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Traveling Knowledge: Publications from Japan and China in Early Twentieth-Century Vietnam

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This paper serves as a foundation for early twentieth-century Vietnamese conceptual history by surveying publications imported from Japan and China available to local intelligentsia at the time. It focuses on publications classified as *tan thu* in the Nguyen dynasty's royal libraries, and another type of *tan thu* circulated among small circles of Vietnamese anticolonial Confucians and often banned by the Court. Although publications imported directly from Japan also found their way to Vietnam, Vietnamese Confucian nationalists learned about the Japanese Meiji Restoration model mostly from Chinese books and periodicals secretly introduced to their country.

Keywords: Intellectual history, conceptual history, Meiji Restoration, translation, anti-colonialism

Introductory Remarks

Conceptual history reminds us of the interconnectedness of world history and the border-crossing flows of people and thoughts. In the opening chapter of their monograph, “History of Concepts and Global History,” Margrit Pernau and Dominic Sachsenmaier start with “three scenes from different countries” to embark on their discussions. One of the “scenes” is set in Japan during the late nineteenth century, where Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1834–1901), one of the most influential thinkers in the nation, endeavored to support the Meiji reforms with his intriguing writings full of “concepts and topoi that, in his eyes, were drawn from works coming out of ‘advanced societies.’”¹ According to the authors, assembled together, the cases indicate two foundational elements of global history: first, historical development “can no longer be explained by looking at

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1 Margrit Pernau and Dominic Sachsenmaier, eds., *Global Conceptual History: A Reader*, London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 1. The other two “scenes” in question are a group of scholars led by Belgian Jesuit Philippe Couple and their first annotated translation, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, in 1687 in Europe; and the eighteenth-century religious scholar from northern India, Shah Wali Ullah, who was one of the most influential leaders of the Islamic reform movement.

only one country or society”; and second, “Men ... and ideas had always moved across boundaries.”² Of course, people traveled beyond their national boundaries, and often brought back home what they had learned or collected from new lands in the form of new thoughts, ideas, or printed materials (for example, books and periodicals). Moreover, diplomatic and commercial activities also created favorable conditions for printed materials to travel overseas and among nations. Thus, modern conceptual history also requires us to identify the materials available in local book markets and libraries where the locals, and especially the literati, could read.

Due to uneven development among nations around the world, critical concepts emerged that would be employed to justify the domination of the strong over the weak, and “civilization” was one of them. As Brett Bowden put it, “Many things have been done in the name of civilization; sadly, among them such grave matters as war, conquest, and colonialism.”³ The bifurcation between the “advanced” West vis-à-vis the “backward” East made the East-West encounters dramatically more challenging during the second half of the nineteenth century. The need to learn from the West for the sake of self-strengthening and sovereignty defense became more urgent for East Asian nations, among which Japan stood out as the pioneer in learning European languages and translating works of Western thought and modern science.

Once translated into Japanese, some works were re-translated into Chinese by Chinese intelligentsia who took advantage of the commonly used Chinese scripts within the Sinosphere (a.k.a. the East Asian cultural sphere)⁴ to facilitate their comprehension of the Japanese translations. In both Japan and China, not only did scholars translate books from the West, but they also derived their intellectual work based on this newly acquired knowledge. Together with the translated works, these publications found their way to Vietnam.

In this context, Vietnam might be seen as the final destination of publications from Japan and China in the early twentieth century. This paper will clarify which publications came to Vietnam in the hope of contributing to the still-developing conceptual history of Vietnam that begins with an early twentieth-century reappraisal by a Vietnamese intellectual on the role of Chinese publications and the Japanese model in Vietnam. It also examines the concept of *tân thư* 新書⁵ and its published holdings in private collections and in royal libraries. It will conclude with a quick survey of Japanese books and their readership in Vietnam in the early twentieth century, and finally focus on two works relevant to Japan that were particularly influential in Vietnam at the time. This history might be seen as the birth of the interest of Vietnamese intellectuals in Japan and as a prelude to Japanese studies in Vietnam which developed decades later.

2 Ibid., p. 2.

3 Brett Bowden, “In the Name of Civilization: War, Conquest, and Colonialism,” *Pléyade* no. 23, January–June 2019, p. 95.

4 This is called *Tōa bunka ken* 東亜文化圏, a term coined by Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生 (1919–1998) of Tokyo University. *Kanji bunka ken* 漢字文化圏 is another Japanese term for this.

5 *Tân thư* may be translated as “new books” or “new writings.” Some scholars have rendered it as “écrits modernes” (modern writings; see, for instance, Nguyễn Thế Anh, “Phan Bội Châu et les débuts du mouvement Đông Du,” in Vinh Sinh, ed., *Phan Bội Châu and the Đông Du Movement*, New Haven & Boston: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, William Joiner Center UMass, 1988, pp. 3–21). It is translated as “new publications” throughout this paper to cover both books and periodicals imported into Vietnam from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

An Early Twentieth-Century Reappraisal of the Roles of Chinese Publications and the Japanese Model in Vietnam

The French attacks on the harbor of Tourane (Da Nang) in 1858 may be considered the beginning of a long colonial period (lasting until 1954) in Vietnamese history, in which the country was divided into three parts: Tonkin (a protectorate), Annam (a semi-protectorate as it was still ruled by the Vietnamese Court), and Cochinchina (a colony). During the third decade of the twentieth century, some Vietnamese intellectuals educated in France returned to Saigon, and their homecoming rekindled anticolonial fervor in the nation. Among them was Phan Văn Trường 潘文長 (1876–1933), the first Vietnamese to earn a law degree from the Sorbonne, and who became Vietnam's first lawyer as well as the first Vietnamese Marxist, cofounding the two French-language newspapers *La Cloche Fêlée* (Cracked Bell) and *L'Annam* (Annam) in Saigon.⁶ From October 25, 1925, to March 15, 1926, *La Cloche Fêlée* serialized Phan Văn Trường's memoirs called *Une histoire de conspirateurs annamites à Paris, ou, La vérité sur l'Indochine* (A Story of Annamese Conspirators in Paris, or, the Truth about Indochina), which would be made into a book in 1928. A few momentous passages from chapter 8 of the book, “La question épineuse de l'enseignement indigène en Indochine” (The Thorny Question of Indigenous Education in Indochina) deserves citing in full as it reflects some widely held opinions of France-trained Vietnamese elites on French politico-educational policies, the role of the Chinese language and new Chinese publications printed in the late Qing period in promoting the study of Western science, and the attraction of the Japanese model in colonial Vietnam:

At the time of the French conquest, the country of Annam was endowed with an educational system which, like the ancient Chinese educational system, comprised exclusively literary studies. The fact that China was lagging behind in scientific progress had led to the belief that the Chinese writing system, which is much less simple than alphabetical scripts, was a serious obstacle to the study of Western science. Also, the obscurantist party, believing to find in this writing an excellent instrument for the triumph of their dark intentions which consist, in short, of diverting the attention of the Annamese from Western sciences, hastened to plead the continuance of their old system of teaching Chinese, while waiting to completely suppress all other kinds of teaching. Most of the settlers and officials expressed the opinion that the Annamese could be left temporarily to study Chinese as they had previously studied, that is to say in their old method, but that the teaching of French should be reduced to the bare minimum for the training of a few scribes, and it was important to be careful not to teach them any Western science.

However, the obscurantist party remained for a long time without realizing that China had reorganized its teaching on new bases, and that it had already translated and commented in Chinese on most of the great Western authors and many Western science treatises. As a result, many Annamese literati, just by reading a few modern Chinese publications, acquire a

6 See also Pierre Brocheux, “Phan Văn Trường, 1876–1933. Acteur d'une histoire partagée,” *Moussons: Recherche en sciences humaines sur l'Asie du Sud-Est* no. 24, 2014, <http://journals.openedition.org/moussons/3013> (Accessed September 16, 2021).

good general knowledge of the sciences and the arts, geography, and the history of the five parts of the world, while their compatriots trained in Franco-Annamese schools do not know anything about it, except those among them who have had the curiosity to teach themselves through books. In Hanoi, there was an old Annamese literatus who, after studying physics and chemistry on his own in a few small Chinese books, could carry out interesting applications from them. Even today we meet Annamese literati who do not understand a word of French but know the stories of France and Europe much better than many of their compatriots trained in French schools.

But it took the worldwide glow of Japan's overwhelming victory in the war against Russia (1904–1905) to convince Europeans that the Chinese language, studied methodically, is hardly more difficult than other languages and is in no way an obstacle to the study of Western science. As regards language, Japan finds itself in a situation analogous to that of Annam before the French conquest: it has a spoken language as in Annam, but the written language is also Chinese. Even today, in Japan, official acts, journals, major newspapers, and schoolbooks are written in Chinese, which is the main compulsory language at various stages of Japanese education.

The Japanese guns, which sprayed the Russian armies on land and sea, awoke the yellow world like a thunderbolt to put it face to face with the white peril. Despite the extremely severe measures taken by the French government of Indochina to prevent the entry into the country of Chinese and Japanese magazines and newspapers of this period, the war nevertheless had its repercussions in the country of Annam. Courageous Annamese, braving official prohibitions and the dangers of evasion, stealthily crossed the border, went to China, and ran to Japan, going everywhere in search of schools they could not find at home.⁷

What Phan Văn Trường did not discuss in the above passages was that the exemplary model of Japan reached Vietnam through books and periodicals from China. Not only did those newly published works expose Vietnamese readers to modern Western science and technology, but they also elicited their curiosity of new sociopolitical values and concepts, such as “civilization,” “freedom,” “democracy,” “citizen,” and “national independence.” Moreover, not only did the Japanese model come to the awareness of the Vietnamese, but Japanese publications also landed in the Southeast Asian country, although in much smaller numbers in comparison to those from China.

Understanding *Tân Thư*

Despite its crucial role in Vietnam's conceptual history, the question of *tân thư* in Vietnam was not fully considered until the last few years of the twentieth century. In July 1996 and January 1997, two conferences sharing the same title, “*Tân thư và xã hội Việt Nam cuối thế kỷ XIX đầu thế kỷ XX*” (*Tân thư* and Vietnamese Society from the Late Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Century) took place at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Hanoi, followed by forty-two

7 Phan Văn Trường, *Une histoire de conspirateurs annamites à Paris, ou, La vérité sur l'Indochine*, Montreuil: L'Insomniaque, 2003, pp. 59–61. All translations are by the author unless indicated.

selected proceedings published in mid-1997, bearing the full title of the two events.⁸ The book's introduction describes *tân thư* as follows:

Tân thư is a general term for books, newspapers, or magazines that emerged in Japan, China, and Vietnam from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, whose contents introduced new American-European thought. People called them *tân thư* [new publications] in order to distinguish them from *cổ thư* [古書, old writings] whose content belongs to traditional feudal culture and education.⁹

This working definition may sound ambiguous since it does not consider several historical circumstances of colonial Vietnam, in which this specific term took root, and blurs the intellectual interconnection of the three nations in question. Hence, before suggesting another definition of *tân thư*, one should quickly review what was happening in Vietnam in relation to Japan and China during that time.

The time from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century was a crucial period in the modern intellectual history of Vietnam. During that period, confronted with French colonialism, and to broaden their knowledge of East Asia and especially of the American and European world, local Confucian literati stepped beyond their national boundaries literally and figuratively in order to find a way out of their national predicament. Their encounters with “the West” could be directly or indirectly realized through their often-secretive travels under the prohibition of the French colonial government, or through the travels of new thought that materialized in border-crossing traveling publications, reaching Vietnam either directly from “the West” (mainly from France), or indirectly from intermediary countries, either Japan or China. Partitioned into two (semi-)protectorates (Annam and Tonkin) and one colony (Cochinchina) by the French colonialists, the divided colonial Vietnam could obtain French publications sanctioned and imported directly from the French metropole as part of the *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission). They arrived mainly through official governmental and unofficial personal channels.

However, there were also numerous paths for alternative publications from East Asia to reach Vietnam. The Nguyễn dynasty imported newly published books and periodicals from China and Japan, labeling them as *tân thư* and preserving them in its dynastic libraries in Huế, the capital of Annam. The imported publications principally served the needs of governance and defense as well as of the modernization of the nation. Besides those imported by the Nguyễn Court, another category of “new publications” by “progressive” Western and East Asian authors like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), was clandestinely introduced into Vietnam from China and Japan and circulated within small circles of Vietnamese anti-French reformists who wanted more sociopolitical changes to strengthen the nation and to foster its aspiration of independence from the French colonial government.

8 Đinh Xuân Lâm et al., *Tân thư và xã hội Việt Nam cuối thế kỷ XIX đầu thế kỷ XX-Tan Thu and Vietnamese Society in the Period of the Late Nineteenth Century to the Early Twentieth Century*, Hanoi: Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 1997.

9 Ibid., p. 6.

Court-Approved vs. Court-Banned “New Publications”

Understandably, “progressive” publications were banned by both the monarchy and the colonialist authority. The *Đại Nam Thực lục Chính biên Đệ lục kỷ* 大南寔錄正編第六紀 (Principal Veritable Records of Đại Nam: The Sixth Annals) registers an account that can help to better understand the Nguyễn Court’s attitude toward *tân thư*. In the fourth month of the fifth year of the reign of Duy Tân 維新 (1911), a memorial from the Department for Rectitude 輔政府 was submitted to the Throne, petitioning that,

Among *new publications* there exist books by Chinese authors, such as *Việt Nam Vong quốc sử* 越南亡國史 [A History of the Loss of Vietnam],¹⁰ together with *Phổ cáo Lục tỉnh văn* 普告六省文 [Proclamation to the Six Provinces of the Far-end South Vietnam],¹¹ *Việt Nam Quốc sử khảo* 越南國史考 [A Study on Vietnam’s National History],¹² *Tân Việt Nam* 新越南 [New Vietnam],¹³ *Viễn hải quy hồng* 遠海歸鴻 [Wild Swan Returning from Distant Oceans],¹⁴ and *Lusuo hun* 盧梭魂 [The Ghost of Rousseau],¹⁵ that wrongly create baseless, unruly stories to comment on current affairs; many teenagers of our nation clandestinely read and circulate them, getting enchanted or becoming agitated to commit malfeasance. Without any

10 Written by Phan Bội Châu 潘佩珠, this seminal work was introduced to Liang Qichao by the author when he first arrived in Japan in 1905. See Phan Bội Châu, *Vuetonamu bōkoku-shi: Hoka* ヲエトナム亡国史：他, translated into Japanese and annotated by Nagaoka Shinjirō 長岡新次郎 and Kawamoto Kunie 川本邦衛, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1966.

11 Phan Bội Châu composed this mobilizing work in 1906 during his stay in Japan as suggested by Prince Cường Để 彊楫 (1882–1951). See Chương Thâu et al., eds., *Vụ án Phan Bội Châu năm 1925: Hồ sơ thẩm vấn, Văn bản tiếng Pháp lưu tại CAOM–Aix-en-Provence* (The Legal Case of Phan Bội Châu in 1925: Investigatory Dossier; French Documents Preserved in CAOM, Aix-en-Provence), Hanoi: Thanh Niên, 2017, p. 450.

12 According to Chương Thâu, Phan Bội Châu finished the manuscript in 1908 and had it printed by Shōransha 翔鸞社 in Tokyo in 1909. See Chương Thâu, ed., *Phan Bội Châu Toàn tập* (The Complete Works of Phan Bội Châu), 10 vols., Huế: Thuận Hoá & Trung tâm Văn hoá Ngôn ngữ Đông Tây, 2000, vol. 3, p. 7.

13 Phan Bội Châu wrote *Tân Việt Nam* around 1906–1907. See Chương Thâu, ed., *Phan Bội Châu Toàn tập* vol. 2, p. 171.

14 This work was composed by Nguyễn Thượng Hiền 阮尚賢 in 1908 in Japan. See Imai Akio 今井昭夫, “Betonamu 20 seiki hajime no shishi Gen Shōken no chosaku ‘Enkaikikō’ (1908 nen): Hon’yaku to sono kaidai” ベトナム 20 世紀初の志士阮尚賢の著作『遠海歸鴻』(1908 年)：翻訳とその解題, *Tōkyō Gaidai Tōnan Ajia gaku* 東京外大東南アジア学 no. 10, 2005, pp. 122–137.

15 *Lusuo hun* is a novel by Huai Ren 懷仁, published in the thirty-first year of the reign of Guangxu (1905): “In *The Ghost of Rousseau* (*Lusuo hun*), the French thinker teams up with the Ming loyalist Huang Zongxi to overthrow the tyrannical rule of Hell” (Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, eds., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 2 vols., Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, vol. 2, p. 449. “Huai Ren” has been identified as the pen name of Zhang Shutong 張樹桐 (1872–1957); see Song Qingyang 宋慶陽, “*Lusuo hun* zuozhe kaobian” 《盧梭魂》作者考辯 (On the Author of *The Ghost of Rousseau*), *Shinmatsu Shōsetsu* 清末小説 no. 35, 2012, pp. 158–164. See also Việt Anh, “Hình bóng Lữ Thoa [Rousseau, 1712–1778] trong nhận thức của Nho sĩ Việt Nam: Một góc nhìn từ tư liệu Hán Văn” (Rousseau’s Image in Vietnamese Confucians’ Knowledge: A Viewpoint from Documents Composed in Literary Chinese), *Tap chí Nghiên cứu và Phát triển* no. 1/155, 2020, pp. 143–152.

proactive prohibition, we are afraid that they will ignite the rise of corrupt practices. We petition the Court for an announcement to literati and commoners in the capital and in provinces that, aside from works on *cách trí* 格致 [natural sciences], *vệ sinh* 衛生 [hygiene], *địa dư* 地輿 [geography], *sử ký* 史記 [history], and *chính trị* 政治 [politics] of Đông Dương 東洋 [Asia], which have been approved by Hanoi Committee, introduced into the school curricula and must be studied for examinations, all other books must be banned to calm people's minds and stop rumors and comments.¹⁶

From this informative account, one can learn quite a few noteworthy features of the “new publications” and the Court's reaction toward them. First, there was the Court's division of “new publications” into two distinctive categories: educational and public-security threats. Second, imported textbooks on the natural and social sciences (including politics) needed the Court's approval to disseminate Western knowledge in the new school system as long as they did not cause any social instability. Third, except for the novel *Lusuo hun*, all of the listed exemplary cases were works written by Vietnamese Confucian patriotic reformists during their stay in Japan, which had become a cradle for anti-French, revolutionary, and democratic “new publications” to grow and travel from there back to Vietnam. Fourth, their authorship apparently remained unknown to the Court, or more precisely, the Court was confused with identifying the authors of some of those works as they were printed overseas (in Japan and China) and imported into Vietnam from there. Lastly, the impact of the new publications was recognized as dangerous by the Court as they presented a serious threat to it, and consequently, these types of new publications composed by Vietnamese authors and sent back home from overseas (particularly from Japan and China) were banned by both the Court and the French government. However, how did the Vietnamese reformists come to settle in Japan at that time? To answer this question, we need to travel back to the late nineteenth century to see how the first waves of “new publications” from East Asia reached the shores of colonial Vietnam and triggered several local Confucian literati to think of new solutions for the liberation of their nation from French colonialism.

Revolutionary “New Publications” from Japan and China

Two key figures in early-twentieth-century-Vietnam's patriotic movements, Phan Bội Châu (1867–1940) and Phan Châu Trinh 潘周楨 (1871–1926), were exposed to “new publications” when in Huế, the royal capital of Annam, around the time of a series of critical military and political events. These were the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the Chinese coup of the year of Wuxu 戊戌 (1898), and the Boxer Rebellion (1900). Thanks to the Court officials Thân Trọng Huề 申仲懺 (1869–1925) and Đào Nguyên Phổ 陶元溥 (1861–1908), Phan Châu Trinh had access to Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's writings, to learn about “the people's rights, liberty,

16 Quốc sử quán Triều Nguyễn (Academia Historica of the Nguyễn Dynasty), *Đại Nam Thực lục Chính biên Đệ lục kỷ Phụ biên* (Principal Veritable Records of Đại Nam: The Sixth Annals Appendix), translated into Vietnamese and introduced by Cao Tự Thanh, Ho Chi Minh City: Văn hoá-Văn nghệ, 2011, entry 1731, p. 547.

appreciably recognizing the nature of Western European civilization.”¹⁷ Similarly, the mandarin Nguyễn Thượng Hiền introduced Phan Bội Châu to the seminal essay “Thiên hạ Đại thế luận” 天下大勢論 (On the Dominant Trends in the World) by the Catholic scholar Nguyễn Trường Tộ 阮長祚 (1828–1871), which broadened Phan’s view of the world. Nguyễn Thượng Hiền also lent Phan a number of “new publications,” such as Young John Allen’s *Zhong Dong zhanji* 中東戰紀 (History of the Sino-Japanese War, 1895), Wang Tao’s *Pu Fa zhanji* 普法戰紀 (A Record of the Franco-Prussian War, 1870–1871), and Xu Jiyu’s 徐繼畲 *Yinghuan zhilue* 瀛寰志略 (Brief Record of the Ocean Circuit, 1849). In Phan’s words, “Having read those books, I roughly understood the competitive circumstances in the world, and miserable conditions of the loss of a country and the extinction of a human race. My heart and mind was more stimulated by reading the books.”¹⁸ Huỳnh Thúc Kháng 黃叔抗 (1876–1947), a contemporary and a friend of Phan Châu Trinh, also happened to find himself in Huế in 1904 as a successful candidate earning the designation of “Associate Presented Scholars” (*đồng tiến sĩ xuất thân* 同進士出身). In his chronological biography, Huỳnh recalled how he and Phan Châu Trinh encountered “new publications,” and for them, the year of 1903 was a landmark in their revolutionary life:

That time, in China, after the Coup of the year Wuxu [1898] and the incident of the military alliance in the year of Gengzi 庚子 [1900], the scholar-gentry were awakened, and movements that welcomed European studies arose nationwide; publications by Kang Youwei, or Liang Qichao (leaders of the reformist school) were gradually reaching our country. News on the Russo-Japanese War could come to us, unlike the earlier period of obstruction. The year before that year [1903], Vice Minister Thân Trọng Huê (who used to study in France) submitted a memorial requesting the abolition of the civil service examination; in the capital, Đào Tào Pha (that is, Đào Nguyên Phổ) successfully purchased several new publications, such as *Wuxu zhengbian* 戊戌政變 [The Wuxu Coup],¹⁹ *Zhongguo hun* 中國魂 [The Soul of China],²⁰ *Riben weixin shi* 日本維新史 [History of Japanese

17 Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, *Phan Tây Hồ Tiên sinh Lịch sử* (A Biography of Phan Tây Hồ), Huế: Anh Minh, 1959, p. 14.

18 Phan Bội Châu, *Phan Bội Châu Niên biểu* (A Chronological Biography of Phan Bội Châu), translated from Chinese into Vietnamese by Phạm Trọng Điểm and Tồn Quang Phiệt, Hanoi: Văn Sử Địa, 1957, p. 32.

19 The full title is *Wuxu zhengbian ji* 戊戌政變記 (Record on the Wuxu Coup) by Liang Qichao. This work was first serialized in *Qingyi bao* 清議報 and later published in book format between 1899 and 1903; see Hazama Naoki 狹間直樹, “Liang Qichao *Wuxu zhengbian ji* chengshu kao” 梁啟超《戊戌政變記》成書考 (A Research on the Completion Time of Liang Qichao’s *Record on the Wuxu Coup*), *Jindaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究 no. 4, 1997, pp. 230–239.

20 After the essay titled “Zhongguo hun anzai hu” 中國魂安在乎 (“Where is the soul of China?,” 1899), Liang Qichao published *Zhongguo hun* in 1902, which was a collection of essays previously written; see Hazama Naoki, “*Xinmin shuo* luelun” 《新民說》略論 (A Brief Discussion on “Discourse on the New Citizen”) *Liang Qichao, Mingzhi Riben, Xifang* 梁啟超·明治日本·西方 (Liang Qichao, Meiji Japan and the West), Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2001, p. 83. As Vietnamese Marxist historian Trần Huy Liệu (1901–1969) recalled, although only a child, he sobbed when he read *Zhongguo hun* on a stormy evening; see Phạm Như Thơm, ed., *Hồi ký Trần Huy Liệu*, p. 33.

Restoration],²¹ and *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 [New Citizen Journal], together with European books translated into French. Among us, Phan Tây Hồ [that is, Phan Châu Trinh] (who served as an imperial administrator of the Ministry of Rites) was the most enthusiastic person in discussing Western studies. Since I did not take the civil examination that year, I often accompanied Tây Hồ to Đào's house and read all the “new publications” available there. Our humble understanding of changes in the world truly started from that year.²²

The impact of Liang Qichao's writings, including the abovementioned *Zhongguo hun*, had a great impact on generations of Vietnamese anticolonial revolutionaries during the first half of the twentieth century.²³ Moreover, with the importation of *Xinmin congbao* and other writings by Chinese reformists like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, several important Japanese thinkers, such as Saigō Takamori 西郷隆盛 (1828–1877) and Fukuzawa Yukichi, must have been known to Vietnamese elites. Liang Qichao's 1902 essay “Lun xueshu zhi shili zuoyou shijie” 論學術之勢力左右世界 (On the World's Power of Knowledge) cites Fukuzawa along with the most influential Western scientists, explorers, politicians, and thinkers.²⁴ In the same year, under the title “Ribei weixin er weiren” 日本維新二偉人 (Two Great Figures of Japan's Reforms), *Xinmin congbao* presented two portraits of Saigō and Fukuzawa together with their short biographies. As for Fukuzawa, his biography clearly identifies him as the advocator of Western studies, and the founder of Keiō Gijuku 慶應義塾, which was at that time, “the top among private schools in Japan” (no. 7, p. 15).

As an obituary composed for the passing of Herbert Spencer, the article “Dazhe Sibinsai luezhuan” 大哲斯賓塞略傳 (A Short Biography of the Great Philosopher Spencer) indicates that even though Darwin initiated the theory of evolution, it was fully developed by Spencer.²⁵ In the early twentieth century, introductory research on Spencer by Japanese scholar Aruga Nagao 有賀長雄 (1860–1921) was translated into Chinese, which identified Spencer with the theory

21 This may be a shorter title of *Riben weixin sanshinian shi* 日本維新三十年史 (History of Thirty Years of Japanese Restoration) published by Guangzhi Shuju in 1903; see Zou Zhenhuan, “Evolution of the Late Qing Historical Writing on the Decline of Poland,” in Iwo Amelung, ed., *Discourses of Weakness in Modern China: Historical Diagnoses of the “Sick Man of East Asia,”* Frankfurt & New York: Campus, 2018, p. 393.

22 Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, *Huỳnh Thúc Kháng Niên phở (Huỳnh Thúc Kháng Tự truyện) & Thư gửi Kỳ Ngoại Hầu Cường Để* (The Chronological Biography or Autobiography of Huỳnh Thúc Kháng & Letters to External Marquis Cường Để), translated from literary Chinese into Vietnamese by Anh Minh, Hanoi: Văn hoá Thông tin, 2000, p. 33.

23 Well-received by enthusiastic Vietnamese reformist literati during the first decade of the twentieth century, Liang Qichao's *Zhongguo hun* was continuously read, and served as great inspiration for national independence and social reforms. After Vietnam's Declaration of Independence in September 1945, a Vietnamese translation of selected excerpts from Liang's work titled *Trung Quốc hỗn trích diễm* (Selections from *Zhongguo hun*) by Học Năng 學能 was published during the first year of the new Democratic Republic of Vietnam in October 1945 (Hanoi: Tân Việt).

24 “Lun xueshu zhi shili zuoyou shijie” 論學術之勢力左右世界, Weiji Wenku 維基文庫, <https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh-hant/%E8%AB%96%E5%AD%B8%E8%A1%93%E4%B9%8B%E5%8B%A2%E5%8A%9B%E5%B7%A6%E5%8F%B3%E4%B8%96%E7%95%8C> (Accessed September 18, 2021).

25 *Xinmin congbao*, “Huibian” 彙編, 1903, p. 447.

of evolution.²⁶

As for Montesquieu, the citation reminds us of a record named “Donghaigong lai jian” 東海公來簡 (A Memorandum from Mr. Donghai, a.k.a. Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲), published in *Xinmin congbao* vol. 13, 1902. It reports that, “Around the twelfth or thirteenth year of the Meiji reign [1879 or 1880], the theory of people’s rights reached its zenith. I was quite surprised when first hearing about it. Having chosen Rousseau and Montesquieu’s theories to read, my mind changed immediately” (p. 1).

The great success of the Meiji reforms, the settlement of Liang Qichao in Japan after the Wuxu coup, and the victory of Japan over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 turned Japan into an attractive revolutionary destination for Vietnamese patriots. Aware of those events thanks to new informative and inspirational writings published in China and later imported to Vietnam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people like Phan Bội Châu fled to Japan to meet like-minded friends (such as Liang Qichao), and thanks to the assistance of those Chinese and Japanese comrades, they promoted democracy, constitutional monarchism, and anti-colonialism through their new writings, printed either in China or Japan, and sent back to their home country as “new publications.” Of course, their works were smuggled back into a divided Vietnam, and secretly read within small circles of comrades when other purely scientific and politically harmless “new publications” approved by the Court were used in schools and preserved in the royal libraries.

Japanese Books and Their Readership in Vietnam in the Early Twentieth Century

Undeniably, Japanese military victories and reform successes brought great hope to early twentieth-century Vietnam seeking to escape the domination of French colonialism. Naturally, one can expect that books, journals, and newspapers should have been imported from Japan to Vietnam in a significant number to nurture and raise such significant public interest. However, what actually happened was very different from what had been expected.

The Library of Viện Thông tin Khoa học Xã hội (Institute of Social Sciences Information, Hanoi) can now proudly claim that it “has preserved the greatest, precious and rare source of materials in Southeast Asia, collected or composed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century, on Oriental studies” in various languages, such as French, English, Japanese, and Chinese. In terms of Japanese publications, it currently holds 11,223 books inherited from the École française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO, or French School of the Far East) in 1957.²⁷

26 For instance, *Renjun jinhua lun* 人群進化論 (Theory of Evolution for the Common Herd), translated by Shunde Mai Zhonghua 順德麥仲華, Shanghai: Guangzhi shuju 廣智書局, 1903. See also Han Chenghua 韓承樞, “Sibinsai dao Zhongguo: Yige fanyishi de taolun” 斯賓塞到中國一個翻譯史的討論 (Spencer Reaching China: A Historical Translation Discussion), *Bianyi luncong* 編譯論叢 vol. 3, no. 2, September 2010, p. 42.

27 Created in Saigon in 1898, the French Archaeological Mission in Indochina was the premise for the establishment of the École française d’Extrême-Orient there in 1900. In 1902, the school was transferred to Hanoi and remained there until 1957; see Philippe Le Failler, ed., *L’École française d’Extrême-Orient au Vietnam: 1900–2000; Regards croisés sur un siècle de curiosité scientifique*, Hanoi: Văn hoá Thông Tin, 2000, p. 3.

A quick survey of its online catalogue yields a few significant titles, such as *Meiji shiyō* 明治史要 (1876) by Shūshikyoku 修史局 (History Compilation Bureau), *Meiji shoshū kōyō* 明治諸宗綱要 (1890) by Yoshitani Kakuju 吉谷覺寿, *Meiji seishi* 明治政史 (1892–1893) by Sashihara Yasuzō 指原安三, *Meiji rekishi* 明治歴史 (1894) by Tsuboya Zenshirō 坪谷善四郎, *Meiji seichoku shū* 明治聖勅集 (1895) by Samura Hachirō 佐村八郎, *Meiji meika kashū* 明治名家集 (1899–1900) by Sasaki Nobutsuna 佐々木信綱, *Fukuzawa zenshū* 福沢全集, and *Takayama Chogyū zenshū* 高山樗牛全集 (1904–1908).²⁸ The titles selectively quoted here may give readers an impression that Vietnamese Confucian literati around that time could learn about Japan in general, and about Meiji Restoration and thought in particular, directly from those Japanese sources. However, one should not forget that although founded in Saigon in 1898, the EFEO did not move to Hanoi until 1900, and as a research institution, its library was not open to the public. Additionally, Vietnam's sociohistorical and cultural conditions also left some linguistic barriers that prevented the Vietnamese intelligentsia from having direct access to publications in Japanese.

Despite growing up in a time of dramatic encounters between East and West, the Vietnamese Confucian literati did not prepare themselves well enough in the unique multilingual environment of their time. Analyzing Vietnamese Confucians' foreign-language ability in the early twentieth century, Nguyễn Thị Việt Thanh also points out their limited knowledge of Japanese when learning new Japanese thought:

[Since] most Confucian literati did not know any other foreign languages, except written Chinese, the only materials they could read were books written in Chinese clandestinely introduced to Vietnam around that time, and those were mainly *tân thư*. A quite similar situation even applied to Phan Bội Châu's Đông Du 東遊 [that is, "Going East"] team: although living in Japan but without understanding its language, they could learn about Japan and the rest of the world only from Chinese publications published or circulated in Japan.²⁹

As it happened, neither did Phan's generation even read French, the language of the colonialists in colonial Vietnam.

In commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the death of Phan Châu Trinh, there was a printed article titled "Cụ Tây Hồ với việc Tây học: Chuyện dật sử trong khoảng Đông học" (Mr. Tây Hồ and Western Learning: Anecdotes within Eastern Learning) by Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, published in the newspaper *Tiếng Dân* (People's Voices) on March 24, 1936. In the article, Huỳnh recounted Phan Châu Trinh's first days in Japan.

There is no rush to listen about external affairs [that is, "Going East" stories], but first things first, there is the need to learn foreign languages. I traveled to Japan, and wherever I went I depended on Sào Nam 巢南 [that is, Phan Bội Châu] speaking little Japanese; when meeting Japanese people who were literate in Chinese, I could borrow a writing brush to communicate

28 The library catalogue is accessible online at http://opac.issi.vass.gov.vn/*eng (Accessed June 23, 2021).

29 Nguyễn Thị Việt Thanh, "Nhật Bản: Nhịp cầu chuyển tải tư tưởng và văn minh phương Tây vào phương Đông" (Japan: A Bridge for the Transmission of Thought from the West to the East), in Đinh Xuân Lâm et al., *Tân thư và xã hội Việt Nam cuối thế kỷ XIX đầu thế kỷ XX*, p. 22.

with them on a few issues; otherwise, I would sit still facing them like a dumb person. If they served tea in front of me, then cursed or scolded me, I would still take the cup of tea and drink it up, and even thank them for that. You could imagine how inexpressible the anguish of not knowing a foreign language is.

Furthermore, Huỳnh reported another story told by Phan Châu Trinh about a meeting between the Japanese Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi 犬養毅 (1855–1932) and Phan Bội Châu, who was accompanied by a group of Vietnamese youth studying in Japan. After learning that those Vietnamese did not yet know French, Inukai responded, possibly by means of “brush talk” (*bitsudan* 筆談),

You have been cohabiting with the French for half a century, and France is a renowned civilized country in the world, why don't you learn their language? That is a serious shortcoming. For us Japanese, when the British came, we learned English; when the Russians, French, and Germans came, we also learned Russian, French, and German. We also send our teenagers to those countries to study. For only if we understand their languages and scripts, and can read their books, can we comprehend their circumstances, systems of government, and their affairs to imitate their outstanding achievements. You [that is, Phan Bội Châu] are too old to learn it, but why don't these young men learn French?

He concluded that,

Vietnam has been under French protection for a few decades, and you are the first Vietnamese people coming to our country with whom we meet. So, it is obvious that rarely do your people step out of your national boundaries. Without traveling overseas, and remaining in the country without learning French, a thousand-mile gap exists in between the two sides. You have gotten sick from asphyxia. Studying French is the first and foremost medicine to cure your asphyxia.³⁰

Setting aside any personal or national embarrassments, the anecdotes in the article are told obviously to trigger learning, especially foreign language learning, among its readers to better understand the world and to strengthen the nation. Equally important is the article's reconfirmation of the limited readership of Japanese materials in Vietnam at that time. In addition to the pressure of Confucian civil service examinations conducted completely in literary Chinese, easy access to Chinese books (including Chinese translations of Japanese works) imported to Vietnam through various channels made the Vietnamese literati heavily dependent on them and feeling no need to find alternative sources or to learn any other new languages.

In the catalogues, we can find only a small number of fourteen titles whose authors are clearly listed as Japanese, and all of them are from the library of the Institute of Classical Studies.³¹ They

30 Chương Thái, ed., *Phan Châu Trinh Toàn tập* (The Complete Works of Phan Châu Trinh), 3 vols., Da Nang: Đà Nẵng Publishing House, 2005, vol. 2, pp. 47–48.

31 Institute of Classical Studies (Cổ học viện 古學院) is an institution of the Nguyễn Court.

are textbooks on physics, zoology, history, mathematics, maritime self-defense, calligraphy, ethics, physiological hygiene, history-accounting maps, psychology, and education. The listed textbooks surely contributed to the establishment of new sciences and scientific vocabulary in Vietnam but did not directly touch on the issues of anti-colonialism, democracy, or sociopolitical reforms. From the list, one may also conclude that lessons from the Meiji Restoration might not have been the dynasty's great concerns or interests. However, if we move beyond the royal libraries' catalogues, we can find a few seminal Japanese works that had a profound impact on Vietnamese intellectuals of the time.

The list of fourteen Japanese textbooks listed in the Nguyễn dynasty's Institute of Classical Studies catalogue

No.	Title in Chinese Characters as Recorded in the Catalogue and its Vietnamese Pronunciation	Author	Catalogue number	Japanese Original Title as Recorded in the Japanese National Diet Library and its publication year (Meiji era and Christian Era)
1	物理學教科書 / <i>Vật lý học giáo khoa thứ</i>	Nishi Moromoto 西師意	20b	Not found
2	物理學教科書 / <i>Vật lý học giáo khoa thứ</i>	Honda Kōtarō 本多光太郎	23a	<i>Shinsen butsurigaku</i> 新撰物理學 (Meiji 34/1901)
3	動物學教科書 / <i>Động vật học giáo khoa thứ</i>	Oka Asajirō 丘浅治郎	21b	<i>Kinsei dōbutsugaku kyōkasho</i> 近世動物学教科書 (Meiji 32/1899)
4	希臘史 / <i>Hy Lạp sử</i>	Kuwabara Kei[ichi] 桑原啓[一]	12a	<i>Shinpen Girisha rekishi</i> 新編希臘歷史 (Meiji 26/1893)
5	筆算教法本 / <i>Bút toán giáo pháp bản</i>	Sawada Goichi 澤田吾一	18b	<i>Kōtō shōgaku hissan kyōhon: Seitoyō</i> 高等小學筆算教本：生徒用 (Meiji 32/1899)
6	海防臆測 / <i>Hải phòng úc trắc</i>	Koga Dōan 古賀侗庵	40a	<i>Kaibō okusoku</i> 海防臆測, Hidaka Nobuzane 日高誠実 (Meiji 13/1880)
7	高等毛筆習畫帖 / <i>Cao đẳng mao bút tập họa thiếp</i>	Otake Chikuha 尾竹竹坡	30b	Not found
8	無機化學 / <i>Vô cơ hoá học</i>	Tanba Keizō 丹波敬三	27a	<i>Muki Kagaku</i> 無機化學 (2 vols.) (Meiji 11/1878)
9	羅馬史 / <i>La Mã sử</i>	Uzurahama Gyoshi 鵜濱漁史	12a	Not found
10	倫理學綱要 / <i>Luân lý học cương yếu</i>	Tobari Yasushi 十張彌 (?)	28a	Not found
11	最新生理衛生教科書 / <i>Tối tân sinh lý vệ sinh giáo khoa thứ</i>	Komatsu Teiho 小松定甫 (?)	24b	<i>Seiri eisei gaku kōgi</i> 生理衛生学講義 by Komatsu Teiichi 小松定市 (Meiji 37/1904)
12	世界讀史地圖 / <i>Thế giới độc sử địa đồ</i>	Yoda Yūho 依田雄甫	37b	<i>Sekai dokushi chizu</i> 世界讀史地圖 (Meiji 31/1898)
13	心理學講義 / <i>Tâm lý học giảng nghĩa</i>	Hattori Unokichi 服部宇之吉	25a	<i>Shinrigaku kōgi</i> 心理學講義 (Meiji 38/1905)
14	新體歐洲教育史略 / <i>Tân thể Âu châu giáo dục sử lược</i>	Tanimoto Tomeri 谷本富	13b	<i>Shintai Ōshū kyōiku shiyō</i> 新体歐洲教育史要 (Meiji 32/1899)

Based on *Cổ học viện thư tịch thủ sách* 古學院書籍守冊 (The Institute of Classical Studies' Librarian Catalog), part "Tân thư thủ sách 新書守冊" (New Publication Catalogue), A.2601 (1-11), preserved in the Han-Nom Research Institute (Hanoi, Vietnam)

Two Seminal Works Introducing the Japanese Model to the Vietnamese Literati

In terms of news sources on and Vietnamese public interest in the Russo-Japanese War, the story of the high-ranking official Thân Trọng Huế provides rich information. Fascinated by the Meiji reforms, Thân often discussed the possibility of applying it in Vietnam with his mandarin peers. In August 1906, Thân encountered a provincial commander of the troops of Quảng Nam 廣南 Province in Tourane (Đà Nẵng), who came to see him and requested his assistance in acquiring a copy of a Chinese book called *Nhật Nga chiến kỷ* (*Ri E zhanji* 日俄戰紀, Russo-Japanese War Records), advertised by the bookstore Quảng Hưng Long 廣興隆 in Hanoi. Since the book was sold out, Thân sent the military head four other Chinese books instead: one on the contemporary history of Europe, one on geography, yet another on Japan's modern history, and lastly, Liang Qichao's *Yinbingshi wenji* 飲冰室文集 (Prose Collection of Yinbingshi). Thân explained why he purchased and sent those books to the military commander: "I believed that the books I bought and sent him were advantageous for those who had no knowledge of French but wanted to know contemporary affairs." Due to the book on the history of the Meiji reforms, Thân was accused by the superior resident in Annam of making himself the instrument of "Japanophile" propaganda.³²

Thân's account reveals several notable issues. First, the widespread advertising and selling of "new publications" from a bookstore in Hanoi show that they were available to certain specific readers. Second, after the victory of Japan over Russia, the title *Ri E zhanji* was highly in demand in Vietnam, although it remains unclear whether it was a serialized multi-issue publication of Shangwu Publishing House in Shanghai, or a single book printed from *Xinmin congbao*, or both. The Japanese triumph remained a great source of encouragement for the Vietnamese for a long time, as it would resurface during the 1930s when the Second World War was about to erupt. Third, "new publications" from China opened a window for the Vietnamese intelligentsia to the rest of the world, helping them better understand contemporary international affairs. And finally, those publications served as a vehicle to bring the Japanese model to Vietnamese readers. The book on Japan's modern history in question might have been the *Riben weixin shi* 日本維新史 (History of Japanese Restoration) heretofore cited in Huỳnh Thúc Kháng's report.

The achievements of and experience from Meiji Reforms undeniably triggered radical thoughts in Vietnamese Confucian reformists. A passage in the *Văn minh tân học sách* 文明新學策 (New Learning Strategies for the Advancement of Civilization, 1904, now preserved in the Han-Nom Research Institute) dealing with the needs of "civilizing" the nation to gain back its sovereignty from French colonialists frankly pointed out the uselessness of superficial changes in this crucial enterprise:

Mending (sackcloth) and rectifying, adorning and exaggerating, appear insufficient to be

32 Emmanuel Poisson, *Mandarins et subalternes au nord du Viêt Nam: Une bureaucratie à l'épreuve, 1820–1918*, Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2004, p. 190; see also *Quan và lại ở miền Bắc Việt Nam: Một bộ máy hành chính trước thử thách (1820–1918)*, translated into Vietnamese from French by Đào Hùng and Nguyễn Văn Sự, Đà Nẵng: Đà Nẵng Publishing House, 2006, pp. 315–316.

identified as “civilization,” but it seems that when the lute and the harp are out of tune, in extreme cases, one must release their strings and re-stretch them;³³ or as if when there exists a thousand-year-old house, people must first put it through renovation, to make it inhabitable (Liang Qichao’s words).³⁴ Our current circumstances certainly must be the same. Haven’t you heard about Japan yet? Within more than thirty years of importing European civilization, it has now attained its goals.³⁵

Having read the statement “more than thirty years of importing European civilization” in the above citation, readers can easily associate it with Takayama Rinjirō’s 高山林次郎 (1871–1902) *Tento sanjūnen*.³⁶ Based on these facts, in his supplementary essay titled “*Văn Minh Tân Học Sách to Riben weixin sanshinian shi*” 『文明新学策』と『日本維新三十年史』 (*New Learning Strategies for Civilization and Japan’s Reforms Thirty Years*), Hashimoto Kazutaka 橋本和孝 tries to prove the connection between the two works.³⁷ Takayama’s book was first translated into Chinese under the new title *Riben weixin sanshinian shi* 日本維新三十年史 and published by Guangzhi shuju 廣智書局 in Shanghai in 1902, and became accessible to a Vietnamese readership as seen in the stories told by Huỳnh Thúc Kháng and Thân Trọng Huề.

In his essay on Takayama Chogyū and other *Meiji sanjūnenshi* and their impact on the modern Asian world, Satō Atsushi 佐藤厚 also cites Huỳnh Thúc Kháng’s account and other contemporary scholars, such as Chương Thâu 章収, Nguyễn Tiến Lực 阮進力, or Luo Jingwen 羅景文, to show the crucial role of this work in the formation of Phan Bội Châu’s faith in the Japanese model of reforms.³⁸ Also noteworthy is Shiraiishi Masaya’s 白石昌也 discovery of a file

33 Those lines are from the biography of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC) recorded in *Hanshu* 漢書 (Han Documents). See Anthony E. Clark, “Han Shu, Chapter 56: Biography of Dong Zhongshu,” Whitworth University (2005), *History Faculty Scholarship*, Paper 26, p. 16.

34 The sentence in question is modeled after a statement asserted by Liang Qichao. In an essay written in 1901, titled “Guodu shidai lun 過渡時代論” (On the age of transition), Liang wrote that, “Like a thousand-year-old house that is unrenovatable and uninhabitable, but people still wish to renovate it, they must first abandon its old stuff.”

35 Anonymous, *Văn minh tân học sách*, pp. 14b–15a.

36 Hakubunkan 博文館, *Tento sanjūnen: Meiji sanjūnenshi, Meiji sanjūnenkan kokusei ichiran* 夔都三十年：明治三十年史・明治卅年間国勢一覽 (Tento Thirty Years: History of Meiji’s Thirty-year Reform; An Overview of Meiji’s Situations during Thirty Years), Tokyo: Hakubunkan 博文館, 1898.

37 Hashimoto Kazutaka, *Ushinawareru shikuro no shita de: Betonamu no shakai to rekishi* 失われるシクロの下で：ベトナムの社会と歴史 (Lost Under the Cyclo: Vietnam’s Society and History), Tokyo: Hābesuto-sha, 2017, pp. 183–194.

38 Satō Atsushi, “Takayama Rinjirō (Chogyū)-tō-cho *Meiji sanjūnenshi* to kindai Ajia sekai ni ataeta eikyō” 高山林次郎 (樗牛) 等著『明治三十年史』と近代アジア世界に与えた影響 (History of the Thirty Years of the Meiji Era by Takayama Chogyū and Others and Its Influence on the Modern Asian World), *Senshū jinbun ronshū* 専修人文論集 no. 95, 2015, pp. 410–412.

archived in France's National Archives–Annex of the Former Colonies,³⁹ in which “the originals seized by the French Indochina authorities are kept.” This evidence helps to reconfirm the circulation of the translation in Vietnam by 1907.⁴⁰ Japan's thirty-year reforms continued to serve as a great model for Vietnam even in the next few decades. In the foreword to his book *Nước Nhật Bốn ba mươi năm duy tân* (Japan's Thirty Years of Reform) printed in Hue in 1936, Đào Trinh Nhất 陶貞一 (1900–1951) concludes,

Where there's a will, there's a way. That was true as when the Japanese recognized their need of becoming civilized, and determined to strengthen themselves, they could successfully obtain the civilization and self-strengthening they wished. The willpower and perseverance of human beings has been exposed at a very high level. They have hung up an exemplary mirror of “self-determination of life or death” for all declining or backward nations in the world to look at themselves in the mirror together, and they should do that. Hence, this book is a work that must be written; and as it has been published, it should not be useless to its compatriot-citizens.⁴¹

As expected, in the list of references printed at the end of the book, one can easily find a book called *Riben sanshinian weixin shi* cited.⁴²

Conclusions

It is clearly impossible to discuss the development of intellectual history in Vietnam at the beginning of the twentieth century without considering the great contribution of Japan. New knowledge from the West were first translated into Japanese and later from there into Chinese, reformist examples and thoughts from Japan (especially from Fukuzawa Yukichi) were introduced to

39 According to Shiraishi, the document is catalogued under the call number IC-GG20225, and titled “Saisie de 3 brochures sur la Guerre russo-japonaise chez la négociant chinois M.Ap-Seng, 1907” (Seizure of Three Brochures on the Russo-Japanese War at a Chinese Merchant M. Ap-Seng, 1907). In terms of the institution where the document is preserved, Shiraishi informs that it is “Furansu kokuritsu monjokan kyū shokuminchi-shō bunkan” フランス国立文書館旧植民地省分館. It is unclear what the institution's name in French is, but it might refer to the Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer (ANOM) in Aix-en-Provence, France.

40 Shiraishi Masaya, *Betonamu minzoku undō to Nihon, Ajia: Fan Boi Chau no kakumei shisō to taigai ninshiki* ベトナム民族運動と日本・アジア：ファン・ボイ・チャウの革命思想と対外認識 (Vietnam's National Movement and Japan, Asia, Phan Boi Chau's Revolutionary Thought and External Recognition), Tokyo: Gannandō Shoten, 1993, p. 137, n. 12.

41 Đào Trinh Nhất, *Nước Nhật Bốn – 30 năm Duy Tân*, Hue: Đắc Lập, 1936, “Vài lời nói trước,” https://www.erct.com/2-ThoVan/0-NBDuyTan/00-Mo_dau.htm (Accessed June 21, 2021).

42 Moreover, the first five entries in the bibliographical list are also worth noting: *Riben kaiguo wushinian shi* 日本開國五十年史 by Ōkuma Shigenobu 大隈重信 et al. (translated into Chinese by Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1929), *Riben jinshi haojie xiaoshi* 日本近世豪傑小史 by Shangwu Yinshuguan (translated into Chinese by Lin Qi 林燦, 1903), *Mingzhi zhengdang xiaoshi* 明治政黨小史 by Mainichi shinbun 毎日新聞 (translated into Chinese by Nanhai Chen Chao 陳超, Shanghai: Guangzhi shuju, 1902), and *Ri E zhanji* by Shangwu Yinshuguan, already discussed above.

Vietnam through various channels and in different publication formats triggered Vietnamese nationalist movements, and inspired socio-educational reforms among which the Tonkin Free School (1907) modeled after the Japanese Keiō Gijuku stood out as a case in point. However, the conceptual history of this historical period has regrettably remained under-researched both inside and outside Vietnam, and as a result, one does not know much about the “border-crossing traveling knowledge” through the vehicle of books and periodicals that helped to spread out new insights from Japan. With all the findings presented above, this paper is an endeavor in bridging that intellectual gap by surveying the availability of printed sources from overseas that were within reach of Vietnamese literati in the arduous context of colonial Vietnam.

During a few decades from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, colonial Vietnam was the destination of a great number of new non-Confucian publications coming mainly from China. Commonly known as *tân thư* in Vietnam, many of them were Chinese translations of Western works from a wide array of natural and social sciences (within this scope, translations from Shanghai Kiangnan Arsenal occupied a significant number in the extant library catalogues).

“New publications” traveled to Vietnam through both official and unofficial channels: consequently, some of them got approved, while others were banned by the court. For those that were approved and even preserved in royal libraries, they could be classified into the general categories of *tân thư*. For those that were banned, in the views of the Court and the French colonialist government, they obviously posed serious threats to dynastic governance and the colonial systems. Interestingly, the banned books were works by Chinese reformists (like Liang Qichao) or Vietnamese anti-colonialist Confucians (like Phan Boi Chau) sent to Vietnam from Japan as a result of the “Going East” movement and Sino-Vietnamese collaborations carried out there. Generally speaking, as members of the Sinosphere, the Vietnamese elite could absorb new concepts from those works written in Chinese without any need of translation.

Despite the great success of the Meiji reforms, due to unfavorable conditions partly resulting from Vietnam’s civil service examination system based on Confucian classics, and because of almost no connection with Japan, Vietnamese Confucians were not ready to import and read Japanese works in the Japanese language, and as a result, had to rely heavily on Chinese translations to learn about Japan. Even though only a few Japanese books are listed in the royal libraries’ catalogues, the EFEO brought to Vietnam a great number of Japanese works and stored them in their research library that was almost closed to the public. Although having almost no direct access to Japanese books, the Vietnamese elite of the time were still able to learn about and be inspired by the Japanese model and Japanese thinkers thanks to books and periodicals unofficially imported from China.

旅する知識

——20世紀初頭のベトナムにおける日本と中国からの出版物の影響——

グエン・ナム*

本稿では、20世紀初頭のベトナムにおいて、知識人が入手できた日本と中国の出版物を調査し、当時のベトナム概念史を概観する。グエン王朝王立図書館で「新書」に分類された出版物と、反植民地派儒教徒の小サークル間で流通し、しばしば宮廷によって禁書とされた別のタイプの「新書」に焦点を当てる。直輸入された日本の出版物もあったが、ベトナムの国家主義儒学者たちは主に、密輸入された中国の本や定期刊行物から日本の明治維新モデルについて学んだ。

キーワード：思想史、概念史、明治維新、翻訳、反植民地主義

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