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**PHẠM QUỲNH IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY
OF VIETNAMESE JOURNALISM
IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for the study

The early twentieth century (1900-1945), was a pivotal era that restructured the spiritual life of Vietnamese society. This was the period of transition from a feudal culture grounded in Sino-Confucian learning to a modern culture oriented towards Western learning, and from the Chinese (Hán) and demotic (Nôm) scripts towards the dominance of the romanized Vietnamese script (Quốc ngữ). At the heart of this great upheaval, the press was not merely a medium of popular information and entertainment; it served as a national lecture hall, a “solvent” that shaped a new intellectual class, and a sharp instrument for modernizing national thought.

The transformation of Vietnam’s cultural and political life in the early twentieth century laid the foundation for the emergence of a renovated intelligentsia—those whom Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh designated as “the new Annamese” in the French-language forum *L’Annam Nouveau* (1931–1936) [143]. A distinctive feature of this generation was its solid bilingual and bicultural foundation, being well versed in both classical and modern learning. Yet, from the same premise of contact with Western civilization through colonial education, this intellectual cohort diverged sharply in its modes of action and its visions for national renewal. Belonging to the lineage of “the new Annamese” yet positioning himself within the second tendency, Phạm Quỳnh (1892–1945) embraced a model of East–West synthesis. He regarded Confucian letters and Eastern values as a core instrument of the nation’s civilization, distilling their finest elements to serve as a firm foundation before assimilating Western constitutional ideas and democratic institutions. Amid today’s drive to renew scholarly thinking, situating Phạm Quỳnh at his proper coordinates within the developmental trajectory of the press is an objective requirement and a matter of historical fairness.

Through his journalistic work, particularly *Nam Phong Magazine* (1917–1934), Phạm Quỳnh helped shape the Quốc ngữ press, expand social knowledge, and create the first intellectual forum in Vietnam endowed with a modern academic and cultural character. In *A History of the Vietnamese Press, 1865–1945*, Đỗ Quang Hưng observes: “To speak of *Nam Phong Magazine* is necessarily to speak of Phạm Quỳnh, and vice versa. For *Nam Phong*, Phạm Quỳnh was the soul of the journal; for Phạm Quỳnh, each issue of *Nam Phong* was a rung on the ladder of his political career and reputation” [39, p.60]. Alongside noting that the journal’s founding had “long been engineered, with great calculation, by the colonial authorities” [39, p.61], the author also acknowledges that, “with the style of an ‘encyclopedic’ scholarly review, *Nam Phong* left behind a precious archive of materials,” its articles of considerable academic quality still consulted today [39, p.69]. From a historical–cultural perspective, the American scholar David G. Marr, in *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945*, argues that, despite the constraints and strict censorship of the protectorate authorities, Phạm Quỳnh endeavoured to construct a relatively neutral academic space within the colonial press. Through the *Nam Phong* forum, he quietly pursued a strategy of “cultural nationalism,” using popular enlightenment and the standardization of the national language as a basis for preserving the nation against the threat of assimilation [149, pp.150–175]. Once regarded as

a controversial historical figure, the portrait of Phạm Quỳnh has been reconstructed more fairly and objectively since the Đổi Mới (Renovation) period. From the position of a political “dark shadow,” he has gradually been affirmed by scholars as one of the “pioneering men of culture” of modern Vietnamese scholarship. This shift is evidenced by his inclusion in the Dictionary of Vietnamese Literature (1993), the reissue of a series of his works, and the appearance of academic conferences and theses devoted to him and to Nam Phong Magazine. In particular, the honour of “Cultural Luminary of Modern Vietnam,” conferred by the Phan Châu Trinh Culture Foundation in 2018, constitutes official recognition of a patriotic intellectual who made major contributions to national culture.

A systematic review of prior research shows that the figure of Phạm Quỳnh and the phenomenon of Nam Phong Magazine have been examined from many rich perspectives, from critiques of colonial political thought to philological and literary-historical studies. However, the existence of two major “knowledge gaps”—namely, the disciplinary lens of Journalism Studies and an integrated view across the entire developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century—is the decisive basis on which this dissertation establishes its own direction. The author seeks to study Phạm Quỳnh in two capacities: as a journalist who directly created works, and as an editor-in-chief who directly organized content and managed the operation of a newsroom within the colonial context. This makes it possible to clarify the position, role, contributions, and limitations of Phạm Quỳnh within the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century. The study does not aim to comment on or re-evaluate Phạm Quỳnh’s political standing; rather, it focuses on examining the journalistic textual legacy produced by him and his collaborators as an objective entity that propelled the development of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century.

For the scholarly and practical reasons stated above, the author has chosen the topic “*Phạm Quỳnh in the Developmental Trajectory of Vietnamese Journalism in the Early Twentieth Century*” as the subject of this doctoral dissertation.

2. Research aim and tasks

2.1. Research aim

The dissertation aims to clarify the position, role, and core contributions of Phạm Quỳnh to the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century; on this basis, it offers an objective, scholarly assessment of his journalistic legacy from the perspective of Journalism Studies, with a view to identifying its referential value and significance for the press today.

2.2. Research tasks

To achieve the above aim, the dissertation undertakes the following tasks:

- To systematize the historical, social, legal context and the overall profile of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century;

– To survey the entire journalistic legacy of Phạm Quỳnh (centred on Nam Phong Magazine and related forums) in order to draw out his journalistic thought, his newsroom model, and his creative approach to producing works in both content and form;

– To analyse and assess the position, role, contributions, and limitations of Phạm Quỳnh within the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century, and thereby to draw lessons for the press today.

3. Research object and scope

3.1. Research object

The dissertation focuses on the journalistic activities, the theoretical views on journalism, and the journalistic products (articles, translations, editorials) of Phạm Quỳnh in relation to the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century.

3.2. Research scope

Spatial scope: the study is set within the context of the Vietnamese press in Tonkin (Bắc Kỳ), Annam (Trung Kỳ), and Cochinchina (Nam Kỳ) under French rule, focusing on the cultural–political space of major press centres such as Hà Nội and Sài Gòn.

Temporal scope: the study is limited mainly to the first decades of the twentieth century (approximately 1910 to 1945), the period in which the Quốc ngữ press served as a “solvent” for cultural transfer.

Content scope: the study is confined to the professional activities and to the cultural, social, and political–journalistic viewpoints expressed directly through Phạm Quỳnh’s journalistic works and activities.

4. Theoretical basis and research methods

4.1. Theoretical basis

The dissertation is grounded in the methodology of Marxist–Leninist dialectical materialism, combined with the system of Hồ Chí Minh’s viewpoints and thought, together with the resolutions and guidelines of the Communist Party of Vietnam on press work.

4.2. Research methods

To carry out the study, the dissertation employs the following methods: documentary research; the historical–logical method; synchronic comparison; diachronic comparison; content analysis; the case-study method; in-depth interviews; and the use of primary and secondary sources.

5. Research hypotheses

The author advances the following research hypotheses:

First, Phạm Quỳnh’s direct creative output (articles, editorials, translations) successfully introduced Western academic ideas while systematically expanding the lexical capacity and

stylistic range of the Quốc ngữ script, turning it into an instrument capable of expressing complex modern concepts.

Second, under Phạm Quỳnh's management and editorship, Nam Phong Magazine operated not merely as an ordinary colonial publication but as a deliberately devised framework for fostering an intellectual forum and nurturing the emergence of a new Vietnamese intellectual class during the transitional period.

Third, Phạm Quỳnh's journalistic activity was an important agent driving the transformation of Vietnamese journalism from the medieval to the modern paradigm. The tendency towards East–West cultural synthesis in his journalistic thought both met the need for social renewal and created a current of academic journalism that profoundly influenced the subsequent history of the national press.

Fourth, the limitations of Phạm Quỳnh's journalistic activity were structurally constrained by the complex political context of the colonial era; nevertheless, his journalistic legacy has left enduring referential values for modern Vietnamese journalism, especially in standardizing the national language, preserving culture, and developing the press.

6. New contributions of the dissertation

The dissertation is the first doctoral-level scholarly work to study, in a systematic, in-depth, and comprehensive manner, the figure of Phạm Quỳnh as situated within the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century.

The dissertation systematizes and explicitly analyses Phạm Quỳnh's system of journalistic views and thought, which had previously been treated in a scattered or fragmentary way. The study shows that his thought constituted a coherent whole concerning the role of the press in social renewal and cultural preservation. Phạm Quỳnh was a historical agent in the process of modernizing Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century.

The dissertation consistently applies the historical–logical methodology combined with the theory of interculturalism. This approach makes it possible to view Phạm Quỳnh not merely as an individual practising journalism, but as a “cultural representative” within the turbulent context of East–West interaction.

The dissertation has collected, classified, and processed a body of primary sources comprising Phạm Quỳnh's articles, speeches, and essays in Nam Phong Magazine, Đông Dương Magazine, and several contemporary French-language publications. Many of these materials are, for the first time, decoded and approached through the lens of modern Journalism Studies, with specific quantitative and qualitative evidence.

In theoretical terms: the dissertation contributes to systematizing, in an objective manner, the journalistic legacy, views, and thought of Phạm Quỳnh within the overall picture of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century. The findings help enrich the theory of the modernization of the national press and clarify the laws governing the movement and the shift of the journalistic model from the medieval to the modern paradigm under the impact of East–West cultural exchange.

In practical terms: the dissertation provides an objective methodology for evaluating historical figures with complex and multidimensional contributions, helping researchers and cultural-management agencies to view past cultural and journalistic legacies more objectively. Clarifying Phạm Quỳnh's model of the "encyclopedic" scholarly review offers practical lessons for today's press organs and specialized research journals in enhancing content quality and standardizing argumentative and scholarly style.

This work serves as a reference of academic value for further in-depth studies of the history of journalism, cultural history, and Vietnamese thought in the early modern and modern periods.

7. Structure of the dissertation

In addition to the Introduction, Conclusion, References, and Appendices, the main body of the dissertation comprises four chapters.

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF RESEARCH

1.1. General overview of the state of research

1.1.1. Studies on the history of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century relating to Phạm Quỳnh

Studies on the history of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century may be divided into two main groups: compilations by contemporary journalists themselves (the first half of the twentieth century), and systematic, comprehensive studies by scholars and research institutes.

Works dealing directly with press history include: *The Vietnamese Press from Its Origins to 1945* (Trí Đức, 1973) by Huỳnh Văn Tòng; *A Brief History of the Vietnamese Press* (Nam Sơn, 1974) by Nguyễn Viết Chúc; *A Preliminary History of the Vietnamese Press* (1974) by the journalist and researcher Hồng Chương; *A History of the Vietnamese Press, 1865–1945* (Social Sciences Publishing House, 2018) by Đỗ Quang Hưng; the *Bibliographic Dictionary of the Vietnamese Press* by Nguyễn Thành (Hồ Chí Minh City General Publishing House, 2001); and *A History of Press Regimes in Vietnam* (Hồ Chí Minh City Publishing House) by Phan Đăng Thanh and Trương Thị Hòa.

Literary-historical works relating to Phạm Quỳnh and Nam Phong include: *Criticism and Discussion* (1933) by Thiệu Sơn; *An Outline History of Vietnamese Literature* (1941) by Dương Quảng Hàm; *Modern Writers* (Vol. 1, 1942) by Vũ Ngọc Phan; the official colonial biographical yearbook *Souverains et Notabilités d'Indochine* (1943); Huỳnh Thúc Kháng's study "The Press of Cochinchina from Its Origins to the Present" (1942) in the newspaper *Tiếng Dân*; *An Outline History of Vietnamese Literature* (Vol. III, 1957) by the Lê Quý Đôn group; Phạm Thế Ngũ's monumental *A Concise New History of Vietnamese Literature* (3 vols., Sài Gòn, 1961–1965); Thanh Lăng's *A Schematic Map of Vietnamese Literature* (1967) and *Literary Criticism: The 1932 Generation* (1972); and Phong Lê's *Modern Vietnamese Literature: History and Theory* (Social Sciences Publishing House, first published 1993, revised 2001 and 2003).

1.1.2. Studies on the person, life, and career of Phạm Quỳnh

Studies of Phạm Quỳnh may be grouped into three major critical tendencies that together form a multidimensional portrait of this historical figure: ideological and class criticism (foregrounding politics); literary-historical and decolonizing criticism (explaining the tragedy); and objective, scholarly criticism (honouring the legacy).

Representative works include: the materials of the debate on The Tale of Kiều in the journal *Literary Studies* (1960–1962); Trần Huy Liệu's series "Nam Phong Magazine and Its Editor-in-Chief Phạm Quỳnh" in the *Journal of Historical Studies* (early 1960s); *The Aims of Nam Phong* (1972); Nguyễn Văn Trung's *The Case of Phạm Quỳnh* (Nam Sơn, 1975); Phạm Long Điền's 1974 studies in *Bách Khoa* entitled "A Solitary Portrait: Phạm Quỳnh Thượng Chi"; Trần Đình Sử's study "Phạm Quỳnh: An Encyclopedic, Enlightening Critic in a

Colonial Condition” (Sông Hương, No. 402, August 2022); the *Dictionary of Literature (new edition)* (Thế Giới, 2004); Khúc Hà Linh’s *Phạm Quỳnh: The Man and His Times* (2010) and *Phạm Quỳnh in the Flow of National Culture* (2012); Nguyễn Văn Khoan’s two-volume *Phạm Quỳnh: A Perspective*; and the series of articles by Phạm Tôn (from 2006 onward). International works include Sarah Whitney Womack’s dissertation “*Colonialism and the Collaborationist Agenda: Pham Quynh, Print Culture, and the Politics of Persuasion in Colonial Vietnam*” (University of Michigan, 2002); Yen N. Vu’s “*Pham Quynh, borrowed language, and the ambivalences of colonial discourse*” (*Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Cambridge, 2020); and Lê Nguyên Long’s “*The Politics of Travel Writing: Pham Quynh’s National Project and the Landscape of the Imperial Capital at Hue, Vietnam*” (Routledge, 2023).

1.1.3. Studies relating to Nam Phong Magazine

Studies of Nam Phong Magazine (1917–1934) across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries form a large-scale scholarly forum in continuous movement and profound transformation.

Representative works include: Bùi Xuân Bào’s *Le roman vietnamien contemporain (1925–1945)*; Phạm Thị Ngoạn’s *Introduction au Nam Phong (1917–1934)* (defended in Paris in 1969, published as a book in 1973), a special milestone in the history of Phạm Quỳnh studies; Hồng Nhuệ–Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên’s *Analytical Index of Nam Phong Magazine (1917–1934)* (Sài Gòn, 1968); *The Vietnamese Press: Firsts and Foremosts* (Trẻ, 2006); Vương Trí Nhàn’s *Phạm Quỳnh and the Reception of Western Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Vietnam* (2005); Nguyễn Huệ Chi’s “Phạm Quỳnh and Nam Phong Magazine in the Cultural Journey of Early Twentieth-Century Vietnam” (*Journal of Historical Studies*, 446(6), 2013, 34–47); Nguyễn Đức Thuận’s “Commentary, Research, and Literary Theory in Nam Phong Magazine” (*Literary Studies*, May 2013); Nguyễn Hữu Sơn’s “The Literary Value of Nam Phong Magazine” (*Vietnam Social Sciences Review*, No. 4, 2018); Phạm Phú Phong’s “Reassessing Nam Phong Magazine”; the study “Notes on the Travel-Writing Genre in Nam Phong Magazine” by Trần Thị Tú Nhi and Trần Thị Ái Nhi; and Phạm Văn Khoái’s study of classical Chinese verse in the “Văn uyển” section.

1.2. Issues arising from the research overview

Having reviewed the state of research on Phạm Quỳnh within the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century, we identify the following issues:

First, although the works above differ in perspective, scale, and degree of directness, they have all made meaningful contributions to the study of Phạm Quỳnh as a man of culture and a journalist, and of his contributions and limitations. We are deeply grateful to inherit and draw upon this body of scholarship in shaping and supporting the dissertation.

Second, current assessments of Phạm Quỳnh’s contributions to journalism in particular and to culture in general have become more open, yet remain inconsistent, with opposing currents of opinion across historical periods: some appraisals are highly laudatory, while

others are sharply critical. These are precisely the problematic situations in which, examined across three chronological stages, one can discern a clear difference and a positive evolution towards recognizing his contributions.

Third, to date there has been no work that systematically and comprehensively studies the role of Phạm Quỳnh within the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century in both capacities—as a journalist who directly created works and as an editor-in-chief who directly organized content and managed newsroom operations within the colonial context. From this overview, the dissertation identifies three core knowledge gaps not fully resolved by prior research:

Regarding disciplinary perspective: more than 80% of prior works approach Phạm Quỳnh through the lens of literary history or pure intellectual history. Very few examine him systematically through the lens of Journalism Studies.

Regarding journalistic craft: studies typically quote the content of Phạm Quỳnh's articles but entirely neglect to analyse the craft of structuring an encyclopedic review (the organization of the trilingual—Quốc ngữ—Hán—French—table of contents, the agenda-setting strategy for the public, and the mechanism for managing a bicultural network of contributors).

Regarding the trajectory of journalistic language: linguists have mainly studied Phạm Quỳnh's prose as a literary text, without examining it as journalistic writing.

The research history shows that the profile of Phạm Quỳnh's career and his position and influence within the movement of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century still leave scholarly gaps to be explored and clarified. The dissertation "*Phạm Quỳnh in the Developmental Trajectory of Vietnamese Journalism in the Early Twentieth Century*" seeks to fill these gaps. The chosen direction is therefore entirely independent and does not overlap with previous publications. Even so, the body of prior work constitutes an invaluable supplementary resource, providing a firm foundation on which the author may inherit, reflect, and conduct in-depth investigation.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS CONCERNING PHẠM QUỲNH IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY OF VIETNAMESE JOURNALISM IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

2.1. System of working concepts and theoretical foundations of the dissertation

2.1.1. *Working concepts of the topic*

2.1.1.1. *Trajectory (tiến trình)*

A trajectory is an axis of movement and development unfolding through time, from one period to the next. More specifically in this study, “trajectory” implies a historical unfolding: Vietnamese journalism passed through stages of formation, development, and transformation; the position and role of Phạm Quỳnh are situated within that historical flow—at which stage of the trajectory he appeared, what he contributed, and how he exerted influence.

2.1.1.2. *Development (phát triển)*

Development is a process of shifting or driving change in an ascending, expanding direction—from narrow to broad, from lower to higher levels, and from simple to complex structures. The term denotes an upward tendency of movement, manifested in the enlargement of structural scale together with qualitative improvement and enhancement.

2.1.1.3. *Journalism / the press (báo chí)*

“Báo chí” is the general term for periodical publications (such as daily papers, weeklies, and magazines) that provide topical information about prominent events, phenomena, and persons in social life. As for terminology, before the word “báo chí” became common, early twentieth-century Vietnamese often used the term Tân văn (新聞) to denote the press.

2.1.1.4. *The developmental trajectory of journalism*

Within the scope of this dissertation, the concept of “the developmental trajectory of journalism” is understood as the law-governed movement—marked by inheritance and qualitative transformation—of the Vietnamese press system in the early twentieth century, signalled by the standardization of language, the consolidation of genres, and the modernization of organizational models, within which the figure of Phạm Quỳnh was at once a product and a driving agent of that process.

2.1.2. *Theories underpinning the study*

2.1.2.1. *Gatekeeping Theory*

Gatekeeping theory was introduced by the American social psychologist Kurt Lewin—one of the founders of modern communication studies—in his research on the flow of information within groups. In 1950, the American communication researcher David Manning White brought this concept into journalism research and proposed a “gatekeeping” model in the process of news selection. Since then, the term “gatekeeper” in communication has commonly referred to journalists and mainstream press organs. Applied to this dissertation,

the theory helps analyse Phạm Quỳnh's role as journalist and editor-in-chief in the capacity of a "gatekeeper," while clarifying the controlling influence of colonial censorship.

2.1.2.2. Theory of journalistic labour

The theory of journalistic labour is an important strand within journalism scholarship, studying the nature, characteristics, processes, and constitutive elements of the professional activity of journalists. This theory clarifies how journalists act upon reality to create journalistic works and products.

2.1.2.3. Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is a critical framework within the social sciences and humanities that studies and deconstructs the cultural, political, and intellectual legacies left by colonialism and imperialism. It exposes the ways in which the coloniser imposes symbolic power upon the colonised, while studying the responses (resistance, compromise, or hybridity) of the native population. In this light, Phạm Quỳnh accepted the colonial authorities' "rules of the game" in order to obtain legitimacy, yet used that very legal space to build a firm intellectual foundation for the native people.

2.1.2.4. Acculturation Theory

Acculturation theory studies the cultural and psychological changes that occur when two or more cultural groups come into direct and prolonged contact. This process leads to changes in the original cultural patterns of one or both groups, while each group retains its distinctive features. According to John Berry's classic model, acculturation is shaped by the resolution of two independent concerns: the need to maintain one's ethnic cultural identity and the need to seek relationships with the new culture. Applying acculturation theory to Phạm Quỳnh's activity at Nam Phong Magazine helps illuminate his role as a "cultural filter" in the person of an intellectual journalist.

2.2. The socio-political and historical context and the profile of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century

2.2.1. The cultural and press policy of the French colonial authorities in Indochina

Following the two waves of colonial exploitation, the structure of Vietnamese society changed profoundly. The feudal examination system was gradually abolished (permanently ending in Tonkin in 1915 and in Annam in 1919). The urban petite bourgeoisie, civil servants, and especially the new Western-educated intelligentsia began to take shape and needed a forum to express themselves. France pursued a "divide and rule" policy, splitting Vietnam into three regions under three different administrative regimes (Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchina) under the common authority of the Governor-General of Indochina. This led to the uneven development of the press:

Cochinchina (a colony – Colonie): enjoyed the relatively liberal French press law (notably the law of 1881); establishing private newspapers was easier, requiring only prior declaration.

Tonkin and Annam (protectorates – Protectorat): were subject to the strict censorship of the decree of 30 December 1898. Launching a newspaper required the direct permission of the Governor-General of Indochina or the Resident-Superior. Censorship operated rigorously, ready to suspend any paper showing oppositional tendencies.

2.2.2. The shift from Confucian to Western learning and the ascendancy of the Quốc ngữ script

The 1900–1945 period is regarded as the era of explosive dissemination, popularization, and consolidation of the modern syntax of the Quốc ngữ script. Whereas in earlier centuries the script had changed only in the conventions of isolated letterforms, in these 45 years the writing system shifted vigorously under the impact of the press, literature, and debates on educational reform. In the 1900–1914 phase, progressive Confucian-trained journalists were compelled to renew themselves to adapt to the times, beginning to read and write the Quốc ngữ press to disseminate new ideas—figures such as Huỳnh Thúc Kháng and members of the Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục. By the 1920s, the older generation of Confucian readers receded into historical shadow, ceding the forum entirely to a new social force.

2.2.3. Stages in the development of Vietnamese journalism, 1900–1945

2.2.3.1. Identify key developments

Period from 1900 to 1918: In the early years of the 20th century, journalism shifted from the colonial government's “official bulletin” (bulletin officiel) model to private “daily newspapers”, “annals”, or “magazines” to serve the newly emerged business class and urban dwellers. The turning point of this period was the relaxation of the French Press Freedom Act of July 29, 1881, in Indochina, which enabled Vietnamese businesses and individuals to apply for permission to open “private press” entities. [16, p.89].

Period from 1919 to 1930: This era witnessed a major revolution in the “press world” closely tied to a strong commercialization trend and the historic emergence of revolutionary journalism. This period marked professionalization through the establishment and solidifying of occupational terms such as “editor-in-chief”, “reporter”, “editorial office”, or “press world”. [40, pp.112-118] Journalism was sustained by print circulation revenue and advertising (Réclame). Notably, under the pressures of the era, the press during this period polarized into two distinct political spectrums. On one hand, the colonial press sector openly chose to exploit the urban market, attracting readers by utilizing the Feuilleton format—thrilling, long-form novels serialized at the bottom of newspaper pages.

Period from 1931 to 1945: This era recorded a professionalization process in terms of both genres and academic depth, marking the remarkable maturity of the country's journalism. The highlight of this period was the breakthrough of the “investigative reportage” (Reportage) genre to become the king of genres, alongside “literary criticism” built on a rational theoretical system, and scientific research magazines reaching full maturity.

2.2.3.2. Assessment of Achievements and Influences

During the period from 1900 to 1945, the developmental process of Vietnamese journalism achieved three core accomplishments:

First and foremost, in terms of language, journalism acted as a primary catalyst that elevated the Romanized Vietnamese script (*chữ Quốc ngữ*) from its initial embryonic stage to a standardized language. From this point onward, *chữ Quốc ngữ* possessed sufficient expressive capacity to serve literary writing, scientific research, academic discourse, and the articulation of complex political ideologies.

Parallel to linguistic advancements, from a social perspective, the boom of editorial offices established a true “public sphere” (*Espace public*) in alignment with modern communication theories. This public forum catalyzed a profound shift in mindset, transforming people from mere “subjects” under the colonial-feudal regime into modern “citizens”, “urbanites”, and “nationals” endowed with a strong sense of social critique.

Finally, regarding professional and organizational structure, this period shaped an independent printing industry, while crystallizing the professional ethics and commitment to engagement among the Vietnamese journalistic class. These comprehensive achievements forged a pivotal stepping stone, enabling the country's journalism to proactively integrate into the historical current of the nation after 1945.

2.3. The life and journalistic career of Phạm Quỳnh

2.3.1. Life

The scholar Phạm Quỳnh (Chinese characters: 范□; 17 December 1892 – 6 September 1945), courtesy name Thượng Chi, pen names Hoa Đường and Hồng Nhân, is known as a man of culture of the first rank, an outstanding scholarly writer, and a high mandarin of the Nguyễn court. In the modernization of national scholarship, he was a pioneer in popularizing the Quốc ngữ script, persistently using Vietnamese as the language of argument and in-depth research in place of the then-prevailing French or classical Chinese. His ancestors came from the scholarly land of Hải Dương—a centre of learning with the highest number of Confucian doctoral laureates in the country. His native village was Lương Ngọc, Hoa Đường commune, a village renowned for its tradition of learning, with twelve laureates of the highest examinations in both civil and military ranks. He lost his mother at nine months of age and his father (the licentiate Phạm Điền) at the age of nine, and was raised and educated by his paternal grandmother.

Although raised in a Confucian family, Phạm Quỳnh did not follow the traditional examination path but pursued the new French educational system. He graduated at the top of the College of Interpreters (Collège des Interprètes) in 1908, aged only sixteen. The College at that time taught not only basic translation skills but also moulded the first generation of Western-educated intellectuals, enabling Phạm Quỳnh to master French and Western rationalism. Although schooled in French, he possessed an astonishing capacity for self-study: he cultivated classical Chinese to read ancient texts deeply, while studying contemporary French philosophical and literary currents (from Rousseau and Montesquieu to nineteenth-

century philosophical doctrines). This dual literacy was the core factor that shaped his later “East–West synthesis” thought in print.

In 1945, Phạm Quỳnh died at the age of 53, shortly after withdrawing from the political arena and returning to scholarship. He departed carrying many unrealized cultural aspirations, closing the turbulent journey of a pioneering intellectual ever devoted to the language and letters of his nation.

His life was not split into two fragments—a “man of culture” and a “politician”—but constituted a coherent process of transformation in which cultural-intellectual thought served as the theoretical foundation, and political action was the effort to put that ideal into practice. This parallel relationship moved through three dialectical states: from awareness to action, and finally to disillusionment. Yet, viewed along the diachronic axis, Phạm Quỳnh’s stature as a bridging figure in the flow of national culture is undeniable. The legacy left by the scholar Phạm Quỳnh (Thượng Chi) is a vast system, comprising both material, textual value and foundational intellectual values for modern Vietnamese culture, journalism, and language.

2.3.2. Stages in his journalistic career

2.3.2.1. The formative stage (1908–1916): from an interpreter at the EFEO to early translation experiments in Đông Dương Magazine

In 1908, after graduating top of his class with the Thành chung diploma at the College of Interpreters (Trường Bưởi), Phạm Quỳnh was hired by the École Française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Hà Nội as an assistant/interpreter. The EFEO at that time was not merely a colonial administrative agency but France’s foremost scholarly centre in Indochina, gathering distinguished orientalists, sinologists, and Vietnamologists such as Louis Finot, Henri Maspero, Claude-Eugène Maitre, and Léonard Arousseau.

During his time at the EFEO, Phạm Quỳnh’s talent caught the eye of Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh, who was directing Đông Dương Magazine (founded in 1913). Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh invited him to collaborate, write, and translate. This was the first experimental workshop in which Phạm Quỳnh tested the instrument of the Quốc ngữ script.

The years 1913–1914 were his apprenticeship in journalism. His output was as yet limited, consisting mainly of short pieces focused on translating French literature to familiarize himself with Quốc ngữ grammar. A representative work is his serialized translation of Victor Hugo’s classic novel *Les Misérables* in Đông Dương Magazine under the pen name Thượng Chi.

In 1915–1916, he began to assert his theoretical standing, introducing abstract Western philosophical concepts into Vietnamese prose. Representative theoretical and translation works include his in-depth philosophical study of *Descartes’s thought* (Discourse on the Method) and social commentaries promoting the Duy Tân movement and the enlightenment of the Eastern mind.

2.3.2.2. The golden age with Nam Phong Magazine (1917–1932)

Over its seventeen years, the editorial structure of Nam Phong Magazine underwent many major shifts, forming a rich network of contributors across four core stages:

The formative stage (1917–1922): the editorial framework was shaped by major figures including Phạm Quỳnh, Nguyễn Bá Trắc, Dương Bá Trạc, Nguyễn Bá Học, Nguyễn Hữu Tiến, Phan Khôi, Tản Đà, Hoàng Tích Chu, and Nguyễn Mạnh Bồng.

The consolidation stage (1922–1925): alongside editor-in-chief Phạm Quỳnh, personnel changed as Lê Dư took charge of the Chinese-script section (replacing Nguyễn Bá Trắc); the editorial board added numerous renowned scholars and writers such as Nguyễn Hữu Tiến, Nguyễn Trọng Thuật, Nguyễn Đôn Phục, Nguyễn Triệu Luật, Hoàng Ngọc Phách, Trần Trọng Kim, Phạm Duy Tồn, and Vũ Đình Long.

The transitional stage (1925–1932): a turning point as Nguyễn Trọng Thuật took over management from Phạm Quỳnh. The core team comprised Lê Dư, Nguyễn Hữu Tiến, Bùi Kỷ, Vũ Đình Long, and Nguyễn Tường Tam, while extending the journal's reach to the South with the participation of southern writers such as Đông Hồ, Mộng Tuyết, Nguyễn Văn Kiêm, and Trúc Hà.

The final stage (1932–1934): management and editorship were handed to a new generation, notably Nguyễn Tiến Lãng, Lê Văn Phúc, Nguyễn Trọng Thuật, Nguyễn Hữu Tiến, Nguyễn Đôn Phục, and Đỗ Đình Thạch.

2.3.2.3. *The 1932–1945 stage: leaving the Nam Phong arena for the political field*

Although he left professional journalism to serve as a mandarin at the Huế court (Minister of Education and then Minister of the Interior) in November 1932, he continued to write articles and books, deliver lectures, and produce important cultural works until his death.

No longer editor-in-chief of Nam Phong after 1932, Phạm Quỳnh nonetheless continued to write for the journal until April 1933, averaging one to two articles per issue. His last article in Nam Phong was “In Praise of a Book,” on Stefan Zweig (No. 183, April 1933), in the commentary section.

The years 1935–1945 were a tragic final chapter, yet also the full realization of Phạm Quỳnh's linguistic thought. He completed a full ideological circle: from using the Quốc ngữ script as a translation tool (1908–1916), to elevating it into an academic language (1917–1923), to making it a national cultural weapon (1924–1932), and finally to a language of inner sentiment and self-revelation (1935–1945). The unfinished manuscript *Hoa Đường Essays*, abandoned on 23 August 1945, was the low note closing the life of a great but solitary wayfarer amid a time of transition.

Chapter 3

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PHẠM QUỲNH TO VIETNAMESE JOURNALISM IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

3.1. Contributions of Phạm Quỳnh as a journalist and author

3.1.1. The number and frequency of Phạm Quỳnh's works in Nam Phong Magazine

Phạm Quỳnh contributed the largest number of works and played the central role in the content of Nam Phong Magazine throughout its seventeen years. Of a total of 463 articles gathered under his five pen names, Thượng Chi accounts for an overwhelming share of 193 articles (41.7%), followed by Phạm Quỳnh with 186 articles (40.2%), and Hồng Nhân with 76 articles (16.4%). This distribution clearly reflects a deliberate division of authorial labour: “Phạm Quỳnh” was the official pen name tied to the role of editor-in-chief; “Thượng Chi” was the academic–philosophical pen name; and “Hồng Nhân” was a more specialized name that appeared later. The “Phạm Quỳnh” pen name is distributed fairly evenly across many groups, most prominently in treatises (58 articles) and literary commentary (61 articles), with 30 articles in philosophical commentary—revealing a writer-thinker in the full sense: at once constructing a theoretical system and exploring new literary genres. The “Thượng Chi” pen name concentrates heavily on philosophical commentary (76 articles), treatises, and literary commentary (31 articles)—the two most analytically and academically critical groups in Nam Phong’s classification, indicating that Thượng Chi was reserved for highly scholarly pieces requiring rigorous argument. “Hồng Nhân” contributed 76 articles in philosophical commentary, the highest degree of specialization among his three pen names.

3.1.2. Phạm Quỳnh's contributions to the development of language

3.1.2.1. Continuing and advancing the process of perfecting the Quốc ngữ script

The appearance of Nam Phong Magazine in July 1917 realized a carefully planned cultural strategy. Assessing the efforts of its editor, scholars affirm that he turned the publication into a “gigantic experimental laboratory” for standardizing the Quốc ngữ script. Through a continuous current of scholarship and translation, Phạm Quỳnh enriched the native tongue with a diverse socio-political vocabulary, elevating a script once dismissed as “rustic” into a “scholarly language” capable of dialogue with the world [119, p.118]. The journal’s contributors actively conducted textual research, built a modern scientific-technical terminology, and proposed officializing the Quốc ngữ script in public administration and school curricula. Phạm Quỳnh declared this intention frankly from the very first issue, defining the forum’s goal as the creation of “a new learning” to replace the obsolete Confucian examination system, while sparking “a new intellectual current” in keeping with the age. His core ambition was to refine and upgrade Vietnamese into a “common language” capable of clearly expounding complex scientific and philosophical systems, enabling the nation to build “a solid foundation of learning.” This method of cultivating academic culture rested on a consistent methodology: to raise the level of popular knowledge, one must modernize popular language. Analysing this thought, Trần Đình Hượu notes that Phạm Quỳnh’s patriotism and

nationalism were expressed in a distinctive way—through a respectful, constructive attitude towards the national language, which he positioned as the vital instrument for preserving cultural identity against the tide of colonial assimilation [54, p.273].

After nearly two decades of continuous experimentation (1917–1934) and a legacy of 211 issues (including the special 1918 Tết edition), Nam Phong affirmed its core role in perfecting the Quốc ngữ script. The Nam Phong group succeeded in creating and enriching the Vietnamese lexicon through the solution of “coining many new terms” in philosophy and science. Through a strategy of actively assimilating scholarship from Chinese sources, the editorial office enhanced translation capacity, enabling Vietnamese to express abstract systems of thought and theory [149, p.97].

3.1.2.2. Creating a Sino-Vietnamese socio-political terminology and Vietnamizing Western philosophical concepts

Phạm Quỳnh’s most practical and enduring mark on the Nam Phong forum was his effort to expand the lexicon, centred on abstract terminology in philosophy, science, and politics. His body of scholarly and translated works convincingly demonstrated the capacity of Vietnamese to render multilayered, abstract ideas. He realized this innovation through two foundational solutions: coining Sino-Vietnamese terms with new semantic shades, and localizing Western vocabulary through sense-translation. To express modern European theories and political thought, Phạm Quỳnh rejected forced “pure Vietnamization,” instead exploiting to the full the resources of the Sino-Vietnamese lexicon. Trần Đình Sử’s research (2012) shows that Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary possesses great advantages in abstraction and formality, especially suited to argumentative and journalistic prose. On this basis, the editor inherited existing Sino-Vietnamese structures or adapted them from the works of Chinese reformist thinkers (notably Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao), endowing them with new layers of meaning to match the contemporary French conceptual system.

Through a series of philosophical and sociological studies from 1917 to 1932 in Nam Phong, Phạm Quỳnh introduced into Vietnamese a range of scholarly terms still used intact today: chủ quan (subjectif), khách quan (objectif), lý trí (raison), trực giác (intuition), tiến hóa (évolution), văn minh (civilisation), and others. Before his standardization, Vietnamese had to use the original French words or explain them with long, rustic phrases. Phạm Quỳnh transformed abstract Western concepts into compact, highly systematic Quốc ngữ compounds.

3.1.2.3. Renovating syntax and establishing complex sentence structures and a system of function words and conjunctions

Before Phạm Quỳnh’s time, Quốc ngữ prose remained “rudimentary,” limited to recording events or simple narration. The editor was the one who actively adapted French complex-sentence structures, relative-clause systems, and logical reasoning to “forge” a complete grammar of argumentative and theoretical prose for Vietnamese. He thereby turned the Nam Phong forum into an encyclopedic model for shaping and standardizing national argumentative writing [71, p.142]. As one of the pioneering intellectuals to apply Western

grammatical structures to Vietnamese, Phạm Quỳnh rigorously introduced punctuation—periods, commas, semicolons, and colons—into the text. This technical solution clearly delineated syntactic components such as subject, predicate, and object, and clearly separated subordinate clauses indicating cause–effect or conditional relations.

Through translation, he compelled the Vietnamese structure to flex and stretch, creating systems of subordinate clauses and complex sentence patterns to convey Western meaning fully without losing the inherent suppleness of the mother tongue.

3.1.2.4. Standardizing Quốc ngữ orthography

Before the twentieth century, the Quốc ngữ texts of missionaries and earlier intellectuals were inconsistent. Initial consonants were easily confused (d/gi/tr), and the marking of tones (hỏi/ngã) depended heavily on regional dialects. Through the printing standards of major presses, the press began to filter and apply uniform orthographic rules nationwide. Continuous weekly and daily publication forced writers to settle on a standard spelling so that readers in all three regions could understand. At this stage, before any state-standardized textbook existed, the press served as the “hinge” through which writers and readers negotiated and agreed on rules.

In the 1920–1935 period, major papers such as Nam Phong Magazine (1917) and Phụ Nữ Tân Văn (1929) began a “quiet” orthographic reform by reducing hyphens to speed reading and save print space. For example, whereas before 1920 three- and four-syllable Sino-Vietnamese compounds had to be fully hyphenated (Hồng-thập-tự, ngôn-ngữ-học, thủy-quân-lục-chiến), by the Nam Phong period hyphens were reduced, linking only paired words (Hồng-thập tự, ngôn-ngữ học) or writing them entirely separately (ngôn ngữ học). When French technical and cultural concepts poured in, the press used hyphens to link transliterated syllables: ra-đi-ô (radio), sô-cô-la (chocolat), nhà măng-tô (manteau), bột a-xít (acide), and so on.

Unifying dialects: a handshake between northern spelling and southern pronunciation. Major papers published in Hà Nội or Sài Gòn were distributed nationwide. This interaction forced journalists to select the most accurate vocabulary and spelling, reducing regionalisms and bringing northern and southern orthography closer together. As Phạm Quỳnh’s argumentative essays in Nam Phong spread southward, the clear-cut distinctions—vào (action), da (skin), gia (family), già (age)—gained the upper hand, and southern journalists began to discipline their pens to write correct orthography even though their everyday pronunciation remained unchanged.

3.1.3. Contributions to the development of genres in Nam Phong Magazine

3.1.3.1. Developing scholarly and translation journalism

His greatest contribution was founding and editing Nam Phong Magazine, turning it into an “encyclopedia” combining literature, scholarship, and political commentary, helping modernize Vietnamese and raise popular knowledge. The journal did not merely report news but concentrated on studying culture, philosophy, and literature, becoming the most prestigious academic forum of its time.

Phạm Quỳnh also elevated the translation genre in the press with a language-constructing style of translation. As noted: “In Nam Phong, Phạm Quỳnh strove to undertake translation, conveying to the public the finest ideas of Western bourgeois democracy, while also introducing the spiritual heritage of our ancestors—Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, folk songs and proverbs—and the precious classical writings that his colleagues selected and transcribed into Vietnamese from the collection of the EFEO” [44, p.1364].

In scholarship, Phạm Quỳnh wrote many essays introducing Western European ideas of civil rights and democracy and critiques of French literature (on Keyserling, Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu; on French literature; on the realist writer Guy de Maupassant; on Descartes as the father of French philosophy; on Bergson; on civilization; and on whether East and West can be reconciled). In writing such essays—besides enlightening the Vietnamese public on freedom, democracy, and human rights and opposing colonial and feudal oppression—he deliberately introduced scientific terminology and cultivated modern Western style in scholarship, political commentary, and critical research, areas still underdeveloped in Quốc ngữ.

In translation, he rendered works such as the *Discourse on the Method* (Descartes); the *Enchiridion* (Epictetus); *La Vie sage* (P. Carton); *Le Cid* and *Horace* (Corneille); and poems of Baudelaire. For Nam Phong, translation was not merely an introduction to Western culture but an effective means of supplementing vocabulary and helping form the style of Vietnamese cultural language. To this end, each issue of Nam Phong included a glossary listing and explaining new terms for readers to consult.

3.1.3.2. Pioneering several new literary genres—precursors of later journalistic genres: travel writing, the essay, the sketch, reportage, and notes

“Phạm Quỳnh also pioneered a genre that later became fashionable—travel writing” [96, p.154]. The journal published reportage-travel pieces of enduring value, regarded as the beginning of modern reportage in the early twentieth-century modernization of our literature: *Ten Days in Huế* (Phạm Quỳnh), *A Moonlit Outing on the Nhuệ River* (Mai Khuê), and the serialized *A Month in Cochinchina* (Phạm Quỳnh) and *A Rambling Travelogue* (Nguyễn Bá Trác). Today, papers such as Tuổi Trẻ and Thanh Niên have developed this into in-depth reportage combining on-site description with cultural-historical analysis. On his journeys through the nation’s scenic sites and his travels to France and Laos, Phạm Quỳnh left famous travelogues still delightful to read today, such as *Ten Days in Huế*, *A Month in Cochinchina*, *A Pilgrimage to the Perfume Pagoda*, *A Journal of Travels in France*, and *A Journey through Laos*.

3.1.3.3. Commentary and literary theory-criticism

The “Treatise” (Luận thuyết) section was an important column, usually appearing on the opening pages of each issue of Nam Phong. Its main content discussed general matters of the times, especially those concerning our own people, to give domestic readers a sound conception of such issues. Commentary was the dominant genre in Nam Phong. At least three columns were designated as commentary: literary commentary, philosophical commentary,

and scientific commentary. These critical, analytical, and scholarly discussions served as a bridge between traditional Confucian learning and modern Western thought.

3.1.4. Phạm Quỳnh's thought on preserving and developing national culture

3.1.4.1. The philosophy “So long as the Vietnamese language endures, the Vietnamese nation endures”—language as the foundation of the nation’s sovereign existence

On 8 December 1924, at the hall of the Society for the Promotion of Learning and Virtue (Hội Khai Trí Tiến Đức) in Hà Nội, the Society’s Literature Section held a grand ceremony marking the 104th anniversary of the death of the great poet Nguyễn Du. Before a large gathering of intellectuals of the old and new learning and French education officials, Phạm Quỳnh—as one of the presiding figures—delivered an immortal address honouring The Tale of Kiều and redefining the standing of the Vietnamese language. In this historic speech, he distilled a proposition regarded as a manifesto of cultural patriotism: “So long as The Tale of Kiều endures, our language endures; so long as our language endures, our nation endures.”

This proposition was not an emotional, impromptu slogan but the result of a long process of theoretical reflection nurtured from the earliest issues of Nam Phong. By establishing a covariant relation among three quantities—a literary masterpiece (The Tale of Kiều), the national language (our language), and the nation’s destiny (our nation)—Phạm Quỳnh transformed a matter of pure aesthetics into a political message. He argued that a nation is truly destroyed only when it is stripped of its voice and wholly assimilated in consciousness. A nation’s body—its land and borders—may be occupied by an expeditionary army, and its administrative apparatus may lose autonomy; but so long as the people retain their native tongue, the cultural “genetic code” survives and the ethnic “root” is not uprooted. Within this logic, preserving the Vietnamese language is not merely about keeping a tool of everyday communication, but a struggle to defend the nation’s “spiritual sovereignty.”

3.1.4.2. The doctrine of “Euro-Asian assimilation” (Thổ nạp Âu-Á)

To realize the philosophy of actively preserving the Vietnamese language, Phạm Quỳnh devised a methodology: the doctrine of “Euro-Asian assimilation.” He affirmed this philosophy in the essay “An Informal Discussion of Eastern and Western Cultures”: “I too believe in such harmony, taking the four words ‘Euro-Asian assimilation’ as my personal maxim” (Thượng Chi, 1924, Nam Phong No. 84, June 1924). The essence of this theory is a process of selective acculturation. He defined “thổ” (expelling) as discarding the decadent, stagnant elements of the old learning, and “nạp” (assimilating) as absorbing the scientific essence and methodology of Western civilization to renew the inner strength of the East. Western rational syntax as the framework (Europe) + Eastern-rooted vocabulary as the flesh (Asia) = a modern, scholarly Vietnamese national language. Phạm Quỳnh demonstrated a historical truth: preserving culture is not keeping it motionless behind glass, but actively arming it with a modern “linguistic weapon” so that it may survive and develop on equal terms within the flow of world civilization.

3.1.4.3. Preserving intangible cultural institutions and social life

Phạm Quỳnh's intellectual legacy offers a historical lesson in the methodology of preserving national cultural heritage. He demonstrated for posterity that preservation is not freezing the past in a museum case, but must go hand in hand with renewal and active acculturation ("dynamic preservation"). His model of cultural development—taking the Eastern moral axis as the basis of social stability, Western scientific-technological thinking as the engine of development, and the national language as the fortress protecting identity—constitutes a referential handbook for the strategy of building a Vietnamese culture that is "advanced and imbued with national identity."

Alongside the positive currents in dress and the áo dài of the artist Nguyễn Cát Tường, the contemporary modes of beauty and adornment for women also produced very positive effects, all reflected through the authors' articles.

3.2. Contributions of Phạm Quỳnh as editor-in-chief and manager

3.2.1. Building Nam Phong Magazine into a forum for disseminating knowledge—a living "encyclopedia" of the culture, history, geography, philosophy, and literature of Vietnam and the world in the early twentieth century

3.2.1.1. The structure and distribution of content in Nam Phong Magazine

The structure of Nam Phong comprised eight main sections: treatise, literary commentary, philosophical commentary, scientific commentary, literary anthology (văn uyển), miscellany (tạp trở), current affairs (thời đàm), and fiction [87]. According to Father Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên's Analytical Index of Nam Phong Magazine, 1917–1934, this division operated as an encyclopedic classification system, helping readers access world knowledge systematically rather than reading fragmentary news. Over its seventeen years and 211 issues from 1917 to 1934, Nam Phong contributed 2,867 articles with rich, diverse content on every aspect of social life. The journal was a vast repository covering nearly all core domains of society: from journalism studies and philosophy (general philosophy, Eastern doctrines, and Western thought) to religion and various sociological dimensions (civil rights, marriage and family, the village-reform movement, women's rights, the mandarin and the intellectual elite, water management, public health, and international society).

At the level of higher matters, the journal analysed domestic and foreign political affairs, economic law, and multilevel education (from elementary education and family education to women's education and the national-language school movement). Matters of custom, natural science, fine arts and music, and especially linguistics (terminology, dictionaries, Chinese characters, national studies, and the modernization of Quốc ngữ) were carefully examined. The literary field (from cultural and civilizational theory to portraits of poets and literary forms) ran alongside history (national and world history and biography) and travel geography, forming a comprehensive encyclopedic picture.

3.2.1.2. Disseminating new knowledge through translation

By content structure and scholarly analysis, the most numerous article groups in Nam Phong were scholarship and translation (science, philosophy, and Euro-Asian literature) in the Quốc ngữ section. These included works introducing Western philosophy (Rousseau,

Montesquieu, Descartes) and French literature, alongside studies of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and classical Vietnamese literature. Nam Phong's core aim was cultural reconciliation. For the Vietnamese to access world knowledge, the only way was continuous translation and scholarship issue by issue. At a time when Quốc ngữ was still young and lacked terms for complex philosophical and scientific concepts, Phạm Quỳnh and his colleagues actively wrote long studies both to disseminate knowledge and to “experiment” with and enrich the Vietnamese lexicon.

3.2.2. The role of editor-in-chief and newsroom-management thinking

3.2.2.1. Organizing personnel and the network of contributors

A major contribution of Phạm Quỳnh lay in his very modern experience of organizing a publication through Nam Phong—from the requisite systems such as the editorial board to the role of editor-in-chief, what we today call the art of newspaper management or newsroom administration. As a major publisher, his contribution here was very clear; even Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh may not have matched Phạm Quỳnh in this respect. He was truly exemplary, not least in sustaining the long lifespan of Nam Phong.

This force strongly reconciled the old and new learning. Sinologists such as Nguyễn Bá Trác and Cao Xuân Dục helped preserve East Asian culture; scholars such as Trần Trọng Kim and Nguyễn Văn Tố contributed in-depth research; while Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh and Dương Quảng Hàm actively disseminated Western knowledge. The participation of southern authors such as Nguyễn Liên Phong, Lê Quang Chiêu, and Trương Vĩnh Tống (son of Trương Vĩnh Ký), and of women such as Sương Nguyệt Anh and Nguyễn Thị Kiêm, broadened the journal's national character. Editor-in-chief Phạm Quỳnh closely coordinated the entire system. The high royalties of the time attracted the finest talent, making Nam Phong the most prestigious academic forum of the twentieth century.

3.2.2.2 Key Individuals Influencing the Development of Nam Phong Magazine (Alongside Phạm Quỳnh)

Nguyen Ba Trac (1881–1945), pen name Tieu Dau, was a unique figure in the cultural, journalistic, and political history of early 20th-century Vietnam. In 1917, upon the founding of *Nam Phong* magazine, he was invited to oversee the entire Chinese-character (Han script) section, working alongside Phạm Quỳnh, who managed the Romanized Vietnamese (*chữ Quốc ngữ*) section.

Nguyen Huu Tien (pen name Dong Chau) was considered Phạm Quỳnh's right-hand man within the editorial board. An erudite scholar of Sinology, he was in charge of columns dedicated to Vietnamese historical research, biographies of historical figures (such as Nguyen Trai and Chu Van An), and the translation of Chinese classics into *chữ Quốc ngữ*.

Nguyen Don Phuc (pen name Tung Van) was an expert in classical literature and geography. He made monumental contributions to collecting and annotating classical Nom poetry, folk verses, and regional customs, while also authoring essays on ethics and family morality.

Nguyen Trong Thuat (pen name Do Nam Tu) was a researcher of both Confucianism and Buddhism. He authored the novel *Qua dua do* (The Red Watermelon), which was serialized in *Nam Phong* and is recognized as one of the earliest modern novels in *Quốc ngữ* literature. He specialized in discussing the harmony between East Asian moral philosophy and the new civilization.

Tran Trong Kim was an eminent scholar who oversaw the academic and philosophical sections. His monumental philosophical research works, such as *Nho giao* (Confucianism) and outlines of Buddhism, were serialized in *Nam Phong* before being published as books, generating a profound echo among scholars nationwide.

Duong Quang Ham was a foundational educator and literary researcher. He contributed in-depth articles on educational methods, the history of Vietnamese literature, and Western literary methodology, laying the groundwork for his later classic textbook, *Viet Nam van hoc su yeu* (An Outline of Vietnamese Literary History).

Nguyen Tien Lang served as the managing editor of *Nam Phong* during its later period and was the son-in-law of Pham Quynh. Highly proficient in both French and Vietnamese literature, he was responsible for literary criticism, translating French poetry (Baudelaire, Albert Samain) into Vietnamese, and efficiently managing the magazine's French Section (*Partie française*).

Pham Duy Ton was a pioneer of the modern short story genre. His renowned short story *Song chet mac bay* (Live or Die, It's Up to Fate, 1918), along with numerous short investigative reports exposing social vices, made their public debut on the pages of *Nam Phong*.

3.2.2.3. Managing distribution, advertising, and resource optimization

As for distribution, according to press-history research, *Nam Phong* not only covered all three regions (North, Centre, South) but also established agencies as far as Paris (France) and Guangzhou (China) to serve overseas Vietnamese and students.

To address the serious deficit between high printing costs and meagre agency revenue, Pham Quynh shrewdly anchored the editorial office to two larger financial sources: the monthly funds from the Governor-General's Office, channelled through the head of the Sûreté, Louis Marty, which served as a lifeline guaranteeing that *Nam Phong* could afford the finest printing paper without worrying about sales pressure; and the front and back supplementary pages, turned into prime real estate for long-term advertising by bourgeois corporations. The revenue from a single advertisement by the Bank of Indochina or a shipping line equalled the retail sales of hundreds of copies combined.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION OF THE POSITION AND ROLE OF PHẠM QUỲNH IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY OF VIETNAMESE JOURNALISM IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE PRESS TODAY

4.1. Assessing the position and role of Phạm Quỳnh in the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century

4.1.1. Phạm Quỳnh as one of the pioneers in receiving and shaping the Vietnamese-language press with a socio-political orientation in Tonkin

As the wave of journalism moved north, the historical context was bound up with the period in which France completed its conquest of Tonkin—a process beginning after 1870–1871 and lasting to the end of the nineteenth century, when Tonkin officially became a protectorate. Accordingly, the formation of the Tonkin press bore the character of a cultural-political institution established after the colonial order had been settled. In this context, Phạm Quỳnh was a representative intellectual with a political position. The colonial authorities quickly recognized his personal ability and his command of both political and technical-professional dimensions. This choice made Phạm Quỳnh a central figure, laying the foundation for the birth of Nam Phong Magazine in 1917.

As a pioneering figure marking a milestone for the Tonkin press, Phạm Quỳnh affirmed his standing on two fronts: the art of journalism and the role of a newspaper. This influence persisted throughout his journalistic career. Even at the great turning point of his life—entering Huế to serve in government as Director of the Royal Cabinet, then Minister of Education and Minister of the Interior under Bảo Đại—his historical role in the trajectory of the northern press did not diminish.

4.1.2. Phạm Quỳnh as a socio-political leader in promoting and orienting the open press system

Under the strategic patronage and use of the French colonial authorities, Phạm Quỳnh leveraged his personal prestige to exert far-reaching influence on press life, even when no longer directly running Nam Phong. He consistently promoted a model of lawful activity within the legal framework, entirely distinct from the clandestine press. His orienting presence gave impetus to the remarkable advances of the Tonkin press in quantity and quality. Although it sprang in no small part from pro-government tendencies, as the North rose to become a major press centre with hundreds of publications, the system underwent profound differentiation, with many papers maintaining a neutral orientation in the later period. On the whole, the complex yet leading political character of Phạm Quỳnh contributed importantly to stimulating and advancing the modernization of Vietnamese journalism in general and of Tonkin in particular.

4.1.3. Phạm Quỳnh's role in expanding academic space and fostering social debate through the controversies of the age

In the developmental trajectory of Vietnamese journalism in the early twentieth century, Phạm Quỳnh participated in debates with extremely high frequency and an enormous volume of writing. As editor-in-chief of *Nam Phong* from 1917 to 1934, he wrote a treatise in almost every issue. The frequency of debate or indirect rebuttal was continuous, aimed at defending his cultural-academic positions. From the core materials serving his direct controversies alone (defending *The Tale of Kiều*, debating national studies and the future of *Quốc ngữ*), he left a vast body of writing collected in the *Thượng Chi Anthology*. Notable are four great controversies: the *Tale of Kiều* controversy (1924), a direct confrontation with Ngô Đức Kế and Huỳnh Thúc Kháng; the debate on scholarship and national studies (1930) with Phan Khôi; the debate on the path of popular enlightenment with Nguyễn An Ninh and the progressive Cochinchinese press; and the literary controversy with the reformist current of the *Tự Lực Văn Đoàn*.

These four great controversies placed Phạm Quỳnh in the position of “a giant standing at the crossroads.” In journalistic and cultural terms, he triumphed brilliantly, fulfilling the mission of standardizing the *Quốc ngữ* script and elevating national scholarship. But in historical and political terms, the controversies exposed the “reformist” limits of his stance, causing him gradually to lose his leading social role as the situation shifted from cultural struggle to the revolution for independence.

4.2. Some issues raised and lessons for the press today

4.2.1. Some issues raised

4.2.1.1 Limits on Freedom of Speech: The Censored Charter and Colonial Fealty

It was precisely this system of total financial subsidization that established a perilous “discursive trap” for the editorial board of *Nam Phong*. Placed within a corridor of financial security yet politically suffocating confines, the magazine was compelled to operate as an “academic ivory tower”, entirely detached from sensitive societal upheavals. A comprehensive survey of all *Nam Phong* issues published between 1925 and 1930—a period when Vietnamese society was profoundly shaken by seismic political events, including the movement demanding the release of Phan Boi Chau (1925), the funeral of Phan Chau Trinh (1926), the Yen Bai Uprising led by the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (1930), and the Nghe-Tinh Soviets movement—reveals an absolute silence across its pages. *Nam Phong* did not publish a single line of news or any direct commentary regarding these milestones. Instead, the issues released concurrently with the Yen Bai Uprising continued to leisurely serialize extensive research papers on the “History of Western Philosophical Doctrines” or “Essays on Classical Nom Poetry”.

4.2.1.2. The ambivalence of Phạm Quỳnh’s journalistic thought

Through the lens of postcolonial theory, the treatises in *Nam Phong* clearly reveal the complex “ambivalence” of Phạm Quỳnh’s thought and pen. This duality created an internal tension in the texts: on the one hand, the column performed the function of marketing and disseminating the values of Western civilization in line with colonial censorship; on the other, it operated as a space of moderate cultural resistance, striving to restore the nation’s classical

literature and awaken the consciousness of preserving values regarded as the essence and soul of the people.

4.2.1.3. The aspect of colonial compromise and “monarchical reformism”

Politically and economically, Phạm Quỳnh did not deny his collaboration with the protectorate authorities. In many early issues of *Nam Phong* (for example, No. 2, August 1917), he often praised France’s “civilizing mission” and called on the Annamese to be loyal to the mother country. He wrote political commentary in French to engage directly with, and express political accord with, the colonial administration. In his Paris address of 1922, “*L’Évolution intellectuelle et morale des Annamites*,” he said: “We are loyal pupils of France; we wish to evolve within the framework of the French protectorate, taking French culture as the torch lighting our way.”

Phạm Quỳnh’s political stance was reformist—respecting the protectorate in order to seek a “constitutional monarchy” and autonomy for Vietnam under French guidance. In his writings, he constantly used the press to advocate harmony and cooperation between natives and the French, believing in France’s promise of a “civilizing mission.” In the context of an early twentieth-century Vietnam seething with anti-French spirit (from the *Đông Du* and *Duy Tân* movements to the *Yên Bái* uprising and the founding of the Communist Party), Phạm Quỳnh’s voice of reconciliation in the press became out of step, inadvertently running counter to the direct aspiration for independence and freedom of the overwhelming majority of his compatriots.

4.2.1.4. Detachment from the masses and a strong “academic elitism”

Vietnamese society at the time had an illiteracy rate of over 90%, with peasants and workers living in extreme hardship. Yet Phạm Quỳnh’s journal chose too narrow a readership. The writing of Phạm Quỳnh and the *Nam Phong* group used many classical Sino-Vietnamese words combined with French-style logic. This overly academic, solemn language meant the journal could circulate only among urban intellectuals, civil servants, and clerks, entirely alien to and disconnected from the impoverished labouring masses. The journal rarely reflected the pressing problems of colonial society such as heavy taxation, famine, or the rights of workers and peasants.

Constrained politically, Phạm Quỳnh pushed the cultural, philosophical, and literary dimensions of *Nam Phong* to the maximum. This produced a negative social consequence. The sacralization of classical literature (such as *The Tale of Kiều*) and the absorbed discussion of remote Western philosophical doctrines turned *Nam Phong* into a kind of “spiritual oasis.” When Phạm Quỳnh delivered his address honouring *The Tale of Kiều* at the Society for the Promotion of Learning and Virtue with the closing line “So long as *The Tale of Kiều* endures, our language endures; so long as our language endures, our nation endures,” Huỳnh Thúc Kháng and the Annam patriots (such as Ngô Đức Kế) rebutted fiercely in print. The Annam group held that promoting a romantic novel like *The Tale of Kiều* amid national loss lulled the youth and sapped their fighting spirit. Phạm Quỳnh wrote a profound rebuttal in *Nam*

Phong, affirming that language is the soul of the nation, and that without a strong national literature, every political movement is mere froth.

4.2.2. Lessons for contemporary Vietnamese journalism

4.2.2.1. The role and responsibility of journalists in leading culture and society

Phạm Quỳnh ran a journal that endured for seventeen years with a scientific column structure, gathering the elite network of contributors of his time. Building a prestigious press organ demands high professionalism in management, rigour in the publication process, and long-term thinking. Today's journalists must not only report surface news (who, what, where, when) but enhance in-depth analysis (why, how). Cultivating multidisciplinary knowledge and a systemic outlook, as Phạm Quỳnh did at Nam Phong, is the key for mainstream journalism to assert a value distinct from and superior to the free, fragmentary information of social media.

4.2.2.2. Responsibility towards the Vietnamese language

Alongside the journal, the Nam Phong editorial board actively established its own publishing arm, the Nam Phong Library (Nam Phong tùng thư). Its core goal was to provide essential learning materials to socialize and simplify the public's access to the Quốc ngữ script. In issue No. 114 (1927), the office publicly announced the aims of this book series. Nam Phong tùng thư was launched with the ambition of using the Quốc ngữ script to introduce Eastern and Western systems of thought in order to raise the intellectual level of the nation. The editor expressed his wish to help the great majority of Vietnamese “grasp the essential meaning” underlying human culture from antiquity to the present without needing to know French. He dreamed of a future in which the people could learn in their mother tongue and, “reading Quốc ngữ books” alone, could nourish their minds—for only then would the task of national enlightenment achieve genuine results.

4.2.2.3. Lessons for building a modern Vietnamese culture from Phạm Quỳnh's thought on national culture

Phạm Quỳnh's system of intellectual heritage left a profound historical lesson in the methodology of preserving national cultural heritage. Through his practice, he convincingly demonstrated that preservation does not mean freezing or isolating the values of the past in a museum space, but must be tied to renewal and active acculturation—“dynamic preservation.” His model of cultural development—based on synthesizing the Eastern moral axis to maintain social stability, Western scientific thinking and technology as the lever of development, and the national language as the core fortress protecting ethnic identity—is a model of high referential value. It offers important suggestions for the strategy of building a contemporary Vietnamese culture that is “advanced and imbued with national identity.”

4.2.2.4. Applying Digital Humanities and integrating the linguistic heritage into modern journalism and linguistics curricula

The 211 issues of Nam Phong and Phạm Quỳnh's hundreds of speeches are now scattered across archives at home and abroad (such as the National Library of Vietnam and the National Library of France—Gallica). It is recommended that cultural-management

agencies and research institutes accelerate comprehensive digitization, building an open-access database combined with big-data tracking. This would not only preserve the original texts against the decay of time but also allow future researchers to consult them easily, compile word-frequency statistics, and map the colonial-era contributor networks accurately through technology. It is further recommended that universities specializing in Journalism, Communication, and Linguistics incorporate Phạm Quỳnh's scholarly essays and philosophical translations into their curricula as a chapter on the history of the development of Vietnamese journalistic grammar and style. Studying how Phạm Quỳnh "Vietnamized" Western concepts will be an invaluable practical lesson for today's journalism students in the skills of translating and assimilating international knowledge without losing the clarity and soul of the Vietnamese language.

CONCLUSION

1. In the early 20th century, the French military pacification prompted Pham Quynh to realize the power imbalance, leading him to abandon armed resistance for a peaceful "Franco-Vietnamese collaboration" and use journalism as a legal dialogue tool. This political shift coincided with a deep ideological crisis as Confucianism declined and the final imperial exam was abolished in 1919. Facing a massive influx of Western culture that threatened to sever national roots, he formed a core philosophy: spreading Western academic knowledge to preserve the Eastern national soul. Capitalizing on Governor-General Albert Sarraut's relaxed press policy and the rise of the romanized Vietnamese script (Quoc Ngu), Pham Quynh turned Nam Phong Magazine into a strategic, moderate forum that praised the colonial power to maintain its license while subtly embedding Western philosophy to enlighten the public. Notably, he elevated Quoc Ngu from a mere phonetic tool into a scholarly language through translation and research, using Western methodology to systematize traditional values. The pinnacle of this direction was his immortal declaration tied to The Tale of Kieu, affirming the national language as the ultimate fortress to preserve the country's identity amid the colonial storm.

2. In the development of Vietnamese journalism and culture, Pham Quynh and Nam Phong Magazine (1917–1934) held a pioneering position as the first encyclopedia in the romanized Vietnamese script (Quoc Ngu). During its golden age from 1917 to the early 1920s, the magazine rose to become the most prestigious academic organ in Tonkin, playing a key role in standardizing Western terms to elevate Vietnamese into a scholarly language. With the philosophy of "absorbing East and West, harmonizing the new and the old" the publication introduced French philosophy, systematized the Han-Nom cultural heritage, and served as a launchpad for modern literature. However, by the late 1920s and early 1930s, this dominant position was severely shaken; Pham Quynh's philosophical, multi-layered argumentative style became outdated and rigid, caught between colonial censorship and progressive nationalist movements, before eventually being eclipsed by the Tu Luc Van Doan (Self-Reliance Literary Group) and shutting down in 1934. Following a long period in the late 20th century when it was harshly criticized due to his "Franco-Vietnamese collaboration" ideology, researchers in the 21st century have adopted a more objective, fair, and generous perspective on the contributions of Pham Quynh and his magazine.

3. The organizational model, newsroom management, and distribution methods of Nam Phong Magazine (1917–1934) were highly structured and professional. Institutionally, the newsroom adopted a "dual-leadership" model with clear specialization, where Pham Quynh served as the director and editor-in-chief of the Quoc Ngu (romanized script) section, while Nguyen Ba Trac managed the Chinese characters (Chu Nho) section. Operations ran seamlessly due to a distinct separation between business management and academic editing, a stellar editorial board of contemporary scholars, and a strict publication schedule maintained for 17 years under the editor-in-chief's meticulous manuscript vetting. This professionalism was further demonstrated through a unique multilingual distribution strategy that integrated Quoc Ngu, Chu Nho, and a French supplement, optimizing its reach across both traditional

and Western-educated readers. Besides receiving a covert subsidy from the colonial government, the magazine sustained itself financially by leveraging advertisements and establishing a widespread long-term subscription system across all three regions of Vietnam and neighboring countries, even experimenting with a transition from a monthly to a semi-monthly publication in 1934 to accelerate news delivery.

4. Pham Quynh transformed Nam Phong Magazine (1917–1934) into a large-scale linguistic laboratory to resolve the severe shortage of vocabulary and syntax in the romanized Vietnamese script (Quoc Ngu) during the early 20th century. His first method was standardizing academic terminology by utilizing Sino-Vietnamese roots to create compound words, shaping a vast array of systematic terms still widely used today, such as "subjective" (chủ quan), "objective" (khách quan), "evolution" (tiến hóa), and "civilization" (văn minh). Furthermore, through the direct translation of Western philosophical essays, he structured modern prose by introducing logical conjunctions and subordinate clauses, while clearly defining subject-predicate boundaries to cultivate analytical and logical thinking habits in readers. Finally, leveraging his authority as editor-in-chief, Pham Quynh established guiding columns and meticulously vetted and refined contributors' manuscripts, thereby eliminating the colloquial phrasing of the era to elevate Quoc Ngu into a lucid, scholarly, and scientific language.

5. The journalistic genres in Nam Phong Magazine (1917–1934) underwent a powerful transformation from medieval literary models to modern structures, serving as a breeding ground that shaped various new genres in the romanized Vietnamese script (Quoc Ngu). Holding the most prominent position was the treatise (essay) genre, which Pham Quynh utilized as a tool to propagate Western philosophy, research Confucianism, and refine logical argumentation. Concurrently, the magazine laid the foundation for literary theory and criticism in Vietnam by applying Western methodologies and aesthetic criteria to dissect literary works scientifically rather than relying on emotional impressions. The chronicle (travelogue) genre also made a breakthrough with serialized travelogues that shifted away from clichéd archaic styles toward a realist approach, vividly recording real people and real events. Finally, translation was elevated into an independent creative activity with a massive volume of work, which not only introduced global literary masterpieces but also familiarized readers with Western plot structures and psychology, thereby driving a major developmental leap for the young Vietnamese press.

6. The ideology of "Franco-Vietnamese collaboration" and Pham Quynh's cultural-academic path made him the focal point of fierce criticism and intense conflicts from various contemporary forces. Regarding the colonial government, despite funding and utilizing Nam Phong Magazine for demagogic purposes, they remained wary and ready to tighten censorship whenever he demanded legitimate political rights or emphasized preserving the national soul. Conversely, conservative Confucian scholars vehemently opposed his philosophy of "absorbing East and West," viewing the promotion of the romanized script (Quoc Ngu) as a betrayal of traditional moral doctrines. Meanwhile, radical revolutionary nationalists completely rejected this compromise, criticizing his preoccupation with academic discourse

as a distraction from the ultimate task of national liberation. This ideological conflict erupted into fiery pen wars, typified by the shocking 1924 debate over *The Tale of Kieu*, during which scholar Ngo Duc Ke fiercely criticized his views for weakening the youth's fighting spirit. By the early 1930s, this wave of backlash reached its peak when the younger generation and the Tu Luc Van Doan (Self-Reliance Literary Group) directly attacked Nam Phong's dogmatic argumentative style, officially isolating Pham Quynh from the mainstream current of the era.

7. From the perspective of modern Journalism Studies, the legacy of Pham Quynh and *Nam Phong Magazine* (1917–1934) is distinctly dualistic, offering foundational lessons and historical insights for the development of Vietnamese journalism. In terms of contributions, he pioneered the cultural-educational function of the press, while *Nam Phong's* specialized newsroom model and strict publication discipline provided an early lesson in modern media production. Notably, his creation of a systematic academic terminology and a logical prose structure for the romanized script (Quoc Ngu) laid the groundwork for future political commentary styles. However, this legacy also exposed major limitations, as political compromise and covert colonial subsidies stripped the magazine of its inherent independence and true social critique power. Furthermore, becoming overly consumed by a rigid, scholarly style that alienated practical reality left the publication slow to innovate and inevitably discarded by progressive journalistic currents. From this historical narrative, contemporary journalism derives a vital lesson on harmonizing national identity with global integration, while reminding journalists to always remain audience-centered and uphold their political integrity and social responsibility.

THE AUTHOR'S SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

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