



Factors Affecting the Working Class in Vietnam Today: A Study from the Perspective of Spiritual and Cultural Life

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ABSTRACT

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The working class stands as the primary productive force, playing an particularly significant role in Vietnam's current industrialization and modernization endeavors. Concerning for and prioritizing the material and cultural-spiritual well-being of the working class is of priority, contributing to the enhancement of human resource quality. Like other classes and strata in society, the cultural and spiritual life of the Vietnamese working class is influenced by a multitude of factors. By grasping these factors, the Vietnamese Party-State can effectively adjust policies to foster the cultural and spiritual development of the Vietnamese working class; for the reason that it has profoundly impacts the formation of the class's endurance, stance, ideology, ethics, and way of life, as an integral part of society. Therefore, this article focuses on analyzing the fundamental and prominent factors influencing various aspects of the working class's life, including: the Vietnamese traditional culture; the leadership of the Party and State; the industrialization and modernization of the country; the globalization and international integration. These factors have an impact on the cultural and spiritual life of the Vietnamese working class today.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Influences from Vietnamese traditional culture

The cultural tradition of the Vietnamese people is a combination of virtues, customs, thoughts, ways of living, etc. of the Vietnamese people that are preserved and promoted from generation to generation. Generating and developing by the nation's spirits, the working class is inevitably influenced by Vietnamese national traditions in both positive and negative aspects.

On positive aspects

The Vietnamese working class has embraced the rich traditional values of Vietnamese people. These values, including "intense patriotism, national self-reliance, a spirit of solidarity, a sense of community that coheres individuals, families, villages, and the nation to be a united body; along with compassion, tolerance, a deep respect for ethics and morality; diligence and creativity in labor; finesse in interpersonal relationship, and simplicity in lifestyle, to name but a few"¹.

They have profoundly shaped the cultural and spiritual life of the Vietnamese working class today. These good values have instilled in the working class a strong sense of responsibility and duty towards their communities and society. They have also fostered a heightened awareness of adherence to community norms and regulations, guiding the workers to live in accordance with societal values, nurture a sense of love and unity within their collectives, strengthen class solidarity, and solidify the enduring bonds of the worker-peasant-intellectual alliance in the ongoing endeavor to build and defend the nation.

In today's dynamic and ever-evolving social landscape, patriotism manifests not solely through armed engagement on the battlefield but also through unwavering determination to build a prosperous and beautiful nation, standing on par with other global powers. Embracing the nation's heritage of patriotism, under the leadership of the Party and State, the Vietnamese working class steadfastly marches under the Party's banner, upholding the spirit of self-

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¹ The Communist Party of Viet Nam (1998), *Documents of the 5th Central Committee Conference term VIII*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 56.

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reliance and national self-strengthening, resolute in achieving the goals set forth in the era of reforming. Indeed, it is the strength derived from the nation's cultural traditions that has empowered, inspired, and motivated the working class to triumph in the fight against poverty and backwardness, successfully pursuing the path of industrialization and modernization, gradually propelling Vietnam towards catching up with and integrating into the global development trajectory.

In addition to inheriting the nation's rich cultural traditions, the Vietnamese working class has also embraced the enduring virtues that have defined the Vietnamese people for generations. These virtues, including diligence, creativity, and an inquisition for knowledge, are evident in the working class's approach to learning, self-improvement, labor productivity, and daily life. These qualities serve as a driving force, motivating the working class to overcome personal limitations, persevere through life's challenges, and engage in their work with dedication and passion. Their commitment to excellence and productivity translates into meaningful contributions to the nation's reforming endeavors.

On negative aspects

While the Vietnamese working class has inherited a rich cultural heritage, there are also certain outdated elements within this tradition that have had a negative impact on their spiritual and cultural life. The legacy of backward agricultural practices has given rise to tendencies such as, patriarchal attitudes, self-interest, localism, attitude of 'hit or miss', arbitrariness, egalitarianism or averageness,, excessive focus on status and hierarchy, materialism, among others. These negative manifestations persist to this day, influencing the thoughts, actions, and lifestyles of a segment of the working class. A tendency towards complacency, reliance on others, a preference for leisure over work, and a lack of industriousness are evident among some workers. This inertia stifles their creative potential and limits their vision in the face of progressive global trends. Eradicating these outdated elements from the cultural life of the working class is crucial for fostering the development of new qualities and shaping the new Vietnamese working class in the era of international integration.

2. Leadership of the Party and the State

Throughout its leadership of the nation, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) has steadfastly advocated for the cultivation of an advanced culture deeply rooted in the nation's identity. The Party has identified the paramount objective of Vietnamese culture as, "the comprehensive development of Vietnamese people in terms of politics, ideology, intellect, morality, physical fitness, and creativity. It

aims to foster a sense of community, compassion, tolerance, respect for relationships, a cultured lifestyle, and harmonious relations within families, communities, and society. Culture is to become a driving force for individuals' self-improvement, the inheritance of the nation's revolutionary traditions, the promotion of patriotism, and the spirit of self-reliance and self-mastery in building and defending the Fatherland"². To achieve this vision, the Party and State have formulated sound cultural policies and guidelines to shape the spiritual and cultural life of the working class in particular, and the entire nation as a whole.

The implementation of the Party and State's cultural policies has had a profound impact on the Vietnamese working class, fostering a spirit of positivity, proactiveness, and creativity in their contributions to national development. These policies have also mobilized significant resources, both human and financial, to establish and expand public cultural infrastructure, to enhance community cultural services, to invest in the preservation and revitalization of the nation's cultural heritage, to safeguard, inherit, and promote the unique cultural values of the 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, as it were. These concerted efforts have yielded remarkable achievements, including: elevating the quality of cultural enjoyment for the people, nurturing individuals and communities with a healthy spiritual environment, opening up vast cultural spaces, catering to the spiritual and cultural needs of the broader population, including the Vietnamese working class.

In essence, the sound and innovative cultural policies of the Party and State, coupled with the enthusiastic participation of all segments of society, have ensured that culture permeates every aspect of community, collective, and individual life. This has propelled the spiritual development of the working class, fostering their holistic growth and contributing significantly to the nation's industrialization and modernization endeavors.

3. The industrialization and modernization endeavors' impacts

The Vietnamese working class stands at the forefront of the nation's industrialization and modernization endeavors. As the direct participants in this transformative process, they are inevitably affected by its multifaceted impact, encompassing both positive and negative aspects, just like any other process.

Positive dimension

The industrialization and modernization process has its aims of making comprehensive and profound transformation in productive forces. It demands a highly skilled workforce, necessitating the continuous upgrading of

² The Communist Party of Vietnam (2001), *Documents of the 9th National Congress*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 114.

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workers' educational attainment, technical proficiency, vocational expertise, and adaptability of new knowledge. Furthermore, this process did making significant changes in the integration of advanced technologies into production processes, infrastructure development, and cross-industry knowledge transfer, etc. All these points requires a workforce capable of embracing and utilizing these innovations. This emphasis on knowledge and adaptability fosters a culture of lifelong learning, having self-discipline on professional development, positive attitude, and voluntariness among the working class. Besides, the transition to modern production methods, characterized by streamlined labor division and specialized tasks, requires workers to adapt to new work styles and embrace industrial discipline. This exposure to structured work environments instills in the working class a sense of efficiency, precision, and organizational discipline.

The transformative impact of industrialization and modernization extends beyond the application of science and technology, encompassing the explosive growth of information and communication technologies (ICT). Today, mass media channels such as television, radio, newspapers, the internet, and social media platforms have become popular, catering to the cultural needs and aspirations of the working class. This digital revolution has enriched and diversified the cultural landscape of workers' lives.

Then, the industrialization and modernization has played a crucial role in narrowing the knowledge gap between the working class and the intellectuals; and at global scale, it takes the Vietnamese workers to the level of global working class community. It has been also fostering a sense of solidarity and strengthening a strong bind of the strategic relationship between the working class, the peasants, and the intellectuals. Simultaneously, it also leaves room for opportunities and possibilities, creates conditions to improve the ability to meet the spiritual and cultural needs of workers, and creates motivation for the working class to develop comprehensively.

Negative dimension

In contrast, the industrialization and modernization process also has its drawbacks, causing negative impacts on the spiritual and cultural life of the Vietnamese working class. The rush to speed up work progress to ensure high labor productivity has placed workers in a whirlwind of work. Long working hours, a hectic and high tempo working's environment, strictness, and the pressure of overtime to meet work targets and schedules all make workers very stressed and tired after work. Therefore, in the rare moments of rest, workers often withdraw and limit activities of meeting and communicating with friends, with neighbors, or engaging in collective activities, or other activities. This has invisibly made workers lose their community lifestyle, fade away their feelings and affection; instead, they adopt a lifestyle of "minding one's own business", or "not interfere in the affairs of others", being apathy, and selfishness, as it were. In

industrial zones where most workers live concentratedly, the spiritual and cultural life in these places can be said to be quite poor and backward, revolving only around devices and equipment such as televisions, radios, newspapers, smartphones, or just gathering to drink and hang out, among others.

In addition, the industrialization and modernization process requires the expansion of production scale and the increased exploitation of resources; this has led to the narrowing and pollution of the living space in general and the spiritual and cultural living space of workers in particular, causing serious impacts on the health and quality of life of workers.

4. The globalization and international integration' impacts

Vietnam is entering an era of profound globalization and international integration. This process requires our country to implement an open-door economic policy, actively engage domestic enterprises in international competition and international labor division to expand the space and environment to occupy the most suitable positions in international economic relations. This is an objective trend that affects all aspects of material and spiritual life of all countries and nations, the social life of the whole community, as well as the life of each individual, including the Vietnamese working class. The impact of globalization on the spiritual life of the working class is quite strong, with both positive and negative aspects.

On positive aspects

The process of globalization and international integration has opened up opportunities for our country to strengthen cooperation in all aspects, such as: economy, education and training, healthcare, science and technology, culture, sports, etc. In this integration environment, workers have the opportunity to strengthen and consolidate the spirit of solidarity and mutual support between the working class of our country and the working class and progressive working people around the world. Through that, they have access to, learn and absorb the progressive cultural values of the times, especially advanced scientific knowledge, modern technology, and experience in organizing and managing labor production.

The process of globalization and international integration has created conditions for the transfer of new scientific and technological achievements in fields such as communication, television, printing, production of audio and video discs, production of audiovisual equipments; from there, this has modernized the material and technical facilities to serve the deployment of cultural and spiritual activities. This is also a process that opens up the exchange and introduction of many cultural products and services. This has facilitated workers to enjoy and experience new and good things, to broaden their knowledge, to be encouraged to

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develop their creativity. In other words, it meets the increasingly rich and diverse cultural and spiritual enjoyment needs of the people in general, and of workers in particular; it also contributes to limiting and gradually eliminating backward, conservative, and stagnant thoughts, perceptions, customs, and habits that still exist in a significant part of Vietnamese workers.

On negative aspects

In addition to its positive aspects, the globalization and international integration process also has its drawbacks, as it has distorted good spiritual and cultural values, undermined traditional morality and customs, and profoundly changed value systems. Today, we can easily see the negative aspects of globalization and international integration, such as: harmful ideological currents, deviations in ethical norms, miscellaneous lifestyles, fading ideals, reactionary cultural products... These anti-cultural phenomena are day by day permeating, negatively affecting the social spiritual and cultural life in general, and the spiritual and cultural life of the working class in particular. It can be said that never has Vietnamese culture faced so many challenges and clashes as it does now. The biggest potential risk in the process of globalization and international integration is the risk of losing national identity, losing oneself, and becoming a shadow of another nation. Another consequence of globalization and international integration is that our country has to face many plots and tricks of hostile forces to sabotage the achievements of the revolution; in which, the main targets are young people and workers, in order to make this part lose their orientation in awareness, ideology, and shake their will and faith in Marxism-Leninism, in the Party and the State. Therefore, if workers are not equipped with knowledge, strong will and unwavering faith, they will easily be swept into that whirlpool, weakening the role and strength of the vanguard class in the cause of national construction and defense.

CONCLUSION

The spiritual and cultural life, and the whole life of the Vietnamese working class in general, are strongly governed and influenced by the economic, political, and social conditions of the country, specifically: the cultural traditions of the nation, the leadership of the Party and the State, the process of industrialization and modernization of the country, and the process of globalization and international integration. Therefore, when building a spiritual and cultural life for the working class, it is necessary to pay attention to the synthesis of these factors. In which, promoting the positive aspects and limiting the negative aspects from these impacts will help the working class maximize their strength and become the vanguard force in leading the country to successfully build socialism.

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