

## First Attempts to Make Cultural Exposure, Exchange, Dialogue between Vietnamese and Western (From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the eve of the First World War)

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**Abstract:** In Vietnam's history, the period from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the eve of the First World War, can be divided into two stages: The first one lasted from 1858 to 1896, when the French colonialists step by step took over the whole Vietnam and then carried out "pacification" to strengthen their ruling yoke. The second one lasted from 1897 to 1913, when the French colonial government started its large-scale exploitation to pillage properties of Vietnam, aiming at enslaving Vietnamese people forever.

In the both stages, in addition to patriotic organizations, which persisted in carrying out armed struggles by the previous way to sweep all the invaders out of Vietnam, there were some preeminent people (including also those who followed the way to use armed struggles to save the country) realizing clearly the necessity of learning experience from overseas countries, especially new achievements of the Western cultures and civilizations, in order to innovate the country and improve the national power in the hope of protecting Vietnam from aggression or regaining national independence from the French invasion. This article analyzes the thoughts and activities of those typical people.

**Key words:** Exposure; exchange; dialogue; culture; Vietnam; Western.

### 1. The thought and activities of renovation by Dang Huy Tru

During the time under the French colonial domination, many ideas on carrying out a reform to strengthen the national power were recommended to the King Tu Duc (Tự Đức) by preeminent Confucian scholars such as Pham Phu Thu (Phạm Phú Thứ), Dang Huy Tru (Đặng Huy Trứ), Nguyen Truong To (Nguyễn Trường Tộ), Bui Vien (Bùi Viện) and Nguyen Lo Trach (Nguyễn Lộ Trạch), etc.

Talking about this, in "*Việt Nam Quốc*

*sử khảo*" (Vietnam's National History Textbook), Phan Boi Chau wrote: "*In the late years of Tu Duc Dynasty, modern (Western) education was not introduced into our country; the sea routes were not established, but there were some people discussing the general situation of the world, arguing that we should strike up a friendship with England and Germany as well as we should not rely on only the Northern Dynasties (Chinese Dynasties). It*

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was proposed: to send people to the West to learn their art of war; to set up trading ports for commercial exchange; and, to encourage people to go to the West for education. They were Dang Huy Tru and Nguyen Lo Trach in Thua Thien, Nguyen Duc Thuan (Nguyễn Đức Thuận) in Quang Ngai, and Nguyen Truong To in Nghe An. They were the ones, who planted the seeds of civilization in Vietnam" [12, p.214].

Of all the above-mentioned people, Dang Huy Tru was more outstanding, as he was one of the first people who had the thought of renovation and carried out innovative measures in the hope of making the country wealthier and more powerful.

Dang Huy Tru was born in 16 May 1825 in the family of a poor Confucian scholar in Thanh Luong Village (in modern Huong Xuan Commune, Huong Dien District, Thua Thien Hue Province). Both his paternal grandfather and his father worked as a teacher.

In 1843, he got the bachelor degree at the age of 18. When he was 22 years old, he took the metropolitan examination (*Thi Hội*). In fact, he should have achieved a doctor degree (a successful applicant), but his paper was rejected due to profanation of taboo names. As a result, he was additionally deprived of the bachelor degree and was punished with 100 lashes.

Not being discouraged by the failure, he again took the prefectural examination (*Thi Hương*) in the late year and got the first laureate at an interprovincial exam (*Giải Nguyên*). And then, he followed his father's job, working as a teacher for 10 years. During that time, he often wrote public announcements (*Cáo thị*), showing his teaching principle. In his opinion, ones

should study a lot to become talented for the sake of the country and the people. They shouldn't "show off as a bachelor or a doctor; whereas they had no knowledge like a goat disguised in a panther's skin". He ridiculed the studying way of those who had doctrinaire and conservative thought. He compared them with those, "who made a mark on a boat-side, when dropping a sword into water, in the hope of hunting for it after the boat came to the shore" [1, p.121].

In 1858, Dang Huy Tru was sent to the military force in Da Nang. In that year, French battleships strafed the area to see what reaction the Hue Court would have, in order to make preparation for its invasion over Vietnam in several years later. Before such a situation, Dang Huy Tru wrote a poem, expressing his thinking and responsibility.

"... Ăn lộc, ta càng lo việc nước,

Tính sao? Hòa, chiến, giữ hay nhường?" [2, p.151]

(...Getting a salary from the Court, we are more concerned about national affairs. What should we do now? Reconcile or fight? Persist in keeping or give up?)

After being appointed as a Counselor (Ngự sử) of the Court (1861 – 1864), Dang Huy Tru resolutely supported the warlike party with a vow of "being in a death-feud with enemies" [3, p.226]. In 1865, as suggested by Pham Phu Thu and the Privy Council, he disguised himself as an official of the Qing Dynasty, who was traveling to Hongkong to investigate the situation. After coming back from Hongkong in 1866, he proposed establishment of an commercial economy agency in Hanoi. From mid-1867 to late 1868, he was sent to Guangdong for business. In 1869, he was appointed as the provincial superior of Hanoi and then as the

military envoy of Son – Hung – Tuyen provinces. In 1981, he held the post of an inter-provincial military superior of Lang – Bang – Ninh – Thai and was assigned to help Hoang Ke Viem (Hoàng Kế Viêm) suppress the bandits in the border area. When the French army started to invade Tonkin for the first time in 1873, Dang Huy Tru moved to the military base in Don Vang, Hung Hoa together with the withdrawal of the armed force led by Hoang Ke Viem. And, he fell sick and passed away on 7 August 1874.

He left us 12 poetry collections with 2,000 poems, 4 collections of essays of various genres, 1 collection of memoirs, some textbooks and research books.

Based on the works and practical activities, Dang Huy Tru is deservedly honored as a poet, a writer, an economist, a militarist, and an intellectual with the first innovative thinking and activities in Vietnam in the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century.

From the perspective of cultural exposure, exchange and dialogue, we are now describing his outstanding devotion to some aspects, as below:

***Firstly, Dang Huy Tru no longer kept obsolete stereotypes of the contemporary feudal thought, which viewed the job of trade as a “disrespectful occupation”. On the contrary, he affirmed that “enrichment was very significant and it couldn’t be disregarded”; at the same time, he supported the harmonious combination between profits and charity in trading activities.***

Obviously, it was new knowledge he learned during his first trip abroad. Based on the principle that “an adventurer had to widen his view over thousands miles, in order to get more knowledge to bring

happiness to all families and the country” [4, p.332], for the entire first trip to Hongkong (1865) – a coastal area of China ceded by the Qing Court to England after the Opium War II (1858-1860) – Dang Huy Tru directly observed, met, and had discussions with many innovative-minded intellectuals, whereby he realized the importance of the application of scientific and technical achievements made by the English to improve all aspects of social life in the area. At the beginning, it was just a peninsula with very poor fishing villages, but it then became an open economic center with busy activities of factories, enterprises, merchant stores and ports etc. Consequently, he tried to collect books and newspapers on overseas sciences and techniques and by himself made detailed notes on the technique of steam-engines to be described in the book “Overseas savant things”.

During the first trip abroad, he met Vietnamese skillful workers, who were sent to Hongkong to learn the steam-engine shipbuilding. Owing to the help from the English, those workers made the first ship named Man Thoa (Mấn Thóa). Dang Huy Tru was really excited to witness the test, when the ship “moved around mountains in the bay”. He wrote: “looking at the shore from the ship, we can see trees and mountains running behind very fast” [5, p.334].

After coming back from Hongkong in 1866, Dang Huy Tru submitted a proposal to the Court. He was, consequently, allowed to establish Ty Binh Chuan, which was then used for trading activities to get more financial resources for the country. As a head of the institution, he decided to set up many trading stores in Hanoi, such as: Lac Sinh (Lạc Sinh) Store, Lac Thanh (Lạc

Thanh) Store and Lac Duc (Lạc Đức) Store etc. He encouraged circulation of goods between different areas in the country. Starting with a limited fund of 50 thousands francs granted by the Court, he mobilized more fund from individuals on the basis of sharing benefits to both the national and the individuals" [6, p.380]. In his opinion, "to make richer is a great principle that can't be despised" [7, p.374]. He organized mining activities and exported tin, silk, sugar, vegetative oil, and cinnamon etc. to Hongkong.

Working in this new area, Dang Huy Tru raised a profoundly significant commitment:

"Đường lợi bốn phương tuy rộng mở  
Đạo tâm một tấm chẳng suy vi" [8, p.370]

*(There are a wide range of opportunities to get interests*

*The virtue cannot be deteriorated)*

This can be seen as a declaration to show the relationship between the application of the Western achievements in trading development, which he learned about during his strip in Hongkong, and the need of preserving the traditional moral values of Vietnam.

In deed, looking at the history of the oriental thoughts, we can see that in the countries, which were severely influenced by the Confucius and Mencius ideologies (like Vietnam), most of scholars just talked about benevolence, but they rarely talked about enrichment; they often mentioned righteousness, but did not mention profit-seeking. In such a context, the thought of Dang Huy Tru on combination of the profit-seeking pursued by traders and the pure virtue to be used in trading activities with partners can be viewed as a breakthrough in applying the ethical culture into trading. His thought was really in advance of his time and is still kept today.

***Secondly, owing to the trading, Dang Huy Tru widened more and more his knowledge, following and selecting good experience from other Oriental countries, which were conducting a reform, whereby he gradually outlined a strategy for national self-reliance and self-strengthening.***

As mentioned above, from mid-1867 to late 1868, Dang Huy Tru was again sent to Guangdong for business. On the way to Guangdong, he fell sick. After coming there, although he was seriously sick for 9 months and sometimes had to lie in the sickbed, he still read books and wrote poems. When his health was recovered, he took advantage of the stay in Guangdong to set ties with the Provincial Chief of Guangdong and nearly 30 Chinese feudal intellectuals. He bought 239 "over-mountain" cannons to be sent to the country. At the same time, he continued to collect new publications and war manuals.

During this time, he wrote a long paper titled "While being sick, I was counseled by the Wild Lake Owner" (*Trong khi ốm được Dã trì chủ nhân chỉ giáo*). The paper describes the meetings, discussions, and dialogues between him and a guest named "the Wild Lake Owner". In fact, the wild lake owner is just an imaginary character that Dang Huy Tru used to reflect the innermost dialogues – i.e. he made a dialogue with himself – about issues relating to the way to build the national self-reliance and self-strengthening.

Comparing good living conditions of a high-ranked mandarin in Vietnam and the conditions Dang Huy Tru had at the time in Guangdong, "the Wild Lake Owner" felt compassion for the miseries of Dang Huy Tru. He said:

- In your country, “thou” have a wealthy life; thou feel composed and relaxed. In here, however, thou have just a compartment on a boat; the door is closed and thou are alone all the time, as if thou were lying in a hole.

- In your country, “thou” have all dainty morsels; thou have a happy life. Yet, as thou are here, food is not appetizing and too expensive.

- In your country, when thou are sick, there are physicians and medicines available for thou; your staff and family members serve thou considerably. As thou are here, thou are alone like an abandoned lamp. There is no one coming to ask after thou.

In that way, the Wild Lake Owner raised 11 aspects, which were viewed as 11 miseries Dang Huy Tru had to suffer during his stay in Guangzhou. Yet, Dang Huy Tru always refused to consider those issues. He said: “Oh! Do you think those are miseries? What I consider a misery is different! Only when a misery is involved with the State, the Court, and the people, will I see it as a real misery. Only common people pay attention to the miseries, which are involved with only himself/herself” [9, p.435]. He continued to explain: “In our country - a long coastal land - every year, our income is just enough to cover daily expenses. From 1858 up to now, there have been floods, droughts, storms and a lot of damages caused by grasshoppers, hostilities, and diseases etc., making the expenditure increasingly higher. The financial shortage is getting severer and severer. Three provinces, including Gia Dinh, Bien Hoa, and Dinh Tuong in Cochin-china are the areas of abundant natural resources and farmland, but they have been occupied by the French invaders; moreover, they force us to pay them 28,800 hectograms of

silver as compensation every year. The border areas have been occupied by enemies. It is what I consider a misery. Our Board of Revenue reveals that we are now encountering a serious shortage of public funds. It is also what I consider a misery. Something can be considered as a misery, only when it is relating to the country; it is the self-sacrifice for the sake of the country. We have to make every effort to fight against the enemies, like Nguyen Duy (Nguyễn Duy) and Nguyen Dang Hanh (Nguyễn Đăng Hành), a Provincial Treasurer of Khanh Hoa Province. Although we are alone in protesting against the enemies, we have to keep condemning the enemies till death, like the academician Pham Hinh (Phạm Hình). We would rather throw ourselves into the river to die, when we run out of food and reinforcements, like Doan Chinh (Doãn Chính), a County Chief of Phu Binh. We should rush into danger bravely like Ong Ich Khiem (Ông Ích Khiêm), a prosecutor of the Ministry of War. We have to move into unwholesome places, when necessary, like the Pacificator Nguyen Tan (Nguyễn Tấn). When we are surrounded by enemies, we have to stand our ground in the citadel, like the mandarins in Hai Duong. When our citadel is occupied by the Western enemies, we have to travel everywhere to seek for a way to save the country, like the strong-willed scholars in Gia Dinh, Bien Hoa, Vinh Long and Dinh Tuong etc.” [9, pp.435-436].

After listening to those words, “the Wild Lake Owner” clapped hands and smiled, showing his respect for the deep patriotism of Dang Huy Tru. He also made some recommendations on how to strengthen the border defense and get back the occupied

land. The recommendations made by the guest are actually what Dang Huy Tru realized after pondering “New books”, studying articles in newspapers, and discussing experience with Chinese feudal intellectuals. He summed up what he learned from the Oriental countries, which were experiencing a reform, so that we could use to improve our national self-reliance and self-strengthening. It consists of following major points:

- To establish a mechanical bureau, an occupational bureau; to recruit clever young learners and invite the Western people to teach languages, mathematics, and graphics, in order to set up a foundation for shipbuilding and mechanical manufacturing. There are 6 requirements for recruitment of learners, including: i) they must have been candidates of the competition-examinations; ii) they have to stay in school as boarders so that they can give the whole mind to their study; iii) there is a test every month to see who are studious and who are lazy; iv) there is a final test at the end of every year; v) scholarships are granted so that learners can keep their mind on study; and, vi) rewards are given to good learners, in order to encourage all of them to study well (*Experience from the Qing Dynasty*).

- To produce quick-shooting guns; to carry out propaganda to make the people feel completely reassured; at the same time, it is necessary to set up alliance with Russia – a powerful nation (*Experience from Persia*).

- To prohibit rigidly overseas traders from buying things at a reduced price and selling things at a higher price as well as speculating illegally imported goods and using trading activities to do reconnaissance (*Experience from Korea*).

- To provide training on martial arts for soldiers. Naval forces have to be skillful in sailing and shooting. It is necessary to provide training on ship-steering skills for steersmen. The best young men are sent to the Academy of London to learn English. Those people are proficient in English language etc. (*Experience from Japan*) [9, pp.436-438].

Due to subjective and objective constraints, Dang Huy Tru could not get a lot of experience on how to start a renovation for national self-strengthening in various countries, including also the ones he had mentioned. Yet, we have to acknowledge that he was the first person to study and sum up experience from so many overseas countries.

By expressing his thinking via words of “the Wild Lake Owner”, Dang Huy Tru argued: “All the ways to improve the national self-governing and self-strengthening of countries are published in Chinese and foreign languages in the Tianjin Newspaper and Guangzhou Weekly Journal. It is necessary to collect and record all the information without any omissions. Then, the information should be submitted to the king and high-ranked mandarins in the Court so that they can use something. Although it is so small as a speck of dust or a drop of water, we are still happy that we can make a contribution into the national development. As subjects of the king, we have to report all what we know. It is considered as loyalty. Heaven! Truth is generally unpalatable. The bitter medicine is useful for treatment; the frank words are unpleasant, but useful for work, etc. Yet, it is necessary to be careful” [9, p.438].

In late 1868, Dang Huy Tru returned to the country. He really wanted to submit the

above-mentioned thinking to King Tu Duc, asking for applying those measures.

At that time, however, Vietnam was experiencing gloomier and gloomier days. After invading 3 provinces in the Southeast, the French troops continued to occupy the rest 3 provinces there. People and intellectuals from all over the country were in a high dudgeon and willing to fight against the French invaders. Having an inveterate conservative and feeble mind, yet, King Tu Duc kept ignoring innovative recommendations from patriotic intellectuals; he just tried to make up to the French colonialists by all means; he issued an ordinance to forbid mandarins of districts from forging weapons and making enrollment for the army; he abrogated Ty Binh Chuan and decided to build the mausoleum for the Queen Mother in a good place according to Feng-Shui.

It is one of the reasons for the tragedy of losing the country. In such a context, like many other innovative-minded intellectuals, Dang Huy Tru had to give up; he could not use his ideas to serve and restore the country.

**2. Change in Phan Boi Chau's thinking: From reinforcement seeking to study-seeking; from the constitutional monarchy to the republic democracy**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the failure of Can Vuong Movement (*Phong trào Cần Vương*), the feudal ideologies seemed to be ineffective to cope with colonialism. Vietnamese patriots were deeply concerned about finding a new trend of thinking, which could shed light on how to save the country. In the meanwhile, the thoughts of bourgeois democratic renovation such as those of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao etc. were introduced into Vietnam via "the

New Books". The victory of Japan, of which the power was much improved after the Meiji Restoration, in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) caused a great echo in Asia.

It is one of the external and internal factors that led to patriotic and cultural movements towards the bourgeois democracy, such as: The Dong Du Movement (*Phong trào Đông Du*) (i.e. go east to study) initiated by Phan Boi Chau (Phan Bội Châu), The Movement of Tonkin Free School (*Phong trào Đông kinh nghĩa thực*) organized by Luong Van Can (Lương Văn Can), and the Duy Tan Renovation (*Phong trào Duy Tân*) launched by Phan Chau Trinh (Phan Châu Trinh), etc.

In this paper, we focus on analyzing a typical case - the Dong Du Movement led by Phan Boi Chau.

Phan Boi Chau (1867-1940) was born and grew up in the family of a poor Confucian scholar in Dan Nhiem Village (Nam Hoa Commune, Nam Dan District, Nghe An Province). Since the childhood, he was already well-known for his brainpower. He was, however, unsuccessful in competition - examinations. Only at the age of thirty four, did he get the first laureate at an interprovincial exam of Nghe An (the prefectural examination). Influenced by the traditional undaunted struggle from the homeland, Phan Boi Chau early had the sense of patriotism. When the French invaders attacked on Tonkin for the second time, he was 17 years old and wrote a proclamation titled "*Bình Tây thu Bắc*" (Putting down the French and retrieving the North). At the age of 19, Phan attempted to rally approximately 60 classmates who

were prospective examination candidates to join in a group called the *Army of Loyalist Examination Candidates*, aiming at supporting Can Vuong Royal Proclamation issued by King Ham Nghi (Hàm Nghi). Eventually, the Can Vuong Movement failed [10, pp.24-27]. Learning a lesson from the failure of the Can Vuong Movement and his own work, Phan Boi Chau realized that it would be impossible to overthrow the French domination, if there were just sporadic armed uprisings in some areas; it was necessary to unite and rally all patriotic people from all over the country and have a new measure to organize activities and fight against the French invaders.

On the occasion of coming to Hue to take examinations in 1897 and working as a teacher afterwards, Phan luckily got access to some books given by his intimate friends, such as: *Discussion on the world general situation* of Nguyen Lo Trach (Nguyễn Lộ Trạch) and other “new books”, including the Franco – Prussian War, the Full List of Strategies, the Hundred days’ Reform (Mậu Tuất Coup), the Chinese Spirit etc. written by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. Phan wrote: “After reading those books, I have realized the world competitive situation and the tragedy when the country is lost and the nation is perished. My patriotism has become higher and I have been more determined, etc. My thinking is consequently given free rein since then” [10, p.32].

Subsequently, Phan travelled to many places in the North, the Central and the South, getting more understanding of the country situation and making friends with those who had the same sense of purpose. In 1903, he wrote a book titled *A New*

*Letter Written in Tears of Blood from the Ryukyu (Lư Cầu huyết lệ tân thư)* to describe the tragedy that people in Ryukyu Okoku had to suffered, after the citadel was defeated and the country was lost. He hoped Vietnamese readers would think about the situation of the home country, after it was invaded by the French enemies; whereby, he showed the urgent necessity of “broadening the people’s knowledge, improving the people’s spirit, and strengthening talents” [10, p.38] in order to set up a foundation to save the country. The book helped Phan Boi Chau to make friends with other patriotic intellectuals such as Phan Chau Trinh, Tran Quy Cap (Trần Quý Cáp) and Huynh Thuc Khang (Huỳnh Thúc Kháng), etc.

In early May 1904, Phan and more than 20 soul-mates held a meeting in Quang Nam to establish officially a secret organization named as the Association for Modernization (Duy Tân Hội). Phan Boi Chau, Nguyen Ham (Nguyễn Hàm), Dang Tu Kinh (Đặng Tử Kinh) and Dang Thai Than (Đặng Thái Thân) etc. were the key founders of the Association. Ji Qiang Hou Cuong De (Cường Đê) – the eldest grandson of Prince Canh from the King Gia Long descent – was appointed as the head of the Association. The aim of the Association was “to use armed uprisings to fight against the enemies for revenge” in order to “establish an independent government of Vietnam” [10, p.33].

The fact that Cuong De was appointed as the head of the Association for the sake of “winning the popularity” demonstrates that the Association for Modernization could not get over the monarchism; in fact, it was likely to be constitutional monarchy – a new trend of the bourgeois democratic ideology.



In addition to acceleration of human and financial resources as well as preparation for uprisings, the Association for Modernization also found it extremely important to go abroad to seek for reinforcements. Phan Boi Chau and Nguyen Ham were assigned to make a plan for this mission. Phan revealed: "We made discussions and agreed that we had no way but to ask for reinforcements from Japan. At that time, Japan just became a power. It is a nation in Asia with the same race. They just won a victory at the Russo-Japanese War, so they perhaps wanted to take the suzerainty over the entire Asia. Thus, they may help us to fight against the French, aiming at reducing the European power in this region. This is really helpful for them as well. If we keep insisting on reinforcements, it will be very possible that they will give us or sell us military weapons" [11, p.173].

On 23 February 1905, Phan Boi Chau, Tang Bat Ho (Tăng Bạt Hổ) and Dang Tu Kinh left Vietnam for Japan. It was a landmark for the beginning of the Dong Du Movement.

As soon as arriving in Yokohama, Phan Boi Chau came to see Liang Qichao, who was residing in Japan as a political refugee and working as the editor-in-chief of the *Xinmin* Newspaper, asking him to introduce Phan to important people in Japan. Immediately at the first meeting, an intimate relationship was formed between Phan and Liang. For the next days, they had some dialogues in form of written conversations for several hours on the issues raised by Phan.

Phan told Liang briefly about the situation of Vietnam under the yoke of the French domination and the insistent aspiration of

all Vietnamese patriots to gain the national independence.

Answering Phan's questions, Liang said: "Please don't worry about getting a day of national independence, but you should worry whether independence is really gained for people. To make a plan of national restoration, it is necessary to satisfy 3 conditions at the same time as below:

1. Real capacity of your nation
2. Reinforcements from Liang-Guang (i.e. Guangdong and Guangxi)
3. Support from Japan

You will not get happiness for your nation, if the real capacity of your nation is too weak, although you get the two later conditions. The real capacity of your nation consists of the people's knowledge, the people's spirit and talents; the reinforcements from Liang-Guang consists of soldiers, food and weapons; the support from Japan means that Vietnam is diplomatically acknowledged to be independent by a powerful country in Asia".

When Phan mentioned the intention of asking for reinforcements from Japan, Liang advised: "That scheme does not sound helpful, because you will have no reason to ask the Japanese troops to move out of Vietnam, after they come in. It means that you fall in national annihilation, while you are seeking for national restoration. Don't worry that you will not have opportunities to gain independence. Yet, there must be talents who can seize the opportunities. When Germany declares war on France, it will be a good opportunity for you to seize the national independence" [10, pp.54-55].

According to Phan's request, Liang introduced him to two important statesmen

of Japan: the Earl Okuma Shigenobu – the head of the Progressive Party and the Viscount Inukai Tsuyoshi – the general director of the Party. Phan suggested that Japan help Vietnam to fight against the French invaders, but they both rejected the provision of armed forces, as they thought it was not appropriate time to do it. They advised him to keep patient and wait for opportunities. In the short term, it was necessary to send Cuong De to Japan so that he would not be arrested by the French colonialists; and, especially, it was essential to encourage more intellectuals to go abroad in order to widen their understanding and improve the sense of patriotism, which was viewed as “a good remedy for the time being” [10, p.56].

A few days later, Liang Qichao invited Phan to his home, discussing a plan. They again used written conversations for discussion. In general, Liang revealed: “I have made every effort to think about it, but I have found only two ways to be told you now:

1. It is necessary to write a lot of drastic and heartfelt papers to: describe the tragedy of losing the country, expose the French cruel intention of extinguishing another nation, and make announcements to the world in order to get support from the international opinions. This is seen as a diplomatic measure.

2. You can come back or send letters to your country, encouraging more and more young people to go abroad for study. This will help to improve the people’s spirit and enhance the people’s knowledge.

Apart from these two measures, you have to suffer hardships to nurse vengeance, waiting for opportunities” [10, p.58].

According to Liang, the opportunity would come, when Germany declared war on France as mentioned above, or when a revolution started in China.

The first trip abroad and dialogues with Chinese patriotic intellectuals such as Liang Qichao and some Japanese politicians enabled Phan Boi Chau widen his vision.

Based on his inherent idea on the necessity of “broadening the people’s knowledge, improving the people’s spirit, and strengthening talents” as implied in *A New Letter Written in Tears of Blood from the Ryukyus*, Phan Boi Chau quickly accepted suggestions made by Liang Qichao. Since then, he decided to switch from the proposal for armed reinforcements to the proposal for study in Japan. A cultural campaign was, therefore, launched in Vietnam. Phan tried his best to write many works with plaintive and heartfelt words to move people’s mind, such as: *History of the loss of Vietnam (Việt Nam vong quốc sử - 1905)*, *Letter written of blood from abroad (Hải ngoại huyết thư - 1906)*, *Letter to encourage domestic people to provide support for young people to go abroad for study (Khuyến quốc dân tư trợ du học văn - 1906)*, *To awake the spirit among the people (Đề tỉnh quốc dân hồn - 1907)*, *New Vietnam (Tân Việt Nam - 1907)*, *Vietnam’s National History Textbook (Việt Nam quốc sử khảo - 1908)*, etc. to be sent to the country, aiming at “encouraging young people go abroad for study and enhancing the sense of patriotism for all the people” [11, p.192].

As a result of the campaign, over 200 children of patriotic intellectuals and tradespeople, who tended to protest against

the French invaders, from all over the North, the Central and the South of Vietnam, went to Japan for study. Another significant achievement of the campaign is that it made a contribution towards exposing the French cruelties, awakening the patriotism, and encouraging 10 social classes of the same mind<sup>(1)</sup> to “share the responsibility of national restoration” (the letter written of blood from abroad).

Being afraid that the Dong Du Movement would develop more and more in linkage with other domestic cultural campaigns, on the one hand, the French colonialists persecuted members of the Association for Modernization; on the other hand, it carried out negotiations with the Japanese government, giving up some trading advantages in Indochina to Japan and asking for expelling all Vietnamese students from Japan. In late 1909, Phan Boi Chau and Cuong De consequently had to leave Japan.

After the failure of the Dong Du Movement, Phan Boi Chau and his faithful comrades came to Guangdong (China) and then to Thailand, where they stayed and waited for opportunities. In late 1911, the Xinhai Revolution broke out in China under direction of the Tongminghui (United League) headed by Sun Yat-sen. The autocratic monarchy of the Qing Dynasty was overthrown. A provisional government of the People's Republic of China was founded in Nanjing. After getting this news, Phan Boi Chau and some of his comrades moved from Thailand to China.

In May 1912, Phan Boi Chau held a plenary meeting of the Association for Modernization in Guangdong with participation

of over 100 members from Vietnam, Thailand and Japan. Ji Qiang Hou Cuong De also came from Hongkong to Guangdong to attend the meeting. A key question to be solved immediately was whether the monarchic or democratic regime should be selected. Phan was the first person to propose following the democratic model instead of the monarchic one. After stressful discussions, most of the participants voted for the democratic regime. At the meeting, the Association for Modernization was abolished and *Vietnam Restoration League* (*Việt Nam Quang Phục hội*) was established with the only guideline: “To drive off the French enemies, to restore Vietnam, and to found the People's Republic of Vietnam” [10, p.141].

Talking about changes in thinking from the monarchy to the democracy, Phan revealed: “After coming to Japan, I had opportunities to learn about overseas revolutions and regimes of other countries. I was very interested in the theory of Rousseau. Moreover, I had a lot of discussions with Chinese comrades, so in my mind, the monarchic thinking was already left away” [10, pp.140-141].

Indeed, after staying in Japan for 3 or 4 years, studying works of French enlighteners and having discussions with a lot of Chinese patriotic intellectuals, including two written conversations with Sun Yat-

<sup>(1)</sup> According to Phan Boi Chau, “the 10 social classes of the same mind” that should be rallied to fight against the French enemies include: the rich and influential, the existing government officials, children of noble families, the Christian believers, the navy and infantry, parties and unions, interpreters clerks and household servants, women, children of families massacred by the French enemies, and student studying abroad.

sen, Phan Boi Chau realized that “the democratic regime was really good and appropriate” [10, p.67].

Thus, Phan paid more attention to the regime. As a result, in his work titled “Vietnam’s National History Textbook” (1908), he raised some remarkable contentions on the relationship between the ideology of national sovereignty and independence – the constants in the scale of cultural values of Vietnam – and the ideology of civil rights from the Western bourgeois democratic movements, which emerged in *the Age of Enlightenment* (*Thế kỷ ánh sáng*), as below:

**Firstly, national sovereignty and independence must be considered as the top importance.**

Phan Boi Chau wrote: “National sovereignty is very important for Vietnam. For the national sovereignty, it is important to have independence; i.e. we are not tyrannized in the external relations and we seize the power in the internal relations, etc. A complete sovereignty means that we have the power for both internal and external relations” [12, p.376].

**Secondly, the civil rights must be attached closely with national sovereignty and independence.**

According to Phan Boi Chau, “a country must have its people, its territory, and its sovereignty, etc. Of the three those things, the most important is the people. Without the people, the territory will not be kept and the sovereignty will not be set up. As long as there are the people, the country will exist. When the people are lost, the country will be lost. In order to realize whether the people are lost or not, it is necessary to see whether the people have rights or not. If the people’s rights are highly appreciated, the

people are respected, the country will be powerful” [12, p.386].

Looking at the above-mentioned contentions, we realize that Phan Boi Chau accepted and applied the thinking of civil rights from French enlighteners on the basis of patriotism.

In the context that a bourgeois revolution was taking place to fight against the feudal monarchy in France in the middle 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) emphasized freedom and equality of everyone in society as the two most important aspects of the civil rights. He argued: “the best for everyone in each country is involved with two goals, including: *Freedom and equality*. It is involved with freedom, because the less freedom individuals have, the less powerful the nation will be. It is involved with equality, because there will not be freedom, if there is no equality” [13, p.86].

In the context of Vietnam, the urgent need was to drive the French invaders off to gain national sovereignty and independence. Thus, Phan Boi Chau attached the civil rights with the two sacred values of the nation.

Obviously, there is interaction and exchange between the top cultural values of Vietnamese and Western, relating to a very important aspect for the national existence. Consequently, the interaction and exchange led to creative acculturation, but not inflexible imitation.

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