

First Submitted: 10 December 2023 / Accepted: 11 January 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61707/8f6m7k14>

## Faithful Marriage - The Human Beauty of the Ede People in Buon Ma Thuot, Dak Lak Province, Vietnam

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### **Abstract**

*The Ede people are one of the long-standing ethnic groups in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Their unique cultural heritage is reflected in various architectural works, festivals, religious rituals, customs, and traditions. This article analyzes marital fidelity, a human and cultural value that continues to be present in the cultural life of the Ede people in Buon Ma Thuot, Dak Lak Province, Vietnam.*

**Keywords:** Ede People, Faithful Marriage, Life Philosophy Through Marriage.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Ede people are one of the five ethnic minorities under the matrilineal system (Ede, Gia Rai, Chu Ru, Raglai, and Champa) belonging to the South-Central language group in Vietnam. Among the ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands, the Ede people have the second-largest population, following the Gia Rai people. This ethnic community possesses a unique, representative, and diverse traditional culture, primarily residing in Dak Lak Province. Due to their large population and the high level of socio-economic development in the Central Highlands, along with historical and cultural factors, the Ede ethnic group has played a significant role in the economic and social development, national security, and political stability in the Central Highlands region throughout history.

The traditional culture of the Ede people, including customs, practices, and marriage ceremonies, represents values that have been shaped over time, reflecting the characteristics of this ethnic group. Therefore, researching the cultural values of the Ede people in general and in the field of marriage, particularly in the context of implementing the Marriage and Family Law, family planning policies, and policies for building a new cultural life in the present-day Ede community, is necessary and meaningful both scientifically and practically.

Studying the cultural life of the Ede people in Buon Ma Thuot city, in particular, and understanding aspects of worldview through marriage, in particular, aims to explore and leverage positive values. This effort ensures that the existential beliefs within the Ede cultural context truly become a strong foundation and driving force for the economic and social development of the city, aligning with the goal of "Building an advanced, culturally rich Central Highlands, united in diversity, respecting the cultural values between ethnic groups... Prioritizing the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage, values, and traditions of ethnic minorities" (Central Executive Committee, 2022, p.4) and "Preserving and promoting cultural values, beliefs, religions, beautiful traditions, historical and cultural landmarks of the Central Highlands ethnic groups; maintaining and building public spaces in markets and villages for community cultural activities associated with Rong houses, long houses, and festivals like Cồng Chiêng...; focusing on preserving the typical cultural heritage of the region and the common cultural heritage of ethnic minorities" (Central Executive Committee, 2022, p.9). This provides a basis for directing cultural activities within the Ede community correctly, spreading the positive values of worldview through culture in general and marriage specifically, in the effort to preserve and promote the cultural identity of the ethnic group.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the ethnic groups in the Central Highlands in general, and the Ede people in particular, by foreign authors, has undergone a long and centuries-old process. Notably, the work of the French author Anne De Hautecloque Howe (2004) in the book "The Rhade People, a Matrilineal Society" is a comprehensive and systematic study. The book, translated into Vietnamese, delves into the organizational structure and social relations of the Ede ethnic group, focusing on the typical matrilineal society of the Ede people in the Central Highlands. In her research, she dedicated a detailed chapter to the description of marriage alliances, marriage procedures, marital life, and divorce among the Ede people.

Vu Dinh Loi's book "Family and Traditional Marriage among the Malayô - Polynesian Ethnic Groups of Truong Son - Central Highlands" in 1994 depicted issues related to customs, traditions, family, and traditional marriage practices of the Malayô - Polynesian language group in the Truong Son - Central Highlands region. This detailed study provides specific insights into the traditional marriage and family life of ethnic groups following the matrilineal system in Vietnam, vividly portraying the traditional customs of these communities.

The book "Ede Customary Law - Legal Practices" by Ngo Duc Thinh, Chu Thai Son, and Nguyen Huu Thau, compiled and edited in 2012, stands out as a typical study of the legal customs of the Ede people. This compilation serves as a societal standard, derived from the social value system of the Ede people, acknowledged by the community, and effective in regulating social relations, including family relationships.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The study's approach is based on the worldview and methodology of Marxist philosophy and uses specific research methods such as analysis and synthesis, logic and history, induction and interpretation, and abstraction. Visualization, generalization, comparison, comparison, and literary research methods and presentation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of the Ede people and traditional cultural characteristics of the Ede people in Buon Ma Thuot

Overview of the Ede people. The Ede people rank 10th in terms of population among the 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, and they are the second largest in the Central Highlands, after the Jrai ethnic group. The Ede people have various names, but the term "Ede" is officially used in state documents, research projects, and public information. They are an ancient ethnic group residing in the Dak Lak plateau, and they belong to the Malayo-Polynesian language family, primarily living in Dak Lak Province, with others residing in neighboring areas such as Gia Lai, Kon Tum, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa. According to the 2019 Census on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minority groups by the Committee for Ethnic Affairs and the General Statistics Office, there are 331,194 Ede people in Vietnam, residing in 59 out of 63 provinces and cities. Among them, Dak Lak province has the highest concentration with 298,534 people, accounting for 17.2% of the province's total population and 90.1% of the total Ede population in Vietnam. The Ede people in Dak Lak are mainly concentrated in the northern or northeastern regions, including the cities of Buon Ma Thuot and Buôn Hồ, as well as the districts of Krông Păk, Krông Buk, M'Drăk, Ea Sup, Ea H'leo, Ea Kar, Cư M'gar, among others. The Ede people share a unified ethnic and linguistic consciousness, but regional differences exist in language and culture, dividing them into various local groups such as Kpă, Atham, Mdthur, Ktul, and Bih. In terms of social aspects, their agrarian lifestyle maintains communal social relations, and their societal model is based on the village. As an indigenous ethnic group with an agricultural economy, the Ede people are closely connected to the forest and depend on it for their livelihoods. Agriculture, particularly slash-and-burn cultivation, plays a crucial role in their lives. The Ede people's production space encompasses natural forests, cultivated fields (formerly natural forests cleared for cultivation), rivers, streams, and marshes, which are significantly larger than their residential areas. According to Anne De Hautecloque-Howe, the Ede express their entire production space through the multifaceted concept of "land" or "lăn" (in the language of the Ede people). This land is considered the origin of all wealth, the foundation of their spiritual life, and their living beliefs.

This article primarily explores the aspect of monogamous marriage as a beautiful aspect of Ede people's worldview through marriage in the Buon Ma Thuot area. Buon Ma Thuot is the name of a "Buon" (village) of the Ede Kpã people. By the late 19th century, this region had only one village with around 50 longhouses situated along the Ea Tam stream, each housing 30 to 40 people. In the early 20th century, Buon Ma Thuot transformed from a single village into a hub, bringing together dozens of other villages. It remained a significant center for the entire region at that time, under the leadership of Ama Thuot, a powerful and influential figure. The name Buon Ma Thuot originates from Ama Y Thuot, meaning the village of Ama Y Thuot (Ama meaning father, and Y Thuot referring to the son named Thuot - Buon Ma Thuot is a shortened form: the village of Ama Y Thuot). Buon Ma Thuot is considered a miniature Vietnam, with 40 ethnic groups coexisting within the city. Among the nearly 400,000 inhabitants, ethnic minorities make up 16.36%, with the Ede people being the largest minority with 39,850 individuals. Within the ethnic minority group, the Ede people are the most numerous and constitute the largest ethnic group in Buon Ma Thuot, followed by the Tay, Thai, Hoa, and Gia Rai ethnic groups.

## **TRADITIONAL CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EDE PEOPLE**

### **Material Culture**

**Cultivation:** In traditional Ede life, rice cultivation plays a crucial role in their productive labor. The community predominantly practices swidden rice cultivation, where after a period of cultivation, the fields are left fallow for the forest to regenerate before resuming planting, burning, and cultivation. In addition to swidden rice, the Ede people also cultivate wet rice in low-lying areas with minimal area. Since 1975, due to population growth through both natural and mechanical means, swidden cultivation has gradually lost its closed-loop basis. To cope with land scarcity, alongside crop rotation, people have shifted from closed-loop cultivation to open-loop cultivation, a form of continuous cultivation over several years on a field, with the inevitable consequence of soil resource depletion. In addition to swidden agriculture, there is an increasing importance of dry fields and gardening. Since 1983, the Ede people in Buon Ma Thuot have started cultivating coffee. Although coffee occupies the majority of agricultural land (83.7%) and holds a dominant position in income structure, fruit trees and vegetables also play a positive role in diversifying income sources for households.

**Livestock Farming and Natural Resource Exploitation:** In tradition, animal husbandry was not a developed economic activity for Ede families; it primarily served the purpose of obtaining daily food and supporting yang rituals. Buffalo and oxen were raised not only for their pulling power but mainly for exchange and ritual offerings. The Ede people raised chickens primarily to meet the family's needs for life cycle ceremonies and religious rituals.

**Handicrafts:** In the traditional context, the Ede people had a well-developed weaving craft. Ede women would weave fabric on a loom by stretching threads into a parallel plane, interlocking them with each other. The traditional weaving craft and clothing of the Ede have undergone significant changes. In daily life, Ede people now use Western-style clothing like other ethnic groups in the region. Traditional costumes are typically reserved for special occasions such as festivals, ceremonies, and weddings. Basketry was a traditional craft that helped Ede families provide their tools, including baskets, sieves, and trays. Weaving was typically done by men in the household. Today, traditional materials are less common, and similar products are widely available in the market, making traditional basketry less prevalent in Ede households.

**Village Layout:** Villages are typically established in flat, spacious areas near streams with fertile soil. Within the village, there are houses, public structures such as water docks, cemeteries, and defensive fences. These elements contribute to the overall village space. The village borders are often determined by natural landmarks such as streams, hills, and agricultural land. Today, the basic locations of villages remain unchanged from the time the Ede people first settled, although part of the garden and swidden land has been converted into residential land. Houses within the village are typically lined along both sides of the road, facing outward. Fences surrounding the village are no longer common.

**Longhouses:** Traditional Ede houses belong to the category of longhouses with low platforms, typically ranging from tens of meters to over 100 meters, depending on the number of family members and the economic

capacity of the household. The traditional Ede house has a simple frame structure with columns but no crossbeams. It is often the residence of an extended family in a matrilineal system. The structure of the longhouse is simple, with a column frame and palm leaf roofing. Large extended families typically live in longhouses. Nowadays, in Cuôr Dăng commune, traditional longhouses are becoming rare. Some villages, such as Aring, Cuôr Dăng A, and Cuôr Dăng B, still have some short longhouses, but their patterns and decorations differ from the past. It is challenging to find traditional items like ceremonial jars and valuable spiritual possessions inside the longhouses. Besides the remaining longhouses, various types of four-room houses have been built under the government's programs 134 and 167, or short platform houses (for a couple and their children).

**Clothing:** Traditionally, Ede men wear a loincloth (kpin), a head-tied cloth, a blanket, and some jewelry. The loincloth comes in different materials, patterns, and lengths. The background color of the loincloth is typically dark with patterns along the edges and two ends. The most beautiful loincloth for Ede men is called kteh or đrai, woven with high-quality fabric, long, with decorative patterns and additional tufts on both ends. This type is used during the grand celebrations of wealthy families in the village. Two types of daily-use loincloths are b'ong and mlang, shorter with fewer decorative patterns and no tufts. Men's shirts are tailored with a head-tied style, with long or short sleeves, covering the hips. The back of the shirt is longer than the front, and there is a slit at the bottom. The collar is round, wider at the chest, and features an opening with buttons in the center. The most beautiful shirt is the kteh or đêch, with a significant pattern called "eagle spreading wings" on the chest. In ancient society, Ede women often wore skirts. Their skirts were thin, woven with cotton fabric in cham or black color. Depending on the type of skirt, there could be more or fewer decorative patterns. Women would wrap the skirts around their waist, securing the edge on the left side, wrapping around the body from the waist down and securing the edge on the right side. Based on the fabric quality, especially the decorative patterns on the skirt, different types were categorized with various names. Skirts like đêch and đrai were made of high-quality fabric, featuring numerous patterns on the skirt's body and waistband, usually worn on grand occasions, weddings, and especially in wealthier families. Kđruêch piêck skirts were also of high quality but not as beautiful as the previous two types. B'ong skirts were made of rough fabric with no decorations and were typically worn for daily work. The elderly and the poor still wear this type of skirt. Men's ao p'ong x'ô shirts are head-tied. The fancy and beautiful type is called ao đêch, named after the decorative patterns on the shirt's hem. Ao b'âl is a casual shirt for daily wear, with short sleeves and no decorative patterns. (Thinh, 2000, p.188-190).

**Cuisine:** Previously, the Ede people ate plain rice every day by cooking it in large terracotta or copper pots (Mai, 2017, p.29). The types of food are very diverse: plants originate from gathering in the forest, taken from the fields, including many parts of the plant for food such as leaves, stems, tops, tubers, and fruits; Food of animal origin is mainly meat and freshwater fish. Sticky rice is only used on occasions of worshiping gods. Can wine is the drink that creates the cultural identity of the Ede ethnic group (Ha Thi Mai, 2017, p.29). Can wine be drunk daily, but only when celebrating the harvest, worshiping the gods (yang), having guests, or during festivals? Can wine is usually kept in a jar (crock jar) and sticks (tubes) are inserted to smoke. In the past, families often prepared jars of wine and took them out to drink when needed. In family worship rituals such as offering new rice, worshiping the body (worshiping health), or worshiping yang for healing, weddings, and funerals... people always drink canned wine. During community festivals, families in the village contribute wine to drink together.

## Spiritual Culture

**Spiritual World:** In the language of most ethnic groups in the Central Highlands, regardless of the specific ethnicity, "yang" is a term commonly used to refer to various deities that can either protect or punish humans. The most significant deity, with a central role, is the creator gods Aê Diê and Aê Đu, followed by the Earth deity (yang Lăn), and yang Mdiê Kuê (the Rice deity), which play a pervasive role in the spiritual life of this ethnic group. For the Ede people, the concept of yang is somewhat vague, representing a supernatural force beyond comprehension (Mai, 2017, p.31). Today, due to various reasons, including the influence and development of religions, the Ede people no longer hold an absolute belief in the "living spirits of all things". Regular rituals to worship yang are no longer as common as before. It can be observed that faith and reverence for spiritual deities have diminished; polytheistic beliefs now primarily exist in the consciousness of the elderly and have faded among the younger generation, especially those following Christianity.

Community Festivals: Traditionally, the Ede people celebrate various community festivals such as ngã yang thun mrâo (water wharf ceremony - celebrating the new year), ngã yang kơ aseï mlei (health ceremony), huã êsei mda (new rice consumption), cang djiê (funeral), bi kuôl (wedding), and more. These are collective festivals for the entire community and villages, consisting of two parts: the ritual and the festive part (Mai, 2017, p. 35). The ritual part involves ceremonies to worship spiritual deities, often accompanied by offerings such as buffalo, cattle, pigs, chickens, traditional wine, and gong performances to call yang. The festive part includes entertainment and feasting. Nowadays, alongside changes in customs, traditions, and religious beliefs, the traditional festivals of the Ede people have gradually faded. While Christmas and Easter of Christianity have become significant celebrations in the community, many believe that organizing traditional festivals requires considerable resources in terms of money, time, and planning.

Gong Music: Gongs primarily serve as ceremonial musical instruments, used in communal rituals and less frequently in everyday life. Different sets of gongs are used for different ceremonies. Gongs are considered sacred objects, a means for people to communicate with spiritual deities. In festivals, the choice of gong compositions depends on the significance of each ceremony. Collective gong performances reflect the communal nature of society. Today, with shrinking forest areas, community festivals (water wharf ceremonies, New Year celebrations, and life-cycle-related ceremonies) are no longer organized as traditionally. In the commune, some sets of gongs are preserved and only performed during major events organized by the local community.

### **Ede People's Concept of Marriage and how to find out their Life Partner**

Marriage plays a crucial role in the lives of the Ede people, reflecting the ethical values of the community and serving as both a right and a duty within the lineage and family. Marriage signifies personal growth and establishes one's position in both the family and the community. When boys and girls reach adulthood, it is expected that they marry; failure to do so may lead to social disapproval and ridicule. Marriage brings about a transformative shift in individuals' lives, and most young men and women have a clear understanding of the significance of marriage in their lives. According to them, getting married is aimed at procreating to maintain the lineage, strengthen family ties, and contribute to family labor and economic development. The organization of engagement and wedding ceremonies not only formalizes the relationship between two individuals but also provides an opportunity for extended family members to gather, witness, and congratulate the newlyweds, and share in the joy with the host family. The Ede people believe that a good marriage requires approval from both families, the lineage, and community recognition and blessings. In many cases, marriages are arranged within the family and lineage to protect family assets from being lost.

In the past, Ede believed that marriage should only take place when both the young man and woman had reached adulthood. Adulthood was marked by the tooth filing ceremony, a primitive initiation ritual. Only when a person had filed teeth were they considered mature and free to seek a romantic partner? If a girl did not undergo tooth filing, she would be subject to public ridicule, and scorn from peers, and was not allowed to marry (Loi, 1994, p.74). Nowadays, the tooth-filing custom has disappeared, and young people, upon reaching adulthood, freely explore relationships through daily production activities, community engagements, and religious activities. Entering adulthood (usually from the age of 16 and above), Ede boys and girls become more conscious of their roles, responsibilities, and duties within the family and society. Girls receive guidance and opinions from their families on how to choose a husband, manage household assets, and handle family affairs, understanding the roles of a wife and mother. In cases where the mother is absent, girls often take on the responsibility of overseeing and managing the household. For young men, reaching adulthood brings awareness of their role as the primary labor force to support the family. They learn production techniques, farming practices, and the customs and regulations of participating and integrating into the community during important events such as funerals, marriages, and property division within the maternal lineage. While the process of getting to know and choosing a life partner is voluntary, premarital physical relationships are strictly prohibited. If caught, the couple must pay a fine or, in some cases, the young man must take responsibility by marrying the young woman: "The Ede people refrain from premarital sexual relations. They believe that if premarital relations occur without the knowledge of the family and before the formal ceremony, it is considered a violation

of ethics. If such relations happen, they believe that the spirits will rebuke them, bringing disaster to the family" (Dang, 1984, p.148). Ede couples often date in discreet places such as fields, on the way to work, at school, or in cafes. They only introduce their partner to their family when they are ready for marriage. At this point, the young man may stay overnight at the girl's house, but this arrangement is kept secret and is not prolonged. The girl's family often proceeds with the formal engagement ceremony early. In general, Ede boys and girls have the freedom to explore potential life partners before deciding to marry, demonstrating their autonomy in marriage.

## **MARRIAGE PROMOTES LOYALTY - THE BEAUTY OF LIFE IN THE CULTURE OF THE EDE PEOPLE**

### **Commitment to fidelity in the ring exchange ceremony of the engagement ceremony**

After the young woman has found a suitable partner for marriage, she proposes the idea to her parents. The family then seeks the assistance of a "dam dei" (or a reputable person from the maternal lineage if a "dam dei" is not available) to thoroughly investigate all aspects of the young man's family. The "dam dei" plays a crucial role, representing the bride's family in discussions and negotiations related to the proposal, as well as agreements on matters concerning the betrothal gifts, procedures, and the sequence of ceremonies in the wedding. Therefore, the "dam dei" must be knowledgeable about customs and traditions and possess adept interpersonal skills. When there is an intention to marry, the bride's family, along with the "dam dei," brings a copper ring (known as "kông ciăng") to the groom's house to initiate the negotiation process. It is possible that the first time the "dam dei" presents the ring for discussion, the young man may decline to take it as a gesture of formality (Anne De Hauteclouque – Howe, 2004, p. 300). This is a symbolic act as everyone already knows the young man has agreed, and this ritual is referred to as "bi khăp mã" (mutual love leads to marriage). After a few refusals, the young man agrees by touching the ring, after which the bride's family goes to the groom's house to organize the ring-giving ceremony. In the event the young man does not agree, the engagement ceremony must come to a halt, as one cannot force the young man against his will. After the young man touches the ring, the "dam dei" from the bride's family presents a copper bowl ("mĩ êa ksâu") to the groom's side as compensation for the nurturing provided by his foster mother ("êa ksâu") since his childhood (Anne De Hauteclouque - Howe, 2004, p.300). The ring-giving ceremony only takes place with the mutual agreement of the young man, the young woman, and both families.

Alongside rice wine and sacrificial animals, the bronze ring is an indispensable item in many Ede ceremonies. Particularly in rituals related to marriage proposals, the bronze wristbands used by the Ede people to exchange symbolize a commitment to loyalty and a pledge to live together for a lifetime. It not only serves as a symbolic object for the covenant between husband and wife but also brings good fortune and health to those who receive it before the witnessing of spirits and the community. Therefore, in many ceremonies, after the priest completes the ritual of putting the bronze ring on the main participant, the remaining family members also have the priest perform a ritual of holding the bronze ring to put it on the wrist of each person, accompanied by words of good wishes.

Depending on the primary purpose of each ceremony, these bronze rings carry distinct meanings. The priest, while reciting the oath, holds the bronze ring in hand to either present or put it on the wrist of the participant, signifying the presentation of evidence for the spirits to protect and bless the participant. The bronze ring is also a symbol of supplication or promise. The Ede people highly value promises, especially those witnessed by the spirits and the community. Therefore, when unable to fulfill a promise, this community often conducts a Ring-Reminding Ceremony to request the spirits for an opportunity to extend the promise to another occasion.

### **The Lifelong Commitment to the “té nước” ("water throwing") Ritual of Wedding Ceremonies**

According to the traditional customs of the Ede people, when the chosen day arrives, the bride's family, along with a representative, visits the groom's house to perform the ritual of fetching the groom. During this journey, they bring along offerings requested by the groom's family in a prior agreement. Upon arrival at the groom's house, they are welcomed with a ritual bidding farewell to the groom as he embarks on his journey to become

a son-in-law. Offerings, including a pig and a jug of rice wine, symbolize reporting to the spirits and ancestral gods about the departure of the groom to join the bride's family.

On the groom's procession, participants take turns presenting copper rings to the newlyweds, symbolizing wishes for eternal togetherness, lifelong happiness, and fulfillment. Along the bride's journey home, groups of young Ede men and women await, ready to playfully splash water on the bride and groom, conveying congratulations for a lifelong union. Upon reaching the bride's family's longhouse, a representative from the groom's family, often a Dăm Dei figure, steps forward to perform a ritual symbolizing regret at sending their son to join the bride's family. Immediately, a representative from the bride's family approaches, performing a ceremony by presenting a copper ring to the former, allowing the procession to continue. Upon entering the house, the formal wedding ceremony commences. The bride's family conducts a ritual report to the spirits, and ancestors, and seeks their blessing for the union. The wedding offerings typically include five jars of fermented cane juice, a pig, and other items. The bride's family representative (often a Dăm Dei figure) applies the blood of the sacrificial animal to the couple's feet, invoking the spirits and ancestors for warmth, happiness, and everlasting companionship. Following this, the representative offers each person three buffalo horns filled with rice wine and two spoons of rice. The sound of ringing gongs marks the beginning of a festive feast, with everyone enjoying food, dancing, and singing to the lively beat of the gongs. As the celebration concludes, the ceremonial aspect resumes with the headwoman of the bride's family, representing both families, officially declaring the marriage's adherence to traditional customs. She presents a copper ring to the couple, who touch their hands for the final time, symbolizing their commitment to eternal fidelity, abundant descendants, and everlasting happiness.

Currently, the traditional rituals of exchanging rings and playful water splashing during the engagement and wedding ceremonies of the Ede people have almost disappeared. In the past, the marriage principles of the Ede focused on endogamy within the same ethnic group and exogamy within the same clan. However, nowadays, there are numerous cases of interethnic marriages among the Ede. This trend is inevitable as the Ede people frequently interact with individuals from other ethnic groups, gradually transforming the characteristics, principles, and traditional marriage ceremonies of their ethnic group. The evolution of customs and rituals in Ede marriages has been particularly pronounced and evident since 1975. Concerning the marriage procedures, in Buon Ma Thuot, the basic customs are still observed following established regulations. This involves the bride's family formally seeking the groom's family's approval and fulfilling certain obligations such as presenting dowry items (buffaloes, cows) and giving gifts to the groom's mother during the proposal day, as a way of reciprocating for the upbringing of the groom (woven blankets, bronze bowls, etc.). However, the majority of these dowry items are now often converted into gold or money (except for woven blankets and milk containers). The specific amount of money or gold is determined through negotiations between the two families and varies depending on each specific case. Even the traditional copper ring, symbolizing mutual agreement and lasting unity of the couple, is now being replaced by paper currency. Instead of touching the copper ring as a tradition, the couple now touches the banknotes to express their intentions.

Despite the gradual fading of many traditional elements as mentioned above, there are still numerous preserved traditional values among the Ede people. The principle of exogamy within the same clan remains quite strong. In marriage customs, the bride's family still takes the initiative to formally propose to the groom's family. After marriage, the tradition of residing with the wife's family, as stipulated in customary law, remains a preferred arrangement for the Ede people. Traditional rituals, although shortened, still follow the ancient sequence. While not as extensive and detailed as before, these ceremonies continue to ensure the traditional roles and functions.

Especially during the engagement ceremony, important traditional rituals are still strictly observed. The items presented as dowry to reciprocate for the groom's upbringing, such as a woven blanket and a milk container symbolizing the mother carrying her child on her back when young, are still present in every wedding ceremony and are not converted into money like other ceremonial items. The key issue is that authorities at all levels need to continue building and refining communication, education, and efforts to instill pride and appreciation for the cultural heritage of the Ede people in villages, especially among the younger generation. The cultural values embedded in family, clan, and community customs and rituals should be established as criteria for shaping

cultural and social life in contemporary villages. Through cultural activities and community exchanges that aim to revive the beauty of traditional marriages, encouraging Ede men and women to wear traditional attire during wedding ceremonies and community events can be achieved. The traditional marriage of the Ede people is a complex process with many meaningful, humane, and educational aspects to each ritual. Therefore, comprehensive research and investment are necessary to introduce and promote the culture, as well as preserve the cultural values of Ede marriages both locally and globally. Positive values in marriage, such as the bride's departure ceremony, the challenge ceremony symbolizing a strong bond in marriage, and weddings being a celebration for the entire community, should be maintained and promoted. Undesirable elements, such as cousin marriages, dowry disputes, and property division after divorce, should be addressed and limited. Marriage is also a folk cultural activity, with ceremonies incorporating songs and illustrative actions that reflect the folk artistic life, aspirations, and talents of the Ede people. Therefore, the Ede people should consciously collect information about their traditional marriages and the customs of their ethnic group to preserve and promote their unique cultural identity.

## CONCLUSION

Marriage is one of the social institutions that vividly reflects the cultural characteristics of the Ede people, holding a significant position in their social and family life. The values in Ede marriages, as analyzed above, are increasingly aligning with modern cultural lifestyles, reflecting the harmonization process among different ethnic groups in terms of economics, society, and culture. Through long-term interactions and cultural exchanges in history, the Ede people in Buon Ma Thuot have gradually formed common cultural elements along with distinct features of their ethnic culture. Marriage is a crucial aspect of society, serving as the foundation for a strong family and a standard for ethical values in Vietnamese culture. In the unique context of the Ede people, marital loyalty plays a vital role and serves as the groundwork for the assimilation of marriage and family laws. As an ethnic minority in Vietnam, the Ede people carry unique cultural values. Marital loyalty is not just a principle but an indispensable part of their marital relationships. In Ede tradition, maintaining faithfulness and respect towards each other is considered a fundamental principle, contributing not only to the strength of their relationships but also to community solidarity. Building family values in contemporary Vietnam requires a flexible combination of tradition and modernity. Respecting and actively promoting traditional cultural values, such as the loyalty of the Ede people, could be the key to ensuring that families not only survive but also thrive for the overall prosperity of the Vietnamese ethnic community.

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