

UNIVERSAL FUN

Story tradition finds new fans abroad

Children in Vietnam love kamishibai tales.

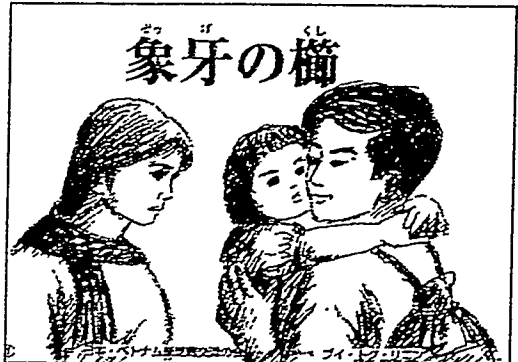
The Asahi Shimbun

A form of Japanese storytelling that reached the height of its popularity in the 1950s is enjoying a revival—this time in Vietnam.

Kamishibai, in which a series of large picture cards is used to accompany a dramatic narration, is very popular in Vietnam, says Nguyen Thanh Tam, a painter and secretary-general of the Hanoi-based Vietnam Kamishibai Association.

Parents and children laughed and applauded as Nguyen told the story "Two Eggs" in Vietnamese at a Vietnam-Japan exchange meeting in Tokyo's Kichijoji district this summer. It was Nguyen who created the story, about a duckling and a chick helping each other.

In Vietnam, government-run children's book publishing firm Kim Dong has brought



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The Japanese version of the Vietnamese kamishibai story "The Ivory Comb"

out over 100 original kamishibai works since 1993. The word kamishibai has become so well known that a song of that name has even been composed.

"Kamishibai has spread all over the country and plays an important role as a means of education, especially in rural areas," says Le Thi Dat, vice president of the publishing firm.

Doan Ngoc Canh, counselor at the Vietnamese Embassy in Tokyo, says kamishibai was welcomed when it was introduced to Vietnam by a group of Japanese including writer Noriko Matsui in 1991.

"Kamishibai was enthusiastically accepted, as children had nothing to play with after the [Vietnam] war," he says. "Vietnamese kamishibai offers hope for peace."

Kamishibai has shown its potential in Vietnam, says Kyoko Sakai, president of Doshinsha, a publisher of children's books, including some translated from Vietnamese. "It's our turn to learn about kamishibai's strength from Vietnam," she says.



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Nguyen Thanh Dam, president of the Vietnam Kamishibai Association, tells the kamishibai story "Two Eggs" in July.

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