

The impact of small-scale peasant culture in traditional Vietnamese society on the current prevention and fight against corruption and negativity

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Abstract: *In addition to the quintessential and good values in traditional Vietnamese society, many shortcomings and negatives significantly impact current life, including the prevention and fight against corruption and negativity. The study identifies the impacts of smallholder culture in traditional Vietnamese society on the current prevention and fight against corruption and negativity in Vietnam, which contributes to improving the effectiveness of this task in Vietnam today.*

Keywords: *Traditional Vietnamese society; traditional culture; small-scale peasant culture; prevention and combat of corruption and negativity; impact.*

1. Introduction

In traditional Vietnamese society, the fundamental economic foundation of Vietnamese people was wet rice agriculture, mainly in manual, small-scale, fragmented, and self-sufficient production. That economic foundation has strongly influenced Vietnamese culture, especially the formation of the Vietnamese lifestyle, psychology, customs, and practices. Vietnamese culture is expressed through people's awareness, emotional feelings, habits, behavior, and working style, which significantly impact the existence and development of Vietnamese society throughout the historical process.

Small-scale peasant culture in traditional Vietnamese society, regarded as a historical social phenomenon, reflects the agricultural society's small-scale production conditions in labor and production and the struggle with nature and culture for survival.

The micro-scale agriculture culture with the existence of village communities covers all areas of political and socio-economic life. Even in big cities, the culture of small-scale peasants still dominates. That surprised Western scholars studying Vietnam because "not only is each village an agricultural commune, but in large cities, when divided into wards, each ward is also

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a commune" (Phong, 2000). Today, Vietnam is promoting industrialization and modernization, aiming at building a socialist-oriented market economy in the context of international solid integration. Besides opportunities, there are also many risks and challenges. In that context, the "small-scale peasant culture" originating from traditional Vietnamese society also has intertwined impacts, affecting almost all aspects of social life, including the current struggle against corruption and negativity.

Identifying the impacts of small-scale peasant culture on the prevention and combat of corruption and negativity is particularly important to setting appropriate and effective guidelines and measures to limit negative impacts and, on that basis, contributing to improving the quality and effectiveness of this task in Vietnam today.

2. The impact of traditional culture on the prevention and fight against corruption and negativity

Culture is considered the spiritual foundation of society. Culture refers to reasonable values instead of bad habits and vices, including corrupt and harmful acts. Corruption or negativity is abusing one's position or power or knowingly violating the law to serve their interests. When good cultural values are deeply embedded in social life, they will significantly prevent bad habits and vices, including corruption and negativity. Traditional Vietnamese society has many good conventional cultural values, which, if adequately ignited and promoted, will foster good virtues and qualities in each Vietnamese person and diminish bad habits and vices, including corruption and negativity. Those outstanding quintessential values include patriotism, national pride, the will and aspiration to build a strong country, the tradition of studiousness, determination, perseverance, patience, and a diligent and saving lifestyle. The economic lifestyle

stabilizes the family and society's financial life in the country's challenging conditions, training a way of life that appreciates labor and combating lavish and wasteful lifestyles.

In addition, a lifestyle that appreciates gratitude, collectivity, and community, the spirit of solidarity, harmony, and mutual affection while not accepting irresponsibility will contribute to restraining and limiting the manifestations of insensitivity and unhealthy competition in the context of the current market economy, at the same time creating the power of unity to build and protect the Fatherland. Those good values will contribute to developing a pleasing personality, developing human qualities, and limiting bad habits and vices. This is also true with cadres and party members in the Party and State apparatus: those imbued with good traditional cultural values will always uphold the national interests, putting the interests of the Fatherland and the People first when facing temptations of power, wealth, and fame. Then, they will have a strong will not to harm those interests just because of mediocre material seduction.

Preventing and combating corruption and negativity is a fierce struggle between cultural values and counterculture in each individual. When the good traditional cultural values penetrate deeply into each cadre and party member, becoming each person's life motto and behavior, they will help them know the actual value of life, staying away from lavish habits of extravagance, honor, trumpet movement to maintain their revolutionary personality, honor, and dignity. At that time, their civic consciousness, political consciousness, and honor will win over their small and selfish individual, both helping them each to be "immune" to corrupt and negative acts and, at the same time, have the courage and responsibility in the fight against corruption and negativity.

3. The impact of small-scale peasant

culture on the current prevention and combat of corruption and negativity

Traditional Vietnamese culture was formed based on a wet-rice cultivation economy, mainly small-scale and fragmented agricultural production. The peasants formed a way of working arbitrarily, needed help organizing sources and a calculating mind in business and production, and paid little attention to strategic and long-term interests. Their work was mainly based on experience and immediate practical benefits. In addition, the peasants' mentality of private ownership, entrenched in their minds for generations and justified to some extent, turns into selfishness when it exists for a long time and is pushed to a specific limit.

In addition, the peasants wanted to avoid joining the outer world because their lives were closely associated with the village bamboo ramparts, the field, and their familiar house. It results in the psychology of asking for peace, being afraid of losing harmony and solidarity. Without restraint, this sentimentality will become a disregard for discipline and the law, easily compromising or ignoring wrong deeds. The negative side of community leads to locality, hanging up on for personal gains and group interests and, at the same time, leading to the mentality of relying on collectives and individuals while not daring to take responsibility. In a broader sense, such a psychology is a significant obstacle in today's fight against corruption and negativity in Vietnam.

The negative impacts of small-scale peasant culture in traditional Vietnamese society significantly affect Vietnam's socio-economic development in the current context, including those on the country's prevention and fight against corruption and negativity. Cadres, party members, civil servants, and public employees in Party agencies and the State apparatus have undergone training and fostering in political ideology, ethics, working

methods, etc. However, many still have heavy thoughts of small-scale peasant culture. This issue is reflected in awareness, thinking, lifestyle, and working style, significantly affecting the quality and efficiency of work and even giving rise to bureaucracy, corruption, and negativity.

Cadres and party members with small-scale peasant thinking, who often think and act on experience, are conservative and afraid of change and innovation. It is easy to recognize these cadres and party members because they usually take advantage of their positions and powers to make personal gains and group interests. In daily activities, they always avoid criticism and self-criticism, although they know their comrades' and colleagues' negative behaviors very well, for fear of affecting their interests. Particularly at work, these people are generally imbued with the thought of asking and giving or the interchange to satisfy each other, thereby giving rise to corruption and negativity.

One example is the case of MobiFone Telecommunications Corporation, which bought 95% of AVG audiovisual shares with 3 million USD being given illegally. Another is the case that occurred at Viet A Company: to win the bid to provide medical equipment and supplies, the head of the Company did not hesitate to spend billions of VND to bribe (Tuan, 2022). Still, another example is the case of "Rescue Flight": There were 25 defendants who took advantage of their assigned positions, powers, and tasks to receive bribes for a total of nearly 165 billion VND and cause a loss of more than 10 billion VND (Lam, 2023).

According to the Central Inspection Committee, in the period 2012 - 2022, the party committees and inspection committees at all levels implemented the discipline of 2,740 party organizations and more than 167,700 cadres and party members, of which 7,390 party members were disciplined due to corruption; disciplined 170 cadres under

central management, including four current and former Politburo members; 29 Central Committee members, former Central Committee members; and, 50 general-ranking officers in the armed forces. Notably, from the beginning of the 13th National Congress to the middle of 2023, 50 cadres under central management have been disciplined (more than four times higher than during the 11th National Congress and equal to nearly half of the handled senior cadres of the 12th National Congress), including eight current and former members of the VCP Central Committee, and 20 officers at general level (Diep, 2022).

In January 2024, the Central Inspection Committee met in Hanoi for the 35th session to decide the implementation of discipline for the Party Committee of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and some related party organizations and party members (Central Inspection Commission of the Communist Party of Vietnam, 2024). According to its conclusions, the corruption mentioned above and negativity cases all have the common characteristic of "violating the Party's principles." Compared to the negative side of the small-scale peasant culture, this violation is trivial and superficial in perception and thinking, arbitrary and corrupt in working practices. Furthermore, the fact that most cases of corruption, waste, and negativity in recent years have been discovered and denounced by public opinion and press agencies indicates that very few cases have been pointed out by party organizations and party members in their agencies. It also stems from the mentality of small-scale peasant culture mentioned above. At the same time, many cadres and party members do not dare to comment, criticize, and struggle with the shortcomings of others, especially those of their superiors, leading to the covering up of corrupt, hostile acts and other wrong deeds and vices.

In short, corruption and negativity in Vietnam originate culturally from the small-scale peasant culture in traditional Vietnamese society. Therefore, to improve the effectiveness of the fight against corruption and negativity in Vietnam today, it is necessary to pay special attention to discovering and preventing negative impacts from this culture as soon as possible.

4. Some solutions to overcome the impact of small-scale peasant culture in traditional Vietnamese society

Firstly, strengthening the education of cadres, party members, civil servants, and public employees on political ideology, ethics, and lifestyle.

The culture of small-scale peasants in traditional Vietnamese society has a considerable influence on the political ideology, morality, and lifestyle of cadres and party members, as well as on preventing and combatting corruption and negativity. Therefore, party committees at all levels, sectors, and sectors, including age, niches, and units, should emphasize this task. They should focus on communicating and educating Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's ideology, views, and guidelines of the Party; educating the political tasks of units and agencies by their prescribed functions and tasks; regularly updating and improving knowledge, professional qualifications and expertise for cadres, party members and officials, especially leaders and managers.

At the same time, it is essential to focus on reporting good people and good deeds, taking positive factors to repel negativity, criticizing and fighting against the manifestations of degradation of political ideology, and violating moral standards and lifestyles. In particular, it is also essential to educate cultural history traditions, exploiting and promoting the quintessence of traditional culture, making each cadre and party member imbued with

those values, especially with passionate patriotism, national self-reliance, solidarity, as well as the cohesion between individuals with the family and the community. In addition, individuals should develop good personalities such as compassion, diligence, creativity in labor, delicacy in conduct, and simplicity in life, especially having the will to be self-reliant, self-respect, and integrity.

Secondly, building a culture of diligence, frugality, and integrity for every agency, unit, cadre, party member, civil servant and public employee.

It is necessary to build organizations, agencies, units, and a contingent of clean, strong, and frugal cadres, party members, civil servants, and public employees in the face of the temptation of money and fame. Integrity is the condition, root, and foundation for building a clean and strong Party and political system. For the state administration, the culture of diligence, frugality, and integrity is crucial for improving the capacity and efficiency of leadership, management, administration, and national governance, creating a clean and healthy environment, contributing to repelling corruption, waste, negative behaviors, and, at the same time, overcoming and repelling the degradation of political ideology, morality, and lifestyle among a part of cadres and party members.

In the current context, when Vietnam still faces various difficulties and challenges, each cadre, party member, civil servant, and public employee should uphold the spirit of diligence and thrift, avoiding waste and luxury. This will be necessary to take advantage of the opportunity and help the country develop quickly and sustainably.

Whether or not the culture of diligence, frugality, and integrity is effectively implemented depends on each cadre and party member's sense of responsibility, voluntariness, and self-discipline. In the context of the socialist-oriented market

economy and international integration, in addition to favorable factors, positive thoughts, and beautiful lifestyles are difficulties and challenges, material temptations, prestige, wrong ideas, reactionary plots, etc., strongly affecting cadres and party members. Therefore, each cadre and party member, especially the leaders, must be a pioneer and exemplary in integrity; need to be economical and consistent between words and actions; have a spirit of daring to think, to do, and to innovate; and be ready to take responsibility; know how to protect the right, the beautiful, the progressive and the civilized; and at the same time be exemplary in preventing and repelling the bad, the evil, and corrupt and harmful acts. In addition, it is necessary to constantly study and cultivate revolutionary ethics, have ideals and aspirations to contribute, have willpower and energy, maintain apparent honor and personality, and have a standard lifestyle in line with the development trend of the community.

Thirdly, building Vietnamese culture and people according to new-era standards.

It is necessary to focus on building an advanced cultural environment imbued with national identity and new cultural standards to meet the requirements of the country's period of accelerating industrialization, modernization, integration, and development. New cultural values should be developed based on preserving and promoting the good traditional cultural values of Vietnamese culture, with relevant attention paid to building a culture of public service and culture in national governance, culture in economy, business culture, corporate and entrepreneur culture, with standards of honesty and respecting for credibility, honor, and responsibility.

It is necessary to develop Vietnamese people in the new era rich in patriotism, pride, and national self-respect; rich in wisdom, rich in spiritual life, morally pure, healthy, ethical,

lifestyle, civilized lifestyle, frugal, honest, benevolent, law-abiding law, taking care of community building; and, know how to think independently, take responsibility, have a spirit of cooperation, and work effectively. Vietnamese people in the new era should have innovative, dynamic, creative thinking, not be afraid of difficulties and hardships, have the will to rise, and be determined to bring the country out of poverty and backwardness.

It is paramount to develop the public service culture and ethics for cadres and party members, especially those with positions and powers - those easily vulnerable to corrupt acts. This is an essential issue in the roadmap towards a modern administration, professionalism, integrity, and serving the people in Vietnam, and at the same time, making a necessary contribution to limiting the adverse effects of small-scale peasant culture on the prevention and combat of corruption and negativity today.

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