



Reshaping Vietnam

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► To cite this version:

Sara Legrandjacques. Reshaping Vietnam: Nationalism and Modernity through Education In the Early Twentieth Century. 2017. hal-01569894

HAL Id: hal-01569894

<https://hal.science/hal-01569894>

Preprint submitted on 27 Jul 2017

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Draft paper
Reshaping Vietnam
Nationalism and Modernity through Education
In the Early Twentieth Century
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Note to the reader: This is a draft paper written for the EuroSEAS panel "New Turning Points in South-East Asian History" organised in Oxford in August 2017. It is based on some hypotheses and conclusions from my previous Master's degree essay and from my ongoing PhD research dealing with student mobility in colonial Asia (1850s-1940s) through a comparative approach. Thus, some parts are likely to be modified and improved from now to the conference as this paper is the result of an ongoing thinking. Some ongoing analysis are notified in the text and some draft notes are included too. The author will be pleased to listen to any suggestions from the potential readers.

Introduction

My previous research about student mobility in French Indochina led me to study *Dông Du*¹, a movement organized by the Vietnamese nationalist Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940) during the first decade of the 20th Century, and its opposite, *Tây Du*², promoted by Phan Châu Trinh (1872-1926). Phan Bội Châu's movement was based on the sending of students to Japan in order to benefit from modern education and totally independent from the French educational policy. If historians have generally focused on the nationalist and anticolonial role of Vietnamese students during the Interwar, when they were staying in European countries, especially in the colonial metropolis, and discovering communism, *Dông Du* was already deeply anticolonial as soon as 1905, a year which thereby appeared as an important turning point to me.

Moreover, a focus on the decade 1900 has been recently developing among scholars working on colonial Vietnam. In 2004, an international conference called "*Duy Tân, "modernisation" au Vietnam dans la première décennie du XXe siècle*" took place in Aix-en-Provence (France). The organizers, Nguyễn Phương Ngọc and Gilles de Gantès, emphasized on two issues:

- The novelty of this approach, mixing social, political and connected histories through a comparison with other Asian and modernizing countries (Siam, China...) when many elder works contained an ideological dimension and few sources are available;
- The complex definition of "modernization" through the notion "*Duy Tân*".

They rejected Phan Bội Châu's movement from their research field even though he created the *Việt Nam Duy Tân Hội* between 1903 and 1906. Phan Bội Châu is considered as a nationalist and political activist rather than a modernist. Besides, *Duy Tân* was more a sensibility than a real movement. It is embodied by other famous Vietnamese figures like Phan Châu Trinh.³

¹ « Going East ».

² « Going West ».

³ See: « Introduction » in Gilles de Gantès, Nguyễn Phương Ngọc (dir.), *Vietnam. Le moment moderniste*, Aix-en-Provence, Presses universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 2009.

My paper will try to catch this dividing trend on the hop by underscoring the watershed the first decade of the 20th Century was for Vietnamese nationalism and modernity through the scope of education, reinforcing national unity but also regional links.

Neither nationalism – including an anti-colonial dimension⁴ – nor modernity are new ideas in the 20th Century Vietnamese society. If modernity and progress are used by the French to justify colonization through the “civilizing mission” rhetoric, some mandarins had been touched by a modernizing tendency since the 19th Century. They urged for reforms to struggle against French conquest. In 1863, Phan Thanh Gian (1796-1867) went to France with two other mandarins and sixty-three visitors. Aiming to lighten the clauses from the 1862 treaty⁵, he came back to his native country convinced in the necessity to adopt Western progress. As other reformist mandarins, Nguyễn Trường Tô, Nguyễn Hiệp or Lê Đình, he failed in convincing Emperor Tu Duc (1847-1883⁶). Here, a “pull-in” movement was supported: modern sciences and techniques was to be imported to Vietnam, as it was done in other Asian countries, principally in Meiji Japan. On the contrary, Phan Bội Châu promoted a “push-out” action, involving training abroad and the establishment of an Asian network. Nevertheless, the pull-in tendency hardly disappeared through the work of Phan Châu Trinh and its collaborators. Using these leading figure’s writings associated to colonial sources, I will try to draw the multiple lines of the renewal of Vietnam during the first decade of the 20th Century, escaping from the French course of action.

1905: Vietnam facing modernity in Asia

If Phan Bội Châu did not initially take interest in educating young Vietnamese through modern methods, the year 1905 introduced changes linking training to nationalism and modernity. This change came from other Asian countries and leaders.

The promotion of studies abroad in order to modernize started at the end of the 19th Century in China. After the 1895 defeat against Japan, some Chinese administrators realized that reformation could not be avoided anymore. A pan-Asian policy was launched resting upon the organization of a specific emigration to Japan: young men sent to be trained in Japanese modern schools. The Japanese educational system was reformed during the Meiji Era (1868-1912) with new universities set up from 1886. The curriculum was inspired from those used in European countries, especially Germany. The Chinese flows reached their apex in 1905, exceeding 10 000 people according to French sources. The students enrolled special schools dedicated to them and were taught different courses, from military arts, sciences, technical arts, languages to literature, history and geography⁷. They were quickly followed by other Asian students, from Korea, Siam and even India⁸. However, the Vietnamese as the

⁴ An important anticolonial movement in the late 19th Century was the *Can Vương* insurrection, started in the 1880s.

See: Charles Fourniau, *Vietnam. Domination coloniale et résistance nationale 1858-1914*, Paris, Les Indes savantes, 2002.

⁵ In 1862, the Saigon Treaty gave some southern parts of the Annam Empire to the French and led to the creation of the colony of Cochinchina.

⁶ Dates of reign.

⁷ Eric W. Maeder, « Aux origines de la modernisation chinoise : les étudiants chinois au Japon » in *Relations internationales*, été 1981, p. 163.

⁸ The *École française d'Extrême-Orient*'s chronique mentions about 50 Indian students trained in Japan in 1905-1906. No precise figures are given concerning the Siamese.

Cambodians and the Laotians, were not concerned by these new circulations. They did not even seem to be aware of this new cartography of flows. Thus, when the French general governor for Indochina asked a report on Chinese students in Japan in 1905, he only used it to know how to attract them to Indochina. No similarity – or anxiety – concerning Vietnamese student mobility was mentioned⁹.

In that context, it is no surprise that Phan Bội Châu was not the original instigator of the *Dông Du* student flows. His primary goal was not to create a modern youth able to change Vietnamese traditions. He was a nationalist and an anti-colonial activist who wanted to get rid of the French in order to restore Vietnamese monarchy. He was looking for a decent pretender and then for foreign help in struggling the French imperialists. His memoirs do not mention any educational task before his first trip to Japan in 1905. He was himself a product of the mandarin examination system: he passed an examination in 1900 and then was allowed to pursue its studies at the imperial college in Huế to take the doctoral examination – but failed to pass it several times.

In 1905, he met Liang Qichao, a Chinese reformist leader who took shelter in Japan¹⁰. He introduced Phan to some Japanese aristocrats. All these men were reluctant concerning foreign military support that might provoke a worldwide conflict. Count Okuma Shigenobu advised:

“We have only known the existence of Vietnamese since your arrival. You should think about countries like India, Poland, Egypt or the Philippines which are also occupied even though they are internally less behind the times than you are. You have to galvanize your elites, to make some of them leave overseas to improve the general level. It does not matter wherever they will go and whatever they will learn, they will breathe a beneficial atmosphere anyway, that will reinforce their mood without discouraging them. (...)

If you send your members here, our country would be able to welcome them. If you prefer living here, I am willing to build you a house and to treat you as my guests, you won't have to worry about your subsistence.”¹¹

This opinion was shared with Liang Qichao which was amongst the Chinese leaders encouraging young men to study in Japan. They convinced Phan Bội Châu when, at the same time, Liang Qichao had an indirect influence on another Vietnamese leading figure, Phan Châu Trinh. In 1904, he read Liang's “new books” and “new journals” and started to notice that the local youth was less and less interested in taking the mandarin examinations when the Chinese were planning to abolish them. He also met Phan Bội Châu for the first time and, even though they had cordial relations, Phan Châu

“Chronique” in *Bulletin de... op.cit.*, p. 481-482. Available online : gallica.bnf.fr.

⁹ Archives nationales d'Outre-Mer (ANOM – Aix-en-Provence), Gouvernement général de l'Indochine (GGI), file 23740 : *Étudiants chinois au Japon*.

The same assessment can be made concerning the aforesaid chromium in the *Bulletin de l'EFEO* published in 1906.

Moreover, the Japanese government is neither aware of the existence of Vietnamese students, see following quote on page 3.

¹⁰ He was designated as an enemy by the Qing dynasty after the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898.

¹¹ Phan Bội Châu, *Mémoires, traduction de la version en quốc ngữ ; présentation et annotations de Georges Boudarel*, Paris, Association pour la meilleure connaissance de l'Asie, 1970, p. 51.

Personal translation.

Trinh considered that his compatriot did not manage to escape “from the traditional straitjacket”¹². When the latter was using student mobility to Japan in a traditional nationalist way to form “the phalanxes of what may become the architects of the national independence”¹³, he was supporting these specific circulations because of their modernizing features. Thus, he was more aware than Phan Bội Châu concerning the role education had to play as to the future of Vietnam. Moreover, it led to “pull-in” initiatives rather than push-out ones: in 1905, he participated in the creation of the Duc Thanh School, promoting physical and then general modern training¹⁴, and tried to convince candidates for the provincial examination organized in Binh Dinh to abandon the traditional system.

Practical change: the direct legacy of 1905 turning point

1905 illustrates changes concerning both “traditional” anti-colonialism and modernism through education. The practical transformations and effects of this 1905 turn appeared as soon as 1906.

The organization of Đông Du

After a stay in Canton during the first months of 1906, Phan Bội Châu arrived in Japan with prince Cuong Dê during the Summer. This arrival officially launched *Đông Du* that Phan had organized in Tonkin at the end of 1905. He had listed four main points:

- “1. The harshly-selected young men have to be clever and hardworking subjects, strong and hardened, determined and brave, with long-life convictions.
2. Fees have to be supported by each part: the pacific reformist part and the insurrectional part.”¹⁵
3. Their trips and the transfer of money abroad have to be entrusted to a totally reliable person.
4. We have to be careful that no snitch infiltrates the organization. A specific seal has to be used to authenticate every item and every report. It is recommended to use invisible ink as often as possible.”¹⁶

At that time, student mobility became the one and quasi-only issue Phan discussed with other Asian leading figures. Liang Qichao recommended to write a call for “good-hearted people” in order to get funding directly from Vietnam. Thus, the *Nguyên quốc dân tu trợ du học văn* (“Call to the citizens to get a private funding for abroad studies”) was published by Liang in, according to Phan, not less than 3 000 copies. Phan Châu Trinh, travelling to Japan in 1907, read this call and approved it. While more and more money was sent to Japan, the training of students was organized step by step and led to the creation of an East-Asian network. Count Inukai was in charge of the admissions

¹² Vinh Sinh (ed.), “Phan Bội Châu and the Đông Du Movement”, *the Lạc Việt series*, n° 8, 1988, p. 21.

¹³ Nguyen the Anh, « Phan Bội Châu et les débuts du mouvement Dong Du » in Vinh Sinh (ed.), *Phan Bội Châu and the Dong-Du movement*, Yale, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988, p. 5.

¹⁴ Sophie Quinn-Judge, *The Third Force in the Vietnam War: The Elusive Search for Peace 1954-85*, IB Tauris, 2017, p. 26.

¹⁵ In his French translation, Georges Boudarel explains that the *Việt Nam Duy Tân Hội* was divided in two factions: the pacific faction and the radical and extremist faction.

¹⁶ Phan Bội Châu, *Mémoires, traduction...*, *op.cit.*, 1970, p. 54-55.

in Japanese schools while Hong Kong was becoming a transit hub thanks to successful negotiations with trade companies and the creation of an agency. Studying in Japan implied to be able to read, write and speak Japanese so some students had to get private lessons before enrolling a school. Some others went to the *Dobun Shoin*, a college dedicated to Asian students, where the curriculum was based on Japanese language and characters. Georges Boudarel mentions five different schools frequented by young Vietnamese:

- The *Shimbu Gakko*: a private military school;
- The *Toà Dobun Shoin*: a private school created by the *Toà Dobunkai*, a cultural association for East Asia, dedicated to non-Japanese Asians;
- The *Seisoku eigo gakko*: an English-language school;
- A preparatory school for military studies;
- An elementary school in Koishikawa: created by the *Duy Tân* league but rapidly closed.¹⁷

Few admissions at the higher school of industrial sciences at Waseda University are noticed too.

The apex of *Đông Du* happened in 1908. Phan Bội Châu estimated more than 200 Vietnamese training in Japan. These figures are controversial amongst historians¹⁸. The crossings between the two examined tendencies, Phan Bội Châu's anticolonial position and Phan Châu Trinh's modernism are sometimes embodied by specific individuals. Indeed, one of the first young man to leave Tonkin for Japan was the son of a leading figure of *Duy Tân* in Hanoi, who participated in the creation of the *Đông Thịnh Nghĩa Thục* School.

Phan Châu Trinh and the Đông Thịnh Nghĩa Thục School

Aware of the positive repercussions of *Đông Du*, Phan Châu Trinh stressed on the fact that "modern education is the key to progress"¹⁹. In his mind, the way to independence must be progressive and a manifestation of a modernized Vietnamese spirit, leading to democracy. He is also suspicious concerning Japanese imperialism. However, external influence seems to be far more developed in his case: he was aware of Liang Qichao's ideas before Phan Bội Châu and shared the idea of an indispensable modernization with many Chinese reformists.

But Phan never fed this youthful emigration to Japan. Despite his visit of this country and his encounters with the *Đông Du* leader, his action remained more internal, pulling modernization in Vietnam, without rejecting the dawning connection existing with the rest of Asia. He was associated to other members of *Duy Tân* like Luong Văn Can who created the *Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục* (DKNT), a free school located in Hanoi, dispensing modern courses. Phan gave lectures there where about 600 students were welcomed in a year, from March 1907 to its closure in March 1908. It was another example of Asian influence as "the curriculum as based on New Learning, relying on the Chinese and Japanese reformed education systems."²⁰ According to Vinh Sinh, the name of the school itself reflects this Asian inspiration: "*nhgia thuc*" is the equivalent for the Japanese "*gijuku*" meaning

¹⁷ Notes by Georges Boudarel in his French translation of Phan Bội Châu's *Mémoires*, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

¹⁸ Yves Le Jariel mentioned about a hundred of students when Nguyễn Thê Anh sticks to 200. Pierre Brocheux and Trinh Van Thao estimate that between 300 and 500 Vietnamese students went to Japan at that time. **Add precise references.**

¹⁹ Vinh Sinh (ed.), "Phan Bội Châu and the Đông Du Movement", *the Lạc Việt series*, n° 8, 1988, p. 24.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

“private community school”. Phan brought a great admiration for Fukuzawa’s educational institution from Japan shared with other members of *Duy Tân*. But the *Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục* also announced another influence, coming from the West, since one of its members’ task was to translate Western books into *quốc ngữ*.

Vietnam as a coherent entity

The Asian dimension of *Đông Du* can be seen through this movement’s origins and the type of studies taken by young Vietnamese. The *Shimbu Gakko* was first dedicated to Chinese students. In 1905, Jules Harmand’s report introduced that school to the French Governor General in Indochina Paul Beau. But the emphasis is more based the building of a national unity, gathering the three *ky* together – Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina.

This idea was shared by the two Phan. Shortly afterwards his graduation and his father’s death, Phan Bội Châu started travelling throughout the three *ky*. But this unification of Tonkin and Annam with Cochinchina was not obvious. He was originally planning to gather “every loyal man from the North and the Centre to move together into action”²¹. However, in 1902, he went to Cochinchina (“*Nam-ky*”), underscoring this unifying tendency in the to-born *Duy Tân* league. The same move characterized *Đông Du* when Phan Bội Châu first regreted that the students were only from the North and the Centre:

“Our students are undoubtedly not numerous but the North and the Centre are well represented and that is already a result. Only the South has not sent anybody yet. If we want to reach people from the *Nam-ky*, the best thing to do is to awaken in their minds the memory of their ancient king. Our Excellency [prince Cuong Dê] should write a proclamation as the first pretender to the throne and direct heir of the dynasty’s founder, now in exile. An emissary would distribute it in the South to encourage young people to go abroad. Money from the *Nam-ky* would allow to fulfil the needs of the migrants from the North and the Centre, that would be an effective policy.”²²

This complementarity, which overtook the different colonial status of the *ky*²³, came quickly into action: Cochinchina became the first source of financial supply for Phan’s movement but also a major base of students. From October 1907 to June 1908, several arrivals happened and the Cochinchinese represented half of the headcount. Phan became more and more concerned about creating a feeling of unity among the young men in Japan and promoted contacts between the different Vietnamese intellectual forces:

“Intellectuals from the three *Ky* did not have any contact with one another until now, they had neither the same personality nor the same habits. People from the *Nam-ky*, direct and bad-tempered, were very demanding concerning material issues. Those from the Centre, adventurous and daring but boorish in their behavior, were not easily liked. People from the North, very cultivated, lack frankness. It was not really easy to mix all this people coming from everywhere, even though they were including some very good individuals. Not telling anybody, I lived for more

²¹ Phan Bội Châu, *Mémoires, traduction..., op.cit.*, 1970, p. 26.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 65.

²³ Cochinchina (*Nam-ky*) was the only French colony in the Indochinese Union when Annam (*Trung-Ky*) et Tonkin (*Bac-ky*) were protectorates. It was also the first land conquered by the French in the peninsula.

than a year worried about a potential incident and scared of not being able to carry out my duties as a leader.”²⁴

Phan Châu Trinh also tried to spread his ideas throughout Vietnam. After its resignation from the mandarin administration in 1904, he went all over Cochinchina with two companions, Trần Quý Cáp and Huỳnh Thúc Kháng in 1905. As its modernizing plan was concerning Vietnam as a whole, it was obvious to him that he had to know how to set it up in the southern province. As a consequence, the first practical modernization projects saw the light of day in Cochinchina²⁵ while other initiatives were located in northern provinces. However, when Phan Bội Châu precariously called his league “Việt Nam Duy Tân Hội” embracing the entire land, the school founded in 1907 was known under the name “*Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục*”. *Đông Kinh* has several meanings – Hanoi, Tonkin, even Japan – but none of them refers to Vietnam. A precise study of the public attending this school is needed in order to determine its zone of influence.

The Cambodians and the Laotians were totally excluded from these nationalist and modernist projects. To go further, Indochina hardly appears in writings referring to the here-examined events. If an imperialist Vietnamese project existed, as Christopher Goscha studied it for a longer period²⁶, it did not seem to be the priority at the time.

A long-term influence?

Colonial repression

One of my first hypothesis was that these nationalist and modernist movements using education participated in Paul Beau’s decision to create an Indochinese university in Hanoi. This allegation was easily defensible since a university in Indochina could have prevented Vietnamese from studying abroad and would have satisfied their desire to be taught modernity, sciences, etc., as proposed by the so-called “civilizing mission”. However, different elements seem to discredit my idea.

Chronological facts came first: the decree for the creation of the Indochinese University was published in May 1906, before the creation of the Hanoi free school and when *Đông Du* was in its early stages. In its Summer report for the year 1906, the temporary *Résident supérieur* for Tonkin Groleau mentioned the presence of lettered migrants from Annam in Japan and the development of propaganda promoting studies abroad²⁷.

Besides, the analysis of the foundation decree shows that the main goal was to attract young Asians, from “Far-East Asia” and especially from China²⁸, not to create an “Annamite” university.

²⁴ Phan Bội Châu, *Mémoires, traduction..., op.cit.*, 1970, p. 92.

²⁵ Vinh Sinh, *Phan Châu Trinh and his political writings*, Ithaca, Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2009, p. 14-16.

²⁶ Christopher Goscha, *Indochine ou Vietnam*, Paris, Vendémiaire, 2015.

²⁷ ANOM, GGI, file 22494 : *Rapport du Résident supérieur p.i. au Tonkin Groleau au Gouverneur général de l’Indochine*, 28 novembre 1906.

This file is quoted by Nguyễn Thê Anh, « Phan Bội Châu et les débuts du mouvement Đông Du » in Vinh Sinh, « Phan Bội Châu and the Đông Du Movement », *The Lâc Việt Series*, n° 8, 1988, p. 14.

²⁸ Some Chinese officials from Yunnan wanted their sons to study in French Indochina during the decade 1900. A special school, the *École Pavie*, was created in 1905, dedicated to these Chinese students. This school was considered as a success until the end of 1906 and participated in comforting Paul Beau concerning its project of university in Indochina.

In 1907, the Vietnamese migration really started to worry the French in East-Asian position. Paul Beau explained that the qualitative change concerning this exodus was dangerous, Japan attracting “mandarin’s sons”²⁹. Negotiations with the Japanese government were organized and led to a common declaration. From the second half of 1907, the growing attraction of the movement has been disturbed by French and Japanese measures in Indochina and in Japan. A spy succeeded in stealing documents kept in Hong Kong and describing the organization of the movement. Pressure was made on families in Indochina to ask their sons to come back to the colony and the Japanese government collaborated to interrupt the studies. Phan’s Japanese partners, generally linked to the political class, could not help him anymore while investigations by the local authorities were propagating. The movement was abolished in September 1908 but severe measures were implemented the following year in order to hurry the students’ way back home. Alongside *Đông Du*, the entire *Duy Tân* tendency suffered from French repression. The *Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục* was closed in March 1908 because the French suspected its members to use it as an anticolonial hotbed. It underlines the French misunderstanding and incapacity to distinguish different Vietnamese movements and tendencies.

Never-ending mobility

Phan Bội Châu left Japan in March 1909 for South China. If he created a new association there, he was never the instigator of another student mobility movement. If historians studied this figure through its nationalism and anti-colonialism, my hypothesis is that its influence on nationalism – and to a certain extent, modernity – through education and circulations of students can be noticed in the medium turn.

First of all, if the majority of the students went back to their native lands, some of them continued their studies abroad. Few of them were from the *Nam-ky* and Phan’s memoirs contain detailed presentation of 18 students staying away from their motherland, mostly in China and Japan, after the abolition of *Đông Du*³⁰. Nguyễn Thê Anh explains that a fine was given to the population of Hanh Thiên in 1912 because five students from this town located in Nam-Dinh province were still in Japan³¹.

According to me, it seems relevant to mention a “*Đông Du* legacy”. This movement had also a great influence on Indochinese student mobility in general, participating in its increase since the beginning of the 20th Century. Indeed, it gave it a nationalist turn. If Indochina-Japan circulations disappeared after Phan’s departure to come back to life during WWII under totally different circumstances, the idea of getting an alternative education abroad seduced more and more young men – and sometimes women – as soon as the late 1900s. Daniel Hémery mentions that the Vietnamese students are more numerous in China and Siam than in France after WWI and the journal *Hon Nam Viet* evokes 2 000 students in Chinese establishments in 1927. The development of nationalist schools in China, especially the foundation of Canton University and the Whampoa Military Academy in 1924, encouraged these flows. The young men wanted to train in military schools in order to know how to fight against the Western imperialist³². Here, the *Đông Du* legacy associated

²⁹ ANOM, Indochine Ancien Fonds, 9/A 20 (54). This file is quoted by Nguyễn Thê Anh, « Phan Bội Châu et les débuts du mouvement Đông Du » in Vinh Sinh, « Phan Bội Châu,... », *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³⁰ An analysis of the 18 “on-the-move” students mentioned by Phan Bội Châu is in progress. It will be ready for the EuroSEAS conference in August 2017.

³¹ ANOM, *Résidence supérieure du Tonkin*, file 38819, quoted by Nguyễn Thê Anh, « Phan Bội Châu et les débuts du mouvement Đông Du » in Vinh Sinh, « Phan Bội Châu,... », *op. cit.*, p. 20.

³² This specific mobility to China are described in some French records.

to other factors, like the Chinese Republicans' influence, participated in developing political student circulations, which did not exist before 1905-1906, in the medium term.

Go West!

The *Duy Tân* tendency was characterized by its “pull-in” initiatives at the opposite of Phan Bội Châu’s movement. This tendency embodied by many personalities including Phan Châu Trinh but also Nguyễn Văn Ninh did not reject French and Western knowledge and influence. Gilles de Gantès sums up this specific vision of modernization as “a choice among new things brought by Europeans, that could be useful for the Vietnamese society and compatible to its values at the same time(…)”³³. In this context, Phan wrote a letter to Paul Beau in 1907 to explain that a collaboration with the colonizers was needed, including colonial reforms. From that point, the closure of the DKNT is sometimes analyzed as a symptom of French paranoia concerning anti-colonialism and the spread of nationalist activism in Indochina³⁴. The collaborative stance also led to a quite common opposition between Phan Bội Châu and Phan Châu Trinh that must not be exaggerated. It must not hide exchanges and mutual respect between these two leading figures (*cf. supra*). However, the idea of “*Tây Du*” – Going West – must not be considered as an opposition or an addition to *Đông Du*. They match different realities and temporalities.

If student mobility leading to French territories outside of Asia – mostly the metropolis but also Algeria – has been existing since the second half of 19th Century, it was not bound to a political project. Some wealthy families, especially from Cochinchina, sent their children abroad to benefit from courses in renowned establishments or to overcome the lack of high and higher schools in their own lands. If these people were aware of the existence of modern knowledge outside the boundaries of the colony, it would be wrong to see a real “global tendency” before the development of *Duy Tân*. The ban of Vietnamese initiatives concerning modern education in 1908 has contributed in feeding flows towards Western schools. But what is called *Tây Du* should not be considered as an organized movement. During his exile in France (1910-1925) with his son Phan Châu Dật, Phan Châu Trinh attempted to “institutionalize” *Tây Du*. With the preexistence of flows towards France, the context was totally different *Đông Du* when Phan Bội Châu created new circulations. Indeed, the French colonial power had organized stays in France since the end of the 19th Century thanks to scholarships. Different public and private organizations already tried to patronize and control these educational migrations.

In April 1912, one of these organizations, the *Comité Paul-Bert*, warned the French administration about the creation of an association dedicated to Indochinese students in France. The originators were known: Phan Châu Trinh, depicted as a “famous lettered man” and Phan Văn Truong, tutor at the *École des langues orientales*. Their headquarters was settled in a French school, the Paris *École Coloniale*, where French colonial administrators were trained.³⁵ This competing association was described as “having very nationalist tendencies”³⁶:

See: ANOM, SLOTFOM, 3/10 : *École spéciale internationale de Canton*.

³³. Gilles de Gantès, Nguyễn Phương Ngọc (dir.), *Vietnam. Le moment moderniste*, Aix-en-Provence, Presses Universitaires Aix-Marseille, 2009.

³⁴ **Add precise references.**

³⁵ Trung Tam Lưu Tru Quốc Gia 1 (TTLTQG1 - Hanoi), RST, dossier 79886 : *Création en France de la Société des étudiants indochinois par Phan Chu Trinh et Phan Văn Truong* : « Lettre de M. Salles du Comité Paul-Bert au Résident supérieur du Tonkin, 30 avril 1912 ».

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

“What seduces our young men is the idea of having a place where they could freely meet. But what guides the instigators is the desire to benefit from it and from letters to spread Phan-Chu-Trinh-like nationalist ideas among the intellectual elite trained in France.”³⁷

However, the French *Résident supérieur* answered that he was not able to do anything except “setting up a severe control as developed as possible among the native people willing to go to France.”³⁸ Since 1907 and the arrival of a new Governor General in Indochina, Antony Klobukowski, many decrees and initiatives have been adopted in that way. In France, only the French Colonial Office can take measures of control. Here, the Franco-Vietnamese collaboration urged by Phan Châu Trinh for more than five years is not understood by the French. The patriotic Vietnamese tendencies prevailed. This mistrust led to the end of the DKNT in Hanoi and conducted Phan Châu Trinh to prefer “push-out” initiatives. It underscores the limits and the ambiguous legacy of the 1905 turning point.

Conclusion

The first decade of the 20th Century matches important changes concerning Vietnamese anti-colonialism, nationalism but also its vision of modernity. Different trends developed, embodied by famous leading figures. For the first time, education became a major tool to fight against Western imperialism and to join the private club of modernized countries. This decade integrated Vietnam into a wider area thanks to various connections with China and Japan. External influences cannot be put asides by any scholars looking at this specific period.

The differences but also the crossings between the different tendencies born around 1905 have to be underscored. Although the two Phan did not share the same vision of what their country had to become, they did not ignore each other. Exchanges and flows existed, nourishing each tendency.

Moreover, the legacy of the 1905 watershed is based both on its short success – limited to few years and suddenly interrupted by the French in 1908-1909 – and its failure. Indeed, the short life of the DKNT school incited Phan Châu Trinh to favor “push-out” actions based on student mobility to the Western metropolis. In a nutshell, the first decade of the 20th century seems to integrate Vietnam in a wider – Asian and imperial – scene based on youthful – political and educational – circulations.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ TTLTGQ1, RST, fille 79886 : *op.cit.* : « Courrier du Résident supérieur du Tonkin au Président du Comité Paul-Bert, 5 août 1912 ».