

# APPLYING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN RESEARCHING AND TEACHING VIETNAM HISTORY

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## ABSTRACT

*Information technology is being applied in the every field of socio-economic. This paper mentions the initial reality of applying information technology, especially is GIS in the researching and teaching history in Vietnam and proposes developed solution in the future at once.*

## 1. VIETNAM HISTORY IN GENERAL

1. Vietnam is a monsoon-tropical country, stretching along the coast of the Pacific Ocean in the South East of Asia, both overlooking the ocean with the coastal length of 3260 km and connecting with the mainland in the position of successive mountains and rivers. This is the location of contact between the continent of Asian South East and the Islands of Asian South East, a meeting place of many flows of emigrants in history, and an interfering area of many cultures in the South East of Asia as well as the South East of Asia with China and India.

The nature in Vietnam is diversified, generally including coastal plains, midlands, highlands, forests and mountains, with the sub-climate areas and the diversification of animals of different kinds. This is an area rich in minerals and its nature is “generous”, but extremely severe, fierce and likely to cause an innumerable number of disasters to people. Living in such a condition, people must know how to adapt themselves to the nature, exploit the advantages, find the ways to limit and overcome natural disasters and better themselves to improve and conquer the nature. The ecological environment has great influence on the people’s life as well as the economic, cultural and social developments of the whole community. It creates many features of Vietnam history. So that, at the first, Vietnam history is the community’s history of adapting, improving and gradually conquering the nature in Vietnam.

2. Ten thousands of years ago, there were people living in the territory of Vietnam. The South East of Asia, including Vietnam is one of the areas which are considered as the human cradle, an early agricultural centre of human beings.

Currently, there are 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam with the population of 82 million people, of whom the Viet people occupy a major rate of about 87 % of the population and 53 ethnic minorities account for about 13 % of the population. In terms of language, the languages of the ethnic groups living in Vietnam belong to the eight groups of the Austro-

Asian, Thai, Austronesian, Sino-Tibetan systems such as Mon-Khmer, Viet-Muong, Miao-Yao, mixed Austro-Asian, Tay-Thai, Tibeto-Burmese, Han, and Austronesian.

Generally, The Kinh group is an ethnic majority living in the plains and big cities, but some parts have lived in the midlands and the mountains for a long time. For the ethnic minorities, some groups have focused living areas; however, the common situation is to live insertionally (many ethnic groups live together in a village). Each ethnic group has its own language and its own cultural features. However, these groups have inserted into one another and lived together for a long time in an area, defended and built the country, so the relation of cultural exchange, mixture and harmonization takes place quite regularly and strongly. Vietnam history is the history a community of many ethnic groups. Of these groups, there are ethnic majorities, ethnic minorities, early ethnic people and later ethnic people. However, once integrating into the Vietnamese community, they combine their power and are unanimous in constructing and defending the country.

3. As we know, after the long development of the prehistoric culture, at the beginning of the Iron Age, there were three big cultural centers in the territory of Vietnam, which led to the foundation of the first ancient states. They are the Dong Son culture in the North which was associated with the foundation of Van Lang and Au Lac states; the Sa Huynh culture in the Southern Middle, which prepared for the appearance of Champa state and the Oc Eo culture in the South, which was the foundation basis of Phu Nam state.

Many historic projects of Vietnam from the ancient time to the present time only presented Vietnam history in the main flows: From the cultures of Phung Nguyen- Dong Dau- Go Mun- Dong Son, leading to the foundation of Van Lang and Au Lac states, experiencing the Chinese domination of 1000 years, to the states of Dai Viet, Dai Nam and Vietnam without concerning about the historic flows of Champa and Phu Nam states (Chan Lap state followed Phu Nam state) in the South. Many book sets of history presented Vietnam history as the history of Viet people's Southward march. It means that wherever Viet people moved toward the South, they started writing down Vietnam history there. The way of writing down history can't avoid being subjective and one-side and don't reflect the right process of Vietnam history. This leads to the misconceptions that the Southern territory is the waste land newly changed into the cultivated land and they have forgotten the extremely important historic and cultural heritages which constitute Vietnam history.

In the historic process of the relations among the states in the current territory of Vietnam, there were economic and cultural exchanges and reciprocal influences, but sometimes there were contradictions, conflicts and annexations among them. Vietnamese historians can't help researching and being aware completely and subjectively of that process in order to understand clearly the complete formation and development of Vietnam history.

With the same conception, in modern history, the French colony-occupied territory or the territory administered by the Republic Government of Southern Vietnam before 1975 must be considered to be part of Vietnam history. For a long time, the book sets of Vietnam history have only concentrated on the modern history of Vietnam in the form of main flows - the revolutionary history of Vietnam.

Vietnam history is the history of the inhabitants' communities, nations and the civilizations which were once formed, existed and developed in the current territory of Vietnam. The development process of Vietnam history is wide-open and collecting, but the collecting is always the dominant trend.

4. The history of fighting foreign invaders is the main content covering the long and glorious history of Vietnamese people. Thus, researching and teaching the history of fighting foreign invaders is considered as the very important content of Vietnam history program.

In fact, fighting foreign invaders is not the specific feature of Vietnam history, but it became a demand for the existence and development of all nations and peoples worldwide a long time ago. However, the foreign invade fighting history of Vietnamese people is extremely special because there are rarely any people facing big and strong enemies in the unequal balance of power like Vietnamese people in the world history. The history of fighting foreign invaders is the history of gathering the national power; it is the crystallization of national vitality; and of course it causes the contrary effects and regulates many features of Vietnamese people.

The history of fighting foreign invaders is not all of the national history, but the economic development, cultural and social achievements, etc. are the bases of the country's existence and development and the material and spiritual strength for Vietnamese people to overcome dangerous hardships and make miraculous feats of arms in the struggle against foreign invaders.

The history of fighting foreign invaders is the remarkable and prominent features of the whole historic process, but the economic development and the socio-cultural achievements are the basis of the country's existence and development and are also the most important contents of Vietnam history.

5. The Feudal Regime's previous book sets of history were really the history of the royal dynasties and only focused the great political and military events of the courts. Many research works on modern history only concentrate on highlighting the lines and policies of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the State of Vietnam, but not clarifying how and where those lines and policies have been implemented. Recently some research projects of history have made efforts to delve into the history of the village communities, the history of the agriculture and the peasants, the history of factories, enterprises, workers, etc. Although these projects partially repaired the limited situation mentioned above, they seemed to be short of the general visibility. The public are the creators of history, the main owners and are the greatest in the national history. *Vietnam history not only focuses the great politic events, the changes of royal dynasties and social regimes but also is the history of the whole nation, of the entire people, including the worthy contribution of working people.*

## **II ABOUT A NEW TEXT BOOK ON VIETNAM HISTORY (4 VOLUMES)**

1. From August Revolution (1945) up to now, Vietnam has many text books of Vietnam history are as follows: *Vietnam history* with 8 volumes, published by the Education Publisher, 1960-1963, *Vietnam history* with 2 volumes, published by the Social Science Publisher, 1971-1985, *Vietnam history* Volumes 1, published by the University and technical Secondary School Publisher, 1983, *The General View of Vietnam history* with 3 volumes, published by the Education Publisher, 1998-1999, *The Evolution of Vietnam history* with 1 volumes, published by the Education Publisher, 2000, etc. These text books, each of which has basically strong points, mark the development of Vietnam history until the late decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, each volumes can't avoid specific limits because of its specific situation and characteristics; but on the whole, the databases are poor and the approaching methods are subjective and one-sided.

2. The requirements for summarizing historical achievements in Vietnam and in the world, especially the over- 10 year renovation of Vietnam, stop at a comparably complete and precise, basic level and systematizing the complete formation and development process of Vietnam history from the origin to the present time give the Vietnam historians a very heavy task. From 2001, I was given a State Subject by Ministry of Sciences, technology and Environment (Ministry of Sciences and technology now) for writing a new text book on Vietnam history follow these conceptions.

3. After the four years (2001- 2005) of implementing the plan of compiling the book set of Vietnam history in accordance with the mentioned directions, until now we have completed the four volume manuscript, including 13 parts and 46 chapters with the total of 2600 pages (has 51 maps and 360 pictures).

3.1. Volume I: Vietnam history from origin to XV century, including 4 parts, 14 chapters (Edited by Phan Huy Le. Authors: Phan Huy Le, Tran Quoc Vuong, Phan Dai Doan, Luong Ninh, Nguyen Quang Ngoc)

3.2. Volume II: Vietnam history from XV century to middle of XIX century, including 2 parts, 8 chapters (Edited by Phan Huy Le. Authors: Phan Huy Le, Nguyen Thua Hy, Nguyen Quang Ngoc, Nguyen Hai Ke, Vu Van Quan)

3.3. Volume III: Vietnam history from 1858 to 1945, including 4 parts, 13 chapters (Edited by Dinh Xuan Lam. Authors: Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Khanh, Pham Xanh, Pham Hong Tung)

3.4. Volume IV: Vietnam history from 1945 to 2000, including 3 parts, 11 chapters (Edited by Le Mau Han. Authors: Le Mau Han, Nguyen Dinh Le, Truong Thi Tien).

This book set will be published by Hanoi Educational Publisher in the end of 2006 and early of 2007. For these reasons, we will synthesize and compile the book of about 600 pages so that the World Publisher can translate and publish in English and other languages in order to meet foreigners' demand for studying the history of Vietnam.

### **III APPLYING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN RESEARCHING AND TEACHING VIETNAM HISTORY**

#### **1. Initial stage of using information technology in drafting the 4 volume collection of Vietnam History.**

Along with the revolution in information technology and research methodology, we have utilized all the present advantages in order to explore, to collect and to systematize different sources in addition to the interdisciplinary method to write and present historical events. It is perhaps unprecedented all previous books on Vietnam history.

1.1. In the process, from the very general ideas to some specific historical events, we have been able to discuss the matters with scholars-Vietnamese or all over the world via internet, especially with first rate scholars such as: David Marr (Australia), Keith W. Taylor (US), Furuta Motoo, Sakurai Yumio, Momoki Shiro (Japan), Yu Insun (Korea), D.V. Deopik (Russia), Liang Zhi Ming (China), Philippe Langlet (France) etc. They have invaluablely

contributed in the process of drafting, not only in terms of providing information but also different perspectives. It has certainly helped to produce an unbiased and accessible edition. Besides, we have also searched for information via internet at various libraries, collections to have more sources concerning the recent researches and writings of Vietnam history, particularly from academically and IT developed countries.

1.2. Concerning historical events, or issues we have also applied *Phuong phap thong ke dinh luong*, graphing, charting in researches as well as writing effectively. For instance, *Dia Ba* (Land register) is an significant source for historians to understand Vietnam countryside. The Land registers, recorded in two reigning kings- Gia Long (1802-1819), Minh Menh (1820-1840) with nearly 18,600 sets are presently kept at the National Archives I and Han Nom studies center. We have so far studied some sets to get some particular information to support an perspective or hypotheses. Having supported by IT lately, we have carried out a project *He thong tu lieu dia ba Vietnam* (Systematizing the land registers in Vietnam), in which thousands of data are systematically analyzed in regions, corresponding with present provinces such as: Ha Dong, Thai Binh, Ha Noi, Nam Dinh, Thanh Hoa, Binh Dinh and many provinces in the South of Vietnam). It is a breakthrough as far as historian is concerned - a more wholly, unbiased picture of rural Vietnam (not only at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century but far back into the past) is being reconstructed. Similarly, we are working on various programs *Nghien cuu gia pha Vietnam* (Research on the genealogy in Vietnam), *Nghien cuu huong uoc Vietnam* (Research on village regulation in Vietnam), *Nghien cuu Chau ban trieu Nguyen* (Research on Imperial Archives of the Nguyen Dynasty) etc. These projects would greatly add more color into the picture of Vietnam history as the whole.

1.3. Our books include 50 maps, some of them drawn based on the comparison of maps in many generations-past and present; using satellite information to compare with the actual surveys. By using RS and GIS, we have been able to reconstruct the structure of Co Loa Citadel with its own characteristics. We have also examined different stages of development of the coastal areas in the North of Vietnam. Having also identified the vestiges of ancient rivers of the lower section of Thai Binh river, we have located the well-known cargo port Domea, relatively unheard in centuries. We have also advanced significantly in studying the vestiges of Thang Long Citadel and Citadel of the Ho Dynasty, the historical formation of Vietnam territory etc.

1.4. All the authors of Vietnam history are familiar with the exchange of information, sources and researching approaches via computers, especially in the process of drafting according to a particular form. The Prof. Phan Huy Le is the editor of the vol.1 and 2 in which different perspectives have been incorporated and substantially supported by information technology. Unlike other set of Vietnam History, we are introducing many pictures, maps, charts; they not only serve as illustrating point for the book but also being presented in a theme. We have try do, but the problem of applied informatics in the field of the research, education in history of Vietnam is almost only recently begun.

## **2. The use of information technology in researching and teaching Vietnam History in the future.**

In the near future, leader at all levels, historian, professional information technology of Vietnam hope for development advantage of information technology in the historical study. The details are as followings:

2.1. Summarizing (total is 3000 and it will be reduce 600 papers with the many presentation of illustrate pictures) and it is also published on the internet the newest Vietnam historical book with many other foreign books. Actually because there is not Vietnam's historical book published and introduced outside Vietnam border.

2.2. Step by step create and improve historical and culture database of Vietnam

2.3. Applied RS and GIS for researching history of Vietnam during the flow of time, firstly the focus are old capital cities: Thang Long - Ha Noi, Tay Do (west capital) Thanh Hoa province, Hue Capital, Hoa Lu capital (Ninh Binh Province), Co Loa (Dong Anh - Ha Noi)...there are good ideas if we follow and expand the previous project which is carry out by Prof. Shibayama.

2.4. Apply problems of the 2D, 3D, 4D models for re-creating history, preserver and promote the values of the history and cultural in some main areas (Thang Long- Ha Noi, West-capital Ho Dynasty citadel- Thanh Hoa province, Hue Capital)

2.5. Absolutely computerizing all of the history museums in Hanoi, some provinces and cities, university, historical research centre in Vietnam.

With the interest in this field of leadership at all levels, the top researcher, and education centre in Vietnam. to obtain the zealous aids of many offices, scientists in the world and (representation for all of them today is the all of the participant in this conference), We believe that the application of the preminent information technology for researching, training in the field of the Vietnam history will be successful.