Chapter 1  Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism

Tam Lang, I Pulled a Rickshaw (1932)¹

The 1920s and 1930s were a time of great political, social, and cultural upheaval in French Indochina. As some young Vietnamese embraced revolutionary causes, others became advocates for various kinds of social and cultural reform. While these reformers often criticized the colonial state and its policies, they maintained that national liberation required Vietnamese to abandon traditional practices in favor of “modern” notions about family life, gender roles, labor, education, and social relations. The reform impulse could be glimpsed in the work of Vietnamese novelists, memoirists, and journalists, many of whom styled themselves social realists, in imitation of their counterparts in France and other European countries.

One prominent Vietnamese social critic of the interwar period was Vu Dinh Chi, who wrote under the pen name of Tam Lang. A native of Hanoi, Tam Lang began working as a journalist in the 1920s and earned a reputation for attacking social injustice. In 1932, he garnered wide attention for his investigative report entitled “I pulled a Rickshaw” (Tôi kéo xe). The


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*report detailed the hard lives and brutal exploitation of Hanoi rickshaw drivers, who transported well-to-do customers (both French and Vietnamese) around the city by pulling them in two-wheeled carriages. Tam Lang explained to readers that he had disguised himself as a coolie (a poor laborer) and took a job as a driver, which allowed him to experience the humiliation and degrading conditions of the trade. In the excerpts of the report presented here, Tam Lang describes spending the night with a fellow driver in an opium den in after a hard day of work on the streets. He also offers his assessment of responsibility for the suffering that he witnessed.*

A rickshaw lamp swung beneath my friend’s hand like a flickering firefly. Passing a dike a little over 2 meters high, we descended into a deep depression that was as dark as a grave.

No longer could we see the row of electric lights along the Don Thuy Road. Obscured by the long dike, they gave off a dull glow above our heads. What a sad scene.

I followed my friend’s footsteps. There were no stars in the sky. A pulsating chorus of croaking frogs and toads and crickets resounded all around me.

That’s the area of the southern slums!

The home of a group of poor, wretched people. A torn basket full of rubbish at the foot of a row of imposing villas!

There was no ray of light. Not one tire mark. Here, the light of civilization is blocked by a wall of dirt; the wheel of progress is stopped by a long stretch of dike.

And yet something has managed to cross it!

This is the Opium Spirit with tortoiseshell red wings attached to its back. This is Miss Phu Dung, the spirit with the beautiful name that people know well how to call.²

That night, I saw Miss Phu Dung lie there, in the compartment of a leaf-covered dwelling that was slanted on a twisted house post and in which ten people were packed as though in a jar.

I bent down and slipped through a doorway that was no higher than a meter. My friend pointed out Tu, who was lying beside an opium tray. Then, taking off his blue outer shirt, my friend said: ‘This person wants to sleep here for a while.’

I nodded a greeting and handed over 2 sous I had just taken out of my pocket.

The person lying beside the opium tray lifted his head, raised his arm to take the money without uttering a word.

² Miss Phu Dung: a Vietnamese slang term for opium.
He was about forty, pale, and with sunken cheeks. His eyes were also deeply sunk into his head. His arms were as thin as reeds. His pants were rolled up above his knees, showing two legs that were no stouter than his arms.

Without being invited, I sat down on the bed beside our friend, who was lying there, smoking opium.

After exhaling a long trail of smoke, he sat up, drew his knees up, undid his flask on the opium pipe, bared his chest, rolled his sleeves up to his shoulders, and scraped the residue out of the flask.

In one corner, a number of others, all men, some wearing shirts, others bare-chested, were sitting on a piece of sleeping mat with their heads converging around a smoky lamp on a tray. They made noisy cries as they gathered around playing a kind of card game called ‘Bat’: ‘Pull’, ‘Turn it over’, ‘Bat’, ‘Damn your mother’, ‘Damn your father’.

Rickshaw coolies robbing rickshaw coolies; crippled chickens scratching around the grinding stone to peck at empty husks!

A woman holding a child lay on a hammock that was hidden in the darkness. She popped her head out from time to time, opened her mouth and asked: ‘Did the “wooden fish” win, or who?’

My friend who brought me here, joined the group playing cards. I was left with Tu, and, having the opportunity, I coaxed him with a question: ‘Each day, how many pipes do you smoke?’

After putting the top back on the flask, he looked up at me: ‘Did you say this is the first time you’ve been here?’

“Yes. The other man has just brought me here today.’

“You look as though you’re from Hanoi.’

“No, I just came down from the highlands a few days ago.’

With the opium pipe standing at the foot of the bed, Tu took a long draw on it. Without giving him the time to judge me, I asked again: ‘Each day, how many pipes do you smoke?’

Lying down slowly, Tu invited me to join him.

Inserting the point of the opium pick into the ball of residue and holding it up to the lamp, Tu said as he prepared the opium: ‘Twenty sous a day, as I have only one session at night. Mixed opium can be smoked many times and the residue lasts.’

“So, in that case, how many pipes?’

‘Three pipes, sometimes four, but no more, because the residue gets too strong and damaging, and I haven’t got the strength to draw on it.’

‘At 20 sous, you must spend 6 or 7 piastres a month.’

“No, not that much. I cook the residue again, so that I save a bit each month.’
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‘Smoking like that, surely you can’t work at night?’
‘No, I only hire a rickshaw and pull it at night. During the day, it’s extremely hot and very hard work.’
‘So if you work at night, when are you able to find the time to smoke opium?’
‘At 2 a.m. I return the rickshaw. I get back here a little before you just arrived. I smoke till morning. After eating, I sleep until five in the afternoon, get up, eat again, and go to work.’
‘Money for hiring the rickshaw, for opium, and also for food; how can you make enough to afford it working only seven or eight hours?’
I asked him his story, and he smoked as he responded. By now, his cold attitude had completely disappeared. Hearing me ask the last question, he just laughed and did not answer...

The group playing cards had broken up. It was almost morning.

On a few flimsy bamboo beds, over ten coolies, who had just been fighting to fleece each other at cards, now lay rolling around exhausted, offering a sweaty banquet to the mosquitoes that swarmed above them.

Lying beside the miserable opium tray and preparing the opium for Tu to smoke, I had become his close friend.

Through the sounds of children crying, the heavy snoring of the half-dead gamblers, we continued to exchange confidences.

I didn’t sleep throughout the whole night....

Now let me say to you here that perhaps there were times when you, Dear Readers, said to your friends: ‘That’s enough! Why bother arguing with those rickshaw coolies!’

I must also confess that there have been times when I said to my friends: ‘Those coolies, why waste energy quarrelling with them!’

Dear Readers, I have been of the same mind as you: we have despised the class of people who pull other people.

But do they really deserve such contempt? Today, let us rethink this question.

Now, let’s imagine that someone asked: ‘Who is to blame for the class of people in our society that works like animals pulling other people?’

What would you say?

If you think carefully, I dare say you would answer honestly as follows: ‘Society is to blame.’

According to its strict meaning, ‘society’ is all of the people who come from the same origins and who all live together under the same system, and that includes you and me.
Yes, you and me, all of us are equally at fault.
To lower a powerless person from his status as a human being to that of a horse, to give him two wooden shafts and say ‘I will sit up here while you pull me’ is the same as saying ‘You are not a human being.’
Having been unjustly denied membership in the human race, why do rickshaw coolies need self-respect?
We take away their dignity without knowing it. Why do we scorn them for supposedly doing undignified things?

The Trial Testimony of Phan Boi Chau (1925)³

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Phan Boi Chau was Vietnam’s best-known anticolonial revolutionary. Phan grew up in the central Vietnamese province of Nghe An – the province in which Ho Chi Minh was born – during the early stages of the French conquest of Indochina. Although he spent years studying Confucian thought and classical Chinese texts, Phan opted not to pursue a career as a mandarin, on the grounds that the Vietnamese imperial bureaucracy had become the corrupt instrument of the French colonial state. In 1903, he founded a patriotic movement that recruited Vietnamese boys to go to Japan to be trained as revolutionaries. After he and his students were expelled from Japan in 1909, Phan continued his anti-French activism in southern China, where he and his followers tried to organize armed attacks on colonial officials inside Vietnam. Most of these operations missed their targets, but they strongly reinforced Phan’s reputation as a national hero.

In 1925, an informer in Phan’s group betrayed him to the French, who arrested him and took him back to Vietnam for trial on charges of murder and treason. A panel of French judges convicted Phan and gave him a life sentence of hard labor. However, Phan successfully used the proceedings to portray himself as an advocate of democracy, independence, and modernization; he also called on the French colonial state to fulfill the “civilizing mission” that it claimed to be pursuing in Indochina. Many Vietnamese were especially moved by Phan’s final statement to the court. Thanks to widespread coverage of the trial in Vietnamese newspapers, Phan’s conviction produced a popular outcry and demands for lenience, leading eventually to a French decision to commute his sentence to a form of house arrest. The main effect of the trial was thus to underscore the depth of

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Vietnamese dissatisfaction with French rule, and the growing strength of nationalist sentiment.

The country of the south is a country that has long languished under tyranny, and its people have suffered greatly. The kings and mandarins have for too long lived apart from the people and oppressed them, leaving them with no means to gain prosperity. Since the French protectorate is a civilized government—that is, one that aims to enlighten and uplift its subjects—I am sure that the people of Vietnam are happy to be associated with it. Surely the government’s rule over the past 20 years has brought many beneficial changes...

I am a man of the country of the South, and I want to wake up the Vietnamese nation. I have witnessed the birth of the idea of political opposition. If my side had a few hundred thousand sailors, a few tens of thousands of soldiers, armed with many guns, warships and airplanes, then I would submit my declaration of war and righteously resist the colonial government. But I am merely a student, my pockets are empty of money, I have no weapons, I cannot engage in armed resistance. Thus I have only sought to use culture—which is to say that I tried to mobilize the people to demand political reforms. No doubt the government distrusted and arrested me because I was hiding in a foreign country for the purpose of pursuing my goals.

I called upon my friends and compatriots to contribute money to send students to school and to provide the people with books [for the purpose of learning]. My work is merely to use my tongue and my pen, and my goal is political reform; the movement I lead is simple and righteous.

If I have done wrong, my only sins are the following:

1. Even though no one else opposed the colonial government, I alone resisted, because I wanted the country to be independent;
2. The country formerly had an absolute monarchy, but I wanted it to become a republic;
3. The colonial state banned people from travelling overseas for study, but I fled and recruited students to go to foreign countries to study;
4. I tried to mobilize and awaken the people of the country of the south, to demand that the government institute political reforms to complete its mandate to bring enlightenment [to the country].

“The country of the South”: a traditional way of referring to Vietnam, which implicitly locates it by reference to its northern neighbor, China.
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Ho Chi Minh, The Path which Led Me to Leninism (1960)\

Between 1945 and his death in 1969, Ho Chi Minh was the pre-eminent leader of the Vietnamese Revolution and one of the world’s most famous communists. However, his political career had begun decades before 1945, under a different name. In 1911, a young man named Nguyen Tat Thanh left Vietnam for Europe. After failing to gain admission to the Colonial School, an institution that trained officials to assume civil service positions in the French colonies, Thanh spent several years working and travelling in various parts of Europe, North Africa, and North America (including the United States). During this time, Thanh became increasingly critical of French colonial rule in Indochina, even though he was not yet a communist. After returning to France in 1917, he became active in anticolonial and socialist political circles and began using the alias “Nguyen Ai Quoc,” which can be translated as “Nguyen the patriot.” In 1919, he signed this name to a petition that called on US President Woodrow Wilson to support autonomy and political freedom for the Vietnamese. The following year, Nguyen Ai Quoc became a founding member of the French Communist Party.

Decades later, in April 1960, Ho Chi Minh published the following essay, in which he recalled his first encounters with socialist thought as a young man in France. Like most of the other autobiographical accounts that Ho wrote during his later years, this one was colored by hindsight and by contemporary political events. At the time this essay appeared in a Russian magazine, relations between Communist China and the Soviet Union were under severe strain, as leaders in both governments accusing the other of abandoning communist principles. Since Ho hoped to remain on good terms with both communist powers, his portrayal of himself as a Leninist should be read in light of this emerging rivalry. Yet the essay still provides some valuable clues about the early evolution of Ho’s thinking, and especially about the reasons for his enthusiastic embrace of Lenin’s ideas.

After World War I, I made my living in Paris, now as a retoucher at a photographer’s, now as painter of “Chinese antiquities” (made in France!). I would distribute leaflets denouncing the crimes committed by the French colonialists in Viet Nam. At that time, I supported the October Revolution only instinctively, not yet grasping all its historic importance. I loved and admired Lenin because he was a great patriot who liberated his compatriots; until then, I had read none of his books. . . .

Heated discussions were then taking place in the branches of the Socialist Party, about the question whether the Socialist Party should remain in the Second International, should a Second and a half International be founded or should the Socialist Party join Lenin’s Third International? I attended the meetings regularly, twice or thrice a week and attentively listened to the discussion. First, I could not understand thoroughly. Why were the discussions so heated? Either with the Second, Second and a half or Third International, the revolution could be waged. What was the use of arguing then? As for the First International, what had become of it?

What I wanted most to know—and this precisely was not debated in the meetings—was: which International sides with the peoples of colonial countries? I raised this question—the most important in my opinion—in a meeting. Some comrades answered: It is the Third, not the Second International. And a comrade gave me Lenin’s “Thesis on the national and colonial questions” published by *l’Humanité* to read.

There were political terms difficult to understand in this thesis. But by dint of reading it again and again, finally I could grasp the main part of it… Though sitting alone in my room, I shouted out aloud as if addressing large crowds: “Dear martyrs, compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation!”

After then, I had entire confidence in Lenin, in the Third International. Formerly, during the meetings of the Party branch, I only listened to the discussion; I had a vague belief that all were logical, and could not differentiate as to who were right and who were wrong. But from then on, I also plunged into the debates and discussed with fervor. Though I was still lacking French words to express all my thoughts, I smashed the allegations attacking Lenin and the Third International with no less vigor. My only argument was: “If you do not condemn colonialism, if you do not side with the colonial people, what kind of revolution are you waging? . . . ”

At first, patriotism, not yet communism, led me to have confidence in Lenin, in the Third International. Step by step, through the struggle, by studying Marxism-Leninism parallel with participation in practical activities, I gradually came upon the fact that only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the working people throughout the world from slavery.

There is a legend, in our country as well as in China, on the miraculous “Book of the Wise”. When facing great difficulties, one opens it and finds a way out. Leninism is not only a miraculous “book of the wise,” a
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compass for us Vietnamese revolutionaries and people; it is also the radiant sun illuminating our path to final victory, to socialism and communism.

Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), Appeal Made on the Occasion of the Founding of the Vietnamese Communist Party (1930)

In 1924, Nguyen Ai Quoc left France for the Soviet Union. Upon his arrival in Moscow, he was recruited to work as an operative for the Comintern, the Soviet-sponsored organization dedicated to the promotion of Marxist revolution around the world. After a year of training, Quoc was dispatched to southern China, where he established a new organization known as the Vietnam Revolutionary Youth League. By the late 1920s, the Youth League had hundreds of members, most of them inside Indochina; however, a schism had developed within the League over the issue of revolutionary strategy. Some members argued that the League ought to focus first and foremost on the issue of national liberation from French colonial rule (the “national question”). But others disagreed, arguing that an emphasis on class struggle and social transformation (the “social question”) was the only way to ensure the success of the revolution in the long run.

In the fall of 1930, Quoc made a bid to heal the rift in the league by inviting the leaders of the rival factions to attend a “Unity Conference” in Hong Kong. At the conference, Quoc persuaded the participants to join him in creating a new organization: the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP). His program advocated national liberation followed by social revolution—a formula that appeared to give precedence to “the national question.” However, as the public appeal that he issued after the conference suggests, Quoc remained very interested in “the social question.”

Workers, peasants, soldiers, youth and school students! Oppressed and exploited fellow-countrymen! Sisters and brothers! Comrades!

Imperialist contradictions were the cause of the 1914-1918 World War. After this horrible slaughter, the world was divided into two camps: one is the revolutionary camp which includes the oppressed colonial peoples and the exploited working class throughout the world. Its vanguard is the Soviet Union. The other is the counter-revolutionary camp of

international capitalism and imperialism, whose general staff is the League of Nations. That war resulted in untold loss of life and property for the peoples. French imperialism was the hardest hit. Therefore, in order to restore the forces of capitalism in France, the French imperialists have resorted to every perfidious scheme to intensify capitalist exploitation in Indochina. They have built new factories to exploit the workers by paying them starvation wages. They have plundered the peasants’ land to establish plantations and drive them to destitution…

However, the French imperialists’ barbarous oppression and ruthless exploitation have awakened our compatriots, who have all realized that revolution is the only road to survival and that without it they will die a slow death. This is why the revolutionary movement has grown stronger with each passing day: the workers refuse to work, the peasants demand land, the students go on strike, the traders stop doing business. Everywhere the masses have risen to oppose the French imperialists…

Workers, peasants, soldiers, youth, school students! Oppressed and exploited fellow-countrymen!

The Vietnamese Communist Party has been founded. It is the Party of the working class. It will help the proletariat lead the revolution waged for the sake of all oppressed and exploited people. From now on we must join the Party, help it and follow it in order to implement the following slogans:

1. To overthrow French imperialism and Vietnamese feudalism and reactionary bourgeoisie;
2. To make Indochina completely independent;
3. To establish a worker-peasant-soldier government;
4. To confiscate the banks and other enterprises belonging to the imperialists and put them under the control of the worker-peasant-soldier government;
5. To confiscate all the plantations and property belonging to the imperialists and the Vietnamese reactionary bourgeoisie and distribute them to the poor peasants;
6. To implement the 8-hour working day;
7. To abolish the forced buying of government bonds, the poll-tax and all unjust taxes hitting the poor;
8. To bring democratic freedoms to the masses;
9. To dispense education to all the people;
10. To realize equality between man and woman.
On Sunday, September 2, 1945, hundreds of thousands of people crowded into Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi. They had gathered to hear the address of Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the pro-independence movement known as the Viet Minh. During the previous three weeks, following the sudden surrender of Imperial Japan and the end of World War II, Viet Minh operatives had seized control of Hanoi and many other cities, towns, and villages across Indochina. They had also proclaimed the formation of an independent Vietnamese government, known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Ho’s address on September 2 marked his first public appearance as the president of the new state. Since he had only recently begun using the alias “Ho Chi Minh,” most of the people in Ba Dinh Square that Sunday did not yet know that the DRV president and the famous communist operative Nguyen Ai Quoc were one and the same person. Nevertheless, the atmosphere was electric and the sense that Vietnam had arrived at a historic moment was palpable. After reading the first few sentences of his address, Ho stopped and asked “Compatriots, can you hear me clearly?” “Yes!” the crowd roared in response. As another senior Viet Minh leader later remarked, it was at that moment that “Uncle Ho and the sea of people became one.”

Prior to the address, Ho had invited a US Army major named Archimedes Patti to sit on the official platform during the ceremony. Patti was an American intelligence officer with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which had cooperated with Ho and the Viet Minh during the last months of World War II. Patti declined Ho’s invitation, choosing instead to stand in front of the platform during the address. He did, however, assist Ho by correcting a minor error in his opening quotation from the US Declaration of Independence. Patti later recalled being “uncomfortably aware that I was participating – however slightly – in the formulation of a political entity.”

My countrymen,

“All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness”

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the nations on the earth are equal from birth, all the nations have the right to live, to be happy and free.

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The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: “All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and having equal rights.” Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French colonialists misused the flag of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity to invade our Fatherland and oppressed our countrymen. Their action was contrary to humanity and justice.

Politically, they absolutely have deprived our people of every democratic freedom.

They have enforced inhumane laws. They have set up three different regimes in the Central, the Southern and the Northern Parts of Vietnam in order to prevent our nation from being unified and our people from being united.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots. They drowned our resistance in rivers of blood. They have fettered public opinion and practiced obscurantism against our people.

They used opium and alcohol to weaken our race.

Economically, they have exploited our people to the bone, so as to impoverish our people and to devastate our country.

They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests and our raw materials. They have monopolized the issuing of bank notes and the export trade.

They have levied numerous unjustifiable taxes, which have forced our people, especially our peasantry and tradesmen, into absolute poverty.

They have hampered the prosperity of our national bourgeoisie. They have mercilessly exploited our industrial workers.

In the autumn of 1940, when the Japanese Fascists arrived to occupy Indochina and build new military bases to fight against the Allies, the French colonialists bent their knees and opened our country to the Japanese. Thus, from that date, our people suffered under the double yoke of the French and the Japanese. As a result, from the end of last year to the beginning of this year, from Quang Tri province to the North of Vietnam, more than two million of our fellow-citizens died from starvation.

On March 9, the Japanese disarmed the French Army. The French colonialists either fled or surrendered. As a matter of fact, they were not only incapable of “protecting” us, but had also sold our country twice to the Japanese.\(^9\)

\(^9\) Although Imperial Japan had occupied Indochina during 1940–1941, Japanese leaders allowed the French colonial regime to remain in place. This arrangement lasted until March
On several occasions before March 9, the Vietminh League (League of Vietnam Alliance for Independence) urged the French to ally themselves with Vietnam to fight against the Japanese. Instead of responding to this proposal, the French colonialists intensified their terrorist activities against the Vietminh, and before fleeing the country they massacred a great number of our political prisoners detained at Yen Bai and Cao Bang.

Notwithstanding all this, our fellow-citizens have always manifested toward the French a tolerant and humane attitude. Even after the Japanese putsch of March 1945, the Vietminh League helped many Frenchmen cross the frontier, rescued some of them from Japanese jails, and protected French lives and property.

From the autumn of 1940, our country had in fact ceased to be a French colony and had become a Japanese possession.

After the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies, our whole people rose to regain our national sovereignty and to found the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The truth is that we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French.

The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated. Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. Our people at the same time have overthrown the monarchical regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries. In its place has been established the present Democratic Republic.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France; we repeal all the international obligations that France has so far subscribed to on behalf of Vietnam and we abolish all the special rights the French have unlawfully acquired in our Fatherland.

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country.

We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.

9, 1945, when Japanese commanders, fearing that French officials planned to betray them to the Allies, finally removed their French counterparts in a coup.
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A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the Fascists during these last years—such a people must be free and independent.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country and in fact is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty.

Discussion questions

1. Who was the intended audience for Tam Lang’s “I pulled a Rickshaw”? What kind of social change was Tam Lang promoting, and how did he seek to persuade his readers to support it?

2. How did Phan Boi Chau challenge the authority and legitimacy of the colonial state in his 1925 statement? Was his reform vision more radical than Tam Lang’s? Why or why not?

3. In his 1930 call for a revolution to overthrow the French colonial regime, was Nguyen Ai Quoc (later Ho Chi Minh) aligning himself with the revolutionary activism of Phan Boi Chau, or was he supporting a different vision?

4. Some historians have argued that Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist who embraced communism because it offered the best means to promote Vietnam’s national liberation (the “national question”); others have depicted him as a dedicated communist who used nationalism merely to gain support for the idea of socialist revolution in Vietnam (the “social question”). Based on the documents in this chapter, how do you interpret Ho and his goals?