

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES IN VIETNAM: OBJECTIVE AND APPROACH

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Over the last 20 years, since the founding of the SEA Studies Institute (1973-1993), we have step by step determined the objectiveives of the SEA studies in Vietnam and got a general, comprehensive view through a multi-branch and inter – branch approach, within a general research institute in terms of subjects and organizational structure. We believe that the objective of the SEA Studies as a regional research, is the examination of the whole region of SEA in its diachronic and synchronic relations as well as in its relations in space and time.

1. SEA is a historical and cultural region an entity born of a particular natural and social ecological environment and existing from prehistory to this day. This is the wet-rice agriculture civilization running from south of the Yang Tze Kiang to northeast India down to Oceania. The different branches of the human science are the main forces to make deep researches in this field.

2. With this common historical and cultural background to day SEA is a modern developed strategic composed of 10 independent nations with different socio-political systems: Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Brunei. In this field, the various branches of social science will make researches as main motive forces.

These objectives set two fundamental tasks to the SEA studies:

a) To strive, to understand, to sum up, and to detect genuine cultural values and development laws from traditional to modern time and to determine the relationship between Vietnam and other SEA countries through which we shall awaken national order the solidarity and friendship between the countries in the region and to build a peaceful, stable, cooperative and developed SEA. Scientific achievements will contribute to the determination of the development strategy and foreign relation strategy of Vietnam with regard to SEA a part of the Asian Pacific strategy of the Vietnamese communist party and state.

b) Through the works of basic sciences, the SEA studies in Vietnam will contribute to broadening and making deeper research on the subjects of Vietnamese social and human sciences themselves. They will also discover Vietnamese problems through regional data and vice versa so as to enrich the common theoretical treasure of various scientific fields in the region and the rest of the world.

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For this purpose the SEA studies should have an appropriate system of approaches. Previously, SEA was examined from a point of view separating each country from its general background, separating each aspect from the whole culture, separating synchronic relation from diachronic relations, etc. Now with the achievements of modern sciences, from the point of view of totality and globality, multi-branch and inter-branch approaches are used to have general comprehension and comprehensive knowledge. This is the prevailing affect of the modern system theory which permits a deeper perception of SEA as an entity; with this approach, history is used as a frame for analysis political economy is considered an institution and together with various cultural branches, they form different systems of explanation and create a system of norm reflecting the realities. This system of approaches will allow us to discover the evolution laws from ancient to modern times of the whole region as well as of each country in the region.

At the same time, looking at SEA, the Asian-Pacific region, and the rest of the world as a panorama from Vietnam, we should discover the relationship between different nations, different states, between different global and partial problems according to Vietnamese perception (Vietnamese point of view). With this approach, we can through the analysis of the present and applying the method of hi-directional thinking, have better perception of the past and foretell the future friends. At same time, we can contribute to viewing the region with the specific of the Vietnamese.

In order to gradually understand our research objective (SEA), from the very beginning, we have determined five subjects placed in space and time as follows:

1. There is an ancient SEA civilization, different from the Chinese and Indian civilization. This is the wet-rice civilization, which has its origin in the region with the ethno-cultural characteristic of the local people and their behavior and mentality in the process of coping with their natural and social environment.

- 2 The formation of ancient national states in SEA and the appearance of traditional cultures in their contacts with other cultures in Asia, primarily India and China.

- 3 The invasion of SEA by western colonialism and the movement of national liberation: the process of Westernization of SEA countries in the present international and regional circumstances.

- 4 The paths to advance to modern societies followed by SEA countries in the present era. The prospects of a developed SEA in the 21st century.

- 5 The relations between Vietnam and SEA countries in various periods. The lessons of the past and present times.

The above-mentioned subjects embody the new general view and the specific research orientations of the SEA studies Institute. They are based of the research orientations of our colleagues in the world. They are also appropriate to the requirements and the research orientations various branches of the social and human sciences of Vietnam.

The subjects allow us to have a panoramic picture of SEA from prehistoric to the present times in which history plays the role of a frame for analysis. But we not bound by the European type of historical views, that is to say we are not limited to the description of socio-political events and to the division of historical periods based on these events as has been frequently done: the origins, the slavery period, feudalism, capitalism, etc. Our research objectives are much broader and move general. We begin with observing SEA as a regional civilization and culture (wet-rice agricultural civilization): this fact was not previously realized by Western scholars or realized only in some of its separate features. From this starting point, we have prepared a long-term research program under the direction of professors Tu Chi and Pham Duc Duong: "The environment and the behavior of the agricultural inhabitants of SEA in the fields of production, organization of life, organization of the family and society, cultural life in the village". Here geography is no longer limited to physical geography but considered the study of the natural environment of SEA in which man has lived and accommodated himself to exist and develop. This is already the intermingling of natural science, social science, and human science towards and inter-branch approach. Modern geography relates the different parts of the world to the community of people and the environment there in and increasingly relates them to the socio-economic phenomena occurring in other parts of the world. Cooperating with us is professor Le Ba Thao, president of the Association of Vietnamese geographers and a number of geographers of the Teachers college 1 Hanoi. Several geographical works have been writing such as Geography of SEA, Geography of Laos, Geography of Cambodia, Geography of Thailand, Ethnographer Tu Chi from the beginning has drawn our attention to the fact that we should not run after the 'the fashion' of talking about the environment in everything but in fact western ethnographers are right when there think it uninteresting to describe the culture of an ethnic group without putting it in a specific environment it will be like to visit a museum: all the exhibits there in have been brought out of their living environment.

From this point of view, we come to the conceptions: the ethnic space, the cultural space, the social space. It is precisely the environment that has influenced the choices of man, particular when man is still dependent on nature, and the nature of man in his relations with the environment is his accommodation. The results achieved by man in the process of accommodation with the environment constitute culture in the broader meaning of the word. That is why each regional culture has its own environment, its own area of existence, in which the relationship between man and environment is multi-directional, an active relationship in the combination between the natural ecology and the human ecology.

In the research on history of a regional culture, ethnography plays an important role not only because it studies the culture of the ethnic groups but also because it the relationship between various branches such as archeology, linguistics, ecology, etc.

We are lucky that the ethnographical group of the institute has, from the beginning received the devoted and sympathetic guidance of Prof. Tu Chi, the well-known ethnographer of Vietnam. He not only taught in classes and books but what is more important, he organized many trips for field-work in Bac Bo, Trung Bo, Nam Bo, and the high Plateaus... and gave lessons to the younger generation on the spot.

Under guidance of Prof. Tu Chi, we have provisionally divided the scenery of the SEA environment into five categories:

- The mountain slopes scenery with burnt-over land farming on slopes.
- The plateau scenery with plane land farming: these first two environments are those of dry farming (extent the tiered, watered fields or those on either sides of streams). These are the area of habitation of the Mon-Kheme, Tibetan-Burmese ethnic groups.
- The mountain-foot narrow valley scenery with the field on burnt-over land farming economy on the Tay. Thai, Moug ethnic groups in the plain or delta. Who cultivate the fields or gardens and primarily grow wet-rice.
- The region of the main ethnic groups such as the Viet. The Thai people the Laos, the Burmese, and the Javanese....
- Finally, the SEA coast and island scenery of the inhabitants of the Southern islands.

The book "About the scenery of the plain area", (SEA studies Institute, Hanoi, 1983, p. 221) by Professor Tu Chi, the editor and co-authors Nguyen Duy Thieu, Bui Xuan Dinh, Nguyen Quoc Hung, Vu Huy Quang, is the first experiment on the subject "environment and the behaviors of agricultures in production and organization of life". Together with the book "Organizational structure of the Vietnamese traditional villages in Bac Bo" (Tu Chi, Social Science publishing house, Hanoi, 1984), the article Democracy in villages "by Tran Tu, SEA studies review, no. 2 (3) 1991, pp1-9)... and the book "On the scenery of the plains" have given us a picture of the villages and communes in the plains and the Viet's behavior in their environment. Professor Too Chi has discovered the "Trung" (hollow) that Pierre Gourou did not know, and the "giap" organization in the village the function on which was not understood before.

Thanks to this approach we have discovered the process of cultural evolution in the height plateaus in present-day Vietnam between the two models of traditional culture: the dry extensive farming on burnt-over lands in relation to forests carried but by the ethnic groups in thru high Plateaus and the wet-rice intensive farming in fields and gardens of the king who account for 70% of the population of the high Plateaus (Tay Nguyen). This evolution process has brought about certain results in the development of the High Plateaus, but not a few arrows have been

committed. For many reasons above all due to the lack of knowledge and especially to the King's habitual imposition on other ethnics, the relations with the ethnic minorities have become tense, and the living environment has been destroyed. The situation in Tay Nguyen is alarming. Many cadres of the SEA studies institute have actively participated in research programs on Tay Nguyen such as Prof. Nguyen Tan Dac, Dr. Ngo Van Doanh, Mr Nguyen Duy Theiu, Prof. Tu Chi, etc.

With regard to the ethnic groups living on mountain slopes and farming on burnt-over lands, we pay attention to the H'mong-dao and the Lolo-Burmese groups. They are living in areas of strategic importance in many respects and belonging to many countries: China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. There fore, the process of concentration of ethnic within the borders of a country cannot prevent the relationship between people of the same ethnic in neighboring countries: at the same time, they are an important factor in the international relations between different states. The pressing problem for the inhabitants of this environmental scenery is to reestablish the balance between production and the natural environment: this constitutes the relation between burn-over land farming and the preservation of forests. To settle this relationship requires comprehensive measures to change from the destroying-and-burning-forest farming method to a forestation and intensive farming.

The articles written in this direction by the SEA ethno-linguistic group are based on the documents supplied by the H'mong in Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and China. Pham Duc Duong has studies "The culture of the H'mong through the semantic materials of the H'mong language" in his book "language and culture" which will be published soon.

Perhaps the scenery that attracts our group's attention most is the valley scenery. We have inherited the results of a life-time ethnological researcher of Prof. Tu Chi on the Moug in Hao Binh a people who have skillfully applied the socio-economic model of the wet-rice cultivation in valleys and who have original relations with the Viet.. We pay attention to the valleys scenery primarily because in the view of many ethnographers it was the place where the cultivation wet-rice first came into being: it is also the habitual area of habitation of the Tay-Thai in Vietnam and SEA.

As a result of many research the wet-rice cultivation socio-culture model of the Viet in the Red rice delta stems from that of the ancient Tay in valley regions.

The Institute research program on the Tay-Thai in Vietnam and SEA has been started in this orientation. If the wet-rice and the whole wet-rice civilization are the common achievement of the SEA peoples. The contributions by the Tay-Thai have been considered particularly when they applied by draulics to the cultivation of paddy and successfully developed this cultural model in nacre mountain-foot valleys an expended it to deltas of larger verses. At present the Tay-Thai are present in the national community of many countries with different positions and social functions: as main subjects of a nation (in Thailand and Laos) a state or an

autonomous region (like the Shan in Myanmar, the Ahon in India, the Choang in China) or living mingled with others ethnics. In Vietnam the Tay are found in Viet Bac provinces, the Thai in North-Western provinces.

The articles about Nabia village by Nguyen Huu Ung, about “the system of public fields and the forms of corves of the Phu The in Hua Phan province” by Nguyen Duy Thieu, Kham Pheng Thin...especially about “social structure in Muong Xinh” by Nguyen Duy Thieu sensed (presented at the international conference on Thailand in London 7/1993), are observations on the environment and corresponding behaviors.

The work ‘Introduction of the ethnics in Laos’ by Pham Duc Duong, Khambay, Nguyen Duy Thieu, Dao Van Tien, result of the cooperation between the Commission of social sciences of Vietnam and that of Laos, is written according to the abovementioned approach.

Nowadays the Institute research group has won the participation of many scholars in Vietnam and other countries. For instance, Jean Berlie wrote “The Thai groups” (SEA studies Review, issue No. 3(8), 1992, pp 53-60) ethnic minority scholars: Prof. Cam Trong, Vi Trong Lien, Luong Ban.

With regard to the coastal scenery, we study it because:

1 Studying SEA without knowing about maritime environment is like man walking one foot, SEA culture being an important tradition of SEA.

2 The SEA is an important strategic region for development in modern times.

3 Vietnam is bordered by the SEA but it is not accustomed to dealing with a maritime environment. It is therefore necessary to contribute development of the SEA regions of Vietnam as part of its development strategy and in its relations with other countries in the world and in the region (see “behavior of the Viet regarding the SEA” by Tu Chi and Pham Duc Duong, “Maritime culture” by Cao Xuan Pho...). For SEA, the sea is the traditional vital environment and the source of unexploited wealth....

It is also from the subject “environment and behavior” that we have expanded to other fields: environment and health, with a view to putting to avail the traditional values in dealing with the environment, this subject is studied by Dr Ta Minh Tri who is prompted by two fundamental principles “man’s body is a small universe” and “nature and man are integrated”. Ta Minh Tri has determined the harmonious relationship between man and the environment and the possibility of the human body to accommodate with the environment and use them as basis to study the methods of traditional medical treatment with medicine or without medicine, which are all oriented to enhancing the ability of the human body to adjust itself and to overcome illnesses by itself (see “thoughts about the relationship between traditional medicine and modern medicine in acupuncture” in the book. “En-

vironment and health” by Ta Minh Tri, SEA Institute the book is in the press). The book “ethnic pharmacology, Vietnam and SEA “ by Ph. Dr. in biology Le Dinh Phai and “Medical practitioners in Dai Ve Village” by Nguyen Duy Thieu, are also conceived in this direction. Recently, we have paid attention to the treatment of diseases by human energy applied by the Nguyen Dinh Phu group Dr. of Mathematics, Ho Chi Minh City University. Moreover, the research group also includes biologist Ngo Thanh Dong studies “the environment and life” through the relationship between “Phenotype” and “Genotype” (in the book “The environment and life”. SEA Institute, which is in the press).

The intention of the participants in the research program on the environment and the behavior of the SEA people from ancient time to the present day is to go further in the common trend of the thinking of our times. If natural sciences have the concentric of a “lasting environment” with the participation of ecologists, targeting on the restoration of balance between man and nature which has been upset by the industrial civilization then from the social point of view, culture will play an extremely great role in establishing a lasting human ecological environment. Together with other factors, on the one hand culture develops thanks to the achievements of science and the effects of the market economy and preserves values and the human essence of the nation and of mankind in general which have taken shape not in a few centuries but over three million. At the same time, culture must be modernized to meet the truth-good-beauty requirement in a life of high quality.

For that reason, the group of programmers lay emphasis on putting to avail “the privileges position of those who come after others” of the developing countries like Vietnam and other SEA countries. Their privileges consist in that they can draw experiences of success of failure from those who come earlier and also in that all countries must decide themselves their development policy through theoretical considerations and intelligence, in accordance with formulas of informatics and not through experiences. Therefore we have made research on the fundamental characteristics of the agricultural civilization and the post industrial civilization with a view to finding a way to modernize our country appropriately to ensure the harmonious development between man and environment in the new conditions of today. If the approaches and the forecasts of Alvin Tofler are reliable, the important and most promising advantage that we should make full use of is the coming into being of a new, marvelous relationship, that is the similarity between the agricultural society and the post-industrial society. According to Alvin Tofler, the industrial civilization cannot bring about success to the “third world”, the development strategy of which must steam from Asia, Africa, and Latin America and not from the developed countries.

The third wave of civilization (post industrial) contains many features similar to those of the first civilization (agricultural).

- 1 Production is dispersed to adequate scales.
- 2 Diversified sources of energy.

- 3 De-urbanization
- 4 Working at home.
- 5 High level of consumption.

Modernizing the agricultural civilization is the combination of the past and those of the future in a new and better present.

For many years, the research program on the environment and behavior has got the participation of many scientists of various branches in Vietnam and the rest of the world. Biology engineer Bui Dang Tuan, secretary of the program, has formed several sub sections and prepared many projects contributing to the study and establishment of a lasting agricultural environment, such as the use of water-immersing land: the economy in rural ecology, organic fertilizers for agriculture, medical plants and gardens of medical plants... in cooperation with the Institute of economy and ecology headed by Prof. Dr. Le Van Chuong, the Institute of agricultural sciences of academician - Prof. Dao The Tuan, the Institute of Biology of late professors Phan Phai. Le Huu Thuoc, the traditional medicine department of Hospital 108, the group of Pharmacology's (which has published the book, **Commonly Used Medicinal Plants in the Indochina's Countries**).

We have established cooperation with the medical academies of the CDR (former) and Poland. The Institute of History of various scientific branches of the Soviet Union (former) on the above mentioned subjects.

The Austro-Thai Studies Institute (ATSI) in Guam invited Prof. Pham Duc Duong, Phan Ngoc, Cao Xuan Pho, Tu Chi, Le Van Chuong, candidate Dr Ngo Van Doanh to participate in the work of the institute as foreign members.

The Canadian VISED and VCOP program of cooperation with Vietnam in the study of the maritime and oceanic environment invited the group of environmentalists of the SEA Institute to participate in their activity.

Archeologists also took part in archeological studies of the environment because they are conscious that it is possible to settle the relationship, between the form of boats and the swamp region the nets and deads and the river-sea environment for instance, only by putting them into their environmental background. Some archeologists have talked about the mountain-foot regions being the cradle of primitive agriculture in the early Neolithic period, or about the middle region as the starting point of the formation of the first states at the initial stage of the metal period, etc... Whereas in the former socialist countries, archeology was always viewed as one branch of history in which diachronic period are considered of primary importance, Vietnamese archeologists also cannot overlook or belittle the space theory. Therefore, environmental archeology is concerned with the behaviors of man with regard to the environment in the following subjects: space, scale or scope of complex communities, environment and heterogeneous communities, interaction in compound environment and the unequal distribution of resources... balance and readjustment. Of course, the basic foundation of archeology is the exhibits and their contexts. The term context is from the Latin root 'contexere'

meaning weaving, assembling, plaiting or getting together. For archeology, context implies the space and time framework in which both cultural and natural environments are found. The framework can be applied to a separate objective (for instance the copper drum of Dong Son) or to a whole ensemble of vestiges (the vestiges of Son Vi and Hoa Binh civilizations).

The advantage of the archeological department of the SEA Institute is that it can rely on the rather developed Vietnamese archeology. Up to now, it holds the exclusive authority to name the archeological cultures in SEA, such as Son Vi, Hoa Binh, Sa Huynh. As Prof. Ha Van Tan has said "The important discoveries about the Paleolithic period in Vietnam have apparently shaken the traditional views of researchers on SEA regarding the relationship between and the environment" (his statement on the 25th anniversary of the Institute of archeology on 22/10/1993 in Hanoi).

Moreover from the beginning the SEA archeology department has been put under the serious and profound guidance of Prof. Ha Van Tan then lecturer of the History Department of Hanoi University. From the beginning, I have proposed to Prof. Tan to concentrate our research on the landmarks of different eras particularly the neo-litchee revolution and the agricultural revolution. The work "*pre-historic archeology of SEA*" was prepared under the direction of Prof. Ha Van Tan and by the archeologist of the SEA Institute: Ngo The Phong: Vu Cong Quy Trinh Nang Chung. The draft of the has been completed with over, 1000 pages of materials Prof. Ha Van Tan have started the summing up of his predecessors and pointed out the limitation of the models for diffusion and the prospects of the new method associating archeology with ecology economy and sociology. At the same time he affirmed the contributions by Vietnamese archeologists in studying the prehistory of SEA. The authors have presented the material evidence and the problems of Paleolithic, Neolithic, and metal periods in SEA. These are the main evidence of agricultural civilization of prehistoric SEA. Prof. Cao Xuan Pho has himself directed the formation of a card index about the "*copper*" period of SEA (comprising over 10,000 cards with the most needed elements).

The articles written by Ngo The Phong about "*The Hoa binh culture in coastal areas*" which are being rearranged to become a M.A thesis and "*The initial model of agriculture and the Neolithic revolution in Vietnam*". (See SEA Studies Review issue No. 1(1) 1990, pp 21-32), are actually contributions to inter-branch concerted work of the SEA institute. The M.A thesis by Vu Cong Quy about "*The Sa Huynh culture*" (under the guidance of Prof. Ha Van Tan) is a rather comprehensive specialized research with the latest documents of Vietnam highly appreciated by the all -Vietnam examining council, because of its generalizing character. The M.A. thesis by Tran Quoc Tri about "*The area of distribution of pre-Hoa Binh and Hoa Binh culture in North Indochina*" is an initial effort in the direction of geo-archeology under the guidance of Prof. Tran Quoc Vuong and Prof. Le Ba Thao. According to Tran Quoc Tri, from Pleistocene to Holocene, From Son Vi to Hoa Binh, man had to readjust his living environment as well as the model of his

residence... as necessitated by the topographic and climatic changes including the sea advancement Flandrian phenomenon.

Of late, participating in the research on "*the maritime environment*" the archeology group under the direction of Prof. Tran Quoc Vuong and Prof. Cao Xuan Pho the book "*The Sea and the Vietnamese*" will show the readers the maritime traditions or the inhabitants of SEA and at the same time contribute to forming a new perception of the sea by the Vietnamese. Prof. Tran Quoc Vuong also wrote "*General Remarks On Ancients history of the Vietnamese's View on the sea*" (See studies review issue No. 1 (10), pp1-1) and Prof. Cao Xuan Pho wrote "*Flements of the maritime culture in SEA*".

The system of subjects also shows that the development of the cultural history of SEA has experienced two contacts. The contacts with Indian and Chinese cultures have brought about the ancients' states the contact with Western culture and civilization has led these states to the modern period. That is why, the research on cultural development. Previously, when we spoke about Indianization, Sinization or Europeanization we easily tended to point out the borrowings and to stress on the imitations or copying but not to clarify their being turned into local elements or to detect how a national culture was affected when contacting and receiving foreign elements. The SEA Institute has a whole programmer of research on "*The cultural contact, exchange and development in SEA*". Of course besides the study of the manifestations of culture (in its broad sense) through the behaviors of man with regard to the environment we also form operations of cultural studies. According to Prof. Phan Ngoc "*Man turn out a product after the model envisioning in his mind*". Therefore at the same time he lives in the relationship between the real world and the imaginary world. What is remarkable is that each ethnic group has its specific way of representing these two worlds. For that reason, when studying a culture we should find out the way of choosing which makes up the SEA culture the Vietnamese culture the Lao culture, etc and not to find the objectives bearing such cultural name. Through cultural contacts, we try to find out the principle of behaviors and the renovation of SEA culture as well as the specific features that allow the comprehension of the development and the true colors of the culture of each country in the community of cultures.

From the point of view of semi logy, if culture is the ensemble of the systems of conventional signals used in society, language is a particular one. The linguists of the SEA institute concentrate their efforts on linguistic contact, which are, considered to be an approach for both linguistics and cultural studies. We have over come the limitations and looked for extra linguistic elements in the relationship between language and culture. Here the multi-directional relations between the cultural elements will set relief the characteristic of the whole system and at the same time highlight more brilliantly the different aspects and the particular features of each constituent element.

All the contentions and approaches as well as many linguistic problems in SEA have been presented in the book "*Linguistic contacts in SEA*" (SEA Institute,

Hanoi 1983, p. 351) by Phan Ngoc and Pham Duc Duong. From the point of view of linguistic contact we have made a hypothesis to explain the formation the groups of new language in SEA with the two expounded concepts of structural layers and mechanism. Also from the point of view of linguistic contact we study the Han-Viet (Sino-Vietnamese), Pali Sanscrit –Thailand (Lao, Khame, Burmese or Cham...) and find out the “*explaining method*” for the borrowed terms at the same time we research on the systems of the ancients written languages of SEA countries in their cultural contacts and in their formation in ancient times. Likewise, in the contact with Western civilization, the linguistic exchange in the field of syntax broadened the language in a systematic way, with differentiations and modifications, for instance the syntax of the modern Vietnamese language is taken after the syntax of the French language. The results of the study of linguistic contact give us a picture in accordance with the cultural change through the two contacts (with Indian-Chinese and Western cultures). As said above the contact of SEA with the Indian and Chinese cultures took place during about two thousand years but it did not change the cultural structure of SEA because they were the entire same Asian mode of production.

On the contrary, when contacting Western culture within one century, the culture of SEA countries has been structured in the direction of modernization. Likewise in linguistics such countries as Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia the Philippines have taken Latin as a basis to reform their written language or borrowed a number of terms particularly in the field of science and technology. What is more important there SEA languages have copied in different degrees the syntactical structure of the European language In a language the syntax is solidly structured therefore it undergoes little change. However through linguistic contacts the syntax of the Vietnamese language and that of many other SEA languages have modified their structure. From this fact we can understand the reason why the contact with Western culture has affected the structure of the culture of SEA countries.

Prof. Phan Ngoc has published the book “*A method to explain Han-Viet terms*” (Da Nang publishing house 1991 p 256). According to the author the book will help the readers understand half of the number of Han-Viet terms. Like those who have spent ten years of study, by presenting the semantic relations and set them into formulas with a list of 250 frequently used Han-Viet phonemes.

With his work “*comparative linguistics and the comparison of SEA languages*” Nguyen Van Chein (of the Teachers’ college Hanoi 1992, p.220) supplier the readers with systematic knowledge about comparative linguistic theoretical foundation, approaches... The author presents the results of his research and his own views regarding the comparison of the Vietnamese language with other SEA and Indo-European languages (chapter on “*the pronouns*” taken from the author’s doctorate thesis *Typologicke Vlastnosti oz viazyxici, Jihovychodni asie a system OZ Vietnamizing V. Konfromta cise systeme oz Khamerking Laostny, Praha, 1985*). The doctorate theses on linguistics presented by researchers of the SEA Institute are all oriented to linguistic and cultural contacts. The book “structure of Thai

Words” by Nguyen Tuong Lai (Hanoi, 1983) analyze the structure principle of genuine Thai words and Dali Sansorit - Thai terms. The book “The phonemes and the syllables system of the E De language and explains the process of mono - syllabication of the languages of the Austronesian group (Southern islands) in their contacts with the continental Austro - Asian languages (South Asian) this approach is highly appreciated by the researchers on SEA languages “The Vocabulary of the Lao Language” by Thongphet Kinhxeda, “The Phonetics of the Lao Language” by Udom Xichalon, “The Categories of Words of the Lao Language” by Phan Van Thanh, “The Structure of the Lao Language” by Bualy Laphaphan, “The Word Structure of the E De Language” by Phan Van Phuc, “The Verb Structure of the Cambodian Language” by Mao Sakan.

The aspiration of the makers of bilingual dictionaries is to compare the SEA languages and the Vietnamese language to offer the readers books of reference, and also to present the original relations as well as the contractual relations between the languages and cultural of the region. (4)

Courses for the teaching of SEA languages have been written from a bilingual point of view: “A Course of the Khmer Language” by Phan Ngoc and Nguyen Sy Tuan, “Courses of the Lao and Thai Languages” by Nguyen Chi Thong, Pham Duc Duong, and Truong Duy Hoa. Of course these works are but the first experimentation of the new orientations. The results are still far from meeting our aspirations and vision range. However, in the application of the inter-branch approach, we have understand all the better the power of language, particularly when it has gone beyond its own limits to penetrate into other fields of research.

The linguists of the institute have concentrated their effort to study the cultural contacts in the field of literature. The pioneer in this field was Cao Huy Dinh, the first director of the SEA Department from 6/1973 to 4/1975. As a researcher on literature he spent two years in India. Banaras Hindy University had direct contacts with the Indian great culture and extensively traveled in all parts of this country “of priests and dancers”, from Bengal in the East to Gujarat in the West from Uttar Bradesh in the North to Kerala in the South. It was in the cradle of this great culture that he perceived thought about and contributed to the understanding of the influence of Indian culture on the various cultures of SEA.

He took up the study of Vietnamese popular literature there after in 1974 the book “To Understand the Evolution of Vietnamese Popular Literature” (Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1974, 308 Pages) was written from the angle of cultural contacts in SEA. Previously, the method of researching on written literature was applied to the study of popular literature (that had been collected and printed): for his part. Cao Huy Dinh has brought popular literature back to the cultural life of the people. He writes: “it (popular literature, Pham Duc Duong) is the one closely associated with the practical activities and artistically performed in the daily living environment of the masses” (cited work p. 10). According to him, “to further clarify the historical content, the epochal character, and the features of an event of popular literature it is necessary to seek assistance from the considera-

tion of all other cultural events (external to popular literature) that we believe relating to it and happening in the same historical conditions with it" (cited work, p.16).

In 1993, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the setting up of the SEA studies in Vietnam, we have reprinted the article by Cao Huy Dinh about "The Culture of India" (Cultural Publishing House, Hanoi, 1993, 184 pages) with an introduction by the Indian ambassador in Hanoi, H.E.S.I. Malik, to remember the initiator who has done a great deal to the branch and also to have an opportunity to renew our perception of the Indian culture as viewed by a Vietnamese scholar as well as to contribute to clarifying the relationship between the Indian culture and other SEA cultures (subject KX 06. 15). This work is a life – time thinking and meditation about the soul and feelings of the essence of Indian culture. It is regrettable that Cao Huy Dinh pass away at the age of 50, like a silk, leaving extreme pain to us and bringing to the other world what he had not enough time to write out. If he had not died, he would what have completed his "History of Buddhism in Vietnam". He left the detailed plan of his book (25 pages) and a box of documents (about 10 cm thick), including the booklet "The finger pointing to the moon excerpted fro a tale about the teachings of Buddha, which is one of his great eat effort in the work of documentation.

If Cao Huy Dinh was outstanding in his knowledge about India his colleague, Prof. Nguyen Tan Dac has deep comprehension of Chinese culture. Nguyen Tan Dac made his studies in China (University and post – graduate education). He speaks the Beijing origin. He studies Lu Shun and wrote about Lu Shun. Transferred to the SEA Institute and wanting to create a "Balance" in his perception, he feverishly read about Indian culture and its influence on SEA, especially on South Vietnam (region of the Khmers in Nam Bo, region of the Cham and the High bplateaus). He researched on the evolution of SEA literature from popular literature to written literature in the cultural background. On the basis of the studies of the literature of China, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia that he had worked on for many years and published articles about. The book "Literature of the Seasion Countries" (SEA Institute Hanoi, 1993, 304 pages) was prepared under his direction together with other scholars. Duc Ninh, Vu Tuyet Loan, Vu Oanh and written in the afore-said orientation. Though Thailand, Malaysia and Philippines have not been dealt with the book gives us a general view of the process of formation and development of the literature of SEA countries, in which the literature of Laos and Cambodia are more profoundly studies. Reside "An anthology of Lao literature" (Literature Publishing House, Hanoi, 1981), "Selected works of Cambodian number of specialized writings about "Cambodian literature through different historical periods" by Vu Tuyet Loan. "The writing on Cambodian steles" by Nguyen Trong Dinh, "Cambodian Literature, Angkor Times" and "Lao Literature through a number of works" by Nguyen Tan Dac, etc. At the same time, Indonesian and Burmese literature have been preliminary presented. Articles have been written about the relationship between popular and written literature, the influence of Indian, Chinese and Arab literature language in SEA countries nowadays. It should be underlined that the

contribution of the SEA literature department consists on the one hand in expanding the scope of the research to many SEA countries; some authors have even profoundly studied specific writers, for instance Duong Xuan Cuong has studied about Xun Thon Phu of Thailand, Lai Phi Hung about the revolutionary literary works of Laos, etc... On the other hand it had made rather comprehensive research on the literature of a specific country, for instance the study and introduction of the Cambodian literature. Perhaps there has been so far no country, which has presented the Cambodian literature as comprehensively as Vietnam, although the research has been limited still. Four-doctorate theses have been defended. The book "Indonesian novels in the first half of the 20th century" (SEA Institute, Hanoi, 1983, 152 pages) by Nguyen Duc Ninh is the first doctorate thesis of the SEA Institute defended in the country, which embodies the orientation of the Institute: the formation the Indonesian modern novels as a result of the contact with the Netherlands and Western literature. This is an important landmark in Indonesian literature: the shifting from traditional literature to modern literature. Thanks to the detection of steps and the characteristics of this initial stage, we have the foundations to go on our path in the future. The author has chosen the novel, which is the main form in modern literature, may, a form that gives a foreign research less difficulty in his work.

The book "Riem Ke and Tum Tieu in Cambodian literature" (Literary publishing house, Hanoi 1992, 125 pages) by Vu Tuyet Loan is another doctorate thesis about the evolution and development of Cambodian literature from the 9th century to the beginning of the 20th century in contact with Indian culture through two great world Riem Ke and Tum Tieu. According to the author, these two outstanding creations appeared at two different historical periods, which are easy to observe and to analyze their social and historical contact, thus enabling us to quickly and deeply grasp the essence and the development of the literature of that country with the grandiose Angkor Vat. The novel "Tum Tieu", translated and introduced by Phung Huy Thinh and Vu Tuyet Loan, has been published (Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1987).

The doctorate thesis about "The characteristics of the developments from novels in verses to modern novels in Cambodian literature" by Nguyen Sy Tuan, (SEA Institute, Hanoi, 1991) is a follow - up step to study the transitional period from traditional novels in verses to modern novels in prose, through the cultural contact between Cambodia in particular and SEA in general with Western culture. The Epic Mythology of the Muong ethnic group (National Culture Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, 253 pages) by Truong Sy Hung is a doctorate thesis about linguistics in the orientation laid down by Cao Huy Dinh. After over 10 years of fieldwork collecting materials for the set of writings "The birth of a country", including three kinds of mo: mo tuong, mo vai, and mo tieu (previously, study was only made of mo tieu). This work has contributed to clarifying the local origin of traditional SEA in ancient times.

Regarding the direction and the deployment of the program on cultural

contacts in the field of linguistics of the SEA Institute. Prof. Phan Ngoc played the key role, although he did not participate in building the SEA Department from the beginning. When we invited him from the Hanoi University to the SEA Institute as a collaborator he both taught at a class for research assistant and guided a number of posts – graduates. Phan Ngoc is one of the few well-known linguists of Vietnam. As a genuine Han – study worker he has deep knowledge about Chinese culture he has translated and introduced Chinese classic works such as Nho Lam Nguoi Su (history of the (forest of Confucians), Su Ky Tu Ma Thien (history by Tu Ma Thien), Han Phi Tu, Tho Duong (poetry of the Tang dynasty), Hong Lau Mong (dream of the red chamber)... He wrote many essays on Chinese classic culture and literature, he even published the book “Do Phu Nha Tho Dan Den”, (Do Phu, the poet of the common people) (Da Nang Publishing House, 1991) to translate and introduce Do Phu’s poem and life. Phan Ngoc is also well conversant with Western culture, he translated and introduced many French, English, German, Russian... literary world including C. Marx’s works: he wrote “Creek mythology”. He got knowledge of the Indian culture through Mahabrata, Jataka, Tagor, and Mahatma Gandhi... He made use of the knowledge of the world in his study of the Vietnamese philology, particularly the periods of the great contacts in Viet – Han, Viet – French, Viet – Soviet. He wrote a great deal about Vietnamese literature and the Vietnamese language.

Since he came and worked at the SEA Institute, he once again changed his perception, as he had admitted. In order to broaden his research work, he learned the Lao and the Khmer languages to have better understanding of the SEA culture. He made contributions both theoretically and in operational method to the study of cultural contact. It is surprising that the book vividly reflecting the cultural contacts in SEA in the work on “The sociological and aesthetical content in the Tuong Do”, he wrote together With Le Ngoc Cau (Social Science publishing house. Hanoi 1981,398 pages); then the books “*Linguistic contacts in SEA*” (written together with Pham Duc Duong, SEA Institute Hanoi 1983, 327 pages) “*To understand Nguyen Du’s styles in the Kieu*” (Social Science publishing house, Hanoi 1985), “*A method to explain Han – Viet terms*” (Da Nang publishing house 1991. 256 pages). It is difficult to list all his scientific research works but the Bibliography about SEA may be referred to (Cultural publishing house Hanoi 1993, 250 pages). Recently, the SEA Institute has published the book “*Vietnam culture and new approaches*” (Cultural publishing house Hanoi 1993, 250 pages) written by Phan Ngoc in the collection. “*Cultural contacts between Vietnam and the world*” compiled under the state programmed KX 06.15. Phan Ngoc’s works have not only brought us new knowledge unexpected and interesting discoveries they have also provide us with new conceptions and excellent and efficient operational methods suitable to the study of Vietnamese and SEA cultures.

Resides Phan Ngoc the SEA institute have also received the guidance of well-known specialists such as late Prof. Cao Xuan Dao Duy Anh. We shall pub-

lish the book "*History of ancient China's ideas*" by Cao Xuan Huy Quite a few Professors are cooperating with us Prof Dinh Gia Khanh with his book "*Vietnamese popular culture in the cultural background of SEA*" Prof. Tran Dinn Huou with his book "*Confucianism and Vietnam's ancient culture in modern times*" (Education publishing house. Hanoi 1994, 450 pages) Prof. Dinh Xuan Lam with his essay "*Vietnam's contacts with the world through Tan thu (new – type books) early in the 20th century*" in the book "*The role of cultural conveyors of the Hoa in Vietnam*" (Cultural publishing house, Hanoi 1993, 380 pages).

There is a collection of book, which are, in my view very important but which receive little attention from the readers. These are the old stories the study of these stories began to be carried out by Cao Huy Dinh and Nguyen Tan Dac with the mythologies and ancient stories of India and the world. Then Dr. Ngo Van Daonh (history) has made great efforts in this field. His collection of Indian old stories comprises tents of volumes, and together with his colleagues in the literary group, he published tales, mythologies tall stories of SEA in general and also of specific countries for instance the old stories of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Laos Cambodia, Thailand.

These collections constitute documents for researchers and introduce to Vietnam readers especially the children the culture of neighboring countries. The SEA Institute also translated and introduced various research works (such as "*popular culture of Thailand*" by Abva Anuma Rajadhon (Cultural publishing house Hanoi 1988, 412 Pages) a great man of culture of Thailand on the 100th anniversary of his birthday and other literary works of Thailand, Myanmar, and Malaysia.

In cultural contacts a most important field which is considered the key subject embraced by the SEA Institute from the very beginning is that religions and arts a very rich diversified and profound field because religions plays an important role in our spiritual life and all religions are oriented to the liberation of man and to the absolute ideals that cannot be found any ware in this world. Once the time when man was still a Homo Habilis till he became a Homo sapiens and to the present day man has always in his mind religious conscience. In the evolution of the culture of mankind, religions have always been the ferment, which excites and contributes to the determination of the true colors of the culture of each region and each nation. Since religions have such a universal character it is also a very sensitive instruments for cultural contacts.

The religions founds in SEA (comprising three world religions-Buddhism Islamism and Christianity –and two specifically in Asian religions Confucianism and Taoism) are all the result on the culture and exchanges. They took root in the land of popular beliefs (also called primitive religions) and were assimilated by the local population therefore the question of religion in SEA is closely associated with the question of nationality. On the other hand, like all popular beliefs, religions manifest themselves through the forms of arts and the development of arts through various historical periods is always related to religions.

The research on *Religion and social culture*" directed by Prof. Cao Xuan

Pho is very attractive but not so easy work. From the start Cao Huy Dinh made a great deal of efforts to study popular beliefs and Buddhism in Vietnam., but so far the book *"Buddhism in Vietnam has not come into being"* The following works on religions in SEA can be mentioned :The book *"The role of Buddhism in the political, cultural and social life in Loas (from the 18th to the 19th centuries)"* by Nguyen Le Thi (Social Sciences publishing house, Hanoi, 1993, 117 pages) is the first Doctorate thesis about Buddhism studied in the orientation of the Institute. According to the author. *"Buddhism in Loas came to its utmost glory when it became the national religion of Loas and a religion very close to the masses at it could accommodate itself with the oldest beliefs of the Loas people"* (cited work, p. 5).

Moreover, a series of essays on Buddhism in Cambodia, Thailand, Burma were written. Dealing with the modern political life, historians have studied Sihanouk's Buddhist socialism in Cambodia. Hru's Buddhist socialism in Myanmar etc. Researchers on Buddhism of the Institute also elaborated a dictionary of Buddhism and translated such research works as *"Philosophical questions of Buddhism"* (Buddhist documentation center, Hanoi, 1990, 237 pages) by O. O. Rozenberg (translation by Ngo Van Doanh and Nguyen Hung Hau).

The Institute also trained specialists on Islamism. Mrs. Pham Thi Vinh graduated at Tashkent University, Arab language faculty, spent two years in Iraq and thereafter went to Malaysia to make research on Islamism. She wrote a number of essays on Islamism *"Islamism and the social life of the Cham"* (SEA studies review, issue No. 2 (11), pp. 43-52), *"Islamic education and development in SEA"* (SEA studies review. Issue No. 4 (9), 1993. pp. 54-64) introducing Islamism in Indonesia, Thailand, etc.

The study of Christianity in SEA has been approached but not yet actively. We pay attention to the role of Christianity in the Philippines and Protestantism in Indonesia. Christianity in the Vietnam. The article *"The integration of Christian culture in the traditional culture of Vietnam in history"* by Nguyen Hong Doung (SEA studies review, issue No. 1 (10), 1993, pp. 27-36) embodies the Institute research orientation regarding religion.

Probably Confucianism is the subject most deeply studied in Vietnam. We have published the book *"Confucianism, past and present"* by Quang Dam (Cultural publishing house. Hanoi, 1993, 480 pages), the essay *"Confucianism and Vietnam environment"* by Prof. Phan Ngoc in the book *"Vietnam-SEA: a historical and cultural relations"* (Political national publishing house, Hanoi, 1993, 221 pages). According to Phan Ngoc *"the first man who spoke only of man and not of god. Who spoke only of life and not of death, and who limited his studied to social relations, was Confucius"* (cited book page 181): therefore Confucianism is a psychological doctrine, take self – perfection as base, responsibility and duty as important problems, knowledge as primary thing, politeness and culture as the way of behavior, etc. It is a doctrine for a social stratum (great noble man aimed at turning out rules, it has both strong point and weak points. Its strong points lie in its expanding force, its weakness is that it cannot develop if there is an obstacle on its

way. For that reason, that giant country of ancient introduced into Vietnam. Confucianism was transformed by Vietnam's environment and Vietnamized. It was transformed in four ways by Vietnamese national land and Vietnamese villages, Vietnam's relations with China and it's relation with SEA.

Following this direction, we organized a round – table seminar with Prof. L. Vandermeersheh on the book *“Le nouveau monde sinise”* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1986, 224 pages) to analyze the role of Confucianism in the economic, political and cultural development of countries having the same culture such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc.

Artistically contacts in SEA attract many scholars not because they are rich, diversified and interesting, but primarily because art is considered the profoundest and the most characteristic manifestation of intellectual culture which should be studied according to an inter – branch approach.

The book *“Arts in SEA”* (SEA Institute, Hanoi, 1983, 267 pages) written under the direction of Prof. Cao Xuan Pho by Prof. Tran Van Khe, Dr. Tran Thi Ly, Dr. Ngo Van Doanh, is considered the first, relatively comprehensive work with deep ideas on this subject. The participation of Prof. Tran Van Khe (Sorbonne University, Paris) a world – known specialist on national music's, was a great encouragement for us. Though the book has not covered all branches of art, it supplies the readers with basic knowledge about regional arts and contributes to the study of the development of national cultures in cultural contacts and exchanges.

There are two doctorate thesis about SEA arts that been defended: *“Buddhist carryings and their role in Vietnamese arts in the middle ages”* is Ngo Van Doanh doctorate thesis presented at the Russian fine Arts Institute, Moscow, 1984. It is the first profound special study about the influence of Indian culture on the Dai Viet culture following the discoveries of Prof. Cao Xuan Pho. Until now when studying the Indo-Vietnam cultural contacts, materials in South Vietnam are exploited because of evident conditions, but materials in North Vietnam are not abundant and appear very deeply inclined the old arts. It is also the first special study of the SEA Institute oriented to cultural contacts.

The book *“Cambodian round statues”* (National culture publishing house) is the Doctorate thesis of Tran Thi Ly, titled *“Development process of Cambodian round statues (16th – 13th century). As introduced by Prof. Cao Xuan Pho,”* after over years traveling about and getting near to Buddha's, geniuses, wise men, dancers... made of stone or through photos or books and after months of “talking” with them at the museum of Phnom Penh the author has expressed in words very lively images full of sentiments” (cited book page 3). Through the book, the readers can imagine the development process of Cambodian art in the specific socio-historical circumstances of the Angkor Kingdom in the middle ages.

Following this direction, Tran Thi Ly continued to make a comparative study to write *“Buddha statues in Thailand and those in other Indochina's countries”* (SEA studies review, No. 2 (7), 1993, pp. 31-49), *“Ornamented Buddha statues and the production date of the newly discovered statue at the museum of*

Kien Giang" (SEA studies review, No. 3 (4), 1991, pp. 52 – 57)....

The book "*Cham sculpture*" a book of genuine art, is printed in Japan with the financial assistance of the Toyota Foundation (Introduction by academician Pham Huy Thong, photos by Nguyen Van Ku and Pham Ngoc Long, comments by Prof. Cao Xuan Pho, of the SEA Institute (Social Science publishing house, Hanoi, 1988, 234 pages). It is actually a photo album introduced and explained in details, printed in the Vietnamese, Japanese, and / English languages. More than 200 photos of art works carved on stone are the lively and valuable reflection of the thinking and aesthetic of the Cham. The photos have been carefully selected and arranged in a scientific and rational manner in chronological order from the 8th to the 16th century with six major landmarks: My Son, Hoa Lai, Dong Duong, Tra Kieu, Thap Man and Po Klaung Giarai.

Among the art researchers, perhaps Dr. Ngo Van Doanh has made the deepest and most comprehensive inter – branch study, he is very active in compiling materials and in field – work in Vietnam, while expanding he research to the whole region. Reside articles minutely depicting architectural constructions such as "*Ancient Pagan cities*" (SEA studies review. No.1 (2) and 2 (3), 1991). "That Luong" (SEA studies review No. 1, 1990. pp. 39-92), together with Prof. Tu Chi and Nguyen Duy Thieu, he made a study of Tay Nguyen and Cham cultures. Ngo Van Doanh has completed his book "*Cham culture in SEA background*" in the state – level programmed KX 06.15. The book "*The funeral houses and statues of the Giarai and the Bahnar*" (The propaganda and information service of Giarai, SEA Institute, 1993, 214 pages, with 33 photos) is written by Ngo Van Doanh in the cooperation between the Sea Institute and Gia Lai province. By his work, besides describing the artistic values of architecture and sculpture, the author also gives the readers knowledge about the abandonment ceremony, which reflects many aspects of the traditional culture of the Giarai and the Bahnar people, from their conceptions of death and life to their music, poetry, song, dances, puppetry, cooking. The readers can also understand the cultural contacts between the Austronesian people and the Austroasian people on the peninsula.

In addition to that the researchers of the SEA Institute also cooperate with Gialai – Kontum provinces in the study and preparation of such works as "*Decorative art of the Giarai – Bahnar*" written under the direction of Prof. Tu Chi, "The going beating art " with the participation of Prof. Nguyen Tan Dac, The result of the research on cultural contacts in the field of linguistics, religion, arts are generalized in works about regional culture and about that of some specific country in SEA. The book "*Vietnam and SEA: historical and cultural relations*" (Political national publishing house, Hanoi, 1993, 331 pages) is a selection of essays on many fields. To introduce the achievements in research as well as Vietnam's points of view and perceptions regarding the region to readers in other countries, we have published the book "*Unity in Diversity cooperation between Vietnam and other SEA Countries*" (Social science publishing house, Hanoi, 1992, 152 pages) written under the direction of Prof. Dr. Nguyen Duy Quy, director of National center of

social and human sciences. The intention of the authors is to collect the special essays about history and culture and the current development of Vietnam and other countries in the region: the human and institutional aspects of national culture and development. SEA in the face of historical challenges, national concord in stability and development, etc we shall continue to publish such books for region reader.

We have not yet written a comprehensive book about SEA culture, but the book "*Culture of the three Indochina's countries*" has been available (Cultural publishing house, Hanoi, 1992, 195 pages). It was written by Phan Ngoc, Cao Quan Pho, Ngo Van Doanh, Ngo The Phong. The book is about the process of information and development of the cultures of a number of neighboring countries on the Indochina peninsula, which have had long – standing historical relations with one another. The work includes 7 chapters dealing with the natural conditions, the people and different phases of development from garments to religions, beliefs, languages, arts, music, dances, and festivals. We are experimentally applying a research method based on a regional point of view. The work is written in a skillful, subtle and easy manner, which makes it very attractive but containing a great deal of profound and diversified knowledge and the results of scientific research.

The book "*The culture of insular countries*" (Cultural publishing house, Hanoi, 1993, 260 pages) written under the direction of Pham Thi Vinh, with the above – mentioned orientation. However, the subject is new, there are not yet veteran specialists the materialization of the inter – branch approach is not so deep and well grasped as in book "*Cultures of the three Indochina's countries*". Regarding the cultural history of each country (view as a land in relation to the whole region), the books written about Laos and Cambodia then Thailand reflect the depth of research work done by the Institute. The collection "*To understand the history and culture of Cambodia*" the third volume having been published (Vol. I, Social Science, Hanoi, 1983, 231 pages: Vol. II Social Science, Hanoi, 1985, 197 pages: Vol. III Social Sciences, Hanoi, 1993). The collection "*To understand the history and culture of Laos*" with three volume already published (Vol. I. Social Science, Hanoi, 1978: Vol. II. Social Science, Hanoi, 1981: Vol. III. Social Science, Hanoi, 1993). The collection "*To understand the history and culture of Thailand*" has seen the first volume published (Social Science publishing house, Hanoi, 1993).

All the three collections reflect the results of separated countries under the system of subjects of the Institute in the form of selected articles. To serve the readers of popular level in great number the Institute has published the collection to present the culture of separated countries such as "*To understand the culture of Laos*" (Cultural publishing house, Hanoi, 1985, 158 pages), "*To understand the culture of Indonesia*" (Cultural publishing house, Hanoi, 197, 169 pages), "*To understand the cultural of golden-pagoda country*" (Cultural publishing house, Hanoi, 1988, 143 pages), "*To understand the culture of Thailand*" (Cultural publishing house, Hanoi, 1991, 161 pages). Preparation is being made for the publication of "*To understand the culture of Malaysia*" and "*To understand he culture of*

the Philippines”.

At the same time, the Institute has cooperated with the Dudestasié publishing house, Paris, in the writing and publication of *“The library for the diffusion of popular knowledge about SEA”*. The first volume of this collection has appeared with the title *“Indonesia, land and people”* written by Dr. Ngo Van Doanh (Information publishing house, SEA Institute. Ed. Susestasié, Paris, Hanoi, 1993, 100 pages). The book is beautifully and attractively printed. Our intention is to supply some knowledge about SEA to Vietnamese readers and to overcome the lack of mutual understanding in the region, to strengthen mutual trust so as to build a peaceful, friendly and cooperative SEA. I have requested Mrs. Do Kim Dung, a Canadian woman of Vietnamese stock and researcher at the population center of the Science institute of Indonesia (LIPI), to read the book and give her remarks because she is a Vietnamese having worked in Indonesia for 7-8 years. I have been very glad that she told me: *“This is a scientific work written in a marvelously simple manner composition and style are very good, a book interesting to read. Moreover. Its knowledge content is accurate, abundant, and general. I am only afraid that it is a little high – leveled if it is intended to be a popular book”* (interview with Mrs. Do Kim Dung at her house in Jakarta on 5/11/1993). We are preparing the edition of *“Myanmar, land and people”* and *“The Philippines, land and people”*....

From what I have just said, though I have not spoken about the achievements of the SEA history department (which will be presented in the programmed: *“The development of the SEA Asian countries from ancient to modern times”*), we can see the role of history in cultural research work. If history plays the role of an analysis frame from a general and comprehensive point of view, multi-branch and inter-branch research work must be carried out through specific programmed and subjects. In scientific management and organization of activity, from the beginning, the SEA Institute has correctly determined the role of scientific research programmed. When summing up the achievements in implementing the two major programs: *“environment and behavior of the inhabitants of SEA from ancient to modern times”* and *“cultural contacts and exchanges in SEA”*. We have clearly realized the scientific issues to be dealt with the role of different departments and their relationship in carrying out the subjects and the diversified activities of the scientific programmed. From our experience over the last 20 years, we are confident that we can build a new scientific branch: *culturology* within the SEA studies in Vietnam.

NOTES

1 Pham Duc Duong, *“Origin Of The Wet – Rice Socio – Cultural Model Of The Vietnamese Through Linguistic Documents, Historical Studies Review, No. 5. 1982, P. 43-52).*

2 Alvin Toffler, *Third Wave, Vietnamese Version, Hanoi, 1992. Chapter 23: Gandhi And Satellites.*

3 Written After Exchange Of Views With Prof. Tran Quoc Vuong, Member Of The Editors, Board Of The Sea Studies Review And Professors Lecturing On This Subject At The Institute.

4 See The Bilingual Dictionaries Elaborated By The Sea Studies Institute Khmer – Vietnamese, Vietnamese – Khmer Dictionary By Hoang Hoc (Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1979). Thai – Vietnamese Dictionary (Social Science Publishing, Hanoi, 1990). Indonesian – Vietnamese Dictionary (Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1991). Laos–Vietnamese Dictionary (To Be Published Soon, Political National Publishing House). Article “The Vietnamese Language In Relation To The Khmer Language “By Phan Ngoc (Sea Studies Review, No. 1(2), 1991, P. 22-23).