

IDE Research Bulletin

Research project summary based on papers for academic journals
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The Vietnamese Family During the Period of Industrialization, Modernization, and International Integration

Project Leader

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March 2019

IDE-JETRO

IDE Research Bulletin

[Title of project]

Project name: Dynamics and transformation of the Vietnamese family in the Doi Moi era

[Period]

April 2016-March 2018

[Member of the research project]

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[The Outline of the Project]

Vietnam has been promoting modernization and industrialization since the mid-1990s. Several researchers pointed out that phenomena such as low birthrate, aging society and weakening of the family's education and socialization function for children has been on the rise in Vietnam with the progression of modernization and industrialization. This research aims to make it clear the dynamics and transformation of the Vietnamese family based on field research and analysis of local materials.

1. Background

Human beings are not strong enough. No one can live alone. Whether a man or a woman faces solitude and feels lonely, even people of influence still depend on others to survive (even if unknowingly); such is the nature of human existence. Considering this need, the family, which is the basic unit of society, forms a crucial base for people's lives.

Vietnam has entered a stage (since the mid-1990s) where it promotes industrialization, modernization, and international integration. How have these phenomena influenced Vietnamese families? How have Vietnamese families coped with these phenomena? These simple but important questions stand at the core of the present research.

First, it may be helpful to describe the research background before moving on to the main task.

In Vietnam, a unification process commenced after the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese government basically intended to implement the same policies of North Vietnam in the South. However, conditions that had supported the wartime North Vietnamese system (rationing, among other things) had already changed. Assistance from the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries changed from grant aid to paid aid. Furthermore, during the war, people tried to share and could withstand difficult economic situations without complaining. However, they began to think about their own welfare afterwards.

The “invasion” of Cambodia in December 1978 isolated Vietnam in the international community, even though Vietnam considered their actions valid. Thereafter, Vietnam was left isolated and could not expect to receive further support from Western countries and the international community. The government’s deficit had been increasing due to its attempts to maintain the old system where the state tried to do everything.

The 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), held in December 1986, adopted a *Đổi Mới* (renewal) policy to resolve these problems. *Đổi Mới* is a comprehensive policy. Nevertheless, its central task was the transformation from a state-controlled, centrally planned economy to a state-controlled market economy. After doing so, Vietnam withdrew from Cambodia in December 1989. Moreover, agreements on a comprehensive political settlement for the Cambodian conflict were signed in Paris on October 23, 1991.

Thereafter, the hardened isolation of Vietnam began to dissolve, and the country started to recover its connections with the international community. With support from international organizations and communities, Vietnam entered a new stage of development.

Internally, experiencing high economic growth after the seventh CPV in June 1991, the Extraordinary Party Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam was held during January 1994. The congress decided to start promoting industrialization and modernization as a national policy. And the eighth CPV Congress, held from the end of June to the beginning of July 1996 decided to promote industrialization and modernization further. This policy line was directed at Vietnam becoming a basically industrial country by 2020.

Border trading with China resumed in 1989. The United States of America (USA) lifted the trade embargo that was imposed on Vietnam in February 1994. In 1995, Vietnam became a member of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and

established diplomatic relations with the USA. In July 2000, Vietnam signed a bilateral trade agreement with the USA. The Party Politburo issued a resolution on international entry to prepare for the altered situation on November 2001, before the trade agreement would go into effect during the subsequent month.

Finally, Vietnam also became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on January 11, 2007 after more than 10 years of negotiations.¹

2. Purpose of this research project

The experience of other countries, such as Japan, demonstrate that promoting industrialization and modernization has led to a declining birthrate, changes in the relationships between family members, an aging society among other related things (Teramoto, 2015). If such outcomes were to occur in Vietnam, they would influence the country's future welfare.

For this reason, this research project focuses on the present situation and the transformation of the Vietnamese family during its period of industrialization, modernization, and international integration.

3. Our approach

Two years (2016—2018) were selected for qualitative research based on field research and an analysis of local materials.

Two perspectives were taken: first, transformation dynamics with respect to familial relations and social welfare; second, transformation dynamics with respect to family member relationships, including the status of women in them.

The original idea for the approach was to implement field research at the place where the researcher had already implemented similar research. The underlying idea is that, “If the researcher is able to do so, the researcher may examine the situation of the family directly and thus compare results with prior findings.”

Moreover, upon analyzing the main data that the researcher collected, local materials were the preferred means to support its analysis.

4. History of our earlier activities

There is a type of research group without a budget to prepare for next stage in IDE-

¹ I gained an understanding of this part based on *Ajiadoukounenpou* (IDE-JETRO) and many other excellent Japanese works that explain the modern history of Vietnam. It is difficult to cite every work, so please forgive me for not citing every work this time.

JETRO. This type of research project had been implemented in fiscal year 2015-2016, resulting in a report named “*Gia đình Việt Nam trong thời kỳ công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa, hội nhập quốc tế*” (Teramoto, Bùi Thế Cường, Phạm Văn Bích, Iwai, 2016) ².

After undergoing the application and examination process, this study received permission from IDE-JETRO in 2015 to start activities with a budget for two years. Therefore, officially, fiscal year 2016–2017 was the first year of our new research project.

During fiscal year 2016–2017, we produced an interim report called, “The Vietnamese Family during the Period of Promoting Industrialization, Modernization and International Integration”(Teramoto, Nguyen Duc Chien, Iwai, Bui The Cuong, 2017).

Summaries from each paper are as follows.

Introduction is a paper titled, “Introduction to this Interim Report: The Vietnamese Family during the Period of Industrialization, Modernization and International Integration.” This is my paper (Minoru Teramoto) to introduce this project (Teramoto, 2017) .

Chapter 1 is a paper entitled, “The Impact of Modernization on the Basic Functions of Traditional Vietnamese Family” by Nguyen Duc Chien. This article was a commissioned manuscript. Based on the analyses of local materials, this paper reveals how modernization has influenced the Vietnamese traditional family in the period of interest (Nguyen Duc Chien, 2017) .

Chapter 2 is a paper called, “Changing Residence Patterns and Ancestor Worship in a Northern Vietnamese Village” by Misaki Iwai. Based on field research in a village about 100 km from Hanoi, the author examines some aspects of changing residence patterns and ancestral ritual performances in the *Đổi Mới* era (Iwai, 2017) .

Chapter 3 is a paper titled, “Roles and Functions of Vietnamese Families in Caring for a Member with Disabilities: Case Studies from the Red River Delta Region.” This is my paper (Minoru Teramoto), based on field research in a commune in one province of the Red River Delta region, clarifying the roles and functions of Vietnamese families caring for a member with disabilities (Teramoto, 2017) .

Chapter 4 is a paper called, “Intentions of Vietnamese Families for the Future: Findings from a Survey in Southern Key Economic Zones of Vietnam” by Bui The Cuong. Based on the dataset compiled from a survey conducted in 2015, the paper analyzes the priority

² There are reasons for having the preliminary stage. When the proposal was sent to establish a study group for IDE-JETRO in 2014, I was staying long-term in Ho Chi Minh City. At that time, there was neither the time nor good circumstances to fight for a budget. Obtaining permission to establish a study group was only thing that I could afford to do.

preferences of Vietnamese families living in this zone (Bui The Cuong, 2017) .

5. Results of fiscal year 2017–2018

In fiscal year 2017–2018, the members of the research group remained unchanged,³ and we continued to work on the studies. The papers that produced in fiscal year 2017–2018 were as follows.

First, paper by **Nguyen Duc Chien** is named **“Extension of Social Capital Sources in the Economic Activities of Rural Households in the Red River Delta: A Period of Transition in Vietnam”**. Based on the empirical evidence at two communes in the Red River Delta in Northern Vietnam, this study discusses the expansion and use of social capital in production and business activities of rural households. In the context of Vietnamese society that is changing and integrating into the world, the family is completely exploiting development opportunities, maintaining the traditional social network, and constantly expanding network links. The research results showed that although the quality of the social capital of the household is low, many production and business networks have been established. However, there is a lack of trust in the linkages, especially the new linkages with entities outside of the family, community, and national territory. This is considered as an enormous challenge for households in the process of restructuring the industry and developing beyond the household economy to become large farms, companies, and production groups in rural Vietnam at present.

Next paper by **Minoru Teramoto** is titled, **“Vietnamese Families and the Lives of Disabled Family Members: A Case Study in A Commune in the Red River Delta Region”**. This study is aimed at examining the roles and functions played by Vietnamese families for members with disabilities and its influence on the way of life of those subjects. Following the work done in previous fiscal years, it reexamined the roles and functions of the Vietnamese family for members with disabilities. Moreover, based on the comparison between the results of research at the same place in different years, relations between the way of life of the subjects with disabilities and the subjects’ families’ were examined. The results show that the families play a vital role in maintaining the daily lives of disabled family members. However, the presence of these individuals in their family is often passive and may easily be influenced by the movement of family members such as marriage, having a child etc.. It is not easy to defend these individuals’ right to independence. Sincere dialogue and communication between the subjects and their family

³ Nguyen Duc Chien who wrote a commissioned manuscript (Chapter 1) in fiscal year 2016 /2017 became an official member.

members would be one potential way to mitigate this situation.

Thirdly, paper by **Misaki Iwai** is named “**Return Migration of Children with Foreign Roots and Their Family Relations in Rural Vietnam: A Case of the Mekong Delta**”. Focal point of this paper is relationship between transnational family relations and social functions in rural Vietnam. Based on the field research at a commune in the Mekong Delta, the author found that there were three types of variations among the situation of the children in the transnational family. The three types of variations are as follows: (1) Children raised by maternal families (mainly grandparents) from early childhood (several months of age) because both of their parents live in Taiwan or Korea and are not able to care for their children; (2) Children raised by maternal families (mainly grandparents), whose parents are divorced and whose naturalized mothers remain overseas for work; (3) Children accompanied by mothers who are divorced (separated), the children return home when they are quite young or even when they are still in their mother’s womb, and are raised by their maternal families. Seeing each case, the author tries to clarify the role, function of the families to care of the children. And author concludes that the maternal family in the Mekong Delta accepts these children above mentioned flexibly and fulfills social functions based on interpersonal relationships, although there are some people that defame, treat badly the mothers and the child.

Finally, paper by **Bui The Cuong** is named “**Southern Vietnamese Family in Social Transformation: An Analysis from the Survey in the Southern Key Economic Zone of Vietnam**”. Numerous historical records show that Vietnam's Southern Region over the past 150 years has undergone dramatic social transformations. From a traditional society, this land became a French colony at the end of the nineteenth century, subject to changes due to the development of colonial capitalism. Then it became the battlefield of the three Indochinese wars since 1945 to the late 1980s, sometimes outbreaks sometimes simmering. After 1975, the politics of the orthodox communism was applied in the whole of the region. But more than 10 years later, a reversal policy called *Đổi Mới* was replaced. Thanks to this policy, since the early 1990s, socio-economic development has flourished in the South.

In the context of such a continuously changing society, how do the Vietnamese families in the South adapt and respond to survive? And, how Vietnamese families in the region are struggling with barriers to job/ business and family conditions?

By analyzing the empirical data collected in the Southern Key Economic Zone in 2015, this paper sees the degree of satisfaction for the job and family life among the people living in the region. Throughout that, this paper tries to think about questions above.

There are bright spots that the satisfaction rate with harmony and relationship to neighbors are relatively high. However, comparing the answers about the satisfaction with family's condition between the families in the higher stratum and the families in the lower stratum, the rate of satisfaction in the higher stratum is much higher. The studies show that there are varieties of family lives depending on the stratum and the occupation. Therefore, in reality, many Vietnamese families in the region are under pressure for seeking the way to adjust to the surrounding situations.

Finally, each paper presents its own implications. We hope that each paper contributes to a better understanding of the situations of Vietnamese families living under the promotion of industrialization, modernization, and international integration.

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