Voices on the Loss of National Independence in Korea and Vietnam, 1890-1920

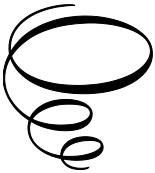
Voices on the Loss of National Independence in Korea and Vietnam, 1890-1920:

Other States of Mind

By

William F. Pore

Cambridge Scholars Publishing



Voices on the Loss of National Independence in Korea and Vietnam, 1890-1920: Other States of Mind

By William F. Pore

This book first published 2021

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-6298-0
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-6298-1

For the people of Korea and Vietnam

欲報之德。昊天罔極。

(*Shijing* II, Book V, Ode VIII, 4)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This would have been a far lesser endeavor without the direction and advice of Shawn F. McHale, Edward A. McCord, and Kirk W. Larsen, who contributed their respective expertise on Vietnam, China, and Korea. I am particularly indebted to Shawn McHale for generously providing his time, insight, and encouragement in positioning my research in the historiography of Southeast Asia and Vietnam. I would further like to thank Young-Key Kim-Renaud, not only for reading an early draft of my manuscript, but also for her abiding encouragement, linguistic expertise, and provision of contacts with scholars in Korea. In addition, my sincere appreciation is due to Da Qing Yang for guidance searching the archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to Jonathan Chaves for his provision of scholarly resources and linguistic direction for reading some of the primary texts in Chinese.

The award of a special Fulbright multi-country scholarship in 2001-2002 generously allowed me the opportunity to conduct research in both Korea and Vietnam, which was an important foundation of the present work. The research that I accomplished and the scholars that I met in both countries as a result of that opportunity were invaluable. In Korea, I was especially fortunate to receive direction from Yu Insun of Seoul National University, to whom I am indebted for his suggestions regarding the choice of the main figures for my research. In Vietnam, the scholars at the Han Nom Institute in Hanoi provided much useful assistance and documents. At that time, I was also fortunate to interview and discuss aspects of Vietnamese history with recognized authorities such as, Phan Huy Le, Tran Quoc Vuong, and Chuong Thau. Throughout the preparation of this study there have been others who, though not individually named, I gratefully acknowledge for their many and generous contributions.

PREFACE

In Southeast Asia, Vietnam alone has been influenced by Sinitic civilization to the extent that it can be considered a part of East as well as Southeast Asia. A few years ago, having become fascinated by this distinction in Vietnam, I began to compare it to Korea's past, the history of which I had previously been most familiar. Adequate scholarship on the Sinitic-influenced pasts of Korea and Vietnam already exists, though it is not of the same volume or presented in the same way. Ki-Baik Lee, Edward W. Wagner, and Michael E. Robinson on Korea and Keith W. Taylor, Alexander B. Woodside, and David Marr on Vietnam are a few of the scholars who have commented on the pasts of these two states and their similarities. Among other things, this scholarship reveals that even though states outside of the continental East Asian center of Sinitic civilization often contradicted it, given a long time span, certain material, intellectual, and cultural expressions of that civilization did appear in Korea and Vietnam indicating that they had shared in a sphere-ecumene so composed.

Among the similar expressions of Sinitic influence that developed in Korea and Vietnam early in their histories was their variously selective adoption of the incompletely differentiated "Three Teachings," comprising Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Each of these three was modified, mediated, or, as with Daoism, sometimes merged with local beliefs or not incorporated at all into the local culture. Due to its presumed usefulness in interpreting Korea, Confucianism, properly Neo-Confucianism, a sure marker of Sinitic influence, has received the most attention, and, for similar reasons, but to a lesser extent, this has been true of Confucianism in Vietnam. In Korea, during the long Chosŏn dynasty, due to a "special" relationship with Ming China, Neo-Confucianism predominated as the state philosophy for more than five hundred years, a few of its scholars even making interpretive contributions. It is in regard to Confucianism in Đại Nam Vietnam, however, that it has had a less assured presence and confronts the most interpretive reservations. The scholars Oliver Wolters, Alexander Woodside, and, most prominently, Shawn McHale, have raised valid reservations about Confucianism's influence there. These scholars' revisionist arguments hold that while it is true that a Confucian presence can be traced in Vietnam and that it reached a high level of official favor

in the nineteenth century, its depth and effect over a long period of time are questionable. Moreover, even though there are similarities in Korea and Vietnam's Sinitic-influenced pasts besides Confucianism, when the scholarship on these two pasts is examined closely in parallel, the several other ways in which they diverged from each other, and of course from the central Sinitic civilization, are evident. For example, in Korea, Buddhism, and even more so local religions, despite deep roots over a long history, do not receive the same attention as Confucianism.

While Buddhism was officially suppressed during the five hundred years of the Chosŏn dynasty, popular, and even a certain amount of elite participation in it and indigenous religious practices continued into the early twentieth century. Buddhism in Vietnam, throughout its long, less interrupted presence there, according to some scholars, was "fluid, selective, and accommodating," as has mostly been true of that religion anywhere it has taken root. Further, in contrast with Korea, in Vietnam it has been contended that it would be more accurate to regard the people as having been influenced more by Buddhism rather than by Confucianism. Therefore, it could be argued that Confucianism in Chosŏn Korea was plausibly somewhat pragmatic and empirical and that in Đại Nam Vietnam a near Confucian-Buddhist dualism developed.

Despite these and other complexities and considerations, I determined, nonetheless, to devise a comparative investigation that would as accurately as possible examine if and to what extent the Sinitic-influenced pasts of Korea and Vietnam, as variant as they were, may have been consequential or determinative during their comparably experienced late nineteenth and early twentieth century histories. In particular, I wanted to examine whether the Sinitc-influenced past in either state bore on particular persons' reactions to colonization within that timeframe. To deal with these and related issues, I decided that an examination of the writings of contemporary figures of the late 1800s and early 1900s, one from Korea and one from Vietnam, who were as alike in background, as representative of their societies, and as expressive in their writings of themselves, their respective states, and conditions in them might offer a promising approach.

I settled on the specific delimiting years of 1890 to 1920. While these years were deliberated, they proved to be the most satisfactory because they were as significant in the lives of the protagonists I came to choose as they were in the histories of these geographically separated but culturally linked parts of Asia. As for the specific protagonists, there were several figures whose lives and writings might have served the same purpose, but the two which to me came to seem best suited were Pak Ŭnsik (1859-1925) of Korea and Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940) of Vietnam. Even though the

lives of these two figures extended from before 1890 and beyond 1920, it was through to the latter year that they were most productive as writers and active as anti-colonial participants, besides that year also marking an accepted point at which colonial conditions in Korea and Vietnam began to change.

As now commemorated figures in their separate states' histories, who, along with others, served as their peoples' spokesmen and conscience at an important time, Pak and Phan have typically been categorized as Confucians, literati, intellectuals, nationalists, anti-colonial activists, and occasionally as combinations of these. Not neglecting the appropriateness of the established categories, I devised *voices* as an additional category to convey what I came to regard as the chorus-like role that Pak and Phan performed in their writings when they commented on themselves, their societies, their states, their times, and their activities. In their roles as *voices*, they also served their countrymen as local interpreters of the world situation, as disseminators of information about conditions in their homelands, as narrators of their own and their states' fate, and as transnational activist spokesmen. Principally by these means my title. *Voices from Korea and Vietnam on the Loss of National Independence, 1890-1920:Other States of Mind*, intends to direct attention toward re-evaluating the thought and activity of representative Asian anticolonial actors, such as Pak and Phan, and how doing so not only complicates the usually accepted place of these and other, single country actors and the interpretation of their thought and activities during a specified time period, but also affects how the seemingly fixed, separate national narratives of anti-colonial struggles should be understood by providing a perspective derived from a more widely defined East Asia.

Perhaps the best justification for selecting Pak Ŭnsik and Phan Bội Châu as the two main figures around which to construct my inquiry was secured by gaining a deeper understanding of them through reading a number of their works written mostly in a form of Chinese that in its structure and knowledge base seemed to be directly related to their Sinitic-influenced learning, besides showing a more contemporary, *au courant* awareness such as that received from the writing of the late Qing reformer Liang Qichao. Evidence of such influence and awareness was readily apparent in their works written between 1890 and 1920, a time when they had reached their maturity and had begun to write extensively about Korea and Vietnam's respective experiences of French and Japanese colonialism, besides by then having become acquainted with the writings of Liang and other "voices" on the world situation. In all, for each of the two main figures, a total of fourteen of their works apiece were read in part or whole.

These works formed the core source for examining them and in devising bases of analysis.

From the beginning, my intention was thus cast beyond the happenstance of two people in two different places at a particular time and in relatively similar historical circumstances. While I had hoped possibly to uncover in Pak and Phan's works findings beyond those already mentioned or previously known, I retained as my primary goal the examination of them individually, and through them, Korea and Vietnam at a significant time in their histories, that is, when the Sinitc-influenced past would likely still be reflected and influential in their writings. In this pursuit, Pak and Phan emerged as truly engaged products of the Sinitic-influenced pasts of Korea and Vietnam and voices of their time. As such, their writings offered sources for better understanding the complexities of the formative thirty-year period I had designated and its impact on two separated, but interconnected, parts of Asia. To me, therefore, their writings were judged to be useful in enhancing understanding of their societies and informing on their states' conditions in a historically important transitory period. In sum, the similarities in Pak and Phan's backgrounds, writing styles, cross-border wanderings, goals, and perceived comparable temperaments convinced me of the correctness of my choice of them as the two principal figures.

My understanding of Pak and Phan, after having been further deepened most by my translations of sample and later longer passages from their writings, made it possible to perceive some comparable reactions to and reflections upon the effects of early colonial rule in Korea and Vietnam. Phan wrote about a Vietnam that had recently been colonized by France, a Western power, and Pak wrote about a Korea which was falling under the control of and very soon was annexed by Japan, a Westernized power. Although both were definitely aware of the fate of the other's state, they were only speculatively aware of the existence of each other. They never met, corresponded, or seem to have directly referred to each other. My preliminary examination of their lives and thought, nonetheless, revealed a number of compelling parallels between them, and, on a larger scale, the contemporary experiences of their states. Eventually more extensive searches of their works and translations from them allowed me to develop and enlarge this preliminary foundation. This approach resulted in more useful insights into these two figures and provided a touchstone for comparing Korea and Vietnam during a pivotal time and in similar circumstances.

A few of the large questions that drove my investigation were ones such as these: Did the geographical separation of these two states, despite

their long inclusion in the larger Sinitic-dominated classical East Asian world, make a difference in their cultures? If the culture were a constant, how could any differences in persons of a similar background in these two states be explained? Or, would it be wrong to assume that a certain constancy of culture turned out persons who were exactly the same no matter where they were found? Throughout, it remained quite clear that the Sinitic-influenced past, which is a commonplace in the historiography of Korea and Vietnam and of East Asia in general, could not at the time Pak and Phan lived have been far removed. Whether in the histories of China, Japan, Korea, or Vietnam, this past had influenced each of these states in many ways: writing, Confucianism, Buddhism, and, vaguely, Daoism, literature, government, philosophy, history, architecture, customs, observances, medicine, food, etiquette, and so on. The presence of each of these cultural expressions in states peripheral to China, a country designation that I later use for its geolocational familiarity despite shifting appellations over time, was owing to direct contact with Han people and to cultural interchange in the course of many centuries within what I have designated as a Sinitic ecumene. The term Sinitic ecumene, comprehends what has also been termed the Sinosphere and I have designated an ecumene to convey the sense of a fairly uniform civilization based on a system of writing and order existing across East Asia within which Korea and Vietnam orbited a Sinitic center over an extended historical time from a remote past to the early twentieth century.

Ample previous scholarship on Sinitic-derived civilization and its influence on Korea and Vietnam supports the existence of such an ecumene in its international and transnational dimensions, due to its pervasiveness, and its contribution to the presence of similarities in the areas affected by it. Historically, for Korea and Vietnam, proximity to what is now known as China, despite the inclusiveness of the ecumene and the obligations of the related and still debated Tribute System, had also entailed episodes of invasion and resulting direct Sinitic or other continental nations' incursions, and, at times, domination. In the seventh and tenth centuries, Korea and Vietnam respectively achieved state unification and political autonomy successfully avoiding absorption by a Sinitic or any other state. The same scholarship which can be used to designate this type of Sinitic ecumene in East Asia and the Tribute System also indicates that, even as autonomous states, Korea and Vietnam continued to be culturally and politically closely associated with it until the late nineteenth century, when outside, militant pressures by newer, more powerful, and farther removed states brought about Vietnam's separation from its association in 1886. Korea experienced a similar

change for like reasons in 1897. Soon after the autonomous status of Korea and Vietnam became perilously endangered by France and Japan, states from abroad more powerful than any Synitic dynasty, their complete loss of autonomy and customary cultural and political identity ensued. For Pak and Phan, these events were palpable transitions reflected in their writings by recognizable changes in their perception of their and their states' place in the ecumene and the customary autonomy of their states, from being included to being separated; and from being subjects of their separate states to being subjects of colonial powers.

It was especially from the late nineteenth century that the modernist concept of the nation and the building of the same has very often been applied to events and activities of anti-colonial participants in Korea and Vietnam, or, they have been interpreted as such. These assertions of mostly reactive, ethnic nationalist activity led by indigenous, geographically and socially peripheral actors were preeminently the result of confrontations with nineteenth century imperialism, whether French or Japanese, the spread of anti-colonial and independence thought on the part of figures like Pak Ŭnsik and Phan Bội Châu, combined with a growing political awareness arising in the populations of Korea and Vietnam. Very often the thought of literati-turned-intellectual activists like them also conspicuously included conceptualizations, as in Western nationalism, of borders, international competition, wars, and historically or mythically inspired, indigenous heroic figures from a distant past who were closely connected lineally and spiritually with the nation. Of course, since nationalism has always been expressed in several different ways, so in Korea and Vietnam, as in other parts of the world, the case can be made for either reactive, anti-colonial, ethnic, or classic Western varieties of nationalism being apparent at various times. As a result of the influence of similarly derived nationalistic thought of whatever type, the histories of all states of the world now exist mostly as blocks that are territorially specific and premised on relatively recent nationalist-inspired enterprises in which both the *longue durée* and cultural context have played major parts.

With all of these things in mind**,** my interest in pursuing the influence of the Sinitic-derived past in Korea and Vietnam led me to search for the answer to an additional question: How did literati so influenced and who became activists, such as the two figures I had chosen, deal with colonialism during the period I had designated? In attempting to answer this question, to a great extent, I was drawn to Prasenjit Duara's insights concerning the nation. The nation, Duara writes, has become the main or sole subject of history. As my research progressed, I continued to return to the intent of Duara's proposal: that a too great emphasis is attached to the

nation. Duara makes it clear that other concerns have always been present and that varied alternate interpretations of the thought and actions of Asian intellectuals are available. It was not only the nation that was the concern or the objective of anti-imperialist or anti-colonial activists. This I came to see as a concept with clear application to the thought I found expressed in the works of the two activist-intellectuals from Korea and Vietnam.

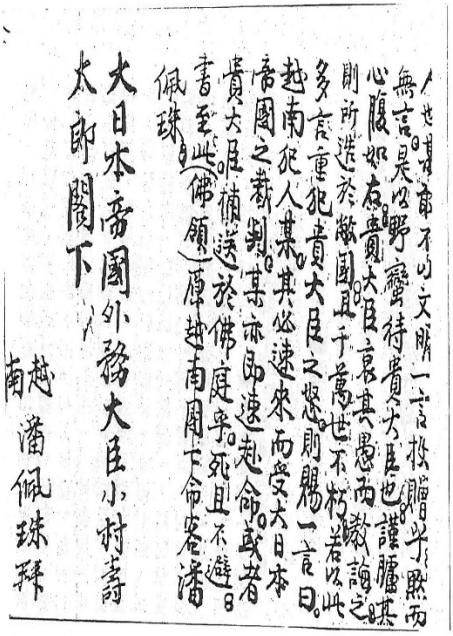
In their writings I found exquisitely telling passages, all be they sometimes scattered and seemingly minor, in which they expressed their comprehension of more than one community, showing that they had more than one loyalty, and comprehended culture, norms, and values that were shared beyond the borders of their states, and that they thought of values and morals as transcending the confines of the state and above narrow definition. Literati in Korea and Vietnam trained in Sinitic Learning, as that observable in Pak and Phan's writings, showed that there was more at stake than the state; they were not simply nationalists. They also expressed something else simultaneously. In the terminology I have chosen to use, there was a lingering pro-imperial, that is, pro-Sinitic, and yet anti-colonial thought that was co-present as well. Recognizing the presence of this ambiguity produced another important insight. Beyond what I found expressly addressed in their works, I also began to imagine, as I believe Pak and Phan too probably imagined more so than they deliberately stated in their writings, altered identities in which they belonged to other communities and other, altered states and states of mind. Though the interpretation I finally arrive at may in some ways seem illuusory to the strictly nationalist-minded, in the final analysis, comprehended from the view of some events of the past and present day, I found such an approach to be eminently applicable.

Structure

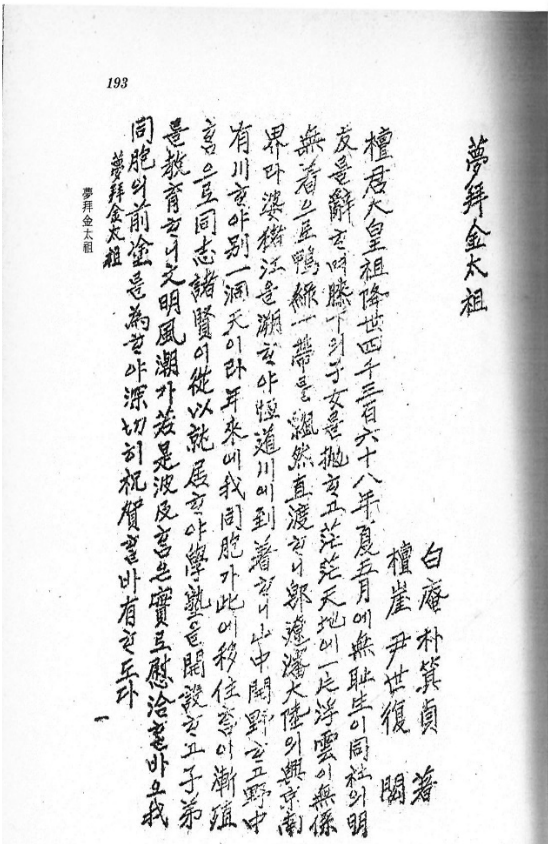
Following the acknowledgements, preface, and illustrations, this book is divided into two parts. Part I begins with a chapter that places Pak Ŭnsik and Phan Bội Châu in context. The five chapters that follow provide the settings and biographical perspectives on Pak and Phan by situating them in parallel as nearly as possible. The perspective in these chapters is chronological and sociological, facilitating their comparative juxtaposition through background information on their families, places of origin, social positions, careers, and activities during the designated time period. The biographical information on Pak Ŭnsik was translated by this writer from Pak's complete works, to which were added chronologies and excerpts from other sources mostly in Korean. The biographical information on

Phan Bội Châu, except where noted, relies to a great extent on Sinh and Wickenden's English translation of Phan's autobiographical *Overturned Chariot*, to which I have added my own translation of parts of that work, Phan's complete works, and, where noted, information from other sources. Part II, comprising Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 is an examination of excerpts from Pak and Phan's writings between 1890 and 1920, each chapter designated according to comparable themes on which they most frequently commented.

Following these chapters is the Conclusion followed by a glossary and four appendices. Appendix A provides extended translations of the excerpts from Pak and Phan's works examined in Part II. Appendix B is an essay which outlines the typical education of late nineteenth century literati in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Appendix C describes the process of translating Pak and Phan. Appendix D provides condensed biographies which allow for a comparison of Pak and Phan with some similar Korean and Vietnamese contemporary activist-intellectuals. The appendices are followed by a glossary, a bibliography, and an index.


大日本帝國外務大臣小村壽
太郎閣下
越南
潘佩珠拜

Portion of a letter of 1909 in Phan Bội Châu's hand to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, showing his signature in the lower left.



夢拜金太祖

白菴 朴箕貞 著
檀崖 尹世復 閱

檀君大皇祖降世四千三百六十八年夏五月에無恥生이同社의明友를辭ᄒᆞ며膝下의子女를抛ᄒᆞ고茫茫天地에一片浮雲이無係無着으로鴨綠一帶를飄然直渡ᄒᆞ니即遼瀋大陸의興京南界라婆豬江을溯ᄒᆞ야恒道川에到着ᄒᆞ니山中闢野ᄒᆞ고野中有川ᄒᆞ야別一洞天이라年來에我同胞가此에移住者이漸殖ᄒᆞᆷ으로同志諸賢이從以就居ᄒᆞ야學塾을開設ᄒᆞ고子弟를敎育ᄒᆞ니文明風潮가若是波及ᄒᆞᆷ은實로慰洽ᄒᆞᆫ바오我同胞의前途를爲ᄒᆞ야深切히祝賀ᄒᆞᆫ바有ᄒᆞᆫ도다

夢拜金太祖

The first page, possibly in his own hand, of Pak Ŭnsik's "I Saw the Emperor of the Jin Dynasty in a Dream" signed with one of his pen names, Pak Kijōng.

PART I

THE SETTING AND BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PAK ŬNSIK AND PHAN BỘI CHÂU

CHAPTER 1

THE SETTING

The preface that Liang Qichao wrote for the Vietnamese literati aspirant turned activist-intellectual Phan Bội Châu's *The History of the Loss of Vietnam* (*Việt Nam Vong Quốc Sử*) of 1905 draws a parallel between concurrent events in Korea and Vietnam. The Chinese scholar-reformer writes of the peril he foresees in the impending takeover of Korea by Japan by commenting on Vietnam's earlier experience of imperialist encroachment and loss of sovereignty to France. Of course Phan Bội Châu was well aware of the events in Vietnam in recent years, but he, like Liang, also knew of recent events in Korea. Stating that Korea is due to receive the same treatment that Japan had already meted out to Taiwan, Liang circumspectly warns that a similar course of events as had led to the French domination of Vietnam could happen to Korea. Liang remarks, "I fear the same dreadful deeds committed against Vietnam will be committed against Chosŏn."[1] In 1915, Korea by then having been annexed by Japan, Pak Ŭnsik, like Phan a former literati aspirant turned activist-intellectual, reciprocally comments in the opening lines of his *The Agony of Korean History* (*Han'guk T'ong Sa*) on Vietnam and its colonization by France: "[A]s a man from Vietnam has said," Pak writes, "my agony at the loss of my country is such that I am filled with grief. I take no pleasure in being no more than a beast or vegetation."[2]

Despite the extensive research which has already been done on the topic of much of Pak and Phan's writings, the takeover of Korea by Japan and of Vietnam by France, not all of the complexities in these events or the figures involved are completely understood. To address this gap, an examination of these events through the lives and writings of representative figures from Korea and Vietnam can provide further insights and

---

[1] *Việt Nam vong quốc sử* (越南亡國史 *The History of the Loss of Vietnam*), in Chinese and *quốc ngữ*, translated from the Chinese and edited by Nguyễn Quang Tô, (Saigon: Tao Đàn 1969?) p.139.

[2] *Pak Ŭnsik chŏnsŏ sang* (朴殷植 全書上 *The Complete Works of Pak Ŭnsik, Volume One*) (Seoul: Tongyanghak yŏn'guso [Institute of East Asian Research] 1975), p. 17.

comparative perspectives. In the second half of the nineteenth century imperialism in the form of colonialism had gradually spread to and enveloped parts of East and Southeast Asia. The effects of colonialism were multidimensional, being especially deeply felt locally but also globally in various ways. In Korea and Vietnam in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Pak and Phan and many of their countrymen, responded to the international forces affecting their states with writings and actions that approached those forces in ways that recalled but also differed from those from similar backgrounds in previous generations at equally crucial times in their states' histories. As the historiographies of Korea and Vietnam present the major events and participants from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Pak, Phan, and others like them, due to the ways they responded to those forces, are often identified not simply as literati but as literati-activists or as intellectuals, thus signifying the newly informed and directed roles they assumed in their societies. Despite their backgrounds, in these new roles, they began to think and act outside of the literati elite's usual cultural, political, and social patterns.[3]

Yet, in the thought and actions of these two literati-turned-intellectuals who were from states on the periphery of Sinitic civilization and who were equally distinct by being from the geographic and social peripheries of their states, some of the traits of the literati of previous generations can still be observed. That is, they possessed habits of thought, which, although formed locally, confirmed their place not only within their own states but also within the culturally comprehensive space in which their states were included. This space, the long extant, boundaryless Sinic ecumene,[4] or that which has previously been often been referred to as the Sinosphere,[5] centered in today's China and encompassing Korea and Vietnam, was a multinational community that variously followed a similar political philosophy, culture, and knowledge base. Although esteem for the

[3] They alternatively might now be classified as populists or cultural nationalists.

[4] The decision to use the term ecumene is based on the intention to convey the sense of an inclusive sphere in which not only Confucianism, but also Buddhism, and Daoism, folk beliefs, local religion, and all of the various texts, knowledge, and schools associated with them were understood to exist by the literate populations of East Asia.

[5] This is another term which may be usefully applied instead of Sinosphere. The term Sinographic sphere is derived from Suyoung Son's "How to Read a Sinographic Text in Eighteenth-Century Chosŏn Korea: *Liuxi Waizhuan* and Yi Tŏmu's Compilation of *Noeroe Nangnak Sŏ*," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 78, Number 2 (May) 2019: pp. 329-353 and may better apply, as here, in place of Sinosphere and other similar terms relating to the influence or Sinitic civilization in countries outside of what has commonly been thought of as China.

culture of the ecumene, its learning, and its adherents had begun to decline in Korea and Vietnam even before the last decades of the nineteenth century, residual respect for it and its maintenance through observance of what has been known as the tribute system, even after that system officially came to an end, remained into the early twentieth century. Even into the early 1900s those within the ecumene could simultaneously identify with more than one community: a local one, that of their own states, and an international one, that of the ecumene, thus allowing loyalties that were pluralistic, dynamic, and changing.[6] Viewing pre-colonial Korea and Vietnam with this in mind facilitates a better understanding of these states and individuals within them in another dimension: not just as nationalists but as parts of a common, borderless, cultural sphere and, as one historian perceptively states, for reintegrating Vietnam in particular, at least culturally, into East Asia.[7]

The resiliency of respect for the Sinitic ecumene and the tribute system was due to the centuries during which China, Korea, and Vietnam[8] had shared connections through the spread of the ecumene's learning, which at its base relied on Sinitic writing as the foundation for a community which might be better understood as a Sinographic sphere. This learning had been formed from a variously received and interpreted combination known as the Three Teachings, that is Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. The ecumene's community affirmed itself and its source through periodic, reciprocal contacts by envoys from and to one of the ecumene's central capitals in Nanjing or Beijing. The Sinitic center was at times regarded by the ecumene's participants as a "spiritual homeland." Complicating Korea and Vietnam's inclusion in this community to which they were connected for more than a thousand years before 1900 was their nearly equally longstanding autonomy. In fact, in the past it had occasionally been necessary for the people of these two states forcibly to assert their

[6] Mary Bakus Rankin, "Social and Political Change in Nineteenth Century China," *Historical Perspectives on Contemporary East Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2000), p. 73

[7] Grant Evans, "Between the Global and the Local There Are Regions, Culture Areas, and National States: A Review Article," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 33 (1), February 2002 pp. 147-162

[8] For convenience, in certain instances, the conventional, present day country names, "China, Korea, and Vietnam, have been used to refer to geographic locations on the East Asian mainland which throughout history have been predominately occupied by people who referred to themselves as Han Chinese, Korean, or Viet ethnic groups and by several different states bearing a number of dynastic names which may at times have been under the control of people of other ethnic origins.

separateness from various Sinitic dynasties or other continental powers, while continuing to return to a default inclusion in the ecumene and acknowledgement of Sinitic preeminence through participation in what has been known as the tribute system and the Sinitic center's superior cultural, if not military, power.

There had always been contradictions as well as cultural and political overlapping and contention in this arrangement, but over several centuries Korea and Vietnam eventually came to be molded by a certain dialectic in which each state experienced both inclusion in the Sinitic-centered community and separateness within it.[9] In fact, in several ways, the Sinitic ecumene was markedly diverse and never monolithic. Even though Confucianism did supply the main theoretical and operating structure, due to a number of abiding cultural differences among the member states, the ecumene was less than dogmatic or existentially Sinitic-focused.

[9] It would be an oversight to ignore the Korean and Vietnamese relationship with China or the "barbarian" states on the East Asian continent which had exercised hegemony. The reasons for this include Korea and Vietnam's submission to an at times imperial and expansionist Asian continental power, a number of occasions of armed confrontation with the same, foreign control of territory, and stationing of occupying armies, which led to resistance to and subtle forms of Korean and Vietnamese subversion of the relationship with one continental or other, non-Chinese state which made incursions from the north. Because of these experiences, after their states became unified and autonomous in the seventh and tenth centuries and extending to the end of the nineteenth century, Koreans and Vietnamese were already familiar with foreign hegemony. These early types of experiences were quasi-colonial, and although they are usually not noted as such, they are staples of the general histories of Korea and Vietnam, such as those by Lee, Han, Lê and Marr mentioned above. Previous forms of resistance to outside control (whether actually Chinese or not, and whether armed or not) conditioned the formation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century anti-colonial dispositions in both states. In contrast to the position taken by the historiography on the anti-colonialism in these states in last decades of the 1800s and early 1900s, which receives so much more attention in the scholarship of (for Korea) Lee Chong-sik [Yi Chŏngsik] (*The Politics of Korean Nationalism* 1963), Vipan Chandra (*Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club* 1988) and Sheila Miyoshi Jager (*Narratives of Nation Building in Korea* 2003); and (for Vietnam) Alexander Woodside (*Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam* 1976), Vinh Sinh, (*Phan Boi Chau and the Dong Du Movement* 1976) and William Duiker (*The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941* 1976), anti-hegemonic and perforce anticolonial dispositions had already been formed from the earlier experiences in defense of autonomy in both states.

Nevertheless in none of Korea and Vietnam's past confrontations with the Sinitic "homeland," during which they defended their national autonomy, had Koreans or Vietnamese completely ended their ties with a Sinitic-based dynasty or declared independence in a nationalistic way. The culture of the Sinitic ecumene in various forms irretrievably impacted these peripheral states, though they were not as closely interconnected and mutually conversant as the scholastic, Latinate community of medieval Europe. There was no time in the past when the commitment to the culture associated with the Sinitic ecumene's learning and order was ever renounced for one of the particularized national cultures. In fact, most of those who were recipients of the ecumene's dominant but varied Sinographic learning could be described as pro-Sino-imperial in their outlook on the affairs of the world. For this reason, allegiance in official and literati writings to the Sinitic center and the ecumene, as well as to their separate states, helped to mold a system of thought that must be taken into account in any consideration of the influence of Sinitic learning, nationalism, anticolonialism, or related thought in Korea and Vietnam before and during the period from the late 1800s to the early 1900s.

Being subjects of these states, even after Korea and Vietnam had been separated from the titular tribute system and had formally ended their ties to Qing China in the late nineteenth century, Pak and Phan, at least in their early years, can rightly be regarded as having been supporting members and perpetuators of the knowledge of one of the world's great civilizations. Yet, as a Korean and a Vietnamese, they sought to assert not only a Sinic-derived cultural heritage but also the diverse historical experiences of their states and people. Under the conditions of colonialism and in their roles as activist-intellectuals, they frequently found it necessary to deal with this multifaceted cultural and historical heritage. When they did, they did not suddenly renege on this heritage and adopt alternate ideas such as were then appearing in East and Southeast Asia at the end of the nineteenth century from the world outside.

Pak Ŭnsik and Phan Bội Châu as the Protagonists

The two protagonists and the period in which they lived did, however, sometimes make them distinguishable from earlier and later persons and times in their states' histories. Pak Ŭnsik and Phan Bội Châu's lives, extending from the later half of the nineteenth century into the early and near mid-twentieth centuries, made it possible for them to experience and remark on comparable and sometimes nearly parallel developments in Korea and Vietnam. An approximate thirty-year period from 1890 to 1920

and the decided impact of events during it can be distinguished not only in their lives and writings but also in that of their states and wider populations. This thirty-year period was an unprecedented experience. In an extention of the nineteenth century, participants like these two in anti-colonial movements before 1920 are distinguished mainly by their search for personal and national dignity along mostly uncharted paths, but also by their drawing of inspiration from traditional referents, whereas those who lived through and witnessed the events in the years after 1920 are marked more by a tendency to distance themselves from connections with the past. The later generations were distinct in being marked by only a trace of the retrospection, despair, and acquiescence expressed in the lives of Pak and Phan and those of their generation. Contrary to those of the earlier generations, the thought and activity of succeeding generations became differently composed, inspired, and enacted by their engagement in greater activism and less investment in the past.

Just as some predictable similarities developed in the culture and society of Korea and Vietnam as a result of their nearness to Sinic civilization and participation in the sphere-ecumene, Pak Ŭnsik and Phan Bội Châu and others like them in their own and previous generations shared a number of equally predictable similarities. One of the most obvious of these was their use of the mutually comprehensible medium of the written Han ideographs. This similarity was not a mere coincidence but a long-recognized commonplace, since it could have been predicted as a result of Korea and Vietnam's long association with Sinitic culture and inclusion in the sphere-ecumene. Pak and Phan's use of this same written, "foreign" language establishes a primary level on which they can be connected across borders, physical and otherwise. There were also other ways in which they were connected. Although they were never physically collocated, their writings sometimes reveal a complementarity and dialogic quality. In that way in particular, their writings imaginatively recall and extend the informal written exchanges on a variety of topics that were carried out in conjunction with the Korean and Vietnamese envoys' meetings on tribute missions in the Sinitic capitals during an approximate six-hundred-year history of shared association and awareness.

Although the Korean and Vietnamese envoys' journeys to China from about the middle of the fourteenth century, along with their written "brush" dialogues, lapsed in the late 1800s when their states became formally, diplomatically separated from Qing China, Pak and Phan, through their written remarks suggest a continuum of those prior envoy exchanges. In this way, Pak and Phan imaginatively serve as updated, unofficial envoys engaged, though in remove, in written dialogues conducted like the

person-to-person ones of the previous Korean and Vietnamese envoys. Imagining Pak and Phan and their late nineteenth to early twentieth century writings as extensions of those envoy dialogues furthers the cultural connections between them and their states that had long existed but which had recently lapsed. Moreover, like the topical issues on which the former envoys had engaged each other, Pak and Phan's writings similarly can be thought of as forming commentaries on contemporary conditions in their by then colonized states as they express a local and East Asia-wide awareness much the same as the literati of the sphere-ecumene had previously possessed.

Due to the similarities in their backgrounds, the cultural space they inhabited, and the time when they lived, Pak and Phan might be expected to have shared some cultural similarities and experiences, but they were not a completely symmetrical dyad. There were a few, but important, differences between them. In addition to their being geographically separated, neither ever corresponded with, met, referred to, or even seem to have known anything in detail about the other.[10] Moreover, besides being products of different autonomous states on the northeastern and southeastern periphery of Asia, they emerged from populations with distinct cultural particulars, ethnicities, spoken languages, and lived circumstances. They were also only near contemporaries, being separated in age by eight years. So it is therefore by foregrounding these several compelling similarities that the most complete interpretive framework can be constructed. The outline of this framework takes shape in the individually lived experiences and observations Pak and Phan reveal in their writings, which suggest the possibility of eliciting through them the condition of their states and people during a particular time. This framework can be extended to regard Pak and Phan as representative of their states, societies, and time, and, their writings as expressive of large and small traditions not only in their thought, but also in their people's and states' condition and the *mentalités* present during a specified time.

Among several other similarities, one which was of particular importance to them was their pursuit early in their lives of careers as literati. Their pursuit of that goal is an indication of their relatively equal social and cultural situations. With their aspirant literati caché, these two figures were able to hold local, but not especially prominent, social and intellectual positions in their societies, making them distinct within the communities where they lived and beyond their immediate locations. Thus,

[10] Phan transited Korea a few times beginning in 1920 on his way to Japan. Pak Ŭnsik probably knew of Phan from the Korean edition of *Việt Nam vong quốc sử* that was published in 1905.

among other things, through them, insights into the ways Pak and Phan stand out for their later active roles in the anti-colonial currents of their states may be gained.

A preponderant part of Pak and Phan's similarities can also be found in their comparable worldviews derived from their nurturing in the combination of the Sinographic sphere's learned community and from the influence of their origins in autonomous states on the borders of the Sinitic center. Although they would later function to varying degrees both inside and outside of their states and the Sinitic ecumene, explaining their thought and activity unavoidably must begin by taking account of their intellectual conditioning and learning. Having been influenced by the Sinitic ecumene's universalistic mindset, they in certain ways may have found it easier to accept and turn to advantage the changed environment that the intellectual dislocations colonialism imposed. These more apropos similarities that they shared included their having lived through the formative political and intellectual transformations they experienced due to French and Japanese colonial encroachments on their states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which had led to the long, closing stage of Korea and Vietnam's inclusion in the tribute system, their mutual association within the Sinitic ecumene, and their states' autonomy, and then culminating in the loss of autonomy with a complete colonial takeover.

Perhaps the most singularly formative distinction that emerges in a comparative examination of Pak and Phan is the recognition of their marginality. This marginality is somewhat various and requires more clarification. It is most evident in that their families were located in and their early lives were spent in places with relatively little distinction. This also meant that they can be defined by their origins being in parts of their states considered culturally, socially, and geographically fringe in location and importance. To this can be added Korea and Vietnam's geopolitically and culturally fringe locations on the periphery of the Sinitic center and the sphere-ecumene. Finally, there was the added shared marginality of Pak and Phan spending most of their lives as inhabitants of colonized East Asian states and later their extended periods as exile outside of them. In assessing the full meaning of their thought and activities, while the immediate impact of contemporary circumstances did often predominate in their motivations, actions, and thought, it would be a mistake to overlook these social, and cultural factors.

Therefore marginal in several ways, but not to the extent that they would have been completely disconnected culturally and intellectually from their societies and states, Pak and Phan would eventually come to

operate physically at interstices and later, by choice, to varying degrees farther outside of them. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they had begun in their separate political and physical sequestrations to reiterate an analogous, not-infrequently-found ancient literati predilection for occasional self-exile and questioning of authority, either domestic or foreign. In fact, this basis for literati dissent was well established. Literati were enabled to express their individual convictions on the authority of precedent Confucian tenets, which in their origin were often critical reactions to moral questions and thus had always allowed for the possibility of using tradition against itself.[11] As such, Pak and Phan, even though their later roles defined them more as intellectuals, in as much as the thought they advanced showed elements of the literati heritage's loyalty to tradition, but at the same time, an inquiring propensity, they prefigured later changes toward a nationalist consciousness among their states' intelligentsia. That role included activism and, in the extreme, sometimes envisioned or called for violence. Yet, a prevailing literati disposition inclined these two and many others in the first generation of anti-colonial activist-literati more toward the cautious and cerebral than any physical or violent enactment of resistance. This mostly non-violent, inherited demeanor seems to have kept other activistint intellectuals, like these two, from the personal performance of any definably extreme acts. In the end, their most effective weapon remained the literati's instrument of choice – the writing brush.

A few final but salient similarities of note between them include their brief but wide travel and activity in continental East or Southeast Asia in response to the colonial takeover of Korea and Vietnam. Though they took diverging routes, and, of the two, by going to Japan and Siam in addition to China, Phan was active over a much wider area. In their early lives they had both aspired to be traditional literati, but, based on their mature, evolved, and expressed thought, in addition to their conduct, they can alternatively rightly be better termed intellectuals.[12] Equally important,

[11] This insight in support of the literati's capacity for critical, independent thinking, and resistance, as it appeared in late Chosŏn can be further examined in "Narrating Dissent in Chosŏn Literati Discourse" Marion Eggert, Ruhr University, Bochum. The 9th Kyujanggak Symposium on Korean Studies, 2016 pp. 91-104.

[12] When the term literati is used, it is meant to apply broadly to those whose learning was primarily grounded in Confucian texts, as mixed as that learning might have been, and without regard to whether they served in any capacity in their governments. It is therefore meant to comprehend those who might also be referred to as scholar-gentry, literati-gentry or scholar-officials, in or out of office. The equivalent term often used in French is *lettré*. The usual Korean equivalents