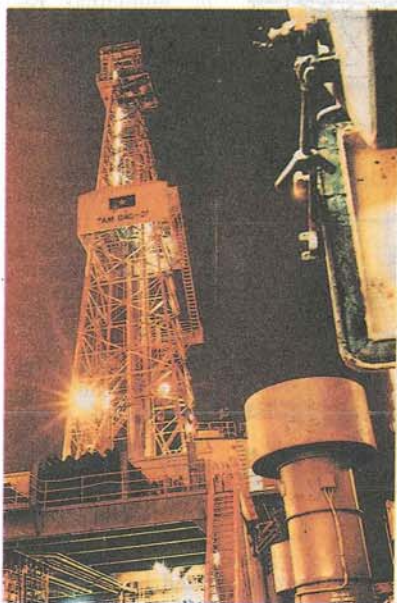


ON THE IMPACT OF CULTURE AND TRADITION ON TECHNOLOGY ABSORPTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM TODAY

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The intellectual standard of the people is a measure of the ability to absorb and diffuse the knowledge of the humankind, while the national culture is sort of filter that allows the best and useful knowledge only to pass into the life and activities of a people. UNESCO defined culture as something that covers all activities of a human being. Culture is synonymous with creation and includes everything that discriminates one people from another with all their products, habits, customs, religions, ways of life and quality of life.

Each culture bears distinctive characteristics of a people and reflects development stages of the people in the human history. A closed

and original culture with no external influences is similar to a field degraded by prolonged drought. A measure of the creativity of a culture is the ability to absorb external influences creatively. Non-cultural factors will damage good traditions. Civilized peoples will connect the culture with the development, remove false barriers and integrate into the world community. Technology makes the society richer while culture makes the society civilized.

At present, many "dragons" have made their appearance in Asia and the Press have mentioned a model of Asian economic development within the Confucian tradition. Japan is a good example of how the Western and Eastern cultures are connected with the famous motto from the Meiji period: "Japanese tradition, Western knowledge and technology". Later on, other countries such as Taiwan, Hongkong, South Korea, Singapore developed this philosophy into methods of controlling the economy, absorbing the technology and managing the social development, and made monumental achievements which surprised the world. The Press and Western scholarly circle have spent a lot of time and energy on studying the art of combining Western and Eastern cultures.

The American stress individualism and open society, so in doing business they are active, creative and ardent, while the Japanese respect community spirit and group activity. Workers in Japan are encouraged to take part in business management and to be attached to their firms.

Generally, the Japanese economy has gained an advantage over the American one. But in fact, there are both strong and weak points in each model, the problem is to extract the best things from these two cultures.

Vietnam has a 4000-year culture and has been influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Western civi-

lization for centuries, that is, Vietnam has been a meeting place for Eastern cultures and Western technology which is favorable for socio-economic development. Moreover, Vietnam is in Asia which is considered as the fastest developing zone in the world and the world's economic center in the twenty-first century.

In order to integrate (without being assimilated) into the world economic system and absorb new technology, Vietnam has to find out its own model of economic development. For the time being, we should pay attention to the following matters:

1. The Vietnamese people are laborious, studious and sensitive to novelty. This tradition should be fostered and developed into the ability to absorb and diffuse foreign technological knowledge with a view to industrializing the economy.

2. Our people have a peace-loving tradition, a sense of responsibility and community spirit which could be turned into a favorable basis for diffusion of knowledge and skills, and technical innovations or inventions.

3. Our people have a habit of practising economy. This habit comes from the low living conditions and the sense of responsibility towards one's family and future generations. This tradition causes a considerable sum of dead money to come into being. If the Government takes appropriate measures to encourage investment this source of capital can contribute remarkably to the industrialization process.

Besides active effects, the national traditions however also produce negative effects on technological and economic development:

- Because of peace-loving tradition, the Vietnamese people are reluctant to fight against wrongdoings or exploit nature for human being's interests.

- The Vietnam people lack ambition to control nature and develop technical skill or new technology. Their way of thinking is more appropriate to literary and artistic creation than to scientific study.

In short, we can't deny the fact that our people have long lasting cultural traditions. Our people have struggle incessantly against nature and enemies to survive and develop. In the history of struggle, many industries and crafts have been developed. If we make the best use of our traditions, Vietnam will become a phenomenon in the next century. In the "flying geese" formation of Asian developed economies, we believe that Vietnam will be present ■