

Japan's role in promoting tourism in ancient Vietnamese villages as part of sustainable heritage tourism development

Period: December 2013–January 2014

Place of fieldwork: Vietnam

Name: Choshen Sabina

Key Words: Vietnam, heritage tourism, sustainable tourism development, ancient villages, Japanese assistance

Since opening itself for international economic cooperation in the late 1980s, heritage tourism development has been one of the significant elements in Vietnam's economic growth. A growing number of domestic and international tourists are visiting several world and national heritage sites in the country every year. In the last ten years, besides the popular and well-known tourist destinations, the Vietnamese government has been promoting and developing lesser known sites under heritage tourism.

My research pertains to Japan's role in sustainable heritage tourism development in Vietnam, wherein the former is assisting three ancient villages, while two of the villages have been recognized as national heritage tourism sites by the Vietnamese government. After visiting various heritage tourism sites in Vietnam during my two-month fieldwork, I have chosen to focus my Master's thesis on these three ancient villages – Duong Lam (Northern Vietnam), Phuoc Tich (Central), and Dong Hoa Hiep in Cai Be (Southern). Each village has its own characteristics and the tourism development conditions are different for each of them. In recent years, personnel and volunteers of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have been assisting the local residents of these villages in sustainable tourism development. Japan's Showa Women's University is also playing a major role in preserving ancient houses and aiding sustainable tourism.

During my visit, I had the opportunity to meet the Japanese personnel and volunteers in the three villages and acquaint myself with their activities. I was also able to converse with several locals regarding their notions and activities regarding developing tourism in their village.

The time I spent with the Japanese aides and the locals helped me realize how heritage tourism is being shaped and evolved in places that were not considered tourist spots about ten years ago. I intend to come back to these villages in the future to track the impact of sustainable tourism development on the lifestyle and mentality of local residents.



Northern Vietnam: A family in Duong Lam village that runs a restaurant business in the compound of their ancient house, where tourists groups sometimes arrive for lunch.



Northern Vietnam: Haruka So, JICA volunteer, is talking to a local resident who is interested in developing her newly started small shop



Central Vietnam: On my way to Phuoc Tich by local bus, with Kaneko Yuichi, JICA 's volunteer in Hue city's Tourism Development office



Central Vietnam: The owner of a homestay in his ancient house in Phuoc Tich showing me his photograph with Ho Chi Minh



Southern Vietnam: Learning from Tomoda Yoshinori, a coordinator from Showa Women's University, about the most popular ancient houses in Cai Be village.



Southern Vietnam: While touring ancient houses in Cai Be, I visited the Xoat Residence, which has a splendid French-style façade and ancient Sino-Vietnamese style interiors.



Southern Vietnam: Signboards installed by JICA in Cai Be for easier navigation