

From a Silent Shout to an Epidemic of Revolution: Vietnamese Intellectuals and Outside Revolutionary Force in the Early 20th Century*

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Abstract

As was the case with China, and thanks to the dissemination of “new books” introducing reform or revolutionary ideas, intellectuals in Vietnam as well as in Korea also started to look to the outside world to help them reconsider their own land. This paper analyzes the case in Vietnam, where this movement was particularly effective. To understand the Vietnamese case, one should explore first a social phenomenon represented by a silent shout: the creeping dissemination of Chinese revolutionary “new books” and leaders into Vietnamese society. And then, the probable connections between the shout and an epidemic of revolution in Vietnam in the early twentieth century should be revealed through the analysis of the geographical and human factors that played a role in leading Vietnamese intellectuals to cooperate with outside revolutionary force.

Keywords: Vietnam, new books, Chinese emigrants, revolution, Phan Bội Châu, Sun Yatsen

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I . Introduction

The First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) widened Chinese intellectuals' vision. They realized China's weakness in the face of Japanese military intrusions and felt the need to transform their country into a prosperous "modern" nation. Chinese reformers began to develop journalism and translate numerous European and Japanese works in order to introduce their compatriots to the various fields of Western sciences and ideas. As was the case with China, and thanks to the dissemination of "new books" introducing reform or revolutionary ideas, intellectuals in Vietnam as well as in Korea also started to look to the outside world to help them reconsider their own land. This paper analyzes the case in Vietnam, where this movement was particularly effective.

As Rebecca E. Karl demonstrates, understandings of contemporary events in countries such as Poland, the Philippines, and Hawaii by European and Japanese scholars influenced the way of Chinese thinkers thought about the future direction of their own country (Karl 2002). Within this context, between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reform or revolutionary ideas were introduced from China to Vietnam and Korea through the so-called "new books" (*xinshu* in Chinese 新書; *tân thư* in Vietnamese; *sinseo* in Korean), which were the vehicle of a "new learning" (*tân học* 新學 in Vietnamese; *sinhak* in Korean). The intellectual progress in Vietnam and Korea was tangible and comparable. However, a difference soon appeared in the degree of distribution of "new learning" in Vietnam

by the revolutionary party of Sun Yatsen (孫逸仙, 1886-1925).

From the end of February 1903, the presence of the Chinese revolutionary Sun Yatsen in Indochina was a great matter of concern to Governor General Paul Beau (1857-1926) because of the plots that the revolutionary could possibly foment with the numerous Chinese nationals residing in the colony. Paul Beau supposed that Sun had a considerable influence on the secret societies that counted among their members a part of Indochina's Chinese residents as well as a small number of "Annamese" (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 6, 109-111). Jean-Louis de Lanessan, former Military Governor of French Indochina (1891-1894), wrote on July 10, 1908: "Today, there can be no doubt that there are communications between the Annamese rebels and Chinese reform associations" (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 200, 223).

How did Vietnamese reformers and Chinese revolutionaries encounter each other? Did the Chinese emigrants to Vietnam play a role in developing a network of communications between the Chinese and Vietnamese activists? Was there strong interaction between these two groups? Finally, what was the political position of the Vietnamese reformers? To answer these questions, one should explore first a social phenomenon represented by a silent shout: the creeping dissemination of Chinese revolutionary "new books" and leaders into Vietnamese society. And then, the probable connections between the shout and an epidemic of revolution in Vietnam in the early twentieth century should be revealed through the analysis of the geographical and human factors that played a role in leading Vietnamese intellectuals to cooperate with outside revolutionary force.

II. The Circulation of Revolutionary “New Books” into Vietnam

What were the origins of the revolutionary “new books” that were introduced into Vietnamese society? The 1906 testimony of a retired civil servant, Đào Nguyên Phổ (1861-1908), provides an interesting view:

The other day I bought several new books whose tone was very violent and demagogic. They have therefore been burned immediately. The books of this kind were used as a pretext for criticizing all new books by regressive or moderate scholars. But they do not know that these iconoclasts and revolting works came from the Chinese revolutionary party (Đào Nguyên Phổ 1906).

From this statement, it could be deduced that the publications originating from Sun Yatsen’s party were spread in Vietnam with arousing the interest of Chinese revolutionary emigrants and scientific and political controversy among Vietnamese intellectuals. To better explain this situation, it is necessary first to take into account of the list of revolutionary “new books” banned in Vietnamese society between July 3, 1904 and March 22, 1911, as shown in the following table.

The list includes two books and five periodicals. What were the main characters of *Qiuyu Qiufeng* (Rain and Wind in Fall) and *Xu Xilin*? These two books related the revolutionary life of Qiu Jin (秋瑾, 1875-1907) and Xu Xilin (1873-1907). A publishing house (Hongwen

Table: List of the “new books” banned in Indochina between July 3, 1904 and March 22, 1911 (AOM, GGI, dossier 43933, dossier 26752)

Title	Date of prohibition
<i>Zhongguo Ribao</i> (中國日報)	July 3, 1904
<i>Xin Shiji</i> (新世紀)	October 26, 1908
<i>Qiuyu Qiufeng</i> (秋雨秋風)	January 26, 1909
<i>Xu Xilin</i> (徐錫麟)	January 26, 1909
<i>Yunnan Zazhi</i> (雲南雜誌)	March 7, 1909
<i>Zhongxing Ribao</i> (中興日報)	April 8, 1909
<i>Nanyue Bao</i> (南越報)	March 22, 1911

Shuju 鴻文書局) in Shanghai published in 1907 *Qiuyu Qiufeng*, edited by Huang Min (黃民), which contained the writings of the female revolutionary, Qiu Jin (Zhang Jinglu ed. 1957, 155). *Xu Xilin* was published in September 1907 by an unknown editor named Renyinlang (人尹郎) (Xu Naichang ed. 1993, 165). Xu Xilin was one of the leaders of the Restoration Society (Guangfuhui 光復會) in Zhejiang (浙江), which was organized in the fall of 1904 and then became the number three in various revolutionary groups at the time, following the Xingzhonghui (興中會, Revive China Society) of Sun Yatsen and the Huaxinghui (華興會, China Revival Society), led by the revolutionary leader Huang Xing (黃興, 1874-1916) (Rankin 1971, 347-348; Boorman et al. eds. 1967-1971, 296-297). Returning from Japan in 1905, Qiu Jin made contact with the leaders of the Guangfuhui through an introduction of Tao Chengzhang (陶成章, ?-1911) (Hummel ed. 1943-1944, 169-170).¹⁾ Two revolutionary

1) Tao Chengzhang was one of the founders of the Restoration Society.

conspiracies were organized in July 1907 in Anjing (安慶) in Anhui (安徽) by Xu as well as in Shaoxing (紹興) in Zhejiang by Qiu. But the police thwarted the plots, and the two revolutionaries were executed (*Ajia Rekishi Jiten*, 440-441; Bergère 1994, 197; Lee, Stenfanowska eds. 1998, 174-177).

The Chinese press published by Sun Yatsen's party penetrated deeper and deeper into Vietnam, at the latest, from the early twentieth century, as testified the Vietnamese reformer, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng (1876-1947) (Chương Thân 1997, 31-32). *Zhongguo Ribao* (Daily Newspaper of China), *Xin Shiji* (La Tampoj Novaj, Le Siècle Nouveau, New Century), *Yunnan Zazhi* (Magazine of Yunnan), *Zhongxing Ribao* (China Revival Daily Newspaper), and *Nanyue Bao* (Newspaper of Nanyue) were disseminated in Vietnam from Hong Kong, Paris, Tokyo, Singapore, and Canton. Who were behind the publication of these Chinese revolutionary periodicals?

Nanyue Bao, the Cantonese mouthpiece of Sun Yatsen's party, whose editor-in-chief was Ou Boming (歐博明), was published from June 1909 (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 26, 225, 227). *Nanyue Bao*, like most of the newspapers in Canton, never ceased to attack the French colonial regime in Vietnam (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 227, 172). Its May 12, 1911 issue devoted an article to the French colonial situation, some of which is quite interesting: "The freedom of the press is greater in France than elsewhere. And however France does not want to apply to its colonies the treatment that it applies to the populations of its own country. Alas! Then how can we believe in the equal rights of all under all the governments of the civilized country!

The actions of France toward Annam prove that this equality is only a vain word” (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 227, 178-179).

Let us look at the evolution of *Zhongguo Ribao*. Chen Shaobai (陳少白, 1869-1934) was editor-in-chief of this revolutionary journal published from 1899 in Hong Kong (Zhang Jinglu ed. 1957, 86). A Cantonese Christian and a good scholar, this anti-Manchu revolutionary was closely associated with the first political activities of Sun Yatsen, who was his classmate in the College of Medicine for the Chinese in Hong Kong. He was also one of the “Big Four bandits” who discussed revolution with Sun Yatsen. He was one of Sun’s key lieutenants in the Xingzhonghui, actively participating in the organization of the uprisings of Canton in 1895, Huizhou (惠州) in 1900 (Bergère 1994, 31, 37, 58, 68, 85-86, 93-96, 104-105, 480). Meanwhile, Sun Mei (孫眉, 1854-1915), the oldest brother of Sun Yatsen, along with other Chinese emigrants in Vietnam, joined in publishing a periodical for the revolutionary party (Li Zhan 1979, 263). In 1910, Zhang Banghan (張邦翰, 1885-1958), a former student of the École Pavie (Pavie School) in Hà Nội, was also editor of *Zhongguo Ribao*, the main mouthpiece in the Far East of the Tongmenghui (同盟會, Chinese Revolutionary Alliance), whose chief was Sun Yatsen (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 21, 213).

The Chinese revolutionary propaganda seems to have extended to Japan and was also associated with Indochinese politics. Its main periodical was *Min Bao* (民報, Journal of the People), managed by Sun Yatsen’s party in Tokyo (AMAE, Papiers d’Agents, Beau, vol. 5, 295). *Yunnan Zazhi* was in circulation in Yunnan where the role of

France was interpreted as hostile. Printed at the printing house, “Shukosha” in No. 4 “Naksarugakuchō Kandaku” of the Japanese capital, the magazine was published monthly from September 1906, with each volume consisting of approximately 150 pages. This magazine was managed by Yunnanese students such as Wu Kun (吳琨) and Sun Zhiceng (孫志曾) in Japan (AMAE, NS China, vol. 238, 24, 30; AJND, Collection M.T. 1.6.1.4-2, 1549; Ge Gongzhen 1955, 163; BEFEO 1907, 456). *Yunan Zazhi* was anti-European as well as anti-dynastic. In particular, France was violently criticized. The magazine reprinted correspondence columns from Indochina, in which the Indochinese administration was violently attacked, and published, with regard to the Hoàng Hoa Thám Affair,²⁾ a wealth of information which might have estranged the Vietnamese people from the colonial authorities (Huỳnh Văn Tòng 1971, 170-171).

Sun Yatsen also encouraged Chinese emigrants in Singapore to publish a revolutionary newspaper. The publication of *Zhongxing Ribao* thus began in August 1907 under the direction of Hu Hanmin (胡漢民, 1886-1936). This daily was, once again, funded by Chinese merchants, in particular, Teo Eng Hok (Zhang Yongfu 張永福, 1871-1958) and Tan Chor Lam (Chen Chunan 陳楚南, 1884-1971) who a few years previously had failed in their business. Hu and Wang Jingwei (汪精衛, 1883-1944) expressed their opinions on constitutional government and diplomacy through this daily (ZGZSBW 1977, vol.

2) Hoàng Hoa Thám (1858-1913) also known as Đề Thám (Colonel Thám), was the Vietnamese leader of the Yên Thế Uprising, holding out against French control in North Vietnam for 25 years.

3, 401; Yong and McKenna 1981, 123; Li Zhan 1979, 263, 270, 292; Bergère 1994, 169, 498; Salmon 1984, 123-134; Zhou Yiliang ed. 1993, 439).

Another Chinese newspaper, *Xin Shiji*,³⁾ was published in Paris and then circulated in Vietnam as well as in China. From 1906, an intellectual center was organized in Paris by Sun Yatsen's party. A hundred young Chinese people gathered there to study French laws and institutions, they continued to publish *Min Bao*, which had been published previously in Tokyo and had reproduced extracts from printed materials written by Chinese revolutionaries in Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangkok etc. Some of them, who considered themselves as an avant-garde of revolutionaries, were anarchists. Obedient to Sun Yatsen, they were well known and encouraged by several eminent personalities of the French Parliament, and their views were well received in certain press circles. They also interacted with European anarchists, which resulted in the publication of *Xin Shiji*, the mouthpiece of these Chinese revolutionaries (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 21, 213, vol. 583, 151). *Xin Shiji* was founded by this group of Chinese revolutionaries and anarchists residing in Paris, including Wu Zhihui (吳稚暉, 1865-1953), Zhang Renji (張人傑, 1877-1950), and Li Shizeng (李石曾, 1881-1973); its first issue appeared on June 22, 1907. The newspaper printed 1,500 copies, which were not sold in Paris, but were shipped directly to China (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 695, ACSN, 1-2; Wang 2002, 91). *Xin Shiji* was published weekly

3) Its another title is: *Le Nouveau Siècle* (French title); *La Novaj Tempoj* (Esperanto title).

until its final issue, n° 164, was published at the end of June 1910 (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 695, ACSN, 4).

Xin Shiji advocated the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty by an insurrectional movement, and was thus considered to be a “revolutionary magazine” and an anti-Manchu and anarchist journal by the Chinese government, who ordered post offices at all Chinese entry ports to confiscate *Xin Shiji* as soon as it was shipped into the country (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 695, ACSN, 3). In addition, a correspondence addressed by a Chinese in Indochina to a newspaper of Formosa expressed the desire of the Vietnamese people, particularly Tonkinese, to expel the French from their colonized territory. According to the Chinese local correspondent, these independence projects were maintained by the introduction into Vietnam of revolutionary works, many of which the Governor General of Indochina had already seized. The Chinese emigrants in Vietnam, in particular, the Chinese communities originating from the city-port Swatow, played a crucial role in the circulation of revolutionary materials (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 18, 16).⁴⁾ Indeed, bundles of *Xin Shiji*, which were distributed clandestinely in the French colony as well as in the Chinese empire, also found their way into Vietnamese villages (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 200, 223). Issue n° 101 (June 12, 1909) indicates that it was distributed free of charge to subscribers in the city of Hà Nội. The revolutionary propaganda and

4) Shantou (汕頭), formerly romanized as Swatow, is located on the eastern coast of Guangdong. Shantou, a city significant during the 19th century, was one of the treaty ports established for Western traded.

the exaltation of political assassination likely had an impact on the perspectives of the Vietnamese people.

In Vietnam, the reform ideas and movements of the early twentieth century were divided into two trends: the supporters of pacific reform and the supporters of uprising and revolution (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 60, 84). It is under the influence of radical ideas that the latter proposed to resort to external assistance and foment uprising in order to recover national independence. And so a revolutionary movement was hatched, just as it was designed by the “new books” originating from Sun Yatsen’s party. Little by little, groups of Vietnamese reformers turned to the Chinese revolutionary party, which seemed capable of carrying out the work of reorganizing Vietnam.

III. Encounters between Vietnamese Reformers and Chinese Revolutionaries

While Korean reformers had few direct links with Chinese revolutionaries in the early twentieth century, Vietnamese reformers were actively making contact with them. The case of the Vietnamese leader Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940), the founder of the *Đông Du* (Voyage to East) political movement, is significant. Leaving Vietnam on his way to Japan at the beginning of 1905, Phan went to the office of *Zhongguo Ribao* – the mouthpiece of the Chinese revolutionaries in Hong Kong – to ask for an interview with its director, Feng Ziyou (馮自由, 1881-1958), one of Sun Yatsen’s confidants. The director

received the Vietnamese reformer on the spot and had a long discussion with him, communicating by writing Chinese characters. Feng expressed much sympathy for the political activities of Phan Bội Châu's group, and said: "Try to hold out a dozen of years, until the time we succeed in subverting the Manchurian government. Then we will have a free hand to help you. Now, this is not the right time. But if you make an appeal to the Qing government in invoking the old relationships between your country and China, you may have a chance to get something. The current governor of Guangdong (廣東) Province, Cen Chunxuan (岑春煊, 1861-1933) is a Han, although he serves Manchus. He is native to Guangxi (廣西), which is also closely linked to your country as if with bared lips, the teeth feel cold. Make an appeal to him, if you have good luck, perhaps he can give a hand to you" (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 51-52). Returning to Canton in the beginning of September 1905, Phan seemed to make a visit to Cen Chunxuan, and submit propaganda pamphlets to him. Cen also introduced Phan Bội Châu to Liu Yongfu (劉永福, 1837-1917), Lu Rongting (陸榮廷, 1859-1928), Zhuang Yunkuan (莊蘊寬, 1866-1932) and Guo Renzhang (郭人漳), all known for their anti-French sentiments (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 60; AOM, GGI, Série 7F 34, Carton 65,514, tome I, 16).

After his arrival in Japan, Phan Bội Châu made acquaintances with a Chinese revolutionary named Tang Juedun (湯覺頓, 1878-1916, real name Tang Rui 湯叡), a former student of Kang Youwei (康有爲, 1858-1927), a prominent political thinker and reformer of the late Qing Dynasty (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 63-64; Phan Bội Châu

1999, 259). Later, he came into contact with a Chinese revolutionary leader. The question here is, under what circumstances? One day, the Japanese politician Inukai Tsuyoshi (犬養毅, 1855-1932) came to visit Phan Bội Châu's lodging to introduce him to Sun Yatsen, who had returned from the United States and was residing in Yokohama. A few days later, Phan made an appearance at Chiwadô (致和堂) with his card and a few introductory words from Inukai to meet the Chinese revolutionary leader. Phan thus came in contact with Sun in the winter of the year 1905, and they discussed problems facing the revolution. Having found, after reading *Việt Nam Vong Quốc Sử* (越南亡國史, History of the Loss of Vietnam) written by the Vietnamese reformer, that Phan had not completely denounced monarchical ideas, Sun criticized very severely the ambiguous character of a constitutional monarchy party. He concluded that members of the Vietnamese party should participate in the activities of the Chinese revolutionary party. After the victory of the Chinese revolution, all forces would be brought together to help the Asian occupied countries and allow them to recover their independence, Vietnam coming first. For his part, Phan admitted the superiority of the democratic republican system, but he held that the Chinese revolution had to begin by helping Vietnam; once the national independence was achieved, the Vietnamese people would be able to allow the Chinese revolutionary movement to use North Vietnam as a springboard from which it would raise Guangxi and Guangdong to conquer Central China. If subsequently, in a time crunch, the party of Vietnamese reformers could rely on the serious support of the

Chinese revolutionary party, it is to this meeting that it owed its success (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 67). In addition, a Vietnamese student in Japan, Lương Ngọc Quyến (1885-1917) was sent to the office of *Min Bao* in Tokyo at the end of 1905. He began to work there for Chinese revolutionaries with his two Vietnamese companions, and eventually, he came to meet Zhang Binglin (章炳麟, 1868-1936) and Zhang Ji (張繼, 1882-1947) (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 63; Boudarel 1981, 168).

The stay in Japan had allowed Phan Bội Châu to study the causes of revolutions abroad and the regimes of various countries. When Phan came to see the Chinese reformer Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929), Liang introduced his translation of *Yidali Jianguo Sanjie Zhuan* (意大利建國三傑傳, Biography of Three Heroes Who Founded Italy) written by a Japanese journalist, Heida Hisashi (平田久, 1871-1923). Phan was excited by Mazzini and particularly by the phrase: “Education and violence must go hand in hand.” While pushing students to go overseas, he never ceased to encourage the development of revolutionary ideas and revolutionary actions in the country (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 75). Phan Bội Châu was also able to read the revolutionary “new books” translated into Chinese, such as *Du Contrat Social* (The Social Contract) by Rousseau and *L’Esprit des Lois* (The Spirit of the Laws) by Montesquieu; in his autobiography, Phan Bội Châu swore that he had already thrown away the monarchical doctrines in his mind (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 139-140). In this regard, the interpretation of the Governor General Beau is very interesting:

In my opinion, people see there's only the sensation of the great political movement that shakes the whole of Asia and aims at the transformation of its old institutions. It is in Annam that this reform movement had to be held back with the most force, because Annam is regarded, in Indochina, as a citadel of old institutions; because it has a large number of intellectuals imbued exclusively with Chinese literature, and the Chinese literature has become deeply revolutionary. We are, therefore, facing a political movement prepared by the publications of Chinese reformers and by the pamphlets of Annamese emigrants in China and Japan. This movement is fomented and led by a group of intellectuals hostile to the mandarin organization (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 20, 248).

IV. Vietnamese Activists and Yunnanese Group of the Tongmenghui in Hà Nội

In this regard, we will try first to evaluate the temporary judgments expressed by the French and Chinese authorities. A report, dated June 16, 1908 and sent by the Indochinese government to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, notes that:

An uprising just occurred in Annam. Insurrections upset the neighboring provinces of China and go beyond the Sino-Annamese border. A great likelihood exists that there is collusion between the agitators of the two countries. A situation of general unrest is revealed by these simultaneous movements in the Far East. All these alarming signs make today all the eyes fall on the enormous fault that some

people committed a crime last year, by killing, with a single blow to Indochina, more than a third of its garrison (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 1, 115).

Then, on September 18, 1908 the Governor General of Indochina communicated to the Minister of Colonies the following opinion:

The number of Chinese in Indochina and the proximity of the colony to the powerful empire oblige the French authorities, beforehand, to accept specific measures to protect themselves against the domestic disturbances that may provoke Chinese people. The recent repercussion of the Chinese reform movement in Indochina may present the grounds for this argument (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 17, 121).

At the same time, Hong Kong's newspaper, *Shang Bao* (商報, Commercial News), published the following telegram on November 9, 1908:

The commander of the troops of Qinzhou (欽州) just telegraphed to the viceroy of the Two Guangs that there were at this moment in Tonkin a thousand of Chinese reformers and Annamese rebels who all devoted themselves ardently to the revolutionary propaganda. The French authorities are very alarmed and guard against this propaganda. It is reported that, joining battle with the French troops last month, these rebels put them to flight and killed six French officers (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 3, 62).

In this regard, the concerns of the Chinese and French authorities were well grounded: the influence of Chinese emigrants in Vietnam

on their local “comrades,” and the subsequent repercussions of the Chinese revolutionary movement in Indochina could develop into the real possibility of a conspiracy formed by the “agitators of two countries” (i.e. China and Vietnam). To further understand the situation, it is necessary to take into account, first, the contacts of Phan Bội Châu with members of the Tongmenghui in Japan.

Phan Bội Châu had established relations with young Chinese revolutionaries. During the summer of 1905 in Tokyo, Phan had met Yin Chengxian (殷承瓚, 1877-1946), who had presented the Vietnamese reformer to the students from Yunnan such as Yang Zhenhong (楊振鴻, 1874-1909) and Zhao Shen (趙伸, 1876-1930). It is thanks to the relationships that Phan had forged at that time that he had been able to subsequently become editor of *Yunnan Zazhi* (AOM, GGI, Série 7F 34, Carton 65514, tome I, 13; Phan Bội Châu 1957, 59, 64-65). In the summer of 1907, Phan established contacts with the students of Yunnan and Guangxi to form in Japan a League of Yunnan, Guangxi, and Vietnam (Hội Liên Minh Điền - Quế - Việt). The presidents of the two students unions of Yunnan and Guangxi, Zhao Shen and Zeng Yan (曾彥), were in agreement with his views and the action plan for solidarity received support from the Chinese students of these regions (Phan Bội Châu 1957, 119). These exchanges were maintained thereafter in Vietnam.

There was at least one branch of this league in Hà Nội, called “Song Nam Đồng Minh Hội” (League of Two Nam: Việt Nam and Vân Nam [Yunnan]). In addition, during a secret visit of his country at the beginning of 1907, Phan Bội Châu might have met some

Yunnanese students residing in the rue des Vermicelles (currently Phố Hàng Bún) and founded this league with them. Đỗ Cơ Quang (Đỗ Chân Thiết, 1878-1914) established relations with this small group of Chinese students (Nguyễn Hiến Lê 2002, 129). While he remained in Indochina, in the same year, Sun Yatsen made acquaintance with “a Vietnamese reformer” (Đỗ Cơ Quang ?) who would become both a pioneer of the “modernization” movement and an active supporter of the insurrectional trend in Hà Nội (Boudarel 1981, 182). Moreover, in accordance with the directions of Phan Bội Châu, this clandestine activist, Đỗ, also tried to create a bomb-making workshop and make contact with Yunnanese immigrants in Hà Nội who showed sympathy to his cause (Nguyễn Hiến Lê 2002, 128-129). In this city, there were Yunnanese students of the École Pavie, some of whom were members of the Tongmenghui: Zhao Lianyuan (趙蓮元), Xu Lian (徐濂), Shu Yude (束於德), Wen Baokui (文寶奎), Li Yufang (李余芳) and Zhang Banghan (ZGZSBW 1977, vol. 2, 72-73; NAV, Fonds de la Résidence Supérieure du Tonkin, dossier 36,685, dossier 38,105, 16-17; AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 582, 86). It is probably through an intermediary at this school that Đỗ came into contact with Sun Yatsen during his passage to Hà Nội in 1907 (Nguyễn Hiến Lê 2002, 130; Boudarel 1981, 182). Phan Bội Châu actively supported direct contact between Chinese and Vietnamese activists. Phan’s political action and propaganda was expanded with the help of the Yunnanese revolutionary group in Indochina; these Chinese emigrants played an important role in encouraging meetings that promoted possible cooperation among

revolutionaries.

V. Tax Resistance Movements in South China and Central Vietnam

Moreover, like the Chinese revolutionaries, Vietnamese patriots began to take advantage of the unrest in the two countries. Phạm Quỳnh (1892-1945), a conservative intellectual who served as a government minister under Emperor Bảo Đại's administration, wrote in a column about the situation of that time: "In reality, the Vietnamese reformers secretly nurtured a hope of fomenting a revolution against the protectorate with the Chinese assistance. The attempts of 1908 and the following years were the consequence of all this movement" (Phạm Quỳnh 1926, 32). Some signs indicate the relations between the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionary movements.

As one of the concrete outcomes of revolutionary agitation that ultimately led to the 1911 Xinhai Revolution in China, it is very interesting to compare the origins and development of the respective tax resistance movements in China and Vietnam. Indeed, the most important cause of unrest in China as well as Vietnam resided in the weight of the taxes.

In the early twentieth century, the increase of taxes and the creation of new taxes in China caused a general discontent among the population of Guangdong, where serious unrest erupted at several

locations (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 20, 187). The insurrections reported in April 1907 in the southern part of Guangdong were due to the application by the mandarins of unpopular reforms as well as the imposition of new taxes (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 200, 90). The uprising of May 1907 was a direct reaction to the discontent caused by the increase or establishment of certain taxes. The instigator of the movement was named “Lau-if-Yit,” surnamed “Sui-Xin,” who had been successful in inciting several thousands of supporters (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 20, 189). This tax resistance movement moved from Guangdong to Guangxi. In July 1907, the population of this region refused to provide food to regular troops. The military requisitions had led to seditious fights, and the payment of tax and various levies had been refused in several places (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 20, 205). Two months later, insurrections were reported in Aidian (愛店),⁵⁾ where some people refused to pay taxes (AMAE, NS Indochine vol. 20, 214).

Immediately after the events in South China, tax resistance movements emerged in Central Vietnam, where the taxes had been increased more rapidly. On February 6, 1908, a demand imposed on the residents of Quảng Nam to immediately provide corvée labor ignited violent opposition. On March 12, 1908, hundreds of inhabitants of the sub-prefecture of Đại Lộc gathered in front of the local governor’s residence to demand a reduction of taxes. Other demonstrations ensued in Quảng Ngãi and Thừa Thiên, as well as in Quảng Nam. From the second week of April, the agitation spread to

5) Aidian is a Chinese outpost located in Longzhou (龍州).

the southern provinces of Central Vietnam. By that time, it took on the character of violent rebellion, particularly in Bình Định, where overexcited elements dominated the direction of operations and the demonstrations degenerated in real riots, during which acts of brutality were committed. As the crisis worsened, troops were sent in the troubled regions; their presence halted the extension of the movement of Phú Yên, after the capture of the ringleaders in Nha Trang and Phan Thiết in mid-May (Nguyễn Thế Anh 1992, 215-216).

Did the tax resistance movement in China exert an influence on the choices of Vietnamese reformers who were reading the Chinese newspapers at that time?⁶⁾ In this regard, the opinion of Lanessan is very telling. In May 1908, he said:

The deeply troubled situation of Indochina that I was pointing out, right here, three months before, only got worse from then on, at the same time that a real revolutionary movement was being produced in some parts of the Chinese territories, which are adjacent to Tonkin. Although these two facts are independent, they derive from causes that are, to a certain extent, common to them, and we cannot deal with one without also paying attention to the other. In Indochina, the disorders were, in April 1908, so serious that the Governor General ad interim asked the European troops to suppress them. It is particularly in Central Annam that they broke out (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 20, 247).

Vietnam was experiencing at this time a crisis of agitation and of

6) At the time, Indochinese newspapers such as *Courrier d'Haïphong* or *Indépendance Tonkinoise* encouraged the Vietnamese to reject tax payment (Huỳnh Văn Tòng 1971, 98).

disorders that it had known since 1886. According to Lanessan, the disorder has assumed a character that was completely different from what was seen by the earlier insurgencies that France struggled to suppress during the first years following the conquest of the country. The former rebellions had been raised in the form of armed bands that had attacked small French outposts, had plundered pro-French villages, and had devoted themselves, in a word, to real acts of war. What happened between March and May 1908 was any other thing. The rebellion was almost exclusively psychological. It began with the formation of small associations, all of whose male members were cutting their hair and asserting their comradeship, and sometimes even forced the people in their hometowns to do the same. When asked why they were cutting their beautiful and long black hair, they responded, “The taxes are too heavy; we have nothing to do but buy turbans.” They constantly expressed their misery, asking for reduced taxes. It is because of taxes that they were not able to buy turbans and dresses and were condemned to die of hunger (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 20, 247).

The most important cause of unrest in China and Vietnam resided in the weight of the taxes. Lanessan concluded that “it was inevitable that a new native class entered into a relation with the Chinese revolutionaries. And that is why we find, today, in front of us, the Indochinese reformers in our colony and the Chinese reformers on the borders of our Indochina. It is with this double danger that the new Governor General Klobukowski will be confronted” (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 20, 247).

VI. Frontier Insurrections and Vietnamese Revolutionaries

While it is hard to track the actual connections between China and Vietnam regarding tax resistance beyond parallel dynamics and similar chronology, the April 1908 Hekou (河口) insurrection in Yunnan shows that a conspiracy had been jointly prepared by unknown Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionary activists. On April 20, 1908, the French administrator resident of Lào Cai arrested eight Chinese who did not hold official certificates for their stay. During the interrogation that followed, he seized a thousand of piasters, and three letters alluding to the political situation: the first was addressed to the resident, the second to the French consul in Mengzi (蒙自), and the third to the British consul, as well as packages of proclamations destined, some of which were destined for Vietnamese and others that were destined for Europeans. The latter also included an English translation of the Chinese text. These proclamations stated that the revolutionaries invading Yunnan intended only to overthrow the Manchu dynasty, destroy the mandarin organization, and reform bad customs. On the other hand, they emphasized that the people and foreigners didn't need to worry and that a protection of their persons and property was guaranteed (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 13, 239).

On the night of April 29, 1908, the market of Hekou, located on the Sino-Vietnamese border, opposite the border town Lào Cai, was attacked by a group of Chinese revolutionary partisans. Their number was estimated to be between two hundred and three hundred (AMEP, vol. 543B-1, 28). On May 1, 1908, the leader of the rebels, Wang

Heshun (王和順, 1868-1934), rode on horseback from Lào Cai to Hekou at the head of an armed group, wearing with all solemnity a seal of the general commander in chief of the rebel “Kwan-Feou-Tchen” (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 14, 50). Holding the title, “Yun Gui Dudu Huang” (雲貴都督黃, General in chief of Yunnan and Guizhou Huang), he distributed revolutionary pamphlets and publications (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 13, 287-289). It is likely that secret agreements had been reached between the Chinese rebels and the Vietnamese soldiers of the garrison stationed in Indochina. The Vietnamese gunners participated in this military operation: the French military officer, Robert, responsible for the outpost, heard on April 29 “the bullets whistle above his head.” Around 9 p.m., a cannon fired, signaling the attack (AMEP, vol. 711A, 50).

The insurgents made efforts to cut the telegraphic wire between Hekou and Mengzi from the beginning, but it was six days before the communications between Mengzi and Yunnanfu (雲南府) were interrupted. This allowed the viceroy to send a strong troop contingent to the scene. The activists of the Tongmenghui, en route from Hekou to Mengzi, judged it prudent to disperse at the moment that Hu Hanmin was to send rifles and munitions to them. Instead, Hu decided to secretly provide these weapons to the “Annamese Revolutionary Party” (Annan Gemingdang 安南革命黨) (AMEP, vol. 543B-1, 28, vol. 711A, 50; ZGZSBW 1977, vol. 3, 25).

Moreover, after the failure of the four Sino-Vietnamese border insurrections between 1907 and 1908, most of the Chinese revolutionaries had returned to Tonkin, in particular to Hà Nội,

geographically close to the border area and where branches of the Tongmenghui had been established. Following the first uprising in Fangcheng (防城, September 1, 1907), for example, the agitators began to disperse because of a lack of the reinforcements that the two officers Guo Renzhang (郭人漳) and Zhao Sheng (趙聲) expected to receive. Therefore, their leaders, such as Hu Hanmin and Wang Heshun, returned to Hà Nội at the end of September 1907 (Bergère 1994, 203; Boorman et al. eds. 1967-1971, vol. 2, 160, vol. 3, 175). During the uprising of Zhennanguan (鎮南關, December 2, 1907), in which Sun Yatsen participated, the military forces of the imperial government, led by Lu Rongting pushed the revolutionaries outside of China. That's why Sun headed for Hà Nội (Bergère 1994, 203-204; Boorman et al. eds. 1967-1971, vol. 2, 160, vol. 3, 175). On December 14, 1907, a group of five hundred revolutionaries entered Tonkin hunted by the Chinese regular army. Subsequently, it was revealed that there were bands of one or two thousand armed men in Lạng Sơn Province (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 225, 212). Having failed in his projects, a Chinese leader called "Ly-Yao-Kinh" (Li Youqing [李幼卿]) remained for nearly one month in Tonkin between Na Sầm and Đăng Đồng before he left to settle definitively in Hà Nội (AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 14, 146). As a result of the failure of the insurrection of Hekou, the leaders retreated quickly from Hekou, and didn't attempt to defend their position. Pursued and driven to the border of Tonkin, they didn't hesitate to cross it, shouting to their opponents a last cry of hope: "We will come back" (AMEP, t. 711A, 50). Taking advantage of the rough mountainous terrain, these

Chinese revolutionaries evaded surveillance along the border outposts to “invade” the French territory and gathered two considerable groups of armed men near Nghĩa Đô in Lào Cai Province and Yên Bình in Hà Giang Province (AMAE, NS Chine vol. 14, 46). Meanwhile, many Chinese without weapons came from Yunnan and reached the interior of Tonkin.⁷⁾

From then on, the revolutionary campaign moved from the border to the inland area and took on new forms. According to a Chinese historian, Yen Ching Hwang, these revolutionaries were extremely agitated and had a tendency to rise against any dominant authority (Yen Ching-hwang 1976, 306). Until then, the French government had calmly witnessed the spectacle that was taking place on the Chinese side. It was thought that “these reformers, who all armed themselves and entered Tonkin, will surrender unconditionally without delay.” Some of the revolutionaries decided to show an amenable attitude, but most of the Chinese partisans preferred the liberty of the underground armed movement to the submission and became absorbed in that. Their first feat was an ambush, followed by assassinations. A French lieutenant, Veignard, was the first to fall under their shots. Also, before long, two other officers, Raynaud and Eymard, followed by a Vietnamese escort, headed for the combat area in Bắng Mường of Yên Bái Province, expecting an unconditional surrender. The rioters feigned surrender and some of them put down

7) For the troubled situation in Tonkin, see also AMAE, NS Indochine vol. 20, 272-273, NS Chine, vol. 200, 128, 134, 181-182, 184, 192-193, 213, 272, vol. 201, 37, 54, 80, 112, 114-115, 133-135, vol. 239, 90, 93, 119, 158, vol. 240, 116-117, 121-122, 124, 130, 270-272.

their weapons and were imprisoned. Their purpose was to extend negotiation time until the night. The French officers, without doubt, satisfied with their mission and confident of their success, led down their guard. Just at that moment, they were suddenly awakened at dawn by the sound of gunshot. They went out and fell immediately under the bullets of the same men that they believed had surrender the previous day. Some Vietnamese soldiers were killed and the others ran away. This unprecedented bold strategy allowed the Chinese revolutionaries to sufficiently procure new models of rifles and ammunition. While the survivors of Chinese bands resumed their path through the mountains, the latest news of the event dispelled the illusions of the French authorities (AMEP, vol. 711A, 50; AMAE, NS Chine, vol. 200, 184, vol. 240, 121-122, 124).

VII. The Conspiracy of Uprising and Revolutionary Propaganda

Subsequently, on June 27, 1908 the first part of the uprising plot was carried out. The diocese of Western Tonkin sent to the Missions Étrangères de Paris (Society of Foreign Missions of Paris) the following report:

At dinner, two French infantry companies of the Hà Nội garrison were poisoned – and barely survived. The dose had been incorrectly calculated. After a few hours of intense pains, all the sick were restored to health, and at the same time the military authorities took measures to

smash any suspicious movement. Seeing the failure of the operation, nobody made a move and the public order was not disturbed. However, as it was found out later, the danger had been great, because if the poisoning had succeeded, bands would have invaded the city and have massacred the Europeans. Indeed, as soon as the first inquiry was made the next day, we became aware of the existence of a conspiracy, prepared for a long time, whose network extended far and high. It was the activity of some native organizations or groups that the authorities, too confident, had approved and who were taking advantage of the situation to organize the betrayal and revolt (AMEP, vol. 711C, 23).

It turned out really that this attempt was the result of patient preparation and the consequence of a concerted plan. It might have been the prelude to achieving a plan matured for a long time by the partisans of Phan Bội Châu to push the native soldiers of the Hà Nội garrison into betrayal in order to capture the citadel through the elimination of European troops and then spark a revolt simultaneously in the capital and neighboring rural communities. Hoàng Hoa Thám himself would mount a military campaign to extend the uprising to the provinces of Bắc Ninh, Phúc Yên and Yên Vĩnh (Nguyễn Thế Anh 1992, 217).⁸⁾ It is an established fact that Chinese revolutionaries were involved in the conspiracy of Vietnamese activists planning to poison the French troops. The attempted poisoning was executed by employees who were working in the barracks, and the plan was to remove arms and ammunitions from the colonial forces. Immediately after the French authorities discovered this uprising plot, a curfew

8) For the conspirators of the case of toxic chemical, see Morlat 1995, 81-84.

was enforced and a large number of suspects were captured. Because of the involvement of several Chinese revolutionary refugees in this conspiracy, approximately one thousand of them were put in jail (Teo Eng-hock 1933, 63).

At the time, the French authorities began to suspect that Lương Văn Can (1854-1927), one of the founders of Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục (Tongkin Free School),⁹⁾ was a member of “secret societies,” and that he was also maintaining relations with several individuals who had taken part in this poisoning conspiracy (AOM, GGI, dossier 4150, 1). Later, his ongoing relations with Ernest Babut (1878-1962), former French director of *Đại Việt Tân Báo* (大越新報, New Journal of Great Viet), were equally significant. Ernest Babut, a socialist activist in the Human Rights League – critical of colonial rule and considered as an agitator – was not only a defender of the Vietnamese reformers, but also of the Chinese revolutionaries. At the time of the capture of Hekou, for example, he had lent to the leaders of the revolutionary party a sum of \$4,000, which was later payed back to him by the intermediary of a bank (AOM, GGI, dossier 4149). Meanwhile, information provided to Xavier Vincilioni, central commissioner in Tonkin, on November 11, 1909 by a Vietnamese secret agent, is very interesting (AOM, GGI, dossier 4150, 2). On the evening of November 10, 1909, Babut had a meeting with Lương Văn Can about financial issues. Because he had asked this agent to serve as an interpreter, the agent of the French government was present from 6:30

9) Tonkin Free School was an educational institution founded to reform Vietnamese society under French colonialism at the time.

p.m. Before the arrival of Lương, Babut had a conversation with the agent:

I have the intention to create a journal for the defense of Vietnamese interests; but I don't have a lot of funds, having at most a thousand of piasters that I entrusted to my Vietnamese girlfriend who earns a living in doing trade, and doing some work at the Imprimerie Gallois. I must therefore raise donations from the influential and rich Vietnamese people who help with the work of justice and humanity that I will start. I really hoped to share my thoughts with Mr. Can, more than anyone else, because I know his patriotic ideas and also because he has a lot of friends.

At 7 o'clock p.m., the intellectual Lương Văn Lương Can, considered one of the leaders of Vietnamese reformers in Tonkin, visited Babut's home, located at 13 rue du Chanvre (currently Phố Hàng Gai). Babut had a conversation with Lương about the questioning of a French politician and journalist Francis de Pressensé (1853-1914), of the imminent amnesty of the nationalist Phan Chu Trinh,¹⁰⁾ a topic which he said was raised by him during his stay in Paris, about the mentalities of the French people in the colony and in France; then he made known his intention to found a newspaper, asking his interpreter to explain a circular to Lương in Vietnamese. After having read it, Lương approved of the program of launching a newspaper,

10) After tax revolts erupted in 1908, Phan Chu Trinh was arrested. He was sentenced to death, but it was commuted to life imprisonment after his progressive admirers in France intervened. He was sent to Côn Đảo Island. In 1911, after three years, he was pardoned and sentenced to house arrest.

and said to Babut: “It would be very good that all the Vietnamese don’t forget to be grateful to you. A newspaper like that will be ideal for my compatriots. But, above all, it would be better for you to make sure that Phan Chu Trinh is released from prison, because, once the latter is free, I will help you do well on the work.” And as the Vietnamese reformer was asked to subscribe for a certain sum of money, he said to Babut, “I cannot promise to you any subscription for the moment, but I will have a duty to recommend your journal to my many comrades.” And then after Babut begged him for help once again, he added: “I say neither yes nor no for the moment, but I will come one of these days and visit you with my son who speaks French and we will come back to this matter.” Before parting with Lương after the meeting, Babut showed him the portrait of Sun Yatsen and told him, “He is one of my good friends. A lot of Vietnamese ought to be like him.”

What were the effects of this project? On January 1, 1910, Babut began the publication of the newspaper, which covered eight pages and appeared at least once a week. Published under the title of *Dân Báo* (民報, Journal of the People), it was without a doubt, inspired of *Min Bao*, the former periodical of the Chinese revolutionary party. The newspaper, published in *quốc ngữ* and Chinese characters had as its main goal defending the interests of the Vietnamese people. A large number of Vietnamese influential figures were entreated either to scribe to the newspaper or to contribute in some way to the success of the business (AOM, GGI, dossier 4151, 1-4). The appearance of *Dân Báo* signaled the dissemination of revolutionary ideas.

VIII. Conclusion

A silent shout came for the revolutionary “new books”. They were secretly spread in Vietnam with the intention of arousing the scientific and political controversy among Vietnamese intellectuals. It is under the influence of radical ideas that the supporters of revolution proposed to resort to external assistance and foment uprising in order to recover national independence. Gradually, a group of Vietnamese reformers turned to the Chinese revolutionary party, and they actively made contact with Chinese revolutionaries. The subsequent repercussions of the Chinese revolutionary movement in Indochina developed into a conspiracy formed by agitators in both China and Vietnam. Like the Chinese revolutionaries, Vietnamese patriots took advantage of the unrest in the two countries. In 1907, the increase of taxes and the creation of new taxes in China caused a general discontent among the population of Guangdong. The next year, tax resistance movements began in Central Vietnam. The April 1908 Hekou uprising shows that a conspiracy was jointly prepared by Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionary activists. Moreover, after the failure of the four Sino-Vietnamese border insurrections between 1907 and 1908, most of the Chinese revolutionaries had returned to Hà Nội. From then on, the revolutionary campaign moved from the border to the inland area. Chinese revolutionaries were involved in this conspiracy of Vietnamese activists planning to poison the French troops. Furthermore, the dissemination of revolutionary ideas was reflected in the foundation of *Dân Báo*.

Compared to Korea, in the early twentieth century, an epidemic of revolution in Vietnam benefited from intellectual, human, and geographical factors: the dissemination of revolutionary ideas and movements, the relatively stable presence of Chinese emigrants in Vietnamese society, and the extension of the influence of Sun Yatsen into Indochina. In particular, the insurrections that shook South China in the early years of the 1900s had an inevitable impact on Vietnam. As Governor General Anthony W. Klobukowski also pointed out in 1908, it is in large part from the Chinese revolutionary literature that Vietnamese intellectuals gained their inclination for reform and their new ideas (AMAE, NS Indochine, vol. 17, 145). Unlike in Korea, where the resistance movement against the Japanese was not fueled from outside revolutionary force, the territory of Indochina served as a fertile breeding ground for revolutionary propaganda against the colonial government.

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요약

소리 없는 외침에서 혁명의 전파로: 20세기 초 베트남의 지식인들과 외부의 혁명 세력

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서강대 동아연구소

중국에서와 마찬가지로, 한국뿐만 아니라 베트남의 지식인들은 자국의 운명과 현실을 진단하는 과정에서 개혁적이거나 혁명적인 사상을 전파하던 ‘중국발(發)’ 혹은 ‘일본발(發)’ 신서(新書)의 도움을 받았다. 이 글은 혁명적인 내용을 담고 있던 혁명 신서의 정치적, 사회적 파장이 두드러졌던 베트남의 경우를 분석의 대상으로 삼는다. 베트남의 사례를 이해하기 위해서는, 우선 현지 사회의 소리 없는 외침, 즉 중국의 혁명 신서와 혁명가들이 비밀리에 베트남 사회에 스멀스멀 침투하던 현상을 주목할 필요가 있다. 다음으로 이러한 외침이 점차 혁명 운동으로 번져 나가는 과정을 밝히는 작업은 지리적 요소와 인적 요소를 활용한 베트남의 지식인들이 외부의 혁명 세력과 연계하여 운동의 모티브와 방향을 설정했던 양상을 집중적으로 규명해 나간다.

주제어: 베트남, 신서, 화교, 혁명, 판 보이 쩌우, 손일선(손문)