

CHALLENGES TO VIETNAMESE CULTURE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION PROCESS

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Summarized by MAI DIÊN

Culture is the spiritual foundation of society and the momentum for socio-economic development. Nevertheless, in the current period of time, apart from factors producing positive impacts, the Vietnamese culture is facing not fewer challenges in such certain domains as education-training, mass media, cultural services, etc. This book (consists of three chapters) contributes to addressing pressing and fundamental matters in the process of international economic integration and building an advanced culture imbued with profound national identity at the time being.

Chapter 1 – Vietnamese culture: formulation and development – remarkable values

1. Brief description of the shaping and development of Vietnamese culture

The author started the book by making a description of natural, historical, economic and social characteristics, which were deemed as the basics shaping remarkable values of the Vietnamese culture. He also drew an outline of the Vietnamese culture through 5 historical periods:

The nation-making period (the age of Van Lang-Au Lac): It was characterized by bronze drum culture of Dong Son, proving the inner creativity of ancient Vietnamese before having contact with the Chinese and Indians.

The period of Chinese domination and against Chinese domination: This was a period of harsh and resolute fight, on the

one hand, against the assimilation attempted by the Northern imperial regimes; on the other hand absorbing and perpetuating the quintessence of foreign culture with a view to enriching and self-perfectionizing the national culture.

The period of Dai Viet: It started from the second half of the Xth century with the inception of such dynasties as Ngo, Dinh, Tien Le, which was succeeded by the Dai Viet state. This period ended with the contact and clash with Western cultures. It was a period within which the national identity was reaffirmed, contributing to the building of an independent and unified nation-state.

The period of French colony and against French domination: This was the second substantial cultural exchange, in which our people carried out a struggle in a tenacious and resilient manner against the assimilation policy of the Western

colonialist regime, at the same time wholeheartedly learnt the good things of the Western civilization with a view to gradually modernizing the home country's culture.

The period of socialist Vietnam: It commenced from the IVth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (1976) with a banner "Building an advanced and socialist-oriented Vietnamese culture imbued with profound national identity" (p.14-16).

2. Remarkable characteristics and outstanding values of Vietnamese culture

Talking about the Vietnamese national traditional culture, we are eager to refer to its core and the most fundamental components, which are the emotion, ideology, ethics and others implied in various forms, demonstrating the soul and heart, character and steadfastness of our nation. Through the above-mentioned historical and cultural periods, namely the Van Lang-Au Lac, the Dai Viet and the socialist Vietnam, basic features of the Vietnamese culture are characterized, as the author put it, by the tradition of solidarity, humanity, resilience, indomitableness; independent ability that contains the inner strength of the Vietnamese culture; the success in "Vietnamizing" external cultural elements; the succeeding in the cultural evolution process; the harmony of three religions and the mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and indigenous beliefs and religions. As such, the Vietnamese traditional culture evolves in a harmonious and tolerant manner with different layers and cultural elements. This also signifies that it advances in line with accumulative moves, gradual alternation rather than the happening of an authentic social revolution

in the traditional history of culture of the nation (p. 25).

Watching the emergence and development of the spiritual values in the history of culture of our country, the author realized that components of these values are not equally progressive in the following six domains: family, economic, education, theatrical and arts, religion and politics.

Family-related values are closely associated with the creation of nuclear families in the social construction: household (family) – village – country. The Vietnamese family is valued as a shelter where personal characters are fostered and developed, or cultural values are maintained and transferred from one to another generation consecutively. A Vietnamese village is deemed as a green stronghold to protect the cultural heritage, against hazardous cultural factors perpetuating into the community; the village is also an educative environment where each member is trained in the community awareness, the communal democratic spirit and patriotism. The Vietnamese family-village structure proves its strength against all attempts of cultural assimilation by strong and powerful empires in the history. It is also able to flexibly accept likely similar external cultural elements, enriching it to rise up equivalent to the times. With regard to the economic aspect, the most significant value owned by the ancient Vietnamese is their abnormal working capacity and the reform of nature. This is the labor epic composed by laborious farmers with their sweats and tears in the nation-making history, said the author. The educational value is bonded with the Chinese-related educational system as well as an educational system subjected to the influence of the Western

culture during the period of French colony. It is also associated with talented and righteous people, the class of neo-educational intellectuals, among whom the most excellent became revolutionaries and the remaining majority made up the core force in building a new educational system of the country, embracing both national and modern characteristics.

The remarkable value of Vietnamese traditional literature and arts lies in that it was a patriotic literature and arts. Essentially, Vietnamese traditional literature and arts were deeply imbued with folk characteristics, except from the 15th century onward a part of literature was separated and developed into a scholastic trend. When Vietnam encountered the Western culture, both literature and arts grew in line with two trends: folk and scholarly. It was the potential patriotism, which showed the love of our country's literature and arts scholars towards the national culture that absorbed progressive elements of the Western culture laying the foundation for the country's literature and arts subjectively integrated into progressive literature and arts of the modern world.

One mention religious values in the spiritual worth system of the history of the Vietnamese culture, it could not help without indicating the "grandparentship", which is considered as the original religion of all Vietnamese. Within a household, there are grandparents; the family line has ancestors, a craft has its a creator, a village has its a saint, and a nation has its founding fathers. The religion and beliefs dedicated to the origin was recognized as a type of synergy or inner power, uniting our people in the nation making and protecting history.

With respect to the political front, patriotism played a key role in the

Vietnamese spiritual worth system. It demonstrated in the sacrifice for the great cause, the determined will to acquire and protect the national sovereignty. Additionally, profound humanity and community compassion were the seeds in the Vietnamese ethical garden, reflecting the philosophy of "loving the other as loving ourselves". That compassion laid the foundation for developing a resilient and indomitable will against aggressive enemies. Heroism and humanity are the two sides of the Vietnamese spiritual attribute, being the pillars of the spiritual worth system embraced by the Vietnamese.

The brief description of the development and selected values of the national culture as indicated in this research work helps us to get a clearer understanding of on-going changes in the Vietnamese culture under the impact driven by the renewal cause of the country. Hence, we can work out plans and solutions to succeed and bring into play progressive and positive values of the national culture in the new era, to run against risks of being culturally assimilated, especially under the impact of globalization and international economic integration (p. 26-32).

Chapter 2 – Impacts of globalization and international economic integration on the Vietnamese culture

1. Globalization and international economic integration in the current context of Vietnam

Globalization is a sequent result of a protracted development history of the commodity-based economy or market-driven economy. A short description of the outstanding characteristics of the economic globalization and international economic integration is made by the author in the

prologue of Chapter 2, though it explicitly implies their movement and development.

The first unique feature of this process is a revolution of the production force and alternations in the business modes. The second characteristic is the profound changes of social aspects in the globalization, such as changes in the labor force and labor division. In that process, education expansion had been linked with social and economic development in line with the trend of "socializing the knowledge" and the modification of social – population structure. The third characteristic was that the on-going globalization is subject to the trajectory of capitalism.

In the next section of this Chapter, the author indicated certain things that need to be done properly by Vietnam in order to proactively integrate into the international economy.

Firstly, it is necessary to make the entire population and the political system familiarized with and fully aware of our proactiveness in integrating into the international economy.

Secondly, based on that perception, it is necessary to formulate and execute a strategy aimed at proactively integrating into the international economy. The strategy must be both sufficiently qualitative and quantitative, with a long-term, cross-cutting and practicable vision.

Thirdly, the international economic integration strategy is part of the master strategy for socio-economic development.

Fourthly, the legislative, executive and judiciary have a radically important role to play in institutional construction and reform.

And, fifthly, enterprises shall directly

involve in international economic integration (p. 57-60).

2. Impacts of economic globalization and international economic integration on cultural activities in Vietnam

With respect to ideology, ethics and life-style, the globalization trend had had tremendous impacts on and contribution to the renewed mindset and theoretical thinking of the Party, which were reflected in awareness on the following issues: a more profound and comprehensive perception on the role of market economy, and a clearer socio-economic development model for our country in the transition to socialism. Commensurate with its renewed mindset, the Communist Party of Vietnam worked out a new social-political oriented value, which was "all for the happiness of the people", striving to build "a strong country with prosperous people and a just, democratic and civilized society". Presently, in the change of mindset, social awareness towards employment has altered. Any type of employment that exerts in practical efficacy and has social contributions in compliance with the law is considered as useful employment and equally appraised for its social value in terms of ethics. Being linked with the above-mentioned issues is the policy of expanding democracy, building a socialist rule-of-law state with a developed civil society.

In parallel with positive impacts that had contributed to the success of the renewal, the author of this book held a viewpoint that globalization and international economic integration also had created negative impacts on our social ideology in the following aspects:

- An idea of "rethinking" of the ideological

foundation;

- "Ignorance" of politics;
- Embarrassment in ideological orientation;
- Dissatisfaction, "de-confidence" in the practical life and the social regime at large;
- Political opportunism.

With regard to the educational and training sector, the author pointed out eight impacts driven by economic globalization that had led to a revolution in vocational training; required a new approach for educational and training development: continuing education, life-pursuing education; changed educational-training contents, ways and means and methods; needed a special emphasis placed by the educational sector on information technology training and utilization; emphasized the importance of English training in schools; integrated global issues in school textbooks; commercialized the international educational system; and, promoted the brain wash in the educational-training sector (p. 73-78).

Impacts led by economic globalization on the mass media sector in Vietnam were thoroughly analyzed by the author, beginning with remarkable characteristics of the Vietnamese press over the last period of twenty years of renewal. The development of the Vietnamese press was not only counted on the increased quantity, but also the techniques and information content. The press had provided diverse information with improved quality, functioning as the voices of the Party, the State, social organizations and the people's forum. These characteristics of the press in the context of globalization had made positive impacts on the one hand, and exposed weak points on the other of media activities. The most obvious weakness of

the Vietnamese press was distraction from its rationales, purposes, political tasks and detachment with readers, in pursuit of shocking, drag and non-educative news with a view to attracting buyers for mere profits. A considerable proportion of falsified news was published. The negative side of society had been mentioned in a disproportional and appropriate manner, distorting impressions of readers on the country and regime. The social responsibility, citizenship, professionalism of a segment of journalists had been substantially deficient. Additionally, the operational mechanism and the legal system remained many shortcomings, constraining possible healthy development of the press (p. 130-131).

Globalization and integrated market economy had brought in effects on religious and beliefs practice in Vietnam, creating the following trends: secularization and religious modernization; religious diversification; denial of traditional religions and national culture; emergence of new religious cults, including inhumane and counter-cultural religions; abuse of national and religious affairs by hostile forces (p. 132-141).

With respect to the cultural service, globalization and international economic integration had exerted in positive impacts, contributing to: increasing the quantity and quality of cultural services; satisfying cultural needs of all populations; narrowing the culture enjoyment disparity between and among regions and countries; effectively exploiting economic benefits brought in by culture, making it become a practical resource for development. Nevertheless, globalization had also had negative impacts on cultural services. "Presently, there is a trend of pursuing

commerciality of cultural services. It places much importance on exploiting economic benefits from cultural services, but undermines artistic, educative and awareness-raising aspects of culture, even ignores the law". Globalization had also enabled external counter-cultural products to enter into our country, posing the vulnerability of losing the national identity, which had been regarded by some researchers as a risk of "being culturally assimilated" (p. 151-164).

The section on "practical impacts of economic globalization and international economic integration on cultural activities in Vietnam" also indicates positive and negative impacts of economic globalization on such fields as: science and technology, literature and arts, cinematography, culture of ethnic minorities, linguistics, cultural imports and exports and state management over the cultural sector.

Having done the above-mentioned analysis, in the next part of the book, the author had made general observations as regards the effects caused by economic globalization and international economic integration on the Vietnamese culture, upon which he indicated challenges to the national culture posed by international economic integration. As for the author, the national culture must involve in improving the competitiveness of the economy in integration; it also needs to strengthen its status in the dialogue between cultures in the world; and, it must be adaptable to the formulation of a socialist-oriented market economy and the international economic integration.

Chapter 3 – Directions and solutions to bring into play advantages, overcome challenges in order to build a Vietnamese

culture with advance aspects and profoundly imbued with the national identity in the period of international economic integration

1. Having analyzed cultural activities in the past time, pursuant to the guidelines and policies on economic integration adopted by the Party and State, compatible with subjective and objective conditions in the international economic integration that impacts on the Vietnamese culture, the author made some forecasts on the general developmental trend of the Vietnamese culture in the first years of the twenty-first century as follows:

The struggle to strengthen the ideological foundation in the building of a Vietnamese culture with advanced aspects and profoundly imbued with the national identity against other aristocratic cultural trends increasingly becomes arduous and intricate.

Additionally, the struggle to maintain and bring into play the national cultural identity against the attacks by imperialism in the cultural sector, especially the cultural Americanization in the economic integration increases.

In the international economic integration, the fight against negative aspects and social evils or the deficiency in ideology, ethics and life-style in an attempt to create a healthy cultural and emotional environment is conducted and deemed as an urgent, essential and permanent task.

The increased international economic integration also generates the rich and poor gap between and among different populations, social strata, regions, areas and ethnic groups (p. 227-230).

2. The four directions to bring into play the existing advantages and overcome

challenges in the building of a Vietnamese culture with advanced aspects and profoundly imbued with the national identity in the period of boosting international economic integration, as the author suggested, include:

- To bring into play the traditional patriotism, the spirit of great national unity and the awareness of independence and autonomy; to actively integrate into the international economy and firmly maintain the socialist orientation as well as the national cultural identity, creating a spiritual momentum for modernizing the national culture;
- To increase the people's educational level, the science and technology status and the state management in a way that is commensurate with the demand and extent of the international economic integration;
- To enhance the creativeness of the national culture and expand democracy to make full use of creativity potentials of the people; to encourage and involve the contingent of intellectuals, literature and arts workers, entrepreneurs and people from all walks of life in the building and development of the national culture;
- To strengthen the struggle in the field of ideology and cultural theory with a view to protecting truthful values of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's Thoughts, maintaining and bringing into play fine cultural values of the nation; to resolutely fight and unveil all attempts that abuse economic globalization to conduct the peaceful evolution in the ideological and cultural domain, to bring in the country ideological trends contrary to the cultural lines of the Party.

3. The steadfastness of Vietnamese people

has been tested in the course of history of the nation and now needs to be brought into play in a creative manner in the cultural exchange, aiming at absorbing things beneficial for development, at the same time removing and preventing cultural hazards that affect aesthetic and humane values. In the final part of the book, the author suggested a number of solutions to overcome challenges in the building and development of the Vietnamese culture with advanced aspects and profoundly imbued with the national identity in the period of boosting international economic integration.

Firstly, to strengthen awareness raising for Party organizations, State agencies, political and social organizations, enterprises and the entire people on the role of the national culture in the international economic integration process;

Secondly, to continue consolidating and perfectionizing the system of policies and laws in order to ensure, on the one hand, that the national identity is maintained and brought into play and, on the other, to subjectively acquire the quintessence of the world cultures by expanding international cultural cooperation and exchange, uplifting the status of the Vietnamese culture in the regional and international community;

Thirdly, to create a momentum for the national culture to develop in the international economic integration process;

Fourthly, to renew the state management over the cultural work in line with the enhancement of industrialization, modernization, the development of a socialist-oriented market economy and international economic integration, and the strengthened international cultural (p. 235-245).