

Original Research Article

The Nationalistic Ideology of Huynh Thuc Khang (1876-1947)

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Abstract: Nationalism has always been a topic of interest in the field of cultural and historical studies. In this study, through the use of document analysis, approaching from a cultural perspective, we will explore the vital aspects of this ideology through the case of a famous cultural figure in Vietnam in the early 20th century, Huynh Thuc Khang (1876 - 1947). We focused on surveying a number of articles published in the newspaper *Tieng Dan* (1927 - 1943) to identify three main aspects of Huynh Thuc Khang's nationalism ideology: national pride; acknowledgement of national sovereignty and self-reliance.

Keywords: Huynh Thuc Khang, nationalism, *Tieng Dan* newspaper.

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INTRODUCTION

Nationalism, from a cultural perspective, can be defined as a structure of collective consciousness aimed at establishing a modern nation and achieving modernization. Nationalism in Vietnam is based on indigenous traditional values while also being developed based on the tendency to learn from Western advanced civilizations in the early 20th century. Vietnamese reformists of this era such as Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chau Trinh, and many intellectuals of the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc had pioneered the compilation and application of these novel ideas into building a stronger national spirit. In this paper, we will explore the important aspects of this ideology through the awareness and actions of a cultural figure, Huynh Thuc Khang (1876 - 1947). Known as one of the greatest Vietnamese thinkers in the early 20th century, Huynh Thuc Khang left a deep mark in contributing to shaping the nationalism ideology of Vietnam. Huynh Thuc Khang (1876 - 1947) was born into a family following the Confucian tradition, where ethics and values of his homeland are of utmost priority. Despite being a Confucian scholar, Huynh Thuc Khang have been actively studying novel literature and journals, expanding his knowledge and critical thinking. He combined the spirit of serving the nation following the Confucian tradition with the spirit of modernizing the country, emphasizing freedom and democracy. *Tieng Dan*, managed by Huynh Thuc Khang, was the first private and independent newspaper in Annam (Central Vietnam). *Tieng Dan* had been published regularly for

nearly 16 years from 1927 to 1943, and although it was based in Hue, it had a wide influence on all of Central Vietnam and made significant contributions to the new nationalist spirit in Vietnam. With the advantage in media, Huynh Thuc Khang is considered a notable intellectual who expressed his views on nationalism in the unique context of Vietnam in the early 20th century.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

In the research on nationalism in Vietnam, the initial focus was on Vietnamese intellectuals during the struggle against the French colonial rule. Prominent intellectuals such as Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh proposed ideas on national independence and national consciousness, to resist the rule of French colonialism. It is worth noting that Huynh Thuc Khang is consistently mentioned alongside Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh in this context. In international studies, Huynh Thuc Khang is recognized as a persistent nationalist (David Marr, 1997). Phan Thi Minh Le argues that the repression and arrests in Annam (Central Vietnam) in 1908 initiated a "*national solidarity*" and that national awareness began to emerge in Huynh Thuc Khang (Phan Thi Minh Le, 1996). Many studies in Vietnam also acknowledge Huynh Thuc Khang especially in the context of patriotism linked to the spirit of national liberation: Nguyen Van Xuan (1970), Nguyen Q. Thang (1972), Tran Van Giau (1998), Tran Thi Hanh (2004), Pham Dao Thinh (2009), and so on. Building on these open-ended studies, approaching from a cultural

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perspective, this article further clarifies two specific aspects of Huynh Thuc Khang's nationalistic ideology.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the research methodology employed is document analysis, with the scope of documents analyzed being a series of articles in the *Tieng Dan* newspaper written by Huynh Thuc Khang. Since Huynh Thuc Khang is a culturally significant figure, an interdisciplinary approach is applied in this research, focusing on concepts in the field of cultural studies that are of instrumental significance. These concepts include cultural identity, nationhood, national consciousness, and cultural essence. As we know, culture does not exist independently but always exists within the context of a specific community. At the community level, cultural identity answers the question, "How do we perceive ourselves, and how do others perceive us?" (Chris Barker, 2011). Therefore, national consciousness is the awareness of the community to which one belongs. Furthermore, cultural essence should be understood on both dimensions of a subject: distinctive characteristics and awareness of essence (Nguyen Van Hieu, 2021). The awareness of one's roots and the traditional values of their own nation is an expression of community consciousness. We apply the concept of "Imagined Community" by Benedict Anderson to understand how a national community is constructed through the consciousness of cultural identity.

According to Benedict Anderson (1991), a national community is created through imagination based on a shared awareness of geography, language, and culture. Even though the members of this community may not meet or have knowledge of each other, they still perceive themselves as part of a larger entity, sharing values, perspectives, and solidarity. The process of imagining the national community plays a crucial role in building cohesion and consensus within a nation. Therefore, a necessary condition for the development of national spirit is sharing a common history, shared suffering, shared victories, shared achievements, shared memories, and shared aspirations. Additionally, the concept of a nation-state implies "a political and social community, directed by a state, established on a specific territory, with a name, an administrative language, a common economic activity, and common cultural symbols that define the character of a nation" (Dang Nghiem Van, 2003, p. 72). In summary, national consciousness is the perception and emotion of a community about the existence of a specific nation, starting from the imagination. This existence is

manifested in both intertwined dimensions: the territorial community and the relational community (Ivanovic Milena, 2008, p. 14). This community comes together and bonds based on the core values and characteristics of the nation, with language and culture often playing significant roles. National consciousness is relative and can change over time, but it usually plays a crucial role in defining the identity and independence of a nation. In this research, we will explore how the cultural figure Huynh Thuc Khang interacted and evaluated the aspects mentioned above in shaping and developing his ideas about the nation and ethnicity.

RESEARCH RESULTS

National Pride

Pride in one's roots is a natural sentiment in the consciousness of every individual. At the beginning of the 20th century, in the cultural awareness of the progressive intellectual generation in Vietnam, this sentiment was considered the "cultural capital". This was a noteworthy cultural phenomenon, especially in the context of the emergence of national consciousness in East Asia. Through the lens of Huynh Thuc Khang, he emphasized the importance of national pride. He believed that to build a strong nation, people needed to have faith in the cultural identity and the spiritual values associated with it. He expressed this by honoring and reminding people of the history, origins, and important historical figures of the nation. Huynh Thuc Khang saw that an individual's "national character" reflected their understanding and pride in their heritage and homeland. This contributes to the formation of national consciousness and ensures that a nation's cultural heritage lives on in the hearts of each community member. Anthony D. Smith (1991) emphasized that the distinctive heritage of nations and individuals' attachment to that heritage are continuously reproduced and interpreted. This means that the cultural and historical elements that define a nation do not just exist once and remain unchanged but are often reproduced and expressed through different generations and interpretations. These patterns of values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions are important factors in defining national identity and shaping individuals' sense of belonging to their nation and culture. Instead of allowing national pride to exist as an individual psychology, the progressive intellectuals of this era believed that national pride should be expressed collectively within the community and play a crucial role as values and standards to guide the actions of the nation. Below are the survey results of some articles that mention historical figures:

Table 2: Articles by Huynh Thuc Khang about historical figures (Source: Compiled)

| Historical Figure | Article name | Issue number |
|-------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Tran Hung Dao | Tran Hung Dao Temple | Tieng Dan issue 9, 1927 |
| To Hien Thanh | The role model of a politician - To Hien Thanh in Vietnamese history. | Tieng Dan issue 507, 1932 |

| Historical Figure | Article name | Issue number |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Nguyen Cong Tru, Cao Ba Quat | A brief historical passage about two eminent scholars in modern Vietnamese history books: Nguyen Cong Tru and Cao Ba Quat. | Tieng Dan issue 511, 1932 |
| Nguyen Lo Trach | Critique of two essays titled "Thoi vu sach" in the work "Quy uu luc" by Nguyen Lo Trach. | Tieng Dan issues 491 and 492, 1932 |
| Phan Thanh Gian | The life and characteristics of a notable figure in our history: Phan Thanh Gian | Tieng Dan issue 746, 1934 |
| Truong Vinh Ky | A document commemorating the academic Truong Vinh Ky | Tieng Dan issue 1100, 1937 |

In the earlier issues of "Tieng Dan", Huynh Thuc Khang demonstrated a conscious effort to honor eminent scholars and heroes. Patriotism and the spirit of struggling for national independence became the highest ethical values, standing at the forefront of the traditional values ladder in Vietnamese culture. They forged the spirit of Vietnam. Notably, for modern intellectuals, this spirit carried the significance of faith in the nation's roots, as national independence was the fundamental content of Huynh Thuc Khang's reformist ideology. Consequently, Huynh Thuc Khang established the importance of national history education in the formation and maintenance of national consciousness. In an article titled "How do our people feel about history?" Huynh Thuc Khang analyzed the role of national history education in helping learners gain a better understanding of the nation's past, thus forming a comprehensive view of its development, ups and downs, and significant historical events. He stated, "Why do our compatriots have such deep feelings for history? There is a source for everything: rivers have sources, trees have roots, sources run deep [...], and the history written by foreign countries [...] makes it easier for history enthusiasts to investigate. This natural sentiment for history naturally resides in people's hearts, it is a natural quality. Take a look at 'Histoire de France,' and you will understand the state of history studies and historical sentiment of the people." (Tieng Dan issue 13, 1927).

National history education often focuses on recounting the achievements of the nation in the past. This can stimulate a sense of unity and national pride, ignite love for the nation, and cultivate a spirit of service to one's homeland. From there, it can promote the preservation and development of the national cultural heritage and, more importantly, awaken the civil spirit, encouraging history learners to engage in social, community, and political activities from a responsible citizen's perspective. The ultimate goal is for national history education to embody the core values and principles of the nation, helping learners gain a better understanding of the importance of protecting and developing the nation and its people. From a community value-building perspective, Huynh Thuc Khang excelled in his mission of awakening national consciousness, contributing to the formation of patriotic citizens who understand history and cultural values and actively contribute to society. The continuous reproduction and interpretation of national identity is an essential factor in Huynh Thuc Khang's modern approach to national identity. Indeed, as Zdzislaw Mach pointed out, "At the

most general level, the ethnic identity itself turns into national identity when there is a belief in common ancestors and origins and the unity of a culture associated with the desire to achieve a sovereign state to protect the unity and freedom of that people's culture" (Zdzislaw Mach, 1993, p. 4). The aforementioned unity is further reinforced by a national language, as language is a tool for creating national consciousness.

Benedict Anderson (1991) argued that through language, people within the same nation can communicate and understand each other, creating an imagined community and feeling that they are part of the same nation. Language helps form connections and consensus among the members of a nation. Huynh Thuc Khang repeatedly expressed the importance of preserving the national language, particularly emphasizing the essential nature of unifying the national script, which is the Quoc ngu (Vietnamese script). Referring to the spread of the Vietnamese script, history acknowledges the contributions of Nguyen Van Vinh (in the North) and Truong Vinh Ky (in the South). In Central Vietnam, this effort includes Confucian scholars who were part of the Duy Tan movement and the Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc group, among them are Ngo Duc Ke, Tran Quy Cap, and Huynh Thuc Khang. Huynh Thuc Khang's activities in the Duy Tan movement (1906-1908) and his later work with the Tieng Dan newspaper made significant contributions to the voluntary adoption of the Quoc ngu by the Vietnamese people. After his time in Con Dao (where he became familiar with and learned French), Huynh Thuc Khang increasingly recognized the power of language and the relationship between language, culture, and national identity. He believed that language was one of the three fundamental elements of a nation: "A nation has three elements: a shared history, common customs, and the same language" (Tieng Dan issue 125, 1928). While not fully developed in theoretical terms, Huynh Thuc Khang's statements aimed at fostering national consciousness originated from the story of the national language (in this case, spoken language).

Indeed, in language itself, the characteristics of a national culture can be preserved most clearly. Regarding concrete actions, Huynh Thuc Khang carried out the practical promotion of Quoc ngu through the establishment of the Tieng Dan newspaper, the first newspaper to use Quoc ngu in Central Vietnam in 1927. One of the objectives of Tieng Dan was to popularize Quoc ngu, expand knowledge among the people, and

build a foundation for modern education. The newspaper aimed to bring Quoc ngu closer to the people of Central Vietnam as a means of rediscovering the "soul of the nation." Huynh Thuc Khang used journalism to promote awareness of Quoc ngu and dispel the notion that it was a "borrowed script." He pointed out that the United States continued to use the English language and had still thrived. He encouraged Tieng Dan's readers to boldly embrace Quoc ngu as it was a writing system capable of representing the nation's spoken language and was easy to learn: "For several decades now, we have abandoned the path of learning Chinese characters and turned to learning our mother tongue. It is our mother tongue, so everyone knows how to speak it; it is not as difficult to learn as Chinese characters used to be" (Tieng Dan issues 209-210, 1929). Huynh Thuc Khang argued to dispel the notion that Quốc ngữ was a "borrowed script," stating: "*Our country used to be a nation with a spoken language but without a script (a script is a set of symbols for recording speech), so if there is something that can be recorded, we can use the script conveniently without necessarily creating it ourselves*" (Tieng Dan issues 209-210, 1929). It can be seen that the pride in one's roots, the awareness of national history education, and the promotion of Quoc ngu are central expressions of the spirit of national pride in Huynh Thuc Khang's ideology. This cultural strategy was continued as a long-term cultural strategy throughout the Tieng Dan and Huynh Thuc Khang's other activities.

National sovereignty consciousness

The approach to Huynh Thuc Khang's nationalistic ideology can be traced through the analysis of discourse in education, politics, media, etc. Through this process of socialization, discourse, whether written or spoken, becomes a social practice in which the content of national identity is reinforced. According to Wodak (2009), national identity is not a fixed concept; it can change and manifest in various ways depending on the social context and circumstances. This can create ambiguity and ambiguity in defining and understanding national identity. Huynh Thuc Khang aimed to establish a national identity through media discourse, clearly expressing awareness of national borders and territorial sovereignty. Through this, Huynh Thuc Khang and his associates affirmed the connection between the shared past, shared present, and shared future of the nation. The issue of national sovereignty for each nation at different points in history is often viewed from various perspectives and different viewpoints. This difference depends on historical conditions, cultural contexts, economics, and dominant ideologies. For Huynh Thuc Khang, belief and pride in territorial sovereignty are values that affirm the national spirit. "*In any country, in any era, and for any nation, when there is a change in sovereignty within their land, there will inevitably be a situation of conflict, whether fast or slow, before finally finding peace...*" (Tieng Dan issues 1054-1056, 1937). Sovereignty and borders are sacred concepts whenever

the topic of the nation is discussed. Violating national sovereignty is synonymous with violating national pride.

From 1938 onwards, the dispute over the Hoang Sa Islands between France and Japan became intense. The Hoang Sa Islands (Paracel Islands) became important for various roles such as a station for seaplanes between Saigon - Hong Kong, Tourane - the Philippines, and a strategic point for submarines during the war. They also played a crucial role in meteorological communication and the protection of fishing vessels, as well as being a source of rich resources. In March 1939, Japan occupied the Paracel Islands, which were a part of Vietnamese territory under French rule. The newspaper Tieng Dan continuously published articles on the Hoang Sa Islands with Japan and France (Tieng Dan issue 1230, 1938); the Hoang Sa Islands became an important issue (Tieng Dan issue 1231, 1938); traces of the Hoang Sa Islands in Vietnamese history and the value of the "Phu bien tap luc" document (Tieng Dan issue 1234, 1938). Huynh Thuc Khang focused on scientific evidence to prove Vietnam's ownership of Hoang Sa, based on historical documents and Chinese characters, emphasizing the value of the "Phu bien tap luc"(1776) document. Huynh Thuc Khang asserted, "*According to our recent collection of documents about Hoang Sa Islands to prove that the island belongs to our country, as it was the people of Vietnam who first occupied it and managed the expeditions on the island...*" (Tieng Dan issue 1234, 1938). Among the works addressing the sovereignty of the Hoang Sa Islands, he emphasized the value of Le Quy Don's "Phu bien tap luc" as the most valuable document regarding Vietnam's sovereignty over Hoang Sa. The Phu bien tap luc describes the process of discovery, establishment, and enforcement of sovereignty by feudal Vietnamese states over both the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa Islands, while also providing accurate information about the administrative, geographical, economic, and military aspects of the islands. Huynh Thuc Khang evaluated the Chinese documents as "*becoming very valuable documents related to international law*" (Tieng Dan issue 1234, 1938).

Therefore, he relied on researching ancient Chinese sources and Nom documents with the goal of finding historical evidence to prove Vietnam's ownership of Hoang Sa. Firstly, he cited the historical records of the Nguyen lords' expeditions to the Hoang Sa Islands for sea products, which were dispatched to the islands every year in March and returned in August. Secondly, based on Duong Quoc Dung's "Cong Ha Ky Van", he provided information about the location of the Hoang Sa Islands, the distance from the Sa Ky sea gate to the island, and descriptions of the sandbanks and traces of human habitation on the island: "*Beyond the Quang Ngai sea, there is Hoang Sa. From the Sa Ky sea gate, heading east, it takes three days and nights to reach the destination. The sandbanks extend endlessly, and dozens of nautical miles cannot cover them all, with few traces*

of people". (Tieng Dan issue 1234, 1938). Thirdly, he referred to Ly Van Thuc's "Man Hinh Thi Thoai" and "Dong Hanh Thi Thuyet" to record the location of the Hoang Sa Islands and descriptions of it: "*Boats heading to the nearby shore, known as 'Van Ly Thach Duong', are all golden sands (Hoang Sa), also called 'Van Ly Truong Sa'*" (Tieng Dan issue 1234, 1938). Fourthly, from the "Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi" and Nguyen Thong's "Bien Su Cuong Giam," he presented evidence of the presence of Vietnamese people on the Hoang Sa Islands since the time of Gia Long and Minh Menh, as well as the traces of temple construction and stone steles. Huynh Thuc Khang used these sources to demonstrate Vietnam's sovereignty over this area.

Huynh Thuc Khang emphasized that the quantity and quality of historical evidence are crucial in determining the sovereignty of the Hoang Sa Islands; any nation with a comprehensive historical record, including official documents, letters, land cultivation laws, and the writings of predecessors that affirm sovereignty over Hoang Sa, possesses scientific evidence to establish sovereignty over these islands. Through a series of articles affirming sovereignty over island territories in the Tieng Dan newspaper, Huynh Thuc Khang demonstrated sensitivity to border issues as well as a sense of political responsibility as an educated intellectual and progressive scholar. More importantly, he aimed to raise awareness among the nation and fellow countrymen about the imminent danger of losing their homeland, directly affecting their deep-seated emotions and awakening their love for their country. According to Wodak and colleagues (2009), political perspectives can be expressed and impact the definition of national identity through discourse. The political views of leaders, policy-makers, and other influential groups can be conveyed through national discourse, such as speeches, official declarations, and legislation. These discourses may reflect the political goals, decisions, and interests of power elites in society. Discourses on sovereignty in the Tieng Dan newspaper also represent the people of Central Vietnam, in particular, and Vietnam as a whole. Clearly, sovereignty, or more broadly, national identity, can also influence political perspectives. When a nation shapes and expresses its national identity, it can use discourses and expressions to create a common vision of identity and political goals for the country. Views on national sovereignty can support and maintain unity and coherence in society, which is something Huynh Thuc Khang particularly emphasized.

Huynh Thuc Khang's ideology on national sovereignty builds upon and develops ideas from previous generations of intellectuals. Phan Boi Chau, when explaining the relationship between civil rights and national sovereignty, wrote: "*According to established international law, a nation must have people, land, and sovereignty*" (Phan Boi Chau, 1990, p. 286). At the beginning of the 20th century, when national sovereignty was threatened by external forces, the majority of

Vietnamese intellectuals focused on using the power of literature and journalism to awaken the nation. For them, the shortest and top priority path to restoring national sovereignty was through raising national awareness. Alongside Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh, Huynh Thuc Khang played a part in initiating a revolution of consciousness, working towards awakening the nation to the dangers of foreign invasion and the risk of cultural assimilation.

The spirit of self-reliance and self-sufficiency

An important aspect of Huynh Thuc Khang's nationalistic ideology is the spirit of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Building and maintaining a national identity requires unity and effort from the individual as well as the whole community. "Self-reliance" means relying on one's own efforts and abilities to live and work independently, without depending on others. "Self-sufficiency" implies self-improvement and development to avoid being inferior to anyone, especially in the context of colonialism. This reflects a spirit of self-esteem, strong will, and a desire to assert oneself and the community. The self-reliance and self-sufficiency of each individual contribute significantly to the formation of the collective spirit of self-reliance and self-sufficiency of the community, nation, and country. A nation is considered to have the spirit of self-reliance and self-sufficiency when it does not depend on external forces. The will for self-reliance and self-sufficiency is maximized on the foundation of patriotism and national spirit, meaning that one must help oneself. Inherited from the ideology of Nguyen Truong To, Huynh Thuc Khang affirmed that the ultimate goal is the prosperity of the nation. Only a strong nation can protect the independence of the people. In the subsequent period, in the 1930s, the sense of national self-reliance developed strongly, focusing on strengthening internal strength and building a strong nation by absorbing the achievements of Western civilization. Reforms and self-reliance were seen as a way to modernize and build a prosperous nation. National consciousness was closely linked to national interests. According to Huynh Thuc Khang's perspective, in the context of power dynamics and the strength of France, self-reliance was the best way to ensure the highest interests of the nation with minimal losses.

He believed that learning from French civilization, and Western civilization in general, was the most effective means to protect the nation's interests. Huynh Thuc Khang, through his absorption of new knowledge and literature, became increasingly aware of the power of Western civilization. However, he also emphasized the need to be vigilant about the colonial nature of the homeland to discern the exploitative policies of French colonialism. His arguments were drawn from careful study and contemplation of the global political context, the East-West balance of power, the situation in Asia and Europe, and the backwardness of Indochina compared to French colonialism and other

major powers. Nguyen Lo Trach, in his work "Thoi Vu Sach Ha", consistently emphasized self-reliance and self-governance as the strong foundation upon which to build, supplemented by external factors, without relying solely on foreign assistance. Therefore, he identified the first task as enhancing internal strength, which was the primary condition for considering national reform, given the significant imbalance in power between France and Vietnam. From there, the subsequent tasks included prudence in negotiating with French colonialism and directing economic, cultural, and social development in a manner that was suitable. Inheriting Nguyen Lo Trach's perspective on self-reliance and self-sufficiency, Huynh Thuc Khang believed that if each citizen in a nation could govern themselves independently, the nation as a whole would be able to do the same. Together with his involvement in the Duy Tan movement alongside Phan Chau Trinh, Huynh Thuc Khang's view was that reform was necessary to save the country from foreign domination and to rescue the people from poverty. This reform was centered on the spirit of studying Western science and technology.

In Huynh Thuc Khang's thinking, the dialectical approach was evident in his understanding of the relationship between political orientation and the strength of the nation. He also believed that the spirit of self-reliance helped develop the character and noble virtues of individuals because the value of a nation in the long run was the value of the individuals who composed it. To enhance the spirit of self-reliance, Huynh Thuc Khang cautioned the young generation and progressive intellectuals to break free from the stagnant past that had accumulated over generations. He emphasized the importance of relying on the internal strength of the nation to build the power needed for the struggle for national independence. Understanding the characteristics of the Vietnamese people, the specific attributes of the Vietnamese, and the nation's position in relation to other countries in the region and the world was essential. Huynh Thuc Khang believed that the citizens should stay updated with news through the media, gain a deep understanding of the nation's resources, and be aware of the human resources required for the developmental and mobilization process. In *Tieng Dan* issues 1008 and 1009, published on January 9 and 12, 1937, he asserted that the spirit of self-reliance should begin with the issues faced by the youth, namely education and employment. Regarding the ideals of youth and material temptations, he stressed that young people should have a clear understanding of the significance of their ideals and resolve them through a strong commitment to education. He classified ideals into two categories: one being ideals that are only seen from a distance and cannot be achieved, no matter how beautiful they may be, and the other being ideals that can be realized. He encouraged young people to critically evaluate their goals and ideals to determine whether they should persevere. Obtaining practical education and finding employment were two aspects that Huynh Thuc Khang highlighted when

discussing the pursuit of education. He recognized that limited educational opportunities, intense competition due to a large number of candidates, and economic difficulties were obstacles to learning.

Huynh Thuc Khang believed that many young people pursued education merely for the sake of degrees. He advised them to abandon the deeply ingrained notion of "doc khoa cu" (only studying for the degree). He also recommended addressing laziness and making necessary improvements in attitudes and work habits. He also criticized the tendency to "look down on small tasks and ordinary work, desiring to engage in grandiose activities with a flashy exterior." Here, we won't delve deep into Huynh Thuc Khang's viewpoints, content, or educational policies. What we emphasize is the awareness of national history education for the citizens. In his article "How do our people feel about history?" Huynh Thuc Khang analyzed the role of national history education in helping learners gain a better understanding of their nation's past. This understanding contributes to forming an overarching perspective on the nation's development, its ups and downs, and significant events in history. "National love still has many deep-rooted reasons. Why is that? Rivers have sources, trees have roots, and sources run deep [...]. Historical accounts have been recorded [...], so history learners can easily explore. The sentiment towards history naturally exists within people's hearts, an innate trait that nurtures love for the country". In essence, Huynh Thuc Khang highlighted the importance of history education in fostering a deep appreciation of one's nation and culture. Understanding the past helps individuals connect with their roots and develop a genuine love for their country. It encourages citizens to appreciate their nation's history, which, in turn, strengthens their sense of national identity and unity. Take a look at 'Histoire de France,' and you will understand the state of history studies and historical sentiment of the people." (*Tieng Dan* issue 13, 1927).

National history education typically focuses on narrating the achievements and accomplishments of the nation in the past. This can foster a sense of unity and national pride, ignite love for one's country, and encourage a spirit of service to the homeland. Furthermore, it can promote the preservation and development of the nation's cultural heritage and, more importantly, awaken civic spirit, motivating history learners to engage in social, community, and political activities from the perspective of responsible citizens. The ultimate goal is for history education to reflect the core values and principles of the nation, helping learners understand more clearly the necessity of protecting and advancing the nation and its people. In summary, history education plays a significant role in building and promoting awareness of the nation and its people, contributing to the development of patriotic citizens who understand history and cultural values, and actively participate in society. The issue runs deeper when Huynh Thuc Khang discusses the relationship between the

masses and the "national character" in his article titled "The Psychology of the Masses - A Science Worth Studying" (Tieng Dan, issues 1168 and 1170, 1938). The concept of "national character" that Huynh Thuc Khang addresses is essentially the essence of the national psyche. According to him, "society values order, and when there is order, the masses are stable; conversely, when there is disorder, the masses become unsettled, like a breached dam or a disturbed beehive, causing chaos with no place to turn". In his expression, "order" represents a static quality, which has been defined early on by intellectuals in distinguishing between the East and the West.

It highlights the fundamental characteristic of our country's civilization as "always static," whereas European civilization is "always dynamic". In line with the views of Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc, Huynh Thuc Khang emphasizes that the Eastern way of life has its own order and discipline, contributing to its unique nature. From another perspective, the Vietnamese people tend to have an introspective nature and are accustomed to deference and often rely on the guidance of others. Therefore, he once again underscores the role of education and the importance of self-improvement in enhancing the capacity for proactive engagement and active participation in Vietnamese society. Tieng Dan had a wide and powerful impact on a large portion of the population, continually discussing the position and responsibilities of the Vietnamese people in new

circumstances. In addition to the responsibility of education, the second responsibility of the nation is to work. Discussing "Two words: labor" (Tieng Dan issue 250 and 251, 1930), Huynh Thuc Khang clearly emphasized the role of labor and the situation of labor allocation in society: "Those who study, teach, make books, newspapers, those who work in various offices, those who engage in creative work, as long as they contribute to the common good of society, then society will provide the necessary things for their livelihood, not everyone in the country has to go to plow and work in factories" (Tieng Dan issue 250 and 251, 1930). According to him, "labor" has two meanings. In a narrow sense, it can be understood as manual labor, such as hired labor, which was also a common understanding in Vietnam during that period. He contributed to changing the perception of labor, where each person, depending on their educational level, circumstances, and experience, strives to work diligently to support themselves, while also fulfilling their individual responsibilities in the social allocation towards the total development of the nation. The responsibility of self-improvement and cultivating the national character is a recurring theme in Tieng Dan. In "Tieng an cua nuoc ta" (Tieng Dan issue 10, 1927), Huynh Thuc Khang openly mentions ten "ugly" characteristics of the Vietnamese people when assessing their national character, such as: More serious than the "social diseases" that he wants to keep caution about:

Table 3: Some newspaper articles addressing "social diseases" as warned by Huynh Thuc Khang
(Source: Compiled)

| Disease | Quotation from newspaper | Problem | Issue number |
|-----------------|--|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Mental disorder | "According to psychologists, after experiencing a war or revolution, along with those chaotic, chaotic, and terrifying dramas, most people cannot keep their calm mind, because they are not strong enough to resist external stimuli, causing panic (still like having a nervous disorder...)" | Social crisis | Tieng Dan issue 1271, 1938 |
| Feeling adrift | "The Vietnamese society today is standing in the midst of those tumultuous dramas, [...] like "ghosts leading the way, demons leading the way", the psychology of most people is unclear about themselves, unclear about who they are, what they will do, almost knowing today but not knowing tomorrow, the sense of adrift is to the extreme!" | Psychological crisis | Tieng Dan issue 1271, 1938 |
| Dizzy mind | "About the mind, it is half awake and half asleep, about the world, the shore is eroded by waves, without a stop, about education, the Chinese flower has withered and the European fruit has not yet bloomed, about professions, there are no jobs but foreignization is rushing in, social morality sinks below the abyss, culture is still in the depths of the sea, the young generation is frivolous, national identity is eroded, people's hearts are scattered." The generation "does not care to examine the bad and stupid, but still wants to follow the Europeans and Americans in one leap". | Crisis of faith | Tieng Dan issue 2, 1928 |

The types of crises mentioned above are clear evidence of the threats to the cultural identity/national character. The political and social issues that Huynh Thuc Khang observed from the perspective of questioning the national character, such as "what am I,

what will I do, and what will the future be like", may seem like questions of someone lacking awareness, but in reality, they are core issues of politics and society.

CONCLUSION

The national and ethnic ideology in Huynh Thuc Khang reflects the characteristic patterns in the East Asian and Asian regions in general, manifesting as an awareness of national identity and the national-ethnic spirit. Although their methods of action may vary, prominent intellectuals in Vietnam such as Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chau Trinh, and Huynh Thuc Khang shared similar viewpoints on the nation and ethnicity. With the advantage of the *Tieng Dan* media platform, Huynh Thuc Khang had many opportunities to shape cultural values within the community and to actualize the national and ethnic ideology through actions. This was a necessary and essential step in preparing for the modernization of the nation's culture and fostering the spiritual readiness for the national liberation movement. By promoting national pride, strengthening national sovereignty awareness, and fostering a spirit of self-reliance, Huynh Thuc Khang made significant contributions to building cultural and spiritual values within the Vietnamese community. This helped the Vietnamese people (in the colonial context) develop a deep sense of national responsibility and increased confidence when participating in social and political activities. At the same time, it laid a solid foundation for the Vietnamese people to embrace democratic ideas, which played a crucial role in the struggle for national liberation and modernization. On the other hand, the idea of the nation and the people, in a broader context, refers to a development strategy for nations in colonial situations, aiming to promote progress and modernization to cope with the challenges of Western modernization. Huynh Thuc Khang actively pursued this strategy with determination and resilience, even in his later years (1947). A more detailed discussion of this topic is a subject for further research on Huynh Thuc Khang and Vietnamese intellectuals.

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