

Independence Movement in Vietnam and Japan during WWII

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Introduction

On March 9, 1945, when the Japanese Army stationed in French Indochina executed the "Operation Akira" and gained supremacy over French Indochina by force, French control was terminated. On March 11, Emperor Bao Dai declared independence of the Empire of Vietnam. This paper shall reveal what roles Japan (Government [Foreign Ministry] and Army) and Japanese civilians played or at least what kind of relations there were with the independence movement groups in Vietnam during the process of achievement of the "first independence" from the colonial control by France that had lasted over 70 years, and discuss the process of winning independence and historical recognition in the post-war period of Vietnam.

Most of the studies on the Vietnamese independence movement in Japan focus on the Viet Minh (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh, League for Independence in Vietnam) and few concern themselves with other groups such as the Ai Quoc Dang (Patriotic Party), Dai Viet Dang (Great Vietnam Party), Vietnam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi (League for National Restoration of Vietnam), Quoc Gia Dang (National Social Party), Cao Dai sect and Hoa Hao sect. The Viet Minh had resisted Japan until they succeeded in the "August Revolution" immediately after the end of the War, and Japan and the Viet Minh had not cooperated, at least not officially. Thus previous studies on the activities of the Viet Minh have not mentioned the relations between the Japanese and the Vietnamese independence movement as discussed in this paper.

The main objective of this paper is to identify the involvement of Japan (Japanese) in the independence of Vietnam, but the author does not necessarily agree with the "affirmative view of the Great East Asian War," which insists that Japan had driven away the powers of Europe and the United States from Asia and brought on independence to the Asian nations. This paper shall instead prove again that although Japan had been engaged in the War with the slogans of "building of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" and "liberation of Asia," there were no specific policies to achieve them and Japan had taken opportunistic or stopgap measures from the beginning to end.

This paper aims to achieve mitigation of the historic recognition issue and contribute to the creation of mutual trust by accumulating efforts to identify individual historic facts from a broader view point and to share the recognition that the Japanese had been involved in the independence of Vietnam.

1 Basic Japanese Policy toward French Indochina

The keyword for the basic Japanese policy toward French Indochina during the Pacific War is the "maintenance of tranquility." The maintenance of tranquility in French Indochina meant that Japan would allow the French legislative organizations to remain, and leave the police, economy, education, society and all other domestic affairs under French control thereby maintaining the conditions before Japan's advance into the area, and Japan would not interfere with the domestic affairs of French Indochina. It also included the decision that Japan would not support the independence movement in Indochina at the same time. Furthermore, it also suggested that Japan would not use the areas in French Indochina as bases for the operations against China and refrain from stimulating the Chinese Army to start actions against French Indochina.

The concept of this "maintenance of tranquility" had originated from the "Matsuoka-Henry Agreement" (August 30, 1940) that stipulated the principles of maintenance of French control and territory in French Indochina, but the reason why this agreement had become the firm policy of the Japanese government and military to the point it was called "golden rule" lay in the aftermaths of an unfortunate event that had occurred when the Japanese Army advanced into northern French Indochina.

When advancing into northern French Indochina, the Japanese had originally intended to execute a "peaceful advance" in accordance with the principles of the Matsuoka-Henry Agreement. The on-the-spot negotiation between Japan and France, however, proved extremely difficult as French Indochina representatives tried to delay the decisions. Meanwhile, the General Headquarters of the Army and Navy of Japan doubted the establishment of the "local agreement," and agreed to "execute a peaceful advance from 00:00 on September 22" and to "exercise force if the French Indochina Army would resist" ("Immediate Actions regarding French Indochina Issue," September 13, 1940).¹ They allowed a delay of 24 hours after the deadline of negotiation and the date of execution of advance was changed to "after 00:00 on September 23."² The "local agreement" was signed at 16:30, September 22 (JST), only hours before the scheduled advance start time.

In other words, although the General Headquarters of the Army and Navy held the principle of "peaceful advance," they had also assumed "forced advance" depending on the result of the negotiation with the French Indochina government. They had actually authorized it. This authorization enlivened the hard-liners in the Army (the 1st Bureau, Army General Staff Headquarters, South China Area Army and Indochina Expeditionary Army) who had expected the "forced advance". Although they should have adopted the

¹ War History Office, National Defense College, Defense Agency, *Senshi Soshō, Daihonei Rikugunbu: Daitōsenso Kaisen Keii*, Vol. 2 (Asagumo Shimbun-sha, 1973), pp. 71-72.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 81 and 87.

"peaceful advance" since the "local agreement" was established just before the scheduled start time of advance, even if it had been after the deadline as mentioned earlier, the Army stationed in the area shelved the notice of reaching the agreement, and rammed through the "forced advance." As a result, Japan and France engaged in battles at Dong Dang and Lang Son, in the border region of northern Indochina. The impact of this incident propagated to the independence movement of Indochina, which shall be discussed later.

There was a huge impact from the battles at the border region at the time of advance into northern Indochina due to confusion in command, and those responsible were punished later.³ The Imperial General Headquarters took the matter seriously and issued instructions signed by both Chiefs of Staff to Major General Sumita Raishiro who had been newly assigned as chairman of the Surveillance Group of the French Indochina blockade of supplies to Chiang Kai-shek (Sumita Mission) in charge of negotiations with the French Indochina government. The instructions to Sumita put emphasis on proceeding with further negotiations with French Indochina with "dedicatedly peaceful and friendly" manners in fear of adversely impacting the relations with France.⁴ Sumita also recognized that "tranquility in French Indochina is absolutely necessary for the acquisition of required supplies for the Empire." Sumita had the following opinion on the independence of the Annamese people:

Independence of the people is of course important, but it is a future matter. What our instruction mission and France fear most is defection of the Annamese. If we start propaganda and conspiracies for the powerless Annamese immediately today, it will not only be ineffective but also it is more than obvious that France will notice it... Propaganda and conspiracies for the Annamese should not be executed for the time being.⁵

Thus the "maintenance of tranquility in French Indochina" became the basic policy of Japan for the relations with France and the independence movement in Indochina as early as immediately after the advance into northern French Indochina.

This policy solidified further. For instance, the Imperial General Headquarters, Army Division issued "Directive No. 924 of Imperial General Headquarters, Army Division" immediately after the advance into southern French Indochina (which started on July 28, 1941), and directed the locally stationed troops (the 25th Army) to follow the policy of the "maintenance of tranquility in French Indochina" with the provisions that:

³ For the issues concerning the command at the advance into northern French Indochina, see, Nakamura Aketo, "Futsuin Shinchu no Shinso," May 1954 (Possession of the National Institute for Defense Studies) and Oi Atsushi, *Tosui Midarete: Hokubu-Futsuin Shinchu Jiken no Kaiso* (Mainichi Shimbun-sha, 1984).

⁴ "Rikugun Shosho Sumita Raishiro ni Atafuru Sho," September 30, 1940 (Ministry of Army, "Riku-shi-mitsu Dai-nikki 1940," No. 37 [Possession of the National Institute for Defense Studies]).

⁵ Hanoi telegram No. 589 sent by the Sumita Mission to vice-ministers and vice-directors (dated October 5, 1940) (ditto).

6. Discipline must be strictly observed and useless friction with the French Indochina side must be avoided.

8. We shall not conduct conspiracies for independence of Annam.⁶

The intentions of the military, especially of the Army were strongly reflected in the decision to adopt the "maintenance of tranquility" as the golden rule. The Japanese Military emphasized stability in French Indochina because it played the role of providing bases for the logistics, military sea transportation and material supplies during the execution of the operations in the southern front. If French Indochina should become unstable, not to mention turn into a battlefield, considerable forces would have to be allocated there to maintain stability. The Japanese military could not possibly afford such an event. Thus, it was judged that it would be wise to avoid any friction.

A better understanding of the effectiveness of the "maintenance of tranquility" may be gained by considering the merits of maintaining the French legislative organization as it was. Japan would not have to allocate the required personnel by leaving the domestic affairs in French Indochina to France. France could govern the area far more effectively than Japan, which lacked the personnel fluent in the local languages and familiar with the environment. Japan judged it better to maintain and utilize the existing organization in view of personnel resources and efficiency of governing.⁷

The "French-Japanese collaboration system"⁸ in French Indochina supported by the golden rule of "maintenance of tranquility" continued until execution of the "Operation Akira" by the Japanese Military on March 9, 1945. During this period, the Japanese government and military had been unable to officially support the independence movement of Vietnam.

2 "Vietnam National Restoration Army"⁹ and the Japanese Army: Before and After the Advance into Northern French Indochina

The South China Area Army, with its headquarters in Kwantung and the 22nd Army

⁶ Directive of Imperial General Headquarters, Army Division No. 924 (dated August 12, 1941) ("Shi," Vol. 5 [Possession of the National Institute for Defense Studies]).

⁷ Shiraishi Masaya and Furuta Motoo, "Taiheiyo-senso ki no Nippon no Tai-Indoshina Seisaku: Sono Futatsu no Tokusei wo Megutte," *Ajikenkyu*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (October 1976), pp. 4-7.

⁸ See Tachikawa Kyoichi, *Dainiji-sekaitaisen to Furansu-ryo Indoshina: "Nichi-Futsu Kyoryoku" no Kenkyu* (Sairyu-sha, 2000).

⁹ According to Shiraishi Masaya, Cuong De in his memoirs called it "Vietnam National Foundation Army," not "Vietnam National Restoration Army" (Shiraishi Masaya, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai to 1940 Nen Fukkoku-gun Hoki nitsuite," *Ajia Keizai*, Vol. 23, No. 4 [April 1982], p. 23). Uchikawa Omi called it "National Restoration and Independence Army" and "Vietnam Independence Army" (Uchikawa Omi, *Shirukurodo no Yume: Aru Seishun no Kiroku* (private press edition) (1993), pp. 79 and 81.

under its control, that executed the advance into northern French Indochina prepared for both a "peaceful advance" and "forced advance," with more emphasis on the latter, and completed arrangements for the "forced advance." This event led to the tragedy for the independence movement activists in Vietnam.

There was a Vietnamese independence activist who planned to lead a revolt of the people in concert with the advance of the Japanese Army to French Indochina, remove the French colonial government with the assistance of the Japanese Army, and achieve independence straight out. He was Tran Trung Lap. Lap was one of the leading activists of the "Vietnam National Restoration Party" seeking independence of Vietnam, in charge of military affairs. The "Vietnam National Restoration Party" was organized in Shanghai in 1939. It stemmed from the "Duy Tan Hoi" organized by Phan Boi Chau (who had visited Japan since 1905, inspired by the victory of Japan against Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, and started the Dong Du Movement to achieve the independence of Vietnam based on the knowledge that he gained in Japan) together with a member of the Annamese royal family Cuong De, who had fled from Hue (location of the Annam Palace) in 1906 as persuaded by Chau, and its immediate successor "Vietnam Quang Phuc Hoi." The representative was Cuong De who had continued activities from Japan.¹⁰

How did Tran Trung Lap contact the Japanese Army and have them recognize his existence and movement? There are two theories. According to the studies of Shiraishi Masaya based on the "autobiography" of Cuong De and the memoir of Hoang Nam Hun, who was one of the staff of the "Vietnam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi," Cuong De requested Wachi Yoji (promoted to major general on March 9, 1940) who was an acquaintance of Hun and other members of the "Vietnam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi" to give him a letter of introduction to the headquarters of the Japanese Army in Kwangchon, met with Major General Nakano Hidemitsu, Chief of Kwantung Special Organ, and agreed to cooperate with the Japanese Army as sounded out by Nakano.¹¹ On the other hand, the memoirs of Uchikawa Omi (who resided in Hanoi as a resident representative of Sawayama Trading Company, an affiliate of Taiwan Takushoku, K.K. and supported the Japanese Army during its advance into northern French Indochina) and Nishikawa Sutesaburo (penname, Kansei) (served as an interpreter in the dispatched troops in French Indochina) tell the following story. Yamane Doichi, who was the representative of Sawayama Trading Company and an executive of Indochina Industry, K.K., another affiliate of Taiwan Takushoku K.K., requested assistance to his acquaintance Colonel Nakai Masutaro, who was a staff officer of the 22nd Army and a member of the Surveillance Group of the French Indochina blockade of supplies

¹⁰ Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," pp. 24-33. For Phan Boi Chau and the Dong Du Movement, see details in, Shiraishi Masaya, *Betonamu Minzoku Undo to Nippon Ajia: Fan Boi Chau no Kakumei Shiso to Taigai Ninshiki* (Gannando Shoten, 1993) and Utsumi Sanpachiro (ed. Chishima Eiichi and Sakurai Ryoju), *Fan Boi Chan Den: Nippon, Chugoku wo Kakenuketa Kakumeika no Shogai* (Fuyo Shobo Shuppan, 1999).

¹¹ Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," p. 30.

to Chiang Kai-shek (Nishihara Mission), and succeeded in sending Lap and others to Lieutenant Colonel Gondo Masatake of the 22nd Army through Colonel Nakai.¹²

In either case, the participation of Lap and others with the Japanese Army was approved at the level of the locally stationed army or at its staff officers, and it seems that the General Headquarters of the Army was not aware of it although it is difficult to prove it without primary source materials.

It was the end of July or early August 1940 when Lap and others joined the 22nd Army in Nanning. Ujihara Susumu and Masui Junichi, employees of Taiwan Takushoku, K.K. and Indochina Industry, K.K., who would become advisors to the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" organized by Lap and others, had already gone to Nanning as a part-time service staff. When Lap arrived in Nanning, he was with an extremely small group of 3 or 4, or 8 at most.¹³ The "Vietnam National Restoration Army" started from this point. Lap assumed the position of supreme commander. As for the deputy commander, there are two theories, Hoang Luong¹⁴ and Ngo Phong Trinh.¹⁵ The "Vietnam National Restoration Army" was planning to cross the border and enter French Indochina simultaneously with the advance of the Japanese Army into northern French Indochina. And they hoped to start the revolt, head for Hanoi and achieve independence immediately as discussed earlier. Lap is said to have entrusted to Yamane Doichi a list of cabinet members of the independent government with Cuong De as the head of the State.¹⁶

On September 23, the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" that had strengthened its forces around the border entered French Indochina territory as a guide when the Japanese Army started its advance. The "Vietnam National Restoration Army" infiltrated into the barracks of the French Indochinese Army in Dong Dang, conducted allegiance maneuvering to the Vietnamese soldiers and the minority groups from the mountainous regions, and persuaded them to refrain from attacks but pretend to resist against the Japanese Army to the eyes of the French officers. After the fall of Dong Dang, a total of some 1,000 Vietnamese soldiers and minority group soldiers left the barracks and joined the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" with weapons and munitions. The "Vietnam National Restoration Army" also contributed to prevention of confusion in the city and maintenance of security in the attacks at Lang Son. Their reputation attracted farmers in the neighboring areas and local

¹² Uchikawa, *Shirukurodo no Yume*, p. 14 and Nishikawa Kansei, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin: Sono Shirarezaru Kiroku (1)," *Ajia Shinzen Koryu Kyokai*, Corporate juridical person, *Kenkyu Shiryo*, No. 1 (June 1995), p. 24.

¹³ Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," p. 37 and Nishikawa, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin (1)," pp. 24-25. The duty assigned to Ujihara when he became a part-time employee to the military was reported to be "guiding the advance into northern French Indochina, instructing the Vietnam National Restoration Party and espionage on military and civilian trends in French Indochina (Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," p. 39).

¹⁴ Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," p. 38.

¹⁵ Uchikawa, *Shirukurodo no Yume*, p. 74 and Nishikawa, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin (1)," p. 24.

¹⁶ Nishikawa, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin (1)," p. 29.

youths to join in haste, and the power of the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" is said to have expanded to 1,500 to 2,000.¹⁷

When, however, the prospect for the "peaceful advance" gained footing and above all when the General Headquarters of the Army and Navy decided to suspend the operations in the area for the reason of unsatisfactory cooperation between the Army and Navy stationed in the area, for situation was completely reversed. The uprising of the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" had presumed the "forced advance" of the Japanese Army. The Japanese Army suddenly stopped the use of force and decided to complete the "peaceful advance." As a result, the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" lost the support of the Japanese Army.

The "Vietnam National Restoration Army" was forced to review its plan. Ujihara and Masui opposed the advance into Hanoi by the single-handed "Vietnam National Restoration Army," and tried to persuade them to make an over-all revision of the plan and develop guerilla operations with bases at the mountainous area near the border or in Thai Nguyen where the Sawayama Trading Company had been conducting mining development business. Colonel Nakai, who rushed to the scene in Lang Son from Hanoi joined in the persuasion effort.¹⁸ Lap, however, refused to accept it, and did not change his will to advance into Hanoi as planned. It was suicidal. On December 3, the last troops of the Japanese Army heading to Hai Phong from the border area between French Indochina and China left Lang Son to conduct the "peaceful advance." Around that time, Lap and his followers rose in revolt, gathered civilian volunteers along the way to expand its forces, and headed southward to Hanoi on Route 1. The French Army, however, had already returned to the Lang Son area to replace the Japanese Army. It was the French Foreign Legion who had awaited the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" on narrow paths in the mountains. The "Vietnam National Restoration Army" which was short of training and equipment had no means to resist the volley firing of the French Army, and had to scatter and flee in disorder. Some managed to flee to Chinese territory,¹⁹ but the majority were killed in action or hid themselves in the mountains around the border. Lap was captured by the French Army, and executed by firing squad in the suburb of Loc Binh on December 26.²⁰ The remnants of the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" are said to have sought refuge in the "Vietnam People's Party," Viet Minh and other anti-Japan Vietnamese independence movement organizations. A rumor has it that

¹⁷ Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," p. 38 and Uchikawa, *Shirukurodo no Yume*, p. 79.

¹⁸ There is a theory that Hoang Luong and some others were persuaded and left for China (Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," p. 38).

¹⁹ According to Trang Trong Kim, 700 people including Hoang Luong (40 women) fled to China (Trang Trong Kim [trans. Chin Kei Wa], "Fujin no Sanakani: Kenbunroku (2)," *Sodai Ajia Kenkyu*, No. 2 [March 1981], p. 189).

²⁰ Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," p. 38; Uchikawa, *Shirukurodo no Yume*, pp. 79-80; Nishikawa, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin (1)," p. 26 and Nishikawa Kansei, "Vetonamu 'Fukkoku' Hishi," *Nagare*, Vol. 27, No. 12 (December 1979), p. 31. The French Indochina authorities at first announced that Lap was killed in action fearing that Japan might demand delivery of Lap (Nishikawa, "Vetonamu 'Fukkoku' Hishi," p. 31).

the son of Lap, who had survived, became a high ranking official of the Viet Minh government later.²¹

It is only the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" that evidently had direct involvement with the Japanese Army, but it was not just the "Vietnam National Restoration Army" that fought for independence of Vietnam stimulated by the advance of the Japanese Army into northern French Indochina.²² Residents rose in revolt in Bac Son, to the west of Lang Son, immediately after the advance by the Japanese Army. The "Annam Independence Revolution Army" also started a rebellion in the area to the east of Hanoi some time later. In southern Vietnam, the Cao Dai sect with its headquarters in Tay Ninh tried an armed uprising. All of them, however, were suppressed by the French Army.²³ The uprisings had expected intervention and support by the Japanese Army to varying degrees. The Japanese Army, however, had already firmly determined to place priority on gaining the cooperation of France and not to be involved with the independence movement as described earlier, and could not meet their expectations. Colonel Cho Isamu, Chief of Staff of the Indochina Expeditionary Army, related the "tendency of the public sentiment" as follows when reporting the uprising of the Cao Dai sect and thorough suppression by France to the Ministry of Army, although it seems somewhat exaggerated in part. Cho seems to have held considerable apprehension over the possible adverse impact on the public opinions of Japan caused by the opportunistic stance of the Japanese Army against the uprisings of the local residents.

...Although hatred and grudges against the French are spreading nationwide, correction of the public opinions of Japan must urgently be made. I have learned that the pro-Japanese sentiment is gradually dying out under the current situation.

Residents in the region [Cochinchina] are simply desperate, miserable, with no signs of recovery. They are currently being cowed into silence under absolute oppression by the French authorities, and seem to anchor their last hope on the Imperial Army expecting

²¹ Uchikawa, *Shirukurodo no Yume*, p. 81 and Nishikawa, "Vetonamu 'Fukkoku' Hishi," p. 31.

²² At the advance into northern French Indochina, Japan had organized a Vietnamese language broadcasting section in Taiwan consisting of major members of the "Vietnam National Restoration Party" (Shiraishi, "Betonamu Fukkoku Domei Kai," pp. 33-36).

²³ Sakurai Yumio and Ishizawa Yoshiaki, *Tonan-Ajia Gendaishi*, Vol. 3 (Sekai Gendaishi 7) (Yamakawa Shuppan-sha, 1977), pp. 150-151; In-gun-jo No. 18 sent from Chief of Staff of the French Indochina Expeditionary Army Cho Isamu to Vice-Minister of Army Anami Korechika (dated January 8, 1941) (Ministry of Army, "Riku-shi-mitsu Dai-nikki 1941," vol. 4 [Possession of the National Institute for Defense Studies]) and In-gun-jo No. 120 sent from Chief of Staff of the French Indochina Expeditionary Army Cho Isamu to Vice-Minister of Army Anami Korechika (dated December 28, 1940) (Ministry of Army, "Riku-shi-mitsu Dai-nikki 1941," Vol. 6 [Possession of the National Institute for Defense studies]).

that "now is the time for Japan to come to our rescue."²⁴

3 Relations between the Independence Movement and Japan

(1) Support of the Independence Movement at the Civilian Level

Decision of the "maintenance of tranquility" as the basic policy of Japan in the French Indochina issue presented extremely huge obstacles in supporting the independence movement in Vietnam for Japan that was to complete the war with the slogans of "building the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" and "liberation of Asia." Diplomats and military staff had to refrain from official support and exercise extreme caution even in daily contacts with the local people. Therefore, support to the independence movement had to be left to the Japanese civilians residing in the area who sympathized with the independence movement as individuals unrelated to the government or the military.

"Yamane in the north and Matsushita in the south," and "Yamane with ingenuity and Matsushita with chivalry." They are both the reputations of the two Japanese, Yamane Doichi and Matsushita Mitsuhiro, who supported the independence movement of Indochina, especially in Vietnam during WWII among those Japanese residents in the area who had known them.

"Yamane in the north" was the representative of Sawayama Trading Company and Indochina Industry, K.K., affiliates of Taiwan Takushoku, K.K. as described earlier. Since he had been stationed in French Indochina in 1937, while he managed the mining development business as a businessman, he gained trust from many independence seekers in Hanoi, and built close relationships with them. One of them was Tran Trung Lap, described earlier.

Yamane established "Indochina Economy Research Institute" with his home as the head office. It became a salon for a number of learned people. Along with the Japanese and Vietnamese, Frenchmen also visited the salon. The visitors included financiers, scholars and literary men, and those engaged in various other fields, both military and civilian. It is said that noted independence fighters who frequented the salon included Nguyen Xuan Chu and Le Toan of the Ai Quoc Dang, Tran Van Lai and Duong Ba Trac of the Dai Viet Dang as well as Tran Trong Kim and Ngo Dinh Diem.²⁵ Young and eager scholars and students of Hanoi University also visited this Institute. Those related to the Viet Minh also started to join in the salon through them.²⁶

²⁴ In-gun-jo No. 120 sent from Chief of Staff of the French Indochina Expeditionary Army Cho Isamu to Vice-Minister of Army Anami Korechika. Cho reported half a year later that, "most of them still earnestly rely on Japan" (In-gun-jo No. 353 sent from Chief of Staff of the French Indochina Expeditionary Army Cho Isamu to Vice-Minister of Army Kimura Heitaro [dated May 9, 1941] [Ministry of Army, "Riku-shi-mitsu Dai-nikki 1941," Vol. 17 (Possession of the National Institute for Defense Studies)]).

²⁵ Nishikawa, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin (1)," pp. 30-31.

²⁶ Nishikawa Kansei, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin: Sono Sirarezaru Kiroku (2)," *Ajia Shinzen Koryu Kyokai*, Corporate juridical person, *Kenkyu Shiryo*, No. 4, (February 1996), p. 60.

The Japanese visitors included Omiya Komaki, Komatsu Kiyoshi and others related to the Japanese House. The director of the Japanese House was Yokoyama Masayuki, a diplomat and former minister in the Japanese Embassy of Cairo. According to Omiya, Yokoyama was a senior to Omiya in middle school, and "sufficiently understood the sentiments of the independence movement"²⁷ of Omiya and Komatsu. Visits by Omiya and others to Yamane's Institute were of course not as a professional duty but for personal reasons, i.e. friendship with Yamane.²⁸

Yamane returned to Japan after some time. His mission was succeeded by Harada Toshiaki, who was a first-time graduate of the Institute attached to the East Asia Economic Research Bureau of the South Manchurian Railway Company led by Okawa Shumei (commonly called the "Okawa School") and resided in the Indochina Economic Research Institute as a staff member. The French authority repeatedly urged the Institute to close down for security reasons, i.e. because the independence movement activists were taking advantage of it. Harada, however, did not yield to such pressure and continued contacts with independence movement elements who visited the Institute. Harada gradually suspected that conventional independence movement could no longer obtain the support of the people. He became interested in the Viet Minh and tried to approach them.²⁹

"Matsushita in the south," on the other hand, was the president of Dainan Koshi, a local company with its head office in Saigon. It was in 1912 when Matsushita came to French Indochina at the age of 15. He started his career there and established Dainan Koshi on his own 10 years later in 1922.³⁰

He knew about the exiled Cuong De in the year before and started a correspondence with him, which was the starting point of his full-fledged involvement with the independence movement. A meeting between Cuong De and Matsushita had to wait until 1928 when they visited Taiwan, but Matsushita gradually became a kind of agent for Cuong De in French Indochina. Cuong De trusted Matsushita, asked for his cooperation and started to establish communication with the independence movement activists related to the Vietnam Phuc Quoc Hoi through Matsushita.³¹

Matsushita was forced to return to Japan temporarily when he was accused of connections with the independence movement, and in 1937, France ordered the deportation to Matsushita with the allegation of espionage. Their reason was the discovery of the sea charts when they investigated the vacant home of Matsushita but the true motive must have been the intention to remove Matsushita from the independence movement. It was after the advance

²⁷ Komaki Omi, *Aru Gendaishi: "Tanemakuhito" Zengo* (Hosei Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1965), p. 162. Komaki Omi is Omiya Komaki's penname.

²⁸ Nishikawa, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin (1)," p. 30.

²⁹ Nishikawa, "Vetonamu no Nipponjin (2)," p. 60.

³⁰ Kitano Norio, *Amakusa Kaigai Hattenshi*, Vol. 2 (Ashi Shobo, 1985), pp. 236-240.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.

of the Japanese Army to southern French Indochina when Matsushita returned to French Indochina again. This was possible through the kind offices of Major General Chudo Kanei, chairman of the Indochina Expeditionary Navy. The Japanese government, surprisingly enough, did not consider it preferable to allow Matsushita's return to French Indochina and suspended issuing of his passport for some time with the excuse that it was an order by the Army. It must have been due to the consideration for relations with France. Matsushita's travel was finally allowed when he promised he would not be involved with the local political issues and the Navy vouched for him. It seems certain that the Army (including the military police) did not consider Matsushita favorable as a general rule although there must have been a few sympathizers among them.³²

Matsushita had been on friendly terms with Ngo Dinh Diem since before the War. In mid-October 1943, the oppression on the independence movement by the French authorities was about to reach Diem. Diem was living in Hue at that time but as soon as he sensed the approaching danger, he fled to Saigon seeking refuge with Matsushita. Matsushita ordered Nishikawa Sutesaburo, Miura Takuji and Katano Kenshiro, the employees of Dainan Koshi, to protect Diem on his way south by rail at Phan Lang. Diem was sheltered in a company house of Dainan Koshi in Saigon for some time.³³ When the situation calmed down, Diem returned to Hue by rail. It was Komatsu Kiyoshi who accompanied Diem at that time. According to Sekiguchi Shungo, an artist who sat on the next seat in the train, Komatsu told Sekiguchi that he had his Vietnamese traveling companion carry a Japanese passport in case of an emergency. Sekiguchi had just arrived at French Indochina for an art exhibition held by the Japanese House, but as he had stayed in Paris a long time he amicably conversed with Diem in fluent French until the train reached Hue. He said Diem introduced himself when boarding.³⁴

Matsushita also helped Trang Trong Kim seek refuge. At the end of October 1943, upon learning of the arrest of a physician Tran Van Lai, Japan (military police) offered protection to Kim. Kim refused it at first, but when his Japanese acquaintance told him that "France will come to arrest you by tonight, sir...You can go home tomorrow evening when you know nothing has happened," he agreed to stay overnight at the person's home.³⁵ According to the memoirs of Kajitani Toshio, a second-time graduate of the "Okawa School," it was the company housing of Dainan Koshi where Kim stayed that night.³⁶

³² Ibid., pp. 247-248 and Chudo Kanei, "Matsushita Shacho to Watashi" (November 1977), p. 6.

³³ Miura Takuji, "Watashi no Senzen Senchu no Ryakureki," Nanpo-kai, *Minnami* (May 1992), pp. 19-20.

³⁴ Interview with Mr. Sekiguchi Shungo.

³⁵ Trang Trong Kim (trans. Chin Kei Wa), "Fujin no Sanakani: Kenbunroku (1)," *Sodai Ajia Kenkyu*, No. 1 (March 1980), pp. 155-156. Who was the "Japanese acquaintance"? Chin Kei Wa who translated Kim's memoirs thinks it was Yamane Doichi (ibid., p. 177). According to Mr. Nishikawa Sutesaburo (Dainan Koshi), it was Miyagishima Minoru, an employee of Dainan Koshi (Nishikawa's letter dated February 24, 2001 to the author).

³⁶ Kajitani Tosio, "Daitoa Senchu Chokugo no Betonamu Dokuritsu Senso: Kaerazaru Minami no Yushi Rokumei to Chan Chon Kimu Shi wo Shinonde," Nanpo-Kai, *Minnami*, No. 25 (July 1994), p. 22.

Kim decided to entrust himself to the Japanese military police from the next day after all, and spent several days at a hotel in Hanoi with Duong Ba Trac who had also been protected by Japan. They decided to seek refuge in Singapore as recommended by Major Oshima Chikamitsu, provost marshal of Hanoi. Kim moved from Hanoi to Saigon in December, and after staying at the Japanese military police for 12 days and at the company housing of Dainan Koshi for 19 days, he left for Singapore.³⁷

In January 1945, Kim moved further to Bangkok, where he met two sons of Cuong De. They had also fled French Indochina under protection of the Japanese Army and sought refuge in Bangkok. Nguyen Van Sam of the Quoc Gia Dang, who frequently visited Kim there, had also received support from Matsushita.³⁸ At the end of March 1945, Kim returned to the Empire of Vietnam that had achieved independence, and he received assistance from Matsushita at that time as well. Matsushita arranged to let Kim use a large room on the second floor of the Quoc Gia Dang building in front of Matsushita's home, and Kim spent three nights before he departed for Hue.³⁹

It was for the support for the Vietnam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi and Cao Dai sect, both of which were under Cuong De's influence, that Matsushita exerted most efforts during WWII. The two parties created a coalition with Matsushita's intermediation in 1943. Matsushita was an agent of and liaison with Cuong De for both organizations. Their loyalty was also extended to Matsushita as a matter of course. Matsushita was assigned by the 38th Army to organize the "Service troop" consisting of 2,500 Cao Dai followers on July 8, 1945, and served as the captain until the end of the war.⁴⁰ Matsushita made all supporting activities for the independence movement described above out of his own expense, not with the fund of Dainan Koshi.⁴¹

(2) Concept and Limits of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Greater East Asia)

It was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Greater East Asia) that was restricted most by the policy toward French Indochina. The burden of the "maintenance of tranquility" became even heavier when Shigemitsu Mamoru assumed the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and aimed to realize the "liberation of Asia," a war slogan of Japan under the name of the "New Greater East Asia policy." The Army strongly wanted stability of French

³⁷ Trang, "Fujin no Sanakani (1)," pp. 156-159.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 168 and Kitano, *Amakusa Kaigai Hattenshi*, Vol. 2, p. 263.

³⁹ Trang, "Fujin no Sanakani (1)," pp. 174 and 176.

⁴⁰ Shin-han-go No. 23, "Kao Dai Kyo Hoshitai Hensei nikansuru Ken" (dated July 8, 1945) (Kitano, *Amakusa Kaigai Hattenshi*, Vol. 2, p. 267). Lieutenant Colonel Katogawa Kotaro, staff of the 38th Army who placed his seal on this document imagines that although this order was issued under the name of the chief of staff of the Army (Colonel Kodo Sadaharu), it might have been planned by Colonel Hayashi Hidezumi of the military police and superior staff of the 38th Army (interview with Mr. Katogawa).

⁴¹ Interview with Mr. Takezaki Ukichi.

Indochina where logistic bases were located for the southern front, and for tactical purposes flatly opposed to the "independence of Annam" which Shigemitsu intended. The policy for French Indochina had repeatedly become the subject of review since Shigemitsu assumed the office of Foreign Minister, from December 1943 after the Great Asia Meeting to January next year, at a period immediately after liberation of Paris on August 25, 1944 and at the first anniversary of the Great East Asia Declaration in November 1944. Every time, however, the Army had their way and the "maintenance of tranquility" was firmly observed.⁴²

Although the Ambassador Extraordinaire to French Indochina Yoshizawa Kenkichi never even suggested it in negotiations with France nor took actions that might deviate from the diplomatic policy, he seems to have supported "independence of Annam" in his heart. It is not certain how much influence there was in the fact that he was a son-in-law of Inukai Tsuyoshi who was supporting Cuong De in exile in Japan. It is, however, easy to assume some kind of contact between them, since when Cuong De died in exile without ever returning to Vietnam on April 6, 1951, Yoshizawa attended his funeral at the Gokoku-ji Temple.

It was also described in the "Secret Diary of the War," a log of the 20th section of General Headquarters of the Army (so-called "War Plans Unit") that Yoshizawa was in support of the "independence of Annam." On January 29, 1944, Yoshizawa visited the Ministry of the Army during his homecoming and stated as follows:

The policy of the Empire should be decided depending on the presence of the "Vichy" regime of France. When the Vichy regime is gone, it is useless to plan the continued utilization of the government structure of the present French Indochina. It should be better to clearly give hope for independence to the Annamese and nurture friendships for the future.⁴³

Yoshizawa took actions that proved his interest in the independence movement at French Indochina, granted that it was a natural duty as the Ambassador Extraordinaire to French Indochina. Yoshizawa usually stayed in Hanoi, but visited Saigon once or twice a year. During his trips between Hanoi and Saigon, he stayed overnight at Hue. There was a Japanese Consulate in Hue, where a clerk, Ishida Masao, worked. Ishida became acquainted with Ngo Dinh Diem who lived in the neighborhood of the Consulate through Tong Thach That, who was hired by the Consulate for collection of intelligence. Intelligence on the independence movement was sent to Diem, and Ishida received it from Diem. The service of relaying the situation of the Vietnamese to the Ministry had been conducted by Deputy Consul Kawamo Shigematsu at first, but after Kawamo's transfer, Ishida succeeded to it.

⁴² Tachikawa, *Dainiji-Sekaitaisen to Furansuryo Indoshina*, pp. 157-159.

⁴³ 20th Section (15th Department), Army General Staff Headquarters, "Kimitsu Senso Nisshi," January 29, 1944 (Possession of the National Institute for Defense Studies).

Yoshizawa received a briefing on the independence movement from Ishida every time he visited the Consulate in Hue. Consul Urabe Seiji, the successor to Kawamo, did not think it was preferable that Ishida contacted Diem, and told others that Ishida was doing it on his own and he had nothing to do with it. According to Ishida, however, Yoshizawa "did not order to stop" contacting Diem. Consul General Minoda Fujio in Saigon sometimes visited Ishida to learn the intelligence.⁴⁴

An incident occurred in July 1944 that proved Diem's reliance on Ishida. When the French police was about to arrest Diem again that year, Diem fled to Ishida's home. Ishida judged that he could not protect him alone, and had no choice but to contact Captain Yamano Yasusuke of the military police (Chief of Tourane military police). The Japanese military police in Saigon held Diem under their care. It was Lieutenant Colonel Hayashi Hidezumi of the public relations section of the Indochina Station Army who made arrangements for the transportation of Diem from Hue to Saigon. Hayashi was ordered to do so by Commander of the Army Lieutenant General Machijiri Kazumoto and Chief of Staff Major General Kawamura Saburo. At this time, Machijiri told Hayashi about the personal distinction of Diem, and disclosed his intention to employ him as the central leader if it became necessary to agitate popular movement in a situation such as if British paratroopers landed on the plains of Laos as they did in Burma. Diem was disguised in the uniform of a Japanese sergeant, fled from Hue in a truck with six real military police officers to head to Tourane, flew to Saigon by Japanese aircraft and was sheltered in the Army Hospital. Since that time, Diem collaborated with Hayashi to prepare governing plans after the forced solution of the French Indochina issue (described later).⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Yoshizawa visited Dainan Koshi in Saigon and met with Matsushita Mitsuhiro. Dainan Koshi in Saigon was frequently visited by the Japanese diplomats, perhaps including Consul General Minoda and Minister to Saigon Tashiro Shigenori who were sympathetic to the independence movement and Nagai Mikizo, an officer at the Greater East Asia Ministry on his business trips from Tokyo. Those key persons gathered when Yoshizawa visited, and made comprehensive analyses of the intelligence collected by Matsushita, stories Yoshizawa had heard from Ishida and intelligence brought by Komatsu Kiyoshi, and exchanged opinions on the political system of Vietnam after gaining independence. As Matsushita frequently received letters from Cuong De in exile in Japan, they must have also discussed the recent situations of Cuong De. Yoshizawa held a concept

⁴⁴ Interview with Mr. Ishida Masao. According to Mr. Ishida, Komatsu Kiyoshi also visited Ishida and it was Ishida who introduced Diem to Komatsu.

⁴⁵ Interview with Mr. Ishida; Hayashi Hidezumi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," *Dodai Kurabu Koenshu Henshu Inkaï*, ed., *"Showa Gunjishi Hiwa": Dodai Kurabu Koenshu*, Vol.2 (Dodai Keizai Konwakai, 1989) pp. 382-387; Ishikawa Ryoko, "Kakedashi Gaikokan no Senjika Futsuin Taikenki: Showa 18 Nen 9 Gatsu-Showa 21 Nen 5 Gatsu, *Gunji Shigaku*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (September 1996), p. 47; Tominaga Hobun, "Chinurareshi Kudeta," Tamura Yoshio, ed., *Hiroku Daitoa Senshi: Marei Taiheiyō Toshō Hen* (Fuji Shoen, 1953), p. 157.

to enthrone Cuong De as the Emperor and have Ngo Dinh Diem assume the office of Prime Minister once Vietnam achieved independence. In precaution against leaks of the discussion, they talked with code names, Cuong De as "south," Diem as "west," Matsushita as "east" and Komatsu as "north."⁴⁶

Since the advance of the Japanese Army to French Indochina, the desire to learn the Japanese language had rapidly grown, and the number of local people who wanted to learn Japanese increased. Japan established Japanese language schools in Hanoi, Hue and Saigon in response. Inoue Kichisaburo, Kobayashi Keizo and Terakawa Kazunobu who had been dispatched as students studying abroad from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to French Indochina became instructors of Japanese in Hanoi. The French Indochina authorities suspected that these Japanese language schools were hotbeds for the independence movement. The French Indochina authorities had been attentively observing all contacts between the Japanese and the Vietnamese, and their response to the Japanese language schools was particularly strict. When Ishida tried to open a Japanese language school in Hue, the mayor of Hue would not easily give permission. The suspicion of the French Indochina authorities might have been strengthened partly due to the fact that Kobayashi had been lodging at the home of a major independence movement activist Tran Van Lai.⁴⁷

The Japanese House set up in Hanoi and Saigon with the objectives of fostering friendship between Japan and France and introducing the Japanese culture to French Indochina appeared to the eyes of the French police as an organization for the support of the independence movement and intelligence collection. It was, however, not groundless since the general director was Omiya Komaki, and Komatsu Kiyoshi often visited there.

Thus, it seems to have been difficult for those related to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Greater East Asia) to be deeply involved with the independence movement. With the exception of Ishida who had been on friendly terms with Ngo Dinh Diem and a foreign student, Kobayashi, who had been lodging at the home of Tran Van Lai, Japanese diplomats seldom had the opportunity to talk with major independence movement activists. It should be appropriate to judge that involvement of Matsushita and other civilians and those related to the Japanese House must have been at the level of obtaining intelligence on the independence movement through Komatsu and others who were not official diplomats.

⁴⁶ Interview with Mr. Takezaki Ukichi.

⁴⁷ Interviews with Mr. Inoue Kichisaburo, Mr. Kobayashi Keizo and Mr. Ishida. Mr. Ishida was so furious about the issue of obstructing establishment of a Japanese language school, he hit Mayor of Hue detained at the "Operation Akira." For this reason he was accused as a war criminal in Classes B and C at the Saigon Military Trial and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment, and was detained in Poulo Condore Island. After 5 years of imprisonment there, he was transferred to the Sugamo Prison (Interview with Mr. Ishida; Tominaga, "Chinurareshi Kudeta," p. 154 and Chaen Yoshio, ed., *BC Kyu Senpan Chugoku Futsuin Saiban Shiryo [BC Kyu Senpan Kankei Shiryo Shusei, 14]* [Fuji Shuppan, 1992], p. 293). Yamazaki Gotaro, a staff of the Consulate in Hue, who was asked to watch the captives at the "Operation Akira" was also accused as a war criminal of Classes B and C, sentenced to 5 years of imprisonment and detained in Poulo Condore Island (interview with Mr. Yamazaki).

(3) The Japanese Army and the Independence Movement

The General Headquarters of the Army had firmly adhered to the "maintenance of tranquility" while they proceeded with the war under the slogans "building the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" and "liberation of Asia." It is, however, remarkable that the military police had attempted to approach the independence movement activist groups from a comparatively early stage in French Indochina.

The military police protected a number of independence movement activists who had been objects of oppression and were about to be arrested, as described earlier. Those who received protection from the military police include Trang Trong Kim, Duong Ba Trac, Nguyen Van Sam, Ngo Dinh Diem, Nguyen Xuan Chu, and the two sons of Cuong De. Kim sought refuge abroad and Diem was sheltered in an Army facility.

The military police also approached the new religious sects that had been under severe oppression by France. The French Indochina authorities had confined the founder of the Hoa Hao sect, Huynh Phu So, in Bak Lieu to the south of Saigon. As the followers began to gather there from early 1942, the French Indochina authorities decided to transfer Huynh Phu So to Laos. On October 12, immediately before the scheduled transfer, the military police succeeded in having Huynh Phu So escape from Bak Lieu with the cooperation of several Hoa Hao sect followers, and sheltered him in the vicinity of the Saigon military police office.⁴⁸ The military police must have intended to use this organization in one way or another in approaching the Hoa Hao sect. The Hoa Hao sect, however, did not have so many followers and its structure was not reinforced, and thus their contribution was limited.

The largest force that the military police approached was the Cao Dai sect. The Cao Dai sect suffered severe oppression from the French Indochina authorities from autumn of 1940 to the next year, was forced out of Tay Ninh where its headquarters had been built and fled to Phnom Penh. Approaches by the military police to the Cao Dai sect began during this Phnom Penh exile period. What the military police expected of the Cao Dai sect at first was the collection of intelligence concerning the movement of the French Indochinese Army. The Cao Dai sect provided the Japanese Army intelligence on the number and movement of the French Indochinese Army and communication with the Allied Forces. No French suspected female peddlers of collecting intelligence, and their achievements were remarkable. The Japanese Army not only promised to protect the Cao Dai sect as compensation for such cooperation but helped the Cao Dai sect return to Tay Ninh and advance to Saigon in February 1943 as well.⁴⁹

Bases for the Cao Dai Youth Group were built in Saigon and Cho Lon. One of them was the shipbuilding factory of Nichinan Shosen, K.K. in Saigon. At this base, camouflaged

⁴⁸ Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Viet-nam de 1940 à 1952* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), pp. 81-91.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-92.

with the signboard "Japan Commercial Shipbuilding Factory," the young members of the Cao Dai sect built wooden boats ordered by the Japanese Army as the signboard said, in daytime. Mitsui and Co., Ltd. supplied the materials. The Japanese Army paid 200,000 to 350,000 piastres per completed boat. These earnings became the fund for the lives and activities of the Cao Dai Youth Group. At night, they worked on military drills with bamboo spears in hand as the Cao Dai Volunteer Army (commander: Trang Quang Vinh) organized the year before. Needless to say, it was Matsushita Mitsuhiro who gave indirect support to these activities of the Cao Dai sect.⁵⁰ The Cao Dai sect played an important role in the cooperation with the Japanese Army at the "Operation Akira" (forced solution of the French Indochina issue) that was executed on March 9, 1945.

It was Lieutenant Colonel Hayashi Hidezumi of the military police who was ordered to study and prepare the governing plan after the execution of the forced solution of the issue. Hayashi was suddenly ordered to go to French Indochina in January 1944, and headed for his new mission at the end of the same month. After assignment at the headquarters of the Indochina Station Army, he was ordered to study the disarmament of French Indochina, subsequent actions and the Annam independence movement.⁵¹

He had spent a half year reading past documents and solving the problems between the Japanese and French Armies as a public relations officer. It was early July when his surroundings suddenly became flurried. Major General Kawamura Saburo, Chief of Staff of the Indochina Station Army, received a personal letter from Colonel Nagai Yatsuji, Chief of the 4th section of the General Headquarters of the Army. Kawamura called Hayashi and showed him the letter. It said, "please send to Tokyo 20 to 30 independence movement activists who strongly desire the independence of Annam. We shall dispatch a man named Vu Dinh Dy to Saigon to select and bring them to Japan." A telegram to the effect that "please send 20 to 30 independence movement activists to Tokyo" also arrived, signed by the deputy chief of staff and addressed to the commander of the Indochina Station Army.⁵²

Vu Dinh Dy was the director of the information and propaganda division of the Ai Quoc Dang, and had visited Japan that year. The objectives of his visit were to reconfirm the policy of Japan concerning the independence of Vietnam and to establish contacts with those involved in the independence movement residing in Japan. Dy stayed in a hotel in Atami arranged by Yamane Doichi and Uchikawa Omi who had already returned to Japan, disguised

⁵⁰ Nguyen Ngoc Hoa, "Daitoasenso to Nippon-bushi no Shiruetto" (1999) (unpublished).

⁵¹ Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," pp. 376-378. Bureau Central de Renseignements d'Indochine (abrégé ensuite en BCRI), Commandement des Troupes Francaises en Extrême-Orient, "Les services spéciaux japonais, le problème japonais en Indochine," (30 décembre 1946) (Service historique d'armée de terre, Château de Vincennes, France) collects Hayashi's diary translated into French. According to the diary, Hayashi was requested to study disarmament of the French Indochinese Army by Lieutenant Colonel Iwakuni Yasuhiko, staff of the Indochina Station Army on February 27, and to study the independence movement by Major General Kawamura Saburo, Chief of Staff of the same Army (Ibid., pp. 316 and 318).

⁵² Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," pp. 379-380.

as a second generation Japanese under the alias of "Jii Takeshi." From his base in Atami, he went to Tokyo everyday and visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Greater East Asia and General Staff Office of the Army accompanied by Uchikawa. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, took the stance of opposing the independence with the justification of maintenance of the relations with France, and the Ministry of Greater East Asia was out of the question since it had newly been established. The Army was then occupied with the problem of how to deal with the defeat of the Japanese Army, and "could not possibly afford to assist the independence movement of Vietnam, deserted Dy saying, 'do as you like, we are too busy,' and left Dy utterly hopeless." Dy visited Cuong De, who lived in Okuzawa, Setagaya, under the alias "Minami Kazuo," accompanied by Uchikawa. Dy "held great expectations and hopes at meeting the supreme leader of the independence movement of Vietnam in Japan," but to his surprise, Cuong De looked much older than his age of 62 and had no spirit, and did not give any impression of a noble-minded patriot for the independence movement. Dy "did not see any vigor in him to actively rouse activities and fight through until achieving independence," and "judged that he was a puppet of the Japanese Army after all, and that no earnest activists would follow him." Dy's stay in Japan was short, only 10 days, and he returned to Vietnam "with his great expectations betrayed, disappointed and lonely."⁵³

On July 10, Dy and Hayashi met at the "Nippon Hotel" (Majestic Hotel) in Saigon. Dy had a letter of introduction by Nagai, which also requested him to bring 20 to 30 independence movement activists as in the letter to Kawamura. Hayashi refrained from giving an immediate response, and avoided making a clear commitment by saying, "it is extremely difficult for the Army in the present conditions, and we might not be able to meet your expectations if worst comes to worst, but since you will not be able to accomplish your mission then, we will make efforts to meet your hopes."⁵⁴

At the same time, there arose the problem of protecting Ngo Dinh Diem. The author has already described the process leading up to his sheltering at the Army Hospital in Saigon on July 13 in the previous section; the following is the subsequent events. On July 14, Hayashi met Ngo Dinh Diem for the first time. They started to see each other almost every day since then. Hayashi learned from Diem the political structure of Vietnam, the improvement methods to be taken at independence, and other detailed information such as the speed of communications, i.e. how many hours it would take from the issuing of a legislative order by the Cabinet to its reception by the general public.

Hayashi thought of introducing Diem and Dy some time later. Hayashi obtained permission from the General Staff Headquarters of the Indochina Station Army and invited both of them to the quarters of Lieutenant Colonel Iwakuni Yasuhiko, a staff officer of the Army. It was July 22. He let Diem and Dy meet alone from 9 in the evening to 1:45 a.m.

⁵³ Uchikawa, *Shirukurodo no Yume*, pp. 193-197.

⁵⁴ Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," p. 382; BCRI, p. 291.

Hayashi had expected them to find themselves kindred spirits since they were both activists aiming for the independence of Vietnam, but they were wary of each other and remained totally uncommunicative. Hayashi was disappointed. He asked Komatsu Kiyoshi, who knew both of them well, to intermedate. He also showed his care, and served some cakes to create a more relaxed atmosphere. His efforts paid off, and their wariness declined as the meetings repeated, but it was not until the fifth meeting (August 5) when the atmosphere finally relaxed.⁵⁵

It was August 27 when Hayashi received the request from Nguyen Xuan Chu, the chairman of the Ai Quoc Dang in Hanoi to allow him to move to Tokyo or Saigon. Chu had sensed danger to himself, stressed the urgency for the move repeatedly and expressed his will to head for Saigon. Hayashi met with the members of the Ai Quoc Dang and started to review the issue, but steps to the solution were slow, perhaps because it was judged not to be so urgent, and it was October 2 when he obtained the permission from Chief of Staff Kawamura to move Chu.⁵⁶

By this time the meetings between Ngo Dinh Diem and Vu Dinh Dy had been held more than 20 times. Although there remained some issues on which they did not agree, the atmosphere had improved.⁵⁷ Dy's superior Nguyen Xuan Chu joined them, and tripartite discussions began.

The first contact between Dy and Hayashi concerned the dispatching of independence movement activists from Vietnam to Japan. They decided to select one representative from Diem and Chu's parties each and send them to Japan, since it was impossible to send as many as 20 to 30 people. They selected Le Toan, vice-chairman of Chu's Ai Quoc Dang and Vu Van An from Diem's faction. Around October 5,⁵⁸ both of them took advantage of the opportunity of the temporary return of Chief of Staff Kawamura and went to Japan with him. Before their departure, the five independence movement activists held discussions for a few days. They reached agreement of opinions to some degree. Hayashi told of the situation at that time after the war as follows:

I was wondering why they wanted to see me. They said they would submit to me a statement that when Annam became independent in the future, the five of them would join efforts and cooperate with the Japanese Army.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," pp. 387-388; BCRI, pp. 291-294.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 298-299, 302-303; Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," p. 389. Hayashi met Chu next day on October 3 (BCRI, p. 303).

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 300-301.

⁵⁸ Hayashi wrote it was around October 10 (Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," p. 389), but since Kawamura made a report at the Supreme War Plan Meeting held on October 6 ("Kimitsu Senso Nisshi" October 6, 1944), it must have been a mistake in Hayashi's memory. The departure of Kawamura and others must have been before October 5 at the latest.

⁵⁹ Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," p. 389.

At this point, two major groups among the pro-Japanese independence movement activists in northern and central Vietnam joined hands, at least for the time being.

The Cao Dai sect, the largest pro-Japanese group in the south, also approached closer to Hayashi. Trang Quang Vinh, the representative of the Cao Dai sect, and Hayashi met for the first time at the headquarters of the military police of Saigon in the evening of October 27. Hayashi seemed to have felt friendly toward Vinh, which was unusual of him.⁶⁰ In the "Operation Akira," a volunteer army of the Cao Dai Youth Group would cooperate with the Japanese Army, calling themselves the "Shinto Practicers," and it was the fruit of this very meeting. A month and a half later on December 14, Matsushita Mitsuhiro visited Hayashi to deliver a donation of 20,000 piastres from Trang Quang Vinh to the Japanese Army. Hayashi, however, could not bring himself to accept it, and entrusted it to Matsushita.⁶¹

Hayashi became acquainted with several major independence movement activists of Vietnam, and grasped the conditions of the independence movement after repeated meetings with them. At the end of October, Chief of Staff Kawamura, who had returned to Saigon, ordered Hayashi to prepare the guideline of the plan by around December 10, as the execution of the forced solution of the French Indochina issue, which had been named the "Operation Ma-go," was becoming a reality. Hayashi started the full-fledged research with assistance from Sato Shun, a civil administrator dispatched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also studied how to structure the police and local legislation. Hayashi had not neglected to listen to the opinions of Diem and others in those studies. He studied tactics on the maps to determine what to do when Vietnam became independent, and requested Diem to write a draft for the declaration to be issued by the commander of the Japanese Army. Hayashi and Diem had different opinions at times.⁶²

Some time after the start of the research, Hayashi began to think it would be impossible to establish a military administration as had been conducted in Sumatra.⁶³ He also had to consider the possibility of independence. As for the head of the state, it was decided to bring back and select Cuong De. Hayashi thought of another alternative, the former Emperor Duy Tan who had been exiled to Reunion Island.⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, Charles de Gaulle, who had established a provisional republic government and assumed the office of Chairman after the liberation of Paris, was also scheming around the same time to reinstate Duy Tan to replace Bao Dai.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ BCRI, p. 305.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 312. The intention of the Cao Dai sect which donated the fund is unknown.

⁶² Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," pp. 390-391; BCRI, pp. 306-311.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 308.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 311.

⁶⁵ Tachikawa Kyoichi, "Furansu ga Kaettekuru: Indoshina no 1945 Nen," Gunjishi Gakkai, ed., *Dainiji-Sekaitaisen, Vol. 3: Shusen* (Kinsei-sha, 1995), pp. 231-232.

Selecting Cuong De was also the intention of Ambassador Extraordinaire Yoshizawa, as described earlier. Hayashi met with Yoshizawa, who was about to return to Japan, along with Yokoyama Masayuki, Minoda Fujio and other diplomats during his research.⁶⁶ It is likely that the intention of Yoshizawa and the others was related to Hayashi in some form. Return and enthronement of Cuong De upon achievement of independence had been commonly expected among the general public in Vietnam at that time.⁶⁷

In early December, Hayashi presented the created plan to the staffs of the Indochina Station Army. He realized from the reactions of the staffs that there were many problems, not only of the difficulties in the military administration and civil administration under military control but also in immediate independence, and was urged to drastically amend the plan. He managed to obtain agreement on the eventual attainment of independence for the time being, but it was decided to put in a transition period before that, and after removing the French administrators above the rank of division directors, the Japanese would temporarily take charge of their duties until the independence of Vietnam. Although Chief of Staff Kawamura approved of Hayashi's plan in general, he demanded some amendments, requesting consideration of independence of only Annam in the central area of French Indochina because the General Headquarters of the Army was considering peace negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek and wanted to use Tonkin as a bargaining tool.⁶⁸ As if that had not been enough, Lieutenant General Tsuchihashi Yuichi, who had just assumed the post of commander at the end of December, when the Indochina Station Army was reorganized into the 38th Army, strongly opposed the plan to enthrone Cuong De. He said, "the sovereign of a country is the most significant issue in domestic administration," and "it is my principle to absolutely avoid interference."⁶⁹

Hayashi had no choice but to drastically review the plan he created after all. That was the moment when the year-long studies of French Indochina, in particular the studies on the independence movement of Vietnam by Hayashi, vanished to naught.

The general public of Vietnam had expected that when independence was achieved, Cuong De would come home from Japan and ascend to the throne, replacing Bao Dai as described earlier. In fact, immediately after the "Operation Akira," the citizens of Saigon "built a hot welcome arch in the streets shaped after the flag of the 'Vietnam Phuc Quoc Hoi' with red dots on a green background," and waited for the return of Cuong De, and his enthronement was the "common public opinion."⁷⁰

Hayashi's plan had been appropriate on this point. The firm statement by Tsuchihashi, however, denied the Cuong De scheme, and Bao Dai was to remain as the emperor of the

⁶⁶ BCRI, pp. 295, 305 and 307.

⁶⁷ Hoa, "Daitoasenso to Nippon-bushi no Shiruotto."

⁶⁸ BCRI, pp. 311-314; Hayashi, "Indoshina Sangoku Dokuritsu no Keii," pp. 393 and 396.

⁶⁹ Tsuchihashi Yuichi, *Gunpuku Seikatsu Yonju-nen no Omoide* (Keiso Shuppan Service Center, 1985), p. 528.

⁷⁰ Nishikawa Kansei, "Okawa Sensei to Kuonde Ko," *Okawa Shumei Kensho Kaiho*, No. 24 (June 1997), p. 7.

independent Empire of Vietnam. The Vietnamese people, who had been exalted with joy when the French were swept away, were utterly disheartened when they learned that Bao Dai was to remain in the throne, and their trust in Japan was totally shattered. It resulted in the creation of the sentiment among the people that France and Japan were after all the same.⁷¹ This must have been the reason why the popular support shifted straight to the Viet Minh toward the end of the War.

Conclusion

Vietnam today recognizes the WWII period as the era of double exploitation by France and Japan, and uses the symbolizing expression of "two pillories on one neck." Their history textbooks repeatedly use the description of "fascist Japan." If interpreted kindly, these might imply that Japan in those days was a certain extraordinary state. Such expressions in history textbooks, however, cannot possibly create a good image of Japan. It was the execution of the "Operation Akira" by the Japanese Military that had swept away the French power and brought on the "first independence" of Vietnam from the colonial administration of France. Why, then, was such historical recognition unfavorable to Japan generated?

First, it was the policy of the "maintenance of tranquility in French Indochina" adopted by Japan during WWII. There had been expectations for Japanese support in the background of uprisings by the "Vietnam National Restoration Army," Cao Dai sect and other independence movement groups at the time of the advance of the Japanese Army into French Indochina. Their expectation was that Japan would be a friend of theirs and defeat France. Far from providing support for independence, however, Japan chose to collaborate with France for tactical reasons, and turned a blind eye towards the oppression against independence movement by France.

For the period of four and a half years from the advance into northern French Indochina until the "Operation Akira," the Japanese Army and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Greater East Asia) had been restricted by their own "maintenance of tranquility in French Indochina" policy and unable to officially support the independence movement even though they had held sympathetic sentiments at heart, and refrained from words and actions that might generate expectations of independence. They protected some independence movement activists who were about to be arrested as exceptions, but it cannot be denied that they had been extremely restricted overall. Support to the Cao Dai sect was the only long and consistent activity.

In any event, basic non-support of the independence movement in French Indochina was totally different from the actions of Japan in other Southeast Asian regions. Japan fought the wars against the United States, Great Britain and Netherlands with slogans of "building

⁷¹ Interview with Mr. Inoue Kichisaburo.

Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" and "liberation of Asia." The "maintenance of tranquility in French Indochina," however, was a completely contradictory policy to those objectives of the war of Japan. It is a fact that proves how the Japanese policies for Asia were opportunistic, stopgap and makeshift, and lacked consistency altogether.

Second, it was a mistake not to abdicate but allow Bao Dai to remain in the throne in the independent administration after the "Operation Akira." Bao Dai had been so pro-France and unpopular among the people that they ridiculed him as a French infection. It was commonly presumed that once Vietnam became independent, Cuong De in exile in Japan would return and ascend to the throne. The first plan drawn by Hayashi Hidezumi included establishment of a Cuong De administration. The principle of Tsuchihashi Yuichi of non-interference in domestic administration, who refused Hayashi's plan, was reasonable. But it brought on an unreasonable result. The fact that Bao Dai remained in the throne invited disappointment among the people. They decided Japan was after all the same as France. It created the grounds for the sudden shift of popular support toward the Viet Minh, who defined Japan as "fascist" and France as "imperialist" and targeted both countries as enemies. Japan failed in grasping the feelings of the people as well as in giving hope and opportunities for the independence of Vietnam by adhering to the "maintenance of tranquility in French Indochina" for too long.

Note

The names, positions (titles) during the War of the interviewees and the research dates are as follows (in the order of research).

- Ishikawa Ryoko (Office of Ambassador Extraordinaire to French Indochina): January 31, 1996 and October 26, 2000.
- Inoue Kichisaburo (Student dispatched by Ministry of Foreign Affairs): February 9, 16, April 17, 1996, July 25, December 9, 1997, and March 8, 2000.
- Yamazaki Gotaro (Consulate in Hue): March 8, 1996.
- Takezaki Ukichi (Dainan Koshi): July 9, October 28 (telephone), 1996, December 17 (telephone) and 26 (telephone).
- Katogawa Kotaro (Staff at the 38th Army): August 20 and September 13, 1996.
- Nishikawa Sutesaburo (Dainan Koshi): August 21 and 29, October 2, 1996, November 12, 1997, and June 16, 1999.
- Ishida Masao (Consulate in Hue): March 4, 1997.
- Kobayashi Keizo (student dispatched by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, office of Ambassador Extraordinaire): October 30, 1997 and January 22, 1998.
- Nguyen Ngoc Hoa (Cao Dai Youth Group): January 10, 1998 and March 8, 2000.
- Sekiguchi Shungo (Japanese House): April 20, August 3 and September 11, 1999, and October 26, 2000.
- Kato Kenshiro (Dainan Koshi): September 19, 2000.