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The Value of Village Convention in Educating Traditions of Culture, Morality and Lifestyle for Vietnamese People in the Feudal Period

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Abstract--Village convention is a code of conduct that is considered a model, which is voluntarily agreed, drafted, promulgated by the traditional Vietnamese rural communities, and takes effect within a residential area, usually a village or a commune, used as a measure of dignity, personality and adjustment of social relations in the life, production and labor of the communities. In the process of existence and development, the village convention has experienced many ups and downs in history and has been handed down by the Vietnamese communities for many generations. The article summarizes the process of formation, basic content and value of village convention in the education of traditions of culture, morality and lifestyle for Vietnamese people in the feudal period and makes recommendations for inherit and promote those values in Vietnamese society today.

Keywords--lifestyle, Vietnam/ Vietnamese, morality, tradition, value, village convention.

Introduction

Village convention is a unique legal and cultural product of the rural communities in Vietnam. From time immemorial, Vietnamese rural communities have always been aware of the relationship between awareness and action and codes of conduct in life. In order to survive and develop together, it is necessary for the communities to have consensus, synergy and clear codes of conduct. Therefore, the birth of village convention with mandatory codes of conduct for rural communities is a proof of a highly organized society. The village convention, after the process of formation, existence and development with many different names such as conventions, village customs, village regulations, village rules, customs, charters, etc., was used as a standard measure of social relationships, to protect fine customs and traditions, keep security and order in communities against threats from the outside, etc by village residents. This article outlines some basic

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contents in compiling traditional village conventions in Vietnam and its values in educating traditions of culture and good lifestyle for Vietnamese people today.

Research Content

Overview of village convention in traditional Vietnamese society Formation of village convention

In traditional Vietnamese rural life, farmers' lives were closely linked with many close social relationships such as cousins, neighbors, etc. They were soon aware of the need to have clear, mandatory rules of conduct to sustainably maintain relationships in the communities in order to unite communities in an area. Therefore, the birth of village conventions and rules is proof of an organized society. Many research works agree that village conventions and rules are the products of villages and associated with the development of the Vietnamese villages. In some of the first researches on village convention, researchers believe that, in the last dynasties of the late Tran Dynasty (14th century), there were necessary and sufficient conditions for the birth of written village rules (Village convention) (Malarney, 2020). However, there is currently no document kept this time (Alm et al., 1999; Schuit et al., 2002).

The Complete Annals of Dai Viet is the earliest book mentioning the issue of "convention", in which it records that under the Tran Nghe Tong dynasty, around December 1370, the Confucian Le Quat made an epitaph at Chieu Khuc pagoda in Bai hamlet, Bac Giang, with the following passage: "Buddhism use fortune to touch people's hearts, how can people believe so deeply! From king to people, whenever they give alms to the Buddhism affairs, even if they run out of money, they will not regret it. If today such alms are deposited in pagodas, the heart is as happy as grasping conventions to get the next day's retribution. Therefore, from imperial city to alleys, everyone always imperial city without any command, always strictly implemented without any pledge". The meaning of the epitaph by the Confucian Le Quat refers to the deep state of mind and belief of the people who follow Buddhism and compares that state of mind and belief with the "convention" as a natural in the orientation of behaviors. However, documents on papers related to the issue of village conventions and rules could no longer be preserved with time, possibly because the Ming invaders implemented the policy of destroying all heritages of Dai Viet culture, thus, a large number of books and documents in Chinese, including original village conventions, were confiscated to China. Documents and epitaphs that could not be taken were destroyed in 1407 and 1419 (Malarney, 2020).

Researcher Tran Thanh Tam, in the article Some recently found handwriting documents about some uprisings in Nghe Tinh mountainous area gave a document that is considered the beginning of convention, titled "Private Covenant" of Tri Le commune, Thanh Chuong district (Nghe An province) established on the 7th of March, the third year of Binh Dinh (April 19, 1420) (Tran, 1984). The content of the Private Covenant mentions that King Le Loi visited Tri Le commune from Tra Lan, officials and people of the commune made a "covenant" committing that all sacrifices, behavior, and clothing must be complied with the State's rules and if anyone acts voluntarily and behaves

according to the barbarian custom, behaves carelessly, such person must be severely punished (Dinh, 2019). Based on the edict issued by King Le Thanh Tong in the fifth year of Quang Thuan (Year of the Monkey, 1464) in the book “The good political affairs of Hong Duc period”, researchers believe that village convention was born in the second half of the 15th century. Some epitaphs with the contents like village convention were established in the middle of the the Early Le dynasty (1428-1527), such as the Epitaph at Tran Tan temple, Phuc Tho commune, Luong Tai district, Bac Ninh province, which was established in the 18th of Hong Duc (Dinh Mui, Year of the Goat, 1487) (Dinh, 2019).

One of the ancient village convention compiled and applied is the Covenant of the Confucian Learners Association of Quynh Doi village, which began to be compiled during the Le Dynasty, in the third year of the Vinh Tho name (1660) with 48 articles and 28 times of amendments and supplements for completion. Another version born in this period is the village convention of Mo Trach village in Hai Duong with the name Mo Trach Village regulation, which was published in 1665 with 30 articles, then continued to be supplemented for 16 times and supplemented for the last version with 82 articles in 1797 (Malarney, 2020). Thus, together with the content recorded in the Complete Annals of Dai Viet related to convention, it was possible to prove that village conventions were formed and issued from the end of the Tran dynasty, to the Ho Dynasty (the end of the 14th century), to the Le Dynasty (the beginning of the 15th century) and had a long development process in the history of Vietnam. The village conventions and rules are regularly revised and supplemented in accordance with the changes arising in life. However, the drafting of village conventions was “broken” because the Ming invaders imposed harsh policies on the Vietnamese countryside to serve their plot to assimilate culture and dominate in our country for a long term (Nguyen, 2004).

Force to compile and censor village conventions

In each different period, village conventions and customs had different names such as: village convention (village convention of Bat Thai village, Khe Thuong canton, Bat Bat district, Son Tay province), customs (customs of Yen Mo Thuong commune, Yen Mo canton, Yen Mo district, Ninh Binh province), village customs (village customs of Ngoc Ha village, Hanoi), village agreement (village agreement of Quynh Doi), village regulations (village regulations of Hoa Cau), Village rules (Mo Trach Village rules), Community compacts (Community compacts of Phu Xa Doai commune, Phu Xa canton, Kim Anh district, Phuc Yen Province), etc., however, village conventions are the name used most of all (Le, 2020). Village conventions were compiled to become standards for assessing the quality and personality, adjusting social relationships in life, production, and determining rights, responsibilities and obligations of each individual in protecting the security and safety of the village community. The contents of the village conventions reflect the unique characteristics of each village but still ensure the common features of the nation and are not contrary to the law. The village conventions issued to apply to life were approved by the current government. In the Introduction of Nghi Tam village rules (Tay Ho district), it was clearly stated: “Rules of a village is like the law of a country”. The village convention of An Hoa (An Ha canton, Hoan Long district, Ha Dong province) affirms: “Each village has rules, like each country has

own laws”. The village custom and charter of Tuong Mai village (Thinh Liet canton, Thanh Tri district, Ha Dong province), it is written that: “A large village is like a country, a small village is like an association. In order to govern a country, a village, an association in an orderly and fair manner, a country must have a law system of its own country, an association must have a charter of its own association, why doesn’t a village have a village rules?” Therefore, the people who drafted village conventions must be qualified, virtuous or they must have dignitaries and authorities in villages (Okumura et al., 2002; Banomyong et al., 2015). In The good political affairs of Hong Duc period,, it records the edict of King Le Thanh Tong, which stipulates: Villages with strange customs can make written promise, appoint virtuous and duly Confucians to draft a village convention. After being drafted, it must be approved or canceled by the supervisory authority. When apply it, anyone who does not obey the above will be punished (Nguyen, 2004).

Under the feudal dynasties with absolute monarchy, Confucianism was the main content and means of education, so Confucians were the first subjects to participate in drafting village conventions to ensure their contents can be applied to real life. Village conventions drafted by people with a degree of Confucianism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries used a parallel constructions style, with coherent, simple and easily accessible style to readers and listeners (Cattell & Beyondism, 1972; Crockett, 2013). For example: In the introduction of the Mo Trach village convention (now in Tan Hong commune, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province) compiled in the year of the Snake, under the name Canh Tri (1665): “It’s reported that the country wants to control the peace according to laws, it must set up all disciplines; Villages want to grasp good-natured practice, they needs to make all conventions clear. These format must be unified, the core terms must be clear. Provisions will be stated clearly below” (Chan, 1984). In the introduction of the Phu Coc village convention (now in Ha Hoi commune, Thuong Tin district, Hanoi city) compiled in the year of the Buffalo, under the name of Chinh Hoa (1697): “As we known, the country has a hundred laws to make political affairs right; Villagers use conventions to help customs to be good-natured. The origin of the country is people. In order to gain harmony, mutual affection, fine customs, harmonic humanity, favourable things for longevity and scenery of peace and prosperity, it is necessary to make conventions as a rules for eternity” (Nguyen & Dang, 1993).

In addition, those who have official positions are dignitaries and authorities in villages who participate in compiling village conventions and are responsible to the monarchy for problems arising in the community so that there is no content in such village conventions are contrary to the law and the interests of the state. Many paragraphs of village conventions clearly show the problem of boundary of rights of the village conventions, village rules and state’s laws. The village conventions are supplemented regulations not specified by the state’s law. In the preface to the Tay Mo village convention, it is clearly stated that: “Obeying the village's rules is like obeying the country's laws because all villages form a country, each village is the root of the country, if all villages are good, the country will prosper”. The preface to the Tho Khoi village convention, Cu Linh canton, Gia Lam district affirms: “Villages with morals, good conducts, and binding conventions are just like a country with rules and regulations to admonish and

prevent, that means, people were born to set up a country.” In addition, moral people formed from Confucian education in accordance with the idea of “loyalty and filial piety”, elderly people who have experience in handling relationships arising in life also participate in compilation of village conventions. Therefore, mandarins who were holding or retired from office or qualified Confucian scholars and thinkers of Confucianism were the undersigned of village conventions (Button, 2000; Belfo & Trigo, 2013).

The Mo Trach village treaty (now in Tan Hong commune, Binh Giang district, Hai Duong province) was compiled by 23 mandarins from officers in charge, district education officers to deputy prime minister, 65 young scholar and 14 chiefs of communes and villages. The beginning of the convention writes that: “We all are officials of Mo Trach commune, Duong An district, Thuong Hong prefect, we consider together to clarify the conventions” Two La Noi and Y La (now in Duong Noi commune, Hoai Duc district, Hanoi city) village rules were compiled in the 12th year of Canh Hung (the Year of the Goat, 1751) by 66 people holding positions including: Vice Minister, Head of province, Chariot guard officer, Assistant Minister, Commune Head, Village Chief, etc. The compilers gathered all the standards set by the absolute monarchy state, including: position, responsibilities, qualifications, age, prestige and even official experience (Mitsch & Gosselink, 2000; Woodward & Wui, 2001).

After being compiled, village conventions were applied to the practice of each locality, but they were not the law of each locality, but must be in agreement with the law and the interests of the State, so they were subject to the censorship of the current government. In The good political affairs of Hong Duc period also mentions that the censorship body for village convention is “superior mandarins”. In the village conventions of the Le Dynasty, there is no mention of submitting them to the superior mandarins for censorship. By the Nguyen Dynasty, many village conventions clearly stated the content of the village conventions submitted to the provincial authorities for approval, and in some documents, there were stamps of district chiefs. When the French colonialists invaded and ruled the country, they clearly understood the effects of Vietnam’s village conventions and rules, so they repeatedly forbade the maintenance of village conventions and rules but they failed. Therefore, the French colonialists implemented stricter and stricter censorship of village conventions in order to minimize the isolation of villages as an easy tool to use against them. From the 1920s to the early 1930s, the French colonialists reformed village conventions with the aim of alienating and dividing the Vietnamese community living in the countryside. Therefore, many village conventions and rules became tools for mandarins, village bullies, and tyrants in the countryside to use to bind and oppress labouring people (Smith et al., 2018; Nozen et al., 2021).

The August Revolution in 1945 successfully smashed the colonial and feudal government, many village conventions and rules were not mentioned, but their positive influences and effects were still preserved and promoted. In 1959, President Ho Chi Minh, on a visit to Thai Binh province, reminded: Village convention is the conventions of a village, those are the fine customs of our country’s countryside before. Since the day of the revolution, you have erased

everything, that's not right. The revolution only erases the bad, the evil and the good needs to be preserved and promoted (Le, 1996).

Basic contents of village conventions

Village conventions went through two stages of development with different names and characteristics. Village conventions compiled from the beginning of village convention formation to the beginning of 1921 are called ancient conventions, and those compiled from the end of 1921 are called reformed village conventions. Most ancient village convention was compiled in Chinese characters with many different names on many materials such as: paper, carved on stone, on copper planks, wooden planks, etc. and with diverse and rich form and content, stipulating the responsibilities, obligations, rights and interests of village management agency, of the people living in the village community in many fields of social life such as: Performing tax and military service obligations to the state, preserving and protecting order and security in villages, preventing natural disasters, preserving fine customs and traditions, worshipping ancestors, people with meritorious services to the village such as worshipping the village tutelary god, eliminating degenerate and unsound customs and practices, encouraging a filial lifestyle in families, solidarity and mutual assistance in the village, settling and adjudicating disputes, lawsuits between members of the community, encouraging agricultural expansion and protecting crops in the fields and in the village, protecting roads, mortgaging property, land, wills, inheritance, etc.

The village convention, Community compacts of Phu Xa Doai commune, Kim Anh district, Vinh Phuc province - the last revised version of the 18th year of Thanh Thai include 88 clauses with many different contents in social life: "Clause 18: Grave preservation: For graves of ancestors, we should protect for each other. On each occasion, descendants will meet to visit them. The offerings are only betel and areca and wine. It is not allowed to have any party, only repairing graves is accepted (great caskets are allowed to be 2 meters long, 1 meter wide, and small caskets is allowed to be 2.4 meter round. Anyone who sees a field owner plowing into a grave should report it to Village officialdom for investigation, if it is true, the field owner must repair it and prepare a areca - nut plate(10 areca nut) to pay tribute to that grave. Those who want to move the grave and bury it to another place should also present it to Village mayor to witness, so as not to make mistakes"; "Clause 51: Construction of ramparts around the village and guarding of village gate: If ramparts around the village are insufficient or empty, *thủ phiên* must ask the landlord to repair and rebuild the fence. Village gates, the front gate, the back gate are divided for the people in the village to guard from morning to night. If any person see a mandarin, soldier or strange person entering the village road, at any gate, the gatekeeper must strike five or three times with a small beak to alarm. When the village officialdom are present to lock the village gate, then the gatekeeper could leave, in case of laziness or carelessness, if any bad happens, punishment will be applied"; "Clause 53: Robbery fighting and reward for people with meritorious services: Every village must have a dry torch.

At night, whenever hearing the signal of a drum, everyone must bring a torch, a pole, and a spear to stand at the top of your rank for the Village officialdom to review, if insufficient, punishment will be applied. If there is a robbery in the

village, someone tries to fight or capture a robber, the village will reward 5 dongs; the reward will be based on the number of robbers captured by that person. Those who are injured, the village will depend on the severity of the situation to provide medicine and food from the beginning until they recover”; “Clause 70: Punishment of those who dare to quarrel and fight: Neighbors living together should be in harmony. The village must be quiet on each occasion of village eating and drinking. If anyone has any grievances, they should report it to the village mayor for settlement, do not arbitrarily argue or fight. If they do not comply with the settlement, the Council brings it to judge, the guilty person must pay a heavy penalty, the person who is not at fault must pay a penalty less than two parts to the guilty person. Punishing must be implemented both sides to encourage forbearance and reconciliation. Besides, the families of two aggressors must be considered and their family heads must be punished with a betel nut plate to warn each other”.

The ancient village conventions are flexible and they were amended and supplemented with many new contents in accordance with the policies and laws of the contemporary state to adapt to the realities of social life in each different period. The Mo Trach village convention was born in the third year of Canh Tri (The Year of the Snake, 1665) with 32 articles, over 100 years, it was revised 16 times and the last revised version (the year of the Snake, Canh Think, 1797) includes 82 articles. Duong Lieu village (now in Hoai Duc district, Hanoi city) convention was compiled in the fourth year of Canh Tri (the Year of the Horse, 1666) including 7 articles and underwent 9 amendments and supplements until the eighth year of Canh Think (the Year of the Monkey, 1800) with 88 articles. The Clause 31 of the village convention, Community compacts of Phu Xa Doai, Kim Anh district, Vinh Phuc province records that: “Prizes for the elderly from seventy years of age onwards: Those who, from childhood to old age, participate in all tasks. When they are seventy years old, the village will give them a single shirt embroidered with four words: “That thap xuan y”(meaning seventy-spring shirt). When they are 76, the village will give another single shirt (a red shirt) embroidered with four words: "Vong bat xuan y". When they are 80, the village will give another shirt embroidered with four words: “Bat thap xuan y”; a hat (outside a jet black flowery material, inside red lining material) and a pair of red flower pants”. In the 17th year of Bao Dai, on April 17 (May 31, 1942), Clause 31 was supplemented as follows: “In Community compacts, Clause 31 refers to those who were born in the village but moved away or lived elsewhere, from childhood to old age, still complying with rules and regulations, without any violation, they will be enjoyed that honor, of course, those who do not keep their duties, or break the law of the country, or violate any thing, they will not be enjoyed such precious things”.

Reformed village conventions are drafted according to the form prescribed by the French colonial government, which is directly managed by the palace of the Tonkin Governor, to serve the policy of reforming the village administrative business in order to firmly grasp the village. The reformed version of village convention compiled according to the prescribed form reduced the diversity, richness and unique characteristics of each village. Most of the content of the clauses in the reformed village convention is focused on the first item, which is political issues, while the custom content is monotonous, many of village village

versions have rigid contents, without specific characteristics of the village and copy the same content between localities or many versions are completely copied according to the content of the prescribed sample document.

Value of village convention in educating in traditions, morality and lifestyle for Vietnamese people in the feudal period
Educating in the awareness of building a democratic lifestyle in activities of the village community

Village convention is a kind of normative document containing mandatory principles to determine responsibilities, obligations, rights and interests of residents in a community, regarding protection of security and safety of the community, protection of natural disasters, robbery and theft, etc. The Village convention gives solid arguments to definitively and clearly affirm the regulations that allow, forbid or encourage individuals and organizations to do something, that is, the community builds its own rules of conduct on the basis of laws and local traditions and customs and voluntarily implements those principles.

The provisions of the village convention reveal the unity of purpose with the laws of the State. The village conventions were built mainly to serve self-governance activities in communities, to regulate social relationship in the civil-society field, which the law does not regulate or only regulates at a level of general principle regulation such as: organizing funerals and marriages, protecting order and peace, developing production, encouraging learning, preserving and promoting traditional moral values, settling disputes or small violations among the people, local specific methods for poverty reduction, etc. The origin of village conventions is different from the law of the state, but they all have the same origin, culture, and interests in many fields and on the same territory. The purpose of the village conventions is towards a life in order and strict discipline to build good customs, ethical and humane lifestyles of each person in each village and commune in the countryside as well as the Laws of the State for all the people of the country (Le, 2020).

The village conventions do not repeat the provisions of the law but specifically stipulates to prevent individuals and communities from violating the provisions of state law, not to apply state penalties, but to use the penalties of the rural community - prohibition of communal house participation - a form of expulsion from the community for violators. This punishment does not consume property, does not cause physical pain, but has a very strong impact on the spirit and honor of the person who intentionally violates it. For many centuries, the unity of purpose in promulgation and application has been the main reason for the co-existence of the village conventions in Vietnam with the laws of the contemporary State. The village convention is an addition of what state law has not yet provided for or has not specified. The village conventions and laws of State interact closely with each other, ensuring the great unity of the entire nation in order to “conquer the constant dangers of foreign invasion and natural harshness” (Le, 2020).

In order for all people to participate in discussions and dialogues about common community affairs as prescribed by village conventions, each village has a communal house or Nhà dãi (long house) in mountainous areas. This is the place

where the villagers come to exchange all works, complaints and lawsuits and also the place where people come to listen to a Council of family heads discuss and decide on the village's affairs. At the same time, this is also a place for villagers to gather and have fun or come to receive benefits such as receiving land, attending community sacrifices, etc. The communal house is a place where everyone in the village, commune are trained in direct democracy, real democracy and not subject to one-sided imposition. The democratic lifestyle and the people's mastery are expressed in the village conventions with phrases expressing the democratic nature in works such as: the village grants, the village cites, the village exempts, the village forbids and the village punishes, etc. In addition, the democratic nature in villages is also reflected in the fact that the community chooses reputable people in the community who are trusted by the community to hold important positions in the villages. During the term, if any person in charge of an important position in the village violates the village's convention, the villagers will meet to decide to dismiss such person, without approval from the government. Therefore, the people who are trusted by the community always try their best to strictly implement, handle openly, transparently and fairly village's affairs.

Educating in the spirit of studiousness, a sense of independence, self-reliance, self-strengthening, courage, resilience and indomitable spirit in the struggle of the Vietnamese peasant community

The Vietnamese people attach great importance to education, since the 11th century, the clearsighted kings in the feudal dynasties of Vietnam taken care of expanding and improving the people's knowledge. The kings forced mandarins taking office in localities to make the people's knowledge and life full. In the spirit of attaching importance to improving people's knowledge, the traditional village conventions also specify material provisions to encourage teaching in the villages such as providing salaries for teachers to teach children in the villages, granting fields to people passing exams in the villages, etc. The Nghi Tam village convention stipulates: "Depending on the financial situation of the village, the amount of money is planned to encourage learning, a part is used to subsidize paper and pen amounts for poor students, and a part is used to buy books to reward good students. Communal council will use public money to buy needed books for poor students to borrow. When they finish their studies, such books will be returned as a public property. Those who damage or lose it, parents have to buy new ones to compensat".

Along with defining the responsibility of the community, traditional village conventions also clearly define the responsibility of families for the education of children. The village conventions affirms: "Teaching children to be educated is the duty of parents, no one can refuse." The Huong Covenant of Dai Huu village (now belonging to Tay Ninh commune, Tien Hai district) writes: "It is the duty of parents to send their children to school. Those who have children aged 8 or older must send their children to school those who are too poor and studious will be given pen and paper by the village. Those who have children of that age do not send their children to school must be fined one dong, in the village, those who diligently study are exempted from fatigue duty. Those who go abroad to study are exempted from fatigue duty and rate of tax, and the villagers will deduct the public funds and pay them, and if there is something wrong with their family at

home, the village must wholeheartedly defend” (Nguyen, 2000). To Xuyen village convention, Phu Duc district (now Quynh Phu district) stipulates: “In the village, village official needs to advise villagers who have children to send them to school, because a village can develop if there are many educated persons, anyone who has children from the age of 8 must send their children to public schools to study it is forbidden to let children roam” (Nguyen, 2000).

Long My village convention, Thuong Tam canton, Thai Ninh district (now Thai Thuy district) emphasizes: “Learning is a very necessary for people, because education will expand wisdom, knowledge, and morals to treat society and family. The civilization and prosperity of a country is also due to general education” (Nguyen, 2000). Besides, village conventions also clearly show respecting teachers by Vietnamese people. During Tet and holidays, Vietnamese people have the custom of wishing New Year to their family members and their teachers. The good tradition of keeping the moral of teachers and students were prescribed by the village conventions and is kept until today. Quynh Doi village convention (Quynh Luu district, Nghe An province) stipulates: “On the second day of the Lunar New Year, dignitaries visit churches, when they pass university, who is a teacher’s student, those who are graduates of a pre-court competition-examination come to visit their teachers, regardless of whether their teacher are alive or dead.” At the same time, village conventions also stipulate things that encourage people to enthusiastically achieve feats, raise talents for the country, and do useful things for the community and society. Thuong Van village convention (Ngoc Truc commune, Tu Liem district) stipulates those who make great contributions to the people such as establishing schools, hospitals or sponsoring public benefits for the village or achieve a feat in fighting against thieves and robbers, protecting the safety of the village, etc., the villagers set up a memorial engraved with their name, clearly stated the merits and erected them on both sides of the communal house.

The spirit of self-awareness, self-reliance and self-governance of the Vietnamese farmer community is clearly and transparently expressed in each village convention: “There are conventions in the village like the State has laws.” (An Hoa village convention, now in Cau Giay district, Hanoi city) or “Each village is the root of the country, if villages are good, the country is prosperous.” (Tay Mo village convention, now in Tu Liem district). The spirit of self-awareness, self-reliance and self-governance of people in the village community is very specific in each field, activity and work. All activities and works in the community are based on the regulations in the village convention to perform and the development of the community is decided by the people.

Villages and communes are the cells of the country, and every powerful village and commune makes the strong country. The village conventions with clear and strict regulations created close, correct and harmonious relationships between villages, communes and the country. Although there are laws of the State, all power in the village is decided by the people. Positions in the village’s management apparatus such as: Council of family heads, Secretary, Treasurer, Village mayor, Deputy village mayor, etc., are all elected by villagers through the representatives of clans. All activities of the village comply with the provisions of the State’s laws and perform the State’s obligations such as tax payment, military

service obligation, etc. However, for issues within the village, villagers base on village conventions to regulate relationships among community members. In the history of the Vietnamese nation, the spirit of self-reliance, self-strengthening and self-control has become a habit and way of thinking of every Vietnamese. The spirit of self-awareness, self-governance and self-control of inhabitants of the village communities has become the spirit of resolutely protecting the independence, freedom and self-determination of the nation. This spirit has been respected, preserved and promoted by the Vietnamese people throughout the nation's history.

Educating in the spirit of solidarity among family members, village communities and great solidarity of the people of the whole nation

Vietnam is a country that always suffers from natural disasters and is always threatened by foreign invaders. Once upon a time, the Vietnamese people knew how to unite to fight against natural disasters and foreign invaders. In all activities of social life and productive labor, each Vietnamese person always promotes the strength of solidarity and the spirit of community cohesion. Everyone is willing to share their hardships and help each other in difficult times because of warming neighborhood. That spirit of solidarity is summarized into fine customs and practices that are handed down from generation to generation and cemented into a national solidarity. Vietnamese people in general and people in rural areas in particular always have the mindset of “living in the village, dying in the village”, so everyone respects and seriously comply with the regulations set out in the village conventions on preserving and protecting the interests of the community. If there is any act that infrings on the interests of the community such as damaging village roads, damaging other people's lands, encroaching on public land, damaging crops of villagers, etc. on the safety of the community, it is strongly condemned by the community and severely punished. In particular, the heaviest and most humiliating punishment for each violator is to be kicked out of the village community, not allowed to participate in any community activities.

The norms of the village conventions have contributed to creating and maintaining the spirit of solidarity among family members, solidarity in the village community and great national solidarity. In the history of nation building and defense, the strength of solidarity in each person and in each village community has become impregnable fortresses against foreign invaders. That strength of solidarity was set out by the village conventions and seriously implemented by all people in the community. Solid solidarity among family members, solidarity in hamlets and villages has created the strength of great national solidarity so that the Vietnamese people won resounding victories in the wars to protect the independence and freedom for the country.

Educating in the awareness of preserving and promoting cultural values, fine customs and traditions, and implementing a civilized lifestyle

In the opinion of the Vietnamese people, practical customs and practices for good values in life, human perfection associated with the values of the true, the good and the beautiful in personality, lifestyle, behavior, practicing humane lifestyle, mutual solidarity among family members, village communities are considered fine

customs and traditions. On the contrary, customs and practices, when applying, that cause anycostliness, create superstitions, lower the personality and value of human personality are all considered usound customs. A long time ago, the Vietnamese people in the countryside used the village conventions to eliminate bad habits and customs in life and encourage people to perfect their personality and improve their dignity. In the prefaces of the village conventions, it is emphasized that: Comparing with previous times, it is necessary to remove harmful customs and follow good ones, in order to make the villagers prosperous and rich, bring fine customs. The purpose of compiling village conventions is to show that the life purpose of Vietnamese people is always towards the good, the beautiful, the perfect and away from the backward and the bad.

The awareness of using village conventions to reform outdated customs, develop fine customs and traditions, and constantly fight against evil to perfect human personality clearly stated in each of the provisions of the village conventions. The beginning of Hao Nam village convention clearly states: “The goal is to make families prosperous with a good order for villagers, and then to improve and supplement according to the level of development”. Bat Trang village rules states: “Village rules - oral or compiled rules that have long been practiced among our people are outdated, so we have to revise them to better suit the needs of this life. We exchange what is harmful and keep what is beneficial, so that families may prosper, and the village will be stable.” Customs of Thieu Ky village (Quynh Luu district, Nghe An province) drafted in 1844, clearly state: “Custom has already become a routine. Now, we add for more complete customs, this is useful. Now the State has a policy of reviving customs. Our village is civilized. It is a good idea to make a fine convention for villagers! Collecting old coventions, selecting relevant things, supplementing necessary things so that they are opportune. Later, someone will add necessary things” (Le, 2020). The rules in the village conventions are prescribed by people living in the same area and voluntarily implemented those regulations.

The rules of the village conventions encourage and nurture the fine customs and traditions of lifestyles and behaviors in various contents such as weddings, funerals, and behavior among family members, behavior in the communities, etc. In addition, the village conventions also stipulates the elimination of customs and bad habits in the community. In the Dich Vong village convention (now in Cau Giay district, Hanoi city) specifically stipulates the elimination of bad habits: “If anyone in the village is unfilial, so that his parents have to submit to the council, he will be fined with expropriation” or “In the village, whoever tease girls, if he is caught in the act, the pecuniary penalty will be applied by the Council” or “In case of village affairs or party, dressing must be clean, the speech must be tactful, gesture must be respectful. If anyone competes for food, drinks, shares, places, or gets drunk, swears loudly at anyone, the Council will impose a fine, if the offense is repeated, the fine will be doubled”.

The Nghi Tam village convention (now in Tay Ho district, Hanoi city) stipulates: “In the village, the junior must respect the patriarch. In the family, children must respect their parents. Any person who behaves in an unethical manner will be punished, and if anyone steals and robs he will be isolated by villagers in the communal house. During the village meeting about sacrifices, banquets and

dinners or meeting to discuss any affairs, citizens, whether at workplace or in a private house, have to be peaceful, regardless of seniors or juniors, those who are drunk and speak thoughtlessly will be punished by the Village council”. Specific regulations in the village conventions regulate the relationship among people in the family, in the village and in the same country, towards a peaceful, friendly and respectful life, etc. These regulation are respected and maintained by all people from one life to another. The rules of the village conventions are voluntary but still fully enforceable, binding on everyone.

Educating in the awareness of environmental protection, village order and security preservation and natural disaster protection

In the village conventions, the village communities in Vietnam has specific regulations on the protection and preservation of the environment in the community such as keeping village roads and alleys clean, preserving the countryside landscape, maintaining the purity of ponds, lakes, rivers, etc., and has strict punishments for acts that pollute water sources, and spread disease in the community. The regulations of the village conventions on preserving environmental hygiene are set out and compulsory for everyone in the village to follow. These conventions are clear, easy to understand, easy to follow and easy to control: “For a healthy village, villagers must follow the rules of hygiene: the first thing is to prevent diseases, the second thing is to cure diseases. “People who are healthy live long. In order for the villagers to be healthy, everyone must know how to maintain public and private hygiene” or “no one is allowed to defecate or throw unclean things on the street. It is forbidden to build latrines next to roads, lakes, ponds or water sources.

Anyone who violates this prohibition will be fined and the latrine must be demolished”. “Any ponds or lakes with stagnant water should be cleaned and filled up. Offices and stores must be cleaned, whitewashed once a year”. When there is an infectious disease in the village, the head of the village must invite a medical practitioner to treat villagers. The belongings of the dead, sick, dead animals are not allowed to be thrown into ponds or lakes. At the same time, the village conventions also stipulate very closely and has very strict sanctions against violations of village road sanitation. Khuong Thuong village convention (now in Dong Da District, Hanoi City) clearly states: “For common road of the whole village, at the end of the year, if any road section is damaged, the village council forces people to repair it. For private roads in any hamlet, that hamlet will repair it” or “Whoever works on his or her own affairs and harms the common roads and bridges of the village or that person must repair and pay a confiscation fine”. The strict compliance with provisions of the village conventions contributed to ensuring convenient travel, maintaining order and cleanliness for the people. At the same time, the village conventions educated each person not to affect the community due to personal gain, and everyone is required to respect for the interests of the community.

In order to ensure security and order in the village, the village conventions also stipulate specific obligations on subjects and ages participating in patrol activities to maintain community order and security. Except for those who are serving in the army, those in charge of positions, and the sick, all men in the village from

the age of 18 to 55 are obliged to alternately patrol and take on guard duty in the village and in fields to protect the life and common property of the village. Those who are busy with unexpected work can ask their family members to guard on behalf of him, but if there is any arising mistake, the person and the replacement must be responsible. The village conventions prohibit the act of using money to hire any person to replace or paying money to the village to hire replacements. The organization and assignment of guard are also detailed by the village conventions and responsibilities for each object when participating in patrolling and guarding are clearly defined, such as: Usually, patrols are carried out in the village. When there is a signal, the patrol and everyone in the village come to the rescue immediately. Weapons for patrol are provided by the village's fund and when the patrol finishes, they must be returned to the village. If anyone loses or damages it, that person must compensate immediately.

The duty of patrol boards is to take precautions and if any incidents occur, promptly report them to the Village Management Council for consideration and resolution. When patrolling, persons in charge must patrol around the village to prevent crooks, fraud, fight, gamble, thief, etc., not concentrate in one place. In addition, the village conventions also stipulate that everyone has the responsibility and obligation to build village protection fences such as planting bamboo. Thanh Son village convention (Quynh Luu district, Nghe An province) stipulates: "Bamboo planted for fence is beneficial for the people. No one is allowed to cut down and not let buffaloes and cows enter the fence or destroy them. Anyone who does not comply with this will be punished heavily." The village conventions also stipulate that each family must also take care of building partitions and fences to prevent bad guys from stealing in their own houses and neighbors' houses. At the same time, the village conventions stipulates that it is the responsibility of parents to educate their children to have a sense of protecting the common property of the community, respecting social order and security, and ensuring security and order for the community. The regulations of the village conventions to ensure security and order in the village train the spirit of self-awareness and the habit of being ready to act when any event that threatens the safety of the community occurs and strictly complied with by all villagers.

The ancient village conventions specify that disaster prevention is the responsibility of every villager and there is no exemption for anyone except the elderly and the weak: When there is an urgent need such as a fire, robbery or dyke collapse, except for those 60 years old or older and the weak, all villagers who hear the signal must immediately come to respond with it. If anyone is late and does not come to respond, the village association will pose a fine to that person. In addition, the village conventions clearly stipulate that each family must have the necessary tools for the common work of the village when there is an order such as: In village, all families must have a small torch, stick and spear, etc. At night, whenever there is a drum signal, they must bring torches, poles, sticks, and spears to gather with everyone in the village to participate in protecting the village. If any family is absent, they will have to pay a fine. During the time of participating in the disaster protection, if anyone is injured, the village will deduct money for curing; in case of fatality, the village will use the public fund to entomb and lay the person to the last home. For children of the dead,

they will be exempted from labor duties for life. Those with meritorious services will be rewarded by the village and have their names engraved on the stone stele erected in the communal house to transmit their merits for a long time.

Conclusion

The village conventions are an important part of contributing to the formation of community culture and clearly showing the aspects and cultural identity of the community. Experiencing the process of formation and existence along with the ups and downs in history, there are times when the custom is criticized and ignored, however, with its values and positive effects in community life, the village conventions continue to exist in the respect, care and protection of the community and is increasingly perfected to match the country's reality. The village conventions are built in the spirit of democracy, according to the aspirations by the majority of people in the community in order to preserve and promote the good values of fine customs and traditions, preserve cultural values, especially in the process of building new countryside in the current period. The content of the village conventions reveals their value in educating, training people to have a good lifestyle, with selflessness, solidarity against injustices, bad habits and to protect the common interests of the community. Today, the preservation and promotion of the positive values of the traditional village conventions and the building of new village conventions in localities are necessary in order to promote the people's role in developing production, protecting social security in rural areas, preserving and promoting traditional cultural values, building a new cultural life.

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