

RESEARCH ON VIETNAMESE TRADITIONAL MILITARY CULTURAL VALUES

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Abstract

The traditional military cultural values of Viet Nam is the combination of material and spiritual creativeness that contain truth, goodness, beauty and reflect and express the noble social values of Vietnamese people in the field of military. These values have been passed and developed from generation to generation and have great significance for the development of society and people nowadays. They include patriotism, humanism and unique military art. Currently, it is necessary to actively do propaganda, education, well organizing practical activities and emulation movements, and creating a favorable cultural environment to promote cultural military values in the new situation.

Keywords: *military cultural values, traditional, Viet Nam*

1. Introduction

Over thousands of years of history, the Vietnamese people have created highly unique material and spiritual values that contain truth, goodness and beauty, reflecting and expressing the noble social values of Vietnamese people in gaining and protecting national independence. These values have continuously been passed, transferred, fostered and developed from generation to generation, becoming a particularly important element in the national culture - traditional military cultural values. Traditional military cultural values play a great role in the development of people and society in Viet Nam in general, and soldiers in the People's Army of Viet Nam in particular. However, such role naturally exists only in potential form; in order to create power in practice, it is necessary to have a process of promoting in reality, with the presence of the subjects and elements of military life. Clarification of the concept, arising, development and content of traditional military cultural values is an important condition for proposing solutions to promote them in practice.

Up to now, many scientists have approached and studied the traditional military culture from many different dimensions. Due to the limited scope of research, this article only focuses on considering traditional military culture of Viet Nam in terms of system - value, that means considering it as the core and basic values of Vietnamese military life and activities throughout the history of country building and protecting.

2. Method

This study applies the general methodology of dialectical materialism and historical

materialism, namely the views of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, and the policies of the Communist Party of Viet Nam on culture and culture development, human and human development, war and the army. Concurrently, the works also use specific methods such as: analysis and synthesis, history and logic and comparison methods.

Analysis and synthesis method: Being used to analyze documents on related issues, such as: scientific topics, scientific articles, dissertations, practical evaluation reports...etc. to draw information basic information about military operations and life. Systemize such information to identify the article's main points.

History and logic method: By researching the history of Vietnamese military ideology, history of major events in the process of fighting to gain and protect national independence to logicise, finding out the practical arising and development basis of traditional military culture as well as its basic and natural issues.

Comparison method: Being used to compare traditional military culture with modern ones and anti-values. Therefore, we can see the richness, diversity and new manifestations of traditional military cultural values as well as the need to do research of methodological issues in order to promote them in the new situation.

3. Results

3.1. The basic issues of traditional military cultural values

Cultural values is a concept conceived by researchers in many different ways, such as: considering it "the most noble, beautiful; the smell, taste, scent of life" [1, p.133], "the cultural achievements that promote the rise of history and serve the interests and needs of the people and the country" [7, p.136], or "the sum of human achievements, demonstrating the development of the human nature according to the criteria of truth, goodness and beauty of each individual and community in creative activities with social significance" [8, p.17]...ect. In brief, *cultural value is the combination of material and spiritual creativeness that contain truth, goodness, beauty and have great significance to promote human and social development.*

In fact, *culture* and *cultural values* are "couple" terms, which are unified in many ways, even a lot of researchers identify them when they think that "the whole culture is one kind of values, culture only contains values, and culture is a part of values" [6, p.40]. However, to draw a relative distinction when culture is mentioned, people often see it from an aspect of life, where there are not only values - which exist as the stable foundation, but also vivid and diverse expressions. When it comes to cultural values, it is to emphasize the core - the last one remaining when we filter out all external phenomena of cultural life, which have great ability to affect the depth of all people's thought and consciousness. Naturally, the real level, scope and effectiveness also depend on many factors in different periods of the history.

Rejecting some fallacies, which always consider the military as a non-cultural field, we all affirm the existing of military cultural values in the history of military operations of all

countries, nationalities, and political - social regimes. Although the military is an area associated with human losses, violence and destruction, wherever the military operations are for the sake of righteousness and protection of human dignity, peace and happiness of the community, which contains the truth, goodness and beauty, they by themselves generate cultural values - military cultural values. Military cultural values can be divided in many different ways, existing in two basic forms: physical forms such as military buildings, combat plans, accommodation arrangements, and other military activities etc; intangible forms such as ideals, spirits, political characters, beliefs, traditions, manners, military lifestyle, etc.

According to Sino-Vietnamese meaning, “Tradition” means the righteous transfer and continuation from generation to generation. When mentioning about the power of tradition, K. Marx had a classic saying: “The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living” [2, p.145]. Thus, according to the logic of conceptual development, it can be conceived: *The traditional military cultural values of Viet Nam is the synthesis of material and spiritual creativeness that contain truth, goodness, beauty and reflecting and demonstrating the noble social values of Vietnamese people in the military, which has been handed down, transferred, inherited and developed from generation to generation, and have great significance for the development of current society and people.*

The traditional military cultural values are always associated with the history of building and protecting the country of Vietnamese people, the social existing with natural and geographic conditions, the ways to organize the state and fight against aggressors throughout the history. The military struggle accounts for a large part of the national history, so the traditional military cultural values are always associated with the history of building and protecting the nation. From the era of the Hung Kings, although the class division was not severe, the demands on water control and against foreign invaders prompted the early birth of the Vietnamese state; along with that, military organizations and activities were also built and carried out in many different forms to protect the community, the nation and the territorial sovereignty. Right from the beginning of history, the core values of the Vietnamese traditional military culture had been identified, laying the foundation for our nation's continuous existence and development in the next centuries. It is more than 10 centuries of fighting against assimilation to preserve the spirit of the nation; is a brilliant Dai Viet civilization; and being continued until the era of Ho Chi Minh when Viet Nam, regardless of being poor and backward, had a great influence on many countries and people in the world with great victories in the national struggle to gain independence and freedom.

Viet Nam’s geopolitical position is highly valuable, located in the region connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, between two major civilization centers - China and India. From a very early age, Viet Nam has become the meeting point of those civilizations. With coastal terrain, located in the tropical monsoon area, this land is rich and fertile but harsh and fierce with a lot of unexpected disasters. It is such geographical characteristics and natural conditions that have fostered Vietnamese people’s passionate patriotism, humanism,

solidarity and love throughout the history of fighting against two frequent threats: foreign invaders and natural disasters. The natural conditions have also contributed significantly to the formation of special features in the Vietnamese military arts such as "use small force to win big enemy", "use small forces to fight against big enemy", etc. From a very early age, the Vietnamese knew how to exploit the terrain in military activities, relying on the dangerous terrain to fight against the forces of invaders. The victory in several wars against foreign invaders was partly due to the fact that Vietnamese people took the most advantage of terrain conditions.

In the history, foreign powers had repeatedly invaded Viet Nam, forcing generation by generation of Vietnamese to constantly stand up to fight against them in order to maintain human rights and national sovereignty. In this process, the values of traditional military culture of Viet Nam have been continuously fostered and deepened. Right from the beginning of the nation's construction, the inhabitants of Van Lang - Au Lac had carried out heroic struggles against were brave and conspiring to fight against the enemies of An, Man, Red Nose, Qin and Trieu dynasty. After An Duong Vuong's defeat by Trieu Da, Viet Nam had been controlled by Chinese feudal dynasties for more than 1,000 years. However, during such period, the Vietnamese continuously rose up in arms against these oppressive rulers.

After the victory of Bach Dang battle in 938, Viet Nam built up an independent feudal state. However, during the next 10 centuries, we could not live in peace due to several foreign invaders. Vietnamese army and people continued to rise up to carry out resistance and insurrection such as: Two times of resistance against the Song, three times of resistance against the Yuan, the resistance against the Ming, the Lam Son uprising, the resistance against the Siam and the Qing, etc. In the modern time, the values of traditional military culture once again shined and developed to the peak, making an important contribution to the nation's victory over the invading French and American professional armies.

3.2. Values of basic traditional military culture of Viet Nam

The basic contents of the values of Vietnamese traditional military culture have been affirmed and clarified by many researchers; therefore, this article mainly inherits and systematizes them into 3 issues:

Firstly, nationalism

Patriotism is a universal value in human life, but for the Vietnamese people, patriotism has been developed and upgraded to a level of nationalism, covering the whole consciousness, directing all activities in every aspect of every human being, especially in the military field. In other words, Vietnam's military is not a purely military foundation, but all aspects of military organization and activities are imbued with nationalism, using nationalism as the foundation to build, maintain and promote the military strength to protect the Fatherland. Nationalism becomes a core value of Vietnamese traditional military culture, the deepest source of all spiritual qualities and creative potential in every human being, so

that when being aroused, it creates extremely strong military power, "passing through all dangers and difficulties and engulfed all gangs of traitors and invaders" [5, p.38], keeping the country and people everlasting.

One of the core contents of Vietnamese nationalism is the spirit of fighting against foreign invaders, protecting independence, freedom and national survival. In the world, it is rare to find out any people who had to go through a long and arduous process of fighting against aggression like the Vietnamese people (throughout history, our people have been dominated by foreign powers for nearly 12 centuries). However, it seems that the more difficult the situation is, the more powerful Vietnamese people's nationalism is showed. When the country was in peace with good kings, people from all walks of life were gathered under the banner of great cause and ruling classes to consolidate national defense and build the country. When the country was invaded, our people continuously stood up to an armed uprising and were ready to sacrifice to the last one to regain national independence. When the feudal class abandoned the leadership role and the country stood on the brink of many disasters, the people rose to undertake the national mission to fight against foreign invaders and eliminate the feudal reactionaries. In the new era, with the light of the Marxism – Leninism, Vietnamese patriotism has highly developed to the target of national independence being associated with socialism.

The nationalism in the military field not only has a strong attachment to the environment, living situation, family and homeland, but also a deep sense of independence, self-control and sovereignty, which are showed with the acts to sacrifice themselves for a great cause, dare to sacrifice personal benefits for the benefit of the community and the country. All Vietnamese people love peace, but it is not a kind of peace in bondage. Therefore, whenever the enemy invades, the Vietnamese people, from young to old, are all ready to go to the battle and determined to drive them out to regain the independence and freedom. During the thousand-year history of the nation's struggle to build and protect the nation, exemplary examples of noble sacrifice for great cause always appear: They are ready to sacrifice for the independence and freedom for the nation as well as peace and happiness for the people.

From nationalism, the traditional resilience and undauntedness in struggle was formed in the cause of fighting against foreign aggression. Although the vast majority of invaders were the most powerful empires in the East, even in the world, the Vietnamese people have never trembled with fear and never surrendered. With the spirit of "being ready to die for the motherland", "better die in honor than live in disgrace", "better die in Viet Nam than live as an emperor in China", the Vietnamese people always show their tenacious will to fight against the enemy on all fronts and battlefields with any kind of forces and weapons. The most precious thing of every human being is life, but for the country, Vietnamese people are ready to dedicate their lives when necessary to the cause of national liberation.

Nationalism also becomes the common denominator to realize national unity and consistent will in the army and all of Vietnamese people, creating great military power against

enemies. In the army of Vietnamese feudal dynasties, the tradition of "generals and soldiers like father and son in a family with singleness of mind" was built and passed from generation to generation. Standing together like flesh and blood relation is a precious tradition, stemming from the reason that all members of the army share their patriotism and deep hatredness for the enemy. On a larger scale, the national unity is also built on such foundation. In case of foreign invaders, all internal conflicts and discords would be pigeon-holed, highly expressing the spirit of community solidarity, and creating great strength. History has also proven whenever the leading forces of the country are capable of gathering and uniting all classes of people under the banner of nationalism, we could gain victory, no matter how strong the enemy is; on the contrary, if the leading forces fail to do such, failure is inevitable.

Secondly, the military humanity

Military is inherently anti-humane activity, especially in war - where the warring parties always find ways to decimate, destroy, and damage the opponents' life and materials. However, the humanistic spirit is imbued with the Vietnamese military because of the righteousness and self-defense in military organization and activities. In Viet Nam, the military force is built entirely not to dominate, invade and threaten other countries and people, but to defend ourselves, being ready to defeat any invaders and protect the interests of the state and the peaceful life of the people. The Vietnamese people always want peace and find every possible way to prevent war, but the enemy never gives up on their intentions to annex the country. Whenever the Fatherland is invaded, the army forces and the entire nation are resort to stand up for self-defense. At such times, humanity is like a spiritual fulcrum, an ideal that covers the entire life of the Vietnamese community - people, with the fundamental content of human morality, motivating each person to perform their sacred duties and lofty duties: protect the Fatherland, fight against the assimilation, oppression, exploitation and enslavement of great countries, and protect human dignity. It can be said that the goal of protecting people, defending the righteousness and justice is the highest level of perfection and humanity of the Vietnamese military. The nation's great thinkers and generals always have strong and clear declaration on such humanistic goals before, during and after each war, affirming: "using military is a cause of humanity to save the people and the country" [4, p.286], "we go into the battle to save all the people" [3, p.320].

Viet Nam's military humanity is clearly shown through minimizing the death and loss of the people and soldiers. The Vietnamese military always affirms its will to fight and win but not at all costs. We always try to find out the best and most effective way to fight in order to minimize the loss. Accordingly, the Vietnamese military always implements "quality is better than quantity", "use small forces to fight against big enemy", well combining the factors of forces - position - time - strategy to create general power against the enemy, making the enemy weaken, bogged down and led to failure.

Viet Nam's military humanity is also evident in its tolerant and humane policies in dealing with the invaders. In the history, our people had suffered the oppression of the

northern feudal dynasties for more than a thousand of years, and a lot of enormous consequences caused by the brutal policies of such invaders. However, with the policy of using great cause to win cruelty and humanity to replace violence, Vietnamese people and military forces are always tolerant and humane towards our own enemies. The Vietnamese military does not aim to completely destroy the enemy, but the highest goal is to weaken the enemy's will to fight, and then driving them out of the country. The Vietnamese people always seek to awaken the invaders' native good judgment, making them being aware of the inhumanity and meaninglessness of their actions which are contrary to the God's will and people; therefore, their failure is inevitable and call them to withdraw their troops in order to avoid loss and death. Even when the enemy has been defeated, we still give them the chance to withdraw in peace. Additionally, the prisoners of war are also treated in a humane way. Above show that the Vietnamese military not only tries to limit the loss of Vietnamese lives, but also always shows the lofty humanity towards their own enemies.

Thirdly, unique military art

Military art is a creative product of Vietnamese people in preparing and carrying out the fight against foreign invaders during the process of building and protecting the country. In addition to its similarities with other countries, Viet Nam's military art has its own characteristics, expressing the independent and creative thinking of Vietnamese people. To Viet Nam, even facing with strong enemies, building up elite forces is not the only target but they include the truth, goodness and beauty. Moreover, in the wars against foreign aggression, the army was not alone, not the only force, but always the core for the entire population to fight the enemy. Therefore, Viet Nam's military art from its birth to the present has always contained unique features with being imbued with the truth, goodness and beauty, becoming a cultural and traditional military value. Depending on the research direction, there are many different approaches, but as a value of traditional military culture, the unique military art of Viet Nam is considered with two main slices, including the art of organizing war preparation and waging war.

The art of organizing war preparation in traditional Vietnamese military culture has always been thoroughly prepared with the spirit of early and remote preparation, taking advantage of peaceful times to gather, build armed forces, and prepare necessary sources, consolidating all aspects being ready for war. It is clearly demonstrated with a series of strategies used by many feudal dynasties such as, "For the people"; "Sending the troops to work as farmers in a period of time when the country is in peace", "every common person could become soldiers in the war time", etc. The art of organizing war preparation with the above strategies has brought into full play the power of righteousness, built the trust in victory of the entire nation and aroused a sense of national unity for the independence. All-people war can produce desired effects be effective only when being based on appropriate methods of force organization, mobilizing the power of the entire society. Nowadays, the tradition has been developed to the strategy of all-people defense with the highest purpose

of preventing any kind of war, but at the same time, being ready to win all wars of aggression, firmly defending the Fatherland – the socialist republic of Viet Nam.

Vietnamese military art is also very prominent in waging war, especially the unique ways of fighting. Viet Nam's ways of fighting contain all common characteristics and comply with the harsh rule of war - "The strong will win, the weak will lose". However, grasping the idea of proactive attack, promoting the great and endless potentials of the entire army and people, the Vietnamese military has created a lot of effective, flexible strategies and plans in multiforms, causing all invaders failed, no matter how big or violent they are. In feudal times, the strategies of "deserted country", "night attack", "surprise attack", "diversion", etc. have become the fear for the Chinese invaders. In the time of Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese military art had developed from the guerrilla warfare to the regular troop operations (raid, ambush, attack an entrenched fortification to decimate its reinforcements, offensive movement, air landing attack, etc.) to the combined operations among military regions or army corps, combining the general uprising and offensive of the masses.

3.3. Promoting the values of Vietnamese traditional military culture in the current situation

Currently, in the world, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has strongly and comprehensively been impacting on all fields and all aspects of social life, creating many important premises for people to develop comprehensively and become stronger. The achievements of more than 30 years of renovation have made the material life of the people, cadres and soldiers constantly improved. The army continues to receive the attention and care of the Party and State leaders. These are the basic advantages that affect the promotion of the traditional military cultural values today. However, addition to these advantages, many difficulties and challenges appear, affecting and dominating the promotion. Along with achievements in material development, the society is also facing many problems such as degradation of moral, culture, lifestyle, human personality; social evils; a part of young people "empty" of historical awareness, turning their backs on traditional values, the trend of "Western lifestyle" is taking the throne, etc. Additionally, the non-stop antigovernment in many aspects of the hostile forces has been affecting the psychology, thoughts and feelings of the masses, especially the young, creating the risk of "self-evolving", "self-transforming".

The national traditional military cultural values have proved their great role and impact on the development of Vietnamese society and people in history. In the current situation, the traditional cultural and military values not only continue to assert their role, but also show the continuous increase in their effectiveness. A value system of humanity, human love, human character and solid cultural origin in the nation's millennial military tradition are the solid spiritual support for the Vietnamese people to overcome all difficulties and challenges, creating a resilient and strong country of Viet Nam.

Today, promoting the traditional military cultural values requires many solutions, with the synchronous participation of all levels, branches and forces. First of all, it is

necessary to focus on carrying out effective propaganda and education of traditional military cultural values in order to raise the awareness and responsibility of all classes of the people, especially the young. It is necessary to continue to have in-depth studies to continue to systematize, summarize, affirm, clarify and enrich the values of the national traditional military culture. Actively innovating methods of propaganda and education, focusing on new, visual methods, promoting the application of new technologies to improve the quality and efficiency of these activities. Paying special attention to traditional history education and propaganda for pupils, students, teenagers and children through history learning activities, historical monument visiting, history discussion, etc. Through the education of traditional military cultural values, to focus on building political ideologies, ideals, goals, lifestyles and develop comprehensive personality for them. To effectively carry out the above work, it is necessary to promote the creative and proactive role of youth union organizations, socio-political organizations, and at the same time, closely link school education with home training.

Well organizing practical activities, emulation movements in the whole society. The national traditional military cultural values are not only limited to the Army, but they always exist through the practices of living, fighting, labor and learning of all people. Therefore, for these values constantly spreading, promoting their effects and roles, it is necessary to put it into all practical activities, promoting the competitive spirit in the whole society. Therefore, the essential issue is to ensure "ideological value" in organizing all activities. Any organized activity should always aim at the highest goal: the direction of people towards patriotism, humanism and other noble values. Fighting against any thoughts and expressions of selfishness, or trivial material goals in practical activities. In order to gain the target, it is highly necessary to have the close and comprehensive leadership and direction of the party committees at all levels as well as the drastic and creative participation of the contingent of managers and commanders at all levels.

Building a cultural environment honoring the traditional military cultural values of the nation. First of all, it is necessary to study, refine, select and standardize the cultural value system of the current Vietnamese people, including a suitable integration of traditional military cultural values. In other words, building the current Vietnamese cultural and human value system needs firmly sticking to the traditional military cultural value systems, as well as modernizing them to adapt to the new situation. Improving the efficiency of cultural institutions in society; in which, besides promoting the cultural organizations and full-time staff, each party organization, government organization and leader also acts as a cultural institution, even a powerful and embracing one. Properly investing in the cultural activity organization as well as embellishing and preserving historical relics, works, and military cultural symbols, at the same time, promoting its effectiveness in political and ideological education and satisfying cultural needs for all classes of people. Building a cultural environment imbued with traditional military cultural values will create a very effective "cultural filter", preventing the intrusion of anti-values, anti-culture, and creating favorable

conditions for the development of Vietnamese personality.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the traditional military cultural values of the Vietnamese people are a specific part of the national culture, arising and developing during the nation's struggle to build and protect the country, associated with military organizations and operations. The basic traditional military cultural values of the nation include: patriotism, humanism and unique military artistic values. In the face of rapid, profound and comprehensive changes in social life, the work of building the Army, protecting the Fatherland, as well as fighting against the hostile forces should strongly rely on the traditional military cultural values of the nation to well perform the functions and tasks of the Army and develop the personality of the revolutionary soldiers. It is necessary to actively conduct education, propaganda, well organize military practice activities and emulation movements, and effectively do the work of building a cultural environment in order to strongly promote the role and strength of national traditional military cultural values in the current situation./.

5. References

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