

Changes In Worldview Through the Study of The Transformation of Marriage Among the Ede People in Buon Ma Thuot City, Dak Lak Province, Vietnam

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Abstract

The Ede people are one of the long-established ethnic groups in the Central Highlands. The unique culture of this ethnic group is reflected in various architectural works, festivals, rituals, and customs. This article analyzes the human values in marriage and the changes in worldview regarding marriage among the Ede people in Buon Ma Thuot City, Dak Lak Province, Vietnam.

Keywords: Ede People, Worldview Through Marriage, Changes in Worldview

INTRODUCTION

Marriage, as one of the fundamental social institutions, not only reflects cultural values and traditions but also serves as a measure of changes in the worldview of communities. For the Ede people - one of the large ethnic minorities in Vietnam - marriage is not just a union between two individuals but also a connection between families, clans, and the community. In the context of rapid modernization and urbanization, especially in Buon Ma Thuot City, Dak Lak Province, the traditional marriage values of the Ede are facing significant upheavals and challenges.

Changes in marriage are not merely about form but involve profound shifts in people's thinking and perceptions regarding love, family, and society. Factors such as urbanization, exposure to foreign cultures, increased education, and career opportunities have strongly impacted the worldview of the Ede people, leading to changes in how they view and practice marriage.

This study focuses on examining the transformation in marriage among the Ede community in Buon Ma Thuot, aiming to shed light on how modern factors have influenced their marital worldview. By analyzing changes in concepts of love, partner selection, gender roles, and marriage rituals, the article will provide a comprehensive view of the cultural transformation occurring within the Ede community, while also raising questions about preserving and developing traditional values in the modern context.

Studying these transformations is not only scientifically significant but also has practical value in shaping cultural and social policies aimed at preserving and developing the traditional cultural values of the Ede people. This contributes to the sustainable development and cultural diversity of Vietnam, aligning with the goal of "Building a progressive Central Highlands culture rich in ethnic identity, unified in diversity, and respecting the cultural values of different ethnic groups... Prioritizing the protection and promotion of cultural heritage values, traditional values, and ethnic identity of minority groups" (Central Executive Committee. (2022), p.4), and "Preserving and promoting the cultural values, beliefs, religions, and good traditions, as well as significant historical and cultural sites of the Central Highlands ethnic groups; maintaining and developing public spaces in villages for community cultural activities associated with Rong houses, longhouses, and traditional festivals such as the Gong Festival...; focusing on preserving the distinctive cultural heritage of the region and the cultural heritage of other minority ethnic groups" (Central Executive Committee. (2022), p.4).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the ethnic groups in the Central Highlands, including the Ede people, by foreign scholars has spanned several centuries. Among the comprehensive and systematic studies of the Ede, the work by French

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author Anne De Hautecloque Howe (2004) stands out with her book *The Rhadé: A Matrilineal Society*. This book, translated into Vietnamese, provides an in-depth study of the organizational structure and social relationships of the Ede people, particularly their matrilineal society in the Central Highlands. In her research, she dedicates a chapter to a detailed examination of marriage arrangements, marriage procedures, married life, and divorce.

The book *Traditional Family and Marriage among the Malayo-Polynesian Ethnic Groups of the Truong Son-Central Highlands* by Vu Dinh Loi (1994) depicts issues related to customs, family, and traditional marriage among the Malayo-Polynesian ethnic groups in the Truong Son-Central Highlands region. This detailed study highlights traditional marriage and family life in matrilineal societies in Vietnam, vividly portraying the traditional customs of the local people.

Truong Bi (2008), in *The Traditional Festivals of the Ede Ethnic Group*, provides a comprehensive overview of Ede rituals, including life cycle ceremonies such as birth rituals, naming ceremonies, coming-of-age ceremonies, health ceremonies, weddings, and funerals; agricultural rituals like the harvest festival, rain prayers, water source offerings, wind deity offerings, poverty alleviation ceremonies, and new rice ceremonies.

Nguyen Dinh Huan and Pham Thi Tam (2024), in their article *Faithful Marriage - The Human Beauty of the Ede People in Buon Ma Thuot, Dak Lak Province, Vietnam* published in the *International Journal of Religion*, Volume 5, Number 1, summarize the traditional culture of the Ede. The article focuses on analyzing marital fidelity as a cherished human value among the Ede people in Buon Ma Thuot City, Dak Lak Province, Vietnam.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study's approach is based on the worldview and methodology of Marxist philosophy and employs specific research methods such as analysis and synthesis, logic and history, induction and interpretation, as well as abstraction. Research and presentation methods include sociological investigation, in-depth interviews, synthesis, comparison, and document research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Ede People and of the Values and Beliefs in Traditional Ede Marriage

The Ede people rank 10th in terms of population among the 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam and 2nd in the Central Highlands, after the Jrai people. The Ede have various names, but the term Ede is officially used in government documents, research works, and public information. The Ede are an indigenous ethnic group in the Dak Lak Plateau, speaking a language from the Malayo-Polynesian family, and primarily reside in Dak Lak, with others living in neighboring regions such as Gia Lai, Kon Tum, Phu Yen, and Khanh Hoa. According to the 2019 survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minorities by the Committee for Ethnic Minorities Affairs and the General Statistics Office, the Ede population in Vietnam is 331,194 (Committee for Ethnic Minorities Affairs and General Statistics Office. (2019), p.53), residing in 59 out of 63 provinces and cities. Of this, Dak Lak Province has 298,534 people, accounting for 17.2% of the provincial population and 90.1% of the total Ede population in Vietnam. The Ede in Dak Lak are mainly concentrated in the northern or northeastern regions, including Buon Ma Thuot City, Buon Ho Town, and the districts of Krong Pak, Krong Buk, M'Drak, Ea Sup, Ea H'leo, Ea Kar, Cu M'gar, etc.

The Ede are a community unified by ethnic consciousness and language. However, depending on their region, there are some differences in language and culture, divided into various local groups such as Kpä, Atham, Mdthur, Ktul, and Bih. Socially, the shifting cultivation lifestyle maintains community social relations, with the social model of the Ede and the Central Highlands being the village (buôn). As an indigenous group with a shifting agriculture system, the Ede are closely connected to and rely on the forest. In agriculture, shifting cultivation plays a crucial role and is the main livelihood of the Ede. Their production space is usually much larger than their residential space, including natural forests, cleared forest land for cultivation, and rivers and swamps. According to Anne De Hautecloque-Howe, the Ede express their entire production space through a multi-meaning concept: land (lăn). It is sometimes also referred to as village land or land of the buôn. For them, land is the source of all wealth, the basis of their religious life, and their concept of living. In the Ede's

expression, land is "the round, concave basket, the pointed basket, the back of the ancestors" (Anne, D. H. (2004), p.78) as it represents the unchanging scenery where their ancestors once lived, sustained them, and remains a constant element across all generations.

This article primarily studies the changes in the worldview of the Ede by examining the transformation of marriage practices among this ethnic group in Buon Ma Thuot. The name Buon Ma Thuot refers to a "buôn" of the Ede Kpã people. At the end of the 19th century, this area had only one buôn with about 50 longhouses along the Ea Tam stream, each housing 30 to 40 people. By the early 20th century, Buon Ma Thuot had expanded beyond a single buôn to include several other buôn. However, Buon Ma Thuot remained a large buôn and a central hub of the region, governed by Ama Thuot, a powerful and respected leader. The name Buon Ma Thuot is derived from this history, meaning "the village of Ama Y Thuot" - the village of Y Thuot's father (in Ede, Ama means father, Y Thuot refers to the son named Thuot - Buon Ma Thuot is a shortened name: the village of Y Thuot's father). Buon Ma Thuot City is considered a microcosm of Vietnam, with 40 ethnic groups living together among the 54 ethnic groups nationwide, with a population of nearly 400,000, of which ethnic minorities make up 16.36% of the total population, primarily the Ede with 39,850 people. Among ethnic minorities, the Ede constitute the largest group and are the largest ethnic group in Buon Ma Thuot, followed by the Tay, Thai, Hoa, and Gia Rai.

Overview of the values and beliefs in traditional Ede Marriage

The marriage of the Ede people is not only a personal event but also a symbol of the connection between families, clans, and the entire community. With a matrilineal cultural foundation, traditional Ede marriage is built upon a distinctive system of values and beliefs, reflecting the integration of women's roles, family relationships, and community ties. In the context of modernization and urbanization, understanding and preserving these values is a crucial task not only for maintaining cultural identity but also for gaining insight into how these traditional values are undergoing transformation.

Matrilineality and the Role of Women in Marriage

The Ede follow a matrilineal system, where inheritance and lineage are passed from mother to daughter. This is a fundamental aspect of traditional Ede marriage, playing a decisive role in family organization and maintenance. In a matrilineal society, women are not only the managers of the household but also hold a leading role in major decisions, including choosing spouses for their children and maintaining clan relationships.

In Ede society, women wield significant power within the family, which is clearly demonstrated through the role of the mother. When a couple marries, the husband usually moves into the wife's home, and the children born will carry the mother's surname. This arrangement not only highlights the importance of women in Ede culture but also illustrates the strong connection between generations in the maternal line. Marriage, therefore, is not merely the union of two individuals but a connection between two clans, focusing on reinforcing and protecting the rights of the maternal family.

Traditionally, the marriage of cousins (con cô con cậu đã jở'ng krâng kđao) is preferred and encouraged among the Ede. This type of traditional marriage in a matrilineal society is because, according to Ede customs, when a husband dies, his family will claim valuable property that was allocated to him or a share of the assets he accumulated during his life. Therefore, the Ede allow cousins to marry to prevent the family's assets from being lost and to ensure that they remain within the clan.

Maintaining and protecting the matrilineal family is reflected not only in the custom of *cuê nuê* but also in the relationships between biological sisters and their children. Within the maternal clan, women always consider their sisters' or female cousins' children as their own. They raise, love, and care for them as if they were their biological children. A woman from the wife's clan accepting the role of wife (*nuê*) is driven not only by affection for the widower but also by a sense of responsibility and compassion for the unfortunate children. According to them, this action not only pleases and satisfies Yang but also brings happiness to the unfortunate children and the clan, thus protecting the matrilineal family. The customary law explicitly states, "If the mat is torn, it must be replaced; if the mat is worn out, it must be renewed; if a person dies, another must take their place." Ede customary law refers to this as *klei cuê nuê, bi cuê*, meaning to reconnect a broken thread, and *nuê* refers

to a sprout growing at the base of a dry tree, replacing the tree (Thin, N.D. (2012), p.340). This custom stipulates that if one of the spouses dies, the family of the deceased must find a replacement, as appointing a replacement from the family of the deceased aims to strengthen the alliance with the surviving family and clan, ensuring the long-term existence of the alliance.

Concept of Marriage: The Connection Between Family and Community

Marriage is a pivotal moment, an essential ritual in the human life cycle, and a custom indispensable in the social life of any ethnic group. It is considered a social institution and, like other social institutions, has undergone changes throughout history. Forms of marriage not only reflect general laws of social development and cultural characteristics of ethnic groups but also are directly influenced and shaped by economic and social conditions across historical periods. Marriage is a factor that forms the family, strengthens and enhances community solidarity, and supports production labor for survival and development.

In the Ede perspective, marriage plays a crucial role in human life, reflecting ethnic moral values, and is both a right and a duty towards one's clan and family. Marriage marks maturity and establishes an individual's position within the family and the community. Upon reaching adulthood, individuals are expected to marry; failing to do so is considered abnormal and subject to social ridicule. Marriage signifies a transformative phase for individuals, who often have a clear understanding of its significance in their lives. For them, marriage is intended to produce offspring to continue the lineage, strengthen familial and clan bonds, provide companionship, add labor to the family, and build the economy. Organizing a betrothal and wedding serves not only to formalize the relationship between the two individuals but also as an occasion for relatives and friends to gather, witness and celebrate the union, and offer their blessings to the newlyweds. The Ede believe that a successful marriage requires the approval of both families and clans and recognition and blessing from the community. In many cases, marriages are arranged by families or clans to protect assets from external loss.

Rituals and Customs in Marriage: Respect for Tradition and Cultural Symbolism

In the marriage customs of the Ede people, rituals and ceremonies play a crucial role in maintaining traditional values and demonstrating respect for ancestors and deities. Each stage of the marriage process - from the initial engagement to the wedding and house entry ceremonies - is carried out meticulously, involving both families and the community. These rituals not only symbolize the union between two families but also reflect the Ede people's reverence for traditions and cultural values passed down through generations.

In traditional Ede marriages, the engagement and wedding ceremonies are two significant rituals that are mandatory and performed with high respect for both families. The engagement ceremony is the initial stage where the groom's family formally proposes marriage to the bride's family. This is a solemn ritual, involving respected members of the clan to ensure that all marriage conditions are met.

Once the engagement is accepted, the wedding ceremony takes place. Ede wedding ceremonies typically last for several days and include numerous important rituals such as the exchange of betrothal gifts, the wedding ceremony at the bride's home, and finally, the house entry ceremony at the groom's home. Betrothal gifts in Ede marriages often include gongs, buffaloes, cows, rice wine, and other local products, symbolizing prosperity and the family's prestige. These gifts hold not only material value but also symbolic meaning, representing prosperity, the connection between the two families, and respect for tradition. Similar to other ethnic groups in the region, the Ede prefer livestock as betrothal gifts, such as buffaloes, cows, or pigs, as these animals are not only economically valuable but also hold spiritual significance. The number of buffaloes and cows given as betrothal gifts is often provided in multiple installments and is seen as compensation to the bride's family for the loss of a worker, while the groom's family gains a healthy person to contribute to their household and continue the lineage.

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The Role of the Community: Oversight and Support in Marriage

The community plays an indispensable role in maintaining the values and beliefs surrounding marriage among the Ede people. In Ede society, marriage is not just a private matter between two families but an event for the entire community. The community is involved not only in the marriage rituals but also in overseeing and supporting the newlyweds in maintaining family relationships and adhering to traditional values.

The Ede believe that marriage is a commitment not only between two individuals but also between two families in the presence of the community and ancestors. Therefore, the community has a crucial role in ensuring that traditional values and beliefs are preserved and passed down to future generations. In the case of family conflicts, the community often acts as an intermediary to mediate and help resolve disputes in a peaceful manner that respects tradition. For example, after negotiating the marriage gifts, both sides agree on the exchange of gifts. If the bride's family does not have enough gifts to present, they commit to providing them but without specifying an exact timeframe. However, if the bride's family fails to deliver the gifts within the agreed period, they are penalized according to customary laws: "A promise must be kept, and the agreed number of marriage gifts must be given to the groom's family... If they fail to deliver tonight, our child will return to us, and in this case, the fault lies with them" (Thin, N.D. (2012), p.292).

Sustainability and Stability: Commitment in Traditional Marriage

One of the core values in the traditional marriage of the Ede people is sustainability and stability. Marriage is viewed as a long-term commitment where loyalty and responsibility are highly emphasized. The Ede believe that a sustainable marriage not only brings happiness to individuals but also ensures the stability and development of the family and lineage. "Once married, one must stay with their spouse until death; once engaged, one must continue the rituals until the wine is finished; once the gong is struck, it must be struck until people hold their hands back" (Binh, T.V. (2004), p.303).

Maintaining a sustainable marriage is a significant responsibility, and the Ede have many customs and rituals to ensure that couples live harmoniously and faithfully. In the event of conflict, involved parties, including family and community, participate in the reconciliation process to resolve disputes and maintain marital stability. This reflects the Ede's profound view of marriage as a social institution responsible for protecting and reinforcing community values. Traditional laws also address divorce once engagement rings have been exchanged: "If you have taken someone as your spouse and then decide not to marry them, the fault is yours, and the matter must be adjudicated between you and them" (Binh, T.V. (2004), p.305).

Overall, the values and beliefs in traditional Ede marriage represent a harmonious combination of women's roles, lineage relationships, and community bonds. These values not only help maintain social stability but also provide a solid foundation for the Ede to preserve and develop their cultural identity in the modern context. However, given the challenges of urbanization and cultural exchange, preserving and passing on these values to future generations has become an important and urgent task.

SOME HUMAN VALUES IN EDE MARRIAGE

Community Orientation and Family Cohesion

In Ede culture, the family extends beyond just parents and children to include the extended clan, with a strong connection between generations. Marriage serves as a crucial means to reinforce family and clan relationships. The Ede people place great importance on family cohesion and strive to maintain harmony within the marital relationship and among family members. Ede customary law reflects the traditional Ede view of marriage as a union between two clans, intended to bear children and sustain the lineage. Thus, marriage exchanges between families and clans aim to establish alliances and strengthen family and clan ties. Marriage binds not just the individuals but the clans of both parties. Once a marriage is established, the bond is intended to be unbreakable: "Ancient customs dictate that clans support each other, intermarry" (Bi, T - Vu, B.M. (2009), p.117).

Marriage creates a social network that extends beyond the couple to encompass broader familial ties. It establishes new relationships between the husband's and wife's relatives, known as affinal relations (formed through marriage), which are distinct from blood relations. Many researchers suggest that exogamous marriage arose from the desire to create connections with outsiders, transforming "others" into "one's own" to maintain

stability. The social alliance aspect of marriage is also reflected in the selection of marriage partners. Families often choose partners with the aim of forming strategic alliances. For instance, sons or daughters of village officials or prominent families are highly valued as marriage partners, especially in the current context where family and clan influence can affect the implementation of state policies in villages. Marriage alliances contribute to and strengthen economic and social ties. Economically, marriage involves a series of mutual rights and obligations. In the matrilineal marriage customs of the Ede, a marriage often involves the transfer of assets from the bride's family to the groom's family through a "bride price." As mentioned, the "value" of the groom is determined by his social and economic status, and the bride price partly compensates for the loss of a productive adult male from the bride's family, with the groom becoming a member of the bride's family and supporting them. Marriage thus involves not only the acknowledged sexual relationship between the spouses but also the creation of a broad social network. Very few societies leave individuals to manage their marriages independently; most marriages are arranged with mutual consent from both families. When an Ede man marries, he not only forms a relationship with his wife but also with her entire clan. Abusing or insulting a wife is considered a serious offense, equivalent to offending all the women in her clan. Marriage forms an alliance between two clans, enhancing mutual "self-defense" - a crucial issue in earlier times marked by unpredictability - and creating mutual support and solidarity in the present community.

Respect for Women and Matrilineal System, Fidelity, and Long-Term Commitment

The Ede people follow a matrilineal system, where inheritance and lineage are passed from mother to daughter. Women, especially mothers, play a crucial role in the family, from managing property to making decisions about their children's marriages. Marriage is not only a union between two individuals but also reinforces the status of the maternal lineage.

In Ede culture, marriage is seen as a long-term commitment between two people, with fidelity and responsibility being paramount. The Ede value loyalty between spouses and believe that a marriage can only be sustainable if both partners maintain their commitment to each other and their family. Along with ritual alcohol, sacrificial animals, and other ceremonial items, copper bracelets are essential in many of the Ede's religious ceremonies. Specifically, in marriage rituals, the copper bracelets exchanged between the couple symbolize their vow of fidelity and a commitment to live together for life. They not only represent the bond of marital union but also bring good fortune and health to those who receive them in the presence of deities and the community.

Respect for Tradition and Rituals

Marriage vividly reflects the customs, rituals, and social norms of an ethnic group, as well as the economic, cultural, and social life of the community in each locality. For the Ede people, marriage is a clear representation of a matrilineal society, manifested through their concepts, principles, and forms of marriage, including customs and rituals, residency with the wife's family, children taking the mother's surname, and the role of women in managing family affairs and inheriting family assets.

Moreover, the adherence to marriage principles and rituals among the Ede contributes to preserving and promoting the cultural values of the ethnic group, in both tangible and intangible forms. The Ede wedding is a major celebration for the entire community, showcasing distinctive customs, attire, and cuisine that are rich in ethnic identity. Traditional marriage rituals encapsulate the group's worldview, serving as a bond among individuals and strengthening the community.

Additionally, recent changes in Ede marriage practices, including the emergence of interethnic and interreligious marriages, along with the activities occurring during the wedding ceremonies, have enriched and diversified contemporary Ede culture. Marriage rituals, from the proposal and engagement to the wedding and moving in, are performed with solemnity and respect for ancestors and traditions. These rituals not only hold symbolic value but also serve to maintain and pass on cultural values through generations.

Family Educational Values

The educational value in the marriage of the Ede people plays a crucial role in maintaining and transmitting cultural and moral values across generations. In Ede society, marriage is not just a union between two individuals but also a means of educating children about traditions, cultural identity, and human values. From a young age, the younger generations are taught about the importance of family, respect for elders, and responsibilities within marriage. Stories, festivals, and marriage rituals provide opportunities to impart valuable lessons about love, fidelity, and filial piety.

Women in the family, with their central role in the matrilineal system, often take on the responsibility of educating children. They not only teach life skills but also convey traditional values, emphasizing the importance of unity and mutual support within the family. Therefore, marriage is not just a personal event but also a continuous educational process, where successive generations work to maintain and develop ethnic identity.

Education within Ede marriage aims not only to create a happy family life but also to preserve and promote cultural values, ensuring that the spiritual heritage of the community is passed on to future generations.

TRENDS IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOME HUMAN VALUES IN EDE MARRIAGE

The Decline of Traditional Values

The transformation of customs and rituals in Ede marriage has been most pronounced since 1975. Regarding marriage rituals, in Buôn Ma Thuột, they still largely adhere to traditional customary laws, where the bride's family negotiates with the groom's family and provides certain items such as: the bride price (cattle, buffaloes); and gifts for the groom's mother on the wedding day as compensation for raising the groom (woven blankets, brass bowls, etc.). However, many of these traditional items are now often converted into gold or money (except for woven blankets and milk bowls). The amount of money or gold is determined through negotiation between the two families and varies depending on specific circumstances (Mai, T.H. (2017)). Even the brass ring, once a symbol of consent and enduring commitment, is now being replaced by paper money, with the gesture of touching the money substituting the traditional practice of touching the brass ring.

The most significant changes have occurred in wedding ceremonies and customs. Weddings are now organized to fit modern lifestyles, serving as occasions to invite relatives and celebrate the couple's happiness. Previously, weddings lasted 2-3 days; now they are often condensed to 1-2 days. Traditional ceremonies have been simplified, such as the brotherhood ceremony (mah ziang) with a male friend from the bride's village before the wedding, the couple's blessing ceremony (kpih ung mô), and water splashing customs are no longer observed. The steps in the engagement ceremony have been combined into one day and are no longer strictly separated as before. Traditional rituals are no longer fully performed but are only symbolic. After marriage, the principle of living with the bride's family is no longer strictly adhered to. Newlyweds, especially those who are civil servants, often choose to live separately or move to a new residence, or live with the groom depending on the agreement between the two families (in cases where the groom is an only child, the youngest son, or the groom's family owns more land). Thus, the post-marriage residence principle for the Ede people in Buôn Ma Thuột has changed from residing with the bride's family to accommodating the conditions of both families, work, and the couple's agreement. There is now a trend for some minority women from the north to move in with their Ede husbands' families after marriage.

Changes in Concepts and Principles of Marriage

In traditional practices, the principles of exogamy and endogamy were strictly enforced, and violations were heavily penalized by the community. Marriage partners were usually confined within the village, with only a few cases extending outside but still within the same ethnic group. Nowadays, due to the intermingling of settlements, the Ede people increasingly interact with other ethnic groups, making inter-ethnic marriages inevitable. Although the principle of endogamy remains dominant, marriages with other ethnic groups are no longer prohibited and are becoming more common, as long as the individuals are of good character, diligent, and kind, and both families approve. The principle of exogamy is still quite strong; however, in many cases, individuals from the same clan but different villages are permitted to marry.

Like other social institutions, marriage among the Ede is influenced by economic, cultural, and social factors. Traditionally, to prevent the loss of assets, protect clan strength, and maintain community cohesion, many marriages were arranged by families and clans (such as cross-cousin marriages, *cuê nuê*). Today, there is a growing trend toward individual autonomy in marriage. People increasingly desire the freedom to choose and marry based on personal understanding and love, aiming to build a happy family with mutual affection and respect.

Significant changes in material life, especially in household economic development, have also impacted the Ede's concept of marriage. Besides traditional moral standards for selecting a partner, there are now more practical considerations, such as seeking a spouse who is financially successful, has a stable job, and owns land and livestock. Marriage age is an indicator of changing attitudes towards marriage. With the application of the State's Marriage and Family Law, the trend of late marriage among the Ede is increasing. A survey of 200 households shows that, aside from the influence of Party policies and state laws (39.5%), the change also stems from public perception (38.5%). Families prefer their children to have better prospects, such as good jobs, skills, and higher education to secure better employment with higher salaries before considering marriage.

Diminished Community Cohesion

The Ede people follow a matrilineal system, where the husband moves to live with the wife's family, a traditional practice in Cuor Dang commune. Before 1975, this practice was strictly adhered to. According to this principle, when a woman from the matrilineal group married, her husband was required to leave his own home and live with her and her matrilineal group. Today, the nuclear family has become the primary unit of society, rather than the extended matrilineal clan as in traditional society. The shift from long communal houses to smaller individual homes has significantly altered Ede social life. This change has two main sources: government policies and spontaneous adjustments by the people themselves.

The government has redistributed land, including garden plots, to households based on the number of family members. According to Article 6 of Decision 327/CT dated September 15, 1992, on the policy of using vacant land, hills, and bare land, land distribution or contracts for land and forest protection to households: each household is allocated a maximum of 5,000 square meters of land for gardening, growing grass, and raising livestock, depending on local conditions (Hien, T.T. (2014), p.98). Each household must have a household registration book, and recent years have seen land documents requiring both spouses' names (Hien, T.T. (2017), p.173). As land resources become scarcer, the principle of living with the wife's family after marriage (a core aspect of the matrilineal system) is not always applied. If the wife's family has little land and cannot allocate any to the couple, while the husband's family has more land, the newlyweds may reside with the husband's family. This includes cases where the bride is the youngest daughter—traditionally expected to stay with her parents and care for them in old age due to inheriting the most property. Research in the study area shows that villages with more land, such as Ale A, Ale B, and Ko Tam, have a higher number of couples living with the husband's family after marriage. Clearly, to adapt to current conditions, people are increasingly flexible in following or breaking traditional customs and norms. Previously, couples lived together in long communal houses with the wife's family. The decline of large families has led to a near disappearance of long communal houses in Ede villages today, replaced by shorter communal houses or smaller houses suited to the nuclear family. As one interviewee noted, "After a few years of marriage, I built my own house because my wife's younger siblings grew up and married, making it very cramped and inconvenient to live together. Initially, we lived with my wife's family according to our ethnic customs. Moreover, during this period, my wife's parents supported us financially and guided us in business and relationships with relatives, as well as childcare" (In-depth interview with Y Thanh, 43 years old, Ko Tam village, Buon Ma Thuot city).

Overall, the traditional custom of living with the wife's family is gradually changing. Survey results show that, in addition to living with the wife's family (66.5%), there are now cases of residing with the husband's family (15.5%), living completely independently (15%), and other arrangements (3%). In practice, living arrangements significantly impact the responsibilities and duties of couples and contribute to the erosion of community cohesion, which is a prominent feature of Ede culture.

CONCLUSION

The values of human existence in Ede marriage are clearly demonstrated through mutual respect, community spirit, and the role of family in maintaining and developing culture. Marriage is not only a connection between two individuals but also a bond between two families, clans, and the entire community. The Ede people place high importance on affection, loyalty, and long-term commitment in marriage, emphasizing the crucial role of women in both family and society. At the same time, preserving traditional marriage rituals is not only a way to honor the past but also a means to maintain the unique cultural identity of the Ede people. Thus, marriage becomes a vital foundation, contributing to the preservation and promotion of human values, while helping the Ede people maintain unity and cohesion within the community, thereby supporting the sustainability and development of society.

Marriage, as well as Ede culture in general, is gradually transforming with economic and social development. There are three main trends in this transformation: the decline of traditional values, changes in marriage concepts and principles, and weakening community cohesion. Notably, Ede marriages in Buon Ma Thuot city are shifting towards incorporating new cultural elements that align with the current social context, such as shortening the duration of ceremonies, minimizing rituals, and discarding outdated concepts. However, this also leads to the distortion of many positive cultural values in marriage, resulting in changes to traditional Ede concepts of human existence. This presents a challenge for policymakers and researchers to study and propose solutions for preserving and promoting the unique cultural and human values expressed through the traditional marriage practices of this ethnic group.

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