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The east asian revolution and politics in the viewpoints of the vietnamese patriotic scholars in the early of 20th century revisited

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Abstract

Thanks to the generally flourished development of East Asia, it seems that scholarship believes during the eighteenth century East Asia was still at a high and stable development path of the monarchical regime. Nevertheless, some regional countries in fact had been weakening due to the division, the other was still going strong with the traditional model, but they had also begun to come to a standstill in terms of way of responding to the challenge of the national sovereignty. By late 18th century, especially prior to the 19th century, some authorities were faced with stronger intrusion directly threatening the sovereignty and the survival. But the other were not fully aware of the risk of annexation, and even tried to deny or promote the disdain for the values of “western civilization”, “civilized process” raised by “white barbarians”.

Prior to the 20th century, given the Meiji successful restoration, according to Vietnamese patriotic scholars Japan became a factor of encouraging the “awakening of Asia”, a model of attracting regional countries of “same race, same culture” for seeking supports for national liberation and de-colonisation. In the general context of East Asia, the awakening and the perception of each country also were an ideological, political and cultural struggle. Besides the revolutionary violence, viewpoints on democracy, civil rights, and people’s life might consider as the continuation of the patriotic scholars’ reformist ideas from the second half of the nineteenth century. It was a cognitive process consistent with national liberation and revolutionary struggle movements in colonies throughout Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia.

The purpose of the article is to revisit the Vietnamese patriotic intellectuals / scholars’ viewpoints on the early twentieth century East Asian revolution and politics. Through their academic and political exchanges, perspectives on the national realities it contributes to not only shape revolutionary struggle and reformist tendencies but also identify mental sense on regional community and egoism of each country.

Keywords: East Asia, Nguyễn Ái Quốc, Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, Political and Revolutionary History, 20th Century, Vietnam, Vietnamese

Introduction

The mystery and prosperity of the Orient in history used to urge Westerners / Occidentals to look for the “Golden Islands” and “Golden Land” in the “Indian” region. With the development of science and technology, *Caraven* sailing boat using a compass, an improved rudder and a system of masts, Western merchants and sailors have gone strong and further into the Eastern lands [Serstevens 2008, 245-246; Jackson 1998, 82-101; Fairbank and al. 1973]. The attraction of the rich flora and fauna with abundant reserves has created the myth of an “Eastern World”, where the source of wealth never runs out.

By late 18th century, especially prior to the 19th century, some East Asian authorities were faced with stronger intrusion directly threatening the sovereignty and the survival. But the other were not fully aware of the risk of annexation, and even tried to deny or promote the disdain for the values of “western civilization”, “civilized process” raised by “white barbarians”. In responses to Western influences and challenges, there are many such major countermeasures against the West, as taking the military measures to resolutely resist the West, or carrying out reforms and opening up, selecting models for developing physical power

and arousing national potential. At that time, industrialization and modernization were synonymous with “Westernization”

Since the late 19th century, the patriotic movements of Vietnam made different trends. Influenced by the wave of modernisation thoughts from Japanese, Vietnamese intellectuals began to learn, research, and expose to the doctrines of democracy, civil rights and constitution of Western ideology and intellectuals like Montesquieu, J. J. Rousseau, C. Darwin... In that general change, along with the violence manner, in their mind, the need to liberate the nation on the path of modernization and evolution was growing. The successful Meiji Restoration (Meiji Ishin) of the late 19th century Japan became a factor encouraging nations of “*đồng văn đồng chủng*” (“same culture and same race”). A wave of “*Châu Á thức tỉnh*” (“The Awakening of Asia”) has really sparked in East Asian countries.

Facing the risk of spreading colonialism in the whole region, intellectuals not only exposed to the advanced knowledge from Europe and Japan, but also paid attention to reforming and gaining independence for their country. Along with domestic factors, the development of patriotic movements was also

encouraged by the modernization movement in East Asia, which was manifested by modern literature and books (*Tân thư, Tân văn*) at that time. The battle of Tsushima in 1905 was considered a glorious victory for an Asian nation, “marked a turning point in modern history” [Lê 2002, 30].

Indeed, Japan has become a prosperous nation that attracts a lot of Asian patriots. Japan became the main attention regarding the choice for the successful self-strengthening model in the first decade of the twentieth century ^[1]. On the other hand, from the experience of the Đông Du (Journey to the East) movement and the Tân Hợi Revolution (Chinese Revolution in the Year of Tân Hợi 1911 - 辛亥革命), the Vietnamese reformers have redefined the strategy for gaining independence, the process of national mobilization and the future of Vietnam, East Asia and Asia more specifically.

The East Asian political and revolutionary context in strong-willed patriotic scholars of Vietnam

The way that Japan became powerful quickly acted as a decisive factor for many Vietnamese people’s tendencies of advocating Japan. Immediately after the Russo-Japanese War, Emperor Thành Thái (成泰) (r. 1889-1907) in his innocent mind asserted that Japan would help Vietnam to defeat the French troops [Anh 1992, 206-207]. Assuming the name Duy Tân (維新), Thành Thái Emperor was also shown his desire to follow the example of Meiji Restoration [Anh 1992, 211-212; Yeong 2009]. Just as the case of Emperor Thành Thái, the trend of cutting hair was also spreading, reflecting the atmosphere of reform in Vietnamese society that wanted to follow the example of Japan. The Đông Du movement was developed in all social strata of Vietnamese society [Yeong 2009, 39-49]. In 1910, Abgnall, the bishop who was in charge of ruling Tonkin commented “Vietnam’s movement to reform is just like the movement which was Japaneseid / Japaneseization” [Yeong 2009, 39-49]. Phan Bội Châu noted “Vietnam is not Vietnam of Europe, but Vietnam of Asia. Vietnamese people have the same race as the people of empire... The majesty of Japan has been spread to the Northwest, to as far as Qing China dynasty and Russia, so could it be that any country sharing the same culture, same racial roots and same continent with Vietnam allows the homeland of Vietnam to be trampled on by the French and does not come to the rescue?” [Châu 2001, 245].

After setting up the *Duy Tân Hội* (維新會 - Modernization Society) in 1904, Phan Bội Châu decided to head to Japan to find a way for the independence of the country. In Japan, Phan met Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and “ask Liang to introduce him to the Japanese people” [Châu 2000, 198-199]. Alternatively, through those inter-national activities the whole world knows about Vietnamese people. In 1905, a book named *Việt Nam vong quốc sử* (越南亡國史 - History of the Loss of Vietnam) was published by the Guang Zhi Publishing House in Shanghai (China). At the same time, in order to enhance people’s knowledge, Phan

encouraged Vietnamese young people and intellectuals to study abroad. In his work “*Ngục trung thư*” (獄中書 - Letters from Prison), Phan Bội Châu determined “The real ability is more important than anything, nothing is compared to talent... As long as talents are enough, when the opportunity comes, a great job is done easily” [Châu 2000, 198-199].

Given his great efforts, Phan Bội Châu has sent hundreds of Vietnamese young people to study at *Đông văn thư viện* (同文書院 - Common Culture Library) of *Đông Á đồng văn Hội* (東亞同文會 - East Asian Same Culture Society) [Châu 2008, 124, 125, 132, 149] and Keio University founded by Fukuzawa Yukichi. This is the place gathering young people from countries such as China, Thailand, India. Thus, Phan Bội Châu became the organizer and leader of the Đông Du movement, gathered and formed an organization that Phan later called *Việt Nam Cống hiến hội* (Constitutional Association of Vietnam) ^[2] and directly became the Leader cum Director ^[3].

At Japanese training establishments, young people and scholars from Asian countries such as China, India, Philippines, Burma and Vietnam studied together. They had many opportunities to exchange their feelings, ideas, and experiences about revolutionary movements and national liberation. During that time, Phan Bội Châu’s *Việt Nam vong quốc sử* was passed on in the capital city of Japan [Anh 1992, 206-207; Yeong 2009, 39-49].

On the other hand, the work was also translated into Korean and was probably the most popular book written by a foreign author in Korea at that time ^[4]. “This book was published around September 1905 in *Guang Zhi Shu Ju*, a publishing house by Liang Qichao, a famous philosopher and reformer at the end of the Qing China Dynasty. He co-wrote the book with a Vietnamese man named Sào Nam Tử (the pen name of Phan Bội Châu). After being published, the book was promoted by many local newspapers and has attracted such great attention that Kim Yun-Sik, a patriotic scholar, who was being banished to Jeju Island at that time also read this book” [Do 2008, 20-23; Conference Proceedings 2008, 113]. “Vietnam, a neighboring country of our country has now become the territory of others. Consequently, the whole population must be very watchful. In this book, the historical content is about the collapse. In order to know the situation of Vietnam after being invaded by French colonialists, patriotic strong-willed scholars must and need to read this book” [Báo Hoàng Thành 1907; Conference Proceedings 2008, 115].

In May 1907, the translated version (into Korean) of the book was republished by Gwangmunsa in Daegu. After that, the translation version was also included in the book, “*Áu niên tất thích nghĩa*” (“Compulsory reader for children”) written by Hyeon Chae and published in July 1907.

From Japan, Phan Bội Châu sent a book on the history of the loss of Korea to Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục (Tonkin Free School). This was one of the three materials for teaching, learning, and

¹ According to the author, Masaya Shiraishi, there are 5 reasons for Vietnamese intellectuals to choose Japan: 1. A place of freedom while less being watched; 2. Having the help of Japanese and Chinese scholars; 3. It is difficult to identify activities made between the Chinese and Vietnamese; 4. A favorable place for Vietnamese students to study abroad; 5. Same culture [Trương Đại học KHXH&NV 2006, 59].

² It aimed to be first and foremost political, aiming to unite young men undertaking educational training in Japan.

³ The Association was formed in September 1907 [Châu 2008, 125-126].

⁴ The book was published 5 times in China and made many copies throughout Vietnam and partly translated into the Vietnamese language [Young 2013, 23-27]. This translation was made by Hyeon Chae (1856-1925), but the appendix “Vietnamese Dictionary” was replaced by some comments of Liang Qichao.

propagating in Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục and was published in 1907-1908. The write “*Thỉnh khán Cao Ly vong quốc chi thảm trạng*” (“Look at Korea’s tragedy of losing country”) was included in the book [5]. In the middle of 1907, the connection between the Vietnamese reformers and the East Asian intellectuals began to face many difficulties due to the Franco-Japanese compromise (through the treaty in June 1907) [6]. “The French government wants to completely eliminate the revolutionary movement so it not only represses the people in the country, but also seeks to eliminate patriots who have activities from abroad” [Lê 2002, 147].

According to research by Youn Dae-yeong, from a comparative perspective, Phan Bội Châu thought that “*karayuki-san*” (からゆきさん - the Making of a Prostitute) of Japan in big cities like Hà Nội, Đà Nẵng and Sài Gòn had worked well when collecting news about the situation of host countries (during the Russo-Japanese War as an example). Phan criticized the French colonialists for preventing Vietnamese from traveling there (*maison de tolérance, brothel house*) [Yeong 2009, 39-49; Châu 2001, 148; Dũng 2017]. Phan appreciated the character and state affairs management method of the Emperor of Japan.

In his books of *Lưu Cầu huyết lệ tân thư* (“Letters Written in Tears and Bloods of Ryukyu”), *Kể chuyện năm châu* (“Stories of five continents”), Phan Bội Châu expressed his sympathy for the fate of Lưu Cầu (Ryukyu) and Korea. But after the Đông Du movement, when talking to Japanese politicians, he avoided talking about the two countries’ affairs. Especially when discussing with Okuma Shigenobu about the issue of Ryukyu, Phan also mentioned the possibility of the French’s aggression and participation. On the other hand, Phan supported the policies of Saigo Takamori (1827-1877), Yoshida Shoin (1830-1859), Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) [Yeong 2009, 39-49], to build “new Vietnam”, a self-strengthening country at the same level as other big countries in “Europe, Americas” as “‘Japan, the U.S.A, Germany, England’, and all of these countries will be united with our country as an ally while Siam, India, and countries in the archipelago of Nanyang will respect [our country] as the host country” [Châu 2009, 148].

In Japan, with the establishment of the *Đông Á đồng minh Hội* (東亜同盟会 - Association of East Asian Allies) (its members from China, Korea, Vietnam and so on) in 1908, “this association then acts as the base to contact East Asia” [7], “making it as the point of contact to connect East Asian countries” [Châu 2000, 198] [8]. In his memoirs, Phan Bội Châu wrote “In the past, when I was in Japan, I had the opportunity to meet with Chinese leaders of revolution such as Huang Xing, Tai Yan and Zhang Ji with other strong-willed scholars (who upheld a just cause) from the countries of Korea, Japan, India, and the Philippines to organize

Đông Á đồng minh Hội” [Châu 2000, 198-199]. This association has a headquarters based in Tokyo with additional branches in China, India, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam because the purpose of the association is to unite parties in China and India, Vietnam, Burma, Malaysia, Japan [Yeong 2009, 39-49].

After the treaty with the French government (September 1908), Japanese officials began to dismiss the organizations of Vietnamese people in Japan, making the order of deporting Vietnamese students to their home country. In February 1909, Phan Bội Châu, Cường Đê together with more than 200 overseas students were also deported [9]. The Đông Du movement broke up *Duy Tân Hội* existed in name only. Facing new revolutionary requirements, *Việt Nam Quang phục Hội* (越南光復會 - Vietnam Restoration League) was formed with the goal of building a democratic republic [10].

From 1912 to 1913, Guangzhou (China) was the place where many patriotic activities took place and it was also the place gathering East Asian revolutionaries. For the Vietnamese revolution, in 1912 in Longzhou, Guangxi, Phan Bội Châu, along with some Japanese, established *Đại đồng liên lạc cảm tình Hội* (Association of Great Sympathy Communication) in order to set up and implement anti-colonial activities more broadly based on the solidarity of the patriotic personalities from invaded Asian countries [Yeong 2009, 39-49].

In 1912, the intellectuals of the Đông Du movement came to China. They jointly set up *Hội Chấn Hoa Hung Á* (“Invigorate China, Revive Asia Society”). Đặng Cảnh Á is the President, and Phan Bội Châu is the Vice President with the organization’s aim of correcting China to make Asia prosperous, while the first purpose was aimed at the enemy who had invaded Vietnam. The organization gathered nearly 200 Asian revolutionaries to assist the independence movement of the countries starting with Vietnam, then Burma and India [Châu 2000, 221-227, 229]... In his *Tự phê phán* (“Self-criticism”), Phan Bội Châu wrote “To do this (revolutionary in military affairs), there are only two methods which are mobilizing soldiers in the country and relying on the Chinese army abroad... before all of us organized the Hội Chấn Hoa Hung Á, I (Phan Bội Châu) drafted a program and a statement of the Association and gave them to Tô Thiếu Lâu và Đặng Cảnh Á for the implementation. According to the program procedure, the first step is to provide aid to Vietnam, the second step to aid India and Burma, and the third step to aid Korea” [Châu 2008, 188-193; Châu 2000, 224-229].

At that same time, in Shanghai, Phan Bội Châu and Nguyễn Thượng Hiền founded *Thế giới nhân đạo Hội* (Association of the Humanity of the World). In 1913, *Tứ quốc Đồng Minh Hội* (League of four allied counties) was established, consisting mainly of revolutionaries from Vietnam, India, Korea, Japan,

⁵ This book is also about the imposition of Japanese colonial policy in North Korea, the suffering and humiliation of the people losing their country. “Alas! Under their protectorate, results are like that! Alas! Under their protectorate, results are like that!” [Thâu 1997, 113, 141-444; Thâu 2007].

⁶ On 10 June 1907, in Paris, the French and Japanese governments together signed the Treaty and Declaration on the issue of Japanese nationals living in Indochina and the people in Indochina - “French subjects and protected by France” living in Japanese land.

⁷ Đông Á Đồng minh Hội had just been established for 5 months, then they were dissolved, and Hội Diên - Quê - Việt liên minh (The alliance of the Yunnan people, Guangxi and Vietnam) existed for 3 months [Châu 2008, 153-154; Châu 2000, 198-199].

⁸ There are about 10 Vietnamese members such as Đặng Từ Mẫn and Nguyễn Quỳnh Lâm...; Chinese members include Zhang Binglin, Jing Mei Cui, Liu Suqi ...; an Indian member; a Filipino [Yeong 2009, 39-49].

⁹ Phan Bội Châu lamented “The scene of my failure at this time is so painful, it seems that people are skinned and torn to pieces, nothing is unbroken” ... “Alas! Too vast to find where to go” [Lê 2002, 147-148]. By his documents, the author named Imai Akio said that “Right after the Đông Du movement was broken up, Phan Bội Châu did not hostile towards Japan... still wanted to maintain a relationship with the people in Đông Á đồng minh Hội (Association of East Asian Allies)” [Akio 2017, 37].

¹⁰ “Fighting the French, making the restoration of Vietnam, and establishing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam were the unique principles of the Association” [Châu 2000, 216].

Russia. [Yeong 2009, 39-49]. During that time, Asian patriots often kept close ties with each other, hold the same idea of saving the country, and expelling the enemies which are colonial people and the empire.

In 1922, the work of *Y hồn đan* (“Treatment for the Soul”) written by Phan Bội Châu while doing activities in China was also translated into French under the name of *Traité de Médecine*, and later popularized domestically by a Korean *Mẫn Quốc Y* with the note: “*Traité de Médecine. Publié par Mẫn Quốc Y. En Corée, le 1^{er} Janvier 1923*”^[11].

Vietnamese patriotic activities in China also attracted the attention of East Asian revolutionaries through the event of Phạm Hồng Thái. “Phạm Hồng Thái’s bomb made the flame of fighting spirit to be rekindled... It signaled the beginning of an era of fighting for the nation, like a small swallow signaling the spring” [Minh 2000c, Vol. 3, 620-621], “awakened our people to stand up and join the revolutionary battle, warn the colonial invader” [Minh 2000c, Vol. 3, 662-663]. That patriotic acted “made a big splash abroad” [Minh 2000b, Vol. 2, 506-507]. Shortly thereafter, *Triều Tiên Hiện tượng báo* (“Korean Occurrence Newspaper”) published a post with photos of the martyr Phạm Hồng Thái. This “Suicide note” was sent directly to the newspaper house by a man named Từ Hưng Á with a letter, a note “To the Editor of the Newspaper” [Thâu 2003, 84-85] and a paragraph written in the letter “You reported that Phạm Quân had been buried himself under the Châu Giang River. Alas, How resentful it is” [Thâu 2003, 84].

Being a representative of the reform movement with the view supporting the style of fighting that is peaceful in nature, Phan Châu Trinh advocated “Relying on the French to make progress”, because “Our country has long learned the wrong doctrine with corrupted customs, had no integrity and knowledge...” [Thâu and al. 1976, 194; Thâu 1997]. For the Đông Du movement, Phan Châu Trinh acknowledged the superiority of Japanese civilization but soon made recommendations about the dangers of imperialist policy [Van 1999, 132]. Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh also advised paying attention to the Japanese occupation of Taiwan and Korea [Yeong 2009, 39-49]. A Korean intellectual, after reading *Việt Nam vong quốc sử*, also used this reason to criticize the weakness of Phan Bội Châu’s theory of using great unity of Asia. Nonetheless, Phan Bội Châu still supported the direction of strengthening solidarity with Japan, interacting with expansionists such as Kashiwabara Buntarô, Fukushima Yasumasa (1852-1919), Kodama Gentarô (1852-1906) [Uhyeongsaeng 1909; Yeong 2009].

In his early years in France, Phan Châu Trinh focused his time and energy on writing two important works, *Đông Dương chính trị luận* (“Indochinese political discussion”) and *Pháp Việt liên hiệp hậu chi tân Việt Nam* (“A new Vietnam after associating with France”). In the book of *Pháp Việt liên hiệp hậu chi tân Việt Nam* (“A new Vietnam after associating with France”), Phan Châu Trinh recalled “In 1902, I was able to read a new book gifted by Mr. Đào Nguyên Phổ and was very happy to say ‘this is the time to use the craziness, the stupidity’ ” [Thắng 1992b, 269]. In the *Thư gửi Toàn quyền Đông Dương* (“Letter to the Governor-General of Indochina”), Phan Châu Trinh wrote “... A nation of 20 million people with the number of well-educated people up to

several tens of thousands is still dark, weak and cowardly... Over the past years, the Vietnamese people are protected under a flag, but now they are weaker and weaker...” [Trinh 2005, 53]. At the same time, he emphasized “If the Government is really willing to change policies, pick up talented people, give power to people, use achievement and manner as receptions, and work together to take advantage of the benefit and eliminate the harms in the country... then changing legislation, removing imperial examination, opening schools, setting up a place for composing textbooks, opening pedagogical classes, industry and commerce classes, engineer and tax collection classes should gradually be improved so that people can focus on doing business and scholars can have willingness to help the Government” [Trinh 2005, 64]. To carry out the violent public disturbances that overthrew the colonial rule, gain national independence, instead of using the policy of seeking help from the outer world (Japan first, China, or even Germany), Phan Châu Trinh said “No violence, using the riots will end your life!”; “Do not rely on the outer world, relying is stupid!” [Trinh 2005, 4]. Because “The South people [Vietnamese] have been hiding under the authoritarian regime for over a thousand years, have not had a status of an independent nation, so if we can make use of foreign countries, we just perform the role of ‘being the slave of the other and forced into slavery for the second time’ ” [Kinh 2001, 153]. It was no use. Furthermore, France is a country that is civilized prior to any nation in the world. “We are now under the French protectorate; we should take the opportunity to learn from them... When people’s intellectual standard is improved and the educational level is higher and higher, independence will follow. If we keep holding the opinion of ‘relying on foreign power’, it will be crooked and we still cannot be independent while any country can be our enemy as taking Korea and Taiwan as clear examples. It is not sure that the Japanese are better than the French” [Kinh 2001, 153]. Thus, in order to practice democracy in Vietnam, comprehensive reforms must be carried out towards three goals: *Khai dân trí, chấn dân khí, hậu dân sinh*^[12].

He spoke up frankly “I would like to gain the French officials’ trust, so I have to use the theory of ‘Relying on the French’ to gain ground”. “I presided over the theory of ‘Relying on the French’ so the trick had to lead to autonomy. Autonomy is a big job and is not easy. If causing the failure, it can lead to death...” [Thắng 1992b, 275]. Therefore, “if education, the awareness of personal identity and the economy is not developed; there will be no way to achieve the goal of autonomy while research institutes, chambers of commerce, speeches are great treatments to cure diseases” [Thắng 1992b, 276].

At the same time, in order to gather and unite revolutionary forces in Asia, *Hội liên hiệp các dân tộc bị áp bức ở Á Đông* (Union Association of Oppressed Nations in East Asia) was formed by Nguyễn Ái Quốc^[13] (who had much experience gained through organizing *Hội liên hiệp thuộc địa* (Intercolonial Union)^[14] in France and a number of Chinese scholars in July 1925). This is a unified international association against imperialism with members which are Vietnamese, Chinese, Indians, Burmese. The association aimed at “overthrowing the empire by connecting with those nations and mutually doing the revolutionaries” and at

¹¹ The translation in French is “Medical Book published by Mẫn Quốc Y in Korea on January 1, 1923” [Châu 2000, 224-225; Châu 2008, 242].

¹² People’s knowledge development (*khai dân trí*), people’s spirit adjustment (*chấn dân khí*), and people’s welfare caring (*hậu dân sinh*).

¹³ Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Lý Thụy) was elected as a Secretary cum person in charge of the financial affairs of the Association, and directly managed An Nam cell.

¹⁴ In French: *Union intercoloniale - Association des indigènes de toutes les colonies*.

the same time called out “All oppressed people, my friends! The empire oppresses us and treats us like animals. It is because we do not unite. If we do so, we will become formidable. Down with imperialism! Long live solidarity among Asian peoples! Long live solidarity between oppressed peoples and workers on earth! Long live the revolution!” [Báo Thanh niên 1925; Minh 2000b, Vol. 2, 442-443] ^[15]. “Look at Korea, Egypt, and India, all of these countries are standing up for their rights, justice, and freedom!” [Minh 2000a, Vol. 1, 182]. “Indian women revolted against British colonial rule. Chinese women joined the revolution in 1912. Korean women have been fighting for the country’s independence. Japanese women have forced the Government to repeal the law banning women from participating in political life...” [Minh 2000a, Vol. 1, 267]. In an editorial in *Inprekorr*, Nguyễn Ái Quốc wrote “While opposing the U.S. law of banning yellow-skinned people to migrate to the U.S., despite claiming to be the leader of the oppressed yellow-skinned races, Japan has expelled more than 6,000 Chinese workers and would continue to deport ‘foreign workers’. How Koreans think about Japanese people’s honesty would rather not to talk about” [Minh 2000b, Vol. 2, 150].

On *Le Populaire* (“People”) on 4 September 1919, under the pseudonym of Nguyễn Ái Quốc, the article “*Indochina and Korea*” mentioned “The Japanese government has foreseen the sad consequences of mounting a punitive expedition under the Militarism and is admitting to reform the regime in Korea in a spirit of tolerance... During the war years, many important national movements broke out in Korea as well as in Indochina to overthrow the domination of foreigners. But immediately after broking up the rebellion movements, the Japanese government immediately took measures to eliminate the past of those traumatic events with progressive reforms and seeking to harmonize the ruling nations with the ruled nation by admitting they have equal rights under the law... What will France do to Indochina to be able to compare with the generosity of Japan towards Korea?” [Minh 2000a, Vol. 1, 11-12].

While finding a way for national salvation and liberation, the thought of Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh afterwards) is the true spirit of international solidarity, linking nationalism with internationalism, attaching the patriotic movement with the world revolutionary movement and considering the fight for the independence of the Vietnamese people as a close part of the general fight movement of the colonial peoples.

Conclusion remarks

In the context of rapid changes in the region and the world, Western warships raging all over the open sea, the Chinese navy which also became “a game for children in shallow puddles”, the Nguyễn Vietnam generally tend toward civilization in Northeast Asia [Tsuboi 1990, 310]. Nevertheless, in the early 20th century, despite following the policy of “escape from Asia”, the awareness of “Brand New Civilization” between Vietnam and Japan was fundamentally different. Phan Bội Châu was aware of the importance of Western civilization, but he also revealed in his

Việt Nam vong quốc sử that it was too late for Vietnam to reform and modernize at that time.

“The 19th century brought a new type of colonialism to Southeast Asia. The main colonial nations, England, the Netherlands, France, Spain, and the U.S, are coloring Southeast Asia maps with their own colors” [Heidhues 2007, 143]. It was the differences in society, culture, economic changes, and mobilization that lead to contradictory behaviors and fate with two main groups: the group of countries losing sovereignty and the group keeping their independence and sovereignty. It corresponds to the confrontation trends which are resolutely resisting, accepting the occupation, reforming and opening up, and renovating and closing down to apply closed-door policy.

At the high tide of the movement to find a way to save the country, Japan has been a successful model for countries which are “Two in distress make sorrowless” (同病相憐) to look to and seek help since the late nineteenth century. Due to various reasons as well as specific time phases, expansionism was praised while Confucian influence and Eastern cultural values were criticized and eliminated ^[16], but it did not mean the monarchic system and wise and talented emperors would be removed. Besides, the process of finding a way for national salvation and the people from slavery, making democracy, civil rights, and people welfare clear shall be considered revolutionary. This was the continuation of reformist ideological from patriots in the second half of the nineteenth century and a great step forward, the maturation for Vietnamese scholars in the early 20th century.

After the October Revolution in Russia, the Marxist-Leninist ideology gradually became a mainstream and illuminated the path of revolutionary struggle. In the general context in Asia, awakening and awareness were not always similar, but each country itself had a struggle on the ideological front. The political and revolutionary context in East Asia even shows the shift in the awareness of Vietnamese scholars more evidently. It is a process of increasing awareness and is consistent with the work of national liberation in colonial countries.

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¹⁵ The Association also published the book of *Phạm Hồng Thái truyện* (“The story of Phạm Hong Thai”) written by Phan Bội Châu.

¹⁶ Based on the research and comparison of Confucianism in *Khổng học đăng* (孔學燈 - The light of Confucianism), the author, Nguyễn Thọ Đức, came to the

remark “Phan Bội Châu re-established the genealogy of the Confucian tradition by his personal views, content and criteria... made Phan Bội Châu be one of the first Vietnamese scholars of the early 20th century to create and re-establish the genealogy of Confucian tradition” [Kỷ yếu Hội thảo Khoa học 2017, 392].

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