekong Delta from the 19th century have been characterized by a great deal more geographical mobility, and with the development of a market economy, display a weakening of traditional communal traits. Furthermore, while the Red River villages are pure Kinh in ethnic composition, southern villages are a mixture of Kinh with Khmer native peoples, Chinese and Malays, which has resulted in an intermingling of both genes and culture, a weaker genealogical consciousness than Kinh in the Red River Delta, and the absence of the *dong ho* patrilineage. It is only natural that such a weak communal and kinship character on the part of southern villages has drawn little interest from scholars specializing in conventional Vietnamese rural studies. Another problem is that fieldwork is difficult to conduct among Vietnam's ethnic minorities due to domestic conditions, and the study of minorities in Southeast Asia is far more fruitful in places like Cambodia rather than on their periphery in the Mekong Delta.

Just about all of the research on rural Vietnam done before the unification of north and south can be found in either Hickey 1964 or Hendry 1964, which contains results of a joint Republic of Vietnam-US-sponsored fieldwork project carried out during the late 1950s by the Michigan Advisory Group in the administrative village of Khanh Hau in Long An Province. After that, until the end of the War, doing fieldwork in Vietnam was impossible.

It was Long An Province that would become the location of Sakurai's Bach Coc Project in 1995, and from 2000 on, Khanh Hau and its new branch village are being surveyed to verify any social changes that have occurred since unification in 1975. Khanh Hau's oral tradition has it that the village was founded by a group of Kinh people which had migrated from the midlands. The Project members who were involved in the work all had participated in the Red River Delta Project and concluded that Khanh Hau, as a village model for the south, did possess characteristics common to villages in the north. Sakurai [2001] has indicated that due to changes that occurred in Khanh Hau's agricultural production since the 1990s, when Doi-Moi got underway in earnest, the village resembles Red River villages in the minimal economic scale under which it operates. Iwai [2001a] reported on the "moral economy" aspect embedded in the village's traditional agricultural wage labor

practices, while Ono Mikiko [2001] explained that the reason why Khanh Hau was one of the few villages in the Mekong Delta to realize group-based agricultural production was because land ownership there had been equally distributed under post-unification reforms. Ono's research on Khanh Hau also concerns (1) the minimalization of land ownership scale and the replacement and bankruptcy of the village's core strata of peasants from the French colonial through the Republic of Vietnam era [Ono 1998] and (2) the economic behavior of villagers in the midst of a migration policy implemented there after the abandonment of collective agriculture [Ono 1997].

In contrast to Sakurai's project, Takada Yoko decided to trace backward from the present conditions of the Mekong Delta village to what it was under French colonial rule. Within her study of source materials from the French colonial era regarding the reclamation of the Mekong Delta [1983, 79–94; 1984, 241–59], especially noteworthy is the formation process of a “frontier society” to the west of the Mekong River the Trans Bassac region. Takada's article [2001] is a detailed account of the ethnic composition, population movements and settlement structure of that “frontier society” based on both the French colonial sources and her fieldwork conducted in two locations since 1995. French colonial society on the Mekong Delta was the site of a landlord-tenant system created under the concession granted to construct a canal network. Takada's another study [1998] is a description of that system based on the memories of peasants still active in the region. Takada also touched upon the relations between the Khmer people native to the Mekong Delta region and Kinh migrants, arguing that the present phenomenon of residential apartheid in ethnically mixed villages can be attributed to the historical relationship between Khmers who reclaimed the land originally and Kinh who moved into the community at a later date [1999].

Within the little amount of research done to date on kinship groups in the rural south, the indication is that a relatively weak consciousness exists there concerning family genealogy, ultimogenitor, and uxorilocality, indicating a “Khmerization” of the Kinh people in the region. For example, there are Shibuya Setsuko's reports [2000, 2002] of her fieldwork done at a Kinh settlement in Can Tho Province and Nakanishi Yuji's survey [1998, 1999] of a mixed Kinh-Khmer-Chinese village in Soc Trang Province. Shibuya [2000; Owada-Shibuya 2002] describes in detail the image of the contemporary farm family, as the basic village social unit consisting of a nuclear family centered around the husband and wife, meaning that it is the family that takes the direct

brunt of social change; and while kinship relations tend towards the patrilineal side, that fact appears consciously only in ritual affairs.

Nakanishi attempted to understand what ties people together within Mekong Delta rural society and concluded that a bilateral sort of kinship exists, in the sense of the Vietnamese term “*bà con*,” meaning that it is kindred ties that form the basis of family and kin relations, including bilateral ancestor worship. What both Shibuya and Nakanishi have found is that the Mekong Delta village consists of nuclear families and households that have not been fused into any overriding kinship group or village level social organization.

In their studies of ethnically mixed villages, Takada and Nakanishi both have concentrated mostly on the character and workings of rural society, rather than Khmer ethnicity, for example. In contrast, Ohashi Hisatoshi [1999], who specializes in Cambodia, has focused on the Khmer Krom ethnic consciousness of the indigenous people of the Mekong Delta and published an interesting dialogue with Truong Mealy, former Cambodian ambassador to Japan, in which Mealy talks about his “Khmer Krom-ness.”

Suzuki Shinji [2000] has done a comparison of the involvement of people of Chinese-descent in the southern Vietnamese fishing industry between now and during the French colonial era, concluding that under the French they ran the industry for all intents and purposes, but today have been economically subordinated to Vietnamese fishing interests. Suzuki has in the process provided us with a very rare case study of fishing communities in rural Vietnam.

Under the tense situation in the midlands and south since the 1990s concerning ethnic identity, religion and anti-government activity, Hagihara Shuko nevertheless managed to investigate a village in Dong Nai Province inhabited by Roman Catholics, providing us with the only rural field study of southeast Vietnam to date [1997].

The Mountain Regions

The unequal distribution in the population between the Kinh people and the country's 53 minority ethnic groups is best exemplified by their respective geographical distributions: the Kinh inhabiting the delta regions, minorities inhabiting the mountains of the north and midlands. These mountains, which form borders with China and Laos, have given the mountain minorities a geopolitical importance far outweighing their proportion within the total population. Although the Vietnamese government has implemented policies to embrace all 54 of its ethnic

groups under a national (*dân tộc*) identity, these measures have not been able to avoid what seems to be inevitable ethnic friction between the minorities and the majority ethnic group, creating a sensitivity not very conducive to permitting foreigners to do fieldwork among minorities.

The friction caused by the overwhelming Kinh ethnic dominance in mere numbers arises most acutely in the form of land disputes. Under domestic migration policy, Kinh people have been allowed to move from the delta regions into the mountain areas inhabited by minorities, taking possession of their land in the process, which often escalates into violent confrontations. Government policy promoting the transformation of mountain peoples from swidden agriculture to sedentary livelihoods has caused changes in both the traditional social structure and ecology in these areas.

Of the scanty research done to date, Ito Masako [2003] focused on a village in the northern mountains of Lang Son Province on the Chinese border inhabited by the Tay-Nung people, who exhibit ethnic changes brought about by the capricious ways in which the state has intervened in their lives from premodern times to the present day. Differences between the Tay and Nung peoples, which have been historically determined by third parties dealing with ethnic groups within various versions of a Chinese-Vietnamese state framework, were dissolved within the process of Vietnam's formation into a democratic nation-state-cum-ethnic melting pot through the successful anti-imperialist struggles waged against France and the United States, resulting in another change in ethnicity under land reform, agricultural communes and education, which lasted until the dissolution of the commune system during the late 1980s, forcing the Tay-Nung people to search for yet another homeland in the midlands.

The Midland Region

Unfortunately, no research to speak of exists on the rural midlands, mainly due to the assumption that village life there is more or less the same as what goes on in Kinh communities of the Red River Delta. At the present time, Yoshimoto Yasuko is studying the rural weaving industry among the Cham people of the midland coast and process of Islamization there based on a local version of Bani.

Other Research

Doi-Moi within the study of Vietnam has not only marked a new era in

fieldwork-based regional research, but also in the collection of written sources.

It has become very easy to use the country's libraries and archives, and individual researchers are welcome to scour the country in search of epigraphy, land records and the like [Yao & Okada 2003]. On the village level, news of the collection and cataloging that began in the late 1980s of land registries from the Nguyen Dynasty caused quite a stir among Japanese historians of Vietnam. Unfortunately, the assumption made by Vietnamese scholars of the dialectical historical school of thought that these records would reveal the economic stratification of the premodern Vietnamese village proved unfounded after closer scrutiny by historiographical experts in Japan found discrepancies between their content and what was really happening on the ground at the time. What we received for our trouble was an introduction to the genre of land-tax ledgers called *iền Bạ* drawn up during the French colonial era and some comments on the level of control exercised by the French authorities in rural south Vietnam during the nineteenth century [Ono 1997, Matsuo 2000].

CONCLUDING REMARKS: TOPICAL DIVERSITY AND THEORETICAL RETRENCHMENT

During the review period covered in this article, which was characterized by the opportunity to reopen fieldwork in rural Vietnam under the Doi-Moi reforms, the theoretical question of what features typify the Vietnam-style village community, like communal land ownership, were laid aside in favor of empirical phenomena and diverse kinds of concrete information observable on the ground. Researchers resembled a group of frontier folk unloosed on virgin soil and scattering in all kinds of directions. It was a time when a new generation of regional studies specialists appeared with little interest in the war that had caused such a stir in the research imaginations of their teachers. The political change that gave this new generation the opportunity to study in the field, Doi-Moi, was itself a movement questioning Vietnam's socialist order in a domestic response to the end of the Cold War and the advent of globalization. What these fieldworkers were seeing was a Vietnam where nothing was happening differently from what was going on elsewhere in Southeast Asia, thus putting what they were observing in a broader, more comparative perspective. And like in other countries of the region, the importance of rural society in the

domestic economy was diminishing in the midst of national efforts to industrialize for the purpose of achieving rapid economic growth. Upon my initial perusal of the post-Doi-Moi research literature to be reviewed, I was struck by the extreme lack of interest in the pre-Doi-Moi, post-WWII era ideas about the rural village, giving one the impression that such ideas are now considered out of date. On the other hand, Vietnam still has a long way to go on the road to realizing industrial, urbanized nation-statehood, given the fact that 80% of its population presently resides in rural village communities. It is this fact that necessitates, like before, concern with and problematics about how to place the village community within the context of contemporary Vietnamese society as a whole, which finds itself now under siege from new outside forces.

—Originally written in Japanese

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