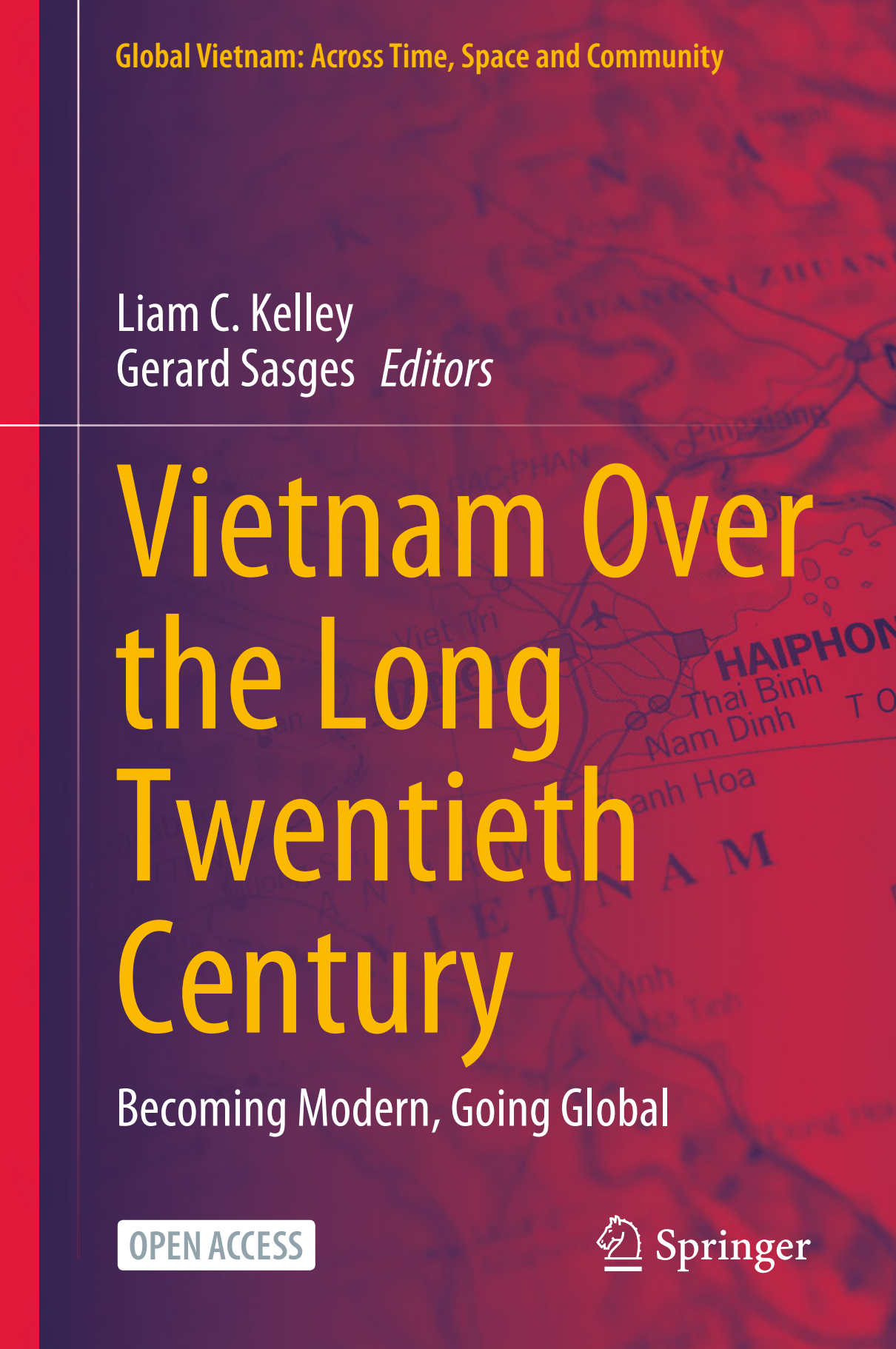
Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community

Liam C. Kelley
Gerard Sasges *Editors*

Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century

Becoming Modern, Going Global



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Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community

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ISSN 2731-7552 ISSN 2731-7560 (electronic)
Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community
ISBN 978-981-97-3610-2 ISBN 978-981-97-3611-9 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

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Chapter 1
Introduction: Documenting Vietnam over the Long Twentieth Century—Becoming Modern, Going Global

Liam C. Kelley and Gerard Sasges

1.1 Introduction

Over the past century, Vietnam has undergone a remarkable series of transformations. If we could go back in time to the mid-nineteenth century, we would find an early modern kingdom deeply influenced by Sinitic culture. By the end of the nineteenth century, some members of that elite, now under French colonial rule but still connected to a broader East Asian intellectual network, began to examine an alternative to their cultural world, the world of Western culture. The door to that world opened and new ideas and practices rapidly transformed elements of Vietnamese society through a process that has often been labeled as "modernization" or "Westernization." While such terms suggest a uniform process, the reality was of course very complex as there were different forms of modernity and the West was not homogenous.

This complexity became extremely evident in the post-colonial era in Vietnam, as the northern half of the country pursued a socialist vision of modernity following such approaches in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China while the southern half sought to create a new society that was in part inspired by the philosophy of Personalism. With the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the path to a socialist vision of modernity became the official direction for the entire country to pursue, and with the deterioration of relations with China following the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War,

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_1

the Soviet Union became the main guiding light for that journey. Soviet experts visited Vietnam and Vietnamese students and workers traveled to the USSR and the Eastern Bloc, while hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese who did not share this vision of the future fled as refugees and established diasporic communities around the globe. Finally, beginning with the Đổi Mới reforms of 1986, the doors to a wider outside world gradually opened and Vietnamese began to consider how they could integrate into a globalizing world.

In this synopsis of the history of Vietnam over what we can call "the long twentieth century," we can see two key points. First, we see Vietnam actively participating in the global circulation of ideas and people. Second, we also see a perpetual effort to achieve some form of modernity that is always imminent but seemingly never achieved, as political developments have repeatedly changed the focus of the desired form of modernity for the nation. The chapters in this volume document different stages in these long and interconnected processes of engaging with the outside world and seeking some form of modernity. Further, they do so by bringing together the strengths of two approaches to historical scholarship, what we can call the Area Studies language-based, nation-focused approach with the more recent transnational or global approach to studying the past.

1.2 Area Studies and Global Studies

Modernity is, of course, an enormous topic that has been dealt with extensively by scholars. Once seen as a uniquely European phenomenon characterized by a move toward secularization, rationality and individualism that developed from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and then spread to other parts of the globe in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is more common today to see the term "modernity" used in the plural, with reference to "multiple modernities" (Eisenstadt 2002). This concept of multiple modernities is employed by scholars to argue that there are various forms of modernity that historically emerged across the globe, and that each can only be understood in its specific historical, cultural, and political context.

This task of understanding the specific historical, cultural, and political contexts of places around the globe has long been the purview of the field of Area Studies, with its emphasis on linguistic training and deep knowledge of individual societies. However, in recent decades Asian Studies, a subfield of Area Studies, has undergone an intellectual transformation that has moved Asian Studies scholarship from its language-based and nation-focused origins to a new emphasis on researching transnational topics, research that at times relies heavily, and at times even exclusively, on Western-language sources.

With the end of the Cold War and the rise of globalization, there were Asian Studies scholars who came to believe that their focus on individual, or at times national, societies was insufficient for understanding the connections between societies and nations that globalization was illuminating. Funding agencies agreed, and starting

in the 1990s, there were calls for "border-crossing" scholarship and in the early 2000s for research that focused on "inter-Asian connections" (Kelley 2021: 362–365). Further, in recent years such approaches have continued to be championed as the way forward for Asian Studies (Chua et al. 2019: 45).

In response to these calls, numerous works have been published since the 1990s that seek to examine various aspects of the history of Asia in regional or global perspectives, from Asia as a whole (Gunn 2011, 2021; Tagliacozzo 2022), to sub-regions like Southeast Asia (Reid 1988, 1995; Andaya 2006; Lieberman 2003, 2009; Lockard 2009), to individual countries like China (Adshead 2000, 2004; Ropp 2010). Additionally, leading journals like the *Journal of Asian Studies* have promoted such topics as interconnections among Asian countries (Duara 2010; Sen 2010; Andaya 2010), and "Global Asias" (Yano 2021; Chen 2021; Ryang 2021), a new field that seeks to merge Asian Studies with Asian American Studies. Finally, at the institutional level, the 2010s saw the emergence of various centers focusing on "global Asia" or "global Asian Studies" (Sato and Sonoda 2021: 207–208). There are now, for instance, global Asia research centers at Waseda University[1] and National Taiwan University.[2] There is a Global Asia Institute at the National University of Singapore[3], while the University of Hong Kong features an Asia Global Institute[4] and NYU Shanghai, meanwhile, is home to a Center for Global Asia.[5] Beyond the Asian region, there is a Stockholm Center for Global Asia[6] and a Global Asia Institute at Pace University[7] in the USA as well as various programs and initiatives around the world that focus on various forms of global Asian Studies (Sato and Sonoda 2021: 207–208).

While the above scholarship and institutions have responded to the call to examine Asia from transnational and global perspectives in diverse ways, we can nonetheless identify certain commonalities. In terms of scholarship, many of the works that promote this approach rely heavily on Western-language and secondary sources. While one could argue that works of theorization and broad synthesis of regional or global topics necessitate such an approach, we also can find an extremely heavy reliance on Western-language sources, and particularly English-language sources, in studies that deal with transnational topics that are more limited in scope. To be fair, we are of course today the benefactors of decades of scholarship in that language and English has now become the dominant and "desired" global language (Phan 2017); nonetheless, we would argue that this emphasis on researching transnational topics combined with the convenience of accessing abundant English-language scholarship has nonetheless moved Asian Studies away from its professed core strength,

[1] https://www.waseda.jp/global-asia/. Accessed 01 March 2023.

[2] https://coss.ntu.edu.tw/cossEN/cp_n_1907.html. Accessed 01 March 2023.

[3] https://www.gai.nus.edu.sg/. Accessed 01 March 2023.

[4] https://www.asiaglobalinstitute.hku.hk/. Accessed 01 March 2023.

[5] https://cga.shanghai.nyu.edu/. Accessed 01 March 2023.

[6] https://www.su.se/stockholm-center-for-global-asia/. Accessed 01 March 2023.

[7] . https://www.pace.edu/dyson/faculty-and-research/research-centers-and-initiatives/global-asia-institute/institute. Accessed 01 March 2023.

language-based research. As such, while some may see such scholarship as the way to move Area/Asian Studies forward, one could also argue that it is undermining that field by neglecting its main contribution.

In terms of the "global Asian Studies" institutions that have been established, we can also detect a commonality in that many are devoted to the examination of contemporary affairs. The Global Asia Research Center at National Taiwan University, for instance, focuses on the following areas: Family, Population and Gender; Ethnicity and Migration; Global Economy and Local Inequality; Civil Society and Social Movements; Urban Development and Governance; Global Culture, Religion and Consumption.[8] The core research programs at the National University of Singapore's Global Asia Institute are Behavior Change, Health Care, Data Analytics, and Interdisciplinary Research.[9] The same focus on contemporary affairs can be found at other centers and programs as well, with the result that historical scholarship plays a minor role in how "Global Asia" is being envisioned (see the comments by Tamara Sears in Isaac et al. 2021).

Alongside this trend to promote global and transnational scholarship has been a move to globalize nation studies. This is a phenomenon that we can detect in the emergence of programs and initiatives that focus on such topics as "Global Japan" or "Global China." While some, like the Global Japan Lab at Princeton University,[10] focus on contemporary affairs, others, such as the Global China Studies major at NYU Shanghai,[11] attempt to meld the traditional Area Studies language-based approach with the insights gained from an understanding of transnational and global contexts. Finally, one graduate program that bridges the above two approaches is the PhD in Comparative Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore.[12] Among the program's requirements is proficiency in two Asian languages, as candidates are expected to bring the language-based approach of Area Studies to their study of a transnational or comparative topic.

1.3 The Field of Vietnamese History

This trend toward producing transnational or global scholarship, and particularly the tendency to produce scholarship that is heavily based on secondary sources in Western languages, particularly English, is one that has generally not been adopted by scholars who work on Vietnam. While scholars inside Vietnam largely focus their research on the nation, employ Vietnamese language sources, and have been less influenced by international scholarly trends, for many of the foreign scholars who work on Vietnam today, linguistic ability has served as an essential element in their

[8] https://garc.ntu.edu.tw/en/. Accessed 01 March 2023.

[9] https://www.gai.nus.edu.sg/#about. Accessed 01 March 2023.

[10] https://gjl.princeton.edu/. Accessed 03 March 2023.

[11] https://gcs.shanghai.nyu.edu/. Accessed 03 March 2023.

[12] https://fass.nus.edu.sg/cas/. Assessed 03 March 2023.

scholarship. Whereas there were foreign scholars who worked on Vietnam beginning in the 1950s and 1960s who had limited or no linguistic ability in Vietnamese, starting in the 1990s, a new and sizable generation of foreign scholars emerged whose scholarship is defined by its reliance on Vietnamese language sources.

This transformation took place as Vietnam opened to the world in the 1990s and foreign scholars were able to visit that country and conduct research. As such, just as scholars who focus on other areas were beginning to examine transnational topics, a new generation of Vietnam scholars were, for the first time, able to engage in serious language-based and archival scholarship on Vietnam, which in the case of Vietnam, includes the use of Vietnamese, French, and classical Chinese. In the late 1990s and into the 2000s, numerous monographs on Vietnamese history emerged that were marked by their significant engagement with Vietnamese language sources. To give some examples, there were works that were primarily based on Vietnamese sources (Ninh 2002; McHale 2004; Dutton 2006; Dror 2007), Vietnamese and French sources (Zinoman 2001; Taylor 2004; Ramsay 2008; Goscha 2012), Vietnamese and classical Chinese sources (Li 1998; Kelley 2005), as well as works on the Vietnam war that made use of Vietnamese archival sources (Asselin 2002; Nguyen 2012; Miller 2013).

That said, this does not mean that scholars working on Vietnam are unaware of or ignore the larger transnational or global contexts in which their linguistically informed research is located. Instead, it is that this element of their research has not been highlighted or made the focus. However, on close inspection, one finds that particularly in recent years it has become ubiquitous. Such diverse topics as the Catholic church (Keith 2012), the colonial alcohol monopoly (Sasges 2017), republicanism (Zinoman 2013; Goscha 2016; Tran and Vu 2022), the Communist revolution (Vu 2016), the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ (Goscha 2022), land reform (Holcombe 2020), cosmopolitan nationalism (Nguyen 2020), and masculinity (Tran 2017) are only understandable in larger global contexts and the authors of the above recent works all examine and discuss those contexts.

1.4 The Chapters

The chapters in this volume reflect this approach to the study of Vietnam. All the chapters have transnational or global elements; however, their authors are also deeply attuned to language and highlight the importance of using sources in vernacular languages, and classical Chinese in the case of the first chapter, to understand how Vietnamese engaged with diverse currents of modernity across the long twentieth century. This engagement with language and the documents that record it is what the "documenting" in our chapter title refers to. Not only do the authors in this volume "document" forms of modernity in their chapters, but many deal with actual "documents" that were employed to promote various elements of modernity.

The opening chapter of the volume, Ran Tai's "Pursuing Văn Minh: A Study of Civilizational Discourse in the Historical Narratives in Colonial Vietnam (1900–1915)," is a perfect example of this. Here the author examines the introduction into

Vietnam of the Western concept of "civilization." This concept was appropriated by certain members of the Vietnamese elite in the early twentieth century as it made its way to Vietnam through the medium of Chinese, traveling across knowledge networks in East Asia, from Japan to China to Vietnam. Ran Tai documents this process by examining some of the actual documents that were written to promote this new concept. Further, he makes the novel contribution of examining works written by pro-French Vietnamese intellectuals, a group that has long been neglected in the scholarship on modern Vietnamese history.

The Western concept of civilization encompassed many different elements that were emphasized in varying ways by the Westernizing members of Vietnamese society in the early twentieth century. One fascinating example is the subject of Chap. 2, "Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa (1896–1982): A Woman Who Wrote to Change Vietnamese Society" by Phuong Ngoc Nguyen. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was an early modernizer who through her writings documented the possibilities for Vietnamese women in the new world of "civilization." This included research that she conducted on the ancient kingdom of Champa as well as a novel about a French woman who married a Vietnamese soldier in France during World War I and who traveled to Vietnam to find him after the war had ended. Through these writings, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa sought to bring change to Vietnam, particularly to the lives of women.

In addition to Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, there were other people in early twentieth century Vietnam who sought to modernize the lives of women, and this is a topic that is addressed in Chap. 3, "An Educational Regime of Truth for Social Reform in Late Colonial Vietnam: The Journalistic Art of the Possible in *Phụ nữ tân văn*'s 'Travel Stories' and 'Letters for You'" by Thanh Phùng and Đăng Minh Vũ. In this chapter, the authors examine two regular columns in a newspaper called *Women's News* (*Phụ nữ tân văn*) and identify what they call an educational regime of truth for social reform in late colonial Vietnam. In particular, Phùng and Vũ argue that while there are elements about these columns, such as their supposed female authorship, that are questionable, these writings sought to document a vision of a modern society that served to educate their readers about the possibilities of the future.

For writings to serve this potential, they had to be able to reach people through sale or dissemination, and this is the topic of Chap. 4, "Between Sacred and Secular: Publishing, Books, and Everyday Life in Colonial Cochinchina" by Cao Vy. In this chapter, Cao Vy examines the global circulation and manipulation of documents, first from the archival services of colonial Indochina to the French National Library and finally to newly digitized archives. Through a careful reading of these documents, Cao Vy maps the extensive, vibrant landscape of colonial publishing. Focusing on the practice of book donation, Cao Vy reveals the convergence of commerce and religion in colonial publishing and shows how new technologies could be used to create, rather than dissolve social ties. In this way, this chapter opens a window into the social world of early twentieth-century Cochinchina and its complex mix of the traditional and the modern, the local and the global.

A prime example of the convergence of publishing and religion that led to enhanced social ties is the topic of Chap. 5, "Multiple-Agents Involved in the Localization Our Lady of La Vang: From a Mythic Figure to the Mother of Vietnam," by

Duong Van Bien. In this chapter, the author examines how a version of the Virgin Mary worshiped in central Vietnam, Our Lady of La Vang, was transformed over the course of the twentieth century into a symbol of the Vietnamese nation and Vietnamese indigeneity. This transformation relied heavily on the deployment of modern print publications. At the same time, however, the novel ways in which Our Lady of Vietnam was depicted and explained were also influenced by Vietnamese politics in the post-colonial era. Indeed, politics became paramount in the post-colonial years and that is evident in the following two chapters as well.

In Chap. 6, "Another kind of Vietnamization: Language Policies in Higher Education in the Two Vietnams," Le Nam Trung Hieu foregrounds the issue of language and its role in processes of colonization, decolonization, and nation-building. After 1945, leaders in both Vietnams prioritized the adoption of Vietnamese as the language of instruction for new and modern national educational systems. Higher education was a particular challenge, requiring the development of entire new vocabularies for topics that had previously been taught in French. Le Nam Trung Hieu's work highlights the immense labor necessary to make ideas circulate, the crucial roles of individual academics in both the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the north and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in the south, and the way processes of translation and circulation are inherently political. In the end, the different processes the two regimes employed to build new vocabularies and curriculums reflected their divergent visions of a modern Vietnam.

Chapter 7, "Not So Honest Relations: Top Level Polish-Vietnamese Contacts 1965–1970" by Jarema Słowiak then looks more closely at one of those visions of a modern Vietnam, the vision of socialist modernity that was pursued in the North. Here, Słowiak uses a very different kind of document, the records of the Polish Foreign Ministry, to locate the DRV in the larger socialist world. Slowiak reveals intra-bloc relations as complex, multifaceted, and occasionally acrimonious. Polish Communist Party First Secretary Władysław Gomułka actively avoided additional aid commitments, questioned his Vietnamese counterpart Lê Duẩn's understanding of global politics, and deplored DRV strategies that he felt led to needless loss of life. For his part, Lê Duẩn considered his Polish counterpart a revisionist with little appetite for global revolution. Beneath a veneer of fraternal solidarity, erstwhile allies pursued their own goals and followed their own paths to socialist modernity.

That one can use Polish sources to seek to understand North Vietnam in the 1960s, as Słowiak does, points to an important issue. We listed above the various monographs on Vietnamese history that have been published in the past twenty-five years that rely on such languages as Vietnamese, French, and classical Chinese. These languages have long been recognized as essential for researching about Vietnamese history. However, starting in the second half of the twentieth century, Vietnam became ever more interconnected with the rest of the globe, a process that particularly picked up speed in the 1990s following the Đổi Mới reforms of 1986. As such, for scholars who focus on historical topics in this period, there are other languages that can be employed, and with the establishment of Vietnamese diasporic communities around the world, "Vietnam" can be examined in multifaceted ways.

This is precisely what we find in Chap. 8, "New Voices in A New World—Media Portrayal of the Experiences of German Reunification in 1990 by Vietnamese Contract Workers in East Germany" by Julia Behrens and Nicolai Okunew. In this chapter, Behrens and Okunew take us to the time of the dissolution of the socialist bloc in 1990. They use a unique document—transcripts of a weekly radio program produced in East Germany for Vietnamese contract workers—to broaden our perspective on a turning point in global history. The loosening of censorship allowed the program's producers to call into question claims of "international solidarity" and reveal the insecurity and racism experienced by Vietnamese during what East Germans call the "year of anarchy." Media reports also demonstrate the agency and resilience of Vietnamese as they adapted to rapid economic and social change. Finally, Behrens and Okunew trace reciprocal flows of ideas about freedom, democracy, and (post-)socialist modernity between Germany and Vietnam at a time when the latter was experiencing its own process of reform and transition. When contract workers eventually returned to Vietnam, they brought their experiences, networks, and ideas with them.

Contract workers returning from East Germany were not the only people who arrived in Vietnam in the 1990s with ideas about how the country could or should be reformed. There were foreign specialists who did the same, and this is the topic of Chap. 9, "JICA's Legal Technical Assistance Projects in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos since the 1990s" by Nobumichi Teramura. In particular, Teramura examines the work of Japanese legal experts who were sent by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to assist with legal reform in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. In doing so, these legal experts found themselves competing with experts sent from other international agencies as well as Vietnamese government officials who had clear ideas about what kinds of legal reforms they felt were acceptable.

While the opening chapter by Ran Tai and the closing chapter by Nobumichi Teramura are very different in content, those differences serve as ideal symbols of the incredible transformations that Vietnam underwent over the course of the long twentieth century, transformations that are documented in various ways in the intervening chapters. At the turn of the twentieth century, Vietnamese intellectuals struggled to educate their colleagues about the Western concept of "civilization" by writing about this concept in classical Chinese while at the turn of the twenty-first century Vietnamese officials used English to engage with experts from Japan, the USA, and other countries about how to implement legal reforms. In both instances, Vietnamese were attempting to establish a form of modernity in Vietnam. However, we perhaps can see a change in scope, from an effort to "become modern" at the turn of the twentieth century by engaging with new concepts from the West to an effort to "go global" at the turn of the twenty-first century by taking the larger world as a model for modernizing reform. Hence, the title of this volume.

1.5 Conclusion

All but one of the chapters in this volume (Chap. 6) were first presented as papers at the 12th Engaging With Vietnam (EWV) conference, held 24–28 August 2021. This conference was organized in conjunction with the 12th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) conference and was scheduled to be held at Kyoto Seika University in Japan; however, due to the pandemic, the conference was moved online. The theme of the 12th EWV conference was "Engaging with Vietnam and ASEAN: Mobilities and Identities in an Age of Global Transformation." Of the roughly 200 presentations that were made at that conference, there were a good number that dealt with historical issues, and some of those papers appear here in this volume. Further, what we found that united these papers was the fact that they all addressed topics that involved transnational or global issues, thus mirroring the development we have seen in recent years in the larger field of Vietnamese history. Therefore, in this volume, we have sought to highlight that transnational/global element but at the same time to also recognize the degree to which these chapters, like much of the recent scholarship on Vietnamese history, is still deeply grounded in traditional Area Studies language-based research. We feel that this combination is a great strength, and we wish to highlight and celebrate it here. Finally, we should note that many of the authors in this volume are at the early stages of their careers. As such, not only does the scholarship here indicate where research on Vietnamese history currently stands, but also it points toward an exciting future for the field.

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Chapter 2
Pursuing *Văn Minh*: A Study of Civilizational Discourse in the Historical Narratives in Colonial Vietnam (1900–1915)

Ran Tai

2.1 Introduction: The Duy Tân Movement and the Emergence of Nation-Centered Historical Writing

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the last traditional Vietnamese regime, the Nguyễn Dynasty (1802–1945) suffered from a series of crises from French military aggression. Having ceded to the French, three provinces in the Mekong Delta in 1862 and three more in 1867, the Nguyễn, in 1883, further agreed to let the remaining central and northern territories become protectorates, namely, Annam and Tonkin. The encounter with the French colonial power which claimed for itself the role of a civilizing savior brought a great shock to the Vietnamese elite and their ideology.

Having a history of sharing Sinitic culture, writing Sinitic characters (Hanzi/Hán tự 漢字)[1], and composing Literary Sinitic/Classical Chinese texts, the Vietnamese elite had for centuries accepted a specific kind of civilizational discourse, to understand the order of the world in which they lived. That civilizational discourse was based on the concept of *wenming/văn minh* 文明.

[1] In the early second millennium CE, there was a writing system called Chữ Nôm (𡨸喃, 𡨸喃, or 字喃)that emerged as an extension of the Sinographic script designed to represent the Vietnamese lexicon (Phan 2016: 277). According to John Phan's analysis of the prefaces of an early-modern Sino-Vietnamese dictionary (*Chỉ Nam Ngọc Âm Giải Nghĩa* 指南玉音解義), Chữ Nôm should not be regarded as a vernacular alternative to Sinitic characters but as a legitimate augmentation of the intellectual machinery of Sinitic writing and thus capable of "domesticating" thought and culture perceived as wild or unorthodox into literate civilization (Phan 2013: 2).

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_2

The word *wenming* originated in a famous East Asian divination book, the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經). The earliest parts of this book can be traced back to the period between the fourth and second centuries BCE, during which time the word *wen* 文 meant "patterns" and *ming* 明 denoted "illuminated and manifested brilliantly." The compound word, *wenming*, referred to the patterns emerging from people's divination about and observation of heaven, earth, and human behavior. These patterns, according to Yufen Chang, grew into China's earliest writing script, which gradually endowed *wen* with such meanings as "words," "characters," "writings," "texts," "learning," "literature," "belles-lettres," etc., and covered it with an aura of sacredness and magic (Chang 2020: 5–6). Around the middle of the first millennium BCE, the concept of *wen* was used by the people who claimed themselves as civilized to differentiate themselves from people whom they perceived as barbarian and illiterate. Through the effort of "a small group of masters of statecraft and moral philosophy," a collective "civilizational consciousness" emerged in early China (Bergeton 2019: 3). As many scholars have pointed out, early Chinese empires developed this "civilizational consciousness" as an important discourse to help manage and control the empire (Brindley 2021: 5; Chang 2020: 6).

Having a millennium-long history under Chinese administrative rule, the Vietnamese elite came to share this premodern civilizational discourse centered around Confucian music-rites, traditions, and praxis, and viewed themselves as the legitimate representative of *wenming*, or *văn minh* in Vietnamese, and their country a "domain of manifest civility" (*wenxian zhi bang*/*văn hiến chi bang* 文獻之邦). Regarding it as universalistic, they utilized the civilizational discourse to construct a powerful imperial ideology and hierarchical ethnography which elevated them to a higher civilizational order in the establishment of a dominant regional hegemony in the early-nineteenth century—a period in which they conquered numerous peoples and states to the south and west of Vietnam, Champa being the most famous example (Kelley 2005: 30; Tran 2020: 170; Chang 2017: 57; Goscha 2016: 23).

With the Qing dynasty's struggle to fend off Western encroachment in the middle of the nineteenth century and particularly its defeat in 1895 by the Westernized Meiji Japan, however, Vietnamese intellectuals realized that the order of the "Sinographic cosmopolis"[2] could no longer be universalistic—it could not provide a set of principles to explain the contemporary clashes with the West and the latter's overwhelming military victories (Tran 2020: 170; Gadkar-Wilcox 2014: 374; Nguyen 1998: 231). Facing this declining world system, they had to seek a new paradigm that could help to understand the position of their country in a new world political order based on the new concept of sovereign nation states (Carrai 2021: 134).

[2] I borrow this term from Ross King. As a response to Sheldon Pollock's concept the "Sanskrit Cosmopolis" in South and Southeast Asia, Ross King put forward this concept to refer to the intellectual and literary space self-consciously shared between members of the Sinographic scriptworld (Phan 2016: 278 and note 7). Here I use this term to not only refer to the long existing intellectual and literary connection among the countries in Sinitic East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, in particular), but also to emphasize their long shared and practiced conceptualization of the Sinitic world order in categorizing and dealing with various political and economic affairs, both domestically and internationally.

In the early 1900s, Vietnamese intellectuals launched a reform movement called "*Duy Tân*" 維新, literally meaning "reform," which was inspired by Japan's successful Meiji Reformation in 1868 and China's failed Hundred-Day Reforms in 1898. Most of the members who led this reform were born in the 1860s and early 1870s into scholar-gentry families from north and north-central Vietnam, which meant that they were highly educated in a tradition of Classical Chinese literature and Confucian thought which emphasized the concept of *văn minh* (Bradley 2004: 67). Despite their different stances toward French colonization, participants in this reform shared the same objective of transforming their country into an "enlightened and civilized" nation. They eagerly devoured "new books" (*tân thư* 新書) composed by influential Chinese reform scholars including Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873–1929), acquiring Western knowledge through the mediation of the Sinographic translational network between Japan and China (Chang 2020: 8).

New terms that these books introduced, such as state, race, society, sovereignty, nationality, evolution, competition, were deeply engraved in the minds of these reformists. They were convinced that without a thorough understanding of these concepts, the Vietnamese would not be able to become a "civilized" (*wenming*/ văn *minh*) society and sovereign nation-state capable of defending its independence in international competition (Chang 2020: 2). In both Classical Chinese and the Romanized Vietnamese script (*quốc ng˜ư*), they wrote in various literary forms such as journal articles and political pamphlets to passionately expound and disseminate these new ideas to their fellow Vietnamese. Among these writings, the general history of the Vietnamese nation emerged as an important genre. Not only anti-French revolutionaries but also mandarins working for the Nguyễn Dynasty under the French protectorate actively engaged in the enterprise of composing national histories. In their writings, new terms pertaining to the ideas of civilization were frequently used to periodize the history of Vietnam and construct a historical continuity of the Vietnamese nation.

Most of the existing scholarship on modern Vietnamese historiography has a particular interest in anti-French historical writings and has provided many insightful discussions (Marr 1971; Duiker 1976; Woodside 1976; Tai 1996).[3] However, little scholarly attention has been paid to the historical works composed by the Nguyễn literati-officials collaborating with the French colonial authorities. According to Sarah Womack, "collaboration" is the mutual accommodation and manipulation of colonizer and colonized in pursuit of separate agendas. In this sense, "collaborators" can be regarded as indigenous agents who actively engage with colonial policy and administration (Womack 2003: 4).

As will be shown in the following sections of this article, the writings of these collaborating literati-officials not only indicated the complexity of the Vietnamese perception of French colonization but also the efforts of Vietnamese to establish

[3] For a meticulous review of the scholarly discussion about Vietnamese nation-centered historiography and its influence, see Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony Reid's "Introduction: The Construction of Vietnamese Historical Identities" (Tran and Reid 2006: 3–17).

a national historiography in which they demonstrated the historical agency of the Vietnamese people. Therefore, the imbalance in the extant English-language scholarship is problematic for three reasons. First, it neglects the dynamics of intellectual interactions between the anti-French activists and their counterparts who collaborated with the French colonial authorities, which, in turn, has narrowed the scope of research on anti-French historiography. Second, it tends to simplify and even caricaturize the picture of the collaborative historiography of Vietnam. Finally, the omission of a meticulous analysis of the conception of *văn minh* in these collaborative historical writings has obscured a better understanding of the broader and more complex conceptual interactions in the Sinographic knowledge network at the turn of the twentieth century.

Through close readings of the historical texts written by two reformist mandarins loyal to the Nguyễn Dynasty during the Duy Tân movement, Hoàng Cao Khải's 1909 *Mirror of Việt History* (*Việt sử kính* 越史鏡) and his 1914 *Essentials of Việt History* (*Việt sử yếu* 越史要), and Ngô Giáp Đậu's 1911 *Việt History for Secondary Schools* (*Trung học Việt sử toát yếu* 中學越史撮要), this chapter will explore how ideas pertaining to civilization were introduced into Vietnam through the mediation of a Sinographic translational network and reconfigured into a localized concept of "*văn minh*" in the construction of the national history of Vietnam, in this case by the Vietnamese figures who collaborated with the French.

By placing these historical writings in a broader regional and global context, this chapter makes two scholarly contributions. First, it challenges the conventional but influential "Western Impact/Vietnamese Response" paradigm that depicts modern Vietnamese history as a series of responses to exterior pressure, which risks voiding all Vietnamese agency from history or subsuming all Vietnamese history into a Western historical narrative (Wilcox 2010: 5). Focusing on pro-French reformist historical writings and their interaction with other contemporary historical scholarship produced in East Asia (Japan and China, in particular), this chapter provides a complex picture of historical knowledge production in colonial Vietnam during the reform movement in the early-twentieth century. Second, through investigating the regional context, especially the Sinographic translational network, that shaped Vietnamese national historical writings, this chapter demonstrates the regional connectivity that mediated the process whereby Vietnamese reconstructed Western knowledge. By focusing on the regional nature of knowledge production, this chapter transcends the dichotomy between Western hegemony and local agency that stresses the "autonomous" or "Vietnam-centric" point of view in much postcolonial scholarship on the role of knowledge in modern nation-building.[4]

[4] For a thorough analysis of the existing paradigms in Vietnamese studies, see Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox, "Introduction: The Co-figuration of Vietnam and the West" (Gadkar-Wilcox 2010: 1–16) and his "Autonomous Histories and World History" (Gadkar-Wilcox 2012).

2.2 Translating Civilization: *Văn minh* as a Neologism in Colonial Vietnam

Although the Sinocentric political system in East Asia began to collapse in the late-nineteenth century with the defeat of the Qing empire in the First Sino-Japanese War, the link between its former center and members based on the shared legacy of the Chinese script and classical learning was reconfigured as a translational network in the early-twentieth century. In this emerging network, as Yufen Chang has noted, the relationship between the constituting societies was equal, at least theoretically, with Japan as the new nodal point that provided source texts on how to attain enlightenment and civilization for its East Asian neighbors (Chang 2020: 8). In these texts, the concept of civilization based on Western experience was translated into the Sinitic world. Ostensibly, the compound word *wenming*/*văn minh* (*bunmei* in Japanese) in these texts appeared to be the matching word to translate the Western concept of "civilization;" however, as the following part of this section will demonstrate, there was a complex rupture in the meaning of the word as a neologism from its premodern predecessor.

The first emergence of the Western concept of civilization in the Sinographic world can be traced back to the missionary periodical, the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* (*Dong-Xi yang kao meiyue tongji zhuan* 東西洋考每月統記傳) published by a Prussian Protestant Missionary Karl Gützlaff (1803–1851) in the 1830s in Guangzhou, an important port city in the south of China. The compound word *wenming* appeared at least five times throughout the articles of that magazine, according to Fang Weigui's count (Fang 1999: 76). Every time this word appeared, it was always linked to the compound word *jiaoze* 教澤, literally meaning "benefits of teaching," which, according to Fang, referred to the benefits of the teachings of Christianity to the development of human society.

To the church, civilization was not the purpose but merely one of the achievements that the religion brought (Fang 1999: 76). Readers in East Asia were of course familiar with the word *wenming*; however, the notion underlying this very word did not refer here to what they believed to be embodied in the Sinitic classics but a novel concept which referred specifically to "Western, Christian civilization." Fang Weigui noted that "civilization" in the major European languages including French, English, German, and Italian was initially used to describe the "process" rather than the "achievements" of development. It was not until the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that "civilization" gradually came to denote the progressive "state" and "level" of development, which made it a prevalent notion to describe and examine the development of not only individuals but also communities, ethnic groups, and nations (Fang 1999: 74–75). In the second half of the nineteenth and in the early-twentieth century, those ideas related to this specific (and secularized) notion of civilization including progress, race, society, sovereignty, people, evolution, and competition, gradually replaced the premodern notion of civilization and gained wide acceptance among intellectuals in East Asia (Fang 2019: 64).

An obvious example of this intellectual transition can be found in the comparison of bilingual dictionaries compiled between the 1820s and the 1930s in East Asia. In these dictionaries, as many scholars have noticed, there was a significant change in the matching words to translate civilization (Fang 1999; Huang 2017). In Sino-English dictionaries compiled in China in the late-nineteenth century, words affiliated with "civilization" were usually translated into the concept of *jiaohua* 教化, or "educational transformation,"[5] a concept which emerged in the Warring States period (476 BCE–221 BCE).

The same phenomenon can be found in Vietnam as well. The earliest appearance of the French word "civilisation" in a dictionary can be traced back to the *Small French-Vietnamese Dictionary* (*Petit Dictionnaire français-annamite*) compiled by the renowned and erudite Vietnamese Confucian-Catholic scholar Pétrus Trương Vĩnh Ký 張永記 (1837–1898) in 1887 in Saigon. Like his Chinese counterparts, in that dictionary Ký did not interpret civilization as *văn minh* but *giáo hoá* (*jiaohua* in Chinese). He defined it as "*Giáo hoá*; to make (someone) well-trained; the way to *giáo hoá*" (*Giáo hoá; Sự làm cho thuần thục; phép giáo hoá*) (Trương 1884: 386; Chang 2020: 15). Considering that Vietnamese intellectuals had a long history of sharing the Sinitic culture and classics with their Chinese counterparts, on the level of the lexicon, the concept of this Sino-Vietnamese *giáo hoá* could be regarded as the same as that of the Chinese *jiaohua*, a Sinocentric concept that means to educate and enlighten people with classical learning (Chang 2020: 15, note 8). It was not until the early-twentieth century that *wenming*/*văn minh* appeared, gradually replacing *jiaohua*/*giáo hoá* as the equivalent word to translate "civilization." Underlying this change was a profound intellectual transition in the Sinographic world of East Asia.

In 1875, influential Japanese Enlightenment scholar, Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 (1835–1901) published *An Outline of the Theory of Civilization* (*Bunmeiron no gairyaku* 文明學概略) as a response to "old Confucian scholars" and the traditional ideology of "harmony" and "order" in the early Meiji era (Fukuzawa 1969: 60). In his book, Fukuzawa, for the first time in East Asia, linked civilization (*bunmei* or *bummei* in Japanese) to the idea of "progress" in his discussion about the actualization of human freedom around the globe (Hwang 2020: 76). Borrowing the unilinear evolutionary historical view from the works of François Guizot and Henry Thomas Buckle, Fukuzawa not only divided the history of human society into three evolutionary stages: barbarian, semi-civilized, and civilized, but he also regarded European countries and North America as the most civilized in his time and attributed their national independence to the level of civilization they had achieved (Hwang 2020: 28; Sheng 2012: 398). Regarding civilization as the universal standard for the recognition of sovereignty, he urged that Japan, as a semi-civilized nation, should not follow the Sinitic model but rather the paragon of Western civilization to advance its progress in civilization and attain national independence.

[5] For more sources of Sino-English dictionaries, see the Database of English-Chinese Dictionaries in modern China developed by Academia Sinica. http://mhdb.mh.sinica.edu.tw/dictionary/index.php, accessed 1 Feb 2021.

Fukuzawa's elaboration of the theory of civilization was echoed in the writings of the prominent Chinese reformist scholar and public intellectual Liang Qichao. During the period in exile in Japan, Liang wrote on this topic in "On Ten Aspects of the Chinese Nation's Invigoration" (*Guomin shi da yuanqi lun* 國民十大元氣論; 1899) and "On Liberty" (*Lun ziyou* 論自由; 1902). According to Ishikawa Yoshihiro, Liang provided "a Chinese version of Fukuzawa's *An Outline of the Theory of Civilization*" in these two important articles (Fang 2019: 62–63). Through his editorship of several pioneering newspapers, Liang Qichao established his influence and intellectual authority in the Sinographic world of East Asia (Tang 1996: 49). With the help of modern print technology and the existing readership linked by the Sinographic translational network, Liang Qichao and other reformists' elaboration on civilization and progressive historical views were widely read and appropriated by the elite in East and Southeast Asia.

In 1908, W. W. Yen's (Yan Huiqing 顏惠慶; 1877–1950) *English and Chinese Standard Dictionary* (*Ying-Hua da cidian* 英華大辭典) was published. As missionary Francis Lister Hawks Pott (1864–1947) indicated in the preface he wrote for this dictionary, the editors' initial plan was to translate Webster's *International Dictionary*. As Table 2.1 shows, Yen's dictionary consists of translations of the definitions of "civilization" from Webster's dictionary, namely, "the act of civilizing" and "the state of being civilized." Yen, in his dictionary, further translated these two definitions for "civilization" as "educational transformation, inspirational transformation" (*jiaohua, ganhua* 教化, 感化) and "civilization, enlightenment, the state of being educationally transformed" (*weming, kaihua, you jiaohua* 文明, 開化, 有教化), respectively (Yen 1908: 379). Similar to earlier Sino-English dictionaries, the word *wenming*, together with *jiaohua*, was employed to translate "civilization." Apart from the definition of "civilization," a more profound change appeared in Yen's definition of "civility." On the one hand, he followed part of Webster's definition for "civility" ("The [state] quality of being civilized") and translated this definition as "civilization, enlightenment, dignity" (*wenming, kaihua, duya* 文明, 開化, 都雅), with the term "dignity" here, *duya* 都雅, being a term that first appeared in the third-century *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi* 三國志), which indicated gentleness and dignity (Huang 2017: 69, note 8). On the other hand, Yen linked a progressive view of history to his interpretation of the entry "civility"—"as, from barbarism to civility"—and translated it as "transform from barbarism to civility" (*zi yeman jinzhi wenming* 自野蠻進至文明) (Yen 1908: 379). Based on the above analysis, the translation of "civilization" and "civility" in Yen's 1908 dictionary suggests both the interaction between the Chinese and Western missionaries and the influence of the Sinographic knowledge production in East Asia at the turn of the twentieth century.

In Vietnam, it was not until the 1930s that the word *văn minh* became the equivalent word to translate "civilization." In 1932, Đào Duy Anh (1904–1988), a historian and linguist who was close to the leaders of the Duy Tân Reform Movement, defined *văn minh* in his *Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary* (*Hán Việt từ điển* 漢越字典 *Dictionaire Sino-Annamite*) as "the radiance of morality manifested in the areas of politics, laws, learning, institutions, etc., is called civilization. The opposite of savagery" (*Cái tia*

Table 2.1 Entries for "civilization" and "civility" in the dictionaries of Yen (1908: 379) and Webster (1898: 260)

Entries	Webster's *International Dictionary*	Yen's *English and Chinese Standard Dictionary*
Civilization	1. The act of civilizing, or the state of being civilized; national culture; refinement 2. (*Law*) Rendering a criminal process civil	1. The act of civilizing, 教化, 感化 [*jiaohua*, *ganhua*] 2. The state of being civilized, 文明, 開化, 有教化 [*wenming*, *kaihua*, *you jiaohua*]
Civility	1. The state of society in which the relations and duties of a citizen are recognized and obeyed; a state of civilization 2. A civil office, or a civil process 3. Courtesy; politeness; kind attention; good breeding; a polite act or expression	1. The quality of being civilized, 文明, 開化, 都雅 [*wenming*, *kaihua*, *duya*]; as, from barbarism to civility, 自野蠻進至文明 [*zi yanman jin zhi wenming*] 2. Good breeding, 禮貌, 禮體, 禮文 [*limao*, *liti*, *liwen*]; as, to treat one with civility, 待人以禮,以禮欵待[*dai ren yi li*, *yi li kuan dai*] 3. *pl.* Acts or expressions of politeness, 禮數, 儀文 [*lishu*, *yiwen*]

của đạo đức, phát hiện ra ở nơi chính trị, pháp luật, học thuật, điển chương v. v., gọi là văn minh. Phản đối với dã man) (Đào 1932: 537). Later, in 1939, another definition appeared in the *Vietnamese Dictionary* (*Việt Nam tự điển* 越南字典, 1931) edited by the Association for Intellectual and Moral Formation (known by its French acronym AFIMA) in Hanoi, an institute organized by a group of high-ranking mandarins in 1919 under the sponsorship of Louis Marty, the head of the Indochinese Sûreté Générale (Tai 1992: 121). In this dictionary, the entry *văn minh* was defined as "Being refined and luminous. It refers to a society or an epoch that has achieved a high level of enlightenment [*khai hóa* 開化]: civilized society" (*Văn-vẻ sáng-sủa. Nói về xã-hội hay thời-đại đã khai-hóa tới một trình-độ cao: Xã-hội văn-minh*) (Hội Khai Trí Tiến Đức [1931] 1939: 627).

It should be pointed out that in both W. W. Yen's and Đào Duy Anh's respective interpretations of the entry, "civilization," the notion of *jiaohua*/*giáo hoá* did not entirely disappear. As mentioned above, *jiaohua* remained as the first word choice for Yen to translate "civilization." In Đào Duy Anh's definition of *văn minh*, there is an obvious combination of the modern notion of Western civilization and the premodern concept of *jiaohua*/*giáo hoá*. On the one hand, the way that Anh contrasted *văn minh* with *dã man* (savagery) was obviously influenced by Fukuzawa's *An Outline of the Theory of Civilization*, in which he solidified the Japanese translation of the concepts pertaining to "savagery" as *yaban* (Chn., *yeman* 野蠻) (Sheng 2012: 394–401). On the other hand, by "radiance," Anh, to some extent, presumed that there was a center, be it as an individual or a political entity, exercising influence on the people or other political entities because of its superiority in morality and culture. This notion resembles what Brindley demonstrated in her analysis of the formulation and evolution of the *jiaohua* discourse in the early Chinese imperial history. According to Brindley, this discourse was associated not only with the ideal of a good education, but of an

education that involves inculcating people in the moral values and ways of Chinese/Sinitic culture and civilization. More importantly, this concept was implicated in a particular approach to state control and policies of cultural, even ethnic conversion in the centuries following its emergence (Brindley 2021: 2). To some extent, *jiaohua* could be seen as a premodern civilizational discourse in the formation of a centralized Chinese empire.

Similarly in Vietnam, especially during the reign of the second emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty, Minh Mạng 明命 (1791–1841, r. 1820–1841), the discourse of *giáo hoá* was integrated as part of his administrative policy in the imperial course of southward expansion and assimilation of non-Viet peoples to a Sino-Vietnamese Han culture, the Vietnamese language, and Chinese characters. Underlying this civilizing mission, according to Goscha, was "an inclusive 'Dai Viet' (Great Viet) identity defined from the capital, from the top down, as part of the East Asian Han civilization" (Goscha 2016: 46–47; Weber 2011: 757).

Comparing this *giáo hoá* discourse to Đào Duy Anh's interpretation of *văn minh*, it is clear that both terms were implicated in a hierarchical, top-down structure of power in which the center, claiming to represent civilization, could exercise its influence on the periphery. Therefore, what differentiated *văn minh* from *giáo hoá* was not the cognitive structure of the power relationship between the center and periphery but rather the very nature of civilization which empowered the center to "manifest" and "radiate" its influence. It is in this sense that *văn minh* became a neologism at the turn of the twentieth century.

As Lydia Liu noted in her research on translingual practice in early-twentieth-century China, modern Chinese words and concepts, as well as those from the classical Chinese language that have been mediated through modern Chinese, often present hidden snares (Liu 1995: 17). These "hidden snares" that Liu observed can also be found in the case of *văn minh* as a neologism in colonial Vietnam. Morphologically, this word *văn minh* shares the same form with its premodern predecessor. As the above analysis shows, however, in becoming the matching word to translate "civilization," it simultaneously included both the progressive view of history which was based on the modern Western historical experience and interpreted via the Sinographic translational network and the premodern Sinitic concept and its cognitive framework of *giáo hoá*. As will be demonstrated in the next section, together with *văn minh*, the discourse of *giáo hoá* played a significant role in the formation of a collaborative Vietnamese historiography during the Duy Tân period.

2.3 The Discourse of *Văn minh* in Pro-French Sino-Vietnamese Historical Writing

In parallel with the translation from civilization into *văn minh* was a transformation in the ways of narrating Vietnamese history in the Duy Tân Movement at the turn of the twentieth century. During this period, the Vietnamese intelligentsia, under the

influence of the "new books" imported from China through the Sinographic translational network, widely accepted the idea that becoming civilized was the prerequisite for restoring national sovereignty and independence. And historical experience, they believed, could bring out clearly the meaning of civilization. As the following part of this chapter will demonstrate, the emergence of a new historiography in 1900s Vietnam is inextricable from Liang Qichao's nationalist historical thinking.

2.4 Liang Qichao's New Historiography

Any set of new narratives needs to engage with the established ones. In his 1901 essay, "Introduction to Chinese History" (*Zhongguo shi xulun* 中國史敘論), Liang Qichao pointed out the difference of scope between traditional and modern historiographies. According to him, traditional historians confined themselves to simply recording historical events, while modern historians could articulate the causal relationships between events and demonstrate the development and historical experience of a nation (Liang 1999: 448). One year later, Liang systematically elaborated the above opinions in his seminal article "New Historiography" (*Xin shixue* 新史學) published in the twentieth issue of the journal *Renovation of the People* (*Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報). In this manifesto of modern historiography, Liang lamented that traditional Chinese history writing suffered from the following four problems: (1) it mistakenly identified the royal family with the entire country and thus paid excessive attention to the events that took place around the court; (2) it focused on a few individuals while failing to investigate the activities of the people as a group; (3) it prioritized ancient times; and (4) it could not articulate the nature and spirit of history implied by those scattered historical events (Liang 1999: 737). To deal with these problems, Liang proposed to restore the nation to the center of historical writing and investigate its development throughout history.

Liang Qichao approached the issue of historical development with the notion of "*jinhua*" 進化, literally, "progression and change." For him, *jinhua* was an irreversible and never-ending process and constituted the only appropriate topic for historical studies (Liang 1999: 739). To make out the direction of *jinhua*, modern historians needed to shed light on the materials and data of the past with their hermeneutic insight so as to tease out from the phenomena in the process of *jinhua* "universal principles and examples," namely, the philosophy of history. He believed that these principles and examples could help to maintain the state of civilization that people had achieved and advance its development in the future (Liang 1999: 740–741).

Liang's conception of the new historiography was reflected in the history textbooks compiled in China at the turn of the twentieth century. The goal of these textbooks, according to Peter Zarrow, was to delineate the evolution of the Chinese nation and convey a sense of continuity with the past that provided students with an identity in the present (Zarrow 2015: 147). Exposed to the copies of Liang's works and these newly compiled Chinese history textbooks, Vietnamese intellectuals of different political stripes started to apply the view of history as a universal, linear, and

homogenizing process in their construction of Vietnamese national history, through which they endeavored to make the historical experience of Vietnam universally relevant so as to justify their projects to make their country a civilized nation-state. Because of the traditional educational background of these Duy Tân intellectuals, most of their historical works were written in classical Chinese, as it was only in the 1920s that modern Vietnamese written in the Romanized script started to significantly replace the use of classical Chinese in the writing of history (Kelley 2012: 4).

2.5 The Emergence of a Reformist New Historiography in Vietnam

The earliest appearance of the idea of a new historiography in Vietnamese historical writing can be traced back to the preface to the *Complete Compilation of the New Testament of Việt History* (*Việt sử tân ước toàn biên* 越史新約全編) in 1906 compiled by Hoàng Đạo Thành 黃道成 (1835–1908), a mandarin and participant of the Duy Tân Movement. In fact, Thành's book was merely a recompilation of the extant historical materials without providing a new narrative framework; however, the preface written by his friend Đào Nguyên Phổ 陶元溥 (1861–1908) marked the advent of the new historiography in Vietnam. A former Confucianist mandarin of the Nguyễn Dynasty, Đào Nguyên Phổ resigned from his office and went to Hanoi as a journalist in 1902. Together with Lương Văn Can and Nguyễn Quyền, he became a cofounder of the renowned Free School of Tonkin (Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục 東京義塾) in 1907. He committed suicide to avoid arrest after the French colonial authorities closed the Free School. In his manifesto-like text, Phổ articulated the significance of history in constructing a modern and civilized nation:

> Regardless of whether a country is large or small, it certainly has a history. That history should reflect and take into account the whole nation as well as its people, its dynasties, and its politics. Europe, America, and Japan are all civilized countries. In all of these places, history is regarded as an important subject. They not only pay specific attention to the field of world history, they also make the history of their countries a general course. Students from the age of seven, when they first enter school, are requested to study their own country's literature and recite their national histories. Women also do this. The word "nation" is therefore etched in each of their minds. When they grow up and finish school, none of them will be ignorant about the close relationship between their fatherland and their own family. Thereupon, they will view the nation's territory as their own property and will treat their fellow countrymen as compatriots. United as community, each of them will fulfill their obligation and provide their efforts to protect the public security and interests. In this sense, it is not a coincidence that their countries become prosperous and powerful. (Hoàng 1906: 1)

Similar to the problems that Liang Qichao had pointed out in his criticism of traditional Chinese historiography, histories in Vietnam before the twentieth century were mostly written as moral guides for monarchs and the officials who served them. In contrast to his predecessors, Đào Nguyên Phổ proposed to place the nation at the center of the new historiography, arguing that it was the national consciousness in

the Western countries that made them states of civilization. In Vietnam, however, the idea of the nation was not a familiar one to most people. Phổ attributed the lack of national consciousness to the civil service examination system, as the curriculum for the exams was confined to the classics from China which did not include the history of his own land. Therefore, to cultivate people's national consciousness, he argued, it was necessary to reform the current examination system and, more importantly, to compose a national history for the Vietnamese people (Hoàng 1906: 3–4).

Although Đào Nguyên Phổ did not author a historical monograph, his brief preamble nevertheless became influential among other Vietnamese reformist intellectuals. In 1911, Ngô Giáp Đậu 吳甲豆 (1853–?), a Confucian scholar born in a family renowned for traditional historical studies wrote a four-volume *Summary of Việt History for Secondary Schools* (*Trung học Việt sử toát yếu* 中學越史撮要), in which Đậu delineated the development of Vietnamese history from the legendary Hồng Bàng era to the modern time under French administration. Three years later, Hoàng Cao Khải 黃高啓 (1850–1933), the retired viceroy of Hanoi and the most famous collaborator with the French colonial government, published the three-volume *Essentials of Việt History* (*Việt sử yếu* 越史要) as an expansion of his 1909 work, the *Mirror of Việt History* (*Việt sử kính* 越史鏡). The *Essentials of Việt History* was based on a series of articles which Khải published in the *Indochina Journal* (*Đông Dương tạp chí* 東洋雜誌), a newspaper funded by the French colonial government. Based on his interpretation of Vietnamese history, Khải systematically elaborated his pro-French proposition and harshly criticized his anti-French counterparts, especially the revolutionary Phan Bội Châu (1867–1940) who encouraged young Vietnamese to go east to Japan to study, in the hope of training a new generation of revolutionaries to overthrow French colonial rule.

As will be shown in the following sections, both scholars adapted a narrative framework from Japanese historiographical paradigms in their respective writings and employed ideas about evolutionary theory and Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism that were translated through the Sinographic translational network in their writings on Vietnamese national history.

2.6 Periodization and the Historical Continuity of the Vietnamese Nation

As a hermeneutic method, periodization provided reformist Vietnamese historians with an important tool to reinterpret the past. Through a reconfiguration of the traditional historical narrative based on dynastic succession, reformist Vietnamese historians rendered the past of Vietnam into a series of analytical stages, each of which could be evaluated according to modern criteria. In the *Summary of Việt History for Secondary Schools*, Ngô Giáp Đậu divided the history of Vietnam into four periods and five time spans. As shown in Table 2.2, Đậu incorporated these periods and time spans into four volumes named in sequence after the appellation of the four seasons,

which, to some extent, resembles the vicissitudes of human history. He singled out, in the autumn volume, the time span from the establishment of the Later Lê Dynasty in 1428 CE to the fall of the Tây Sơn Dynasty in 1802 CE without attributing it to any period.

As Ye Shaofei has pointed out, Ngô Giáp Đậu's four-stage narrative framework was largely inspired by the work of Japanese scholar Kuwabara Jitsuzō 桑原隲藏(1871–1931) (Ye 2018: 64–65). In his 1898 book entitled *Intermediate Oriental History* (*Chūtō Tōyōshi* 中等東洋史), which was translated into Chinese as *The Outline of Oriental History* (*Dongyang shi yao* 東洋史要) and published by The Commercial Press in Shanghai in 1908, Kuwabara employed the following four-stage framework to periodize the history of China:

(1) Ancient times (*shanggu* 上古): from remote antiquity to the establishment of the Qin Dynasty.

(2) Medieval times (*zhonggu* 中古): from the Qin to the end of the Tang Dynasty.

(3) Late medieval times (*jingu* 近古): from the Five Dynasties to the rise of the Qing Dynasty.

(4) Early modern times (*jinshi* 近世): from the early Qing to the first Sino-Japanese War (Kuwabara 1998).

Kuwabara's periodization divided Chinese history into two parts, of which the first half from the ancient to the end of the Tang witnessed the rise and expansion of the Han people, while the other half belonged to the domination of the Mongols and Manchus over the Han. Moreover, Kuwabara employed neither the modern discourse of civilization, nor the traditional framework based on the dichotomy between the *Hua* (the civilized) and *Yi* (the barbarous). Instead, his periodization of Chinese history focused on the continuous competition between the Han people and other ethnic groups living to the north of China. By doing so, Kuwabara challenged the

Table 2.2 Ngô Giáp Đậu's historical periodization

Volumes	Periods	Time span
Spring	Primordial times (最古辰代)	From the legendary Hồng Bàng period to the annexation by the Han Dynasty in 112 BC
	Medieval times (中古辰代)	From the period under the rule of the Han Dynasty to Dương Đình Nghệ's uprising against the Southern Han around 931 CE
Summer	Late medieval times (近古辰代)	From the restoration of autonomy by Ngô Quyền in 939 BC to the military intrusion of the Ming Dynasty in 1407 CE
Autumn		From the establishment of the Later Lê Dynasty in 1428 CE to the fall of the Tây Sơn Dynasty in 1802 CE
Winter	Revival times (更新辰代)	From the founding of the Nguyễn Dynasty to the reign of Thành Thái under French "protection" to 1907 CE

Source Ngô (1911: Vol. 1, 12–20)

Sino-centric historical narrative and deconstructed the continuity of the history of China in which the Han people constituted the dominant ethnic group in China.

In contrast with Kuwabara, Ngô Giáp Đậu employed a dual narrative thread throughout his four-stage periodization to emphasize the continuity of the Việt people and the Việt-centric history of Vietnam. It should be pointed out that Đậu did not provide a clear definition of the Việt people. According to him, Hua immigrants from "the North," as he referred to "China," whose origin could be traced back to the convicts sent by the Qin and Han dynasties to garrison the region of Lingnan up to the Ming loyalists and who arrived when that dynasty fell to the Qing, constituted the majority of the population of what he termed "the Southern Land." Because of their advanced civilization, these people "expanded daily and forced the original inhabitants of Jiaozhi into the remote areas" (Ngô 1911, Vol. 1: 7–8). In his dual narrative framework, Đậu on the one hand placed the Việt people as the major participants in the international competitions and clashes between the regimes of Vietnam and that of China over the past millennium. On the other hand, he devoted a good deal of space to the territorial expansion and military conflicts between the Việt regimes with other non-Việt peoples such as the Cham and Khmer. In both narrative threads, Đậu viewed the Việt people as the historical subject of the Vietnamese nation who had been constantly engaging with the missions of defending their national independence and expanding their territory southward to the Mekong Delta. Similar to Đậu, Hoàng Cao Khải also applied this dual narrative to divide the history of Vietnam into five periods in his *Essentials of Việt History* (Table 2.3).

Compared to Ngô Giáp Đậu, Hoàng Cao Khải's five-stage periodization combined the formation of a unified Việt people with the process of competing against foreign countries (mainly from the north) and expanding toward the south. Mirroring Liang

Table 2.3 Hoàng Cao Khải's historical periodization

Periods	Time span
The ancient times of the establishment of the kingdom 上古建國之時代	From the legendary Hồng Bàng period (2879 BC) to the reign of king of An Dương (275 BC)
The times under the rule of China 內屬之時代	From the establishment of the kingdom of Nam Việt by Triệu Đà in 204 BC to the end of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period in the tenth century
The autonomous times 自主之時代	From the Ngô Dynasty (939–965 AD) through the Đinh Dynasty (968–980 AD) to the Early Lê Dynasty (980–1009 AD)
The times of the development of civilization/ *văn minh* 文明長進之時代	From the Lý Dynasty (1009–1225 AD) to the early era of the Later Lê Dynasty (1428–1527 AD)
The times of conflicts and separation between the South and the North of Vietnam 南北分爭之時代	From the restoration of the Later Lê in 1533 AC to the its fall in 1789 AD

Source Hoàng (1914: Vol. 1–Vol. 3)

Qichao's statement that "competition is the mother of progress" (Liang [1902] 1999: 683), Khải attributed the development of the nation, from a poorly organized cluster of some primitive tribes to a civilized country, to internal and international competition (Hoàng 1914: Vol. 1, 11). According to him, since the time of King An Dương who had conquered the legendary state of Văn Lang in 258 BCE, competition emerged among the peoples living in the land of what is today northern Vietnam. And since being conquered by the Qin Dynasty in the third-century BCE and ruled by various Chinese empires in the following one thousand years up until the late Tang Dynasty in the tenth century CE, the scale of competition had significantly expanded from domestic to international, which led to the unprecedented evolution of the Việt people from the stage of savagery into civilization/*văn minh.*

Based on the discourse of *giáo hoá*, Khải argued that the earliest Việt people, what he called "Jiaozhi people," were descendants of generations of intermarriage between Han immigrants from the North and the indigenous people in the South since the invasion of the Qin Dynasty. During the period under the direct rule of the Han Dynasty, administrative and educational institutes were established and the "old race of Jiaozhi" was gradually assimilated into the Han civilization and eventually became the Việt people who were racially the same as the Han people living in China (Hoàng 1914: Vol. 1, 5). From the autonomous period onward, Khải pointed out, the Việt people expanded southward the specific *văn minh* they obtained from the North to the land of the Chams and other indigenous peoples whom they regarded as barbarians. They launched several expansionist wars against these non-Việt peoples, through which, "The barbarians were gradually transformed and assimilated into a great nation of prosperity and *văn minh*" (Hoàng 1914: Vol. 3, 15–17). By "great nation," Khải referred to a homogenous Việt society that was created by eliminating ethnic differences:

> Since our Nguyễn dynasty moved its administrative capital to Huế, it, in the following two hundred years, conquered the land of the Cham and established three prefectures (Phú Yên, Khánh Hòa, and Bình Thuận). It also conquered Zhenla and divided the land into six provinces. The Nguyễn arranged officials to manage the annexed land and gradually transformed the barbaric peoples, which made the peoples living between An Giang and Quảng Ngãi a great nation of *văn minh* (civilization) and prosperity. (Hoàng 1914: Vol. 3, 17)

In other words, Khải placed the historical continuity of the Vietnamese nation in a dynamic process, central to which was the development and dissemination of civilization. As will be demonstrated in the next section, the notion of civilization that Hoàng Cao Khải and other reformist historians held was based on the social organism theory of evolution.

2.7 Social Organism Theory, *Văn Minh*, and the Pro-Collaboration Version of Vietnamese Nationalism

Reformist Vietnamese intellectuals in their historical narrative combined the Vietnamese people's continuous competition and expansion toward the south over the past centuries with their pursuit of civilization and regarded the latter as the crucial impetus behind the formation and evolution of the Vietnamese nation. As will be demonstrated in this section, Herbert Spencer's social organism theory provided them with an important theoretical basis to construct the internal logics of this narrative.

Spencer's theory of social organisms entered the intellectual world of East Asia during the early Meiji period of the 1870s and 1880s. As a specific version of Social Darwinism, social organism theory provided the Meiji reformists with a "scientific" model of progress to understand social development (Nagai 1954; Howland 2000). In their adaptation of Spencer's theory, the Meiji reformists, especially those who were critical of emergent popular rights movements, placed the state as the basic unit in the natural context of the "survival of the fittest" (Howland 2000: 67–76). According to Shiraishi and Tai, this version of Social Darwinism was introduced to Vietnamese intellectuals around 1900 through Chinese writings (Shiraishi 1990: 97; Tai 1992: 20–21), which provided them with a persuasive explanation for the origins of the difference among nations, i.e., between the stronger and wealthier and the weaker and poorer. This specific version of Social Darwinism was adapted by the reformist Vietnamese scholars to understand not only the history of their country under the rule of China in the past but also the present situation under French colonization.

Hoàng Cao Khải, for instance, believed that the collective ability to compete was the decisive criteria to gauge the level of civilization. In the *Essentials of Việt History*, he attributed China's annexation of Vietnam to the former's overwhelming superiority in international competition. According to him, this superiority derived from the achievements of the Chinese people in the domains of civilization/*văn minh*, including the feudal system, bureaucracy, tax law, military organization, and educational pedagogy. Again, according to Khải, during the long period of Chinese rule, the inferior Vietnamese people were exposed to the advanced teachings of Confucianism and obtained unprecedented and comprehensive development, which eventually brought Vietnam into "the whirlpool of civilization/*văn minh*" (Hoàng 1914: Vol. 1, 11–14). Thanks to whole-scale assimilation for more than one thousand years, argued Khải, Vietnamese people were transformed into civilized people and acquired the "characteristics of civilization" as well as the "capacity to compete," which enabled them to restore their national independence (Hoàng 1909: 2). In this narrative, China was viewed as the model of civilization for its superiority in competition. In this sense, being assimilated into the Sinitic culture meant being civilized.

With the defeat of China in its competition with the West in the nineteenth century, however, the model of civilization for Vietnamese to follow shifted to "Great France" (Đại Pháp 大法). Based on Social Darwinism, Hoàng Cao Khải explained this

paradigm shift from a universalistic perspective and pointed out that this phenomenon was inherent in the development of civilization:

> The relationship between the strong and the weak determines the result of competition in the present world. The inferior has to rely on the superior in order to develop and the weak has to turn to the strong for survival. This principle is not only applicable to our nation… In the past, we were under Chinese governance for one thousand years and France was ruled by the Roman Empire for four hundred years. Eventually, our assimilation into China enabled us to be independent, and France's integration into Rome made it civilized. (Hoàng 1909: Vol. 1, 1–2)

According to the original text of the above quote, Hoàng Cao Khải employed the Sino-Vietnamese concept of 化 (*hua/hoá*, meaning "to transform") which was based on the discourse of *giáo hoá* to explain the historical relationships between Vietnam and China and between France and the Roman empire.

The logic underlying this analogy was reminiscent of the ideas that French scholars in the colonial period developed to understand the history of Vietnam. According to these French scholars, Vietnam developed through its contact with China, and it would only be able to advance its development through contact with France. In his 1909 *Introductory Outline of the History of Annam* (*An Nam sơ học sử lược* 安南初學史略), for example, French Sinologist Charles Maybon (1872–1926) emphasized the significant role that France played in enlightening and civilizing the Vietnamese people and assisting them to obtain full independence from the Qing empire (Ye 2018: 68). In other words, this model of historiography emphasized that the major transformation to Vietnam was brought about from nothing but external contact.

Since the 1990s, the ideas of French colonial scholars at the turn of the twentieth century, especially the model they developed to understand the past of Vietnam, became an important academic topic into which many modern scholars of Vietnamese studies provided their insights (Cooke 1991; Pelley 2002; Kelley 2005). Despite the nuances in their opinions toward such a model of narrative about the past of Vietnam, most of these scholars generally agreed to refer to it as the "little China theory." This French theory argues, according to Liam Kelley, that Vietnam became a miniature replica of China during the millennium under the rule of various Chinese empires. Prior to its contact with the Chinese, the Vietnamese did not develop sophisticated political and social institutions. It was precisely through adopting many of Chinese customs and political institutions, that Vietnam was subsequently able to maintain its autonomy for the next thousand year until the advent of French colonization in the nineteenth century. By employing this historical narrative to interpret the past of Vietnam, the little China theory implied that Vietnam, at the turn of the twentieth century, would obtain its strength to become autonomous under the tutelage of the French (Kelley 2005: 9).

Most of the criticism toward the little China theory revolves around its depiction of the image of pre-colonial Vietnam as "nothing but China in all essentials" and that "its people, culture, and institutions had remained unchanged from when China had ruled a thousand years before and were thus fully understandable in Sinic terms" (Cooke 1991: 37). In this perspective of viewing the past of Vietnam, argues Patricia Pelley, the autonomy and subjectivity of the Vietnamese people as historical agents

who acted in specific ways in pursuit of specific goals were concealed (Pelley 2002: 7–8). This criticism rightly reveals the French hegemonic discourse of colonialism underlying the seemly objective narrative of Vietnamese history; however, it fails to include in its analysis the perspective of the Vietnamese elite that the French concealed and scrutinize how these Vietnamese perceived, adapted, and transformed the modern discourse of civilization in their construction of the past of Vietnam. As has been analyzed in the previous sections, this specific discourse of civilization was introduced into Vietnam through the interaction between Vietnamese and other intellectuals of East Asia via the Sinographic translational network. Based on this discourse, Vietnamese intellectuals, from anti-French revolutionaries like Phan Bội Châu (1867–1940) to the reformist collaborators like Hoàng Cao Khải, developed a narrative of *văn minh* in their construction of the national history of Vietnam.

In their Sino-Vietnamese history writings, both the anti-French revolutionaries and the reformist collaborators shared a "contact and transformation" view of history, which looks similar to the "little China theory" that the French colonial scholars developed. Phan Bội Châu, for example, regarded the Vietnamese people and society over the long stretches of time from remote antiquity to the Tự Đức reign (1847–1883) as essentially stagnant and barbarous. In a writing from 1909, he stated that it was not until the recent years of the early-twentieth century when "winds and rains from Europe and America" blew into Vietnam that Vietnamese people ushered in a time of enlightenment (*khai-hóa* 開化). Moreover, he envisioned that if Vietnam followed the model of the West, it would eventually achieve the stage of *văn minh* in the next couple of decades (Phan 2000: 456–58).

Compared to Phan Bội Châu who regarded the history of Vietnam as stagnant and barbarous, other reformist intellectuals viewed it as a continuous process toward *văn minh*. More importantly, they stressed the autonomy and subjectivity of the Vietnamese people as historical agents in the pursuit of *văn minh*. According to these scholars, the transition of Vietnam from barbarous to *văn minh* had already began since the educational transformation (*giáo hoá*) initiated by the Chinese and continued by various Vietnamese dynasties. Once independent of China, the civilized Việt people launched their own *mission civilisatrice* over the past centuries to conquer and colonize the "barbarous" regimes such as the kingdoms of Champa and Zhenla. Through a series of direct and indirect methods of rule over distant, multi-racial peoples, they established a Viet-centered imperial administrative order in the eastern Indochinese Peninsula, a region that included today's Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

In the *Mirror of Việt History*, Hoàng Cao Khải regarded this process as the manifestation of the "universal principle of evolution" (*Thiên diễn chi công lệ* 天演之公例) that no one could ever evade (Hoàng 1909: Vol. 1, 32). He highly praised the Nguyễn Dynasty for its active participation in this process and its effort to conquer and homogenize various peoples into a Việt-centered nation through this southward expansion:

> In fact, the conquered area was merely a cluster of wasteland. However, [our Nguyễn dynasty] spared no effort in its administration and management. It transported landless people and Chinese immigrants to the conquered land where they either constructed roads to communicate with the outside, or established villages to unite the various groups of people. Local

> customs were reformed and local education was revived. […] The peoples of Champa [Chiêm Thành 占城], Zhenla [Chân Lạp 真臘], Jiuzhen [Cửu Chân 九真], and Jiaozhi [Giao Chỉ 交趾] became integrated into a great nation of Vietnam. (Hoàng 1909: Vol. 1, 36)

Furthermore, Hoàng Cao Khải employed a progressive framework to understand the development of nationalism and broadly linked the formation of the Vietnamese nation to a global process. According to him, nationalism originated in Europe in the fourteenth century and had already developed into the form of imperial nationalism since the nineteenth century. In the past, nationalism referred to the "integration of multi-racial peoples within a state into a homogenous nation." In his day, however, Khải argued that it had evolved into "imperial nationalism" which is based upon "the assimilation of the various races of different countries into a homogenous nation of the world" (HYPERLINK "SPS:refid::bib19" *Hoàng* 1909: Vol. 1, 37). In this sense, the southward expansion of the Việt people and the attendant formation of the Vietnamese nation represented the earlier phase in the development of nationalism. In face of the dominant historical trend of imperial nationalism in the early-twentieth century, Hoàng Cao Khải and other like-minded Vietnamese scholars on the one hand warned their Vietnamese compatriots to take the historical lesson from the fall of Champa and Zhenla. On the other hand, they encouraged the Vietnamese people to follow the steps of their Việt antecedents and voluntarily participate in the self-transformation under the tutelage of the French (HYPERLINK "SPS:refid::bib19" Hoàng 1909: Vol. 1, 39–40).

In the above historical image constructed by reformist Vietnamese historians, Vietnam was by no means depicted as stagnant in pre-French times. Quite the contrary, it actively implemented colonialist projects as a significant part of the building of an imperial nation-state. Integrating the premodern discourse of giáo hoá into the modern notion of civilization and nation, Vietnamese reformist historians related the model transition from China to France to an intersecting of imperial projects that combined the unfinished Vietnamese imperial project of internal colonization with the French colonial conception of the Indochinese Union.[6] By so doing, the reformist Vietnamese intellectuals provided a specific version of Vietnamese nationalist historiography.

2.8 Conclusion

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, a Western version of civilization entered East Asia and gradually replaced the hegemony of the Sinitic wenming, the central ideology of the Sinocentric political system which had profoundly influenced the political entities and the world view of elites in East Asia for millennia. In parallel to this was the introduction of a specific perspective of philosophy of history based

[6] Christopher Goscha has pointed out that the French colonizers often reinforced the Vietnamese imperial project in many places, by making them their privileged partners in building another colonial state (Goscha 2016, xxxviii).

on the Social Darwinist ideas of evolution and competition. Through the mediation of the Sinographic translational network based on the shared knowledge of Literary Sinitic among East Asian intellectuals, these ideas pertaining to the Western concept of civilization were widely adapted to understand and describe the development and progress of human society. This process led to a significant reconfiguration of the meaning of the Sinitic word 文明 (wenming/bunmei/văn minh) and eventually made it a neologism and matching word to translate "civilization." In the second part of this article, I demonstrated that in the context of the early-twentieth century East Asia, this neologism simultaneously included the Western experience-based view of history on the one hand, and the premodern Sinitic concept and its cognitive framework of "educational transformation" (jiaohua/giáo hóa 教化), on the other.

The conceptual transformation of civilization, as Yufen Chang pointed out, ushered in the dual projects of nationalism and modernization, which manifested through pan-East Asian reform movements aiming to achieve "civilization and enlightenment," first in Japan in the late 1860s, then in China in 1898, and finally in French colonial Vietnam in the 1900s (HYPERLINK "SPS:refid::bib7" Chang 2017: 649). Taking advantage of what Benedict Anderson termed the "print capitalism" emergent in East Asia (Anderson 2006: 37–40), participants of these reform movements wrote in various literary forms to expound and disseminate their ideas pertaining to civilization, among which national history emerged as an important genre.

The conception of national history was meticulously elaborated by the prominent Japanese reformist Fukuzawa Yukichi and his compatriot Tōyōshi, or "Oriental history," scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century and was theoretically synthesized by the famous Chinese reformist Liang Qichao in his manifesto-like article "New Historiography" in 1902. Based on the unilinear evolutionary historical view, this nation-centered historiography rendered the past into collections of data and materials awaiting illumination by historians with their hermeneutic insight (HYPERLINK "SPS:refid::bib29" Kuo 2014: 278–79). As part of the Chinese "new books" imported into colonial Vietnam at the turn of the twentieth century, Liang Qichao's historical theories were widely read and discussed among the Vietnamese intelligentsia. Under his influence, Vietnamese intellectuals of different political stripes started to apply the view of history as a universal, linear, and homogenizing process in their construction of Vietnamese national history, through which they attempted to make the historical experience of Vietnam universally relevant to justify their projects to make their country a civilized nation-state. In their historical writings, the neologism văn minh functioned as the key concept that helped them to interpret the past and envision the future of the Vietnamese nation.

This chapter analyzed a group of historical texts written in Literary Sinitic by reformist Vietnamese intellectuals who chose to collaborate with the French colonial authorities at the turn of twentieth century. These texts adapted the framework from the Japanese writings of Tōyōshi to periodize the history of Vietnam into a series of phases from the state of savagery to civilization. By employing the dual narrative threads, namely, "competing with the foreign forces (Chinese, in most cases)" and "expanding toward the south," these reformist intellectuals constructed the historical

continuity and subjectivity of the Vietnamese nation. In the first thread, China was depicted as the representative of the civilizing force that transformed the barbarous Vietnam into a domain of civility through assimilative and sometimes even oppressive approaches. Under the rule of China, Vietnam adopted many of the Chinese customs and political institutions, which enabled it to eventually restore its independence and maintain its autonomy.

Superficially, this historical narrative is reminiscent of the "little China theory" developed by French Orientalists during the colonial era to understand the colony and, more importantly, to provide a justification for colonization. This theory, as many modern scholars of Vietnamese studies have noticed, depicted the history of Vietnam as stagnant and passive, which could not develop without external contact and intervention, whereby concealing the autonomy and subjectivity of the Vietnamese people as historical agents. Focusing on the theme of "expanding toward the south" that appeared in the historical writings composed by the reformist Vietnamese scholars, the last section of this article demonstrated how they depicted the image of Vietnam as a positive if not aggressive force of civilization that engaged in the mission of establishing a regional empire in the eastern part of the Indochinese Peninsula. In the historical narrative of these reformist scholars, the non-Việt multi-racial peoples were barbarous. Therefore, the assimilation and homogenization of these non-Việt peoples into a united nation and the southward aggression and expansion of the Việt regimes were regarded a great yet unfinished cause that manifested the "universal principle of evolution." For them, the conception of the French Indochinese Union shared the same object with Vietnam of establishing a nation-state with regional imperialist hegemony.

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Chapter 3
Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa (1896–1982): A Woman Who Wrote to Change Vietnamese Society

Phuong Ngoc Nguyen

3.1 Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a radical change took place in French colonial Vietnam: women went to school, wrote in the newspapers, gave lectures, published novels and books, led associations, and campaigned for the status of women. What happened in the lives of Vietnamese women? What happened such that women began to think and act for themselves?

We propose to look at the life of an educated woman, Mrs. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa who was born in 1896 into a family of Confucian scholars. She is known for her activities in favor of women, as well as for her writings. Her novel, *The Western Beauty* (*Tây phương mỹ nhơn*), published in Saigon in 1927, tells the story of a young Vietnamese man who fought in France during the First World War and married a French woman; both of whom were highly critical of the colonial system. By using a biographical approach and analyzing her writings, we hope to gain a better understanding of the life of an educated woman who lived in Vietnam in the early twentieth century.

To understand Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's life, I propose first to analyze her novel in which the main heroine can be considered a role model, as is expressed in the title. Then, within the limits of the available sources, I will try to tell her life story. Finally, based on her writings, I will analyze three aspects of her activities, as a feminist and modernist, as a writer, and as a researcher.

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_3

3.2 Body of Work and Sources

I first came across the name Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa during my dissertation research, because of her essay on the kingdom of Champa, and I read her novel at the French National Library in Paris around the year 2000. At that time nobody knew her name. In 2003, Mr. Trương Duy Hy wrote a short biography of Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa and re-edited some of her writings.

In recent years I have become interested in the subject of Vietnamese migration to France during the First World War and last year I translated her novel *The Western Beauty* into French. To study Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's career more fully, we identified the corpus of her writings and now have access to the first editions of three of her publications:

(1) The novel, *Tây phương mỹ nhơn* [The Western beauty] (Saigon: Nhà in Bảo Tồn, 1927), seventy-six pages; prefaces by Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, Tản Đà, Bùi Thế Mỹ. French translation: *La Belle d'Occident* (Fuveau: Decrescenzo Editeurs, 2021).
(2) The reformed *tuồng* drama (*tuồng cải lương*), *Huyền Trân công chúa* [Princess Huyền Trân] (Hue: Imprimerie Tiếng Dân, 1934), thirty pages; forewords.
(3) The scholarly synthesis work, *Chiêm Thành lược khảo* [Summary study of Champa] (Hanoi: Imprimerie Đông Tây, 1936), sixty-four pages; seven photos and one color drawing; preface by Phạm Quỳnh; forewords in Vietnamese; afterwords in French.

We also have at our disposal:

(1) A travel story, "Banà du ký: Mấy ngày đăng sơn lên thăm núi 'Chúa'" [A story of the trip to Banà: A few days in the mountains visiting the Mount Lord], *Nam phong* [Southern breeze] 163 (June 1931): 552–559.
(2) An article, "Nhân cách phụ nữ" [Women's personality], *Nam phong* 191 (December 1933): 545–551. This is record of a speech given at a market in Tourane (now Đà Nẵng) on December 31, 1933, as part of a charity event.
(3) An interview, "Vì sao tôi cúp tóc?" [Why did I cut my hair?] *Phụ nữ tân văn* [Women's news] 244 (August 31, 1934): 17–18; two photos. This interview was conducted by the *Women's News* team and is also published in *Nam phong* 197 (1934): 390–392, one photo.

As for the other activities of Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, we have some documents published during the colonial period, such as press articles and book reviews. For this study, articles in periodicals or books published before 1945 have been very helpful. We have the publications of the Women's Work Learned Society (Nữ công học hội) in Hue of which Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was a member, namely four volumes of *General Knowledge of Women's Work* (*Nữ công thường thức*) published between 1928 and 1931. The association also published revolutionary Phan Bội Chau's *Things Female Citizens Should Know* (*Nữ quốc dân tu tri*) in 1926 (second printing in 1927).

After a long period in which nothing seems to have been written about Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, Lại Nguyên Ân published an article about her in 2001 (Lại 2001),

followed by a book by Trương Duy Hy (2003, 2010). Trương Duy Hy carried out a field investigation in Đà Nẵng and with the family of Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa. Various articles subsequently published in the Vietnamese press are mainly based on his publications. Thanks to his work, Mrs. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa is now known in Vietnam and in her hometown, Đà Nẵng, where a street now bears her name.

As for archival records produced during the colonial period, the research I have conducted on Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa as well as on her family at the Archives nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence has been fruitless. We can hope that the archives in Vietnam, the Center No. 4 in Đà Lạt in particular, in the series on the control of the press and associations, can reveal some information.

To answer our initial questions, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's writings, especially the prefaces to her three publications in which she takes care to explain her ideas and positions, are essential. However, it is her first fictional text that should be of particular interest to us. The first known publication, signed only by her name Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa as a woman of letters (unlike the two following publications which are signed by her married name, followed by her name), the novel, presents the ideal of a modern woman, embodied here by a Frenchwoman, who is a responsible citizen, while demonstrating feminine qualities in accordance with Confucian tradition.

3.3 A New Model of an Ideal Woman

The Western Beauty tells the story of Tuấn Ngọc, a young man from Tam Kỳ, a village in central Vietnam, who goes to France as a colonial soldier. He is wounded during the great battle of Verdun and sent to a military hospital. There he meets a French nurse, Bạch Lan (her French name is transformed into Vietnamese). After many difficulties, they are allowed to marry, and they have a baby girl. In 1918, at the end of the war, Tuấn Ngọc asks the authorities to be allowed to stay in France with his family, but he is sent to Indochina and cannot return to France. When his wife receives his letter, she decides to go to Indochina with their little daughter. She discovers the racism in the colony: the French authorities do not want her to find her husband, because he is Vietnamese. She has to fight, with great courage, and in the end, they are allowed to meet, but are not allowed to live in Indochina. The reason is that, according to the authorities, a colonized man should not marry a French woman.

Bạch Lan's fidelity, uprightness, and courage are admired by the Vietnamese people. When she leaves Indochina with her family, many Vietnamese people come to the boat to say goodbye. The title of the novel, *The Western Beauty*, pays tribute to this woman whose beauty is complete: in her soul as well as in her physical appearance.

What does the novel have to tell us about women in modern society and how they should be? In this novel, there are many female characters, both French and Vietnamese. Some may represent the traditional model of a woman devoted to her family, like the mother of Tuấn Ngọc and his brother Minh Châu, as well as Minh Châu's wife. On the other hand, Tư Hiệp, a young and educated Vietnamese girl, does

not hesitate to help Bạch Lan, going so far as to try to get her out of her guarded hotel in secret. On the French side, the figure of Bạch Lan's mother, a loving mother but not always understanding of her daughter, is opposed to Duy Liên, her older sister, who brings her moral and financial support to help her sister leave for Indochina. Sa Nhi, her servant, is very kind and ready to follow her mistress. Other female figures appear throughout the story, especially in the eyes of the main hero, bringing complementary touches and nuances. Unlike Bạch Lan who signs up as a volunteer nurse, Vietnamese women have no idea of their responsibility in society, but not all French women are like her, as other nurses at the hospital are quite racist toward the colonial soldiers who have nevertheless come to risk their lives for France.

Among all these female characters, Bạch Lan, which means "White Orchid," a very noble flower in the Vietnamese imagination, is the embodiment of moral values. The first time she appears in the novel, she appears in Tuấn Ngọc's eyes like a wonderful apparition:

> One day, suddenly awakened from a bad dream, Tuấn Ngọc saw a young woman of great elegance beside his bed. She was holding a glass of milk. She smiled at him and said:
>
> "Are you feeling a little better already? Drink some of this milk to regain your strength."
>
> Tuấn Ngọc, who was gradually healing from his wounds, grabbed the glass and thanked the young woman while looking at her more carefully. Oval face, eyebrows like willow leaves, skin white as snow, lips vermilion red, teeth shining like pearls, hair as light as silk thread, eyes like autumn water, a smile like a spring flower. (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 13–14)

The description is conventional, but a Vietnamese reader accustomed to the criteria of traditional female beauty will certainly appreciate it. This beautiful woman works as a volunteer nurse in a military hospital. Tuấn Ngọc admires her courage and her spirit of a citizen. He contrasts her to the Vietnamese women from rich families who know nothing beyond their comfortable daily life.

> This very elegant young woman must have been from a good family. Yet she is not afraid of hard work and volunteered for the Red Cross to help wounded soldiers. She really deserves to be praised (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 14)!

Knowing her better through their discussions, Tuấn Ngọc appreciates her respectful behavior, as well as her knowledge and open-mindedness:

> Sometimes, at quieter times, she would stay and talk with him for a while. He learned that her name was Bạch Lan and observed that she was the only one among the orderlies who treated all the soldiers from different countries fairly, while the others were contemptuous of the wounded, soldiers from overseas who had risked their lives to defend France. Bạch Lan also enjoyed discussions with Tuấn Ngọc about life and current events and often asked questions about the society and customs of the country of Annam, which he was happy to answer. Sometimes they talked about literature and history, commenting on the exploits of heroes, and they understood each other as long-time friends. (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 15)

The reader then sees Bạch Lan in the next chapter presented in her family environment. In fact, she is the daughter of a high-ranking French officer in "the city of Alsace":

> . . . the youngest, named Bạch Lan, was just twenty-nine years old. She was of remarkable beauty and virtuous character but did not abuse her freedom like so many other young women born in a civilized country. She held her parents in great respect, observed the rites, was very talented in needle and thread work. Beauty and talent, she had all these qualities, but she placed virtue above all and paid no attention to stories of butterflies flirting with flowers. So, she remained single while waiting for a soul mate, and shunned gold and honors. Her parents let her do as she pleased and allowed her to volunteer for the Red Cross. (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 16).

In the meantime, Tuấn Ngọc is assigned to the service of a French officer, as his personal secretary, who is none other than Bạch Lan's father. Their reunion, warm and friendly, is followed by regular meetings where they play music and discuss everything. She even asked very direct questions: Why did he become a soldier? Why did he not avenge an injustice done to his parents? Why did he not enjoy a quiet life in the village instead of risking his life in the war in France? Having understood that he is not a coward, but a man who has a high opinion of his responsibility as a man (*xả thân vì nghĩa*), she falls in love with him (*yêu vì hạnh, phục vì tài*), but remains reserved (*không điều gì trái lễ*) (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 21). Tuấn Ngọc is also in love with this "admirable woman" (*bực hiệp nữ*), but remains discreet, being aware of his condition as a colonial soldier. Scenes are described where two lovers are courting Bạch Lan, one from an influential family in politics, the other with a large fortune. Jealous, they manage to make her father feel that he could not allow Tuấn Ngọc into his house. Then forced to be separated, they finally find each other thanks to a combination of circumstances that allows them to declare their mutual love. Bạch Lan has the courage to ask her parents for permission to marry Tuan Ngoc, arguing: "Since he saved my life, it is not necessary to consider wealth or poverty" (*Chàng đã có công cứu tử, sự giàu nghèo có đáng kể chi*) (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 32). Their marriage takes place "in church" and the couple live in respect and harmony:

> Since this couple of a European woman and an Asian man lived under the same roof, united by the bonds of marriage, the understanding and harmony were perfect, a rare thing, even among spouses from the same country. However, they did not live in ease, for the monthly salary of a soldier was quite modest. Fortunately, Bạch Lan knew how to be thrifty and often took on sewing and embroidery work with her golden fingers so as not to waste her time and to bring some income into the home, which she did with grace and devotion, not wanting to be a burden to her husband. A woman of high moral qualities, she did not abuse the word "equality" like so many others, despite being born in a civilized country. Since her marriage to Tuấn Ngọc, she dressed simply and took care of everything in the house, showing love and respect to her husband, like how in the old days the lady Mạnh Quang served her husband at every meal.[1] With this newlywed couple, it was only agreement and harmony. She excelled in the household arts, he showed his talent in poetry and music. The spectacle of this happy family life was a joy to witness. (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 35–36)

Unfortunately, with the end of the war Tuan Ngoc is sent back to Indochina, officially because his contract has ended. Having no way to return to France, even

[1] Mạnh Quang, Meng Guang in Chinese, is the name of a woman who lived during the Eastern Han period (206–220 CE). She did not marry until the age of thirty as she was determined to marry an upright, but poor, scholar by the name of Liang Hong. She would have dinner ready for him when he returned after a day's work.

clandestinely on a ship, he decides to write to his wife to give her back her freedom. Dated June 12, 1919, the letter arrives in France in the fall. The news is like a thunderclap for Bạch Lan who refuses the idea of remarriage suggested by her mother. On the contrary, she decides to defend their love:

> We hoped, she said to herself, that we would soon meet again, without suspecting that by saying goodbye, we were separating forever! She silently blamed this arbitrary and perverse power that had separated a couple who lived in harmony, wondering why her letters written to her husband had never arrived. There were still many revolting things in Vietnamese society! If I marry again, she thought, it is against the moral code; if I stay here alone, life will be too hard. The right decision would be to find my husband. Should I cross the ocean to join him, following my role as a wife? I am not afraid of rough seas, high mountains or the dangers of the long road, I will not spare myself the pains to fulfill my duties. I will honor my duty of love. But if I leave, who will take care of the parents? (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 49)

Encouraged by her elder sister who assured her that she would take care of their parents, she decides "to find her husband to fulfill her moral obligations" (*đi tìm chồng cho trọn đạo*) (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 50). After a long journey, she arrives in a colonial city and has to confront the reality of a racial hierarchy. Faced with an administrator who advises her to take a return ship to France, she replies in a dignified manner:

> In this world of five continents and six races, all individuals are equal as human beings, no one can be looked down upon. In any society, morality dictates our duties, and mine is to follow my husband. Should I abandon him because he is poor? A French citizen who acts according to the law and fulfills her duties is rather a subject of pride for the people of France. (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 55)

The struggle to find her husband begins in this way, with still worse obstacles to overcome, eventually leading to the desperate act of a suicide attempt. In front of the same stubborn French administrator, she says:

> Sir, the people of Annam are of another race, it is true, but they are a people with a culture and rituals, and moreover they have helped us in a difficult time. I hold them in respect, and that is correct. How can you say that it is shameful? My daughter and I came from far away and spent a lot of money, hoping to see my husband, her father, without knowing that here we would be oppressed and that you would use force to make us leave. I would rather die than live to suffer like this! (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 67)

As she speaks these words, Bạch Lan pulls out a pistol, determined to end her life to free herself from this arbitrary power. The administrator is seized with panic, but nevertheless manages to take the gun from her.

Advised by a Vietnamese employee who "praised her uprightness and fidelity" and who assured him that "the people of Annam would... be very admiring of the fidelity of a woman of noble France" (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 67), the administrator finally summons Tuấn Ngọc to come to his office to find his wife. Bạch Lan finds her husband and requests to go to the village to meet his family. Her wish, however simple, is forbidden "so as not to make France lose face" (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 74). In order not to cause more trouble to her family-in-law and the village, she has to comply with this order. The solution is to invite her sister-in-law, her brother-in-law,

and two other relatives to come to the town: "When they arrived, Bạch Lan welcomed them warmly and respectfully, although they were country folk. The visitors were delighted and, on their way home, spoke highly of her qualities" (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 74).

The novelist Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa describes Bạch Lan as endowed with the essential qualities in a woman according to the Confucian tradition, namely work, appearance, words, and actions (*công, dung, ngôn, hạnh*). We see her as a perfect housewife, thrifty and hard-working, even able to earn money to support the household. She is beautiful as is described from her first appearance, then by the conventional expression of "face like a flower, skin like jade" (*mặt hoa da ngọc*) (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 28). As for her other qualities, we see her respectfulness toward her husband to whom she demonstrates, even at the cost of her life, exemplary fidelity. We understand the admiration of the Vietnamese who sympathized with her situation. Once she is reunited with her husband, they go to Cochinchine (Nam Kỳ) where people welcome them with great kindness:

> When they arrived, a great number of people came to meet them, for everyone had heard good things about this foreign woman who was so faithful to her Vietnamese husband. . . many people brought them food and sweets. (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 75)

In addition to these qualities exalted in the Confucian tradition, the character of Bạch Lan is also exemplary for her courage. In the colonial context, a heroine who dares to stand up to the authorities is not common, if not unique in Vietnamese literature. She has a strong sense of her place in society, participating according to her abilities in the defense of her homeland in times of war, but also respecting and defending the rights of human beings. We see this through her kind attitude toward all soldiers, without distinction between French and colonials, and her firmness toward the administrator, and against the racial hierarchy in the colony. Her open-mindedness and curiosity about the Other, different from herself but equally worthy of attention, are in deep contradiction with the attitudes and ideas of the colonial regime. The following passage describing a trip through the countryside shows her wonder at the landscape and her attention to the women she saw:

> Along the road, nature was waking up with the return of spring. . . Bạch Lan was attentive to the people they passed along the way. At the sight of the women who, carrying heavy loads of goods, remained smiling, she remembered the stories told by Tuấn Ngọc when he was still in France. "Here is an example of the qualities of the women of the Eastern countries," she said. She felt compassion for these frail bodies who had to perform hard labor to feed their families, thus taking on the duties that fell to them. She compared them to women in France who led an easy life with many freedoms, were respected in society, but who invoked the law to ask for a divorce at the slightest problem in their relationship. (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 73)

This passage, a kind of summary of women's issues, must be read in relation to the answer that the character Tuan Ngoc offers regarding the colonial context. He answers her as follows:

> Before, women respected the rules of the three obediences and the four virtues. France has brought the seed of civilization, but it has not made the tree of modernization grow high

> enough among those who have learned things without really understanding them. Men no longer respect the law, women break morals. Fortunately, there are a few people living in the countryside who are not yet contaminated by bad morals. (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 73)

This exchange between the two main characters toward the end of the novel can be used to refine Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's idea of the ideal modern woman for Vietnamese society. First, she must have qualities to ensure her responsibilities within the family. Like the character, through her actions and words, she must also consider herself a citizen and share with the man her responsibilities in society. But freedom and rights do not mean being above everything and without regard for anyone. The character, Bạch Lan, while arguing to have her vows accepted, remains respectful and obedient to her parents: when her father forbids her to see her lover, "she was sad, but did not dare to contradict her parents" (*không dám trái ý*) (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 24). Once married, she "took care of everything in the house, showing love and respect to her husband" (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 1, 36). Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, by creating this character, shows that a modern woman must have irreproachable moral qualities and must participate in social actions, and fight for human rights, even in a colonial society, and women's rights. What is completely new is that it affirms, through the character's determination, that a woman must choose her life partner and must have the courage to defend her love. Compared to the three Confucian obediences, it is really a female revolution that is described in the novel *The Western Beauty*.

This is the heroine of the novel. Is she in any way like Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa in her life? Did the author have the same qualities as the "Western beauty" she highlighted in her novel?

3.4 Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa (1896–1982): A Woman Who Lived Under Colonization

We have some information about Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's life from Trương Duy Hy's field investigation. He writes about her birth and origin as follows:

> Mrs. Huỳnh Thị Thái whose pseudonym is Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa or Huỳnh Bảo Hòa, was born in 1896 in Đa Phước Homeland, Hòa Minh Commune, Hòa Vang District, Quảng Nam Province - Đà Nẵng (now part of Đà Nẵng). Her father was called Huỳnh Phúc Lợi, her mother Bùi Thị Trang. Mr. Lợi was a military mandarin serving the Nguyễn dynasty and participated in the Cần Vương movement in Quảng Nam Province. (Trương 2003)

The year 1896 is given without reference to any document. Let us keep this date, however, because what is important is that she was probably born around 1900. Her childhood took place at a time when French colonial control was already established, but still shaken by anti-French events.

We can see here a change in name. Huỳnh Thị Thái, a young girl, at one point took on a pen name, which we can see as a statement of intent. Bảo Hòa, a name which seems to mean "to preserve harmony," can probably be related to the Đà Nẵng region which has several names of localities with the word "*hoà*" such as Hoà Vang,

Hoà Ninh, Hoà Khánh, etc. However, we do not know exactly her native village. Đa Phước, perhaps the district with a well-known communal hall, or *đình*, in Đà Nẵng city, is mentioned as "*quê*," a term indicating the place of origin of the paternal family but does not mean that the person was born or lived there. Moreover, a complementary field survey will be necessary to complete, or even rectify, this information.

Trương Duy Hy wrote that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was born into a "mandarin family." She herself said, reports Huỳnh Thúc Kháng in the preface to the novel, "I come from a family that loves learning, my father is a retired mandarin. Since my early childhood, I loved to learn" (Huỳnh Thúc Kháng 1927: 1). But we have no further details. According to Trương Duy Hy, her father "was a military mandarin and participated in the anti-French Cần Vương movement" in the years 1885–1895. We cannot say for sure, but it is possible that this element would play a role later in the involvement of her children in the struggle for Vietnamese independence.

The most important thing to note is that the father was literate and could teach his daughter Chinese characters and Confucian classics. Girls at that time were excluded from the traditional education system and the only way for them to learn was to have a teacher at home, or to dress as a boy to go to school. If she was an only child, this was even more plausible. The fact is that we have no other information on her family, nor on her possible brothers and sisters. We do not know exactly when and how she began to learn the Vietnamese *quốc ngữ* script, and also French, but she wrote both well, as can be seen from her publications in Vietnamese, as well as from the afterword in French of the book about Champa.

According to Trương Duy Hy, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa lived in the countryside until her marriage and then came to the city as a young bride:

> This young country girl who had to leave all her habits to become a lady in a modern city, a French concession that was completely foreign to her, was not frightened, but on the contrary, quickly became accustomed to the urban way of life and in particular became imbued with the modernist (*duy tân*) spirit promoted by the various patriotic movements. (2003: 10).

Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa married in 1914 (we have a picture) with Vương Khả Lãm. He had been granted the title "*Hàn lâm viện đại học sĩ*" which can be translated as "academician," but seems to be more of an honorific title (on the mandarin hierarchy see Poisson 2004). Another photo shows him in a traditional tunic and turban. In Đà Nẵng, he seems to have been a personality who could enjoy friendship with mandarins and scholars, such as ministers (*thượng thư*) Hồ Đắc Trung and Lê Bá Trinh, and exam graduates (*phó bảng*) Dương Hiển Tiến and Lê Văn Chiểu (Phạm and Lê 2001, cited by Trương 2003: 10). No other information is available, however, we can formulate a hypothesis that he worked rather in relation with Western circles: on the one hand, their residence in the center of Đà Nẵng, a French concession, excluded the membership of the mandarinate; on the other hand, his wife wrote in the account of their stay in the climatic resort of Bà Nà reserved for Westerners, that he had to return to Đà Nẵng at the "end of his vacation leave"(*hết phép nghỉ*) (Huỳnh 1931: 555). At present, it is through his wife that he is known: in the list of members of the Women's Work Learned Society published in 1929, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa is mentioned under the name of her husband, as in general were the other members of

the association in the 1929 list, as Mrs. Vương Khả Lãm (Anonymous 1929: Vol. 2, 30). She is the sixty-ninth member listed and is part of the Tourane, or what is now called Đà Nẵng, section which had seven members. Her publications in 1934 and 1936 are also signed under her husband's name, followed by the clarification, "that is" (*tức là*), "Mrs. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa."

Let us consider that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa got married in 1914. She was then 18 years old, not a very early age for those times. Five children were born in the 1920s, including two sons and three daughters. Their eldest son, Vương Khả Hàn, born in 1922, would go on to earn a bachelor's degree in 1945. Their daughter, Vương Thị Nguyệt Thu, born in 1924, would join the anti-French resistance as early as 1945 and died in 1951 in the maquis. The younger son Vương Khả Thụy (whom Trương Duy Hy met around 2002), born in 1928, would join North Vietnam in 1955 along with his older brother. Two daughters were born in 1930 and 1932, Vương Thúy Lan and Vương Thiên Hương. They would live with their youngest daughter until their deaths in the family house in Đà Nẵng.

These dates, which are known thanks to Trương Duy Hy's fieldwork, call for a remark. The exceptionally long time between the marriage (1914) and the birth of the first child (1922), i.e., 8 years, is not normal. Except for an exceptional case of a health problem, we could formulate the hypothesis that Mr. Vương Khả Lãm, shortly after their marriage, had to leave his wife for a few years. The Great War (1914–1918) could be this cause, but research should be carried out in a thorough way in to try to find information about an individual from among the 90,000 Vietnamese enlisted men who went to France during this period. This could be one of the explanations for the genesis of the novel.

In any case, we can assume that the couple lived happily with their five children, as much as was possible in those troubled years in Vietnam's history. Two portraits seem to have been taken at the same time, with the same oval frame, showing them in traditional clothes, with serene and complicit expressions. In her account of her trip to Bà Nà, published in 1931, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa mentions her husband with the affectionate term "*nhà tôi*" (my husband) in recounting this two-week family stay at the hill resort. Mr. Vương Khả Lãm passed away in 1968, if a photo of Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa in mourning dated 1968 is to be believed. Given Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's activities, especially very active in the years 1926–1936, when their children were still very young, we can imagine that this was not possible without a perfect understanding between spouses and real support from her husband.

Further, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was a personality in her city and far beyond. In 1926, she participated, with other "important" people, in the organization of the funeral of the modernist leader Phan Châu Trinh. Bùi Thế Mỹ, in the French-language newspaper *Annamese Echo* (*Echo annamite*), presented her in 1928 as a "feminist," an active supporter of female education (Bùi 1928: 1–2). In 1934, a delegation from the emblematic feminist magazine *Women's News* (*Phụ nữ tân văn*), visited her and interviewed her about her decision to cut her hair short. In the 1940s, she was well known from north to south. A note in the first issue of *Renewed Knowledge* (*Tạp chí tri tân*), published by a group of eminent intellectuals in Hanoi, shows the consideration she enjoyed in the intellectual milieu at that time, stating, "To

Mrs. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa in Tourane—Did you receive my letter? Please answer. Please think of promoting *Renewed Knowledge.* Thank you" (Anonymous 1941: 20). Meanwhile, Ái Lang (1943) and Hoa Bang (1943) both spoke of her as a pioneer in women's journalism.

Based on current sources, we believe that the activities of Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa can be divided into two periods. From 1926 to 1929, she was very involved in actions in favor of women's education and women's rights. She was a member of the Tourane section of the Women's Work Learned Society association founded in Hue by Mrs. Đạm Phương and inaugurated on June 28, 1926. Two years later she created another Women's Work Learned Society in Tourane which was inaugurated on November 18, 1928, for which we have a photo of the ceremony. It was during this period that she wrote regularly in the press, notably in the *Industrial People's News* (*Thực nghiệp dân báo*) of which we have a photo of her journalist's card dated 1927. According to Bùi Thế Mỹ, a well-known journalist in Saigon:

> As for the articles she gave to the various Annamese newspapers, and more particularly to the *Voice of the People* [*Tiếng dân*] and the *Indochina Times* [*Đông Pháp thời báo*], and in which the author deals most often with women's issues, they are always written with good sense, even with authority, in a pleasant style. (Bùi 1928: 2)

The novel, *The Western Beauty*, written probably in 1926, was published very quickly in 1927, with prefaces by three intellectuals: Bùi Thế Mỹ, Tản Đà, the great poet from Hanoi, as well as Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, whose official title was President of the House of the People's Representatives of Annam, but above all, was a modernist leader who had spent years in colonial prisons.

During the following period, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was mainly interested in her region as the territory of the ancient kingdom of Champa. In 1929, she visited an ancient Cham site discovered by the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient (French School of the Far East, or EFEO). She certainly visited other sites, worked in the Museum of Cham Sculpture, and studied the available literature on Champa from the historical, cultural, architectural, and artistic points of view. Her work of synthesis on Champa, published in 1936, received a glowing review in the *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* by Nguyễn Văn Tố, one of the greatest historians of the time (Nguyễn 1936: 506–507). But before this work, she had already published in 1934 a traditional *tuồng* drama, *Princess Huyền Trân*, in which she dramatized a well-known episode in Vietnamese history when in the thirteenth century the Trần king gave his daughter in marriage to the king of Champa. This piece, fortunately preserved in the legal deposit at the National Library of France in Paris, testifies to another aspect of Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's activities. More specifically, in the preface of that work she speaks of the importance of theater in society and of her wish to contribute to the reform of traditional *tuồng* theater, not only by arranging old plays and writing new ones, but also by financially supporting a theater company for about a year, from the end of 1931 until the economic crisis was heavily felt (Huỳnh 1934a, b: 2–4).

In 1931, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa also published an account of her family's trip to Bà Nà, a hill station at an altitude of 1400 m created for French personnel, during which

she noted the inequalities and injustices between human beings (Huỳnh 1931). It seems that she was then no longer active in feminism as in the previous period. The interview she gave in 1934 about her hair being cut short for a year leads us to believe that she advises Vietnamese women to have the courage to assert their will, first in the private domain, such as hair and clothes, while waiting to obtain more freedom in the public domain. The reaction of a *Woman's News* reader shows that cutting one's hair was not as trivial as it may seem to us today and required a high opinion of womanhood that most did not have (Bạch 1934: 21). Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's interview reveals a page in the history of feminism in Vietnam, showing us at the same time the great difference between the reality and the ideal of a modern woman described in the novel published seven years earlier.

The *Summary Study of Champa* published in 1936 is Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's last known writing. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa may still have written in the press, but we do not have any such works. From 1945 on, she probably did not publish anymore. According to Trương Duy Hy:

> In 1945, after the August Revolution, she continued her activities at the Đà Nẵng Women's Association until the beginning of the Indochina War. After a brief period of evacuation [*tản cư*], she and her husband returned to live with their youngest daughter Vương Thiên Hương in the family house, No. 18-20 Phan Châu Trinh Avenue in Đà Nẵng. . . In 1975 after the reunification of the country, she made a trip to Hanoi to visit friends. A few years before her death, she lost her eyesight and became progressively weaker (Trương 2010).

Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa died on May 8, 1982, in her house in Đà Nẵng and was buried at the family plot, and then transferred in 1988 to Hồ Chí Minh City to a house of worship under the responsibility of her grandson Nguyễn Thành Nghĩa. Some family members remained in Đà Nẵng, including Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's youngest son. About Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's life before 1945, especially her novel and play, the memory was lost, even in her family, until the book about her was published in 2003.

3.5 A Modernist and Feminist Woman

In Đà Nẵng, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa is now known as the first woman in the city to have short hair and to ride a bicycle. Trương Duy Hy was fortunate to interview "elders born in Đà Nẵng like Mr. and Mrs. Đoàn Bá Từ, retired executive and members of the Thái Phiên Club" who kept this image in their memory (Trương 2003). The short hair and the bicycle are not just an appearance, but rather a symbol of her adherence to the ideas of modernization. Here it is necessary to say a few words about the modernist moment which is very important in the history of Vietnam in general, and in the region where Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa lived in particular.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in parallel with the armed anti-French struggle which Phan Bội Châu organized from Japan, the modernists (literates, but also new French-speaking graduates) were persuaded of the importance of "modernizing" (*duy tân*) Vietnamese society in order to prepare it for independence, which remained their objective. The regional and international context lent itself to this, and

reformer Phan Châu Trinh was in a position to publish an open letter to the Governor-General of Indochina to explain the modernist project and to demand more rights for the Vietnamese.

The central region of Vietnam, named Annam by the French, was a field of very dynamic activities such as the establishment of modern schools and businesses. The image of an immobile royal court in Hue is certainly not the whole picture. It should be noted that the modernist leaders Phan Châu Trinh and Huỳnh Thúc Kháng came from the center and that modernist activities were more precocious there at the beginning of the century, although for posterity the Đông Kinh Free School (Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục school), created in Hanoi in 1907, has become the emblem. This modernist episode was brief, as it was suppressed as early as 1908, following an anti-tax protest in the center in March. The scholars, identified as troublemakers, were targeted by the colonial and mandarin authorities and forced to leave the public scene.

Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was between ten and twelve years old in these years. The young Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa could of course see or even participate in some of the modernization activities, but we do not know exactly where she lived at the time. Note, however, that the village of Phan Châu Trinh (Tam Lộc, Phú Ninh) and that of his cousin and reformer Lê Cơ (Tiên Sơn, Tiên Phước) are distant from each other by about thirteen kilometers, are only seventy kilometers from Đà Nẵng, and thus are quite accessible, even on foot (Sở văn hóa thông tin tỉnh Quảng Nam 2006). The area is thus one of the nuclei of modernist activities in the years 1900–1908.

The first trace of any public activity by Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa dates from 1926. A witness, who later became a Communist Party first secretary of Quảng Nam Province, attests to her participation in 1926 in the organization of Phan Chau Trinh's funeral:

> The workers gathered in mutual aid associations, as well as some important personalities in Đà Nẵng at the time such as Nguyễn Tùng, Phạm Doãn Điềm, Nguyễn Đình Thuần, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hoà. . . and took the initiative to organize the funeral of Phan Châu Trinh in a very solemn way. Thousands of people came to the town hall to participate. (Phan 1980 cited in Trương 2010: 12)

Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa is the only woman listed among the organizers. It took courage to show respect to the old modernist leader who literally sacrificed his life for his country. Without a doubt, she must have also enjoyed a situation that allowed her not to be worried by the colonial authorities. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was certainly not naive. In the novel she was probably writing at the same time, she has her character say many times that her country "has lost its independence" and that its inhabitants are like "slaves." Her heroine, the Frenchwoman, complains about the "arbitrary power" in France as in Indochina. As one can see, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa did not only write beautiful words in a novel, but she also acted in her life according to her convictions.

Her activities in favor of women's education and the defense of women's rights also show the correspondence between her ideas and her actions. We can see this in the Women's Work Learned Society founded in Hue in 1926 of which she was a member, and in the chapter that she founded in Tourane in 1928. She had the idea of creating a federation of women's associations from different cities and regions which seems to have been supported, for example, by a member of the Hue Women's

Work Learned Society who lived in Nam Định in the north and who wrote a letter to the Women's Work Learned Society in 1927 that was published in its journal the following year (Bích 1928: 30).

What did it mean to be a feminist in colonial Vietnam? First, it meant giving lectures on practical subjects and calling on all women to educate themselves and to participate in social life. According to Trương Duy Hy, in numerous conferences in Đà Nẵng, "organized by different movements," she:

> . . . aimed to improve women's knowledge, encourage them to adopt a new way of life, urge them to be thrifty, to know how to raise and educate their children, etc., using, for example, soapberry [*bồ hòn*] fruit as soap to clean clothes. By calling on women to learn *quốc ngữ*, she showed the benefits of knowing how to read and write for oneself, for the family, and for society. She explained how to save money by using *bời lời* [*Litsea glutinosa*] to make ink. (Trương 2010: 11)

As Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was a member of the Hue chapter of the Women's Work Learned Society, the activities of this association should help us to know more about its mindset and its own activities. The "women's work" in its title is a reference to the domestic arts, which is quite harmless. The journalist Bùi Thế Mỹ wrote in 1928:

> The purpose of the association is household education. Conferences are organized accordingly, where members can teach each other everything related to housework.
>
> Apart from that, we also take care of school-age girls. In fact, on their days off, many of them attend the lessons given at the association's headquarters. The members of the [Women's Work Learned Society] are in charge, in turn, of telling these free pupils how to make a child's costume, embroider a handkerchief, prepare certain dishes, make gifts, etc. In a word, these kids are taught everything that a well-educated Annamite girl should not ignore. (Bùi 1928: 1)

Reading the publications issued by the Hue chapter of the Women's Work Learned Society, we can also see that the objective of the association, at least of Mrs. Đạm Phương, its founder, and members like Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, was not limited to training a good wife and a good mother. The announcement of its foundation in the newspaper *Center and North News* (*Trung Bắc tân văn*) on May 17, 1926, specifies its three objectives concerning women "(1) Improving skills; (2) Defining responsibilities; (3) Opening the mind." A speech by Phan Bội Châu, "the revered patriot," at the inauguration of the association on June 28, 1926, in Hue, clearly assigned a much higher objective, by urging women to contribute to the collective efforts of the Vietnamese people (Phan 1926: 18–27). Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, another modernist leader, as the Chairman of the House of People's Representatives of Annam, in response to Mrs. Đạm Phương at this inauguration ceremony, was also very clear:

> Look at the civilized countries in Europe and America, women are competing with men in the affairs of society, not only in the fields of studies and techniques, but they also demand participation in politics, elections, etc. Moreover, the bright evidence is that in the recent war in Europe, women have led many businesses and companies. (Huỳnh 1926: 31)

Europe and the United States are put forth here as examples, which was not only a rhetorical effect intended for the colonial authorities, present at the inauguration in the person of Pierre Pasquier, future governor-general of Indochina. Like *The*

Western Beauty that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa would publish shortly after, with a preface by Huỳnh Thúc Kháng that praises her effort to spread modern ideas to women, the intention to follow the West in its best, was sincere.

The Women's Work Learned Society was therefore not a simple association that taught "household arts." Phan Bội Châu, in his book published by the Women's Work Learned Society in 1926 comprising twenty-five "chapters" in the form of short poems, affirms the eminent role of women in human society from the first poem entitled "General Idea": "Girl or boy, all carry the burden of the country's affairs together/But the girls have a more important share/For being a mother (of the national community) is a female task" (Phan 1926: 3). After poems about "what a woman should know" as a child, then as a wife and mother, in the family and social relationships, the last one with the title "Do you have a husband yet?" (*Mầy đã có chồng chưa?*) expresses the voice of a Vietnamese woman who lost her husband (her country): "His last name is Việt, his first name is Nam. He is more than 3000 years old, not very old... Heaven, how can you be so cruel? By taking my husband away from me" (Phan 1926: 16). Strange as it may seem, this little book, reissued in 1927, was well published, circulated for a time, and was kept in the colonial legal deposit. We must undoubtedly deduce a moment of softness in Indochinese politics, probably with the appointment on July 28, 1925, of the socialist Alexandre Varenne to the post of governor-general until 1929, the year when Mrs. Đạm Phương, despite her status as a member of the royal family, was imprisoned for two months, suspected by the authorities of being in contact with the nationalist Tân Việt party.

A text by Mrs. Đạm Phương, dated February 14, 1928, and published in the first volume of the *General Knowledge of Women's Work* in 1928, in response to critics of her project, allows us to better understand the steps necessary to obtain equality of women with men:

> Following the wave of women's rights that recently arose in our society, several people, women or men, asked my opinion, probably wanting to ask me this question: when women proclaim women's rights, why do I say that we must take care of the education of women's work [*nữ công*]. . . Women's work is a step towards women's rights. Let me explain: A country that has no rights is so because it has lost its independence, a family that has no rights is also because it has lost its independence, a human being who has no rights is again because he has lost his independence, a woman who has no rights is because she has lost her independence and has become accustomed to relying on others and being a slave to them. Independence is about two things: 1) Independence of the mind; 2) independence of the body. Independence of the mind means independence in knowledge and ideas. In order to be independent, it is necessary to widen one's knowledge to be wise in different fields. Independence of the body means independence in one's life. You have to learn how to do things yourself, so that you can support yourself. . . A girl who wants to have rights must her two independences. This is quite contrary to the Chinese ideology of the three obediences, which is to obey and rely on others. (Đạm Phương 1928: 26–27)

The lecture given by Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa on December 31, 1933, at a market in Tourane for a charity event corresponds to the ideas espoused by Đạm Phương. She agrees with the necessity of teaching trades so that women can become financially independent, but this is only a step to go further, that is to be equal with men. Her lecture, "Women's Personality" (*Nhân cách phụ nữ*) gives a deplorable account of

the situation of women in the world, then offers a history of the place of women since antiquity in different civilizations and religions, before asserting that women, representing half of humanity, must have their dignity and their place in modern society. She underlines the opposition in the Vietnamese society between the conservatives and the moderns (*duy tân*) who:

> . . . want women to obtain their full quality as human beings, to have enough knowledge to manage their affairs, to educate their children, to participate in society, to be able to be independent to do whatever they wish in order to create happiness for the family and society. . . in the family as well as in society, it is necessary to fight and eradicate the old morals and customs which are mistakes of the past, especially men should no longer consider women as treasures, society and law should no longer consider them as minors. (Huỳnh 1933: 552)

The novel, *The Western Beauty*, beyond its role in the history of the Vietnamese language and literature, must be situated in this perspective. The character of the beautiful and educated French woman, model wife, and responsible citizen, is proposed as a model for Vietnamese women. In our opinion, this novel should not be read as an old-fashioned novel telling once again the story of a faithful and devoted wife. The objective of its author is much more of a rupture with traditional morality, by choosing the novel form to spread as widely as possible the ideas in favor of the liberation of the woman. She confided in Huỳnh Thúc Kháng who reports her words as follows:

> During the last decade or so, which saw the emergence of the women's studies movement [*nữ học*], I liked to collect newspapers and magazines, with the idea of reading to educate myself. Of these readings, I much prefer the novel, which gave me the courage to try my hand at it myself. (Huỳnh 1926: 1)

Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's project was completely in agreement with the modernist spirit, as Huỳnh Thúc Kháng also affirmed in his preface, that the novel was an incomparably effective means to diffuse ideas.

The *tuồng* drama, *Princess Huyền Trân*, can also be considered in the modernist and feminist spirit: the story of the princess highlights the role that a woman can play in history, as the protagonist sacrifices herself for her country, but also her right to love, once her husband has died. The publication of this play also allowed us to know, thanks to the preface, that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, according to modernist recommendations, also contributed economically, by financing a theater company. By giving work to about twenty people, women and men, she helped to revive and reform a traditional art.

However, the fight for women's rights was not an easy path. Numerous articles in the press of the time testify to the difficulty of changing mentalities, starting with the idea of manual labor allowing a woman to support herself. Concerning Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, her short hair and her practice of cycling mentioned above are not a simple matter of appearance. Let us recall in passing that in the early twentieth century, hair was worn long by men as a symbol of filial piety and that modernist scholars were known precisely as the "cut hair" and were subject to repression by the colonial power.

For women, it was still a problem a quarter of a century later. In the interview given in May 1934 to the magazine *Women's News*, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa clearly explained that her decision to cut her hair was part of the exercise of her rights as an individual, until equality between men and women could be achieved:

> . . . The right to equality and the right to participate in governance will surely be achieved one day, but for the time being, they are only an ideal, especially since in order to exercise these rights, we will have to ask for authorization, because the power to give them belongs to others who must consent to them. As for the change of our look, this is a freedom of each individual, we do not have to ask for authorization from anyone. That is why, after cutting my hair short, I am studying to see how to change my habits, such as playing sports, cycling, and changing clothes and shoes. Do not think that I am doing all this to try to make myself more beautiful, because the truth is that I want to change so that industry, commerce, and technology can progress. (Huỳnh 1934b: 17–18)

These changes, while possible immediately, required a real change of mindset. Her hair cut in 1934 needed a lot of determination:

> We must arm ourselves with courage and will to face and fight inertia; the necessary weapon here is confidence and determination. When I made my decision, I entrusted without hesitation my long hair to the scissors; after that, I did not pay any attention to the words of some or others, to the hostile glances that stare at my short hair, in order to completely realize my will. (Huỳnh 1934b: 18)

The letter from a woman reader, after the publication of this interview, shows how difficult it was to change the mentalities in the Vietnamese society of the time. After giving several examples of women who wanted to wear short hair but did not dare, this woman admitted that she herself did not succeed in doing so and hoped that her daughters would do better. She praised Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa for her courage, saying, "I admire Ms. Bảo Hòa for this. She does what she wants to do" (Bạch 1934: 21).

Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa wanted precisely to write a novel to show a female example and she did so. Thanks to this novel rediscovered in the 2000s, her name has become familiar again to the Vietnamese reader.

3.6 The First Woman Novelist

Recent research shows the importance of Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa in the history of Vietnamese literature. Yet her name and her work were "forgotten for seventy years." Lại Nguyên Ân, while casually reading an account, discovered the existence of the novel *The Western Beauty* and found it in the National Library of Vietnam in Hanoi. First in a blog post, dated December 2000, and then in an article in the *Journal of Literature* (*Tạp chí văn học*) published in June 2001, he hypothesized that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa was the first female novelist. At that time, he was not aware of any other publications by Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa.

Trương Duy Hy then took over, but unfortunately did not have access to all of Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's publications. In the book he released in 2003, Trương Duy Hy re-edited *The Western Beauty*, the travel story, and the book on Champa (from a

manuscript kept by the family) but could only point out the possible existence of a play. We now have the published play. These literary texts allow us to better know Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa the writer who may have published other works, short stories, or essays, in periodicals.

We have here the modest intention to briefly present her literary work. First is the question of interest to the literary history of Vietnam. Is Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa the first female novelist or not? The three authors who wrote prefaces to her work emphasize the innovative character of a novel written by a woman. According to Bùi Thế Mỹ, for instance, upon its release the novel "enjoyed a rare success in Cochinchina" (Bùi 1928: 2). Meanwhile, Diệp Văn Kỳ, journalist and owner of the *Indochina Times*, wrote a review in his newspaper in October 1927 (Diệp 1927) while journalist and writer Thiếu Sơn mentioned the novel in 1934 (Thiếu 1934: 7). About fifteen years later, however, Vũ Ngọc Phan, author of a monumental history of modern Vietnamese literature written in *quốc ngữ*, seems not to have known of its existence (Vũ 1951). Hoa Bằng, in an article published in *Renewed Knowledge*, in an issue dedicated to women's literature, which cites Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa as a pioneer in journalism, does not mention this novel either (Hoa 1943: 2).

Lại Nguyên Ân and Trương Duy Hy argue that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's novel is the first written in Vietnamese and published by a woman. However, Lê Thanh Hiền, known for his research in theater, has contested this hypothesis and proposes instead a novel by Đạm Phương, published in book form in 1928, after being serialized in several issues in a magazine (Lại 2001). Similarly, Võ Văn Nhơn, in a work on literature from the first half of the twentieth century, mentions other earlier published novels (Võ 2007). However, Nguyễn Kim Anh, who compiled a book on women's writing in the twentieth century, and who had access to other sources, considers that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa is indeed the first female Vietnamese language novelist (Nguyễn 2002).

In our opinion, the title of champion is not interesting, but the question of which woman had published the first modern Western-style novel in Vietnamese has the merit of attracting the attention of scholars and hopefully stimulating further research. We want to emphasize that from the point of view of content, unlike these other novels that may have been published earlier, *The Western Beauty* presents a story anchored in contemporary society, which speaks of a major social fact. The commitment of many young Vietnamese to come to France during the First World War is a reality that is little discussed in historiographical research in France and Vietnam. To our knowledge, there is no equivalent in colonial literature, even though colonial soldiers did contribute to France's victory. It is also necessary to underline the criticism of social injustice, that of the corrupt mandarinate, but also that of colonization, which runs through the whole novel. We can quote the passage when the couple receives the prohibition against Bạch Lan visiting the village to see her family-in-law "not to make France lose face." Bạch Lan reacts like a Frenchwoman and "did not want to hear anything":

> Her husband had to find the right words to reason with her: "In my country, we are not free like in France. If we do not submit it, it will be a catastrophe. It is useless and will only bring us misfortune. As the road is bad, if you really want, I will go to the village alone and bring

> back the family so that you can see them. Then we will have to make arrangements to return to France because they won't let us live here in peace". (Huỳnh 1927: Vol. 2, 74)

As for the form, although the structure of the novel follows a traditional model, summarizing the content of each chapter by two verses, it reads easily, with common words and despite references to classical Chinese literature. These are perhaps numerous for a modern reader, but this is quite understandable with a main hero who began his studies with Chinese characters, before going to a French school. *The Western Beauty* also gives much space to inner monologues which give access to the thoughts of the main characters. Lại Nguyên Ân notes Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's efforts to make her sentences natural, avoiding rhythmic and symmetrical sentences, as well as avoiding imposing her point of view and letting the characters evolve.

Apart from the novel, we know that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa experimented in two other literary genres. In 1931, she published in the magazine *Southern Breeze* an account of a trip to the hill resort Bà Nà. Now well known to tourists, the resort, which is at an altitude of 1400 m and twenty-five kilometers from the bay of Tourane, was not so easily accessible at that time, and for part of the journey, the traveler had to leave the car and be transported in sedan chairs. In the tradition of the travelogue inaugurated by Phạm Quỳnh, editor of *Southern Breeze*, the reader is provided with information on all the stages of the journey so that he could make it himself. The author takes care to inform about the organization of the place, the access conditions, the accommodation, the landscape, and the climate, as well as the sites of interest in the surroundings. The reading is pleasant, we appreciate the clarity of the language which is not encumbered by expressions of Chinese origin. The following passage could give us an idea of the style:

> One afternoon I took a book and came to the foot of a pine tree to read in peace, in the company of my children, about seven - eight years old, who were running around after butterflies and picking flowers. Absorbed in my reading, I did not pay attention to the clouds that were accumulating until I saw in the hollow of the mountains, something white like a big cloud rising strongly. . . obstinately, I stayed until the fog began to envelop us, and only then I hurried back, the children running ahead of me in the fog, their blue and red clothes floating like little immortals walking in the clouds. (Huỳnh 1931: 557)

Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, a connoisseur of *tuồng* theater, rearranged other ancient texts for the needs of the troupe she was sponsoring in 1931, before writing the play *Princess Huyền Trân*, with the aim of renewing *tuồng* drama (it is specified on the cover page that it is a "*tuồng cải lương*" or "renovated *tuồng*"). Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa deplores the situation of *tuồng*, unable to withstand the competition of *cải lương*, or "renovated theater" which was very popular in the south, and wishes to contribute to improving this ancient performing art not only by funding the training of male and female singers, the manufacture of stage clothes and scenery, but also by enriching the content of the repertoire. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa writes in the preface that the story of the princess whose marriage to the king of Champa brought Vietnam two provinces deserves to be known to understand the history of Vietnam, especially its relationship with the kingdom of Champa. As is expected in a *tuồng* play, ancient expressions are numerous, but one can find dialogues with a much more common language as in this scene where the princess is about to leave her country:

> Princess (appears [on stage]) - Your Majesty my brother, I am only a woman who could not pay the debt to her birth, now that you have given me to the kingdom of Champa, father and yourself, do not pay attention to my fragile life, what matters is the peace of our country and the strength of our ramparts.
>
> . . .
>
> Princess (looks at [the man she loves, Trần] Khắc Chung) - South and North are now separated, save the wish of faithful love for the next life". (Huỳnh 1934a, b: 20)

In this play dedicated to a traditional theatrical practice, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa also brings something new. Unlike the repertoire of other plays, this work takes as subject a fact in the history of Vietnam, and not the history of ancient China. The exemplary role of the princess is emphasized, "fidelity, filial piety, love, duty everything is fulfilled" (Huỳnh 1934a, b: 4), but with a certain audacity, because her sacrifice (for the country) is on the same level of honor as her choice to follow her love.

This figure of a Vietnamese princess in the land of Champa seems to have allowed Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa to start a scholarly work that led to the publication of a synthesis work on Champa in 1936.

3.7 Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa as a Researcher of Her Native Land

In her publications, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa shows a great attachment to her region which seems to be a source of inspiration. The novel, *The Western Beauty*, tells a story that took place there, real according to her statements and that of Bùi Thế Mỹ who had heard it told by his family living in the region. It is not our purpose here to discuss the relationship between fiction and history (which must wait for research in the archives in Vietnam and France), but it seems to us that it is relevant to underline the attention that Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa pays to what happened around her. She had an inquisitive mind, was open and in constant motion. While staying in Đà Nẵng for most of her life, it was by visiting places around her home and studying the history of the region that she wrote her writings.

The work of synthesis on Champa, *A Summary Study of Champa,* published in 1936, is the result of a work of research that must certainly have been spread over several years. It is also necessary to include the travelogue and the theatrical play which attest to her "scientific spirit," the object of great attention in the milieu of Vietnamese intellectuals of the time. Her play, *Princess Huyền Trân*, takes as its subject a real historical episode and relies on the historical sources she had at her disposal. The account of the trip to Bà Nà shows that the author was very concerned about the exactitude of the information and sources she mentioned, making her own comments on the possible veracity of these statements, whether it was about Lord Mountain (Núi Chúa) on which the future king Gia Long established his base, or about varieties of insects or a rock that changes color with the passage of time.

A Summary Study of Champa has this subtitle: "Traces of the Chàm (Champa): population—religion—kingdom—literature—architecture—music—fine arts—history—personalities." The book is fairly long at sixty-four pages and includes one color drawing, as well as seven photos of sculptures and monuments, which was a great novelty. The author's foreword states her objective: "... this land (Trung Kỳ) where we live now, was the territory of Champa. The history of this people has close links with that of our Vietnamese people. Our duty is to study it in a thorough way" (Huỳnh 1936: 5). The preface by Phạm Quỳnh, Minister of Education in Hué (Thượng thư bộ Giáo dục Huế), in welcoming the author's effort to offer Vietnamese readers the first book on the ancient kingdom of Champa, is marked by nostalgia for the time of Vietnam's independence: "The life of a people, of a kingdom, is in fact quite fragile!... To exist, one must be able to rely on one's own strength, we should meditate on this" (Phạm 1936: 3).

The originality of the book is not therefore its subject. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's contribution, by synthesizing the scientific research of the EFEO and by doing field-work, is to propose a work that aims to give the reader an overall and objective view of this ancient kingdom. She states in her foreword that she has been able to take advantage of the collection at the Museum of Cham Sculpture near her home, has read books in Chinese characters, and recent research in French "thanks to the help of friends," but has also gone into the field. She thus recalls a visit to an ancient capital of the Chams as follows:

> I had the chance to visit an ancient Champa site in 1929. . . When the Chams left their capital, they completely buried their palaces under the earth; for hundreds of years, the Vietnamese saw only a small hill. Thanks to the French scholars who studied the ancient traces and found this site which they opened, we knew that it was what remained of the capital of the Cham". (Huỳnh 1936: 24–25).

She also went to the sacred sites of the Cham, Mỹ Sơn and Đồng Dương, so she could tell the story and observe the architecture of the towers:

> The towers of Mỹ Sơn and Đồng Dương are two of the most famous complexes in the territory of Quảng Nam province. Having had the opportunity to visit them several times, we will talk in the different sections about their architecture and the paths that lead to them. (Huỳnh 1936: 30)

For this rather long part (31–45), she was helped, as Nguyễn Văn Tố points out in his review, by Võ Quang Quỳnh, secretary at the Museum of Cham Sculpture, for the details concerning the architecture of which several French terms are explained probably for the first time in Vietnamese. This part, moreover, includes a travel story signed by Võ Quang Quỳnh and entitled "Visiting the Towers of Mỹ Sơn (September 1934): Impressions of a Traveler" (41–42).

A chapter is dedicated to the music and arts of the Chams. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa thus speaks about it to her Vietnamese readers, most of whom know nothing about Champa:

> The Chams loved music and the fine arts. Among the sculptures that have come down to us, several show figures playing the flute and other instruments, or representing figures holding each other by the back and dancing to the rhythm of the music. (Huỳnh 1936: 21)

In the last part, devoted to the personalities of Champa, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa deplores the lack of sources and says that she strives to portray those who have marked the history of the kingdom, including King Chế Bồng Nga in the fourteenth century, praised for his military talent, but also Queen Mi E who preferred death to dishonor.

Upon its publication, this work was reviewed in the bulletin of the EFEO by Nguyên Văn Tố, then an assistant at the EFEO and one of the best-known Vietnamese historians:

> It has the great merit of being clear, relatively succinct, and of recalling all the essential facts. . . There is certainly more than one shortcoming to be pointed out, more than one error to be noted in his work, but these errors and shortcomings, thanks to the very real merits which accompany them, do not prevent his booklet from presenting a serious interest. (Nguyễn 1936: 506–507)

From this erudite man who is famous for his rigor, including pointing out phrases that he felt could be improved, this is high praise. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa's work surely has its place in the history of the introduction of social sciences and humanities in Vietnam, especially anthropology, by bringing not only knowledge to the Vietnamese public who did not have access to Western research, but also elements of the modern scientific research method, as well as words to express new concepts in Vietnamese. Her work, which she modestly introduces in her preface as "a first step in the study of ancient times by a woman" (*bước đầu về việc khảo cổ học của nữ lưu*) (Huỳnh 1936: 5), is rightly appreciated as an early synthesis of scholarly research on Champa, thus putting her on par with other male scholars.

It seems important to us also to talk about another aspect of this book. Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa clearly expresses her opinion in her preface on the need to study the history and culture of the Chams whose lands were conquered by the Việts. A chapter of her book is devoted to the history of Champa, through mentions in Chinese and Vietnamese written sources, thus especially mentions of battles between Champa, China, and Vietnam. The question of assimilation (*đồng hóa*) of the Chams by the Việts is also addressed. In her conclusion, she makes a point of providing her thoughts on the causes of Champa's decline, which she also repeats in her post-face in French. According to her, the Chams lost their country because of a combination of reasons. The Chams "because of the worship of their deities (see the sculptures and towers that reach us)... did not pay attention to practical things (*đường thực tế*)" (Huỳnh 1936: 5 60). Excellent warriors "loving war" (61), "they did not hold literature (*văn học*) in consideration, did not have annals to write their reigns, did not celebrate the work of their ancestors... did not love their country with a warm love (*yêu nước nồng nàn*), so they lost all the lands of their homeland (*quốc thổ*)" (61).

Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa manifests here a very innovative spirit at the time, namely the consideration of the populations that would later be called in Vietnam "ethnic minorities," in the history of Vietnam (written as Việt-Nam in the text). We see this in this book, in her *tuồng* piece, but also in her travelogue where she mentions only in passing, but with respect, the mountain people living near the climate resort.

3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, I think that we can consider Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa among the women who made modern Vietnam. In a colonial society, she worked actively for about twenty years in favor of Vietnamese women for whom she wished more freedom, a better education, and a better place in society. She was certainly a feminist, but in the spirit of the Vietnamese modernists of the early twentieth century who held women in high respect and called upon them to participate in the transformation of Vietnamese society, with the idea to prepare for future independence. First woman novelist or not, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa is in any case one of the female authors who counted at the time. She also participated in the development of Vietnamese scientific research, by making Western methods and results available to readers.

All these aspects of her activities are obviously to be considered in a unity that often escapes the outside eye, distant moreover by about a century. Let us keep in mind that her life is present in her work and her work is intimately linked to her life. I would like to quote a passage from *A Summary Study of Champa*, when Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, while visiting the ancient Cham towers, meditates on common pages in the history of the Chams and the Việts. She thinks of Princess Huyền Trân, and of a song that is performed in her *tuồng* drama when right before the princess departs for Champa (Huỳnh 1934a, b: 22). That song is called the "Nam Bình song" (Bài ca Nam Bình), and it mentions a bird called "Red Swallow" (chim Hồng Nhạn). To quote:

> Here Princess Huyền Trân of the Trần left footprints of her passages, lived with the Chams, hoping to contribute to the peace and interest of her country. Could this little bird, all cute, with dark red feathers, hopping from one branch to another, be the "Red Swallow" described by the princess in her Nam Bình song? (Huỳnh 1936: 34)

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Chapter 4
An Educational Regime of Truth for Social Reform in Late Colonial Vietnam: The Journalistic Art of the Possible in *Phụ nữ tân văn*'s "Travel Stories" and "Letters for You"

Thanh Phùng and Đăng Minh Vũ

4.1 Introduction

Newspapers were introduced to Vietnam by the French as a tool for their colonial administration of the country and to instill in the Vietnamese people an attachment to "the motherland" (*mẫu quốc*). As the colonial authorities provided legal guarantees for the press to operate as a medium of public expression, though under heavy censorship, Vietnamese intellectuals started engaging in journalism in Vietnamese and for different purposes. The Vietnamese periodicals during the French colonial period staged efforts to popularize Western ideas and beliefs, expose and analyze the issues of colonial rule, promote nationalist ideas, and preserve traditional values. They played a key role in fashioning dynamic modern Vietnamese identities. One journal exemplifying these efforts was the weekly newspaper *Women's News* (*Phụ nữ tân văn*). In circulation starting in 1929, *Women's News*, after *Women's Bell* (*Nữ giới chung*), first published in 1918, was the second newspaper devoted to women's issues. It reached a wider audience, discussed a wider range of issues, and lasted longer, proving an unprecedented success. *Women's News* "averaged 8500 copies a week for over two years, dropped to 5000 as the effects of the Depression reached Indochina, and then survived at about 2500 copies until finally being shut down by government order in December 1934" (Marr 1981: 220). Its last issue, the 273rd, was released on April 21, 1935. With the supervision of the head publisher, Mme Nguyễn Đức Nhuận, who was financially backed by her husband, "a major Saigon importer, wholesaler and retailer" (Marr 1981: 221), *Women's News* convened famous writers

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_4

in all the three regions of Vietnam (Thiện 2010). The newspaper has been regarded as a landmark in the development of journalism, readership, and for women in Vietnam (Đặng 2008).

Marr (1981) criticizes *Women's News* for its conservative stand in advocating a number of traditions unfavorable for women, yet he commends the newspaper as probably the best example of its type in spreading new ideas into Vietnam and advancing women's educational opportunities. *Women's News* has also been recognized for its contributions to the renovation of the Vietnamese language and Vietnamese literature and its display of an anticolonial attitude despite a claimed neutral position (Thiện 2010). These achievements were a function of genuine education. We understand education not as a predefined field but as a process of making space for engagement in the cultivation of subjectivities and/or capacities. By framing journalism in terms of education, we hope to highlight the pedagogy of texts and the nature of truth production in journalism.

Women's News contained a variety of columns. This chapter focuses on two columns in the newspaper, "Travel Stories" (*Du ký*) and "Letters for You" (*Thơ cho bạn*), since they excellently illustrate an educational regime of truth for social reform enacted through journalism in late colonial Vietnam. The two columns, from a first-person perspective, present Vietnamese women who freely navigate the world and the Vietnamese landscape at the time. "Travel Stories," consisting of two parts, "Going to the West" (*Sang Tây*; May–July 1929) and "Ten Months in France" (*Mười tháng ở* Pháp; October 1929–August 1930), lay out Ms. Phạm Vân Anh's observations during her trip to France, introducing the first Vietnamese woman traveler as the author of a travelog. "Letters for You" (May 1929–February 1930) is a series of letters on Vietnam and the world situation exchanged between Trần Thị Thanh Nhàn and Lê Thị Huỳnh Lan.

The travelog has been confirmed to be written by Đào Trinh Nhất, a prolific, influential male journalist, also the first editor-in-chief of *Women's News*. In 2018, it was published in Vietnam as a book, with the name Đào Trinh Nhất in parentheses beside Phạm Vân Anh on the cover (see Nguyễn, Hữu Sơn 2018). Some details in Thanh Nhàn's writings indicate a very high likelihood that she was performed by Đào Trinh Nhất. Thanh Nhàn, in her first installment, wrote about herself as follows: "In 1926, we were on the Portlios ship, which departed from Saigon on the morning of March 22" (Thanh 1929a: 22). Đào Trinh Nhất's biography notes that he went to France to study abroad on the same day ("Đào Trinh Nhất" 2021). Travelogs and letter exchanges appeal to authenticity; however, apparently, the authors' identities behind the texts do not matter much as the texts present themselves to their readers.

Previous studies have brought into view the variety of issues and woman figures emerging from Vietnamese journalism's presentation of "the woman question" (*vấn đề phụ nữ*) in the 1920s–1930s (see Marr 1981; McHale 1995; Ho Tai 1996; Đặng 2008; Tran 2011; Aitchison 2018; Nguyen 2020). For example, Aitchison (2018) traces the engagement of *Women's News* with historical time and global space to promote two differing ideal feminine models: the reinvention of martial Vietnamese women in historical records such as the Trưng Sisters and Lady Triệu as national heroines and the making of the educated, cosmopolitan, and charitable woman from

international news. What matters more to Aitchison is that these ideals were created by a small but active community of female Vietnamese writers during the period. Aitchison mentions Phạm Vân Anh as an example of the latter model; however, she did not attend to the possibility/fact that Vân Anh is not a female writer in real life but just one in the text. While the contents and strategies of the debate on women in Vietnamese journalism in the 1920–1930s have been extensively explored, there is still room for further inquiry and articulation.

This chapter, in examining twenty-nine extant issues of "Travel Stories" and twenty-eight extant issues of "Letters for You," demonstrates how the two columns, with specific techniques of creating woman personae and discussions, through the forms of travelogs and letter exchanges, have fabricated internationally minded and socially engaged woman figures for a modern Vietnam.

A text always encodes certain invitations for reading. In that sense, it is already pedagogical (Segall 2004). Our textual analysis contributes to an elaborate practice of attention to the pedagogy of journalistic texts and an educational regime of truth that helps understand the nuances of journalistic truths. Educational truths are not those that pursue accurate representations of existing realities but those that are effective in making certain things imaginable as possibilities in real life. They grapple with the art of the possible. We argue that the two columns embodied an educational regime of truth for social reform in modernizing Vietnam during the late colonial period. This chapter will review background issues, analyze the two columns' educational projects, and characterize the educational regime of truth within which the two columns operated.

4.2 Vietnamese Journalism: The National Question, the Woman Question, and the Pedagogical Question in the Context of Modernization in the 1920s–1930s

4.2.1 French Colonization of Vietnam and the Questions of Modernization

The terms "Vietnam" and "Vietnamese" when applied to the period before 1945 are anachronistic (for many different Vietnams, see Taylor 2013; Goscha 2016), yet they are convenient and relevant to refer to the spaces, cultures, and peoples that are the subject of this chapter. Before the French conquest, despite the plurality of constituent groups and cultures, a unitary S-shaped Vietnam did exist. It was established in 1802 by Emperor Gia Long and consolidated and maintained by the Nguyễn dynasty until violated by the French. Emperor Minh Mạng's policies of centralization to create one Confucian Vietnam and his attempts to expand the Nguyễn empire amounted to a form of modernity before the French invasion, as Goscha (2016) persuasively argues.

In July 1857, Napoleon III decided to invade Vietnam with the intention of expanding France's markets and territories in Asia. Upon Napoleon's command, Rigault de Genouilly and his troop attacked Đà Nẵng harbor in August 1858. In February 1859, they sailed southward, attacked Saigon, and occupied it after two weeks. By 1887, French colonizers had set up a ruling system in Vietnam. They divided the country into three different administrative regions, the protectorates of Tonkin (in the north) and Annam (in the center) and the colony of Cochinchina (in the south), as well as joined Vietnam with Cambodia under French Indochina, which later incorporated two more entities, the Chinese territory of Guangzhouwan in 1898 and the Laotian protectorate in 1899. The recitation of these brief, well-known facts may not suffice to evoke the extent of violence in this process, yet it sets the scene for a focus on the modernization of Vietnam in relation to the West.

The French was very different from the Chinese that Vietnam had been simultaneously learning from and resisting. Apart from superior technological and economic developments, they also claimed superior sociopolitical organization and lifestyles, taking pride in their French republicanism and prioritization of "liberté, égalité, fraternité," the French national motto made official under the Third Republic. After military supremacy established domination, French hegemony was soon justified by an ideology claiming Western civilization's superiority and its right to govern over so-called less advanced people in the name of human progress. For the Vietnamese people, Western modernity was too enormous and piercing to ignore.

After the French invasion, the modernization of Vietnam aspired to the West though it went together with a divided attitude toward traditions characteristic of the East's position in encountering Western colonialism (Marr 1981). How to build a modern Vietnam and fight for its independence was imperative. We call it the national question. Inseparable from Vietnam's modernization and the national question was how to rethink women's roles and rights, the woman question. On the one hand, new ideas and lifestyles came to Vietnam. On the other hand, colonial injustices required men to rethink their relationship with women. A cultural reform could take place only if the status of women was reformed. From 1905 to 1910, traditional perceptions about women started to be challenged, but it was not until about two decades later that women began to publicly voice their opinions and participated in organizing related movements (Marr 1981). *Women's News* was a pioneer of these movements. In its first issue on May 2, 1929, *Women's News* made it clear that "*Women's News* is an independent organization dedicated to studying matters relating to women, which are also matters concerning the nation and society. *Women's News* does not follow any party, worships truth as God and homeland as religion" (Phụ nữ Tân văn 1929: 6).

4.2.2 Print Journalism as a Space of Public Expression

The introduction of newspapers in Vietnam by the French began with the need for communication among the French administrators, colonialists, and their Vietnamese

associates. By the end of the nineteenth century, a series of newspapers were in circulation in Cochinchina. For example, *Le Bulletin Officiel de l'Expédition de la Cochinchine*, the first French language newspaper, published in 1861, circulated decrees and military reports to French soldiers and officers. In 1863, the French published the Mandarin gazette *Le Bulletin des Communes* to spread new laws to their associates in Vietnamese villages; *Gia Định News* (*Gia Định báo*), a gazette that disseminated official and legal documents as well as articles on Vietnamese culture and agriculture, published in 1865, was the first Vietnamese language newspaper (Phan and Trương 2017). Journalism was then seen as a means of propaganda to exert influence on the indigenous population. The pinnacle of this plot took place during Governor-general Albert Sarraut's two mandates (1911–14 and 1917–19), at a time when France's capacity to hold its Asian colonies was in doubt (Peycam 2012). Goscha (2016) summarizes a number of contextual conditions for Sarraut's collaborationist strategy: the flimsy legitimacy of the French presence in Indochina as alerted by the revolts of 1908 in Vietnam; the series of debates in Paris on French possessions between 1908 and 1911 under the effects of the Dreyfus Affair, energized republicanism, and the advent of a modern, activist press in the Third Republic; the rise of other colonial forces such as Japan, Germany, Britain, and the USA; the great potential of East Asian influence as seen from the fall of the Qing in China in late 1911, the creation of the Republic of China under Sun Yat-sen, and Phan Bội Châu's search for Chinese republican support for his Go East study-abroad program for young Vietnamese to travel to Japan.

Sarraut was sent to Indochina as governor-general to implement substantial reforms. A *francophonie* project was initiated "because the Vietnamese knowledge of the French, their culture, and their oeuvres was not sufficiently developed and broadcast, and because the French were not the only ones competing for Vietnamese hearts and minds" (Goscha 2004: 166). Sarraut's team enacted new press laws and authorized the publication of more newspapers, books, and translations. They enlisted a group of reform-minded Vietnamese allies and placed them in charge of major government-backed newspapers. Among these Vietnamese collaborators were such remarkable men as Phạm Quỳnh, head of *Southern Breeze* (*Nam phong*) in Tonkin; Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh at *Indochina Review* (*Đông Dương tạp chí*), *Central and Northern News* (*Trung Bắc tân văn*), and *New Annam* (*L'Annam nouveau*) also in Tonkin; Bùi Quang Chiêu and Nguyen Phú Khai at *Native Tribune* (*La Tribune indigene*) in Cochinchina; and later Huỳnh Thúc Kháng at *Voice of the People* (*Tiếng dân*) in Annam (Goscha 2016). Through the print press rather than representative bodies (as in the case of other European colonies such as British India, the American Philippines, or Dutch Indonesia), the French opened a narrow space of public debate, where the indigenous could express their needs with a modern instrument (Peycam 2012).

The French government's attempt met with the rise of a newly assertive, urban Vietnamese middle class that was eager to both publish and consume newspapers. Many of the newspapers discussed new social trends and political events, as well as furthered the growth of the national script, *quốc ngữ*, the Romanized writing system for Vietnamese. Together with French, *quốc ngữ* arose as "the 'language-of-power' to discuss, re-contextualize, and proclaim both *từ mới* [new vocabulary] and new

ideas" (Nguyen 2013: 16). The different concerns, imaginations, and sentiments of the Vietnamese on the printed page appeared as a constellation of local and global constructs. The intelligentsia became more diverse, yet all of them were attracted to the printing press. The 1920s–1930s witnessed the emergence of a younger cohort of intellectuals, many of whom had just returned from their studies in France. The abolishment of the Confucian imperial exams and the establishment of a Franco-Vietnamese educational system facilitated this younger generation's proficiency in the French language and access to European ideas and worldviews (Tran 2011). More French influence did not mean more subjugation. Vietnamese journalists had continually exercised their own interests. In the 1920s–1930s, their ownership and activism radiated. The Vietnamese press gradually distanced itself from French interests, even turning into a vigorous forum for anticolonialism (Peycam 2012).

It is worth noting that emerging from the rapid growth of journalism during the late colonial period was not professionally trained journalists, but scholarly literary figures associated with popular newspapers (Cao 2011). A typical example is Phan Khôi, a key contributor to *Women's News*. He was not only a writer, critic, and scholar but also a star of the press, who was present at and actively contributed to the vast majority of the greatest controversies of the time. Đào Trinh Nhất was the youngest star among a group known as the Four Greats of the Saigon newspaper village in the 1930s (Thiện 2010). The three others were Phan Khôi, Diệp Văn Kỳ, and Bùi Thế Mỹ. At that time, all forms of writing were published in periodicals. The periodicals were the platform for the emergence and growth of new literary genres and trends, constituting literary journalism. People could not distinguish a journalist from a writer since the distinction was perhaps not necessary (Cao 2011). Many publishers were associated with newspapers. For example, the Self-Reliant Literary Group managed the newspapers *Mores* (*Phong hóa*) and *Today* (*Ngày nay*) and also the publisher *Nowadays* (*Đời nay*). Journals were frequently used as mouthpieces for a movement or an avant-garde point of view. Most did not last long because of censorship, but literary and activist groups kept founding new ones (Cao 2011). Almost the entire intellectual life of the time took place in the print press. People waiting for a periodical's release of new issues formed a new social force: the readers, who became connected across geographic divides through following the rhythm and substance of the press.

4.2.3 Gender Education: Opening Up Possibilities

Here we address gender education through journalism instead of genders and gender education in schools. According to Marr, in the 1920s–1930s, the woman question became "a focal point around which other issues often revolved" (1981: 191) and women started seeing themselves as a social group with particular interests, grievances, and demands. Vietnamese newsprint made a vibrant medium for debate and dispersion of ideas on the woman question. Comparing a set of writings appearing in *Women's Bell* in 1918 with another set published in *Women's News* in the early

1930s, McHale (1995) is impressed by a sea change in elite perceptions of the place of women just within fifteen years. The authors of *Women's Bell* discussed women's rights in the context of Franco-Vietnamese collaboration, whereas by the early 1930s, *Women's News* columnists had rejected a facile collaborationist attitude and engaged in spirited debates over women's liberation. By the early 1930s, most newspapers included a column for women (Đặng 2008). Besides *Women's News*, other journals for women during the period were *Women's Current Discussions* (*Phụ nữ thời đàm*; 1930–1931, 1933–1934), *Progressive Women* (*Phụ nữ tân tiến*; 1932–1933, 1934), *New Women* (*Đàn bà mới*; 1934–1936), *Ladies* (*Nữ lưu*; 1936–1937), *Journal of Household Arts for Women* (*Nữ công tạp chí*; 1936–1938), *Vietnamese Women* (*Việt nữ*; 1937), *Women* (*Phụ nữ*; 1938–1939), and *Female* (*Nữ giới*; 1938–1939) (Đặng 2008).

The woman question that was addressed in these periodicals queried basic institutions and the Confucian standards through which these institutions had been understood. Vietnamese family reform was central. The Confucian norms for behavior between parents and children, husband and wife, brother and sister were examined and challenged. Newspapers discussed premarital virginity and early marriage, polygamy and widow remarriage, and romantic love and free choice of a spouse. Vietnamese traditions and new lifestyles for women, including studying abroad, tourism, fashion, nail painting, dancing, tennis playing, beauty contests, etc., were brought to the print pages. Journalism also created new spaces for women to develop their social, national, and global consciousness. For instance, in resonance with Phan Bội Châu's reimagining of the Trưng Sisters as national heroines, *Women's News* dedicated a special issue to the Trưng Sisters, generating a space to commemorate them, even communicating with them, and hence facilitating a newfound tradition of recognizing them as well as opening the possibility for women to act as leaders of the Vietnamese struggle against colonizers (Aitchison 2018).

International news featured exceptional women from around the world, especially those who assumed roles equal to men and excelled in their careers in Europe, the USA, Japan, and China. Several female journalists became well-known, living examples of women beyond the family, Đạm Phương, Huỳnh Thị Bảo Hòa, Phan Thị Bạch Vân, Nguyễn Thị Kiêm, and Thụy An, to name just a few. Plenty of female names appeared as authors in the print media, yet until now we cannot be sure how many of them were female in real life.

From journalistic sketches, various woman figures made their appearance. One of the most iconic figures of this period was the New Woman, a version of the Western flapper in the 1920s (Henchy 2005; Tran 2011; Aitchison 2018). In Tran's depiction, "[t]hrough her flashy dress, hair-style, high heels and use of make-up, this modern woman stood in stark contrast to more modest ideals of traditional femininity" (2011: vi). She was there, though many people did not like her. Conservative opinions stood but just as one among many positions. For example, in a forum in *Women's News* on "Vietnamese Celebrities' Opinions on the Woman Question," Bùi Quang Chiêu and Nguyễn Phan Long opposed women's fight for equal rights; Phạm Quỳnh and

Trần Trọng Kim underscored women's roles in the family; Phan Bội Châu, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, Trịnh Đình Rư, Đạm Phương, Phan Khôi, and Diệp Văn Kỳ endorsed gender equality (Đặng 2008).

Differing opinions, facts, and fictions for reimagining the potential of women circulated through an abundance of written forms. Periodicals popularized modern journalistic and literary writing genres, including the news, the interview, the essay, the travelog, the public letter, the free verse, the novel, etc. The number of new genres and their subgenres exceeds our ability to list. While many of these genres had their precedent forms, as they appeared in the print press, they acquired a modern shape. From an educational perspective, different forms, styles, and specific moves of writing constitute the pedagogical question.

In general, in the 1920s–1930s, especially the 1930s, a large, heterogeneous assemblage of gender-related texts enacted a mode of education characterized by the opening up of possibilities, manifesting the flourishing of gender plasticity beyond a binary model of thinking. After reviewing a wide scope of stories coming from all over the world and all appearing in print media in Vietnam in the 1930s, from stories about army women disguised as men, bearded women, women attempting to undertake masculine writing, cases of cross-dressing in literary works, hermaphrodites who embodied a transcendence of sexual dimorphism, to accounts of sex changes and the unknown frontiers of reproductive science, Tran (2011: 36) concludes that "the gendered and sexual body was imagined to be open to different modalities of becoming." He assumes a correspondence between writings and real life that allows inferring social norms from writings. However, to be more precise, writings participate in fashioning social norms and are only part of "the distribution of the sensible," to borrow Rancière's (2004) words. They aim to produce effects rather than just reflect what has already been there.

4.3 Travelog and Epistolary Exchange: Openness and Authenticity

As textual pedagogies, travelog and epistolary exchange pre-inscribe modalities of openness committed to the real. Travel involves moving, creating a distance, meeting and immersing oneself in new things. Exchanging letters means engaging with another person; as a result, ideas flow and are juxtaposed to each other. Both forms of writing are anchored to a sense of authenticity.

4.3.1 Travel Writing

Often classified as non-fiction, a semi-literary genre, the "*du ký*" or travelog, tells "real" stories based on the traveler's "real" journeys and experiences. To reassure readers and authenticate their accounts, travel writers use rhetorical gestures such as giving biographical information, emphasizing eyewitness accounts as a criterion of truth, insisting on truthfulness, describing circumstances, and constructing a sense of "being there."

Studies on modern travel writing in Western culture date the genre to the eighteenth century (Thompson 2011; Bird 2016). The first time the Vietnamese term *du ký* was recorded dates back to the nineteenth century (Nguyễn 2016), but travelogs were not popularized until the 1920s–1930s, when travel became more accessible due to the expansion of modern transportation networks as well as the growth of a new generation of Vietnamese journalists and intellectuals, the middle class, and urban entrepreneurs who directly shaped and spread a culture of leisure, exploration, and social debate (Nguyen 2013). Travel had likely always been considered a source of wisdom in Vietnam. In the 1920s–1940s, the print press amplified the convergence between travel and knowledge since travelers could publish their travel stories in newspapers disseminated to the increasingly literate Vietnamese population. Through validations for travel, authors of travel stories attempted to carve out the social purpose, intellectual meaning, and cultural responsibility of their writing (Nguyen 2013).

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Vietnamese authors' travel writing resulting from their encounter with the West had portrayed the customary free and equal interactions between men and women, contrasting the Western manner with the Confucian codes of conduct (e.g., Bình 1968 [1822]; Phạm 2001 [1863]). In the twentieth century, travel writing diversified, yet the observation of cultures still ran as the main thread. Phạm Quỳnh, in his "Diary of Travel to France" (Pháp du hành trình nhật ký), published in *Southern Breeze* in thirteen episodes, from April 1922 to October–November 1925, expressed his admiration for a female French salon owner and remarked that an equivalent elegant and intellectual Vietnamese female figure could not be found (Nguyễn 2019). While previous scholars' reactions to Western gender relations were merely amazement, Phạm Quỳnh showed a thorough understanding. He saw not only the bright but also the dark sides of France, including prostitution, poverty, and wealth inequality. Thus, his "Diary of Travel to France" presented a milestone in the development of travel writing in Vietnam (Nguyễn 2019). Travelogs by Vietnamese authors also described gender dynamics in different ethnic groups and regions within Vietnam (e.g., Mẫu, 2007 [1928]; Lang 1941; Mãn 1943a, b).

Traditionally, Vietnamese women did not travel far from their community, and when they did so, it was usually because of a dependency on their husband. By the 1920s, many Vietnamese women in the elite class had traveled far for their own cause. However, we hardly find images of Vietnamese woman travelers in the literature

before the 1920s. Previous studies of *Women's News* and first accounts of travel writing by women in Vietnam have centered around Nguyễn Thị Kiêm, a real-life female journalist. Her travel together with Phan Thị Nga from the south to the north to promote the readership of *Women's News* and women's rights in 1934 has been well reported. Though Kiêm had her father with her on the trip, the Vietnamese press in general, and men in particular, criticized her for her independence and "immoral" behavior. Mme Nguyễn Đức Nhuận wrote an article in Kiêm's defense. "We can criticize a woman's private life as long as we also criticize men," she said in response to Kiêm's detractors, stating that she was representing *Women's News* on the speaking tour (Nguyễn, Đức Nhuận, Mme 1934: 9).

Writing about her journey, in the form of a letter to a woman named Huê, Kiêm contrasted the manners of women in Hanoi with those of women in the south and paid special attention to the heated issue of women's suicide. She also brought into view the gap between the rich and the poor and the decadent lifestyle evident in Khâm Thiên's "District of Female Entertainers" (Xóm cô đầu) (Nguyễn, Thị Kiêm 1934). Through her writings and other endeavors such as public speaking and fundraising, Nguyễn Thị Kiêm exemplified a young, progressive, socially engaged modern woman figure.

Nonetheless, before Nguyễn Thị Kiêm, the "Travel Stories" column in *Women's News* had presented a woman figure who was more well-traveled, Phạm Vân Anh. Phạm Vân Anh has been understudied in scholarship, possibly because she was not a prominent real-life character. However, we will argue that it is precisely the case of Phạm Vân Anh that allows us to see the full capacity of journalism in producing truths about Vietnamese women.

4.3.2 Letter Writing

Whether letter writing is a genre of writing is debatable. Letters can be seen as "proto-genres whose distinctive yet infinitely malleable features can be best understood through the social and literary codes of relationship" (Jolley and Stanley 2005: 91). Most commonly, letters appeal to truth and sincerity and tolerate meandering.

In Western culture, during the eighteenth century, regarded as the "Great Age of Letter Writing," postal routes quickly grew, and the epistolary novel became a hugely popular genre (Curran 2018). Also, for the first time, so-called "personal" letters were published to promote and maintain literary fame (Curran 2018). Letter writers of the time used the format to explore the self and everyday experience. Letters provide enticing insights into other people's thoughts and feelings. Associated with both domestic seclusion and public self-exposure, they occupy that space between the private and public worlds.

Despite a lack of studies on letter writing in Vietnam, it is safe to affirm the growth of postal routes and the increased popularity of letter writing during the French colonial time. The period also witnessed the publication of letters in newspapers. The letter as a format of writing was often integrated into other genres of writing, with travelog as an example. The letters varied in their personal-public dynamics. "Letters

for You" is a series of letters exchanged between women who were supposedly connected in real life and who wrote for each other and also for the public. Some letters were presented as if originally written for personal purposes, though readers could never be sure about that. In another series in *Women's News*, "Letters Sent from France," many letters exchanged between students abroad and family, friends, and lovers back home depict the routine challenges of life abroad (Nguyen 2015). Some were authored by well-known contributors such as Cao Chánh, who also went by the name Thạch Lan, but the majority of the articles, like the other columns, were un-authored or signed by the collective "P. N. T. V" (Nguyen 2015).

4.4 The Educational Projects of "Travel Stories" and "Letters for You"

4.4.1 "Travel Stories"

Even without assuming fundamental alignment of form, style, and attitude with the writer's gender, to feature a woman traveler as the author of a travelog summons gender performance. The authenticity of her account depends on her gender. In Western culture, while women's travel may have always posed an implicit challenge to patriarchy, most female travelers and travel writers have typically tended to negotiate rather than confront gender conventions head on (Thompson 2011). In performing femininity on the page, well into the twentieth century, it was common for women to adopt an epistolary or diary format, which suggests that their observations were not originally intended for publication and their moral compass was pointed toward home (Thompson 2011; Bird 2016). Politics, business, and science had long been thought to be issues that only males were capable of discussing, and indeed, they should discuss if they wanted to project a masculine sense of purpose.

"Travel Stories" does not fit in the conforming scheme described above. The motivation for presenting the first woman as the author of an extensive travelog should be understood in the context of modernizing Vietnam at the time. The introduction of a female point of view would fashion a new possibility for Vietnamese women. The writing is meant for publication, introduced as belonging to the genre of travelog. It focuses on matters usually designated for men. "Travel Stories" affirms female authority through profile details, confidence, and sentiment.

The travelog is narrated by Phạm Vân Anh, a young lady on her trip to France. As revealed in the first issue, Vân Anh comes from a wealthy family in Vĩnh Long. Her father is an intellectual who entertains quite a radical mindset. Vân Anh presents her observations during her journey through different countries such as Singapore, India, and France. "Travel Stories" was interrupted for around two months, in August and September 1929. After publishing the first part, titled "Going to the West" (*Sang Tây*), *Women's News* explains in issue thirteen that the interruption is because the author wanted to review her writings carefully before publishing them. The name Vân Anh

also appears as the author of articles in some other columns of the newspaper. The lessons of "Travel Stories" reflect the ethos of learning from the West while preserving certain East Asian, Vietnamese traditions, particularly family values. "Travel Stories" taps into the way travel writing has allowed for cultural comparison and contrast as well as the introduction of new scenes.

Vân Anh tells anecdotes and provides her comments to point out or hint at new possibilities for Vietnamese people, especially Vietnamese women. As typical of travel writing, explicit discussion of the meaning of travel is offered. Vân Anh has traveled around Vietnam and sees it as just the first chapter in her exploration of the world. On her trip to the West, she meets Cúc-Tử, a young Japanese lady, and converses with her. Cúc-Tử affirms that Japanese women have become equal to European and American women. They work as lawyers, doctors, pilots, and councilmen, yet the family remains the root of society. Taking good care of one's family can be how a woman contributes to society. Japan can preserve the soul of their traditional culture and still learn new things. Vân Anh suggests that because both Japanese and Vietnamese are East Asian cultures, knowing about Japanese women's status might be beneficial for Vietnamese women. The possibility of a worldly yet still "Oriental" woman figure is solidified by the respectful and affectionate relations between these two young ladies from two different East Asian countries.

Vân Anh embodies more radicality as she navigates herself during the trip, confident and engaging with a wide range of social issues instead of a narrow focus on women-specific problems. She must have already attained robust knowledge of France before the trip. While reporting many failures of the West, unsurprisingly, most of the time Vân Anh compliments the innovations of Western society, especially its infrastructure, urban planning, and lifestyles. She praises the neat organization of buildings and the transportation system. She emphasizes the convenience of traveling around Paris with the metro. While avenues, streets, and buildings seem overwhelming at first, she soon gets used to Paris and is excited to travel around the city without having to ask anyone for directions as a map would suffice. This positions the West as an ideal for Vietnam to strive toward. At the same time, a young Vietnamese lady is found in a strange Western setting, eager and fearless. Vân Anh presents herself as a scholar who is capable of envisioning a research project and appreciating art as she visits the National Library and the Louvre Museum. She expresses a mild anticolonial attitude. While staying in Paris, Vân Anh visits an anti-alcohol club and gets to know organizations that promote alcohol abstinence. She acknowledges the importance of these organizations and the danger of alcohol and opium. In a temperate manner, she questions why the French come to civilize a nation and sell to that very nation deadly opium, which is forbidden in France.

Vân Anh uses the first-person pronoun "*em*," which helps endear her to her readers as though she was a younger sister of theirs. Rather than a compilation of objective observations, her travelog shows her feelings and emotions. For instance, she feels extremely nervous when informed that there will be a huge storm. In another case, she worries if there would be bad news when receiving a telegram. Here is how she reacts upon hearing a story: "I was shocked, moved beyond measure, it seems that at that time, tears were pouring out in my heart" (Phạm 1929b: 23).

Sentiment is a traditional trope of femininity, generic rather than specific to a woman type. Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh, when performing the woman persona of Đào Thị Loan in "Women's Words" (*Nhời đàn bà*) in *Sounding the Drum Miscellany* (*Đăng cổ tùng báo*) and *Indochina Review* (see Nguyễn, Lân Bình 2018), uses a voice that could be described with such Vietnamese words meaning "sharp-tongued" (*đanh đá*, *xéo xắt*), which somewhat borrows from an existing woman type in Vietnamese folk culture. While Đào Thị Loan is basically a style of communication and a woman voice, Phạm Vân Anh is radical yet relatable in her very ideality as a woman. She has a purpose for travel: to educate herself. She demonstrates a clear attitude toward education: "In the vast universe, knowledge is boundless. We take what we can learn and accept our human limitations" (Phạm 1929a: 23). She adapts quickly to *quốc ngữ* and writes well in it. She knows French and is able to communicate with foreigners. She travels widely and is perceptive in observing new surroundings. She learns from foreign cultures in a critical way and respects the beauty of Vietnamese traditions. She cares about her own country but is internationally minded. She is knowledgeable and unafraid to voice her personal opinions.

Vân Anh seems overly ideal, hence somewhat inauthentic, but the point is to fashion an ideal woman figure. Đào Trinh Nhất's performance of Phạm Vân Anh connects with the East Asian tradition of female impersonation in ancient and premodern literature and is an example of the well-known persona technique in modern journalism; thus, it is possible to read Phạm Vân Anh not as woman but as a man. However, the text is very clear: She is a woman. Phạm Vân Anh is persuasive precisely because she is ideal. The character dwells on the interplay between humility and confidence, traditionality and radicality, groundedness and ideality, man and woman. She is coherent and whole, a shining new, progressive woman subjectivity. This woman can stand for Vietnam, an ideal Vietnam in modernization.

Several articles in *Women's News* show an unfavorable attitude to traits associated with the New Woman. Such an unfavorable attitude toward free love, sex, and bodily exhibition might be interpreted as a patriarchal obsession, and the question is whether the focus in "Travel Stories" on social issues presents a male obsession. In our opinion, it speaks to both men and women. Although Đào Trinh Nhất's performance is didactic for pretending to be a woman, it neither dismisses traditional woman subjectivities nor imposes a male subjectivity on women.

4.4.2 "Letters for You"

Besides "Travel Stories," "Letters for You" is another *Women's News* column that presents female figures who are internationally minded and socially engaged from the first-person perspective. One is Trần Thị Thanh Nhàn, an editor of *Women's News* and from the city, and Lê Thị Huỳnh Lan, a writer for and subscriber of *Women's News* and from the countryside. The two women have known each other for some time. Their letter exchange is simultaneously personal and public. The epistolary format is not to associate women with a domestic sphere but to bring social affairs

closer to women. The different backgrounds create a sense of women's sisterhood across contexts and a sense of grounded concerns and experience. Thanh Nhàn's writing about world issues is based on news from telegrams. Huỳnh Lan reports issues she herself observes in the countryside. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Thanh Nhàn was probably performed by Đào Trinh Nhất. There is a lack of information about Huỳnh Lan as a writer in real life, but the name also appears in other sections as a female journalist from Trà Vinh who directly raises her voice about the woman question and is a donor to a scholarship fund for poor students organized by *Women's News.*

"Letters for You" discusses numerous topics including contemporary world issues, the situation of Vietnamese people living abroad, scholarships for poor Vietnamese students, Vietnamese ways of dressing, flood-related issues in the north, the inequality faced by women in the countryside, technological developments, the independent status of nations in the world, world warfare, etc. In a similar vein to "Travel Stories," the attitude is critical yet temperate. Thanh Nhàn's choice of what to include in her letter is explained as a matter of being strategic in building women's consciousness.

> I know that there are many stories in the world every day, but I only choose those that are useful for education, for politics, for the intellectual path of our society, and first of all for women. You should understand what I mean. I do not talk nonsense about: the prime minister of this country resigns, the cabinet of that country is set up – these things happen every day, but what is the use of knowing them for us? (Thanh 1930: 23)

The useful story for women's knowledge in this issue is the redrawing of the world map. The two authors take turns to present their observations of either world situations or Vietnam's situations. They engage with one another in a respectful manner. The issues discussed in the column were quite bold for women at the time, yet the way they are presented is friendly. The narrators emerge not only as each other's friend, but also as readers' confidantes. The authors invoke rhetorical moves that evoke the actual experience of letter writing: waiting and reminding each other about their commitment.

> Please try so that you can reply to me on a weekly basis. You have many stories from the countryside to tell. You are just lazy if you do not write me. I hope that we keep our promise of writing to each other. I send you a letter about the world, and you respond with one about the countryside. (Thanh 1929b: 21)

Despite the authors' different backgrounds, they demonstrate many commonalities. They are both writing in a modest tone whether they are discussing the most updated warfare events or funeral traditions in the rural area. This shared tone and their equal level of knowledge imply no barrier of understanding. The two women do not fit in any existing female stereotypes. If Huỳnh Lan possessed fewer ideal characteristics compared to Thanh Nhàn, i.e., if she appeared stereotypically rural with a less refined articulation, the column might have reinforced prejudices against countryside women.

4.5 An Educational Regime of Truth for Social Reform: The Journalistic Art of the Possible

Marr (1998: 11), when describing the moment when the Vietnamese love affair with the printing press began, chooses the scene of a song exhorting people to read daily newspapers that circulated in Vietnam in 1907:

> Truth is the medicine that cures ignorance and darkness,
>
> Truth is the remedy to overcome hunger and cowardice.

According to the anonymous author, any reader might learn about current events throughout the world, share what they learn with others, change lives, and contribute to the country's strength and prosperity. More importantly, the songwriter established a relationship between the printed page and truth. Journalism appeals to truth. *Women's News* claimed that it worshiped truth. It is, however, not easy to define or describe truth. From the two columns, it is possible to understand that truth is predicated on a commitment to real life. This chapter proposes the notion of "educational truth" to reflect upon a mode of truth that journalism enacts. Education is a process of facilitating the development of subjectivities and/or capacities. Educational truths are defined not by their accurate representation of an existing reality but by their effective intervention into the possible. Educational truths do not always mean new possibilities; they can reinforce established norms or enable familiar capacities. The point is that they are effective, committed to real life and do not exclude fiction.

Indeed, there is more than one meaning of fiction. Besides fiction as fabrication and fiction as a literary genre, Rancière (2014: 54) offers the following understanding:

> Fiction is not the reverse of reality. It is not a flight of imagination that invents a dreamworld. Fiction is a way of deeply examining reality, of adding names and characters to it, and scenes and stories that multiply it and strip it of its univocal self-evidence.

Fiction in such a sense is essential to the art of the possible and constitutes a mode of educational truth. It allows fabrication.

In the case of "Travel Stories" and "Letters for You," the education is to open up new possibilities for women and Vietnam. On the woman question, the two columns' educational truth is that Vietnamese women can be internationally minded and socially engaged. Besides using two modalities of openness, travelog and letter exchange, the columns employ fictive elements in creating the woman personae, who act as the authors of the texts. They are not the authors behind the text, but the authors as texts.

This chapter calls close attention to writing the author. The author's identity itself is a text deliberately written. The reader also brings into the scene their own text–their previous knowledge. The author, the text, and the reader are on the same ontological plane. Besides showing up as a full-fledged character, in print media the author of a text might appear just as a name, a few letters associated with the title of the text. In modern journalism and literature, a writer is not confined to a fixed number of pen names that follow conventions known to the public. Đào Trinh

Nhất adopted an abundance of pen names: Nam Chúc, Viên Nạp, Hậu Đình, Tinh Vệ, Bất Nghị, Vô Nhị, Hồng Phong, Anh Đào, etc. Each name was used to match a particular communicative intent. For example, Hậu Đình and Tinh Vệ, due to their references to classical literature, hint at the status of a person who has lost their country (Nguyễn 2010).

The two columns' extensive inventions of Phạm Vân Anh, Trần Thị Thanh Nhàn, and Lê Thị Huỳnh Lan apparently blur the distinction between journalism and literature, yet they operate within particular journalistic constraints.

Travelog, letter exchange, and persona are popular forms and techniques of both journalism and literature. Journalism is distinguished from literature in its commitment to reality and society. In literature, as a literary genre, fiction can freely play with fantasies. The fiction writer is entitled to a range of moves that the journalist is not afforded. Pretending to know what is happening in a character's head is an instance.

Malcolm (1990: 159–60) offers her insight into the journalistic "I" as follows:

> The "I" character in journalism is almost pure invention. Unlike, the "I" of autobiography, who is meant to be seen as a representation of the writer, the "I" of journalism is connected to the writer only in a tenuous way… The journalistic "I" is an overreliable narrator, a functionary to whom crucial tasks of narration and argument and tone have been entrusted, an ad hoc creation, like the chorus of Greek tragedy. He is an emblematic figure, an embodiment of the idea of the dispassionate observer of life.

This division between the journalistic and autobiographical first person is perhaps too categorical, but the passage keenly points out the tenuous connection of the journalistic "I" and the writer as well as its presumed impartiality. The narrators of "Travel Stories" and "Letters for You" are carefully crafted as women. These female journalists, while emotional, present analytical observations rather than just express deep-seated beliefs.

Journalistic and literary personae demonstrate that gender is performance. The performances of woman personae in "Travel Stories" and "Letters for You" are not limited to a communication style relatable to woman readers but committed to social reform. The personae not only discuss social reform but also themselves present new possibilities. Other woman impersonations by male journalists such as Đào Thị Loan by Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh or Dã Lan nữ sĩ by Đào Duy Anh, contributor to the column "Women's Forum" (Phụ nữ diễn đàn) in the newspaper *Voice of the People* (*Tiếng dân*) from 1927 to 1929 and translator of *The Women's Movement* (*Phụ nữ vận động*) published by Quan Hải Tùng Thư in 1929 (see Lại 2019), should also be interpreted in relation to their endeavors to grapple with the woman question. They participate in producing educational truths for social reform. In that respect, these woman personae are similar to the woman characters in the Self-Reliant Literary Group's fictional writings such as Nhất Linh's *Severance* (*Đoạn tuyệt*; 1934) and *Cold* (*Lạnh lùng*; 1935), Khái Hưng's *Halfway Spring* (*Nửa chừng xuân*; 1934) and *The Escape* (*Thoát ly*; 1938), Khái Hưng and Nhất Linh's *Tempestuous Life* (*Đời mưa gió*; 1934). These literary works, however, focus on women's private lives and promote woman figures who think and act for themselves, pursue personal happiness, especially romantic love, and do not follow traditional family roles, which valorize

Western individualism and advocate for a radical break with tradition. They maintain the male gaze as they consistently position women as men's romantic lovers. To many readers, Phạm Vân Anh, Trần Thị Thanh Nhàn, and Lê Thị Huỳnh Lan might appear overly male for the social capacities they afford, but making them more womanly by placing them in a domestic space is not relevant. The project of *Women's News* also differs from the Self-Reliant Literary Group's in that their modern Vietnamese woman figures are not detached from Vietnamese tradition. They echo the couplet of *lục bát* verse, a traditional Vietnamese form of poetry, on the first cover of *Women's News*, which stands as the slogan of the newspaper.

> Phấn son tô điểm sơn hà,
> Làm cho rõ mặt đàn bà nước Nam.
> Women's makeup lends beauty to the rivers and mountains,
> Brightening the faces of women of the Southern country.

From attending to the two columns, we understand "phấn son," or "women's makeup," as gender performance. The educational truth of *Women's News* lies in gender performance, which embraces the art of the possible, rather than in deep-seated, permanent natures. The feminine touch of women's makeup lends beauty (*tô điểm*) to the rivers and mountains/the nation (*sơn hà*). Simultaneously, it brightens the faces of Vietnamese women (*đàn bà nước Nam*). The woman question is central and entwined with the national question. Traditional language is (re)articulated with a feminist sense.

We use the term "regime of truth" in a Foucauldian sense, to highlight the specific historical conditions that shape the mode of truth production. The regime operated in the context of modernizing Vietnam under French colonial rule in the 1920s–1930s. A regime of truth always implies specific questions. The persona performance in "Travel Stories" and "Letters for You" carries the woman question of the time and differs from male authors' assuming feminine personae in East Asian classical literature. In an article titled "A Rebuttal by Mr. Thê Phụng: Women and Literature" (Thê 1929) in *Women's News*, the author claims that women are somehow innately incapable of producing great literary works. This claim is inadmissibly misogynistic, yet the author's justification illuminates the distinction we seek to describe. The excerpt below presents Mr. Thê Phụng's response to Phan Khôi, often regarded as the father of the New Poetry of the 1930s, who asserts that women should be allowed to produce literature because they could then reflect their own sentiments and, in so doing, exceed their predecessors, the prior male Tang poets.

> The male poet has to impersonate being a woman [*giả một người đàn bà*] in order to speak of himself. To do otherwise would be, first of all, impertinent [*trơ trẽn*] behavior and a deprivation of pleasure [*một thú*]. Second, we cannot expect strong talented men [*trượng phu hào kiệt*] such as Mr. Khuất Nguyên [Qu Yuan], Đỗ Phủ [Du Fu], and Bạch Cư Dị [Bo Juyi] to be lamenting and sobbing. If they lose their appearance [*mất cái vẻ*] as strong talented men [*trượng phu hào kiệt*], nobody would pity them, and so they naturally must entrust [*ký thác vào*] women with this role, because when women sob and lament, there is grace and charm, which makes it easier for people to feel pity [*tội nghiệp, xót thương*]. (Thê 1929: 14 as translated by Tran 2011: 7)

Tran (2011) provides the translation above as he suggests how classical male poets' female impersonation is a form of protohomoeroticism and a construction of male femininity. In the classical world of letters, only men could transgress gender boundaries. The practice could potentially leave implications for women or be deliberately used to invent possibilities for women; however, according to Mr. Thê Phụng's interpretation, it is primarily about and for men. Moreover, the impersonation is to be both welcomed and expected because poetry is about illusion, semblance, and creation. Vietnamese male journalists' assuming first-person female personae in the 1920s–1930s stay in touch with but also break from tradition in that it aims at fashioning new woman subjectivities, explicitly targets women, and deals with truth. The practice is also distinct from male authors' inventions of female characters in Vietnam's premodern literature. Monumental female characters such as the soldier's wife in Đặng Trần Côn's *Lament of the Soldier's Wife* (*Chinh phụ ngâm*), the royal concubine in Nguyễn Gia Thiều's *Complaint of a Palace Maid* (*Cung oán ngâm khúc*), and Thúy Kiều in Nguyễn Du's *The Tale of Kiều* (*Truyện Kiều*) challenge social norms and genuinely care about women's fate; however, they feature tragedy, do not appear in the first-person mode, and resort to references in Chinese literature and traditional conventions of poetry.

The untied knot between the author as a writer in real life and the text that put forth the author as a text and hence a proliferation of inventions in designing the author occurred largely due to the indirect nature of print communication. Nonetheless, the specific directions of these inventions were not totally determined by the medium of communication but shaped by a heterogeneous assemblage of material, linguistic, and affective conditions at the time, a particular *dispositif*. In line with Foucault (1980), a *dispositif* is a system of relations that has a dominant strategic function. It "acts" rather than "is," which has effects but no essence. The *dispositif* of journalism that the two columns illustrate functions to expand the normative limits of Vietnamese women (*đàn bà nước Nam*).

Indeed, there is no essential correlation between the status of women and the status of a country. One of the reasons for which Bùi Quang Chiêu opposed women's fight for equal rights was the assumption that the fight would lead to too much opposition in the society, an excess that should be avoided as men were striving for Vietnam's autonomy (Đặng 2008). The woman question had its own value, but part of it was the personification of the national question, which indicates a particular colonial situation. Within the rise of the print press, the *dispositif* of Vietnamese women involves the confluence of French colonial rule and Sarraut's reforms, Vietnamese and East Asian traditions, Vietnamese anticolonialism, the incubation and growth of Vietnamese nationalism, the expansion of modern transportation networks, economic development in urban areas of Vietnam, and world situations such as the rise of various colonial forces, anticolonial movements, and new genders and bodies emanating from modern cultural shifts in Europe in the wake of the World War I. The pioneer position of Vietnamese journalism in social reform was actualized in relation to the inadequacy of other means under colonial rule. In the article "Vietnamese Celebrities' Opinions on the Woman Question" in *Women's News*, Phan Khôi and Diệp Văn Kỳ consider the issue of women's equal rights from a legal

perspective (Đặng 2008). They hint at the slave status of the Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese were not law-makers but only law-abiding people. The French never allowed a "colonial republic" of any form to emerge (Goscha 2016). Without the power of law in hand, education through journalism, though under heavy censorship, was particularly significant. As Vietnamese journalism, journalism done by and for the Vietnamese, built upon modern, nationalist, and anticolonialist ideas, it refused to advance a singular agenda that closes off possibilities and was committed to the opening up of possibilities. While writing for and reading certain newspapers led to consequences in real life, there was no direct, stable relationship between journalism and real life. Journalism was an art of the possible. Resonating with Rancière's conception of politics, politics is not the power struggle between parties but the struggle for a new distribution of capacities. Thus, the educational regime of truth in focus is also political. With the rise of rural-based, communist mass movements in the 1930s, newspapers' place as the primary space for transforming the status quo was gradually marginalized although journalism remained an important tool for different political agendas.

In a consensual context, personae are communication techniques rather than efforts of social reform. In Vietnam, certain newspapers are known for the fictive personae of some of their columns. In the current global context of journalism, prestigious newspapers often require biographical information about the writer of a text. Pen names are still used but the art of using pen names seems to have diminished. In order to create a brand name for oneself as an author in the market, both quantity and variety of writings are needed, and the connection between the textual authors and the writer behind the text should be clear. The increasing commercialization of news media and the rise of fake news have led to an emphasis on fact-checking as a key media literacy skill. While fact-checking is important, we want to draw attention to the distinction between two modes of reading in reading for educational truths: reading for information, which requires fact-checking for accuracy, and reading for inspiration, which involves engaging with fiction, "a way of deeply examining reality, of adding names and characters to it, and scenes and stories that multiply it and strip it of its univocal self-evidence" (Rancière 2014: 54). Attending to fiction trains a critical capacity to interpret what is presented as facts.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

For their consistency and wholeness in performing woman personae, the two columns were successful in fashioning internationally minded and socially engaged woman figures for a modern Vietnam. They embodied a vibrant time in journalism. Hopefully, the way "Travel Stories" and "Letters for You" contributed to the woman question and operated within an educational regime of truth for social reform in the 1920s–1930s can shape an intellectually pleasurable experience. Our articulation of the educational regime of truth aims to lend clarity and nuance to understanding the role of journalism in late colonial Vietnam. By framing journalism as educational, this

chapter is also an invitation to look at education beyond the school, the pedagogy of texts, and an inspirational mode of reading.

Acknowledgements This research was funded by VNU University of Languages and International Studies (VNU-ULIS) in the project No.23.11.

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Chapter 5
Between the Sacred and the Secular: Publishing, Books, and Everyday Life in Colonial Cochinchina

Vy Cao

5.1 Introduction

In 1939, inhabitants of Sóc Trăng Province in the Mekong Delta could hear the following ditty (Lý 1939: 2):

> *One for the cheap price,*
> *Two for the peace of mind,*
> *Three for the pleasure,*
> *Four for the proximity and convenience!*[1]

This poem was an advertisement spread by the local printing press Lý Công Quận, which offered cheap printing services for Vietnamese novels, catalogues, and religious texts. Lý Công Quận not an isolated phenomenon. Other presses that specialized in religious texts were located across Cochinchina: the Imprimerie Hậu Giang in Long Xuyên, the Imprimerie Phú Toàn in Vĩnh Long, and the Imprimerie du Mékong in Sa Đéc, to name just a few. What are we to make of this convergence of the "modern" print media with the "traditional"—in the form of religion and devotion?

The rise of the popular press transformed communication in Cochinchina in the late colonial period. Thanks to the proliferation of printing technology, advertising images and marketing slogans brought the idea of modernity into urban and rural areas. Embodied by French and local elites, modernity was also manifested through different objects and infrastructures, such as buildings, bridges, transportation systems, and daily items.

[1] The original text in Vietnamese is "Một là đặng giá rẻ; hai là đặng yên trí; ba là đặng vui lòng; bốn là đặng cận tiện.".

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_5

But far from being a homogeneous phenomenon, what was seen as modern was incessantly reappropriated and reinvented by different groups and individuals in their everyday life. When we define modernity as a desire to respond to singular aspirations, the concept becomes less a contradiction with traditional norms than a rational choice that resonates with the individual and their belief systems. Nor can we define modernity in simple economic terms. The expansion of the market economy can be a useful metric with which to analyze changes in social structures and practices, but this statement remains a hypothesis which requires solid data to be verified. In 1930s Cochinchina, new forms of investment encountered pre-existing practices of credit and trade. It is important to remember that the expansion of new economic models and practices do not necessarily lead to the same consequences everywhere and for everyone; nor do they obey a singular logic of development as individuals and institutions operate in different contexts.

This chapter begins with a quantitative study that traces the social and economic landscape of printing in Cochinchina in the late colonial period. The study is based on data collected from the Indochinese collection catalogue, which contains 12,270 bibliographic records of non-periodicals in *quốc ngữ*, the romanized script used to record vernacular Vietnamese, and its digitized documents. In complement to this catalogue, I also use the *Lists of Deposited Materials* (*Liste des imprimés déposés*), published by the Directorate of Archives and Libraries in Hanoi from 1922 to 1944. Data from these catalogues were input into a database on Heurist, which is a free and open-source platform built by Dr. Ian Johnson, Artem Osmakov and the Arts eResearch team at the University of Sydney. Heurist possesses a mapping tool and a networks visualization feature, which in this research provides interesting insights on the spatial distribution of printing and publishing houses in Cochinchina. Besides bibliographic records, this database also contains information on individuals and organizations that participated in the book's industry.

After mapping the landscape of publishing in Cochinchina in the 1930s quantitatively, I then map it qualitatively. My approach consists of documenting and describing a specific type of action within a delimited population and geographical area. The action chosen for this study is the act of giving money to a printing house, individually or collectively, to publish books intended for free distribution. For my case study, I focus on the Imprimerie du Mékong, founded by Hồ Văn Sao in Sa Đéc aroud 1933.

Bringing the quantitative and qualitative approaches together sheds new light on the history of the publishing industry in colonial Indochina. While many histories of print media have focused on major cities like Saigon, Hanoi, or Hue, my study illustrates the broad reach of the printing industry and its presence across the Mekong Delta. It also shows the importance of religious publications for the growth of the publishing industry. While scholars frequently highlight print media as a vector of modernity, I argue it could just as easily serve to reinforce traditional beliefs and practices.

Moreover, attending to the materiality of the book and the meaning of its exchange provides a unique window into everyday life in Cochinchina. While it is commonplace to see the introduction of new technologies and the extension of market relationships as breaking down social ties, I argue that in colonial Cochinchina, the expansion and development of the publishing industry occurred alongside a diverse continuum of interpersonal exchanges among publishers, printers, merchants, peddlers, and readers. Rather than eroding social ties, publishing in the form of book donations served to link believers in practices of ritualized exchange based on shared cosmologies.

5.2 Approaches

Since the late colonial period, scholars have explored how print culture spread widely in Vietnamese urban areas, entering the daily life of local populations through the rapid expansion of newspapers, brochures, books, advertising posters, and ephemeral printed material. Already in 1942, Hoa Bằng—a pseudonym of the Vietnamese journalist and historian Hoàng Thúc Trâm—wrote on the history of publishing in Vietnam in terms of the shift from woodblock printing to modern typesetting and highlighted the transformative nature of that new technology (Hoa 1942). Huỳnh Văn Tòng's 1971 doctoral dissertation, *The History of Vietnamese Press from its Origins to 1930*, offers a complete introduction to archival sources and their use (Huỳnh 1971). He examined the favorable political and legislative conditions that contributed to the rise of the Vietnamese press, articulating a chronological and thematic evolution based on a rigorous analysis of Vietnamese newspapers and magazines.

In his influential *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, David Marr explored the relationships among economic development, media, and social and economic change under French colonial rule (Marr 1984). One of his main arguments concerned the modification of communal life and social bonds. According to Marr, the penetration of the cash economy into the countryside reinforced the notion of private property and transformed social relations. He observed that "traditional multiple and personal forms of socio-economic interactions were being replaced by the single, essentially impersonal commercial exchange system" (Marr 1984: 4). Although that may be intuitively persuasive, this chapter will demonstrate that Marr's conclusion overstates the rate and degree of socio-economic change and fails to acknowledge how multiple forms of exchange existed simultaneously.

Other scholars have taken a different approach. Philippe Peycam's (2012) detailed analysis of Saigon's media in the 1920s and 1930s is framed in terms of the development of a vibrant public sphere despite colonial censorship and repression. While he echoes Marr's concern with politics, he does enclose them in a strict dialectic. At the same time, he is concerned to re-evaluate the complex reality of colonial politics often characterized in terms of collaboration and resistance. Shawn McHale adopted an even more inclusive approach to his study of the Vietnamese press, exploring its integral role in the evolution of the Buddhist, Confucian, and Communist realms.

McHale in particular stressed the need not only to place printing and publishing in their economic, social, and political contexts, but also the need to "explore the world as viewed through such texts" (McHale 2004: 3).

Meanwhile, few scholars have considered an approach that attends to the materiality of printed matter, conditioned by a network of production and distribution, and how these aspects shaped the relationship of the local populations to reading and writing. According to Roger Chartier, "the printing press diffuses new objects, easily manipulated, carried on oneself or displayed, which gives the images and the texts a thicker presence, a more familiar reality" (1987: 7). Print culture can also be apprehended as the totality of new gestures generated by novel forms of images and textual production, so that it is no longer reduced to the sole practice of reading which, in Chartier words, "is a reading of today or of ancient scholars" (1987: 8). Although most studies on print culture focus on reading practices or the expansion of literacy, this chapter moves beyond the common assumption of a correlation between printed matter and literacy. As Chartier writes, "in the cities first, the massive appearance of new means of communication modifies practices—of devotion, of entertainment, of information, of knowledge—and redefines the relations men and women have with the sacred, powers, or their community" (1987: 7). This study thus adopts a hybrid approach, attending simultaneously to the socio-economic, to the material, to the spatial, and to the ideational, in order to shed new light on the history of publishing in Cochinchina in the late colonial period and its relationship to tradition and modernity.

5.3 Sources

The data in this research are collected from two main types of sources: first, the four volumes of the *Catalog of the Indochinese Collection 1922–1954* (Pasquel-Rageau 1988), which is an expanded and revised edition of the *Catalog of the Indochinese Collection of the National Library. Volume 1. Vietnamese Books Printed in Quốc Ngữ (1922–1954)* (Rageau 1979); second, the *List of Deposited Printed Works* (Boudet and Bourgeois 1922–1944), published by the Directorate of Archives and Libraries of Indochina.

The origins of the catalogues are to be found in the French system of the legal deposit. In France, the idea of a legal deposit originated during the reign of Francis I in the Montpellier order of December 28, 1537. As a kind of "safeguard of French thought," the legal deposit assumed different roles and functions according to the political regime and historical context. It guaranteed a common intellectual and cultural heritage, helped to protect authors' rights, and served as a means of control and surveillance (Dougnac and Guilbaud 1960; Koskas 2011).

The principle of the legal deposit was implemented across the five territories of Indochina beginning in 1922. According to the enacting legislation, which was based largely on French precedent, only printers were subject to the deposit obligation. They had to submit two copies of each publication to local government officials,

with one copy sent to the Central Library in Hanoi and the other copy forwarded to the National Library in Paris, where they arrived after a long administrative journey via both the Colonial and Interior ministries. In 1925, new legislation implemented the principle of a "double deposit," which required both printers and publishers to additionally submit their works to an administrative unit. A final major modification of the Indochinese legal deposit occurred on January 9, 1945, when the number of examples was increased to eight and the definition of publishers was expanded to include "any person or legal person (printer, publisher, association, labor union, civil or commercial society, author who published their own work, or principal depositor of imported works, public administration), who sells, distributes, lends [printed materials]."

Responsibility for the legal deposit rested with the Indochinese Directorate of Archives and Libraries and its director, Paul Boudet, who headed the service for three decades (1917–1947). The directorate presided over a highly centralized system which depended on the presence of an efficient administrative network and a high level of coordination across the entire territory of Indochina to carry out its task of preserving and cataloguing all material published in the colony.

As the process of decolonization played out after 1945, the administration of the legal deposit became complicated. In Vietnam, the legal deposit now functioned under two different regimes. The operations of the legal deposit office, which was part of the Central Library in Hanoi, was disrupted by the Japanese military coup on March 9, 1945. Thus from 1945 to 1946, the Office of Legal Deposit in Hanoi only registered publications from Tonkin, that is, the north of Vietnam. In Saigon, the Cochinchina Regional Library was placed in the hands of Vietnamese authorities, with the result that the legal deposit system now functioned independently. In 1947, the Central Library and the Directorate of Archives and Libraries in Hanoi were placed under the authority of the High Commissioner of France based in Saigon. From 1947 to 1952, the High Commissioner continued to send the legal deposits of 1940–1944 to the National Library of France through the intermediary of the Ministry of the Interior. According to the register of printed matter of the National Library, the last shipment of deposits from Saigon to Paris occurred in 1950 and from Hanoi in August 1952. Additionally, after the Geneva Accords in 1954, the remaining collection of the Central Library in Hanoi was transferred to Saigon, consisting of 1000 containers of books including periodicals and documents from the archives.

Meanwhile, in Paris, the conservation of the Indochinese collection was shaped by history, institutions, and above all by the available linguistic and material resources. Between 1922 and 1934, the Indochinese legal deposits arrived directly at the National Library of France. They were registered at the Department of Printed Books, and then sorted according to topic. An Indochinese collection was created to gather all the printed materials in *quốc ngữ*. It was then classified according to the lists of the legal deposit published by the Directorate of Archives and Libraries in Hanoi. However, the bibliographic records were full of spelling mistakes and were often misinterpreted by the French librarians. Recognizing the problem, in 1934, the National Library agreed to transfer the collection to the School of Oriental

Languages. A Vietnamese assistant from the school was assigned to update the bibliographic records and register new arrivals. Unfortunately, the library had difficulty finding a person who could commit to this daunting task. From 1934 to 1952, the School of Oriental Languages only managed to classify 200 volumes out of 20,000, with the result that the bulk of the Indochinese collection remained inaccessible. Finally, in August 1952, all the Indochinese collection and deposits were returned to the National Library.

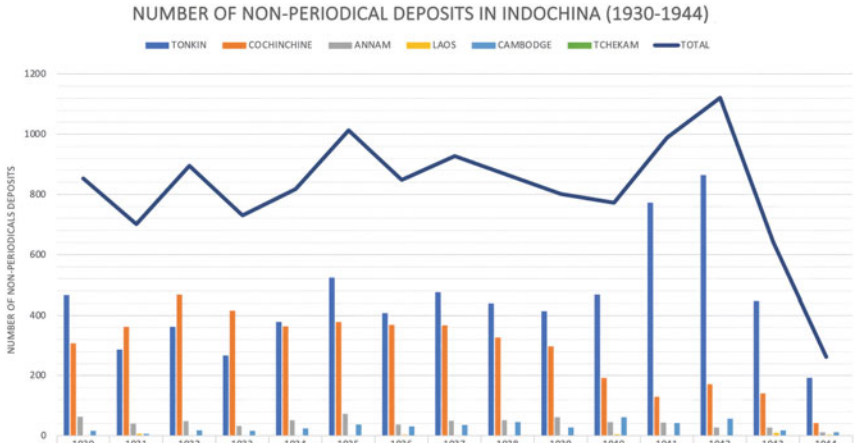
Today's Indochinese collection dates to the arrival of librarian Christiane Pasquel-Rageau in 1965. The first fruits of her effort to catalogue the Vietnamese collection is the *Catalogue of Printed Materials from the Indochinese Collection 1922–1954 Reproduced on Microfiches*, published in 1979, with 12,270 bibliographic records. From July 1986 to June 1988, the center for book conservation, the Department of Printed Books, and the Asia Service from the Department of Foreign Entries, decided to reproduce the entire Indochinese collection on microfiche. In this initiative, bibliographic data from the former catalogue were revised to prepare for the new *Indochinese Collection: Vietnamese Books Printed in Quốc-ngữ (1922–1954).* Further, approximately 500 books from the Indochinese collection were added to the new version of the catalogue by Nguyễn Tất Đắc and Jean-Claude Poitelon. Nonetheless, it excluded publications recorded in the general catalogue and all the periodicals from the legal deposit. The new catalogue was published in four volumes in 1989, and all of its bibliographic records were added to the online catalogue of the National Library in 1997. Finally, beginning in 2020, a major collaboration between the national libraries in France and in Vietnam allowed for the digitization of the Indochinese collection. Thanks to these digitized documents, it is now possible to collect data and to analyze book production and circulation in Indochina during the early twentieth century.

5.4 Data

This section begins by tracing the publishing landscape of Indochina in general before moving on to focus on Cochinchina. This is the first time such a project of quantification and description has been attempted. The results allow us to explore data from locations where the legal deposit system functioned during the colonial period. In Cochinchina, this included Saigon and its surrounding neighborhoods such as Chợ Lớn, Đa Kao, Tân Định, Thủ Dầu Một, and Thủ Đức, as well as other provinces of the Mekong Delta.

The following chart, Fig. 5.1, shows the number of non-periodical deposits per printer or publisher in Indochina, from 1930 to 1944, including one publication in the French territory of Kouang-Tchéou-Wan (Guangzhouwan) in 1938.

According to the data, there were 257 printers and publishers in Indochina during this period and a total number of 12,305 deposits. Printing and publishing in Indochina varied greatly depending on the locality. In general, the number of deposits in Tonkin and Cochinchina far exceeded the rest of Indochina. In all cases,



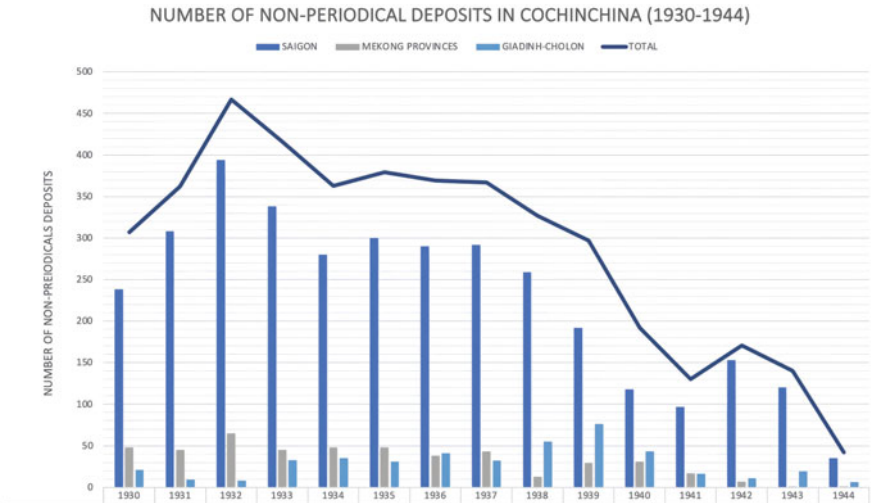
	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
TONKIN	466	286	362	266	378	524	407	475	439	414	467	772	865	447	192
COCHINCHINE	307	362	467	416	363	379	369	367	327	297	192	130	171	140	42
ANNAM	63	40	48	32	52	73	38	50	52	62	46	44	27	27	12
LAOS	0	7	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	2	5	1	1	10	4
CAMBODGE	17	6	18	17	25	37	31	35	46	27	62	42	57	18	12
TCHEKAM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	853	701	895	731	818	1013	848	928	865	802	772	989	1121	642	262

Fig. 5.1 Number of non-periodical deposits in the Indochinese Union (1930–1944). *Source* Author, based on Boudet and Bourgeois 1922–1944

the general curve decreased drastically for all the provinces from 1943 and reached its lowest point in 1944.

Contrary to the common assumption that Cochinchina was home to Indochina's most dynamic publishing industry, the number of non-periodical deposits in Tonkin exceeded that of Cochinchina's throughout this period. The gap between these two major urban poles began in 1930 and widened considerably in favor of Tonkin after 1934. Then, in contrast to the general evolution of Indochina, Tonkin's publishing rates exploded from 1940 to 1942.

Outside of Tonkin and Cochinchina, Annam and Cambodia had similar rates of non-periodical deposits, whereas Laos saw the least deposits. In Annam, fifteen printing and publishing houses were recorded in Hue, Qui Nhơn, and Vinh: A. J. S., Canh Tân, Đắc Lập, Imprimerie de la Mission de Huế, Imprimerie de la Mission de Qui Nhơn, Imprimerie du Mirador (Viễn Đệ), Hương Giang, Phúc Long, Tiếng Dân, Tôn Thất Cảnh, Imprimerie de Qui Nhơn, Châu Tinh, Imprimerie du Nord Annam, Nguyễn Đức Tư, and Vương Đình Châu. There were at least nine printing and publishing houses registered in Phnom Penh: Imprimerie Chong-hoa, Imprimerie de Nagaravatta, Imprimerie du Protectorat, Imprimerie Henry, Imprimerie Portail, Imprimerie Royale, Trường Xuân, and the Société d'Éditions Khmer. Notably, the Imprimerie de Nagaravatta, the publisher of *Nagaravatta* (1936–1942), the first Cambodian newspaper to be published in the Khmer language, appears in the legal deposits in 1939, 1941, and 1942.



	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
SAIGON	238	308	394	338	280	300	290	292	259	192	118	97	153	120	35
MEKONG PROVINCES	48	45	65	45	48	48	38	43	13	29	31	17	7	1	1
GIADINH-CHOLON	21	9	8	33	35	31	41	32	55	76	43	16	11	19	6
TOTAL	307	362	467	416	363	379	369	367	327	297	192	130	171	140	42

Fig. 5.2 Number of non-periodical deposits in Cochinchina (1930–1944). *Source* Author, based on Boudet and Bourgeois 1922–1944

Moving on to consider Cochinchina, although the number of deposits in Tonkin exceeded those in Cochinchina, printing and publishing activities in the Mekong Delta were more expansive and covered a wider geographical area. According to the data, there were 102 printing and publishing houses in Cochinchina and a total number of 4,329 publications between 1930 and 1944. See Fig. 5.2 for details.

As the statistics in Saigon greatly exceeded the ones in other areas, I have regrouped the data into three categories to get a better idea of their spatial distribution. The "Giadinh-Cholon" category includes districts or neighborhoods connected to Saigon such as Chợ Lớn, Đa Kao, Gia Định, Tân Định, Thủ Dầu Một, and Thủ Đức. The "Mekong provinces" category includes Bạc Liêu, Bến Tre, Cần Thơ, Gò Công, Long Xuyên, Mỹ Tho, Rạch Giá, Sa Đéc, Sóc Trăng, Trà Vinh, and Vĩnh Long.

Quantitatively, publishing in Cochinchina reached its peak in 1932. The following years witnessed a gradual decline until dropping sharply with the repression and arrest of Vietnamese journalists, writers, and anticolonial activists in 1938–1939. While non-periodical deposits in Saigon essentially ended with the appointment of the Vichyist government in 1942, publishing activities dropped off more gradually in the other Cochinchinese provinces. Beginning from 1944, the legal deposit system functioned only partially and with difficulty as communication between Saigon and the provinces faced difficulties due to military occupation and armed conflict.

5.5 Publishing as Practice

Many studies on Vietnamese modernity and the rise of printing have demonstrated the undeniable role of political and cultural associations (Brocheux and Hémery 1995; Marr 1984; Peycam 2012). However, few of them have documented the socio-economic conditions that allowed these activities to flourish, both inside and outside of the bourgeoisie and intellectual circles.

According to our data, printers, and publishers were mainly present in urban areas. These places possessed public facilities that allowed trading and economic development, such as buildings, routes, and financial infrastructures. Urban populations also constituted the main customer base for printing and publishing services, which ranged from printing catalogues and invitation cards to publishing popular Vietnamese plays and serialized novels.

Local elites embraced the idea of using modern printing technology to promote change and progress. Book manufacturers, bookstores, and publishing houses were often found near the headquarters of newspapers. For example, the Imprimerie de l'Ouest in Cần Thơ (also called "An-Hà" in Vietnamese) started as a daily newspaper and went on to become a major publishing hub in the Mekong Delta. From 1918 to 1952, the press published at least 152 non-periodicals. The same phenomenon was observed with *New Progress* (*Tân tiến*; 1935–1938), a weekly newspaper founded by local elites in Vĩnh Long and Sa Đéc. The Women's Bookstore (Nữ lưu thơ quán) publisher in Gò Công is another example of a modernist publishing project. During its first months of activity, it printed books and novels in partnership with another publisher Bảo Tồn in Saigon, which was owned by Diệp Văn Kỳ's spouse, Lê Thị Hạnh. After a short period living in France and supporting to the Constitutionalist Party of Bùi Quang Chiêu, Diệp Văn Kỳ advocated for freedom of speech and expression in Cochinchina. Diệp Văn Kỳ also owned important newspapers such as the *Indochina Times* (*Đông Pháp thời báo*; 1927–1928) and the *Morning Bell* (*Thần chung*; 1929), and collaborated with well-known activists and journalists Đào Trinh Nhất, Phan Khôi, Tản Đà Nguyễn Khắc Hiếu, Phan Văn Hùm, etc.

Throughout the early twentieth century, the rise of print culture transformed literary products into consumer items. Most printing houses in Cochinchina published novels, poems, and other literary pieces to satisfy a growing literate population. In response to this new market, publishers sought to purchase their own printing presses and other publishing technologies to reduce their dependence on presses and lower their production costs. While personal relationships might be enough to start a bookstore or even a publishing label, after a certain period, publishers often tried to acquire their own printing presses.

This tendency was even more obvious in the case of publishing houses owned by merchants who engaged in other trading activities alongside their activity as publishers. The pharmacist was an emblematic figure of a printer who also excelled as a merchant. One of the most successful book sellers in the Mekong Delta was run by a merchant and pharmaceutical retailer—François Võ Văn Vân, who owned a publishing house in Bến Tre province from 1929 to 1936. For publishers like these,

printed materials served both as a medium and a vector for commercial activities. On the one hand, books became consumer goods that could generate profits; on the other hand, people who owned the means to print books and other materials could easily advertise for their own businesses.

Advertising slogans and marketing strategies flourished side by side with the expanding market for published materials. Through mercantile and trading dynamics, print culture allowed the expression of ordinary discourses and one on one communication. For the first time in Cochinchina, visual items and written discourses were situated and embodied by networks of local merchants, pharmacists, small shop keepers, craftsmen, and women from various backgrounds. Daily life became saturated with thousands of images and textual objects; social life in communities and villages became more visible and denser with the rise of print culture.

5.6 Between Commerce and Devotion

Buddhist temples, pagodas, and other religious institutions were also important actors in the book industry. Buddhist sutras and prayer books occupied an important proportion of the non-periodicals registered in the Indochinese collection. Many printers in Cochinchina specialized in publishing religious books. This was the case, for example, with the Imprimerie Hậu Giang in Long Xuyên (1931–1940), the Imprimerie Phú Toàn in Vĩnh Long (1929–1938), and the Imprimerie du Mékong in Sa Đéc (1933–1942). Book donation to temples, pagodas, and local communities, was a direct consequence of print culture. The growing number of local printers and easier access to printing services were a result of technical and economic modernization. Investigating book donations offers new insights into the socio-economic models of printing. It also sheds light on the continuous importance of communal bonds and the role religious organizations played in structuring life in Cochinchina.

Religious books and booklets are usually small and fragile objects. Their format varied from "in-octavo" to "in-16," and often contained twelve to twenty-four pages. Although this does not reveal their actual size, which depends on the type of paper used by the printer, it indicates their specificity in comparison to other religious or literary collections. Religious books and booklets printed for free distributions were not necessarily destined for reading practices. Book donation reflects an economy of virtuous deeds and good karma. Books were instead a type of symbolic currency and, as such, could be duplicated in identical formats. The number of print runs was proportional to the level of good intention. However, religious books and booklets possessed an ambiguous status. The scriptural spaces available on these objects could be used by local people for communication, advertisement, and announcement.

Analyzing donations allows us to observe the geographical and social scope of the transformation in practices, due to the rise of print culture at a local level. Scriptural objects hold a certain value within the moral or religious economy. For these reasons, donors often made explicit their personal information and the amount of money donated to show their good intentions. There were two main ways to participate in

this economy of good deeds. When a donation was made by individuals, married couples, or small groups of people, their identities and the amount of donated money usually figured on the cover-page. When a donation was made by a larger group, it often figured as a list inserted inside the book. These donations were mostly made at temples and pagodas.

In this article, I chose to limit my analysis to the Imprimerie du Mékong to present a complete and quantitative sample of publications and donations. The Imprimerie du Mékong is an interesting case for this study because it was the primary and main publisher of Hoà Hảo Buddhist books and booklets. Established in Sa Đéc, it was owned by Hồ Văn Sao, the co-director of the *New Progress* (1935–1938) weekly newspaper which appeared in Vĩnh Long and Sa Đéc.

The Indochinese collection of the National Library contains sixty-four non-periodicals published by the Imprimerie du Mékong from 1933 to 1942. Among them, at least forty-seven books were ordered and printed by local residents, with the intention to distribute them for free. This study is only possible since the digitization of the non-periodicals of the Indochinese collection, which allows direct access to these primary sources. It is important to note that bibliographic records from the Indochinese collection catalogues contain many errors. Most of them categorize donors as publishers or printers. I use Heurist to edit errors, and to describe and locate these donations. Data were manually extracted from digitized books of the Indochinese collection, then added and restructured in the Heurist database.

The Imprimerie du Mékong was an important place for religious printing services. Figure 5.3 shows temples and pagodas that gave money to print at the Imprimerie du Mékong between 1933 and 1942.

Compared to other printing houses in the delta, the Imprimerie du Mékong's customer base was broader and transnational. It stretched from Đồng Nai in the north of Cochinchina, to Phnom Penh in Cambodia, and to Rạch Giá in the south. There is an important concentration of individual and institutional donations from Châu Đốc, which was also an historical region of Hoà Hảo Buddhism, as well as other Buddhist "sects" in Cochinchina.

By the late 1930s, printing activities appear to have become an integral part of people's daily activities and way of life, even in the rural areas of the Mekong Delta. Heurist mapping option allows us to systematically locate data if geographic coordinates are available and input into the database. The following example shows a donation from Nguyễn Thị Thinh who lived in Cần Thơ province (Photo 5.1).

Despite the existence of printers and publishers in Cần Thơ, a woman named Nguyễn Thị Thinh chose to print 1,000 copies of a religious book at the Imprimerie du Mékong in Sa Đéc. A short summary of the book features an advertisement by the donor, who introduced herself as a healer serving people for free. As with other services, healers and occultists also benefited from the rise of printing, which helped to promote their practices.

Printed matter from donations constituted a singular discursive space, because the customer base who came to print these religious books and booklets was extremely diverse. Peasants and merchants from local markets could insert advertisement or personal messages in their publications. For example, one donor, Nguyễn Thị Năm,

Locations in Cochinchina	Temples and/or Pagodas
Bạc Liêu	Châu Viên
Bến Tre	Phú Long
Châu Đốc	Hoà Thạnh, Phước Điền, Châu Viên, Kỳ Viên, An Phước
Đồng Nai	Thanh Phước
Nhà Bè	Phước Linh
Rạch Giá	Thập Phương
Sa Đéc	Kim Huê, Phước Long
Sài Gòn	Long Hưng
Trà Vinh	Phước Long

Fig. 5.3 Temples and pagodas that gave money to print at the Imprimerie du Mékong between 1933 and 1942. *Source* Author

owned a fish stall in Sa Đéc with her husband Lê Văn Chu. They ordered 1000 copies of a Buddhist Pure Land prayer from the Imprimerie du Mékong in 1936. On the back cover of the book, they left a note to thank people who supported their activities through the economic crisis. They explained that their donation was a means to express their gratitude to their customers and to invite whoever wished to talk with them to come meet them on their boat, which was moored next to the Sa Đéc fish market. One did not have to be literate but only needed to communicate a message orally to the printers for it to be transcribed and published. Hence, advertisements and announcements in these books constitute an important resource to investigate literacy and its relation to the rise of printing.

When collecting and analyzing information about donors, we also notice a singular manner of how people identified themselves. Some donors preferred to put down a nickname, or to be more precise, a familiar appellation linked to their surroundings, rather than their real name. Their nickname was always linked to a recognizable feature of their person, such as the place where they resided or their profession.

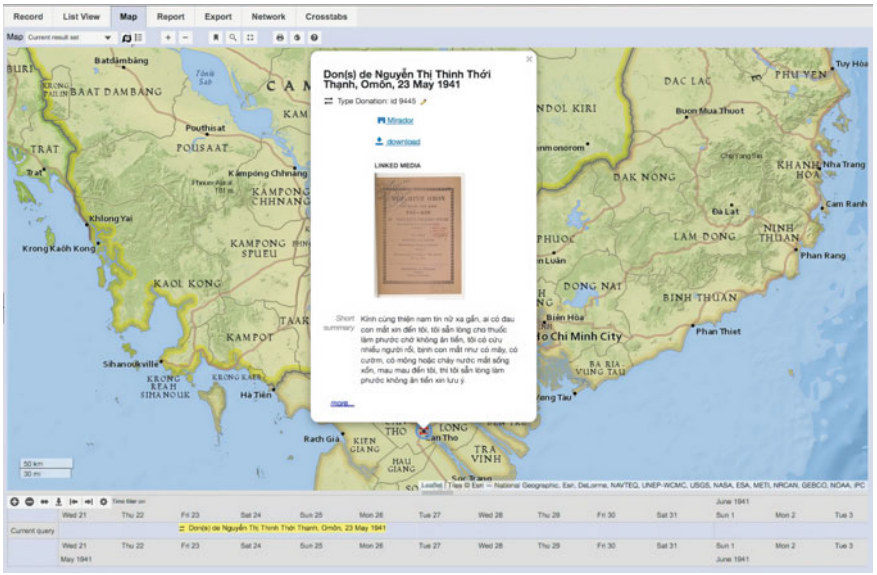


Photo 5.1 Example of a donation record on Heurist database with description and geographical coordinates. *Source* Author

Examples of nicknames from donors of the Imprimerie du Mékong are "the lady who sells sandwiches," "the first-born sister from Sa Đéc," "the couple of fish sellers at the Tân Phú Đông market," or "the fourth son from Châu Đốc." As it was important for donors to be seen and, more so, to be recognizable, these nicknames attest to social proximity, and even familiarity within a close and small community.

The Imprimerie du Mékong, like many other printing houses in Cochinchina, sought to gain customers by offering cheap services. They had special deals for religious requests and promoted them like in this advertisement:

> Ladies and Gentlemen, we have printed many sutras recently thanks to our expert in Buddhist sutras, who checks and reviews printed characters. The owner of this printing house made a special vow to only ask for the cheapest printing cost for anyone who brings their sutra and uses our service. Customers who have printed multiple times here can attest to our very cheap price (Thiện 1934: n.p.)!

Further, the geographical extension and the diversity of their customer base shows a special dynamic. Although it is not yet possible to demonstrate with certainty to what extent the Imprimerie du Mékong was important in spreading or encouraging certain types of religious ideas and movements in the Mekong Delta, it is plausible to think that their specialization in printing religious texts and their marketing strategy strengthened the print culture in these locations. The study of book donations reveals a transformation of pre-existing practices, while these new printed materials are also the vector of a new social cohesion on a regional scale.

With the rise of print culture, the book became an object that embodied modernity. As such, it could be used to manifest respect, devotion, and reverence. The

symbolic value of a book differed substantially from periodicals because their usage was completely different in regard to donation. Inside donation circuits, books were not only a reading product but also a symbolic or religious currency. While religious debates figured largely in local newspapers, especially during the Buddhist reform movement in the 1920s, most religious books found in the Indochinese collection were destined for free distribution and obeyed this singular logic of donation. Thanks to the diffusion of the technology of the printing press and the expansion of print media in Cochinchina, anyone could order the publication of Buddhist sutras or prayers at their local printing house.

In sum, analyzing print culture allows us to arrive at a thicker description of the reality of interpersonal relations by making them visible, especially in rural or remote areas. By the end of the colonial period, the book had become a desirable yet affordable object. It was no longer solely a reading object destined for literate people, but an item of ordinary and daily life.

5.7 Conclusion

The rise of print media in the early twentieth century in Cochinchina is a complex phenomenon. While other authors have demonstrated the impact of print culture on communication, political organizations, and the birth of a Vietnamese public sphere, to date we lack an in-depth study of the socio-economic context of the publishing industry. This chapter demonstrates the potential of using the Indochinese collection and its digitized documents to fill that gap. It is now possible to name, locate, and measure the activities of publishers and printers: in short, to map the landscape of publishing in colonial Cochinchina.

Several features emerge from this landscape. The first is the breadth and depth of the publishing industry across the Mekong Delta, not just in Saigon. A brief presentation of the data collected from the Indochinese collection reveals a dynamic publishing industry, especially in urban areas. Second is the degree to which the industry was imbricated in the broader economy through trading networks, pharmaceutical retailers, local merchants, and small shop keepers. Books were produced in large numbers and circulated widely, serving simultaneously as a means to diffuse exciting new ideas and ways of living as well as an ordinary consumer good.

Another feature that emerges is the importance of religious publishing for the growth of the industry. The practice of devotees paying for the publication of religious texts was widespread, in some cases being the main or even sole activity for publishers or printers. The Imprimerie du Mékong was one such case, surviving for almost ten years with no other commercial activity. In this way, examining the landscape of publishing in colonial Indochina complicates typical binaries of traditional and modern, secular, and religious. Whether we should see the practice of book donation as the commodification of karma or the sacralization of commerce is debatable; what is clear, however, is that capitalist development, economic and social change, and religion were intimately related in colonial Cochinchina.

The importance of religious texts underlines how printed matter is not always destined to be read. The meaning of a book is not always to be found in the words it contains. A close examination of religious texts and their circulation complicates the commonly accepted understanding of capitalist development in colonial Indochina and its effects. Rather than dissolving social ties, the adoption of new technologies and the expansion of market relations could serve instead to connect people. Donated religious texts reduced the distance among individuals by creating common imaginaries and reinforcing donors' and readers' participation in a shared cosmology. In this way, close attention to the landscape of publishing in Cochinchina provides a unique window into ordinary life in colonial Indochina and the ideas and experiences of its people.

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Chapter 6
Multiple Agents Involved in the Localization of Our Lady of La Vang: From a Mythic Figure to the Mother of Vietnam

Van Bien Duong

6.1 Introduction

Our Lady of La Vang (Đức Mẹ La Vang) is one name that Catholics in Vietnam use for the Virgin Mary. There is a pilgrimage shrine of Our Lady of La Vang that is today situated in Hải Phú Commune, Hải Lăng District, Quảng Trị Province, in the central region of Vietnam. The shrine of Our Lady of La Vang under La Vang parish belongs to the Hue Archdiocese under the administration of the Vietnamese Catholic Church. This shrine has been designated as a National Marian Shrine and a Minor Basilica as well. It is also a place of great veneration, and many devout pilgrims flock there on the occasion of the great pilgrimage festival (*Đại hội hành hương*), which is organized once every three years in August.

Since the implementation of the policy of Renovation (Đổi Mới) in 1986, the Communist Party and the government of Vietnam have implemented a moderate policy toward religious affairs and encouraged the inclusion of cultural values from religions into the development of the country. In the process, Vietnamese scholars have examined and discussed the relationship between Catholicism and Vietnamese national culture. In particular, they have conceptualized the issue of the Vietnamization/localization of Catholicism from the perspective of culturology, a line of inquiry developed by Soviet scholars that focuses on an exploration of the nature, laws of existence, and the development of culture, the humanistic meanings of culture, and methods of studying culture (Nguyễn 2006: 6). Among other cases of the localization of Catholicism in Vietnam, the localization of Our Lady of La Vang has emerged as

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_6

an interesting topic that has sustained scholarly debates on Catholicism in Vietnam. Nguyễn Hồng Dương, a former researcher of the Institute for Religious studies (IRS) of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) in Vietnam, argues that the Vietnamese have an original practice of Mother Goddess worship (Đạo Mẫu), and that they then transformed (*chuyển hóa*) or Vietnamized (*Việt hóa*) the Virgin Mary of Catholicism in light of this worship (Nguyễn 2001: 311, 2004: 235–245). Given the case of Our Lady of La Vang, he says that her first apparition near a banyan tree in 1798 implied a reference to the Mother Goddess of the Forest (Bà Chúa Thượng Ngàn), which is one of the mother goddesses worshipped by Vietnamese (Nguyễn 2004: 241). According to Nguyễn Hồng Dương, the Vietnamization of Catholicism (*Việt hóa đạo*), including the Vietnamization of Marian devotion, was a significant outcome of Catholic inculturation in Vietnam (Nguyễn 1999: 37). However, such inculturation was, according to Nguyễn Hồng Dương, a return of Vietnamese Catholics to the original culture of Vietnamese. Nguyễn Hồng Dương said that Vietnamese Catholics are first and foremost Vietnamese people who have imbued the national cultural identity (*bản sắc văn hóa dân tộc*) (Nguyễn 1999: 37). Nevertheless, Nguyễn Hồng Dương, after converting to the Catholic faith, Vietnamese Catholics were initially not allowed to maintain their traditional rites and lifestyles, and consequently their consciousness also changed and they finally became strangers even in their own homeland. Nguyễn Hồng Dương states further, however, that over the course of time, Vietnamese Catholics gradually became aware of their situation, and they desired to return to their origin (*muốn trở về với nguồn cội*), live harmoniously with the nation, and follow the course of national culture (Nguyễn 1999: 37).

Influenced by such research as that of Nguyễn Hồng Dương, Trần Văn Nhàn, a lecturer at the University of Arts and Culture of the Military, changed from employing the term Vietnamization to using the concept of localization (*bản địa hóa*) when he discussed Marian devotion in a Catholic village in Nghệ An province (Trần 2017: 51–55). In his doctoral dissertation, he also analyzed the localization of the Virgin Mary in Vietnam (Trần 2022). That said, the main statements in his paper and dissertation relied heavily on Nguyễn Hồng Dương's argument about the Vietnamization of the Virgin Mary.

Nguyễn Hồng Dương, wrote about the relationship between Mother Goddess worship and Catholicism in the years following Đổi Mới, a time when there was a new interest in Mother Goddess religion and an attempt by scholars to demonstrate that this was a particularly distinct aspect of Vietnamese culture. By basing his ideas on a new view about the importance of Mother Goddess worship to explain the historical relationship between this worship and Marian devotion, Nguyễn Hồng Dương produced arguments that relied on a great deal of speculation. He also tended to posit an essentialized Vietnamese cultural identity that could play a primary role in directing the Vietnamization of Catholicism. This point of view reflects a primordial approach that argues that each nation possesses a fixed identity that can control foreign elements in the process of interaction.

Meanwhile, some overseas Vietnamese scholars have shown an interest in examining the Marian devotion of Vietnamese Catholics. Peter C. Phan, a Catholic scholar in the United States, argues that the Marian piety of Vietnamese Catholics was

fostered by many factors such as the dogma of the Catholic Church, the Catholic tradition of Marian devotion, folk belief in the role of the Virgin Mary as a medium of God, and encouragement from the Catholic hierarchy and congregations (Phan 2003: 99). From this point of view, Peter C. Phan produced a new argument that Marian piety in Vietnam was promoted by a series of outside factors. As a theologian, Phan tried to use Vietnamese cultural resources to create a local theology of Mary. To do so, he employed Vietnamese cultural resources to render Marian devotion under the category of Vietnamese Mariology. This, Phan stated, could help theologians to imagine Mary in the course of Vietnamese culture (2003: 103).

Putting aside the specific issue of the influence of Mother Goddess worship on Marian piety, Peter C. Phan argued that Marian devotion in Vietnam developed in both Vietnamese cultural and religious contexts. In terms of culture, he contended that Vietnamese women were historically very powerful in politics and family life and that this facilitated the spread of Marian piety among Vietnamese people (2003: 106). Peter C. Phan even said that the devotion of Mary as a powerful woman can inspire Vietnamese women to counter the patriarchalism of Confucianism in Vietnamese culture and to achieve equality (2003: 107). Furthermore, Peter C. Phan considered that Vietnamese Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary was also "a natural extension of their love of and devotion to the merciful Quan Âm Thị Kính (a version of Guanyin of Vietnamese Buddhism)" (2003: 105). He assumed that Vietnamese Catholic devotees to Our Lady of La Vang had a close relationship with Buddhists since early times, in part because Buddhists reportedly once offered their pagoda to Catholics to transform it into a Marian shrine in La Vang (Phan 2003: 107). That said, such an argument is assumed from folk stories instead of basing on actual historical facts.

Thao Nguyen, at Santa Clara University in the United States, has endeavored to combine the points of view of both Nguyễn Hồng Dương and Peter C. Phan to generate a novel perspective on Marian devotion in Vietnam in which he conceptualizes Marian devotion under the terms of "transformation" and "indigenization." On the one hand, Thao Nguyen agrees that Marian devotion in Vietnam has been influenced by the Catholic Church, Western missionaries, and local Catholics (Nguyen 2017a: 192). On the other hand, he argues that Marian devotion has also been strengthened by the Mother Goddess worship which is considered by some scholars to represent a prominent expression of a feminine characteristic in Vietnamese culture (2017a: 193). In addition, Thao Nguyen examines Jeremy Clarke's work on the influence of Marian portraits on Guanyin's image in China in the thirteenth century. He also addresses Trang Thanh Hiền's research on the Vietnamese version of Guanyin, Quan Âm Thị Kính. Thao Nguyen then posits that the representation of Our Lady of La Vang had a close relation to Guanyin in Vietnam (2017a: 195). He concludes by seeing the indigenization of Our Lady of La Vang as a continuous reference to both Mother Goddess worship and Guanyin devotion (2017b: 186).

In making these arguments, Thao Nguyen did not provide as clear evidence as Jeremy Clarke did in his research on the interrelation between the depictions of Guanyin and the Virgin Mary in Chinese Catholic art. Thao Nguyen also did not show any actual relationship between Guanyin and Mary in Vietnam when he followed the

research findings of Trang Thanh Hiền. Such a point of view of Thao Nguyen thus is based on assumed connections.

According to Thao Nguyen, the indigenization of Our Lady of La Vang was either a rediscovery by the Catholic Church of Vietnamese cultural foundations or an effective missionary strategy of the Church to achieve its propagation of the faith in the postcolonial context of Vietnamese culture and religion. He especially emphasized the process of the indigenization of the statue of Our Lady of La Vang. He says that the transformation of Mary's presentation was first carried out by overseas Vietnamese Catholics in the United States (Nguyen 2017b: 182). It was then carried out by Catholics in Vietnam. Thao Nguyen additionally noticed that Asian bishops promoted the building of local churches after the Second Vatican Council, thus influencing the localization of Our Lady of La Vang in Vietnam. Thien-Huong T. Ninh also made the claim that the Vietnamization of the depiction of Our Lady of La Vang was started by Vietnamese-American Catholics, and this representation then influenced Vietnamese Catholics in Vietnam in the 1990s (Ninh 2017). This point of view shows that the indigenization/Vietnamization of Our Lady of La Vang was a construction of Catholics.

Pointing to factors that facilitated Our Lady of La Vang's localization in Vietnam, Thien-Huong T. Ninh just briefly stated that "religious persecutions, continuing political conflicts, and poverty under which the Virgin Mary emerged have reconstituted her into uniquely Vietnamese religious icon" (Ninh 2017: 64). To be fair, the specific research scope of Thien-Huong T. Ninh was to focus on the Vietnamization of Our Lady of La Vang in the Vietnamese-American community, so she had to highlight her main subject. With such a purpose, Thien-Huong T. Ninh could not inquire comprehensively about local agents that had participated in or influenced the indigenization of Our Lady of La Vang in Vietnam. As a result, in her work, the role of Vietnamese-American Catholics, especially the role of sculptor artist Van Nhan, became dominant in the process of creating a new statute of Our Lady of La Vang for both Vietnamese American and Vietnamese Catholics in the 1990s.

Having highlighted the significant contributions of the above scholars, we put forward in this chapter a different argument, namely, that the localization of Our Lady of La Vang is not ultimately a natural return to Vietnamese cultural roots or is determined by what has been put forth as a tradition of highlighting the female in Vietnamese culture. Additionally, this localization of Our Lady of La Vang should not be mainly investigated in terms of visual presentation and efforts of outside agents. Instead, we argue that the localization process of Our Lady of La Vang was generated through the collective efforts of both Catholics and non-Catholics from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1990s. This localization process encompassed both tangible and intangible aspects, and it was driven by many inside and outside factors that were intertwined together. First, the myths, folk stories, and written documents about Our Lady of La Vang created an indigenous imagination of her. Along with that, the establishment of more convenient transportation and the ritualization of pilgrimage festivals prompted flocks of local pilgrims to visit the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang. Vietnamese Catholics then considered Our Lady of La Vang as an essential element in their religious identity, and they even referred

to her as the Mother of Vietnam (*Mẹ Việt Nam*). Finally, the transformation of her visual presentation into the appearance of a Vietnamese woman was like a climax of multiple localizing processes: the creation of local perceptions developed from local stories, processes of inculturation, and the development of national sentiments.

6.2 Oral Stories and Documents About Our Lady of La Vang

Before the twentieth century, as the research of Charles Keith has demonstrated, the religious practices of Vietnamese Catholics were "primarily oral, with prayers, songs, and stories transmitted through homilies during mass or in catechism classes" (2012: 121). At the turn of the twentieth century in Vietnam, writers began to document more information about Catholic practices in general, and Marian devotion in particular.

In the case of Our Lady of La Vang, one of the earliest records appeared in 1900 in a publication of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (*Société des Missions-Étrangères de Paris*), a Catholic missionary congregation based in France. This document recorded that a shrine in honor of the Virgin Mary in La Vang was destroyed in 1885 during a period of persecution, so the apostolic vicar of Northern Cochin, which was later renamed the apostolic vicariate of Hue in 1924, called Catholics to build a new one (Anonymous 1900: 170). Relying on the account of a certain priest Bonin in Quảng Trị, this 1900 French document recorded that the eighth of August was fixed as the day for organizing a great procession of Our Lady of La Vang, but the document did not mention which specific year. That great festival attracted roughly 12,000 Christians. With regard to the history of devotion to the Virgin Mary in the La Vang site, the 1900 French document estimated that this occurred roughly 100 years earlier (Anonymous 1900: 170–171).

In 1901, the *Annals of the Society of Foreign Missions*, a periodical published by the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris published a paper on Our Lady of La Vang by an anonymous author, although some Catholics guess that this author was the same priest Bonin, that examined Our Lady of La Vang in greater detail. According to this document, approximately 100 years earlier, Catholics in Cổ Vưu parish in Quảng Trị Province carried an image of the Virgin Mary when they took refuge at a place called La Vang in a dense forest at a time when Catholics were being persecuted. They gathered in a poor cottage to pray and ask Mary to protect them from a plague, and tigers in the forest. One night, a lady of incredible beauty appeared before these believers. Dressed in white, surrounded by light, and with two children were standing nearby, she softly talked to these believers and said: "My children, whatever you have asked me, I will grant it to you, and henceforth all those who come here to pray me, I will grant them [their wishes]" (Anonymous 1901: 274).

Such a story was supposedly based on oral transmission that emanated from "tradition" (Anonymous 1901: 274). This document also explained why Our Lady of La Vang became well known. This was because of an oral story about barren

women in Annam, the name at that time for the area of what is now central Vietnam, who received the grace of fertility from Our Lady of La Vang. After local people had heard this story, they visited her to beg for such grace. The account in this document states that, like in ancient Judea, fertility is very important for Vietnamese. They would be proud if they could become parents of large families with many children. In contrast, sterility was considered a serious misfortune for couples. Among new Catholic followers at that time, there was a young couple who were able to bear a child after praying to Our Lady of La Vang. In the years that followed, there were persecutions of Catholics in the region, but this couple did not apostatize. Our Lady of La Vang was additionally known as a protector of believers from wild beasts in the forest. When Catholics crossed through the forest, they only needed to chant a single invocation to Our Lady of La Vang and this could help them to avoid encounters with tigers (Anonymous 1901: 275–276).

This document also described a ritual to honor Our Lady of La Vang held during the first great pilgrimage festival on 8 August, but again, without identifying the specific year. At night, children in white dresses held torches in their hands and performed dances and sang hymns, and they then traced shapes of the cross and monograms of Jesus and Mary. Meanwhile, other participants prayed by singing songs. Bishop Caspar of the apostolic vicariate of Northern Cochin used the official language of the Church (Latin) to bless pilgrims. Pilgrims enthusiastically followed the ritual whether they understood that language or not (Anonymous 1901: 276–277).

Relying on the 1901 French document, many later Vietnamese Catholic writers said that the year for the first pilgrimage festival of Our Lady of La Vang was 1901 (Nguyễn 1970; Tòa Tổng giám mục Huế 1998; Hồng n.d.), while some others, such as Trần Quang Chu, argued that it could be 1900 because the 1900 French document also referred to the words "this year" for saying about the year completing the new church in La Vang (Trần 2019). However, identifying in which exact year the first great festival pilgrimage of Our Lady of La Vang occurred is difficult as these two early records did not refer to the specific year of this event.

Most local people at that time were not able to read the narrative of Our Lady of La Vang written in these French documents. They thus only knew about her from oral stories rather than from such documents in a foreign language. Later, in 1930, Catholic priest Joseph T. V. Trang (Trần Văn Trang) published a book in Vietnamese about Our Lady of La Vang entitled *Revered Written Traces of Our Lady of La Vang* (*Tự tích tôn kính Đức Mẹ La Vang*).

In this book, Trần Văn Trang made reference to the 1901 paper in the *Annals of the Society of Foreign Missions* and he also incorporated other stories about Our Lady of La Vang. Officially published in 1930, the book had been accepted by the Catholic authorities of the Hue Diocese to print in 1923 and was already known by pilgrims to La Vang before it was published. According to Trang, though many people in the apostolic vicariate of Hue were devoted to Our Lady of La Vang, they did not really know her past achievements or deeds (*sự tích*). He thus wished to document this information for future generations (Trần 1930: 3). To compile information about the achievements of Our Lady of La Vang, Trần Văn Trang relied on the 1901 French document as well as religious odes (*hát vãn*) from La Vang and stories retold by old

priests and elders who lived near the La Vang site. He also personally visited the Lang Vang site and described the landscape there (Trần 1930: 3).

After presenting a poem and an ode for Our Lady of La Vang, Trần Văn Trang arranged stories about her into two sections in his book. The first section contains information about the apparition of Our Lady of La Vang. The second one talks about the graces of Our Lady of La Vang. Trang said that elders and older priests relied on oral stories from ancestors to recount the apparition of Our Lady of La Vang (Trần 1930: 8). According to both Trần Văn Trang's 1930 book and the 1901 French document, Our Lady of La Vang appeared with two angels (incarnated as two children). Trang also said that according to oral stories, the Catholics of Cổ Vưu fled from the unrest caused by literati (*văn thân*). Although the French document and Trần Văn Trang say that this took place approximately a century earlier, in fact, this is a reference to a movement that began in the 1860s following the signing of the Treaty of Saigon, a treaty which granted the French three provinces in the Mekong Delta. Literati in the area to the north of the capital, Hue, expressed their opposition to this development by attacking Catholic villages under the motto of "pacify the Westerners and kill the heretics" (*bình Tây sát tả*).

According to Trần Văn Trang's account, around 50–70 Catholics from Cổ Vưu moved across the mountains to look for a place of refuge. They chose a level area where there was a large tree that had lush foliage. The tree as such was a home for many birds. This also created shade for people to take rest and enjoy the songs of the birds. Pagans believed in the tree spirit there, so they often came and prayed to that spirit to protect them from accidents (Trần 1930: 7). On the other hand, Catholics built a cottage near the tree, and they placed an altar in this cottage with a paper image of the Virgin Mary holding her infant son, as well as a light and some other articles. The cottage in turn became a place for Catholics to pray to the Mother of God. However, they practiced their religion in a setting where they were suffering from plague and the threat of attack from wild animals. Tigers from the forest often came and disturbed their life. Although the cottage was subsequently burned by literati, the altar and light to venerate Our Lady of La Vang continued to exist there. As the literati left the La Vang site, believers from far away saw a light and heard hymn singing at the place where the cottage used to exist. This was reportedly witnessed by many pagans (Trần 1930: 7–9).

Trần Văn Trang stated that with the end of persecution and the threat of tiger attacks, people began to flock to the Our Lady of La Vang site. These visitors wished Our Lady of La Vang would grant them many blessings such as fertility, health, and buffaloes. In addition, oral stories about the deeds of Our Lady of La Vang began to circulate, two of which were particularly famous. The first story was about a female cloth merchant (*mụ bán vải*). In this story, Our Lady of La Vang incarnated as a customer to buy cloth for the church. After an elderly couple witnessed this miracle, they reported it to a priest in Cổ Vưu. This priest believed that the Virgin Mary had selected the La Vang site to grant graces. The story was then retold to other people, and they thus believed in the sacredness of Our Lady of La Vang (Trần 1930: 10–11).

The second story is called "On the Origins of the Person who Picked Leaves at La Vang" (*Về gốc tích người ta đến hái lá tại La Vang*). In this story, Our Lady of

La Vang tells a sick woman to pick leaves at the La Vang site for medical treatment (Trần 1930: 12–13). The tree mentioned in Trần Văn Trang's account of this story was a banyan tree (*cây đa*). Believing this story, many pilgrims visited the La Vang site to pick leaves from the banyan tree in front of the La Vang church. They then cut branches and peeled off the bark of this tree. As the banyan tree withered, pilgrims started plucking leaves of other trees like one known as the La Vang tree (*cây Lá Vằng*) and even collected grasses from the La Vang church's garden. They believed these leaves and grasses were able to treat health problems (Trần 1930: 12–13).

According to Trần Văn Trang, as the La Vang site received many visitors, these people offered money to contribute to constructing a large church. Three priests, referred to as Bonnard (cố Bổn), Patinier (cố Kinh), and Bonin (cố Ninh), respectively, built the church with an interior area large enough to hold around 500–600 people and two high towers. That church was at the place where the apparition of Our Lady of La Vang was said to have occurred, and with the church's front facing the banyan tree. According to Trần Văn Trang, the church was built in that location based on information in the oral stories of the followers. Meanwhile, a statue of Our Lady of La Vang in the form of Mary holding her infant son was placed at a location where Our Lady of La Vang had reportedly once stepped (Trần 1930: 13).

For the second section of the book, Trần Văn Trang compiled a collection of stories about the graces of Our Lady of La Vang. These stories included one story previously recorded in the 1901 French document about Our Lady of La Vang granting a local couple fertility. Trần Văn Trang, however, added specific details about the couple such as their names (the husband was Đôn, and the wife was Phương) and their address (at Đồng Bàu, Quảng Trị Province) (Trần 1930: 23). He also recorded other stories to illustrate the graces of Our Lady of La Vang. For instance, Our Lady of La Vang reportedly cured the eyes of one person in Saigon (Trần 1930: 23–24), exculpated Nguyễn Khôi Kì, a non-Catholic (Trần 1930: 25–26), and granted fertility to Nguyễn Hữu Bài, a member of the royal court (Trần 1930: 26–27).

Catholic priest J. B. Hướng (Huỳnh Tịnh Hướng) from Chợ Lớn, now in Hồ Chí Minh City, visited the La Vang site in 1923 and said that the above book by Trần Văn Trang was waiting to be printed. With the aim of providing information about Our Lady of La Vang to many more people (Hướng 1923a: 120), J. B. Hướng wrote a story about Our Lady of La Vang and the La Vang site. This story drew on information from Trần Văn Trang's yet-to-be-published book as well as his own experiences during his trip to the La Vang site. This story was published under the title "Pilgrimage Visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang" (Đi viếng cung thánh Đức Mẹ La Vang) in the *Southern Diocese* (*Nam Kỳ địa phận*) in 1923 (Hướng 1923a, 1923b, 1923c, 1923d, 1923e, 1923f, 1923g, 1923h, 1923i, 1923j, 1923k, 1923l, 1923m, 1923n, 1923o, 1923p, 1923q and 1923r).

Hoàng Mai Rĩnh, a Catholic in Tonkin, the northern region of Vietnam, also cited some stories from Trần Văn Trang's work in his diary about his journey by train from the Hanoi Diocese to the La Vang site in 1929. When the train went across La Khê, and then came to Tân Ấp, passengers on the train saw a big statue of Mary holding her infant son, and they assumed that she was Our Lady of La Vang, however, that was not the La Vang site (Hoàng 1931: 6). Once standing on the La Vang site, Hoàng

Mai Rĩnh learned about the stories of the graces of Our Lady of La Vang documented by Trần Văn Trang. He was also informed that Trang's book was sold to pilgrims there (Hoàng 1931: 52). Hoàng Mai Rĩnh also employed oral stories to record that Our Lady of La Vang had appeared as an apparition holding her infant son (Hoàng 1931: 45 and 48).

After the ninth great pilgrimage festival of Our Lady of La Vang in 1928, the second Vietnamese bishop, Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, said that the La Vang site was a veneration place for both Catholics and non-Catholics because whoever went there to pray, all received a favorable response (*hữu cầu tất ứng*), nonetheless, he noted that the history of this site was still ambiguous (Hồ 1929a: 53). In an attempt to look for a historical account of the La Vang site and Our Lady of La Vang as well, Bishop Cẩn collected and revised oral references to Our Lady of La Vang, and then published such oral references first with the title "Written Traces of La Vang" (*La Vang tự tích*) in the *Southern Diocese* in 1929 (Hồ 1929a, b), and he later compiled these writings into the book *Odes of the Deeds of La Vang* (*La Vang sự tích vãn*) in 1932 (Trần 2020; Nguyễn n.d.: 297).

Hồ Ngọc Cẩn wrote that according to oral stories, there was a banyan tree in La Vang, and that nearby this tree non-Catholic people (*bên lương*) initially set up a cottage temple for spirit and Buddha worship (*thờ thần Phật*) and that this place was called a "holy site" (*chỗ linh hoàng*) (Hồ 1929a: 54). However, one day the Mother of God (Bà bên đạo) through extraordinary miracles appeared and forced these spirits away from. As a result, non-Catholics ceded the place for Catholics to pray to the Mother of God (Đức Bà) (Hồ 1929a: 54). Hồ Ngọc Cẩn himself confessed that no one knew whose stories and poems were recorded in his book, and when they had been composed. He surmised that these narratives had existed since before the first great pilgrimage festival (Hồ 1929a: 53). Since that festival, Bishop Cẩn argued, people had added information about the church of La Vang and the procession of Our Lady of La Vang in 1901 to the odes of La Vang (Hồ 1929a: 53).

According to Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, there was no village named "La Vang" found in old cadastral records. Relying on oral stories, he assumed that "La Vang" could be another way of calling "Lá Vằng" (also the name of a hamlet with many Lá Vằng trees) (Hồ 1929b: 119). He guessed that in the time of persecution under Emperor Tự Đức, there were Catholics who took refuge in the La Vang site (Hồ 1929b: 119–120). Though unclear about the history of the oral narratives about Our Lady of La Vang, Hồ Ngọc Cẩn noted that her deeds had been transformed into religious performances (Hồ 1929a: 53; Nguyễn 1970: 38; Hồng n.d.: 34).

Like the anonymous author of the 1901 French document, J. B. Roux, a missionary in Hue, published the paper *The Pilgrimage to Our Lady of La Vang* (*Le Pèlerinage de Notre-Dame de Lavang*) in the *Annals of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris* in 1933, in which he reconfirmed that the information about Our Lady of La Vang was based on "tradition" rather than written records and that there was no way to determine what was actual historical fact and what came from popular imagination (Roux 1933: 112). An example of this was information that Roux provided about the origin of La Vang. According to Roux, oral stories explained that originally people cultivated potatoes, cassava, and rice in the valley where La Vang is located, and that

at night they gathered to chase tigers, boars, and stags away from their fields and huts. The name of this area then came to be known as "La Vang," which Roux noted in Vietnamese can mean "resounding clamor" (*clameur rententissante*) (Roux 1933: 112).

Roux states further that these stories also talked about how there was a large tree in the valley, and people often rested under its shade when they worked in or crossed the forest. Pagans worshipped the spirit of this tree to ask the spirit to protect them from danger, especially from tigers and disease, while Catholics prayed and recited the Rosary to implore the Blessed Virgin there. The pagans were frightened by the religious practices of the Catholics, and consequently abandoned the place. The Catholics then put additional objects of worship there, such as an image of the Blessed Virgin, and continued to worship Our Lady of La Vang. On the occasion of the procession of Our Lady of La Vang, according to J. B. Roux, some pagans thus whispered to each other: "This Lady is ours, but the Catholics took over" (Roux 1933: 113).

Roux also said that according to tradition, Catholics from Cổ Vưu took refuge and gathered in a poor cottage, rather than under a large tree, and prayed before a simple image of Mary during a time of persecution. Roux guessed that this could have happened during the time of the Tây Sơn Rebellion at the end of the eighteenth century. The story of Mary's apparition in La Vang documented by Roux has the same content as the 1901 French document. Roux also again explained that Our Lady of La Vang became popular among local people because she was believed to grant fertility. Roux also restated the information that a large family with many children was not only a joy but a great pride for Annamese couples, and that a sterile union was considered an extreme misfortune. Finally, Roux stated that the devotion to Our Lady of La Vang spread across Indochina and that flocks of believers visited La Vang (Roux 1933: 113–114).

The aforementioned writers mostly relied on oral stories and referenced each other to document information about Our Lady of La Vang. These authors, however, acknowledged that they were unable to determine what the actual historical facts were in these oral narratives of Our Lady of La Vang. Though historically ambiguous, the narratives were transmitted over time, and starting in 1900, the oral stories of Our Lady of La Vang were documented with some differing details. For instance, some writers said that Mary had appeared near a banyan tree with her infant son while others did not mention this. In terms of the time when the apparition of Our Lady of La Vang took place, Trần Văn Trang referred to oral stories to argue that this apparition took place during the time of the literati attacks on Catholics in the 1860s and 1870s, while Roux guessed the time was around the end of the eighteenth century. We, therefore, cannot determine when exactly the apparition of Our Lady of La Vang took place at the La Vang site, if her apparition may have been claimed at different times, when oral stories about her began to be told, or even in which exact year the first great pilgrimage festival of Our Lady of La Vang took place. What we can see, however, is that these stories created a biography of Our Lady of La Vang in which her apparition and grace were directed first at a group of local vulnerable Catholics, and then expanded to both other Catholics and non-Catholics.

Alongside the process of documenting stories about Our Lady of La Vang, the development of transportation, particularly the railway, helped pilgrims in remote areas to be able to visit the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang and to participate in the triennial great pilgrimage festival. In fact, for the great pilgrimage festival of Our Lady of La Vang, the railway agency changed its schedule to accommodate the pilgrims. In 1910, priest Léopold Cadière negotiated with a railway agency to arrange two rounds of the train to pick up around 4000 Catholic pilgrims from Phủ Cam and Kim Long in the Hue Diocese and to deliver them to La Vang (Nguyễn n.d.: 42–43). The ninth great pilgrimage festival in 1928 welcomed participants from Tonkin, Annam, and Quinam (Nguyễn n.d.: 51). The railway agency at that time offered cheap tickets for pilgrims to La Vang, and a total of 1566 such tickets were sold to passengers at the Hue railway station alone (Nguyễn n.d.: 52). In 1932, the *Hanoi Midday News* (*Hà Thành ngọ báo*), a newspaper in Tonkin, reported that on the occasion of the great festival of Our Lady of La Vang in Quảng Trị province, the Northern railway agency would give promotions to individual passengers who wanted to undertake the pilgrimage to the La Vang site. The price reduction was twenty-five percent for a round-trip ticket. Pilgrims could buy tickets at the railway stations on the lines from Hanoi to Hue and Hue to Tourane (i.e., Đà Nẵng) (Anonymous 1932: 2).

The narratives of Our Lady of La Vang, moreover, were repeated by Catholic storytellers and writers on the occasions of the great pilgrimage festival. In such a way, recognition of Our Lady of La Vang came to be gradually embedded in the minds of Vietnamese Catholics and whatever imagined and actual elements made up those narratives became intertwined. Eventually, many Vietnamese Catholic priests and writers actively made use of Catholic journals in the Vietnamese language to document stories about Our Lady of La Vang. Among them, there were such newspapers and journals as *Southern Diocese*, the *Journal of Our Lady of Perpetual Help* (*Nguyệt san Đức Mẹ hằng cứu giúp*) and the *Journal of Our Lady of La Vang* (*Nguyệt san Đức Mẹ La Vang*).

In 1955, the publishing house of the *Journal of Our Lady of Perpetual Help* published a book that selected and compiled many documents about Our Lady of La Vang. Most of the contents of this book were collected by Nguyễn Linh Kinh who was a priest of La Vang parish from 1948 to 1955. The book presented the history of Our Lady of La Vang and the various miracles that she had granted to believers (Hồng 1955). During the great pilgrimage festival in 1961, Hà Châu, a reporter, wrote an article entitled the "Apparition of La Vang" (*La Vang linh hiển*) that included many details with historical information and fragments of oral narratives to document information about Our Lady of La Vang. The writer even added new information about the miraculous interventions of Our Lady of La Vang in the 1950s (Hà 1961).

In addition to written accounts of Our Lady of La Vang, there were also poems that documented and praised her deeds. One author, for instance, recorded in 1961 that visitors could buy texts that included such poems when they were on the train to the La Vang site (Tam 1961: 28). One such work was a collection of poems entitled *Here, La Vang* (*Đây, La Vang*). This work embraced both mythological and historical dimensions, and vividly reenacted the past of Our Lady of La Vang, thus bringing her to life for readers and listeners (Tam 1961: 29).

Finally, as followers spread far beyond La Vang, in addition to recording information about the graces that Our Lady of La Vang performed at the La Vang site, Catholics in other places also recounted the graces that they believed they received from her. For instance, Catholic priest Phạm Đình Khiêm reported to archbishop Ngô Đình Thục that Our Lady of La Vang granted graces to a Catholic at a site in the outskirts of Saigon, and that this person recovered from an illness after drinking leaves of Our Lady of La Vang (*lá Đức Mẹ*) (Phạm 1961: 17). Many such stories were also recorded in Catholic journals and newspapers to talk about the graces of Our Lady of La Vang.

6.3 Discourses About Our Lady of La Vang as Mother of Vietnam

In the above written documents, Our Lady of La Vang is called by various Vietnamese terms: "*Chúa Bà*" (Lady Lord), "*Đức Mẹ Chúa Trời*" (Mother of God) and "*Nữ vương Việt Nam*" (Queen of Vietnam). However, Vietnamese Catholics recognize that Our Lady of La Vang is not a distinct figure from the Virgin Mary, and her apparition at the La Vang site is also one of various Marian apparitions over the world. Indeed, on the occasion of the great pilgrimage festival in 1961, Nguyễn Văn Bình, Archbishop of Saigon, even said that La Vang was not the only place where Catholic pilgrims were able to find the Mother of God (Vũ 1961: 6), given that she was worshipped in many other places in Vietnam.

While Our Lady of La Vang is recognized by Vietnamese Catholics to be the same Virgin Mary who is worshipped by Catholics around the world, the stories that were created about Our Lady of La Vang, and which we discussed in the previous section, linked her apparition and graces with a local setting. Indeed, the title, "Our Lady of La Vang" (*Notre-Dame de La-vang*), and its Vietnamese equivalent, which literally means the "Honored Mother of La Vang" (*Đức Mẹ La Vang*), distinguish this figure from other versions of the Virgin Mary. Further, it is also clear that a sensibility of Our Lady of La Vang as a figure of national pride for Vietnamese Catholics and even as a "Mother of Vietnam" (*Mẹ Việt Nam*) emerged in Catholic discourses in the twentieth century.

According to the Hue episcopal see, in 1901, Bishop Marie-Antoine Caspar, whose Vietnamese name was Lộc, of the Hue Diocese issued a regulation that the great pilgrimage festival of Our Lady of La Vang would take place once every three years at the time of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (normally in the middle of August) (Tòa Tổng giám mục Huế 1998: 20). This decision set the foundation for the ritualization of Our Lady of La Vang and created a great religious event to gather large devout believers in the La Vang site. Although there is little information about the early years of the great pilgrimage festival, Catholic writers have confirmed there was a second festival in 1904 and a third in 1907 (Tòa Tổng giám mục Huế 1998: 20; Nguyễn n.d.: 39). The fourth great pilgrimage festival took place in 1910, and

at this festival, the participants included local cultural elements such as Annamese music (*nhạc An Nam*) and a red and gold colored palanquin (*kiệu sơn son thếp vàng*) to celebrate Our Lady of La Vang (Nguyễn n.d.: 43). The festivals later brought together pilgrims from many areas into a network of devotees of Our Lady of La Vang. Through such events Vietnamese Catholics appear to have developed a strong sense of pride in Our Lady of La Vang and she became a means for them to define themselves in comparison with others. For instance, at the great pilgrimage festival in 1938, a Vietnamese Catholic priest by the name of Tin came to the pulpit and spoke to pilgrims saying that the Marian apparition in La Vang gave back national pride and an equal position in relationships with powerful Western countries, and that the Marian apparition in La Vang also demonstrated that this site received more graces than other places in the world (Nghĩa 1938: 559).

As the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang became a more famous pilgrimage destination, Catholic authorities in the Hue Diocese desired to construct facilities to meet the need for religious practices there. They tended to refer to Our Lady of La Vang as the mother of everyone in Vietnam. On 18 October 1924, René Morineau, whose Vietnamese name was Trung, an apostolic missionary in Quảng Trị province, issued a letter in Vietnamese to solicit financial contributions for building various facilities at the La Vang site such as a new shrine for worship, along with guest houses for pilgrims, and houses for priests and church keepers. Although pilgrims had offered money to the church at the annual procession events, this was not enough to erect such facilities, as much had been spent on religious services. René Morineau stated to believers that instead of renovating the old church, they should build a new one, for the Lady who was the common mother of every Catholic from the South to the North (*Mẹ chung mọi người giáo hữu khắp Nam Bắc*). He even used the proverb "One tree could not amount to anything, three of them together could build up a high mountain" (*Một cây làm chẳng nên non, ba cây dụm lại lên hòn núi cao*) to inspire every Catholic to participate in the construction of the new shrine. Morineau emphasized that Catholiclics are servants of one God (*tôi một Chúa*), and children of one Mother (*con một Mẹ*) as well (Morineau 1924: 2).

The La Vang site continued to be developed by the Catholic authorities of the Hue Diocese, particularly after they set up a more effective administration of religious practices there. In 1928, bishop Allys appointed Paul Võ Văn Thới as the first priest to take care of La Vang parish. Later, priests of the La Vang parish and Vietnamese bishops kept improving the position of the La Vang site, and tried to preserve the statue of Our Lady of La Vang during the years of the First Indochina War (1946–1954). After the Geneva Accords of 1954, around 676,348 Catholics in the North moved to the South (Hansen 2009: 180). One of the reasons Catholics did so was because they believed in a rumor that said, "The Virgin Mary had gone South and those who refused to follow her would oppose God's will and risk damnation" (Denney 1990: 271). La Vang shrine was located in South Vietnam, around 30 km from the seventeenth parallel where the country was supposed to be temporarily divided under the Geneva Accords. Our Lady of La Vang thus gained new significance in this political context. Catholic authorities in South Vietnam even considered Our Lady of La Vang as a symbol of opposition to atheism. Hồng Phúc, a Catholic priest,

referred to the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang as a watchtower and a fortress that could hold back "the red wave of atheism" (*làn sóng đỏ vô thần*) (Hồng 1961: 235). Trần Văn Tường, a former priest at La Vang, said that Vietnam was suffering and divided, and that the La Vang shrine was a gathering place for pilgrims to pray to the Mother to save the nation (Bảo 1961: 12). To reinforce the position of the Catholic Church against atheism, bishops in the South requested that the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang be called a national consecrated shrine (*Đền thờ toàn quốc khấn dâng*) at the meeting of bishops in 1959 (Dell'acqua 1961: 28).

Indeed, after 1954, Our Lady of La Vang came to be recognized by the upper levels of both the global and Vietnamese Catholic churches. From 1955 to 1959, three cardinals visited and prayed to Our Lady of La Vang. On 21 February 1959, for instance, Vietnamese Catholics warmly welcomed cardinal Agagianian, Pro-Perfect of the Propagation of the Faith, to the La Vang site (Hồng n.d.: 78). This cardinal later requested that the Vatican Holy See consecrate the Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang as a minor basilica (Hồng n.d.: 79). Meanwhile, the Vietnamese Catholic bishops held a conference and consecrated Our Lady of La Vang as a shrine for the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and as the National Marian Shrine (*Trung tâm Thánh mẫu Toàn quốc*) as well. The Vietnamese Catholic authorities then carried out a project to enlarge the La Vang site (Hồng n.d.: 86).

Among the bishops in South Vietnam, Ngô Đình Thục emerged as a very influential religious leader (Jacobs 2006: 89). The elder brother of Ngô Đình Diệm, the president of the Republic of Vietnam, or what is commonly referred to as South Vietnam, Thục actively worked to consolidate the position of Our Lady of La Vang. He substantially contributed to legitimizing the identity of Our Lady of La Vang in the Vietnamese Catholic community. Thục sought to establish Our Lady of La Vang as a common religious symbol for all Vietnamese. Through the "Venerabilium Nostrorum" decree of 24 November 1960, Pope John XXIII officially established the Vietnamese Catholic hierarchy. Three archdioceses were also designated at Hanoi, Hue, and Saigon. In 1960, Ngô Đình Thục was appointed to become the first archbishop of the Hue Archdiocese. As archbishop, Thục issued a letter to summon both Catholics and non-Catholics to participate in the great pilgrimage festival of La Vang. In the letter, he referred to Vietnam as a great family, but one that was divided into North and South. Thục called all Vietnamese to look to the common Mother, who is the Mother of God, along with the mother of human beings, and the mother of all Vietnamese regardless of their religion (*Mẹ tất cả mọi người dân Việt Nam bất phân tôn giáo*) (Ngô 1961: 4).

At that time, many accounts in news media mirrored Archbishop Thục's wording and depicted Our Lady of La Vang as the "Mother of both the South and the North" (*Mẹ của hai miền Nam Bắc*) and the "Mother of the unity of Vietnam" (*Mẹ của Việt Nam thống nhất*) (Bùi 1961: 9). Such a discourse was promoted as part of the nation-building project under Ngô Đình Diệm. Catholicism enjoyed a favored position, as President Diệm and his family were Catholics. Under his government, only Catholicism was defined as a "religion," while Buddhism was considered as an "association" (Jacobs 2006: 56). At the great pilgrimage festival in 1961, Ngô Đình Diệm himself also entrusted the future of the country to Our Lady of La Vang (Trần

1988: 127). In July 1962, the post office of South Vietnam issued a stamp of Our Lady of La Vang in which there were images of Our Lady of Victories, an image of Mary wearing a crown and holding her son who is also wearing a crown. Behind these images, there was a bamboo rush that was also a symbol in the national emblem of the Republic of Vietnam from 1957 to 1963 (Nguyễn 1970: 133–134; Trần 2021a: 80–81). Our Lady of La Vang was also repeatedly referenced in comparison with other Marian titles in foreign countries. For instance, at the great pilgrimage festival in 1961, a Catholic reporter contended that while Portugal was proud of Mother Fatima, Poland had Mother Czestochowa, and France delighted in Mother Lourdes, Vietnam possessed the La Vang site where the Queen of the Heavenly Kingdom (*Nữ vương Thiên quốc*) had appeared many times for the benefit of earthly people (Trần 1961: 11).

6.4 Transforming the Statue of Our Lady of La Vang into Vietnamese Style

While a perception of Our Lady of La Vang as a mother of the Vietnamese developed along with her documentation and ritualization, the localization of Our Lady of La Vang in visual art occurred later. The original presentation of Our Lady of La Vang was derived from the model of Our Lady of Victories in France. A writer named "Joseph (Annam)," writing in the *Southern Diocese* newspaper in 1913, said that Catholic priest Léopold Cadière, who had previously been in charge of the Cổ Vưu parish, asked an artist to make paintings of the statue of Our Lady of La Vang and the La Vang shrine before Cadière traveled to France for a short vacation (around the end of 1910) (Joseph 1913: 296 and 297). This painter was a non-Catholic artist called Nhơn (ký Nhơn) from Quảng Trị province (Josep 1913: 296). Joseph noted that the picture of the statue of Our Lady of La Vang, depicted by Nhơn, was so sophisticated and great that everyone felt thrilled and devoted to Our Lady of La Vang (Joseph 1913: 297). When Cadière came back to the Hue Diocese, he brought along with him many copies of such a picture of Our Lady of La Vang that he had produced in France (Joseph 1913: 296).

Based on the above information, Catholic priest Nguyễn Văn Ngọc and Catholic writer Trần Quang Chu suggested that artist Nhơn was Nguyễn Khắc Nhân, a former artist of the Hue royal court, who served under Emperor Thành Thái (Nguyễn 1970: 60–61; Trần 2019). The painting of Our Lady of La Vang no longer exists, however, a painting of the La Vang Shrine is preserved in some documents, such as the book, *Holy Site of La Vang* (*Linh địa La Vang*), by priest Nguyễn Văn Ngọc and published in 1970 (Trần 2019). This painting shows that on the top of the church was an image of Our Lady of La Vang following the model of Our Lady of Victories. The only difference in this presentation was a halo around the image of Our Lady of La Vang holding her infant son (Trần 2019).

Some writers in the early twentieth century also described the church in La Vang, and what the statue of Our Lady of La Vang looked like. Trần Văn Trang, the author of a reference book on La Vang, recorded that a statue of Our Lady of La Vang holding her infant son was built at a place where there had previously been an altar dedicated to her. This account also indicates that people claimed that when Our Lady of La Vang appeared, she was holding the child Jesus, and that therefore, the statue was built in the same manner (Trần 1930: 13–14).

Such a story suggests a local inspiration for the statue, however, other accounts make it clear that this first statue was modeled after Our Lady of Victories. According to Catholic priests Nguyễn Văn Ngọc and Hồng Phúc, when the first great pilgrimage of Our Lady of La Vang took place in perhaps 1901, bishop Casper blessed the statue of Our Lady of La Vang that was modeled after the Our Lady of Victories statue in the Notre Dame des Victoires church in Paris (Nguyễn 1970: 62; Hồng n.d.: 58). When writing about La Vang in 1923, Catholic priest J.B. Hướng stated that the statue of Mary holding her son at the La Vang shrine was bought from the West (*bên Tây*) and was originally Our Lady of Victories (Hướng 1923j: 268). This model depicted Mary holding her son which was one of the popular portraits of Mary in France at that time. The representation of Our Lady of La Vang as a mother holding her child, therefore, mirrored the representation of Our Lady of Victories and was not related to the presentation style of Quan Âm Thị Kính in Vietnam.

From 1928 to 1945, pilgrimage activities in the La Vang site took place regularly. However, from 1946 to 1954, when the First Indochina War broke out, and in particularly starting in 1949 when La Vang came under the control of Việt Minh, many Catholics from the area then fled to other villages in Quảng Trị province. Religious practices in the La Vang site became more difficult to carry out at that time, and Catholics secretly moved the statue of Our Lady of La Vang to the Quảng Trị provincial seat in 1952 (Hồng 1955: 41–42; Nguyễn 1970: 88). On 6 December 1954, the statue of Our Lady of La Vang was taken back to the La Vang site (Hồng 1955: 45). In 1955, priest Trần Văn Tường was appointed to manage La Vang parish, he then carried out a renovation of the old church that was built in 1928 (Nguyễn 1970: 95).

In 1961, Catholic bishops in South Vietnam decided to consecrate the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang as the National Marian Shrine at a conference of bishops that was held that year in Đà Lạt. A year later, in 1962, Catholic bishops established a plan to renovate the La Vang site. According to this project, the monument to celebrate the event of the Marian apparition would be renovated with the addition of three banyan trees made of cement and steel, and an altar made of marble from Five-Element Mountain (*Ngũ hành sơn*) in Đà Nẵng, which the plan referred to as a symbol for Vietnam (Anonymous 1964: 85). On the altar, there would be a marble base for a statue of Our Lady of La Vang who was to be sculpted with a gentle face looking down (Anonymous 1964: 86). This statue of Our Lady of La Vang was to be depicted in the style of the Blessed Mary (*Đức bà xuống ơn*) which differs from the model of Our Lady of Victories (Nguyễn 2016: 475) in that she stands looking down and does not hold her infant son. That project started on 20 June 1963. In November 1963, President Ngô Đình Diệm of South Vietnam was assassinated, and archbishop Ngô Đình Thục, who was in Rome at the time, remained overseas. The renovation

of the La Vang site had to be put on hold for a long time. Before that point, the only part of the monument to Our Lady of La Vang that had been completed was a frame in the form of banyan trees (Anonymous 1964: 86). As such, while the statue of Our Lady of La Vang had not been localized yet, the project had introduced items with local significance, such as the marble from Five-Element Mountain.

In a wider context, by the mid-twentieth century, Marian portraits were being Vietnamized by some artists who were either Catholic or non-Catholic. For instance, Nam Phong, a Catholic artist of Phát Diệm Diocese in Ninh Bình province, painted Mary as the "Vietnamese Queen in Heaven" (*Nữ vương Việt Nam ngự trên trời*) which was exhibited in 1953 in Phát Diệm town (Kim 2021). The painting depicted the Virgin Mary holding her infant son and wearing Vietnamese robes, and it was then brought to Rome by Lê Hữu Từ, a bishop of Phát Diệm Diocese, in that same year. This was eventually exhibited in the Foyer Phát Diệm in Rome (Kim 2021). Some other artists also portrayed Mary and Jesus with Vietnamese appearances in paintings for Christmas. Such works were the "Holy Night" (*Đêm Thánh*) by Nguyễn Gia Trí in 1941, and the "Christmas" (*Giáng sinh*) painting by Hoàng Tích Chu and Nguyễn Tiến Chung from around 1942–1943 (Nguyễn 2010; Phạm 2016). The "Vietnamization" of the Virgin Mary in terms of art, therefore, already took place at that time.

Nonetheless, an important event in the localization of the statue of Our Lady of La Vang was the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Being the most important Catholic ecclesial event in the twentieth century, the Second Vatican Council issued sixteen documents (four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations) to direct issues concerning Catholic relationships inside and outside the Church in modern times. Among those issues, the Second Vatican Council was especially aware of the importance of inculturation during the course of evangelization. Given that, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World that this council promulgated encouraged that the Church should understand different cultures and effectively deploy materials from such cultures in order to not only "spread" but also "explain" Christian messages to people living in various settings (Paul VI 1965).

As the Catholic hierarchy promoted the above spirit of the Second Vatican Council and acknowledged the destiny of the Vietnamese Catholic Church in the country, the transformation of the Virgin Mary into a local manifestation was in keeping with efforts to integrate Catholicism into Vietnamese culture. Catholic priest Trương Bá Cần, in a paper published in 1969, questioned why Catholicism was not Vietnamized in Vietnam yet, though it had been introduced to Vietnam 300 years earlier (Trương 1969: 16). He explained that one of main reasons behind that situation could possibly be attributed to Catholic intellectuals (*yếu tố trí thức*) (Trương 1969: 16), those who upheld Western theological education. Relying heavily on such education and emphasizing the importance of the Vietnamese vernacular (*quốc ngữ*) lead to the fact that many Catholic missionaries and intellectuals underestimated local civilization and ignored the literature of the literati (*văn chương thi phú của nho sĩ*) in Vietnam (Trương 1969: 25–26). As a result, according to Cần's point of view, Vietnamese Catholics could not produce statements following the Vietnamese style (*lối phát biểu của người Việt Nam*) (Trương 1969: 26). Starting in the early 1970s, some

other Vietnamese Catholics also drew attention to the complexity of the Vietnamization of Catholicism, in the sense that it required that one first define Vietnamese characteristics (Nhà Chúa 1973: 1).

Regarding the Vietnamization of Catholic statues, an overseas Vietnamese priest, Trần Tam Tỉnh, said that there were contested debates about Western statues of the Virgin Mary in Vietnam before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Some Catholic lay intellectuals (*giáo dân trí thức*) even requested that the Vietnamese Catholic Church should abandon Marian pictures and statues with a Western presentation (blue eyes, pointed nose, and blonde hair), which were imported from Western countries (Trần 1974: 47). Overriding that opinion, a Catholic priest confirmed that these portraits and statues were Catholic art that transcended national boundaries. Lay people were encouraged to focus on their responsibility rather than intervening in the tasks of the Catholic hierarchy (Trần 1974: 47).

Nonetheless, some people still hoped that the Second Vatican Council would create an opportunity for the Vietnamization of Catholicism (Trần 1974: 47). Tỉnh, for instance, hoped for this, and he defined the Vietnamization of Catholicism as not an ambiguous return to the past, but instead an intentional rediscovery of the national characteristics of Vietnamese culture and art and their application in Catholic liturgy and art. This process, he argued, could help Vietnamese Catholics set themselves apart from the Western context (Trần 1974: 52).

In the case of Our Lady of La Vang, in 1968, an article in the *Journal of Our Lady of Perpetual Help* proposed an idea to sculpt a new statue for Our Lady of La Vang in local form. This idea was based on an argument that although the Virgin Mary was originally a Jew, after Catholicism had spread to many different parts of the world, she had been depicted in many different forms, such as Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Russian (Anonymous 1968: 267). The Virgin Mary could therefore be depicted as the Mother of Vietnam with a Vietnamese face, body, and adornments (Anonymous 1968: 267). Though we do not know whose idea this was, it is obvious that someone had already begun a quest to transform the statue of Our Lady of La Vang into a Vietnamese style.

This move to integrate the Church into Vietnamese society that was underway in South Vietnam was intensified in the years following the end of the Vietnam War. In post-1975 unified Vietnam, the Catholic authorities in Vietnam mobilized Catholics to collaborate with the new regime under the leadership of the Communist Party and contribute to building a new society (Denney 1990: 282). The Vietnamese Catholic community was represented in this process as an inextricable part of the nation (*một thành phần của cộng đồng dân tộc*) (Nguyễn 1976: 57).

This trend of incorporating Catholics into the nation was supported actively by Archbishop Nguyễn Văn Bình of the Saigon Archdiocese. On the occasion of the national day of Vietnam, 2 September 1975, Archbishop Bình issued a public letter to direct Catholic engagement in the course of nation-building. In this letter, he used the term "Vietnamese Catholics" (*người Việt Nam Công giáo*) when he called upon Catholics to affiliate with the nation and construct an earthly life (*xây dựng trần thế*) (Nguyễn 1975a: 8–9). The term "*người Việt Nam Công giáo*" in the discourse of the Vietnamese language means that Vietnamese Catholic believers are Vietnamese

first and Catholics second. This could be distinct from the term "Catholic Vietnamese" (*người Công giáo Việt Nam*) which emphasizes the Catholic characteristic of each believer. To highlight nationality, in the greeting speech for the Conference of Unification of the Country in November 1975, Archbishop Bình said that Vietnamese unity is a natural truth because from north to south every person speaks the same language and participates in a common national culture. To set the Vietnamese Catholic community as one part of the national unity, Archbishop Bình called Vietnamese Catholics "Vietnamese Catholic compatriots" (*đồng bào Việt Nam Công giáo*) (Nguyễn 1975b: 2). Such a discourse stimulated the trend of Vietnamization in the Catholic community. Along with motivating Catholic affiliation with the nation, news reporters of the daily newspaper *Catholicism and the Nation* (*Công giáo và Dân tộc*) under a patriotic Catholic group also used the illustration of the Virgin Mary wearing a robe and headscarf in Vietnamese female style (Nguyễn 1975–1976: 10).

Beyond Vietnam, there were also developments in these years that promoted the inculturation of Catholicism. Starting in 1970 with the establishment of the Federation of Asian Bishop Conferences (FABC), the messages of the Second Vatican Council were promoted among Asian Catholic communities. In the first assembly in 1974, the FABC discussed how to construct a local church in the Asian indigenous contexts (Nguyen 2017b: 183). In 1980, Vietnamese bishops organized the bishop conference. This conference launched a general pastoral letter to keep promoting the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and the FABC. It called for the construction of the Church for the whole of humankind, but also motivated Catholic integration in the national context. The letter moreover urged believers to foster a lifestyle and a way of expressing their faith in the course of the national tradition. The pastoral letter required Vietnamese Catholics to understand the Bible and theology. At the same time, they were encouraged to deepen and explore the values of the traditions of every ethnic group, and then adapt these values to both their lifestyle and religion (Hội đồng Giám mục Việt Nam 2017).

Meanwhile, the great pilgrimage festivals of La Vang in 1981, 1984, and 1987 took place on a limited scale (Nguyễn n.d.: 183). However, starting around 1990, the great pilgrimage festivals of La Vang became more vibrant with thousands of participants because the Vietnamese Communist Party and the government of Vietnam implemented a more tolerant policy toward religious affairs (Nguyễn n.d.: 188). In 1993, many Vietnamese overseas Catholics visited the La Vang shrine and participated in the twenty-third great pilgrimage festival. The logo of this festival presented Our Lady of La Vang holding Jesus in her right hand. This was slightly different from the presentation of Our Lady of Victories (Nguyễn n.d.: 189; Trần 2021b). In 1994, the Holy See ordained Nguyễn Như Thể as an apostolic bishop of the Hue Archdiocese, and he was ordained as archbishop of this archdiocese in March 1998. Nguyễn Như Thể actively promoted Catholic inculturation in the La Vang site. In 1996, the logo of the festival illustrated Our Lady of La Vang as a Vietnamese woman wearing a robe and head scarf, and it depicted the baby Jesus as a Vietnamese child (Trần 2021b). This logo must been reviewed by the festival organizing committee under the leadership of bishop Thể. Participants in the festival in 1996 also wore clothes in style of the dynasties of old and performed the ritual celebration of Our

Lady of La Vang like the Nam Giao ritual offering to Heaven carried out by the last Vietnamese dynasty, the Nguyễn dynasty (Trần 2021b).

Also in 1994, Vietnamese-American Catholics in Orange County made a statue of Our Lady of La Vang that is called "Our Lady of Vietnam." This statue is in the form of a Vietnamese woman with a robe and rounded headdress. It was sculpted by a Vietnamese-American Catholic sculptor named Van Nhan (Ninh 2017: 74). The establishment of diplomatic relations between the US and Vietnam in 1995 enhanced the contacts between Vietnamese-American Catholics with their counterparts in Vietnam (Ninh 2017: 76). In this context, the exchange of ideas concerning the representation of Our Lady of La Vang occurred. Van Nhan showed the statue of "Our Lady of Vietnam" to Vietnamese priests when they visited Orange County in the mid-1990s and the information about this statue reached bishop Nguyễn Như Thể (Ninh 2017: 76–77).

The climax of the localization of Our Lady of La Vang's representation took place in conjunction with the Vietnamese Catholic church's preparations for the 200th anniversary of the Marian apparition at the La Vang site. Bishop Nguyễn Như Thể set three major tasks to promote Catholic inculturation with the events for the anniversary: building a new statue of Our Lady of La Vang, showcasing music and performance in liturgy, and decorating a stage for ritual performances (Trần n.d.: 232). A new statue of Our Lady of La Vang was created at this time, a time when Vietnamese Catholics acknowledged that the old statue was not suitable because it did not communicate a local sense of identity. There was a sense that a new statue should not be presented in the style of Our Lady of Victories which depicted Mary the style of a royal queen in her palace (Trần n.d.: 233). On February 24, 1998, Vietnamese bishops organized a meeting in Hanoi. They argued that the statue of Our Lady of La Vang followed the model of Our Lady of Victories in Paris and that it was no longer suitable as other models of Our Lady of La Vang had started to appear and that this would confuse believers. Vietnamese bishops demanded a new model for the statue of Our Lady of La Vang and one that must be created by a Vietnamese artist. Further, they stated that the new statute should present characteristics of both a compassionate and majestic mother (Trần 2021c).

Archbishop Nguyễn Như Thể and other Vietnamese bishops then invited Van Nhan to make a new statue of Our Lady of La Vang (Ninh 2017: 77). Beginning in March 1998, this archbishop consulted with Van Nhan through the entire process of creating a new Our Lady of La Vang statue. This bishop also shared the main ideas of the style of the new statute in which Our Lady of La Vang wears a blue robe with a yellow collar, along with a rounded scarf on her head, and light-yellow heels. She holds her son Jesus on her arm, and her head leans slightly toward his head. This shape implies that Our Lady of La Vang and her son are congenial. Our Lady of La Vang stans on green grass surrounded by white clouds while Jesus wears pink clothes with symbols of Alpha and Omega on his chest (Trần 2021c).

There were two such statues created by Van Nhan under this guidance. On July 1, 1998, Pope John Paul II blessed these statutes of Our Lady of La Vang. One of them was brought back to the US, while the other was taken to Vietnam. On August

1, 1998, the Vietnamese Bishop Conference officially recognized this statue as the official statue of Our Lady of La Vang (Trần 2021c).

6.5 Conclusion

The localization of Our Lady of La Vang was a process that involved multiple agents over the course of time. Starting in the early twentieth century, writers documented the stories of Our Lady of La Vang. These documents established details of her biography that not only gave rise to a vivid picture of Our Lady of La Vang in local communities but also brought her to the lives of local people.

Perpetuating the achievements and deeds of Our Lady of La Vang through publications and rituals developed shared knowledge. Alongside the oral stories and written documents about Our Lady of La Vang, the advance in transportation based on the railway contributed to establishing a network for devout pilgrims to visit the La Vang site. These pilgrims in turn played an active role retelling the stories of Our Lady of La Vang for the next generations, thereby revitalizing her achievements and deeds in local settings. Moreover, the writers and Catholic authorities kept discussing Our Lady of La Vang and began to refer to her as a common mother of all Vietnamese with the aim of soliciting local people to construct the La Vang shrine, serve nation-building, and establish a religious identity for Vietnamese Catholics. The discourses that emerged bonded the thoughts and emotions of Vietnamese Catholics with Our Lady of La Vang as a mother of the Vietnamese.

Such a change in the perception toward Our Lady of La Vang was a significant motivation behind the transformation of her portrait into a local form. That transformation became much more realistic after the Second Vatican Council's messages were introduced to the Vietnamese Catholic community. Indeed, Vietnamese Catholic authorities boosted inculturation in many aspects of Catholic practices including art creation in light of this council. Here, both domestic and overseas Vietnamese Catholics recognized that her statute followed the model of Our Lady of Victories and sought to transform it into Vietnamese style, and as a Vietnamese mother. The transformation of the statue of Our Lady of La Vang was thus the product of the collective efforts of multiple agents, particularly Vietnamese Catholics from both inside and outside of Vietnam.

Further, we believe that our research has provided sufficient evidence to call into question the idea that Mother Goddess worship played a substantial role in navigating the localization/Vietnamization of Our Lady of La Vang in Vietnam during the course of history. While some scholars from the 1990s onwards strived to find out the interrelation between Mother Goddess worship and Our Lady of La Vang, there is no solid evidence that demonstrates that Mother Goddess worship facilitated the localization of Our Lady of La Vang in Vietnam.

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Chapter 7
Another Kind of Vietnamization: Language Policies in Higher Education in the Two Vietnams

Hieu Nam Trung Le

7.1 Introduction

The reform and expansion of higher education was a priority for both of Vietnam's postcolonial regimes, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the nation's north and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in the south. "Vietnamization," or the adoption of Vietnamese as the language of instruction, was seen as a central part of that reform. Symbolically, it would mark a break with the colonial era, where higher education had been offered exclusively in French; practically, it would democratize education by making it accessible to more Vietnamese and facilitating the expansion of the university system. Yet despite working from the same colonial-era base and sharing many motives and goals, the two regimes pursued Vietnamization by very different means and on very different timelines.

This chapter consists of five parts: the first part discusses relevant scholarship and the sources and methods used in this study. The second introduces the language policy during the colonial period, focusing particularly on university-level education. The third part traces the decline of instruction in Hán-Nôm and the rise of *quốc ngữ*. The fourth and fifth parts discuss the transformation of university education in the DRV and the RVN, respectively.

This chapter argues that the history of the Vietnamization of higher education reflects the different political systems of the two regimes. In the DRV, Vietnamization was initiated by the central authorities and carried out by decree; nevertheless, government policy did not always reflect reality as educators were challenged to translate vocabulary and curriculums into the new language of instruction. By contrast, in the RVN, Vietnamization was shaped by the efforts of individual educators and linguists, associations, and student participation. In this sense, policy followed the

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_7

evolving reality in the classroom and on university campuses. Exploring the process of Vietnamization thus sheds light on a crucial aspect of the process of decolonization and highlights the very different paths to independence taken by the two Vietnams between 1945 and 1975.

7.2 Scholarship, Sources, and Methods

While much has been written on the colonial language policy established by the French in Vietnam, the problem of language in colonial higher education has received little attention. Short discussions of the topic can be found in works by Vũ (1985), Trịnh (2019), and Nguyễn (2020). In general, these works balance praise and criticism of the university system in Indochina. As such, they provide a useful baseline for the discussion of the reform efforts of the postcolonial regimes.

Scholarship on the DRV's language policy in university education dates to the 1980s and 1990s, with much of it produced by educators and policymakers who participated in educational reform after 1954. Although these works exhibit a generally positive attitude toward the DRV's educational policies, they also reveal the difficulties of the process of the nationalization of educational in the face of structural obstacles. However, they do little to analyze these obstacles, particularly the problem of developing new scientific terminology. Later work by Vietnamese linguists such as Lê (2015) shed light on the process of developing new scientific vocabularies, but does not go into detail for the RVN, with the result that important achievements and figures are ignored.

After the emergence in the 1960s and early 1970s of monographs about South Vietnam's educational system, the 1980s saw almost no books on the topic. Increasing interest in the topic, however, was shown in the 1990s when scholars began to debate the merits and limits of education in the RVN. Researchers in Vietnam were generally critical of the RNV's education and language policy while praising the development of education in Communist-controlled areas and the struggles of activists in the south's cities. An example is Trần et al.'s (1995) *A Rough Outline of 30 Years of Education in the South* (*Sơ thảo 30 năm giáo dục miền Nam*), a collection of articles by educators active in the south before 1975. Outside of Vietnam, researchers have painted a more positive picture of education in the RVN. Olga Dror's *Making Two Vietnams: War and Youth Identities* (2018) takes an explicitly comparative perspective, highlighting the uniformity and ideological domination of DRV education, in comparison with the RVN's republicanism and diversity. Her views echo those of scholars like Nguyễn (2006) and Trần (2014). In *University Education in South Vietnam before 1975* (*Nền giáo dục đại học ở miền Nam Việt Nam trước năm 1975*), Nguyễn (2014) focuses specifically on university education, highlighting the autonomous and liberal nature of the RVN's universities and aspects of superiority to its counterpart to the north. However, none of these studies focus specifically on language policy. At the same time, they emphasize the role of student protests and downplay the contributions of professors and scholars in driving educational reform.

This chapter is based on a mix of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include government documents accessed online and through the national archive system, journals, memoirs and accounts by participants in the Vietnamization process, and interviews. Secondary sources include publications by the Ministry of Education and Training, publications by universities and other institutions, monographs, research articles, and dissertations. Sources are mostly in Vietnamese and translations are by the author.

7.3 Colonial Educational Policy

The first language school set up by the French colonial regime was the School of Interpreters (Collège des Interprètes/Trường Thông ngôn), founded in 1862 to train interpreters for the French Army. The school's programs were taught in French and Vietnamese, with Vietnamese written in *quốc ngữ*, the Romanized script, rather than Hán-Nôm, the logographic writing system. 1906 saw the establishment of the University of Indochina (Université Indochinoise/Đại học Đông Dương). This institution was modeled on French universities and used French as the language of instruction. It reflected a consensus among both French and Vietnamese intellectuals and policymakers that primary and secondary education should be carried out in the vernacular, while tertiary education should be in French (Trịnh 2019). Lecturers were recruited from either the French School of the Far East (l'École française d'Extrême-Orient) or the University of Paris (Université de Paris). The French university education in its early days in Indochina has been criticized by recent scholars as "not better than high school education" (Nguyễn 2020). The university was closed after only a few years, perhaps because of its low enrollment rate (Legrandjacques 2018).

Almost a decade later, in 1917, university education in French Indochina was revived when Governor-General Albert Sarraut reestablished the University of Indochina, which would serve as the only university-level institution in French Indochina until the end of the colonial period. According to Nguyễn (2020), only the university's College of Medicine taught at a level comparable to the metropole. She attributes this outcome to political considerations, noting that colleges were regarded with suspicion by the colonial authorities.

French remained the sole official language of university instruction throughout the colonial period. Trần Văn Chánh notes, "except for the first three grades of primary education, French was still the official teaching language; Vietnamese language just played a subordinate role" (2019: 19). Bùi Khánh Thế (1976) even claimed it was illegal for teachers and professors to speak Vietnamese in class, and that doing so could lead to severe consequences. However, I have found no historical evidence to support this claim. But whatever may have been the case inside the classroom, outside the University of Indochina, Vietnamese society was vigorously struggling to prepare for a national education system.

7.4 From Hán Nôm to *Quốc Ngữ*

The Vietnamese had a long-established higher education system, dating back to 1076 when the Imperial Academy (Quốc Tử Giám) was established. The feudal examination and education system was regulated and developed during the Trần dynasty, with a national exam held every ten years and the establishment of government and private academies for both nobles and commoners. The traditional education and examination system was developed further under the Lê dynasty and reached its apogee under the Nguyễn. While the system was abolished in Cochinchina after the French conquest, it remained popular in Annam and Tonkin well into the twentieth century. It is worth noting that in 1906, the first class of the University of Indochina had ninety-four students, while 6121 registered for the traditional civil service examinations (Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội 2019). Although the number of students enrolled in traditional education gradually declined in the years that followed, it was only in 1918 that the civil service examinations were officially abolished, leaving the field of higher education to the French language.

The termination of the traditional education system coincided with "a vibrant ambience of ideological struggles in the early twentieth century," when government officials, traditionally trained scholars, French-educated intellectuals, the youth, and the masses vigorously debated educational reform (Vũ 1985). Progressive scholars such as Phan Bội Châu, Lương Văn Can, and others vigorously promoted educational reforms and novel approaches for education and the adoption of *quốc ngữ* through vehicles like the Duy Tân (Restoration) movement, the Tonkin Free School (Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục), and the *Textbook for the New Learning of Civilization* (*Văn minh tân học sách*). For such activists, *quốc ngữ* was a means to increase literacy and awaken a spirit of nationalism during a period of heavy feudal and colonial repression (Đào 2018).

At the same time, the French also promoted the use of *quốc ngữ* in the education system at the primary and secondary level. For them, popular literacy would serve to promote obedience and loyalty toward France (Nguyễn 2020). The popularity of *quốc ngữ* increased particularly during the period of the Popular Front government after 1936. That period saw communist activists like Võ Nguyên Giáp and Trần Huy Liệu collaborate with well-known intellectuals like Phan Thanh, Nguyễn Văn Tố, Trần Trọng Kim, and Đặng Thai Mai to establish the Quốc Ngữ Popularization Society (Hội Truyền bá Quốc Ngữ) in 1937 (Lê 2018b). In this way, *quốc ngữ* gradually became more popular as a language of instruction and in society more generally.

Nevertheless, to serve as a language of higher education, Vietnamese had to incorporate the entirely new vocabularies embedded in modern education. *Southern Breeze* (*Nam Phong tạp chí*), a journal established in 1917, was the first to take up such responsibility, publishing scientific discussions and debates in *quốc ngữ*. It is worth noting the existence of two opposing positions, with some scholars advocating the translation of new terms from the French, and others like Dương Quảng Hàm, Vũ Công Nghi, Nguyễn Ứng, and Nguyễn Triệu Luật promoting the translation of terms from Chinese (Trần 2002). The 1930s saw the appearance of the first two scientific

journals in Vietnamese, one in Tonkin and the other in Cochinchina: *Science Journal* (*Khoa học tạp chí*) and *Popular Science* (*Khoa học phổ thông*) (Hà 2018). At the same time, the publication of dictionaries like Đào Duy Anh's *Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary* (*Hán Việt từ điển*) in 1932 and the *French-Vietnamese Dictionary* (*Pháp-Việt từ điển*) in 1936 helped build a bridge between traditional and modern education (Kiều 2019). 1942 saw the publication of Hoàng Xuân Hãn's *Scientific Vocabulary* (*Danh từ khoa học*) as well as a work of the same name by Đào Duy Tiến. Other important publications include *Plant Vocabulary* (*Danh từ thực vật*) by Nguyễn Hữu Quán and Lê Văn Căn published in 1945 and *Medical Vocabulary* (*Danh từ y học*) by Lê Khắc Thiền and Phạm Khắc Quảng published in 1951. Of these, however, it is Hoàng Xuân Hãn's *Scientific Vocabulary* that had the greatest influence, providing the foundation for using Vietnamese as the sole language of instruction (Lê 2015; Dương 2000).

The first opportunity came during World War II. On 9 March 1945, the Japanese initiated a coup d'état, ending French authority and returning nominal independence to Emperor Bảo Đại and a government under the authority of Trần Trọng Kim. As Minister of Education and Fine Arts, Hoàng Xuân Hãn designed and executed the first educational program in *quốc ngữ*. For the first time, the Hoàng Xuân Hãn or "I-tờ" program allowed students to study and take exams for the Baccalaureate in Vietnamese. Although the reform only applied to primary and secondary education, nevertheless, it is a milestone in the process of establishing and nationalizing a Vietnamese education system, setting the stage for educational reforms to come.

7.5 Language Policy in Higher Education in the DRV

Even before independence in 1945, Vietnamese communists had already established the principles of national education. A key document was the *Outline of Vietnamese Culture* (*Đề cương về văn hóa Việt Nam*), approved at a meeting of the Party Central Standing Committee in February 1943. The document established three guiding principles: "nationalization (against all subjugating and colonizing influences in order for Vietnamese culture to develop independently), popularization (against all activities and policies aimed to make the culture counterproductive to or isolated from the masses), and scientification (against all things causing the culture to be reactionary and unscientific)." On the issue of language, the *Outline* called on academics to "Fight for the spoken language and script," and specifically to "(1) unite and enrich our spoken language; (2) set the rules of grammar; and (3) reform *quốc ngữ*" (Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam 2000). The *Outline* guided the formulation and implementation of education policy for the new state.

The fledgling state moved immediately to turn plans into action. Six days following the declaration of independence, on 9 September 1945, President Hồ Chí Minh signed three important directives related to the new national education. Directive No. 17-SL established a General Education Department (Nha Bình dân Học vụ). Directive No. 19-SL established nighttime classes for the working class. Directive

No. 20-SL declared that while waiting for the establishment of compulsory elementary education, the learning of *quốc ngữ* would be mandatory and free for everyone (Trần et al. 1995). In the weeks that followed, President Hồ Chí Minh worked with Minister of National Education Vũ Đình Hòe and prominent French-educated intellectuals like Nguyễn Văn Huyên, Ngụy Như Kontum, and Hồ Hữu Tường to develop a three-point plan: (1) eradicating illiteracy in one year; (2) abolishing teaching in French and, instead, use Vietnamese as the language of instruction at every educational level including university; and (3) quickly executing the educational reform plan.

A key element of the plan was the reopening of universities and colleges. The government established a Department of University Education with Nguyễn Văn Huyên at its head. In November 1945, the government officially reopened the University of Medicine, Faculty of Pharmacy, Faculty of Dentistry, College of Science, College of Fine Arts, College of Agriculture, and the Veterinary College. A series of decrees in late 1945 and early 1946 granted universities financial autonomy and improved their administrative capacities. While implementation sometimes lagged, and no new students were enrolled in 1945, nevertheless, the evidence is clear that the DRV made educational reform a priority, developed clear guiding principles for reform, and moved decisively to create a new national education system.

Another element that emerges from the meetings of August and September 1945 is the determination to use Vietnamese as the sole language of instruction. This was reflected not only in the decrees that followed, but also in the 1946 negotiations, ultimately fruitless, held to find a means of accommodating an independent Vietnam within a French-led Union. Vietnamese delegates, notably Nguyễn Văn Huyên, fought vigorously for the right to administer their own universities and academies, with Vietnamese as the only official language of instruction (Vũ 2015: 287).

Meanwhile, DRV officials had already begun to realize the policy. The new National University opened on 15 November 1945, staffed by eminent scholars like Nguyễn Văn Huyên and Nguyễn Mạnh Tường. Other faculty, such as Ngụy Như Kontum, Nguyễn Văn Thiêm, Đào Duy Anh, Đỗ Xuân Hợp, Hồ Đắc Di, Đỗ Tất Lợi, and Đặng Vũ Hủy had only just returned from France (Vạn 2017). Courses on the ancient history of Vietnam and Vietnamese literature were taught for the first time ever in Vietnamese, arousing great excitement among students (Lê 2018a, b). The Law University was reformed, and an entirely new University of Literature was founded. However, this period of rapid progress was interrupted when negotiations between the DRV and France collapsed, triggering the outbreak of hostilities in late 1946.

Wartime put serious constraints on the development of national education. The DRV's universities and colleges were moved out of Hanoi and relocated to rural or mountainous areas. While the University of Medicine continued to operate and new classes in general mathematics were opened, the University of Literature and the College of Sciences were closed. By 1951, higher education had been consolidated in three locations: Việt Bắc (the DRV's resistance base in the north), Liên khu IV

(Inter-Zone IV), and Khu Học xá Trung ương (Central Campus) in Nanning, China (Bộ giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995).

Officially, Vietnamese was the language of instruction for all general and higher education (Ngô and Đỗ 2008). However, the lack of qualified instructors and the challenge of translating vocabulary into Vietnamese meant the reality was more complex. The issue is illustrated by the College of Medicine, which, as one of the few surviving tertiary institutions, brought together the majority of Vietnamese professors at the time. The college's courses continued to be based on the French curriculum. Professors found it hard to use Vietnamese to teach, so most of them lectured in French, or code-mixed, using a few words in Vietnamese. According to the memoir of Associate Professor Trần Quang Vỹ, clinical teaching and medical record teaching were conducted in French, and students and instructors only spoke Vietnamese with patients. Similarly, surviving class notes of students were written 100% in French (Đại học Y Hà Nội 2003). One exception was an anatomy textbook compiled by Professor Đỗ Xuân Hợp in 1952. His textbook, the first of its kind in Vietnamese, remains the foundation for the current system of Vietnamese medical terms (Đại học Y Hà Nội 2017). Thus, despite government decrees, new institutions, and the best efforts of scholars and educators, higher education in Vietnam in the period 1945–1956 remained deeply influenced by its French colonial predecessor.

The end of the First Indochina War in 1954 and the DRV's consolidation of control over the country's north set the stage for the expansion and reorganization of the existing university system. On 4 June 1956, the government issued Decision No. 2184/TC establishing five universities: Polytechnic University (Đại học Bách khoa), Normal University (Đại học Sư phạm), Medical University (Đại học Y Dược), University of Agriculture and Forestry (Đại học Nông Lâm), and General University of Hanoi (Đại học Tổng hợp Hà Nội). These new institutions in turn developed new programs and courses: the number of higher education programs offered rose from ten in 1955 to 184 in 1971 (Bộ giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995). This inevitably exacerbated the problems of translating vocabulary and compiling textbooks. While programs in the humanities and social sciences could often function without recourse to foreign languages, programs in science and technology continued to pose a challenge. Typical was the Polytechnic University where its academic staff consulted and translated foreign materials to compile textbooks to immediately support learning and researching activities (Khoa Toán-Cơ-Tin học 2011). Lecturers and students alike encountered many new terms that they had to study and "figure out by trial and error" (Hội Cựu sinh viên toán Bách Khoa 2016). Once again, much of the burden fell to individual instructors. The field of geology in Vietnam, for example, is indebted to the work of Professor Nguyễn Văn Chiến, who not only taught most of the program's courses, but also compiled a dictionary of geological terms that, like Đỗ Xuân Hợp's anatomy textbook, continues to provide the foundation for studies in geology in Vietnam (Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội 2008).

The rapid expansion of higher education underlined the need for a centralized and systematic approach to the problem of translation. One turning point was the creation in 1959 of the Governmental Science Committee (Uỷ ban Khoa học Nhà nước). The Committee, which had authority and duties equivalent to a ministry,

provided the government with guidance on all matters related to science and technology. Its Terminology—Dictionary Team (Tổ thuật ngữ—Từ điển) would provide impetus and guidance for translation efforts in higher education. In 1960, the History-Geography-Literature Committee (Ban Sử Địa Văn) published the document "Temporary Regulations on the Rules to Compile Terms in the Natural Sciences" (Quy định tạm thời về nguyên tắc biên soạn danh từ khoa học tự nhiên). These regulations served as a framework until 1964, when a national conference on scientific terminology produced the authoritative "Rules for Translating Foreign Scientific Terms (of Indo-European origin) into Vietnamese" (Quy tắc phiên thuật ngữ Khoa học nước ngoài [gốc Ấn-Âu] ra tiếng Việt), hereafter referred to as "the Rules."

The publication of the Rules was followed in May 1965 by the Conference to Consult Opinions about the Use of Scientific Terminology (Hội nghị trưng cầu ý kiến về việc sử dụng thuật ngữ khoa học) and the creation of the Council of the Science of Terminology and Dictionaries (Hội đồng Thuật ngữ—Từ điển khoa học), chaired by Professor Nguyễn Khánh Toàn and including eminent scientists such as Tạ Quang Bửu, Nguyễn Văn Chiển, Quang Đạm, Trần Văn Giàu, and Ngụy Như Kontum. On 10 October 1965, the Council announced a project, hereafter referred to as "the Project," that would see the Vietnamese Institute of Social Sciences (Viện Khoa học Xã hội Việt Nam) rapidly and systematically apply the Rules to Vietnamese scientific vocabulary. The results were immediate. The following year, in June 1966, the Institute announced the initial application of the Rules, consisting of fifteen groups of terms with roughly 25,000 words. Thus, these two important initiatives, the Rules and the Project, paved the way for the rapid building of Vietnamese scientific terminology in the mid-1960s.

At the same time, the state also moved to nationalize and standardize the textbooks and curricula used in higher education. Using the heuristic of Minister Tạ Quang Bửu's "Three Best Principles" (Chủ trương ba nhất; "most basic, most updated, closest to the reality of Vietnam"), Ministry of Education officials convened dozens of meetings to examine how to modernize the curricula of programs in basic science and technology. Their efforts eventually resulted in the Ministry's Course Secretariat (Ban Thư ký môn học) with the responsibility of developing curricula, compiling and reviewing textbooks, and developing human resources. The Course Secretariat played a vital role in maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and learning despite the escalating war (Bộ giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995).

Taken together, the centralization and standardization of vocabulary, curricula, and textbooks transformed education in the DRV in the 1960s. This is seen most clearly in the change in academic publishing. Whereas from 1956 to 1965, most textbooks had either been based on French originals or were translated versions of Soviet undergraduate textbooks, from 1965 onward, the output of the Ministry of Education's publishing house consisted primarily of texts compiled by Vietnamese universities, supplemented by selective translations of well-known textbooks from the USSR, France, and the USA (Bộ giáo dục và Đào tạo 1995).

In short, using top-down, centralized control, between 1945 and 1965 the DRV was able to create a truly national education system, taught entirely in Vietnamese. It may be that the system was shaped by ideological concerns and suffered from rigidity and

conformism which, as Dror (2018) argues, may have produced "disastrous" results after 1975. Yet the achievements of early generations of Vietnamese officials and academics in the face of enormous challenges remain undeniable and worthy of study.

7.6 Language Policy in Higher Education in the RVN

Much like its counterpart to the north, the RVN government sought to create the basis for an independent, anti-colonial, and national education system. Yet here, change would be led from below rather than above. Initial progress toward building a truly post-colonial education system was slow. In 1949, following the establishment of the State of Vietnam (État du Viêt-Nam), a bilateral cultural agreement on 30 December 1949 resulted in the University of Indochina being renamed the French-Vietnamese Joint University (Université Mixte Franco-Vietnamienne), also known as University of Hanoi (Université de Hanoi). Little changed, however. The university was headed by a French rector directly appointed by the French president. In Saigon, an affiliate was created under the authority of a Vietnamese vice rector. The teaching staff was largely French, though the figure for Vietnamese faculty members showed a considerable increase (Nguyen 1965). After the signing of the Geneva Accords, and the withdrawal of French and pro-French forces to the south, the French-Vietnamese Joint University moved to Saigon and merged with its Saigon-based affiliate. On 11 May 1955, the French-Vietnamese Joint University was transferred to the jurisdiction of the government of the State of Vietnam and renamed the National University of Vietnam (Viện Đại học Quốc gia Việt Nam). Under the RVN government, in 1957 it was renamed Saigon University (Viện Đại học Sài Gòn). The same year also saw the establishment of Hue University. Even so, French influence in higher education remained strong. Decree No. 1 (Nghị định số 1), issued on 20 October 1955, set out the principles of university administration during the transitional period: in essence, French enrollment policies, the organization of the university-faculty system, and the examination and grading system remained. Initially, academic staff were mainly French and would be gradually replaced by French-educated Vietnamese counterparts (Nguyễn and Lưu 2021; Bộ Quốc gia Giáo dục 1960).

Against the backdrop of gradual change, however, the RVN was establishing the basic principles of a new national education. The 1956 Constitution generally placed an emphasis on the universal, compulsory, and gratis nature of South Vietnam's general education and created a favorable legal framework for the development of private universities and professional colleges (Quốc hội lập hiến Việt Nam Cộng hòa 1956). Nonetheless, it was not until under the administration of Minister of National Education Trần Hữu Thể (1958–1960) that principles of a new education for the Vietnamese were established. On the occasion of the First Congress of National Education (Đại hội Giáo dục Quốc gia lần thứ nhất) held in Saigon in 1958, the "humanistic, nationalistic, emancipatory" motto was introduced, becoming the basic tenets of the Republic of Vietnam's educational system. Following the 1963 coup d'état, these

guiding principles were modified into "humanistic, nationalistic, scientific" (*nhân bản, dân tộc, khoa học*). This modified version was maintained in Article 11 of the second Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam in 1967 (Quốc hội lập hiến Việt Nam Cộng hòa 1967). However, the Educational and Cultural Policy (*Chính sách văn hóa giáo dục*) published by the Republic of Vietnam's Council of Culture and Education in 1972, returned to the former tenets of education—humanistic, nationalistic, emancipatory—with clear explanations for each principle (Việt Nam Cộng hòa Hội đồng Văn hóa Giáo dục 1972).

Whether emancipatory or scientific or both, the question remained how exactly to translate these ideals into reality and to forge a truly national university system, taught by Vietnamese in the Vietnamese language. As in the DRV, the problem of translating foreign scientific vocabulary, in this case mainly French, into Vietnamese was an enormous challenge. However, unlike in the DRV, the work of translation would occur largely free from central control. Before 1955, the National University of Vietnam still used French as the instructional language in all faculties, except the Saigon College of Literature (Đại học Văn khoa Saigon) and the Teachers College (Cao đẳng Sư phạm). At the College of Law (Trường Luật), thanks to the efforts of Acting Dean Professor Vũ Quốc Thúc and his colleagues such as Nguyễn Cao Hách and Professor Vũ Văn Mẫu, Vietnamese was used as the instructional language from the 1955–56 academic year (Lê 2010). However, other courses and programs remained taught in French, often by French professors. To be specific, along with 300 French professors and teachers serving in seven secondary schools (Lycée) and a community of 17,000 French citizens across the South, forty French professo rs still taught at universities in Saigon and Hue at least until the late 1950s (Annunziata 1967). The overwhelming influence of French colonial education probably began to attenuate when the RVN sent its officials and students to the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries to study (Lê 2011). However, the Ministry of Education of the RVN continued to delay the switch of languages at the tertiary level until 1961–1962 and required more time for a consensus on translated scientific nouns to be reached (Bộ Quốc gia Giáo dục Việt Nam Cộng hòa 1965: 2803).

In response, Vietnamese professors and scholars took the lead in building up the Vietnamese system of scientific nouns. In 1960, the Scientific Vocabulary Compilation Committee (Ủy Ban Soạn Thảo Danh Từ Khoa Học), led by Professor Lê Văn Thới of the College of Science, Saigon University, was established (Tiểu ban Mỹ thuật 1973). There were sub-committees for each discipline: mathematics, physics, chemistry, flora, fauna, etc. As a result, in 1962, the first volume of the series *Scientific Vocabulary* (*Danh từ khoa học*), supervised by Professor Lê Văn Thới, was published. It can be said that it was Professor Lê Văn Thới who furthered the legacy of Vietnamese progenitors like Hoàng Xuân Hãn and Đào Văn Tiến and established the general principles for establishing Vietnamese terminology in the RVN.

In 1967, the government finally recognized the work of the Scientific Vocabulary Compilation Committee when it created the Committee for the Compilation of Specialized Vocabulary (Ủy ban Quốc gia Soạn thảo Danh từ Chuyên môn). This new committee officialized and extended an earlier body (Tiểu ban Mỹ thuật 1973). The central committee included twelve disciplinary committees further divided into

thirty-two sub-committees, with each of the latter responsible for compiling a list of scientific terms for the relevant discipline. In 1970, Lê Văn Thới and Nguyễn Văn Dương published a set of guidelines for translating disciplinary terms in the *Internal Jounal of Specialized Vocabulary* (*Nội san Danh từ Chuyên môn*). In this sense, their publication lagged five years behind the publication of a similar framework by their counterparts in the DRV. Every week, Committee President Lê Văn Thới, the two vice presidents, the chairman, and selected outside scholars reviewed a list of nouns submitted by a panel. The process was described as "very difficult" and that "Sometimes the committee had to spend hours or the whole meeting to review just a few nouns" (Ủy ban Quốc gia Soạn thảo Danh từ Chuyên môn 1972).

Altogether, the Committee for the Compilation of Specialized Vocabulary published nine issues of the *Internal Journal of Specialized Vocabulary* between 1969 and 1975. Each issue was comprised of various articles on linguistic problems or the activities of the committee. More importantly, each issue introduced a list of collectively authorized terms used within a particular academic discipline. At the same time, the Ministry of Culture, Education, and Youth (known earlier as the Ministry of Education), together with the Committee for the Compilation of Specialized Vocabulary, published three important works: *Terminology of Atomics* (1969); *Terminology of Pharmacy* (1973)*; and Terminology of Fine Arts* (1973) (Ủy ban Quốc gia Soạn thảo Danh từ Chuyên môn 1975: n.p.). Nevertheless, it must be noted that much of the committee's work remained at a preliminary stage. In many disciplines, the committee had only completed and published the list of scientific terms beginning with the letter A. Clearly, a sizable workload remained to be completed.

At the same time that the RVN's scholars labored in committee rooms to translate and standardize scientific vocabulary, outside, members of society at large were taking their own steps to build national education in the Vietnamese language. On 12 January 1950, as part of the demonstrations to mark the killing by French police of Trần Văn Ơn, a student from the Petrus Ky School, demonstrators called for the use of Vietnamese in education. Another important event was the founding by prominent Cochinchinese intellectuals of the Quốc Ngữ Popularization Society (Hội truyền bá chữ Quốc Ngữ) in 1952, not to be confused with the society with the same name founded in Hanoi in 1937. This organization led a grassroots movement to spread the use of *quốc ngữ* throughout the Cochinchinese population (Hồ 2003).

By 1953, a broad movement of students and teachers, supported by intellectuals and other elites, was calling on the government to require all education in the Vietnamese language, ensure the nationalistic and popular character of curricula, and end years of dependence on foreign culture in education (Hồ 2003, 2001). In part, student activism stemmed from the high failure rate that resulted from studying and taking examinations in French, effectively making higher education inaccessible to all but the children of wealthy families (Hồ Hữu Nhựt, personal communication, 17 December 2019). This helps explain the demonstrations, protests, and declarations that characterized the following years. One of the most significant occurred in February 1958, when 200 students from fifteen public and private schools in Saigon marched to the Bureau of Academic Affairs (Nha Giám đốc học vụ) to make demands

under three main heads: (1) use Vietnamese as the instructional language at university; (2) tackle the problem of the shortage of schools and classes, improve the living standard of teachers, subsidize poor students, leverage the budget for education; and (3) modify the curricula to make them more appropriate for an independent and national education, and conduct democratic reforms in schools (Trần 2017). Nor was the movement confined to Saigon. Students in Hue founded the Letters and Arts Group (Nhóm văn nghệ) in 1961 at the College of Literature (Trường Đại học Văn Khoa), and the Language Change Group (Nhóm chuyển ngữ) in 1960 at the College of Sciences (Trường Đại học Khoa học) to demand the use of Vietnamese in university-level education.

Student demonstrations for the use of Vietnamese in higher education were bound up with politics more generally. The student groups at Hue University were the outgrowth of "revolution-developing grassroots organizations" (tổ chức cơ sở phát triển cách mạng) and were effectively communist-controlled (Trần 2017). Americans as well attempted to turn student activism to their advantage. According to Nguyễn (2013), the first president of the General Union of Saigon Students (Tổng hội Sinh viên Sài Gòn), after the coup d'état of 1963 "many political forces behind the scenes motivated students to do street protests, opposing the neutralization option and denouncing the cultural domination of the French, particularly the problem of trường Tây [French-modeled schools]." The attempt may ultimately have backfired, as it highlighted the issue of cultural imperialism more generally. Nguyễn Hữu Thái suggested that "opposing French-modeled schools raised the awareness of Vietnamese students about the issue of national sovereignty" (2013), which later, by the same token, would motivate Vietnamese students to oppose American involvement in Vietnamese politics.

Leaving aside the complicated politics behind student activism, the 1960s saw steady, if uneven progress in the use of Vietnamese in higher education. By the mid-1960s, only a handful of courses at the Saigon College of Science were still taught in French (Bình 2016). At the end of 1966, students at the College of Medicine began agitating for the right to study in Vietnamese at schools, coming up with the slogan "Vietnamese people learn Vietnamese." The movement spread to other universities, colleges, institutes, and schools across South Vietnam. An advocacy committee was set up at the College of Pedagogy, and a newspaper representing the movement was established: *Language Change* (*chuyển ngữ*). As a result, from the beginning of 1967, all universities in South Vietnam switched to teaching in Vietnamese except for the University of Medicine. There, according to Professor Lê (2010), "the prolongation of the transition was evident with the Medical University in the last years: the teaching staff included Vietnamese, French, and American professors. However, some Vietnamese professors still mixed Vietnamese and French while teaching, and the lectures were written in French, typed, and copied for students to memorize for year-end exams." As in the DRV, theory was one thing, practice another.

In short, while we must acknowledge the complex nature of the student movements in South Vietnam, student activism undoubtedly played a major role in driving the Vietnamization of higher education in the RVN. Student activism was matched by

the efforts of individual professors and scholars to develop a new vocabulary for teaching in Vietnamese. Over time, the initiative shifted from students and individual scholars to the state-run Committee for the Compilation of Specialized Vocabulary as its committees sought to systematize and standardize the translation of scientific terminology. Despite being left unfinished due to the collapse of the RVN in 1975, the project demonstrates how the enthusiasm and activism of students and scholars combined in a bottom-up manner to create the conditions to realize the state's policy of adopting Vietnamese as the language of instruction in higher education.

7.7 Conclusion

The project of developing a modern, scientific, national system of education taught in Vietnamese has its origins in the colonial period. Intellectuals and activists across the political spectrum, from conservative intellectuals to communist radicals, all embraced the project of teaching in Vietnamese using the *quốc ngữ* script. Thanks to their efforts, by 1945 important progress in general literacy and curriculum development had been made, setting the stage for rapid change under postcolonial governments. Particularly during the period 1945–1975, *quốc ngữ* can be regarded as the primary tool of decolonization and nation-building. The DRV's commitment to the Vietnamization of education manifested itself from the very first days of independence in 1945. Meanwhile, in French-controlled territory, the slow progress of Vietnamization and the continued use of French in higher education was a source of popular discontent and protest.

It was after 1954 and the establishment of de facto control by the two governments over their respective territories that the process of nationalizing education in the two Vietnams entered a crucial period. Although both governments set out clear principles for the creation of a national education system, the results varied. In the DRV, the top-down management of higher education reform and the development of scientific vocabulary achieved major advances despite the immense challenges presented by the war. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that at least some of the advances were more theoretical than real and did not reflect the reality of the classroom. In the RVN, much of the early impetus for change came from the student struggle movement, combined with the contributions of South Vietnamese intellectuals and scholars. There, it was only in 1966–1967 that the RVN government put the idea of an independent national education into practice by changing its language policy for higher education and officially supporting the development of Vietnamese terminology. In this way, the process of Vietnamization in the RVN reflects the greater degree of academic freedom and the tradition of student activism.

On 30 April 1975, Vietnamization was still very much a work in progress in both Vietnams. The triumph of the DRV and the dissolution of the RVN marked a new era in Vietnam's education, but we should not assume that higher education in the unified Vietnam was immediately dominated by the system of Vietnamese terminology developed in the DRV. Many features of the RVN's educational system,

particularly in tertiary and professional education, were perceived as desirable by communist leaders (Nguyễn 2014). More concretely, articles published in the *Journal of Linguistics* (*Tạp chí ngôn ngữ học*) during the years after 1975 demonstrate the participation of scholars from the south in debates over new terminology. Arguably, the standardization of Vietnamese terminology in the reunification era was the result of discussions and a consensus among all relevant Vietnamese scientists and scholars regardless of whether they were from the north, south, or center. However, given that many well-known scholars from the RVN had fled the country, in the end, scholarly forums were mostly dominated by scholars from the north. In this way, the language of instruction in Vietnamese universities and colleges today is the outcome of a complex political process, reflecting in microcosm the complex political process that has produced the contemporary nation.

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Chapter 8
Not so Honest Relations: Top-Level Polish-Vietnamese Contacts 1965–1970

Jarema Słowiak

8.1 Introduction

On April 28, 1970, a special Soviet government plane landed in Warsaw, bringing Lê Duẩn, First Secretary of the Vietnamese Workers' Party on a sudden semi-official visit. Usually, such trips were planned and confirmed at least several months ahead. In this unusual case, the North Vietnamese leader arrived just a few days after his request was delivered to the Poles. What was even more peculiar was that the visit was initially supposed to be strictly for leisure, but at the last minute, the Vietnamese announced that it would instead be a working visit, although they still wanted to avoid the pomp and ceremony associated with an official visit by a head of state. Such visits by high-ranking officials of fraternal socialist nations were a feature of the Cold War. Symbolically, such visits were public confirmation of the close and friendly relations between fraternal members of the Socialist bloc. And practically, they were an opportunity to exchange intelligence and to work out the sometimes-thorny details of economic and political cooperation. As a result, Lê Duẩn's visit represents an opportunity to explore the "actually existing Socialist bloc interactions" of the Cold War.

In the official communist narrative, Polish support for North Vietnam was constant and indisputable, and the Vietnamese struggle against "American imperialist aggression" enjoyed the widespread support of the entire Polish society and party authorities. However, the reality of Warsaw-Hanoi relations was complex. Aid for Vietnam, while dutifully sent from Poland, was a growing burden for the Polish economy. On the political level, Warsaw dreaded the possibility of a localized war spilling from Vietnam and turning into a global conflict. Poles also walked a fine line trying to keep proper relations with the United States, deeming loans and technology from

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_8

Washington essential for their economic development. As a result, in the 1960s Poles tried several times to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table and to reduce the volume of aid sent to Vietnam. Thus, the rushed organization of Lê Duẩn's trip, its evolving agenda over the course of his stay in Poland, and its ultimately ambiguous outcomes were all symptomatic of the complexity of Polish-Vietnamese relations from that period.

In this chapter, based on party and diplomatic documents from Polish archives, I provide a brief outline of top-level meetings between Vietnamese-Polish communist leadership since 1965. The focus, however, is on the meeting between Gomułka and Lê Duẩn that took place on 5 May during the latter's 1970 visit. Lê Duẩn arrived in Warsaw just days before the start of the US incursion into Cambodia. The expansion of the war forced the Vietnamese leader to cut short his stay in Poland, and heavily influenced Lê Duẩn's meeting with his Polish counterpart, Władysław Gomułka. This chapter summarizes the main points made by both leaders during their three-hour conversation, such as the communist evaluation of the ongoing events in Indochina, American policy, Vietnamese requests for additional Polish support, and the Sino-Soviet split. I pay particular attention to the communist verbal fencing between Gomułka and Lê Duẩn, which reveals that Polish-Vietnamese relations were not as straightforward, i.e., cordial and friendly, as they might appear from the other parts of the transcript.

Both before and during the war against the United States, the aid provided by the Warsaw Pact countries was not comparable to the aid provided by the People's Republic of China and the USSR. This was due to a combination of factors, such as political arrangements made in Moscow and Beijing, but also the great geographical distance and the poor state of the economies of European communist countries, which was the most obvious factor in the willingness or unwillingness to support a distant brotherly country in Asia. In a way this is also reflected in the literature on the subject: while China's and the USSR's policy toward Vietnam both before and during the war against the United States has been the subject of several books in recent decades, by authors such as Gaiduk (2003), Li (2020) and Zhai (2000), the topic of the DRV's relations with smaller European communist countries is still not researched both in depth and in the broad sense. The few scholars from those countries who deal with the topic, usually write about very specific subjects, like Grossheim (2014), who published about East German "Stasi" support for the Vietnamese security apparatus, Szőke (2010), who wrote about Hungarian diplomatic efforts during the Second Indochina War, or Kudrna (2010) who published about Czechoslovak members of the French Foreign Legion fighting in Indochina. Those and other scholars have produced small pieces of knowledge that are slowly filling the wide gaps in the big picture of Vietnamese-European communist relations and the aid provided by the Warsaw Pact countries for Hanoi during its war struggle. I hope this article will offer another such piece, expanding our knowledge on the subject and bringing light to the otherwise unknown topic for English-speaking scholars.

This article was prepared thanks to the archival research done as part of research project 2018/29/N/HS3/02920 funded by the National Science Center, Poland. The transcript of the 1970 Gomułka—Lê Duẩn meeting, along with transcripts of two

other top-level Polish-Vietnamese meetings from 1968 to 1969, were translated and are available online in the Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Archive in Lubbock, Texas.

8.2 Before the "American War"

The establishment of a proper state after the 1954 Geneva Conference poised a set of new challenges for Vietnamese communists, completely different from their guerilla war against the French. Governing a country proved to be even more challenging than leading a war against the French, especially in a country so devastated by war as North Vietnam. In January 1955, Ho Chi Minh addressed those challenges at a meeting with ambassadors from European socialist countries, asking them to provide urgent assistance to his fledgling state. This somehow improvised aid later developed into more stable support, provided by European communist countries to the newest member of their camp.

The Polish People's Republic was present in Vietnam since 1954 as a member of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) in Indochina (along with India and Canada). The work in ICSC added another dimension to Polish-Vietnamese relations and meant that Poland, at least on a diplomatic level, was much more engaged in Indochina than other Eastern Bloc countries (Słowiak 2021). The relations between Poland and Vietnam were not, however, free of tension. In particular, the events of 1956: the coming to power of Władysław Gomułka, and his *Polish Road to Socialism*, led to a cooling of bilateral relations for several years.

Comrade Wiesław (Gomułka's widely used *nom de guerre* from World War II) survived Stalin's pre-war purge of the Communist Party of Poland as he was jailed at the time in a Polish prison. During World War II, Gomułka helped to rebuild the communist party in German-occupied Poland, and after the war, he held several top party and governmental positions. He was however seen as a rival by the Stalinist faction in the newly created Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP), and as a result, he was sacked from all positions, expelled from the party, and finally imprisoned in 1951. Why Gomułka survived remains a matter of debate, but he was released from prison finally in 1954. In 1956 he returned to the top, being elected by the PUWP Central Committee for the post of First Secretary during the events that went down in history as Polish October, after tense negotiations with the Soviet Politburo which flew to Warsaw as Red Army troops were marching on Polish capital.

The circumstances of Gomułka's return to power and his consistent emphasis on the "Polish Road to Socialism," which included an agreement with the Catholic Church, cessation of collectivization of Polish agriculture, and enthusiastic acceptance of Khrushchev's Secret Speech, made Hanoi deeply suspicious of the new Polish leadership. This mistrust was reinforced by the events of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and unrest in Vietnam in the aftermath of the excesses of land reform and the Party's eventual clampdown on more liberal parts of society. In the internal

Vietnamese propaganda, the events of the Polish October and Hungarian Revolution were perceived as anticommunist counterrevolution and subsequent policies of Gomułka as dangerous deviations from the proper communist path (Słowiak 2022).

Polish-Vietnamese relations were normalized only with the start of the new decade, both because Gomulka halted liberalization policies in Poland and turned to a more dogmatic, communist line, but also because Hanoi, gearing up for the confrontation with Saigon, recognized that it was imperative to obtain support from whoever it could, even as it continued to look with distrust on certain aspects of the Polish communist system. However, due to the great distance, Poland's own potential, and economic woes, actual material support was not very significant, especially since Warsaw was keen to keep the trade balance between both countries as equal as possible. This changed drastically after the American escalation in March 1965. Poland also hosted Vietnamese students, but until the escalation of hostilities in Vietnam in 1965, those were not received in high numbers.

8.3 The War Starts

Large-scale aerial bombing of North Vietnam and the American decision to put boots on the ground in Vietnam in March 1965 were not left unanswered by Moscow, and consequently, the whole Eastern Bloc. The Kremlin was motivated to provide significant support to Hanoi not only as a response to American actions but also because of its growing competition with Beijing about which country was the *real* leader of the communist bloc and vanguard of the world revolution. As a result, the two communist superpowers were in open rivalry with each other in Vietnam, a fact that was eagerly exploited by Hanoi to obtain more and more aid.

Where Moscow pointed, her European satellites followed, and soon a stream of economic and military aid flowed to Vietnam. While support provided by individual countries like Poland or Czechoslovakia might seem negligible when compared to that provided by the USSR and China, when put together, smaller communist countries delivered a significant volume of materiel and money. For example, between 1965 and 1970, Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary provided the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with loans amounting to 300 million rubles, almost half of the amount provided in the same period by the USSR (AMSZ 1). In regard to weapons shipments, in 1970 the same countries, without Romania, provided military aid worth 43% of what the USSR sent to DRV (51.5 and 120 million rubles respectively), although it should be noted that Moscow drastically reduced the number of weapon shipments in that year, compared to 1969 (from 360 to 120 million rubles) (AMSZ 2). It still was a considerable amount, and therefore it was not surprising that the communist leadership in Hanoi devoted considerable effort to maintaining and increasing the aid provided by its European allies.

Poland's aid to Vietnam took a variety of forms. Before the war it was mostly loans for the purchase of Polish goods, equipment, and industrial plants, hosting

Vietnamese students in Poland, and sending Polish specialists to help with their know-how in building and operating various industrial plants. For example, in the first quarter of 1961, eighty-five Polish specialists were present in Vietnam who carried out the following tasks: construction and commissioning of a sugar refinery, modernization of power plants, operation of boiler rooms, and geophysical surveys (AAN 1). Poland also planned to fund and build a large hospital in Vinh in the early 1960s; however, the project suffered from numerous bureaucratic setbacks and delays, and was abandoned completed after the start of the air campaign by the United States. During the war, the half-finished complex was bombed, and Poles returned to complete this hospital only after the end of hostilities in the 1970s.

Negotiating the terms of European communist support and cultivating the good relations on which it depended required frequent trips of various technical and military delegations that negotiated details of military, economic and humanitarian support, but also visits by high-ranking political leaders who made sure that the stream of aid for Vietnam would not dry up.

In the Polish case, Warsaw was visited regularly by Lê Thanh Nghị, a Politburo member of the Vietnamese Workers' Party and deputy prime minister in charge of industry. He visited Poland for the first time in 1961 as a member of a delegation led by prime minister Phạm Văn Đồng. After the escalation of the war in the 1960s, his trips to Warsaw became more frequent, and he met with the Polish communist leadership practically every year. According to Polish archival files, Lê Thanh Nghị visited Poland in January and October 1966, June 1968, and October 1969. His absence in Poland in 1967 can be explained by the visit of a Polish delegation to Hanoi, headed by PUWP Politburo member and Central Committee secretary Zenon Kliszko, that met with Lê Duẩn and other Vietnamese leaders in June of that year. Poland also received at least two official delegations from the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.

Reading through the minutes of those meetings, it is striking how the Vietnamese were always very careful about cultivating proper relations with their hosts and underlining their admiration and gratitude for Polish support, both as members of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, and as allies and providers of aid. Vietnamese diligence can be explained by several factors. Poland was the largest Soviet satellite in Europe; Polish ships carried materiel not only from Poland but also Czechoslovakia; and last but not least, even if the ICSC was becoming more and more irrelevant with each passing year, it still carried some weight in international relations and remained one of the many fronts in the diplomatic war Hanoi was waging against the United States.

Furthermore, the Vietnamese were aware of Polish fears that conflict in Vietnam would turn into a world war, with potentially catastrophic results for Poland. While that possibility receded somewhat after the United States engaged in a land war in South Vietnam but limited itself in North Vietnam and in regard to China, the Hanoi leadership understood that this fear still lingered in the minds of their Polish counterparts. Driven by this anxiety, but also Polish state interests toward Western World, Poles tried several times to broker a direct meeting or negotiations between

the warring sides, with the most well-known example being the top-secret diplomatic maneuvers in 1966 known as Operation Marigold and described in depth by James Hershberg (2012).

Finally, Poland was deeply entrenched in the peaceful coexistence camp of the USSR and backed Moscow in its rivalry with Beijing. Since China was an indispensable ally of Hanoi, especially in the early period of American intervention, this made political talks on the subject between the Poles and the Vietnamese a delicate matter.

The Vietnamese however had several advantages, or we could say, tools, at their disposal in the talks with the Poles. Obviously, they could (and did) raise the issue of fraternal communist solidarity in the face of American aggression. This was treated very seriously by Gomułka, who, while being a pragmatist, was at the same time a devout old-school communist. That meant that while he wasn't happy about the conflict dragging on, he perceived it as his unavoidable obligation to deliver aid to a fellow communist country fighting against external assault.

Vietnamese amplified this argument by invoking parallels in the two nations' past. And there were plenty of them: subjugation and long occupation by a foreign power, attempted cultural domination by the occupier, numerous uprisings, and finally, a seemingly uneven fight against a stronger enemy culminating in regaining independence—all of those resonated strongly with Poles, who recalled vividly similar pictures from their own past. These sentiments were in fact also exploited by Polish communists in their internal propaganda about the war in Vietnam. Polish communist propaganda put special emphasis on parallels between the traumatic experience of German conquest and occupation during World War II, still vividly remembered in Polish society, and the American way of waging the war in Vietnam. In popular books describing Vietnam War, tiger cages were compared to Gestapo torture chambers, American bombings of North Vietnam to German terror bombings in 1939, and pacification of the Vietnamese countryside which involved resettlement of the population and demolition of villages to similar operations performed by Germans in occupied Poland.

This propaganda work was actually made easier by the abundance of photos and film reels produced by the American media that provided visual context and "proof" of communist claims. The results of this propaganda campaign are hard to gauge since communist authorities were not conducting any real opinion surveys, but they had to have some resonance—in the archival files, there is information about grassroots social fundraisers and medical personnel volunteering to go to Vietnam (AAN 2).

And lastly, Polish participation in the International Commission for Supervision and Control, while in many ways beneficial to Poland, also tied Polish international prestige to the situation in Indochina. This was used both by Hanoi and Washington to put pressure on Warsaw. For example, in a letter sent to Marian Spychalski (Polish Chairman of the Council of State) on April 7, 1970, President Richard Nixon wrote that "as a signatory to the 1962 Geneva Accords and a member of the International Commission for Supervision and Control, your government, bears a special responsibility with regard to the Laos issue" (AAN 3). In turn, North Vietnamese, despite the declining relevance of the Commission, consistently emphasized the significance of the work of Poles in the ICSC and also their deep gratitude for these efforts. This

was, of course, not only a genuine expression of appreciation or flattery, but also a way of pressuring Poles to remain engaged in Vietnam.

8.4 Gomułka—Lê Thanh Nghị Meetings

Lê Thanh Nghị's talks with Władysław Gomułka reveal certain patterns which would reemerge in the meeting with Lê Duẩn in 1970. The meetings always started with Lê Thanh Nghị relaying regards and appreciation from Vietnamese top leaders, party, and nation to his hosts for their steadfast support. Then he presented the Vietnamese perspective on current developments in Indochina. It is worth noting that the timing of the visits was not accidental—in 1966 they related to the expansion of the war in the South, in 1968 with the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, and in 1969 with the death of Hồ Chí Minh.

After the presentation of the Vietnamese perspective, Gomułka replied in kind to the regards and thanks delivered by his guest, assuring him of Polish admiration for the Vietnamese people and unwavering support for their struggle. After that, he usually moved to comments and presented the Polish perspective, which usually included a somewhat broader outlook, for example, an evaluation of events in the Middle East or Europe. This was followed by a conversation on specific topics, such as the assessment of the current American policy and objectives in Indochina, Polish assistance, China's position, etc.

As already mentioned, the Vietnamese side was always very careful to stress their appreciation of Polish help, for example always remembering to point out Polish work in the ICSC, even at a time when the international commission no longer played any meaningful role. Lê Thanh Nghị usually also highlighted the successes of Poland's growth under Gomułka's leadership. This was always downplayed by the Polish leader, who pointed to numerous difficulties and challenges in the development of the national economy. Such reaction was not only simple, more or less genuine modesty (Gomułka was known for his frugal lifestyle); Comrade Wiesław was aware that behind every compliment about Polish economic growth lurked a potential request for additional aid to Vietnam. And since the Polish economy struggled with its own serious problems in the 1960s, Gomułka was torn between his loyalty toward fellow communists fighting against imperialistic aggression and the fact that providing support hampered the development of his own country. For example, to fulfill their obligations to Vietnam, from around 1968, Poles were forced to direct the ongoing production of their armaments plants to Vietnam, after depleting existing stocks of weapons and ammunition. This meant serious delays in the modernization and replenishing of their own armed forces (AMSZ 2).

Providing his own opinions and evaluations, Gomułka always stressed that Poles had no desire to influence or force decisions taken by their guests, and underlined that "comrades probably know their own situation better" as he spelled it during a meeting with Lê Thanh Nghị in 1969 (VNCA 1). However, the Polish side usually perceived the Vietnamese depiction of the situation in Vietnam as too optimistic,

especially since the Polish presence on both sides of the 17th Parallel (the location of the Demilitarized Zone dividing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from the Republic of Vietnam) allowed Warsaw to independently verify Hanoi's claims about the supposed victories in the South and losses inflicted on the American and Saigon forces. This is worth emphasising, because despite their claims of honesty, even at these top-level meetings, the Vietnamese presented a mix of truth and outright propaganda. For example, at a meeting in January 1966, in the reality of the rapid increase of US forces and the escalation of fighting in the South, Lê Thanh Nghị opened his statement with "above all, I would like to inform you about the victories achieved recently by the Liberation Army in South Vietnam" (AAN 4). As already mentioned, Poles had their own sources of information, but usually did not openly challenge the propaganda claims of their guests. In one rare instance in 1969, Gomułka disputed the absurdly high number of American losses provided by his interlocutor, to which Lê Thanh Nghị defended his statement, claiming that he meant all casualties combined (killed, wounded, missing) and that the numbers came from "secret US data that we were able to obtain" (VNCA 1).

Over the course of meetings, Gomułka also expressed his worry about the apparent disregard of the Hanoi leadership for their own losses, both casualties in the South, and those inflicted by the bombing of North Vietnam. Long-lasting destruction inflicted on Poland and its population during the Second World War shaped Gomułka's opinions on the matter. In an ironic twist, in one Polish report sent back to Warsaw, the Vietnamese dismissed the danger posed by the American bombing, citing Polish experience: "So what if they bomb our cities, from which the population was evacuated. The capital cities of Warsaw and Pyongyang were completely razed and they were rebuilt even more beautiful" (AAN 5). Being aware of such sentiments, the Polish leader cautioned his guests that they should put serious effort into preserving both their civilian population and military manpower:

> The substance of the nation is the most valuable thing. It takes many years to rebuild it. We know this from our own experience which shapes our attitude and our policy. We know what it means to lose qualified cadres, scientists, and intelligentsia. This shows later in the future and creates a worse position compared to those nations that have lost fewer people. I'm talking about it because you said military victory is decisive. This is right, but you always have to calculate how much it costs and how much you have to pay for it (VNCA 1).

Poles also thought that their Vietnamese counterparts underestimated American resolve and the seriousness of Washington's involvement in Vietnam:

> In our opinion, however, neither military spending, although it is large, or considerable loss of life do not constitute a decisive factor that would force the United States to stop the war, to withdraw from Vietnam, and to accept a solution based on the ten-point program. (…) That is why these twenty-thirty billion dollars are not such a burden for the United States which will break them down and force them to make concessions, lose their prestige, and surrender. They can bear such burdens for many years, and permanently introduce them into their budget expenditure… The prestige of the United States is at stake. Total withdrawal would be a capitulation. This is not even about the loss of Vietnam itself, but about the matter of the US prestige, which is already torn quite a bit (VNCA 1).

One topic that was always a sensitive and a complicated subject for both sides, was the role of China in the Vietnam War and in the whole communist camp. Beijing was the most important ally of Hanoi in the first half of the 1960s, and even when the USSR started to surpass it as the main supplier of military hardware, China remained influential, providing economic and military aid, anti-aircraft and engineering troops for protection of the northern parts of DRV, and an ideological position far more in line with the DRV's war against the Americans than the peaceful coexistence promoted by the USSR. While the fact of Chinese support for Hanoi was well known even during the conflict, the real scale of Beijing's effort has only recently been revealed by scholarship about its support—political, economic (Zhai 2000), and especially military (Li 2020).

In contrast, the People's Republic of Poland was firmly entrenched in the Soviet camp. It depended on Moscow's protection of its western border with Germany, sincerely advocated the easing of international tensions, and looked with anxiety at Beijing's belligerent rhetoric and confrontational attitude both outside and inside of the communist camp. In Polish-Vietnamese talks, the subject of China came up in 1966, but both sides, understanding their differences on the topic, did not push for in-depth discussion.

The Tet Offensive in 1968, despite being a military disaster for the communist side, turned out to be a political and propaganda victory for Hanoi. However, this success came with a price and a new set of risks. As Pierre Asselin convincingly argues, the North Vietnamese agreement to start peace talks in 1968 never meant they actually wanted to negotiate a peace agreement in Paris at that point (Asselin 2018). For Hanoi, those talks were only another diplomatic front that was supposed to corner the United States and at the same time please Moscow, which has been trying to persuade the Vietnamese to resolve the conflict diplomatically for a long time (Gaiduk 1996).

However, it turned out that this charade also carried considerable risks. Beijing vehemently opposed any kind of diplomatic solution and saw the Vietnamese decision to open negotiations as a clear sign that Hanoi was leaning into Moscow-style defeatism. Mao's suspicions were not alleviated by Vietnamese assurances that the Paris talks were only a deception to put the United States in a disadvantageous international position, and in 1969–1970 Beijing reduced the volume of aid and pulled out from the North Vietnam the bulk of the Chinese anti-air and engineering troops.

On the other hand, inconclusive, drawn-out negotiations were also testing the patience of Hanoi's allies from the Eastern Bloc, where most countries, Poland included, were eagerly waiting for a negotiated end to the war. With each passing month, their patience—and willingness to contribute to the Vietnamese war effort—was wearing thinner, especially when it became more and more obvious that the lack of results in Paris could not be blamed solely on Washington.

Two additional events from 1969 put Hanoi in an even more precarious position. First was the short but fierce border conflict between the USSR and China in March, which threatened to divert the world's attention away from Vietnam and ignite a full-scale conflict between the two main sponsors of the DRV. The second was the death of Hồ Chí Minh in September. Although sidelined from actual power by Lê Duẩn

since 1964, the Vietnamese President was still a potent symbol of the Vietnamese struggle, especially abroad. His passing dealt a severe blow to the DRV's cause and the loss of a formidable diplomatic tool, particularly in regard to communist and Third World countries.

Considering all the above, it is no wonder that North Vietnamese, Lê Duẩn included, had to put much more effort into maintaining relations with their allies. After Moscow decided to slash military aid for North Vietnam in 1970, alarm bells rang in Hanoi, since the Vietnamese Politburo was painfully aware that any reduction of USSR aid most likely meant that other Eastern Bloc countries would soon follow suit. This seems to be the main reason behind the sudden and unexpected arrival of Lê Duẩn in Warsaw in April 1970.

8.5 Lê Duẩn's Visit to Warsaw

The Vietnamese Workers' Party First Secretary was on an official visit in Moscow, when, on April 25th, the Polish embassy in Hanoi was informed that Lê Duẩn would like to come to Poland on the 27th or 28th of April for a short vacation. The Vietnamese asked for discretion, which was interpreted by the Foreign Department of PUWP as a sign that the visit would have an unofficial character (AAN 6). The Polish leadership customarily invited Vietnamese leaders to visit Poland for the purpose of leisure, but this was a courtesy offer the Vietnamese rarely took up, especially on such short notice.

Still, preliminary plans of the visit were quickly drawn up: they envisaged a short stay in Warsaw and then sending Lê Duẩn and his entourage to a state-owned recreational complex in Łańsk, and a draft list was compiled of people who would welcome Lê Duẩn at the airport and take part in a possible meeting with Władysław Gomułka. A telegram from the Vietnamese embassy in Moscow followed the same day, in which Lê Duẩn transmitted thanks for the invitation. He informed his hosts that he and a delegation of fifteen would most likely arrive on the 28th and stay for ten days (AAN 7).

Then the events took a curious turn: on the 27th of April, a day before Lê Duẩn's scheduled arrival, the Polish embassy in Moscow was suddenly informed by the Vietnamese that while the visit would remain unofficial, nevertheless it was "not for leisure but to discuss with our leadership the issues they are interested in" (AAN 8). Lê Duẩn also asked for a chance to visit several industrial and agricultural facilities. Considering the late notification and the sudden change of the purpose of the visit, it seems that the Vietnamese hoped to catch the Polish leadership off guard and to discuss several important subjects before their hosts would have the time to prepare themselves substantively to counter possible Vietnamese arguments.

If the Vietnamese had intended to surprise the Poles, it probably had little effect. Warsaw apparently anticipated the expansion of Vietnamese demands from prior top-level conversations and planned the visit accordingly. The meeting with Gomułka was scheduled to take place on 5 May, after several days of Lê Duẩn touring various

industrial and agricultural plants and meeting with Vietnamese students in Poland. In addition, in the meantime, the American invasion of Cambodia started, which forced Lê Duẩn to cut his visit short and probably disrupted his focus on European affairs. The meeting between the two leaders took place in the headquarters of the Central Committee of PUWP in Warsaw and lasted almost three hours. It was also attended by Zenon Kliszko, a politburo member and Gomułka's right-hand man, and Józef Czesak, head of the Foreign Department of the PUWP. They discussed four main topics: the situation in Cambodia, the United States, China, and Polish support for Vietnam.

The meeting started with Gomułka's request for an explanation of the situation in Cambodia. Lê Duẩn claimed that they were more surprised by the Lon Nol coup against Prince Norodom Sihanouk in March than the American invasion itself, which they anticipated for some time. The Vietnamese leader assured his hosts that South Vietnamese and American thrusts were directed in the wrong places, that they made a mistake and attacked empty regions. He then claimed that the Vietnamese will "open the gate, we will let them through, and then we will attack" (VNCA 1). Lê Duẩn furthermore claimed that the extension of the war to Cambodia was only another American blunder, that they had suffered a string of defeats in this war and that this was another mistake that would turn into another disaster. This is a similar line that Lê Thanh Nghị presented to Gomułka at the beginning of the war and during their meetings in 1968 and 1969. Although it is understandable that the Vietnamese wanted to *sell* the optimistic vision of their struggle, it is still a bit surprising how dishonest sometimes they were toward their own allies, especially on such a high level as during meeting with a fellow first secretary. Gomułka did not challenge Lê Duẩn's evaluation of the whole war and the ongoing Cambodian incursion, but from his follow-up questions, we can sense that he wasn't 100% convinced by the vision presented by his interlocutor. Gomułka asked several more detailed questions, which indicated his deeper insight into the subject, but yet concluded on the topic of Cambodia with the remark "I thank comrade Lê Duẩn very much for such interesting information. We were not well-versed on how things are developing in Cambodia" (VNCA 1). Given that the Poles were getting their information through the ICSC in Saigon and also had their own embassy in Phnom Penh, Gomułka was most likely as "well-versed" on the topic as it was possible at the time.

Both sides differed in their evaluation of the US. Lê Duẩn presented the opinion that the war in Vietnam was only a first step in the global American attack on the whole socialist world, that "planned to shatter the gains of socialism in North Vietnam and to attack socialist China," which was prevented only by the heroic defiance of the DRV. Lê Duẩn was adamant in his opinion that Americans were suffering only defeats in Vietnam, and that they were not able to sustain the costly war, while North Vietnam was able to keep fighting for the next four-five years or longer, and that this would not interfere with its development. The Vietnamese first secretary also restated the assertion that annual conscription rates for the PAVN far exceeded the casualties they were suffering in the struggle to liberate the South. Lê Duẩn claimed annual casualties at the 50–60,000 level, while in North Vietnam they conscripted 150,000 men each year, and as such, Vietnamese casualties were not a problem.

We can only imagine how such an argument was received by Gomułka, who rarely missed an opportunity to caution the Vietnamese against the needless loss of life, as was already pointed out above.

Gomułka was much more cautious in his estimate of both US potential and will, and cautioned that Nixon still had almost two years to try and force a military solution of the conflict before the presidential election might push him to seek a diplomatic solution. Even though he admitted that in the context of Cambodia, "Americans were wrong in all of their calculations," he warned that this would not force the US to pull out, but only to consider other options. Gomułka also cautioned against overestimating the role of elections in the United States, pointing out that Nixon had de facto continued the policies of previous presidents. In his opinion, the United States had invested too much prestige to be able to afford an outright failure in Vietnam, and as such Lê Duẩn should consider other strategies for ending the conflict. Gomułka also cautioned his counterpart that airstrikes on North Vietnam could resume at any time. For Gomulka, Nixon had decided to expand the war to Cambodia simply because he had the military capacity and because he felt that the divided socialist camp was no longer a threat. This assertion led naturally to a discussion of China.

The Poles laid the blame for the lack of unity of the socialist camp solely on Beijing. Gomułka was clearly emotional about the issue, recalling that "we even took initiatives, comrade Kliszko was in Beijing, but we were met only with insults." While the souring of Vietnamese relations with the PRC in 1968 meant that Lê Duẩn seemed more receptive to the Polish position, nevertheless he refused to condemn China openly. He agreed that the lack of a united front between the PRC and USSR benefited the United States and that there was a group in Beijing motivated by an "anti-Soviet spirit" that sought to prevent a consensus between the two Socialist nations. Both first secretaries agreed that the Chinese stance on the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was wrong and that the decision made by Moscow and its allies was the right one. Clearly frustrated, Gomułka declared at one point: "Just as your victories in Vietnam are our victories in Europe, our defeats in Europe are your defeats in Vietnam. Do Chinese comrades not understand this?" Still, both sides of the conversation tried to find some glimmers of hope in the recent May Day celebrations in Beijing, during which the critique of Poland and the USSR was supposedly much milder than in previous years.

Lê Duẩn knew about Polish intentions to reduce the amount of aid sent to Vietnam, and it is safe to say that one of the main reasons behind his sudden visit to Warsaw was an effort to prevent this from happening. After Gomułka asked if Lê Duẩn had any questions, the first secretary complained about various economic difficulties in North Vietnam and bluntly asked the Poles to design, construct and operate a coal mine in Vietnam. However, he soon found himself on the defensive. The Poles had clearly anticipated such a request, and Gomułka quickly cornered his interlocutor with a series of technical questions and advice provided on the spot. Gomułka was clearly prepared for this subject to appear and determined to deflect any definitive commitment, suggesting for example, that Hanoi should seize the opportunity of investment by Japan mentioned during the talk. In the end, the topic of coal mines was dropped without any commitment from the Polish side.

Lê Duẩn's other requests for aid, veiled behind praise for various Polish achievements such as the reconstruction of Warsaw after the city's destruction during World War II were not any more successful. Gomułka countered Lê Duẩn's compliments with showcase modesty, denying Poland deserved such extravagant praise and underlining the various challenges and difficulties still to be overcome.

Clearly, Lê Duẩn's meeting with Gomulka had not gone how he hoped for. His personal, albeit hidden frustration, manifested itself during his closing statements. While profusely thanking his host for material and moral support, the Vietnamese leader at one point described that, among many things he saw during his short time in Poland, was also "how independently [Polish] peasants work." This seemingly innocuous remark was actually a jab at his host. Gomulka's decision to halt the collectivization of agriculture and the resulting independence of Polish peasants was perceived as a dangerous deviation from communist norms in other "fraternal countries" by many communist leaders. Lê Duẩn's veiled criticism was recognized and clearly annoyed his host, and Gomulka dismissed the remark as a "subject specific to us… We have our own policy, adapted to our conditions and capabilities" (VNCA 1). Communist fraternity, it would seem, only went so far.

The verbal sparring of the two leaders reflected the underlying political and economic realities of relations between the two countries. Despite Lê Duẩn's personal appeals, Polish officials proceeded with plans to reduce their aid budget to Vietnam for 1971. While this ultimately did not happen—Polish aid remained on the level of the previous year—that was driven by the decision by the USSR to increase its own support to North Vietnam, making any reduction by its Eastern Bloc allies impossible.

8.6 Conclusion

In the end, the reduction of aid provided by the Poles, so feared by the Vietnamese, did not happen. However, this was not the result of Lê Duẩn's clearly unsatisfactory talks with Gomułka. Nor was it the effect of Gomułka's ousting from power after the 1970 Polish protest in December of that year. It simply turned out that the USSR instead of reducing, actually increased the aid provided to Hanoi in 1971, and all Moscow's European satellites had to follow suit, or at least not reduce the earlier amount, as was the Polish case.

Yet even if Lê Duẩn's visit was unsuccessful, in combination with earlier visits by Lê Thanh Nghị it is still an interesting case study of the way Hanoi managed its relations with other members of the communist bloc. As it turns out, even a theoretically close and trusted ally like Poland was not really treated with much trust. While some of this mistrust can be explained both by the Vietnamese experience of being exploited by external powers and additional lingering suspicion of Poles dating back to 1956, it is still surprising that even in the very top-level meetings Vietnamese often served their partners sometimes blatantly obvious propaganda. This

tactic makes even less sense if we consider that Poles, being present in Vietnam below the 17th Parallel, had the means to verify many of Hanoi's claims.

Despite that, based on archival material, it seems that the North Vietnamese used propaganda (or to be more precise: victory propaganda) against all of their allies, Poland included, just as much as they employed it against the rest of the world. Most likely Hanoi was afraid that showing any sign of weakness or setback would be used against it, i.e., used by its allies as leverage to force the Vietnamese to accept a diplomatic solution and robbing them of the fruits of their struggle. In effect, Hanoi had to maintain the narrative about both constant sacrifice (to ask for aid or for an increase of it) and a stream of victories (to prove the aid is working and as such, is still needed). Historical similarities with Poles were from this perspective a very useful tool to exploit, alongside communist fraternity.

For their part, Poles were in a sort of trap. While they felt genuine sympathy for the Vietnamese struggle, at the same time the drawn-out conflict was a problem for them, hurting Poland economically and politically while providing very limited benefits. But their "fraternal duty" of supporting fellow communist countries and the scale of this support depended more on decisions taken in Moscow, than by Poles themselves.

In the end, the Vietnamese knew that Poles could not challenge their propaganda claims (at least openly) because that would go against the whole communist narrative about the Vietnam War, and as a cog in the machine of the Warsaw Pact, Warsaw could not do that. At the same time, the Poles accepted that they would have to send aid to Vietnam as long as the Kremlin deemed so necessary, but that did not stop them from searching for ways to reduce the burden, like trying to arrange for peace negotiations between the warring sides.

Internal differences in communist ideology added an extra layer to those relations. Socialist countries differed from each other, just like there were no two identical democracies in the West. Still, for the outside world, the Eastern Bloc usually tried to present an image of unity and harmony, despite sometimes serious differences that actually influenced their real relations. In the case of Poland and North Vietnam, Gomułka's "deviations from the proper line," like individual farmers, were not forgotten even a decade later, as we can see from the jab Lê Duẩn took at his host in 1970. On the other hand, Poles were not exactly enthusiasts of Vietnamese war communism, especially their apparent disregard for the loss of human life, and their close ideological ties with Beijing. However, in the end, despite all those differences, and probably with a fake or forced smile from time to time, Warsaw and Hanoi cooperated with each other.

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Chapter 9
New Voices in a New World—Media Portrayal of the Experiences of German Reunification in 1990 by Vietnamese Contract Workers in East Germany

Julia L. Behrens and Nikolai Okunew

9.1 Introduction

2022 marks the thirtieth anniversary of a pogrom in Rostock-Lichtenhagen. In August of that year, neo-Nazis attacked the "Sunflower house" in the northeastern city of Rostock which was the home to former Vietnamese contract workers and other migrants, like Sinti and Roma. Cheered on by local German residents and without intervention by the police, the attackers not only threw stones but also broke in and set fire to a house. Thanks only to the skills and calm reaction of the 150 inhabitants, who were able to make an escape route to a neighboring house, no one was killed. This incident deeply shaped the experience of the years after reunification of non-white Germans and migrants. Until now, their perspective has been largely absent from the historiography of the period.

At the time of what would be called German reunification, around 59,000 Vietnamese contract workers lived in East Germany (Dennis 2007). Contract workers originated from "socialist brother states," mostly from Angola, Mozambique and Vietnam. Sociologist Steffen Mau described the East German transformation of 1989/1990 as a societal "tsunami" and 1990 as a "year of anarchy" (Mau 2019). But like natural disasters, the "Wende" (turning point) affected different people in different ways and the positive sides of the anarchy turned into discriminatory and racist experiences for others. It comes as no surprise, then, that the experience

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_9

of Vietnamese migrant workers in the East, the focus of this paper, differs from the ones of native-born Germans (Plamper 2019). Today, the latter tend to choose elegiac terms to describe the dreamlike atmosphere of the "peaceful revolution." By contrast, migrant experiences were dominated by a specter of uncertainty and a collapsing social space while being devoid of any compensatory delight in a positive narrative of the German nation (Long 2017). 1990 was a turning point in world history and for "socialist cosmopolite workers" alike (Schwenkel 2014), and with this paper we seek to contribute to a more diverse re-telling of 1990.

This paper examines the meaning of the changes after the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 in Germany and beyond for the Vietnamese migrant workers in the East in their host as well as their sending country through archival work and media analysis. By analyzing East German (German Democratic Republic; GDR) print media, TV programming, and the radio show "*Tiếng quê hương*" (Voice of Home), which was broadcast in Vietnamese by GDR state radio in the year 1990, we show that the year of 1990 was a year of displacement, of the renegotiation of citizenship, and a chance for democratization for the Vietnamese migrant workers. By focusing on the reports in different media outlets, we show how the experiences of this year by Vietnamese migrant workers were portrayed, and we draw a conclusion regarding changes in reporting in a new media landscape. Print media from 1990 and TV reports from 1990 to 1992 illustrate that without the ruling party's authoritarianism, GDR journalists contested grandiose claims of international solidarity. Instead, during the "short year of anarchy" they arrived, for the first time, at programs openly addressing the needs of Vietnamese migrant workers in the fading state. Ultimately, however, they were unable, or unwilling, to integrate the experiences and aspirations of Vietnamese living in Germany into the emerging narrative of the experience of 1990.

9.2 Labor Migration in the GDR and East Europe

Labor migrants played a crucial role in keeping the economy of socialist Europe running. Migrants came from socialist brother states both within Eastern European and overseas from places like Vietnam, Mozambique, Cuba, and Angola. In theory, contract workers were to be a triple win for the sending countries, which would offload responsibility for educating and qualifying their workers and have fewer people to feed in times of war and hardship. Further, while they were away, migrant workers would send much-needed industrial goods and financial aid to their home countries, and at the end of their contract they would return with newly acquired skills and expertise. For example, Cuba initially decided not to send workers abroad to not politically become dependent on the Soviet Union but in the 1970s, joined these programs in order to reduce unemployment (Bortlová-Vondráková and Szente-Varga 2021).

For the receiving countries, contract workers were a chance to address the lack of labor in their own countries and find laborers who would do the jobs their own citizens refused to do. For East Germany and Czechoslovakia, foreign contract workers were

mainly a solution to the problem of labor shortages after they had already mobilized internal available groups for labor (students, soldiers, convicts, women) (Klipa 2022). The GDR suffered from labor shortages from the earliest years of its existence. The main reason for the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 was exactly to stem the outpouring of workers. Until 1961, young workers in particular left the GDR for the West when given a chance (Kohli 1994). In early 1990, this prior movement of East German laborers would be mirrored by Vietnamese moving to West Berlin, some 3500 in the spring of that year (Doc. 19).

Already in the 1960s, the labor shortage in the GDR was compensated for by contract workers, but their numbers would grow massively in the 1980s after a policy shift that prioritized quantity over quality of work due to the changing dynamics of the Cold War and Poland raising the price for their workers abroad significantly (Klipa 2022; Weiss 2012). At the same time, economic development had led to an increase in the qualification of the East German workforce. An adverse effect was their rejection of low skilled jobs. Thus, an ever-growing shortage of lower-skilled labor constituted one of the driving forces behind the treaties with Mozambique and Vietnam. Both debt-ridden countries had labor surpluses which they exported to East Germany in exchange for state-sponsored education and loans (Paul 1999). East Germans started moving on from physically demanding jobs, which they left for the newly arrived migrant workers (Poutrus 2020a). In total, the GDR recruited about 70,000 Vietnamese workers (Schaland and Schmiz 2015).

The motivation for individuals to become contract workers was emotionally and economically driven. The Vietnamese contract workers themselves described their stay abroad as an opportunity to make money and to see the world. Looking back, and in comparison to the 1990s, many describe their time in the GDR before reunification as "happy" (Schwenkel 2014). For Mozambiquan workers, long-distance migration for work became a rite of passage toward adulthood after which they would be able to contribute in meaningful ways to their home country (Allina 2018; Alamgir 2018). Alamgir (2018) points out that these motivations but also the commodified flexible treatment of the workers is similar to the realities of labor migrants in capitalist countries until today. In both cases precarity and limited welfare provisions are acceptable risks.

Based on their interests, the sending and receiving states negotiated the employment conditions of the contract workers, which turned out differently from country to country, in some cases under the influence of workers' actions and demands. The treaty between the GDR and Vietnam was an agreement between the Marxist-Leninist ruling party, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands; SED), in East Germany and the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in which the German side dictated many of the rules. By contrast, with Czechoslovakia Vietnam had more bargaining power and was therefore able to negotiate better working conditions: higher wages, safer jobs, maternity benefits equal to the ones of Czechoslovakian women, all with the help of the pressure that potential strikes of their workers posed on the ground (Alamgir 2017a). Strikingly, there are indications that collective actions by the migrant workers were more frequent than previously thought. When, for example, in early 1989 authorities threatened to tighten export

regulations, Vietnamese workers threatened to strike until the party abandoned these plans. In Czechoslovakia, Alamgir (2017a) further describes how Vietnamese used the tactic of unexcused absenteeism to win different work placements. For the future, it would be rewarding to track down those examples of collective actions in the scattered sources and place them in the broader context of the last decade of state socialism in Europe.

In the case of the GDR, although the party's influence on the ground was waning (Alamgir 2017a), a number of drastic measures were kept in place. Women were not allowed to become pregnant, and if they did, they had to choose between deportation or abortion. Prior to 1989, Vietnamese workers were obliged to live in crowded workers homes in which they shared rooms with compatriots, only 5 m^2 were assigned per person. The state directly subsidized these homes, which the employers provided (Arndt 2012). Neither residents nor visitors could enter them without regulation and record keeping. The same applies to other institutions like state-owned youth clubs. Many of these pubs and nightclubs refused entry to Vietnamese, who responded by spending their leisure time in public places like parks, streets, and train stations. Despite these conditions, around 70,000 workers arrived in the GDR, most of them in the second half of the 1980s (Dennis 2017).

Before 1990, "international solidarity" was an important discursive element which not only helped to explain the "comrade of color" to East Germans but also the existence of the GDR itself and its dependence on the Soviet Union (Schüle 2002). But this claim of solidarity was over-shadowed by the self-portrayal of the GDR that saw itself as benevolent and superior to other states by providing a place for labor instead of sending their people away themselves (Saunders 2003). The GDR citizens echoed this notion and it would live on, at least in the media-discourse, after 1990.

Furthermore, despite these claims of solidarity, workers suffered from policies of social segregation and differences in benefits. In the GDR, there was a "Kontaktverbot" (contact ban). Private contacts between Vietnamese and Germans were severely restricted for the interest of both countries, because the GDR authorities focused on productivity and a successful return to the home country (Zatlin 2007). No German courses were offered consequently except for designated translators. In contrast, Hungary and Czechoslovakia provided for compulsory language classes and Hungary set the same standards and obligations to their own citizens and foreign workers in wages and benefits (Bortlová-Vondráková and Szente-Varga 2021). However, in the GDR, limited opportunities for personal exchange, along with different pay scales, compensation, and benefits all contributed to the othering of migrant workers (Zatlin 2007). Although the political framework for segregation varied, social segregation and a lack of personal ties was both a reason and a consequence of racism across all countries. On top of that, racism with its roots in Germany's colonial past kept stereotypes about black people and other people of color alive and fueled racism in the growing skinhead-subculture (Botsch 2012).

A final factor contributing to racism was economic competition. Recent research has revealed the existence of a transnational Vietnamese migrant economy well before 1990 (Hüwelmeier 2017; Alamgir 2017a). As part of these transnational networks, Vietnamese in East Germany spent large sums on consumer goods that they

then sent to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. They bought certain consumer goods in Germany, for example, like sewing machines and mopeds, scarcely available at home, and sent them in bulk to their families. Changing the rules of this part of the migrant economy threatened the implicit societal contract between foreign workers and the East German authorities (Dennis 2017; Poutrus 2020a). At the same time, ordinary Germans often observed foreign workers buying consumer goods like bikes or hi-fi-equipment, which further strengthened the image of the over-privileged and undeserving migrant worker (Poutrus 2020a). Similar dynamics were at play with white East European citizens, above all Polish workers and even tourists, who had the same access to consumer goods that GDR citizens lacked (Zatlin 2007). Given that the ability to purchase these products was an important factor in the workers' decision to work in Europe, policies intended to limit the practice were an object of contention, both at the level of the sending and receiving states and at the level of the workers themselves. This would be an ongoing issue in the GDR and to a larger extent in neighboring Czechoslovakia (Alamgir 2017b).

Contracts for sending workers between European and African and Asian countries differed from case to case. They were, however, all connected by the goals to create a win–win-win situation for the sending and receiving countries as well as for the workers themselves. Overall, the negotiation power of all those three actors was strong enough to indeed reach a positive outcome for all sides, even if the workers had to suffer from hardship. Drawing from the living conditions of Vietnamese in the GDR, it becomes apparent that the claim of solidarity for the contract worker program was mainly that, a claim, that covered the reality of economic goals that were at the forefront. This motive rose to the surface during German reunification, too, when economic concerns from the German side and racism characterized the experience of Vietnamese contract workers. They in return showed their own agency and will to negotiate the new political realities both in Germany and in Vietnam as we will show in this chapter.

9.3 Vietnamese Contract Workers, German Media, and *Tiếng Quê Hương*

For most of the GRD's existence, a public sphere in the narrow sense did not exist. The state-socialist understanding of journalism muted most voices, including those of migrant workers. Therefore, Vietnamese voices appear only rarely in official discourse. However, the GDRs media landscape changed rapidly during the autumn of 1989, establishing new modes of public discourse which now included marginalized groups. It is this expanded public sphere that we set out to explore.

For this chapter, we analyzed sources that together cover television, print media, and radio. One source was German Television Broadcasting (Deutscher Fernsehfunk, or DFF) accessed through the television database of the German Broadcasting Service (ARD or FESAD). The DFF is an artifact of the GDR media system and its transition

to the system of the Federal Republic. During its short existence from 1990 to 1992, the DFF mainly reported on issues concerning people in East Germany, including the tens of thousands of migrant workers. In addition to the DDF, we analyzed East German print media from the same period. Using the ZEFYS portal of the Berlin State Library we searched the four main GDR newspapers in the years 1989–1992 and found sixty-nine articles covering legal and social issues directly connected to Vietnamese migrant workers. We analyze those articles qualitatively and cite twenty-six of them in this paper. We chose lengthy articles that report in depth on the transformation of the Vietnamese working environment during 1989–1990 and did not include pieces that refer to or are extractions of the in-depth articles.

Our richest source for the portrayal of Vietnamese contract workers' experiences of German reunification, however, was the radio program *Tiếng quê hương*. The program was a Vietnamese-language variety program aimed at contract workers living in East Germany broadcast by the GDR state radio for a short span in 1990. The show is stored in the GDR broadcast archives in Potsdam-Babelsberg (DRA) and was found by accident when researching the history of metal music in the GDR. No written sources on *Tiếng quê hương* seem to have survived in the DRA. Not being able to understand the show, even the archivist did not know what it was about. Thus, we want to express our gratitude to Petra Pham, one of the show's hosts, for helping us recreate the history of the program.

Tiếng quê hương aired once a week and each episode lasted about one hour. A man who introduced himself as Hòa and a woman named Petra were the hosts. This Vietnamese-German duo symbolized the transnational character of the program, which covered news and commentary from both the GDR and Vietnam. After surveying the recordings, we selected five exemplary episodes for transcription and translation. These episodes deal with issues central to the program and the reporting on Vietnamese migrant workers in East Germany during 1990–1992.

The following reconstruction of its origins is based on an email exchange with Petra Pham, the former host of the show. During the summer of 1989, the Vietnamese embassy approached scholars in the GDR expressing the wish to communicate to migrant workers in their own language. Through Humboldt University, the officials found Petra Pham who had graduated in regional studies in 1985 after studying Laotian. After marrying a Vietnamese resident in Germany, Pham exclusively worked in fields demanding her to be fluent in Vietnamese, a language that she had not studied but in which she still became proficient after some time and with the help of her husband and other Vietnamese friends. Pham recalls how in 1989, the Vietnamese government wanted to take care of its citizens in the GDR by providing a radio show. Because GDR planners had already placed all graduates in Vietnam Studies in the small number of jobs destined for them, this made Pham one of the few people with the requisite language skills available for the position.

The show was an innovation in the East German media landscape. While it may not have given full agency to its target group, through its choice of language alone, the broadcast made space for Vietnamese perspectives on the historic time. The program was created for a long-neglected target audience and explicitly tried to address its needs and concerns. Yet the show never took the last step to hand over authority to

Vietnamese let alone contract workers. Early on, East German publication standards still applied to *Tiếng quê hương* and so the chief editor had the last word on the German written script. Put bluntly, remnants of the state media apparatus were still in charge.

In early episodes, Pham copied reports from the official Vietnamese news agency mixed in with Vietnamese music from her private tape collection. Additionally, she conducted interviews with Vietnamese workers like those producing clothes for Westerns companies like C&A. During the last year of the GDR, censorship loosened, and Pham introduced a Vietnamese friend in Germany, named Đinh Quang Hòa as co-host. Further expanding the number of Vietnamese voices, in 1990 they collaborated with official Vietnamese broadcasters to produce several smaller reports from Vietnam that were sent to Berlin via phone.

Reflecting the almost DIY-approach to the show, the episodes have a rough structure and vary considerably in terms of content. Usually, an episode would start with a theme, such as an in-depth report of an event or a current discussion, which would then be followed by news from both Germany and Vietnam. Pham structured the episodes with intermittent Vietnamese songs, which ranged from patriotic war music to traditional music to the newest pop songs. The end of an episode was devoted to "logistics": important contacts for people seeking help in East Germany's transforming society, suggestions for events, asking people to take part in the radio show by writing letters, etc. Broadly speaking, *Tiếng quê hương* resembled the majority of programs broadcast in the GDR during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Stahl 2013). Yet not every episode would follow this structure. For example, one might only feature music, or another might consist of reading poems written and sent in by listeners. The hosts justified this break from the usual pattern by citing letters from the audience demanding a change or by stating that the people also deserved a change and something happy in times of hardship. In fact, by this time such strategies were well established in socialist state media which, to compete with Western stations, sought to create the impression that the audience had an influence on the program (Arnold and Classen 2004). *Tiếng quê hương* therefore was a German media tool with Vietnamese influence.

From our analysis of GDR media, two key themes emerge. First, Vietnamese contract workers in East Germany had their own experiences of German reunification, which were characterized by displacement and by questions of citizenship and democracy. While these would also have shaped the experiences of East Germans at the time, for Vietnamese they took on added salience and new meanings because of their position within and between the home and host country. Second, the period saw East German media reporting on issues of discrimination and racism that had previously been taboo. For the first time, Vietnamese were able to speak publicly about issues that had long structured their existence in the GDR, and which, in the "year of anarchy" were becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. In what follows, we discuss these two key topics in detail.

9.4 Displacement

As reunification became a new German reality, two things rapidly became apparent. First, that reunification would happen on the legal terms of the Federal Republic of Germany; and second, that concerns of the migrant population in East Germany were not high on the agenda of political decision-makers (Schmidt 1992; Poutrus 2020b). Since the vast majority of Vietnamese contract workers did not gain GDR citizenship during their stay, they were thrown into a legal gray-zone: would West Germany honor the treaties between the GDR and the brother states that brought Vietnamese and other workers into the country? Not knowing if the government of the reunified Germany would allow them to stay, and if so under what conditions, Vietnamese workers found themselves in a legal limbo. "Fear," as one TV report from the fall of 1990 put it "had become a constant companion" (Doc. 27).

In short, the legal and social situation of Vietnamese migrant workers in 1990 was dire, complex, and highly volatile. The uncertainty at the level of the state and the overall legal status of Vietnamese workers was mirrored at the level of the firm and the individual. With the rapid collapse of the GDR during and after the autumn of 1989, any oversight of state-owned businesses disappeared. Often for the first time in their lives managers of these firms had initiative and responsibility. With the status of Vietnamese workers in theory protected by intergovernmental treaties, GDR businesses had only limited authority to dissolve working contracts with Vietnamese, the last of which were valid until 1994. Nevertheless, with German workers threatening to go on strike or "spill blood" if one German lost their job before the last foreigner was fired (Doc. 10; Doc. 11), it was inevitable that Vietnamese would be among the first victims of managers' desperate efforts to keep their enterprises afloat in a collapsing economy. One estimate holds that by the end of 1990, sixty percent of all foreign workers lost their jobs (Sextro 1996). Thus, many of the firings in 1990 were unlawful (Doc. 8; Doc. 18; Doc. 21).

Additionally, the state stopped subsidizing migrant homes, which caused the businesses owning these homes to sometimes quadruple the rents asked from migrant workers (Doc. 17; Doc. 23; Doc. 24). As a result, many workers lost both their jobs and their homes in a matter of weeks. A considerable number of them began working at street markets selling falsified consumer goods (see Photo 9.1), many of which were provided by Vietnamese working in Eastern Europe and arriving in Germany via pre-existing migrant networks (Doc. 5; Doc. 6; Doc. 15).

In the spring of 1990, it became apparent that West German laws would become the laws of the land in the former GDR. Yet it was unclear how existing asylum laws would be applied to the radically new context. West German asylum laws after 1949 originally followed a very liberal approach intended to provide security from political persecution to refugees. During the Cold War, Western politicians imagined those refugees as East Germans escaping the oppressive communist dictatorship. The asylum laws consequently were not drafted to accommodate refugees fleeing from crises in the global south but to help East Germans fleeing from communism (Su 2017). By the 1980s, when foreign crises seemed to move closer and closer to

Photo 9.1 Facing unemployment but relying on transnational networks some Vietnamese opened illegal street markets. A new phenomenon in East Berlin. *Source* Doc. 27; TC 17:12:25

the Federal Republic of Germany, the asylum laws became an intensely discussed subject in the public sphere. The end of the GDR and the arrival of East European refugees and former Vietnamese migrant workers alike reignited the debate on the nation's asylum laws. Those sympathetic to the situation of migrant workers in the GDR sought to align their legal status with that of Western Germany (Doc. 13). In the end, the so-called Asylkompromiss, or asylum compromise, of 1993 took the formerly basic but clear German asylum law and extended it with four full paragraphs of new restrictions that effectively excluded Vietnamese from claiming asylum status (Poutrus 2014).

Meanwhile, the collapse of the hegemonic socialist discourse in late 1989 saw an outburst in racist petitions to the new government. These petitions called on the state to expel non-Germans such as Cubans, Vietnamese, and Poles, among others (Rabenschlag 2014). To some East Germans trying to correct forty years of socialist rule, those workers from former socialist brother states were seen as remnants of dictatorship to be purged. Mixed with older racist sentiments, these notions fueled right-wing violence that exploded in early 1990. The timeline of these attacks contradicts the familiar notion that right-wing violence in East Germany was the result of years of mass unemployment and other side effects of transformation (Doc. 8; Doc. 9; Doc. 25). In connection with these attacks, the newly elected GDR

government introduced financial incentives for migrant workers willing to return to their home countries (Doc. 14). The violence and this policy had the desired effect of its perpetrators and was a factor for some Vietnamese in their decision to return to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Berger 2005).

Discussion groups connected to protestant churches, especially in East Berlin, were among the very few that raised awareness of the precarious situation of Vietnamese migrant workers during early 1990. These discussion groups had played a decisive role during the early and middle phases of political opposition in the second half of the 1980s. Already before the "Wende," many groups were providing counseling for migrant workers and using their moral authority to bring the situation of Vietnamese workers into the public sphere (Doc. 1; Doc. 10; Doc. 26). During 1990, pastor and newly appointed GDR commissioner for foreigners Almuth Berger played a key role in raising public awareness of the difficult situation of Vietnamese and mounting a response to right-wing violence (Doc. 19). She also sought to establish contacts between Germans and migrant workers on a personal level since she identified the lack of contact as one of the main causes for racism and misunderstandings (Doc. 29; Doc. 30). It was in this context that formerly secret binational treaties were openly discussed for the first time (Berger 2005), and in May of 1990 the GDR government and East German Protestant pastor Almuth Berger deliberated for the first time modifying the existing treaties with Vietnam. In exchange for a temporary "right to stay," the SRV was to allow GDR businesses to fire Vietnamese workers.[1] Given the rapid changes, the best outcome Berger could hope for was "damage control" (Doc. 16).

The state-socialist GDR had fixed wages, subsidized accommodations, and, not least, defined a discursive place for migrant workers. When the regime ended, migrant workers from Vietnam and elsewhere lost various forms of security (see Photo 9.2), and as a result, were displaced not only geographically but also legally, politically, and emotionally (Doc. 2; Doc. 3). East German journalists, still committed to the idea of internationalism, raised concerns about the fate of Vietnamese migrant workers in the East and their displacement (Doc. 4; Doc. 7). They asked for a way of providing help and information (Doc. 18; Doc. 20; Doc. 22). In the spring of 1990, only a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the DFF implored that Vietnamese should be given "daily practical help in life." Internationalism and solidarity, it argued should continue to exist as "basic values in our country" (Doc. 28). Contemporaneously, issues of discrimination began to be raised for the first time. The Berlin district of Lichtenberg was an area of industry and of residential homes for workers. It had, and still does feature, both a large Vietnamese community and an active Neo-Nazi presence. In the 1990s, right-wing skinhead groups dominated its public spaces. Beginning at this time, media began to report right-wing violence against foreign workers in the district (Doc. 32).

Tiếng quê hương was designed to mitigate the impact of these dramatic developments for Vietnamese living in the GDR. It also marked a break from a socialist

[1] The legal limbo of Vietnamese migrant workers extended to 1993, then 1995 and only ended in 1997 when sweeping reforms were put into place (Hopfmann 2020).

Photo 9.2 Women arrested trying to cross the border at the Brandenburg Gate while Germans passed back and forth. *Source* Doc. 31; TC 11:08:15

discourse that represented the presence of migrant workers in Germany as a story of international solidarity and success. In certain respects, *Tiếng quê hương* was the product of a state-socialist propaganda machine that had to reinvent itself after 1989. On the one hand, it found its new role in conveying certain ideals originating in the GDR, such as anti-fascism and international solidarity. On the other, and sometimes in tension with these values, the evolving media system was strongly oriented toward the everyday problems of the population. Programs were no longer solely shaped by Marxist-Leninist ideology, but rather were intended to help East Germans find their way in a rapidly changing environment.

Reflecting this evolution of GDR media, *Tiếng quê hương* sought to help Vietnamese make sense of and find their way in this changing world. But it became clear that Vietnamese would follow a very different path than their German counterparts. One episode features interviews of representatives of the ruling parties of the two German states concerning the fate of contract workers:

> [CDU (Christian Democratic Union, West Germany) Representative]: Concerning the question of the further development of relations with Vietnam, we have to say that we as the party of government of course must stick to signed agreements. We do not have any decision to change the foreign relations with Vietnam. Looking at the current relationship, I am not able to say anything as of today. Reality will show how Vietnam will develop. It will depend a lot on how Vietnam builds its relations with neighboring states. For us it is a priority to

> solve international conflicts in a peaceful way. This is how we measure the cooperation between us and other countries. Concerning the agreements on labor cooperation that exist with Vietnam right now, I want to say that we will implement fundamental changes, from a planned economy to a market economy. This means that we will not receive any more laborers for businesses. The government of the SED [Socialist Unity Party of Germany] has brought 60,000 people from Vietnam and 30,000 people from Mozambique to the GDR. The current problem is to find a suitable solution that works for the laborers as well as for the enterprises. According to my view, we must discuss this together with the Vietnamese side to see if the laborers can return to Vietnam after their contracts have finished or if it is up to the workers to decide if they want to stay.
>
> [PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) Representative]: I believe there is a difference between asylum for mostly political and partly economic reasons, we currently know that a few tens of thousands of Vietnamese are working here but have not applied for residence. I think we must open the door for those people who are here for political reasons. In the past, we have rarely done so. At the moment, I see that we have to admit mistakes concerning asylum and we have to follow the law of the federal republic in the future. The limitation for the Vietnamese, it is a difficult issue. Both governments have to talk to each other. Vietnam urgently needs a well-educated labor force that can build the country. I wish that they become well-educated workers who return and contribute to rebuilding the country (Episode ZI110088-2).

These quotes show that there was broad political consensus for the return of contract workers and changes to the duration of actual contracts. Instead of championing international socialist unity and solidarity, the political discourse in the interviews effectively others Vietnamese workers. Despite being affected by the same changes, workers from East Germany and Vietnam were described differently, setting up radically different experiences of reunification. The news section of the episode goes on to place the fate of Vietnamese contract workers in Germany alongside that of migrant workers in the Soviet Union, thereby expanding the space of events beyond Germany to a global socialist sphere. Approximately 100,000 Vietnamese were resident in the Soviet Union at the time of its collapse (Hoang 2020: 25). On one hand, this served to normalize ongoing events in East Germany. On the other, by highlighting the global nature of events, it raised practical concerns for workers who worried about their families and social networks in Vietnam and their ability to continue sending back goods and financial remittances.

Racism and other forms of mistreatment in Germany and in the Soviet Bloc were also discussed in *Tiếng quê hương*. This included emotional displacement (see Photo 9.3) and the violent exclusion from the place of current residence:

> [Interviewer]: A number of newspapers in the West bemoan the difficult situation of Vietnamese workers who are currently in Eastern Europe. We kindly ask the comrade to tell us the reality of the situation.
>
> [Answer by a Vietnamese government representative]: There are not only fluctuations in politics but also on the side of economy and society which create difficulties for the foreign workers. I can, for example, tell you about the following: firstly, old governments are dissolved in a number of countries and new ones have been founded. The state institutions and responsible people for the agreements are changing as well. That is why there is no sufficient basis to protect and enforce the rights of the workers. Even the factories are looking for ways to lay off workers. Secondly, many have a low income and that is why it is difficult to buy goods and send them home. Thirdly, because of the change in politics, many

Photo 9.3 A recurring theme in memory and reporting is the separation between Germans and Vietnamese in everyday work, such as during the lunch break. *Source* Doc. 31; TC: 10:21:43 and 10:32:369

> organizations and parties have many different opinions about the foreign workers; besides many right opinions, there are also opinions that are not right at all. There are even awful words and bad actions which influence the emotional state of our Vietnamese brothers and sisters (ZI110088-2).

In another episode, the program hosts invited listeners to attend an upcoming protest, explaining, "On April 24 there will be a protest against racism and xenophobia, at 5 pm at Alexanderplatz. There will also be a Vietnamese speaker who will talk about the problems of Vietnamese workers in the GDR" (ZI110088-2).

For the most part, the events of the period and their emotional dimension were filtered through the words of the hosts or of the state officials they interviewed. Listeners' poems, however, allowed workers to express their emotions and sense of connection to the place. In a poem from early 1990, a worker wrote:

> When I think about you,
> I will surely still go very far.
> In the afternoon I hear the wind blowing from afar.
> How many directives there have been from the country.
> Dearest friend,
> The next day is coming, I am returning.
> I will forever remember our affection.
> For sure we will meet again. (15 February 1990)
>
> (ZI110088-5)

The threat of geographic and emotional displacement put Vietnamese in East Germany in a state of "in-betweenness." While this "year of anarchy" was often difficult, potentially involving unemployment, loss of accommodation, uncertain legal status, and exposure to discrimination and racially motivated violence, nevertheless in the coming years, Vietnamese workers would respond by taking matters into their own hands to secure a living for themselves and their families. While the majority

eventually returned to Vietnam (exact statistics are not available), many of those who decided to stay in Germany used their entrepreneurial skills to open small businesses such as Asian bistros, flower shops, and cigarette vending. Their presence shapes the face of many German cities today and is an important part of the contemporary cosmopolitan society.

9.5 Citizenship and Democracy

Another central theme in media coverage is the one of citizenship and democracy. The socialist international movement experienced its gravest defeat during the breakdown of East Germany and the Soviet Union, a decisive moment in global history. Nonetheless, in the media there remained a commitment to socialist ideals within the frame of the nation-state that reassured contract workers of their citizenship in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam even as their right to remain in the GDR was under threat. Crucially, however, the historical juncture created opportunities to conceive this citizenship in newly critical and participatory ways. Take, for example, the host's comments as part of an episode commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of the liberation of Saigon.

> Fifteen years ago, Hồ Chí Minh with the force of the revolution achieved victory in the South and the unconditional surrender of the American troops. You all know the historic events of those days; we do not want to repeat them today…
>
> In the development of the past fifteen years in Vietnam, we had a lot of highs and lows, mistakes and correction in the areas of politics and the economy (ZI110088-3).

In the present atmosphere, rather than dwell on the past successes of the Party, the host instead admits its failings since 1975 and identifies the people as the foundation of future reform. The host goes on to summarize the resolutions of the recent Party Central Committee meeting.

> The eighth meeting of the Party Central Committee decided on a renewal of cooperation between politics and the people and would like to improve the relationship between the Party and the population. The meeting acknowledged mistakes and gaps of the Party and the state in the societal area. The active fight against corruption, against powerful people, who can block doors, has not yet shown any results. The members of state organizations and the government have lost the trust of the people and must take responsibility for it. On top of that, the meeting noted that only the people can implement this renovation (ZI110088-3).

A later episode went still further, reporting on a recent debate held in Berlin among Vietnamese citizens on the idea of democracy and reform in Vietnam:

> In the beginning, all participants of the conference agreed on a simple definition of democracy. Democracy is power for the people. Afterwards, the participants explained their opinions as follows. According to Mr. Khong Doan Hoi, democracy is a long-term project, which is kept alive by the experiences of many generations. It is not a product of a system; it is human. Many opinions hold that democracy is the goal, to find solutions for human problems regarding the many requirements which get worse every day. In philosophy, there is a saying

> that democracy is lent to the people of a society to free the people, so that only then people can be free and equal. There have been a few opinions about the relation between democracy and a multi-party system. Mr. Phan Dinh Dieu reminds us that you must respect diverse opinions and political ideas in a democracy, and that it is a necessary requirement for social organizations to protect this diversity. Democratic parties and diversity must be protected by law. According to Mr. Nguyen Chinh, we should not be too quick to criticize capitalist democracy and dismiss it. If we dismiss it, then people will still feel attracted to it and when we look at reality, then socialist countries will miss a point in the race. Democratic socialism cannot compete with capitalist democracy (ZI110088-6).

Although some of the discussions and ideas brought up in the radio segment might not be consistent and easy to follow anymore, the fact that a public debate was held and then its contents broadcast on *Tiếng quê hương* shows how an important part of the "year of anarchy" involved the opening of new spaces for debate, criticism, and political engagement, not only outside but also inside Vietnam as well. The program's episodes reveal the complex circulation of experiences, ideas, and aspirations across borders of all sorts: cultural, ideological, spatial, and temporal, from the capitalist West to the Socialist East, from Germany to Vietnam, and back again. They show that Vietnamese contract workers understood the events of 1990 as truly global developments, and that despite their differences, Vietnamese and Germans were participating in the same flow of ideas and engaging in similar discussions about identity, politics, and democracy. In this way, the experiences of Vietnamese living in Germany in the 1990s were global as much as local, reflecting developments in Vietnam as much as in Germany itself.

9.6 Conclusion

This is just a brief glimpse into the important developments of 1990, the different ways Vietnamese contract workers in East Germany experienced them, and how they were portrayed in the East German media. By analyzing the contents of the radio show *Tiếng quê hương* and considering German print media and TV reports, we show that 1990 was a "year of anarchy" not just for Germans, but for Vietnamese contract workers as well, characterized by insecurity and fear because of the strong economic motivation to drive contract workers out of the country and a clear lack of solidarity, and also by new forms of agency as people created new livelihoods under the most difficult of circumstances. Vietnamese contract workers experienced 1990 as year of displacement, both from the German state which saw Vietnamese migrants as an additional economic burden during the reunification process and from German citizens who showed blatant racism toward the migrant communities, thereby contributing to emotional displacement. Thirty years after the racist attacks on the Sunflower House in Rostock Lichtenhagen, the issue of racism remains and although the East German media landscape changed in 1990 by allowing critical reports and by publicizing the growing problem of racism, the development in the

reunified media landscape since then still lacks a truly representative reporting about realities of people of color and other migrant communities to this day.

At the same time, 1990 and its political earthquake was an opportunity for Vietnamese in Germany to participate in important debates about citizenship and democracy in a changing Vietnam and shape their new livelihoods in the new Federal Republic of Germany. In the long-run, these new possibilities paved the way for moving families from Vietnam to Germany or founding new families.

Similar processes happened across Eastern Europe in the former Soviet Bloc where Vietnamese workers returned in great numbers to Vietnam, but the ones who decided to stay started independent lives by setting up their own business, having children, etc., while at the same time maintaining a strong connection to their homelands. The coherence and the level or connection within the communities as well as to the mainstream society would differ in each country. Meanwhile, the experiences in the socialist Eastern European countries and after their fall were similar, but as we can see from the different contract conditions, not the same.

The material presented in this paper is limited because we focus on media reports and not, for example, accounts of oral history. In addition, it is limited because we focus on only one group of Vietnamese in Germany. How the refugees residing in West Germany experienced 1990, for example, would be another interesting topic for further research. It is our hope that in the future, researchers will explore other new sources and adopt new perspectives, and, together with the present chapter, contribute to the literature of (post-)migrant experiences of the twentieth century and the writing of a more diverse and inclusive account of German history.

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Chapter 10
JICA's Legal Technical Assistance Projects in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos Since the 1990s

Nobumichi Teramura

10.1 Introduction

Laws of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are significant study subjects for legal academics. Thus, they have authored in English various literature on the legal and judicial systems of these countries (The MLS Academic Research Service 2021). However, it is rare that English academic literature addresses the history of law in the former French Indochina region, as we know from the general lack of interest in this topic among the contributors of a core research handbook of legal history (Dubber and Tomlins 2018). Some reference materials nonetheless address how the law has developed in the region (Grabowsky 2009; Nicholson 2009; Seng 2009), which we can summarise as follows: (1) Before the arrival of French colonialism in the Mekong Subregion, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were governed by their traditional legal systems and customary norms influenced by Buddhism and/or Confucianism. (2) Under French colonial rule between the late 19th and mid-twentieth centuries, many laws and institutions modelled after the French civil law system were established. (3) After the Second World War and during the Cold War, communism dominated the former French Indochina region. This resulted in the introduction of socialist legal systems in Vietnam and Laos. Cambodia started practising the Vietnamese socialist justice system when Vietnamese armed forces drove the Khmer Rouge out of Phnom Penh. (4) From the late 1980s onwards, these countries undertook substantial law reforms to adopt market-oriented legal systems for economic recovery and development. This view of the regional legal history has shaped a perception among Western government officials and legal experts that the three countries continue to be under the dominant influence of French and Soviet civil law traditions (Forsaith 2016: 73; Harrington 2016: 161; US Department of State 2021a, b, c).

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L. C. Kelley and G. Sasges (eds.), *Vietnam Over the Long Twentieth Century*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3611-9_10

However, the post-Cold War legal history of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos is more complicated than it seems. These countries reformed their legal systems with support from foreign donors who belonged to different legal traditions, including the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)—Japan's national ODA agency. However, less is known about how the law reforms have been influenced by Japanese legal ideas through JICA's legal technical assistance projects.[1]

In the 1990s, facing the need to update their laws to ones suitable for market-oriented economies, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos requested Japan to provide them with legal technical assistance for reforming their law codes and the training of lawyers in the use of those codes (MOJ n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c). In response to the requests, JICA launched legal technical assistance projects (JICA Projects), with support from Japanese governmental agencies such as the International Cooperation Department (ICD) of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) (MOJ n.d.d).[2] JICA ensured that the Projects would not result in Japanese experts' intervention in the local legal systems, like the replacement of local customs by imported Japanese legal models (Kaneko 2008: 50; Taylor 2012: 240). Thus, JICA gave due weight to the opinions of local legal officers, adopting consensus-based decision-making processes (ICD 2020a: 3). Nonetheless, the reformed codes and rules culminating from the Project were inevitably affected by Japanese legal ideas as Japanese law experts and local lawyers trained in Japan carried out and supervised the law reform processes (Kaneko 2019; Taylor 2005; Teramura 2021a: 26–27).

However, there is a paucity of English literature discussing Japanese law's influence on the legal norms of the host countries.[3] This is most likely because many essential documents, such as commentaries and textbooks, are available in local and Japanese languages only (Teramura 2021b: 202). As a consequence, western commentators do not perceive Japan as the source of legal ideas useful in the countries along the Mekong River.[4] This refers to the importance of a more comprehensive and systematic study assessing the implementation of JICA Projects in the former French Indochina region that takes into account contributions written in Japanese (Taylor 2001; Taylor 2009; Teramura 2021a).

Against this backdrop, this chapter examines the role of JICA in the legal development of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, consulting both English and Japanese documents. The chapter proceeds as follows. First, it critically examines JICA's contribution to the rule of law in those countries, focussing on the implementation of

[1] English writing commentators pay little attention to the influence of Japanese private law in those countries. See, for example, (Forsaith 2016: 73; Harrington 2016: 161; Melwani 2016: 415).

[2] Other Japanese institutions involved in JICA Projects include: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (JICA's parent ministry), the International Civil and Commercial Law Centre (MOJ's satellite organization), the Supreme Court, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (Nichibenren), the Japanese Federation of Industries (Keidanren) and Japanese university law faculties (ICD 2020a: 2).

[3] When writing about JICA Projects, commentators often focus on specific issues and narrow topics (Teramura 2021a: 20).

[4] For example, Kischel (2019: 55, 689, 699, 728–735) refers to Japan as a vehicle for disseminating a modern German-style legal system to its neighbouring Asian countries.

JICA Projects (Sect. 10.2). Second, it considers whether the Japanese soft power as manifested by JICA and other Japanese government agencies complements or is at cross-purposes with legal aid projects of other donors (Sect. 10.3). Third, it evaluates the extent to which JICA Projects are currently attuned to and/or might be made more responsive to the social and economic aspirations of the host countries (Sect. 10.4). Note that this chapter only addresses JICA's initiatives for developing private law, a branch of the law dealing with relations between individuals or institutions. It does not examine public law, the law of relations between the state and the general public.

10.2 The Legal and Judicial Development Projects of JICA

JICA Projects aim to offer host countries: "(1) Assistance in the drafting of basic laws; (2) [a]ssistance in the establishment of judicial institutions for the operation of enacted laws; and (3) [a]ssistance in the capacity building of legal professionals" (ICD 2020a: 3). To achieve these goals, JICA has been conducting law and development cooperation activities in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos for around 30 years. This section overviews the nature and scope of such activities, examining Japanese law experts' commitment to local legal development.

10.2.1 Vietnam

JICA has delivered the following law and development programmes in Vietnam: the Legal Technical Assistance Project from 1996 to 2007 (First Project), the Legal and Judicial System Reform Project from 2007 to 2015 (Second Project) and the Project for Harmonised, Practical Legislation and Uniform Application of Law Targeting Year 2020 from 2015 to 2020 (Third Project) (JICA n.d.a).

On the First Project, JICA's English website reads that "[the First Project] achieved certain results, for example, revised Civil Code (June 2005), revised Civil Procedure Code (November 2004) and manuals for legal practitioners that were jointly made by Japanese experts and partner organisations" (JICA n.d.a). However, Japanese experts' contribution to the preparation of those products was likely modest. This is because Japan had never provided legal technical assistance before, and because the Vietnamese government took the lead on the law reform processes. For instance, the Vietnamese government commenced revising the Civil Procedure Code in 1993. JICA started sending Japanese law experts to the country in 1997, to hold seminars and training programmes for Vietnamese legal experts working at the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuracy (Maruyama 2004: 4). These capacity-building opportunities arguably facilitated Vietnamese experts' discussion on the civil procedure law reform (Maruyama 2004: 4). Japanese legal experts got more directly involved in the law reform in 2002 when the Vietnamese

government issued a resolution prompting the Drafting Committee of the Civil Procedure Code to complete its mission expeditiously.[5] Then, the Vietnamese government requested JICA and other donors to comment on the "seventh" draft of the new Civil Procedure Code,[6] which the Drafting Committee prepared based on the past Civil Procedure Codes of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union (Yoshimura 2005: 11).

JICA appointed Japanese legal experts as advisors to the First Project and the Drafting Committee. These advisors formed a research group with senior Japanese scholars and practitioners to review the draft and submit recommendations to the Vietnamese government (Maruyama 2005: 5). Nevertheless, not all their proposals were reflected in the revised Civil Procedure Code because the Drafting Committee and the National Assembly of Vietnam had the final authority to decide whether and to what extent the proposals were to be adopted (Iseki 2005: 59; Yoshimura and Iseki 2005). Moreover, the Drafting Committee expected the Japanese experts to advise on specific topics and issues extracted from the draft Code (Maruyama 2005: 8). In other words, the Committee in advance framed the Japanese commentators' discussions on the law reform. In spite of such a modest expectation of Vietnamese lawyers, the Japanese experts often spotted in the draft Civil Procedure Code problems that were not covered by the Committee's request for advice, and they proposed solutions for such problems (Iseki 2005: 59; Yoshimura and Iseki 2005: 44).

According to a legal instructor working for the First Project, JICA avoided drafting its version of the Civil Procedure Code as it believed that doing so would not only undermine Vietnamese lawyers' motivation towards the law reform but also bring about negative consequences to their capacity building (Maruyama 2005: 8). JICA opted for a similar approach in assisting the reform process of the 1995 Civil Code, which the National Assembly of Vietnam officially launched in 2000. Professor Morishima of Nagoya University formed a joint research group for the law reform, inviting Japanese legal experts and Vietnamese law officers. The group issued various recommendations, and the Drafting Committee accepted the working group's suggestions on the fundamental principles of private transactions, such as equality between the parties, party autonomy and respect for private rights (Lien 2006: 12–13). Accordingly, the Japanese legal experts indeed contributed to the reform of the 1995 Civil Code (and the establishment of the 2005 Civil Code). However, the process was initiated by the Vietnamese government not to overhaul the 1995 Civil Code comprehensively but to modify some aspects of the Code that were based on the Civil Code of the Russian Federation (Morishima 2006: 17). Therefore, the assistance of JICA in preparing the 2005 Civil Code and the 2004 Civil Procedure Code was specific and targeted but non-comprehensive.

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[5] The Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee Politburo Resolution (08-NQ/TV): (Kawashima 2019: 104, noting that the Drafting Committee was formed in 1993).

[6] For example, the experts sent by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) commented on the fourth draft of the Code, and the STAR Project of the United States from time to time held workshops on civil procedure law (Maruyama 2005: 7; Yoshimura 2005: 11).

Building upon its experience of the First Project, JICA launched the Second Project in 2007. JICA invested more resources into the capacity building of legal officers with different backgrounds. The capacity building methodology was unique in that JICA adopted a bottom-up approach aiming to improve the quality of Vietnamese legal practice from local level authorities (Kikegawa 2008; Morinaga 2008: 15–18). The Vietnamese government and JICA chose Bắc Ninh Province as a pilot zone, and JICA offered training programmes to local judicial officers, legal officers and legal practitioners working for the People's Court and the People's Procuracy, as well as agencies of the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice in the Province (Morinaga 2008: 15–18). The idea was for JICA to identify those institutions' problems and challenges and explore plausible solutions for such issues. Whether those solutions worked or not, JICA shared the outcomes of its attempts with the central level authorities,[7] for the latter to take advantage of this information in their future law reform projects (Morinaga 2008: 18–19).

Despite this shift to capacity building, JICA continued helping Vietnam update legislation. For example, the Civil Judgement Enforcement Act was established in 2008. JICA had organised several workshops where the members of the Drafting Committee of the Act and court execution officers could discuss with Japanese legal experts about early drafts of the Act (Public Policy Department at JICA 2010: 12). The Vietnamese experts responded favourably to the Japanese experts' suggestions to strengthen the independence of law enforcement agencies, increase the transparency and efficiency of judgement enforcement proceedings, and improve procedures for the attachment, evaluation, and auction of property.[8] Thus, the Drafting Committee reflected those comments in the final draft of the Act (Public Policy Department at JICA 2010: 140). Unfortunately, JICA's long-standing support for drafting the Real Property Registration Act, which was reportedly highly valued by the local experts drafting the Act (Public Policy Department at JICA 2010: 127, 136–137), was not rewarded due to the National Assembly's cancellation of the legislative project (Public Policy Department at JICA 2015: 27). Notwithstanding this setback, JICA organised a series of workshops for the knowledge development of Vietnamese experts drafting the Decree on the Registration of Secured Transactions, introducing them relevant Japanese laws and practice (Public Policy Department at JICA 2015: 9). The workshops were reportedly helpful for preparing the final draft of the Decree. Further, the amendments of the 2004 Civil Procedure Code and the 2005 Civil Code were adopted by the National Assembly in 2011 and 2015, respectively (Tatara 2012: 48; Tsukahara 2018: 41). JICA worked with the drafting committees for these Codes by organising seminars to comment on the amendment proposals that were elaborated by the Vietnamese law experts (Public Policy Department at JICA 2015; Kawashima 2019: 120; Joint Research Group on the Civil Code of Vietnam 2015).

[7] The central authorities were the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice (VMOJ), the Supreme People's Court (SPC), the Supreme People's Procuracy (SPP) and the Vietnam Bar Federation (VBF): (JICA 2021).

[8] See comments from Mr. Le Tuan Son of the Law Enforcement Department at the Ministry of Justice, who was a member of the Drafting Committee: (Public Policy Department at JICA 2010: 140).

The Third Project commenced in 2015, hoping to improve the capacity and skills of legal and judicial institutions for the consistent and efficient application of legal instruments (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2018: 59ff). JICA kept offering support for legislative drafting but avoided setting short-term objectives. For example, JICA held several workshops to build the foundation of the codification of private international law, which would hopefully take place at some point (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2018: iv–v).[9] Therefore, the aim of the Third Project was to help the Vietnamese government develop human resources that would enable them to craft consistent and coherent legal and legislative documents in the foreseeable future (Kawanishi 2015: 9–14; Matsumoto 2015).

10.2.2 Cambodia

For the development of private law in Cambodia, JICA has been implementing the Legal and Judicial Development Project since 1999. We can divide the Project into three periods. Between 1999 and 2012 (First Period) were the Phases 1–3 of the Project in which JICA collaborated with the Cambodian Ministry of Justice (CMOJ) in establishing the Civil Code, Civil Procedure Code, and relevant rules almost anew (JICA 2012a: 3ff). Between 2012 to 2017 (Second Period) is Phase 4, in which JICA aimed to equip Cambodian legal elites with the knowledge and skills that enable them to lead the future reforms of those Codes and rules without support from foreign donors (JICA 2012b). From 2017 to 2022 (Third Period) has been Phase 5, whose primary objective has been to build a solid foundation of legal practice that complies with those Codes and rules (JICA 2017).

During the First Period, Japanese experts committed heavily to drafting the main bodies of Cambodian private law—the Civil Code and the Civil Procedure Code. The cause of this outstanding involvement was the shortage of human resources in the legal sector of Cambodia, which was triggered in the 1970s by the nationwide atrocity and destruction by the Khmer Rouge regime (Teramura 2021b: 202). The regime turned the country into a (near-)complete legal vacuum by burning law books, demolishing libraries and exterminating trained lawyers (Phallack 2012: 8; Vickery 1986: 120). Hence, the Japanese legal experts were exceptionally determined to take leadership in JICA Projects operating in Cambodia, balancing this initiative with the local ownership of law reform. For instance, JICA established in Japan the Civil Code Working Group (CCWG) and the Civil Procedure Code Working Group (CPCWG)—each composed of Japanese experts in the field, to make these groups to draft the Codes in Japanese (JICA 2001: 6–7). Correspondingly, the CMOJ established in

[9] In 2021, JICA undertook the new Project for Improving the Quality and Efficiency of Law Enforcement and Legal Development in Vietnam, whose major focus was on dealing with inconsistencies in various legal instruments and thereby reducing inefficiencies in the enforcement of these legal instruments: (ICD 2020b).

Cambodia the study groups for those Codes consisting of Cambodian judges, CMOJ officials and other legal experts, to define legal terminologies and finalise the draft Codes in their language—Khmer (JICA 2001: 6–7).

The CCWG drafted the Civil Code as follows (Morishima 2003: 7).[10] First, each group member worked on a specific part of the Civil Code, tracing the structure of the Japanese Civil Code. Second, the members prepared the proposals of the assigned sections of the Cambodian Civil Code for their internal and informal discussion. The proposals took into account relevant rules in the old Cambodian Civil Code and the civil laws of Japan, Germany, and France, among others. Third, the members travelled to Cambodia in rotation to explain the draft proposals to the study group in the CMOJ and obtain feedback. From time to time, Cambodian legal experts were invited to Japan to share their views on Cambodian civil law with the CCWG. Fourth, the CCWG drafted the Civil Code in Japanese, reflecting inputs from the Japanese and Cambodian experts. Fifth, the study group in the CMOJ translated the draft Civil Code into Khmer, with the support of JICA staff who were fluent in both Khmer and Japanese (Sakano 2003). The CPCWG adopted a similar approach in drafting the Civil Procedure Code (Takeshita 2003). The cooperation of Cambodian and Japanese lawyers culminated in the promulgations of the Civil Procedure Code in 2006 and the Civil Code in 2007. Further, JICA guided the Cambodian legal professionals in drafting and finalising the Law on Non-Contentious Case Procedures, the Law on Personal Status Litigation, the Law on Implementation of the Civil Code, the official commentaries and textbooks of the Civil Code and the Civil Procedure Code, and so on (JICA 2012a: 5–12).[11]

During the Second and Third Periods, JICA concentrated on the capacity building of Khmer legal practitioners. For instance, Phase 4 of the Legal and Judicial Development Project was designed to enhance the understanding of those new legal instruments among Khmer legal experts at the CMOJ, Royal Academy for Judicial Profession (RAJP), the Bar Association of Kingdom of Cambodia (BAKC), and the Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE) (JICA 2012b). Special training courses were organised by experienced instructors—most of them were Japanese law experts, and each Cambodian institution was tasked to nominate members who would participate in the training courses. In addition, JICA continued to support legislative drafting, which led to the promulgation of the Inter-Ministerial Prakas (Regulation) Concerning Real Rights Registration Procedure Pertaining to the Civil Code in 2013 (JICA n.d.e.).

The Third Period started in 2017, with the aim of helping Cambodian legal practice strictly follow the Civil Code and the Civil Procedure Code. Phase 5 led to preparing document templates for legal proceedings and new judgment publication initiatives for greater legal certainty and transparency (Chheng 2021; JICA 2017). JICA also

[10] Morishima notes that the CCWG was formed by twelve civil law professors from top Japanese universities.

[11] In particular, the value of the commentaries and textbooks may not be underestimated in Cambodia, where the courts do not strictly follow the doctrine of precedent and where those authoritative sources are often considered as quasi-sources of law: (Teramura 2021b: 203).

intended to update laws and regulations related to those Codes (with the initiatives of Cambodian elite lawyers), reflecting on needs in the Cambodian legal sector (JICA 2017).

10.2.3 Laos

JICA has implemented three projects to reinforce the rule of law in Laos: the Legal and Judicial Development Project between 2003 and 2009 (JICA 2020), the Project for Human Resource Development in the Legal Sector between 2010 and 2018 and the Project for Promoting Development and Strengthening of the Rule of Law in the Legal Sector of Lao P.D.R. between 2018 and 2023 (JICA n.d.b,n.d.c,n.d.d). We can classify the achievements of these projects as follows.

The first category is the capacity development of local legal practitioners to obtain effective skills for handling civil cases. JICA intended to achieve this goal through collaboration between Japanese experts and local practitioners in preparing and publishing core legal resources, such as commentaries and textbooks. As such materials were not always available in Laos in the early 2000s (Tabe 2007: 14–16), the JICA experts considered that the collaboration would help Lao lawyers deepen their understanding of private law (Matsuo 2007: 41; Nakahigashi et al. 2007). The resources Japanese and Lao experts published through JICA Projects include a handbook for judicial writing, a glossary for legal terminology, a legal database, textbooks on civil law and commercial law and civil litigation handbooks (JICA 2009: 2–4; Nakamura 2014: 5–6). Seminars and workshops targeting small and large audiences were also held by JICA to familiarise Lao legal experts with these new publications and disseminate them among Lao lawyers and government officers (JICA 2009: 43–117). Note, however, that JICA and its Lao partners produced such materials to address ambiguities in existing laws and harmonise the interpretation of these laws. Therefore, the influence of Japanese private law on those resources is unlikely to be outstanding.

The second category is the provision of support for drafting the first Lao Civil Code. The backdrop of the support is as follows. In the 2000s, the Lao government ordered the Lao Ministry of Justice (LMOJ) to establish a working group for civil law reform. The working group looked into the civil law of Laos with Japanese law experts, participating in various capacity-building activities organised by JICA. At that time, Laos did not have a civil code, and what lawyers called "civil law" was 18 individual statutes governing different areas of private disputes (Ito 2017: 60). These statutes had been updated from time to time. However, the working group concluded that repeating partial reforms and amendments would not be useful for addressing duplications and contradictions in the statutes and making the statutes compatible with the rapidly progressing society of Laos. Accordingly, the working group recommended that the Lao government combine those separate statutes into a single statutory body—the Civil Code. The Lao government approved the recommendation in 2012. Then, the LMOJ officially requested JICA to support drafting

the new Civil Code as it realised that JICA acquired the knowledge and information of Lao private law through those capacity-building initiatives for Lao lawyers (Ito 2017: 60; Savankham 2016).

JICA had not anticipated such a request but agreed to work with the LMOJ on the law reform (Ito 2020). The two organisations established the Civil Code Drafting Committee. The members of the Committee were local legal officers recruited from the LMOJ, the People's Supreme Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the National University of Laos, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Irie 2020: 65). Correspondingly, JICA established in Japan the Civil Law Advisory Group for Laos that consisted of Japanese law professors and lawyers working for JICA (Irie 2019a: 29). The Advisory Group, with a group of JICA officers being resident in Laos, offered to the Drafting Committee instructions and consultancy for completing the new Code by the proposed deadline in 2015 (Irie 2019a: 30). The Advisory Group refrained from dominating the drafting process because it was keen on witnessing the creation of "Lao Civil Code by the [Lao] People, of the [Lao] People, for the [Lao] People".[12] The Group respected the leadership of the Drafting Committee and limited its role to a facilitative general advisor who responded to enquiries from the Committee, and who lectured to the Committee about various topics, including basic legal concepts and foreign legal systems (Irie 2019a: 31).[13] The Drafting Committee managed to prepare the first complete draft of the Civil Code by 2015, but it took until 2018 for the National Assembly of Laos to promulgate the Code. The three-year gap was spent on improving the draft further, based on public comments from legal and business sectors (Irie 2019a: 31–32). Finally, the Code came into effect in 2020 (MOJ 2020).

10.3 Legal Development Projects of Other Donors

JICA is not the only institution that has offered legal development aid projects to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. International organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as foreign countries' national ODA agencies, like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Agence Fançaise de Développement (AFD), have also implemented law reform projects in the former French Indochina region. Their law and development initiatives have sometimes overlapped with JICA Projects, which have resulted in tensions and contradictions. This section discusses competitions between JICA and other donors operating in the region. It also considers JICA's regional standing in the development of private law.

[12] Comment by Professor Hiroshi Matsuo, the Chairman of the Advisory Group: (Irie 2019a: 31).

[13] High-ranking Lao government officials positively evaluated JICA's approach. For example, see (Umemoto 2017).

10.3.1 Vietnam

The institutions that have and have been providing Vietnam with legal technical assistance (apart from JICA) since the 1990s are USAID, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), AusAID, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Maison du droit by France, the European Union (EU), the World Bank, ADB and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among others (Edagawa 2020).[14] These organisations have worked on diverse legal development aid projects for many years. Since the conclusion of the US-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) in 2001, USAID has delivered the Support for Trade Acceleration (STAR) Project from 2001 to 2013 and the Governance for Inclusive Growth (GIG) Program from 2014 to 2018. The purpose of these initiatives was to help Vietnam meet the commitments under the US-Vietnam BTA and become a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In the area of commercial law, USAID had assisted Vietnam until 2006 in: (1) developing 93 laws and regulations that conform with the US-Vietnam BTA; (2) promoting law reforms through organising 290 seminars and workshops for 20,400 local state officials and business leaders; and (3) publishing and distributing reference materials to local political, legal and business stakeholders (Coon 2012). These projects arranged by the US were inevitably at cross-purposes with JICA Projects because USAID intended to reform laws and regulations on commerce and trade, and because JICA updated the Civil and Civil Procedure Codes—the bodies of law governing relationships between private parties generally—and laws closely related to these Codes. The coverage of the Civil and Civil Procedure Codes is broad in that these Codes provide foundational rules dealing with differences among diverse private individuals, including merchants. As the number of aid donors working in Vietnam has been outstanding, it is highly likely that the development projects of other donors have also intersected with JICA Projects.

Nevertheless, Vietnam has managed to coordinate these competing donors effectively. For example, in reforming the Civil and Civil Procedure Codes and relevant laws, the Vietnamese government bestowed control of the drafting processes on the committees and working groups consisting of local government officials and lawyers. Occasionally, the members of these committees and groups sought foreign legal experts for advice on their draft legislation. However, they avoided fully depending on recommendations from one donor. This attitude is conceivable based on JICA's experience preparing the 2004 Vietnamese Bankruptcy Law. According to JICA's record, Vietnam first worked with ADB on the reform of its bankruptcy law. However, ADB ceased to provide law reform support before completing the final draft (Morinaga

[14] According to Edagawa, the organisations still offering such legal development support to Vietnam as of September 2020, other than JICA, were Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), EU, Germany's Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, UNDP, UNICEF, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Bank.

2008: 10). Accordingly, the Supreme People's Court of Vietnam which was responsible for the law reform project, requested JICA to take over the advisory role from ADB (Kono 2021: 25; Morinaga 2008: 10). JICA agreed and started being involved in the reform project in 2000. It invited authorities of Japanese bankruptcy law to be expert advisors on the project.[15] These advisors commented on the second, third and seventh drafts of the 2004 Bankruptcy Law but refrained from forcing Vietnam to follow their law reform model (Kaneko 2006: 13–14). The Japanese experts reportedly put forward a legislative model that designed the 2004 Bankruptcy Law as a system for fair and equitable debt collection from companies insolvent. The idea of this legislative model was to establish a set of rules that enable insolvent companies to complete liquidation and leave the market expeditiously. The third draft of the Bankruptcy Law adopted this legislative model. However, the seventh draft focussed on the salvation and restructuring of businesses facing financial stress, prioritising business continuity over strict debt collection. Like Chapter 11 of the US Bankruptcy Code, the new draft of the 2004 Bankruptcy Law permitted the sacrifice of creditors' rights for corporate rescue and reorganisation (Kaneko 2006: 15; 2021). Kaneko suggests that this policy shift was inspired by the active promotion by the World Bank and ADB of their US-style legislative models.[16] The National Assembly of Vietnam adopted the seventh draft without significant revisions, rejecting JICA's legislative model emphasising debt collection.

It is conceivable from Vietnam's law reform projects with USAID, ADB, the World Bank and JICA that the country has not conferred JICA special status compared with other donor organisations. Because many donor institutions were operating in Vietnam, the country had the luxury of comparing diverse legislative proposals from different donors, assessing economic and financial incentives that would likely follow these proposals. If it found recommendations from other donors more appealing, the Vietnamese government would not hesitate to decline suggestions from JICA, as in the case of the 2004 Bankruptcy Law reform. JICA has contributed to improving private law in Vietnam, which does not connote that its contribution has always been more profound than other donor agencies'. Hence, the position of JICA and Japanese law experts in developing Vietnamese private law has been relative to other aid institutions. Vietnam treated JICA's legislative models as "comparable" to those from other donors.

[15] These advisors include Professor Yasuhei Taniguchi, the Professor Emeritus in Civil Procedure Law of Kyoto University, who was formerly a member of the Appellate Body of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body.

[16] See, respectively, the World Bank's 2001 Principles and Guidelines for Effective Insolvency and Creditor Rights Systems and the ADB's 2000 Good Practice Standards for Insolvency Law (Kaneko 2006: 15). See also (Kaneko 2021: 66), noting that the driving force behind the promotion of the US-style legislative models by the World Bank was large US law firms in New York, to whom the World Bank outsourced many legal aid projects.

10.3.2 Cambodia

No discernible record shows the precise number of cooperation agencies that have engaged in legal development projects in Cambodia. However, the number is unlikely to be small, considering the history that the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), led by Pol Pot, almost entirely abolished the legal and judicial systems of the Kingdom. The new Cambodian government established in the 1990s was eager to fill this legal vacuum because to do so was a condition for receiving financial aid support from international institutions and foreign governments. The support was crucial for Cambodia due to its high poverty rate, destroyed infrastructure and economy damaged by the civil conflict. Accordingly, the Cambodian government was open to any aid support proposed by foreign institutions. However, unlike in the case of Vietnamese law reform, the Cambodian government was often reluctant to take initiatives in its law reform projects. This passive attitude caused tensions among donor institutions. JICA has experienced such tensions at least twice, as discussed immediately below.

The first case was on the Civil Code. Since 1999, JICA had worked with the CMOJ on drafting the Code until its promulgation in 2007.[17] The purpose of the Code was to define the basic rights of citizens—private rights—such as personal and property rights. Naturally, early drafts of the Code contained various rules on immovable property. On the other hand, the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC) had been undertaking the Land Management and Administration Project (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2012: 40), with support from ADB, the World Bank, and GIZ.[18] As part of this project, the East-West Management Institute (EWMI), a US not-for-profit organisation for the promotion of the rule of law, had been working on reforming the 1992 Land Law, based on its consultancy contract with ADB. When the revised Land Law was promulgated in 2001, it became clear that some provisions of the new Land Law conflicted with the draft Civil Code prepared by JICA and the CMOJ (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2012: 39–41). The point of controversy was whether to adopt the Torrens title system—a land registration and transfer system operating on the principle of "title by registration" rather than "registration of title"—derived from the common law of South Australia (Kaneko 2006: 18).[19] For instance, Article 69 of the 2001 Land Law read that "the transfer of ownership of [land or a real property] shall be considered as valid upon the registration of the contract of sale with the Cadastral Registry Unit" (MLMUPC 2002). In contrast, the draft Civil Code required registration as perfection of property rights against a third party (i.e. an additional step required to be taken to make ownership rights effective against a third party), stating that the transfer of land ownership took place

[17] See Sect. 10.2.2 above.

[18] For the details of the Land Management and Administration Project, see (The World Bank 2022).

[19] For the details of the Torrens system, see (State Government of Victoria n.d.), noting that the countries using the system include Australia, New Zealand, England and Wales, Ireland, Malaysia, Singapore, Iran, Canada and Madagascar.

upon the meeting of the minds between parties (e.g. a seller and a buyer) (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2012: 39–41).

According to JICA, this draft rule on ownership transfer emerged from its discussion and consensus with the CMOJ and the General Department of Cadastre and Geography. Nevertheless, ADB and EWMI started opposing the adoption of the Civil Code, insisting that the Code would be an obstacle to the 2001 Land Law coming into force. The opposition caused an inter-ministerial controversy between the CMOJ and the MLMUPC, which escalated to an inter-donor debate among the World Bank, ADB and JICA (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2012: 39–41; Trzcinski and Upham 2014). Suggesting the subject was highly technical, the Council of Ministers of Cambodia requested these donors to settle the difference by themselves. In 2004, the three donors held a two-day conference at the headquarters of the World Bank in Washington, DC. JICA agreed to partially modify the draft Civil Code to make it compatible with the 2001 Land Law because the latter was already promulgated.[20] After JICA made the modification, no opposition to the Civil Code was expressed by the MLMUPC, ADB, and the EMWI (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2012: 39–41).

The second case concerned the Civil Procedure Code (CPC). In 2003, the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce (CMOC) published the draft of the Commercial Court Law (CCL) that it prepared with CIDA. The idea of the CCL was to establish a special first instance court in Phnom Penh that would be capable of dealing with commercial cases fairly and efficiently under "fast track" rules diverged from the draft CPC for the Kingdom to improve its business environment and attract more foreign investors (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2012: 51).

The preliminary draft was not acceptable to the CMOJ and JICA, who had been preparing the CPC since 1999, because (1) the procedure for the appointment of judges under the CCL violated the Constitution of Cambodia, and (2) the jurisdiction of the proposed Commercial Court was so broad that it could water down the CPC and other procedural norms (Takeshita 2004).

On (1), the draft law provided that each tribunal in the Commercial Court consist of two career judges and one advisory judge (or one associate judge) (Takeshita 2004: 25). The appointment of the advisory judge was planned to be made by an inter-ministerial commission comprising of officers who belong to the CMOJ, CMOC, Ministry of Economy and Finance, National Bank of Cambodia and Cambodia Chamber of Commerce (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2012: 51; Takeshita 2004: 25). However, the Constitution stated that the appointment of judges in Cambodian courts was to be made by the King as per recommendations by the Supreme Council of the Magistracy—a judicial organ to maintain the independence of the judiciary.[21] Thus, having such an advisory judge in a tribunal would contradict the judicial independence guaranteed by the Constitution.

On (2), the draft law intended to confer the Commercial Court broad exclusive jurisdiction to hear matters related to commercial transactions, mixed contracts (i.e.,

[20] As a result, Articles 135 and 336(2) were newly established in the draft Civil Code.

[21] See Article 21 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

contracts between merchants and non-merchants), negotiable instruments such as stocks and bonds, commercial enterprises, insolvencies, banking, financial institutions, foreign exchange, product and service liability, maritime disputes and competition, among others (Takeshita 2004: 25–26). This broad authority implied that the Commercial Court could bypass the CPC (and even the Criminal Procedure Code prepared by France) on many occasions. The CMOJ and JICA hence issued comments criticising the draft CCL. The CMOC ultimately decided to modify the draft CCL to reduce the exclusive jurisdiction of the Commercial Court, agreeing to mandate the Court to apply the CPC where applicable. ADB and UNDP later joined CIDA to offer legal technical assistance to the CMOC in updating the draft CCL (Industry Development and Public Policy Department at JICA 2012: 51–52). However no discernible material suggests that the CCL has been promulgated, and the government still likely plans to establish the Commercial Court (Kunmakara 2021; Vanyuth 2021).[22]

10.3.3 Laos

Few cases have been reported about overlaps between JICA's and other donors' legal technical assistance projects in Laos. This is likely because JICA has delivered law and development initiatives that supplement the works of other donors. For example, JICA published legal education materials to help local practitioners learn about laws and rules established by Lao experts and foreign donors. JICA also drafted the Civil Code with Lao lawyers and government officers, but the foundation of the Code was 18 statutes that had been created by local and foreign experts (Irie 2019a: 33ff). The only noticeable event reported by JICA as an overlapping case is one that occurred in relation to a matter raised by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group. In late 2017, when the drafting committee of the Civil Code was in the final stage of its mission, the IFC sent a notice to the committee, demanding the committee rewrite the rules on secured transactions in the Civil Code (Irie 2019a: 32). The IFC argued that the committee should make the Code more convenient for those using the Registry Office for Security Interests in Movable Property. This centralised computer registry allegedly allowed registered individuals and institutions to record their financial interest in moveable and personal property.[23] The IFC developed the system with the Ministry of Finance of Laos (Irie 2019a: 32), to record (if possible) all secured transactions in personal property on the unified and transparent online system for the promotion of such transactions in the country (Irie 2019b: 42). To this end, the IFC insisted on making various changes in the Civil Code, including but not limited to the prohibitions of "pledge on movable property" and "setting up

[22] Presumably, the rejuvenated move was inspired by the recent (proposed) establishment of international commercial courts around the world: see, e.g., (Teramura et al. 2021).

[23] The registry is available at: https://www.mof.gov.la/str/en_index.html (However, the registration to the system is not open to the public.)

pledge with documents" (Irie 2019a: 32), despite these being widely used among Lao people (Irie 2019b: 47). The IFC urged the committee that noncompliance with the advice would result in Laos going down in the World Bank's annual Ease of Doing Business Rankings (Irie 2019b: 41–42). However, the drafting committee opted to follow the IFC's notice only minimally because it found that the unified registration system was not useful for ordinary transactions among Lao private parties (Irie 2019b: 46–50). The committee pointed out that the purpose of the Civil Code was to regulate ordinal private transactions, not business ones, so it rejected most of the IFC's recommendations (Irie 2019a: 32).

10.4 Conclusions: JICA's Commitment to Law Reforms in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos

This chapter has examined how JICA has shaped part of legal pluralism in the former French Indochina countries over the last three decades. Based on the assessment, one may rank the level of JICA's commitment to civil law reforms in the three countries as follows: (1) Cambodia, (2) Laos and (3) Vietnam. In Cambodia, JICA has played a leading role in drafting principal codes and laws from almost scratch, filling the lack of human resources in the Cambodian legal sector. The leadership was crucial for the promulgations of the Civil Code and the Civil Procedure Code, which formed the foundation of the Cambodian legal system.[24] Indeed, the drafting process of these Codes caused tensions between JICA and other donors such as ADB, the World Bank, GIZ and CAID. However, Cambodian legal elites did not make decisions that might turn JICA's long-term efforts in vain, respecting JICA's proposals as practically as possible. Even where the elite lawyers observed occasional conflicts between different legal models, as in the case of the Land Law reform, they requested JICA to consult directly with other donors. They did not unilaterally discard the plan of JICA, so the Japanese law experts were not forced to rewrite their legislative models. Thus, JICA's achievements in the Kingdom are comprehensive and outstanding. In Laos, JICA delivered Civil Code-centred supervisory support, relying on other donors' past legal technical assistance projects. Put differently, JICA Projects in Laos focussed on improving the legal environment by supplementing past law reforms initiated by other donor agencies. Hence, JICA's accomplishments in developing Laos civil law are significant but supplementary. In Vietnam, JICA's role has remained to be one of many aid donors who provide on-demand advice and support to Vietnamese lawyers. JICA has provided drafting assistance to the Vietnamese government from time to time and in a piecemeal fashion. Some essential proposals by JICA have been rejected by Vietnamese legal experts, as in the case of the Insolvency Law reform in the 2000s. Therefore, JICA contributed to varying degrees of legal development in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

[24] Section 10.2.2 above.

Whether JICA's Projects are attuned to the social and economic aspirations of the three countries may not be determined solely based on the research conducted for this chapter. Nevertheless, Cambodia and Laos have maintained the legislative models that JICA developed with local legal experts, despite occasional interference from other influential donors. This may imply Cambodian and Lao lawyers' basic endorsement of JICA Projects. In contrast, it is unclear to what extent Vietnamese legal elites have positively evaluated JICA Projects. These elites have often limited the role of JICA to an advisor and have not let the agency play an outstanding role in the development of Vietnamese private law. Thus, JICA Projects have possibly been in accord with Cambodia's and Laos' social and economic ambitions but not strictly with Vietnam's. Hence, the time has probably come for JICA to critically reflect on its commitment to the Vietnamese legal system and to decide whether and how it will continue to provide Vietnam with legal technical assistance. Hopefully, the reflection will open up new possibilities for both JICA and Vietnam.

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