

# EGGS IN THE RITUALS OF THAI PEOPLE IN CON CUONG DISTRICT, NGHE AN PROVINCE, VIETNAM

**Abstract:** *Con Cuong is a mountainous district in the southwest of Nghe An province with the population of 70,914 people and a natural area of 166,263.67 ha. It is inhabited by 5 ethnic groups: Thai, Kinh, Tho (Dan Lai, Ly Ha), Nung and Hoa. Among these groups, the Thai people account for the highest number of the district's population (64.2% ). The Thai people in Con Cuong district consist of 3 local groups: Tay Muoi, Tay Thanh and Tay Muong. The Tay Muoi and Tay Thanh groups recognize them as Black Thai (Tay Dam) while the Tay Muong group recognize themselves as the White Thai (Tay Don), who appeared the earliest in this area (around the 14th-15th centuries).*

**Keywords:** *Egg; Ritual; Thai People; Nghe An; Vietnam.*

Thai people in Con Cuong not only share common cultural identity with Thai people in general but also have their own distinctions, which are clearly shown in the life cycle rituals as well as other rituals. For Thai people in Con Cuong district, eggs play an important role in their rituals such as worshipping, child naming, marrying or in funeral rituals... According to the concept of the Thai people, eggs are believed to be sacred and the embodiment of completeness, fidelity, the beginning and the end. For different rituals, Thai people have the proper ways to prepare the eggs to make them more colourful and increase the efficacy for each ritual. This is why eggs in the culture of the Thai people are the wish for completeness, well-being, affluence, and an indispensable gift in the cultural life of Thai people.

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\* Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.  
Email: luongthietna.vme@gmail.com

## **1. Some characteristics about the Thai people in Con Cuong District**

Con Cuong is a mountainous district located in South West of NgheAn province. The population of this region is 70.914 and the natural area is 166.263,67 ha. It is also the home of 5 ethnic minorities including Thai, Kinh, Tho (Dan Lai, Ly Ha), Hoa and Nung; among these, the Thai people account for the largest number, around 66,4% of the total residents. The Thai are distributed in 3 main areas: Tay Muoi, Tay Thanh, and Tay Muong. Two groups of Tay Muoi and Tay Thanh self-recognize themselves as Black Thai (*Tay Dam*), while Tay Muong self-recognize themselves as White Thai (*Tay Don*). This group was recorded as the earliest residents of this region around XIV-XV century (*Đại Việt Sử ký toàn thư, 1968* - A book recording complete Annals of Dai Viet).

Most of the forest in Con Cuong is an old forest, around 148,648 ha. There exist Pu Ma reservation area having dense vegetation and plentiful fauna such as elephants, bears, tigers, muntjacs, wild boar, and rare flora such as lathoa, sen, tau, lim...Especially, the forest also supplies the people here with a great amount of medicinal valuable plants.

## **2. Eggs according to the Thai people's culture**

### **2.1. Eggs according to the conception of the Thai people**

The Thai people think eggs are not only considered as a kind of food, the fruit of labor but also represent a special spiritual significance. Eggs are seen as a good food to restore health for the elders and the children. In daily life, eggs play an important role in many rituals such as worshipping spirit for children, funeral ceremonies, wedding parties or praying for health. The Thai people regard hen eggs as the most complete "Good as the buds of trees, intact as the new-laid hen egg" (*Đi như pại mạy, hiên như tòn xáy cáy*). Hen eggs represent complete, round and fullness so it is believed that worshipping hen eggs will bring complete and fullness to people's bodies. (Nguyen Thi Thu Hoai, 2016, p.462).

Newborn hen eggs are usually fresh-pink, so the Thai people hope that the complexion of the people who have been praying for will be fresh pink as the color of eggs. New-born hen eggshells are usually silky, covered by just one color and faultless (Quach Thi Cam Huong, 2017, p.12). In consequence the Thai people hope baby body will not get pimple or itch. The shape of eggs is tapering and balanced, which represents the wish of the Thai people about healthy and balanced development for children and the safety and health for the elders. Eggs are also seen as living beings but motionless, therefore, using eggs to worship spirit is to wish obedient children and have sound sleep. Moreover, eggs are seen as the origin of growing, multiplying; baby chickens come from eggs then they grow up and give birth, then restart a new cycle. Then, eggs are considered as the beginning and the end at the same time, then eggs represent the wish of a perfect and unbroken lifecycle. In rituals of wishing for fertility in family, eggs become an indispensable part.

Because it is believed eggs are the most intact and perfect offering, whenever the Thai people perform worshipping ancestors or Midwife, and *Then* they use it. They all use eggs to pray for a healthy, happy and safe life. In daily life, it is very rare that eggs are used as food. Especially, they do not sell hen eggs and just use it to supply nutrition and recover health for old people and babies. In fact, only spoiled eggs are eaten, the good ones are used for hatching and worshipping. They consider that eating healthy intact and unbroken eggs will bring bad luck such as losing money, childless and failure in raising animals.

Eggs are also the offering to catch bad ghosts for the ill or those controlled by some ghosts. This custom of treatment is called rolling eggs. This cast-spell form of treating disease is used for backache, stomachache, knee ache, bone ache, but not for kind of pain due to falling, having cuts in hands or legs, broken bones. This is one of the earliest cast-spell forms of treating diseases. Therefore, in the Thai opinion, eggs play an important role in performing rituals or treating diseases. The study about eggs in the Thai culture in Con Cuong district contributes to clarify the rituals and the usage of eggs of this minority.

Since then, the writing also provides the materials for doing research on spiritual life and shaman practice of Vietnamese ethnic minorities.

## **2.2. Eggs in birth rituals and taking care of fetuses**

### **2.2.1. Eggs in worshipping Midwife and giving names (văn tôóc lóóm)**

After giving birth, mother must sleep in the kitchen for the rest of the month. The usual time for living nearby kitchen (*buon phay*) is usually 7 days if the baby is a boy and 9 days if baby is a girl. During confinement, the family does ritual (*oóc khọ*) to welcome the new member; carry ritual of worshipping spirit to wish health and give names for the child. According to family condition, the rich ones can use pigs or buffalos, the poor ones can only use chickens for the ritual. However, the indispensable offering is hen eggs.

The offerings for *oóc khọ* ritual include: chicken, alcohol, baby clothes, and betel and areca, these are put on a tray and near the kitchen to be worshipped. Besides, if the baby is a boy, the offering will include other things such as casting-net, ax, knife, crossbow. If the baby is girl, the offering will include sewing needle and thread, racket to catch fish, shuttle. Magician Luong Van Kieu in Con Cuong District has the explanation that “*The offerings aim to differentiate boy and girl. They show the wish that the boy will be good at doing casting-net, hunting and be brave; otherwise, the girl will have skill in growing cotton, weaving, taking good care of family meals.*” Also, in this ritual, family members will cut a mulberry branch, as long as possible to make 7-steps stair leaning from the floor to the place of the baby, if the mulberry branch is too short, it can be bound with another. Besides, they tighten a string to the wrist of the baby, the other piece of string will be laid down to a dug hole - Spirit hole. Apart from spirit hole, there are two others dug with mulberry branch near the foot of the stair. These holes are all covered by leaves. After all the offerings and procedures well-prepared, the magician will start the ritual. The content of his speech will include expressing thanks to the Kitchen God for protecting mother and baby during they live in the kitchen. The magician reads the ritual speech while holding the baby hand tied

with the string and raising it up and down 3 times with the meaning of helping the baby to get the energy from the earth, and one part of the baby spirit after death will come back to the earth. The speech will inform the ancestors that the stairs made of mulberry branches will help the spirit in the baby's sleep follow the Midwife who will teach him eat, crawl, sit and move. The Thai people believe that after hearing the speech of the magician, Kitchen God and Midwife will protect the baby, make the baby grows faster.

After doing ritual to live in the kitchen and worshipping ancestor, the magician moves to practicing worshipping Midwife for the baby (*văn tôốc lôóm*) to pray for health and good luck. This ritual is performed at the sleeping place of the mother. In this ritual, magician is often a female to connect with the Midwife easier. This originates from the belief that the baby is born by *Lo Bau* Mother, a female god that casts babies. Above the sleeping place of the mother, there is a special bowl, called *thuối bầu*. This bowl is used to keep fallen hair which represent for mother's placenta. The tray used for worshipping *Lo Bau* Mother includes 2 dishes of sticky rice, 5 betels, 2 cups of alcohol, 1 bowl of water, 5 pairs of chopsticks, 2 boiled hen eggs. In this ritual, hen eggs are cut in half, each hen egg is put in a small dish, which expresses the wish of fertility. The cooking method of eggs for the ritual of giving names for baby is a bit different from the ritual of worshipping daddies (in which they cut each egg in four pieces and put two eggs in the same dish). Before worshipping Midwife, the magician will worship ancestors outside to announce them about the birth of the baby and wish the ancestorsto protect the baby. In every tray used for worshipping Midwife, a dress of female who helps the unborn baby and welcome it into life before all the other of the family is indispensable. The magician will inform the ancestors and *Then* and pray for the health and good luck for mother and the baby. The ritual speech tells about the pain and difficulty of the mother during pregnancy, wish for the baby health and good development which can bring pride to the parents and be the mainstay for them when they get old. After doing worship, the magician will use chicken meat and hen

egg to dot in the baby's mouth. This means the baby is offered good luck from the Gods and it will be nurtured healthily. After that, the magician also prays for mother's bottle always full, not stuck, so that the baby has enough nutrition. This ritual is performed this way: Firstly, the magician will pretend to use scissors to cut the mother's nipple, which aims to drive away bad ghosts. Secondly, he wipes alcohol from the upper of the mother's bottle to the nipple to make the milk not be able to be stuck. Finally, he rubs the hen egg around mother's nipple then dot to the baby's mouth. They use eggs because eggs represent sprouting, round and perfection. After the ritual, the maternal grandmother will cut hair for the baby. At the end, the magician will tie a thread for mother to keep connect with Midwife and pray for the health of the mother; while the family member will tie the thread for the baby to pray for safety, health and good luck. At the same time, the maternal grandfather will hang the cradle, the magician then comes by the cradle to read ritual speech to pray for the baby always have good sleep. Then, paternal grandmother will put the baby into the cradle and sing baby to sleep. When everything is done, people will have meals together and give congratulations.

To give a name for the baby, maternal grandparents, matchmaker or uncle should prepare in advance a name for grandson and a name for granddaughter. The ritual of worshipping Midwife and giving name will take place in paternal house. But the ritual only will be carried with the presence of maternal parents and uncle. The uncle plays an important role in niece life from giving a name to let her get married.

Every time the baby gets sick, family must invite the magician to come to practice some worships. If the baby is older than 3 years old, eggs are not used, the offerings will include 2 fishes, 2 dishes of sticky rice, 5 betels, 2 cups of alcohol, 1 bowl of water, 5 pairs of chopsticks. The offerings which are fishes - living beings in replace of eggs - motionless represent a change inside the baby. In the opinion of the Thai's people, eggs are the beginning as well as the end of life on earth, like a self-contained cycle. The over-3-years-old baby is able to talk, walk, eat and learn a lot from midwife. From now on, the baby

could have his independent thoughts and actions of a living being, he must self-exercise to lead his own life. Therefore, it is believed that when the baby got this age, eggs are no more suitable for worshipping and the offering should be living being like fish.

### 2.2.2. Eggs' role in ritual of bad luck relief, illness (*phi luong*)

In many cases when babies don't want to suck, just crying all the times and glowering, the family should take them to magician to have diagnoses, then have the magician done the ritual of dismissing bad spirituals (*phi luong*). The offerings will include a dog (if there is no a whole dog, 4 dog legs are enough) or a chicken. In this ritual, people will put other offerings on a tray covered by banana leaves. The offerings include 9 dog skin pieces, 9 fistfuls of rice (3 of them are dyed in red by betel chewing water, 3 others are dyed in black by used-for-cook coal water, the rest are white), 2 pieces of white cloth and a bar of silver to ask for spirit. If there is no dog, the Thai people can use buffalo skin baked, dye in black, then put black, red and white threads, betel and areca, and salt near the head of bed to drive bad ghost away, protect mother and baby.

The Thai people in Con Cuong practice the ritual of bad luck relief outside, by the gate where space is large. *Phi luong* in their belief just walks along the road in some fixed times. Therefore, the worship should take place outside and at the time *phi luong* gets across. According to Luong Van Kieu magician, Chi Khe commune, Con Cuong district, *phi luong* group includes 4 members: a couple of husband and wife, two children and they walk across from 4 am to 1 pm, and from 6 pm to 11 pm. In case that the baby is born at the time of *phi luong* patrolling, a ritual of bad luck relief should be carried out with the offering of dogs if *phi luong* is dad; duck if *phi luong* is mom and daughter and chicken or suckling pig if *phi luong* is son.

In other places in the district, there are some other ways to deal with the case of being harmed by *phi luong*. The ritual offerings will include 1 boiled hen egg, 3 incense sticks, baby clothes, 9 fistfuls of rice (four are dyed in black by cooked coal water, others are dyed in red by betel chewing water), 3 mulberry branches. All the offerings

are set in the tray and put under the floor to practice ritual. After seducing *phi* ghost for coming, witnessing and enjoying the offerings from the master of the house, the magician will carry 3 mulberry branches to drive the ghost away, then throw away the rest of the offering before sunset.

After this ritual of getting rid of *phi luong*, the family continue to prepare another tray for worshiping spirit for the baby. The offerings include a hen egg in a bowl and 2 other hen eggs cut into 4 pieces separated put into 2 dishes. Besides, there are 3 - 4 threads to tie between the baby and its mother. During the ritual, the magician will pray for the health of the baby, then rub a little egg yolk in the baby mouth and tie the thread for the baby to keep the spirit in the baby, which helps the baby health. Meanwhile, the egg in the bowl will be kept above the mosquito-net where the baby will lie inside for 3 days, then be thrown with the mulberry branches.

### 2.2.3. *Ritual of bad luck relief (xên chái hạn)*

According to the Thai's opinion in Con Cuong District, babies who are born in the moments that are incompatible with the parents should join the ritual of "selling to the maternal side" (*xên chái lực*) or bad luck relief (*xên chái hạn*), because these babies will be hard to bring up or harm the life of its mother or dad, or they will die young. If this case is said by the fortune teller that though the baby was born in paternal house but can only live with the maternal side, then the family must do a ritual of "selling" the baby to the maternal side. There is a case when the baby's spirit (*hua vắn*) can just live with strangers, then the family must also do the ritual to get that strangers the baby's adoptive parents. In case that *hua vắn* wants to live in maternal house then the paternal side must prepare 2 chickens, one set of clothes then choose good day to take the maternal grandparents to the house to practice the "selling" ritual. The ritual speech should clarify the baby's age is incompatible with parents then ask the ancestors "sell" to the maternal grandparents. "*The baby was born having father, mother, ancestors but no milk to drink. Today, a couple of chickens are ready to be consecrated, what the ancestor calculated,*



*who you gonna sell the baby for? The maternal grandparents are here waiting for purchasing.*” After the ritual, the maternal parents use black thread to tie the wrist of the baby to keep its spirit (*hua vãn*) healthy. In the night of doing this ritual, the mother and the baby will stay in the maternal grandparent's house to keep doing other rituals for the next day (Le Hai Dang, 2013, p.73).

In the next day, the mother will wake up early and silently come back to her and husband's house, leave the baby back with the maternal grandparents. After that, the grandmother will bring the baby to its parent's house with a bar of silver, 2 dresses to practice ritual of bad luck relief. When coming to the baby's parents house, the grandmother will put the offerings into the tray and talk to the mother of the baby: *“This night I got a child, but how can mine grow up as I do not have milk. Now, you have milk while I have silver and dresses. You let my baby drink your milk to grow up, I will offer you silver and dresses. You help me raise the baby, when it is mature, I will give more money.”* At the end of the ritual, the grandmother will give back the baby to its mother.

In the case of doing bad luck relief to pray for a child, *Then*, after being asked to grant a child by a couple, he will send an emissary to the earth and the mother will be pregnant and give birth. However, after completing the task, that emissary doesn't want to come back with *Then* but stay to play with newborn baby. Sometimes, the emissary sent by *Then* will tease the baby, prevent the baby to eat, to sleep, to be uncomfortable. In this case, the family should do the ritual of bad luck relief to pray for the health of the baby. To prepare the ritual, the family should make a boat made with bamboos cut in half and knitted together, 1 piece of betel, a piece of areca, 3 forest eggplants, 3 garden eggplants, 1 egg, 1 bowl of sticky rice, a mulberry branch (to make a rod). The purpose of this ritual is to drive the emissary sent by *Then* out of the baby's body, let it back to *Muong Then*. This ritual takes place inside the house by a magician, under the room of the family's master. The magician will use his magic to force the emissary to get on the boat, if it is not effective, the rod will be

used. Then, the family members will bring this bamboo boat to the river or spring and let it drift. The magician will show the way back to *Muong Then* for the emissary, and the boat is its vehicle.

To carry out this ritual, it is needed to get high-quality magicians whose master using magic; if not, the spirit will be not scared and won't leave. Magic referred, in this case, is how to control water and fire - two elements in five basics elements, use water to restrain fire, use fire to burn the spirit, and then use water to make regeneration.

### **2.3. Egg in the ritual of worry relief (*hồng vắn*)**

The ritual is carried inside the house of person who is sick, losing appetite, insomniac, started, luckless, etc. After having fortune teller suggest the reasons, the family member will invite a magician to come and do the ritual of bad luck relief, ritual of worshipping spirit (*hồng vắn*) and tie thread around the wrist of the needy person and pray for him safe and sound.

The Thai people consider that, when the ritual of calling spirit has not been carried out, the spirit will wander somewhere near the river bank, in the forest, in cemetery, or even in *Muong Then*, sometimes, the other reasons can be like it is started by lightning and forgets the way back, it can also be scolded by others or be seduced by ghosts and doesn't want to come back to the baby's body, which makes the baby sick for a long time. To dismiss bad luck and diseases for a person, the Thai people practice the ritual of binding spirit, which also shows the solidarity and love among family members.

The ritual of worry relief (*hồng vắn*) of the Thai people is also carried after family got a member lost, right after the day the dead one was buried. This ritual is for all the members of the family, especially for the wife, husband, or children of the dead. Before doing the ritual of worshipping spirit, the family prepares two trays of offerings, one for the ancestors, one for all the members of the family. The tray used for worshipping ancestors include 1 chicken (a whole one, its head is up while in *hồng vắn* offerings, its head is down), 2 bowls of rice, 3 pairs of chopsticks, 1 bottle of alcohol, 1 bowl of water, 1 spread of cloth, 1 silver ring, 1 betel (rubbed with lime) and 4 pieces of arecas.

The offering tray for the family members includes all the above offerings and get more black threads to tie around their wrists. Especially, the wife or the husband of the dead or the oldest child of the family will tie the most threads to show their grief and responsibility to the dead. The oil lamp must be kept light in both trays during the whole ritual (even the ritual is carried in daytime, though it often takes place in the evening), which not only lets the light not stop even when there is blackout but also scares bad ghosts and drives them away. The content of this ritual speech is: *“The spirits did see the dead to his destination. Now it is time to come back to the meal with chicken meat, let first use water to wash hands and legs then enjoy the meal. After that, the spirit should come back to its own body, not follow the bad ghosts; don’t over regret the dead and forget the way back.”* After speaking the ritual speech, the magician respectively ties thread for each family members, from the wife of the husband to the oldest child and the others. During that, the family members (often the oldest child) tie the thread for the magician to show their affection, thankfulness and pray health for the magician. To end up the ritual of binding threads, the participants must finish all the offerings in the tray (*tom vãn*) to wish safety and health. The more the magician does ritual, the more threads around his wrist will increase. When there are too many threads around the wrist, the magician will get them off, tie to his mosquito-net, or put near his pillow or hang on his house wall. If he burns or throws these threads, he will get a lot of bad lucks or diseases because these threads are his spirit shelters.

The ritual of worry relief is also practiced when the Thai people find their family members sick, losing appetite or started at night, luckless, etc. After having the fortune teller clarify the reason, family will invite magician to the house to carry the ritual of bad luck relief, calling the spirit and binding thread for the sick.

The Thai people consider that, when the ritual of calling spirit has not been carried out, the spirit will wander somewhere near the river bank, in the forest, in cemetery, or even in *Muong Then*, sometimes, the other reasons can be like it is started by lightning and forgets the

way back, it also can be scolded by the others or be seduced by ghosts and doesn't want to come back to the baby's body, which makes the baby sick for such a long time. To dismiss bad luck and diseases for a person, the Thai people practice the ritual of binding spirit, which also shows the solidarity and love among family members.

After the ritual of worshipping the spirit, the magician will bow to the family ancestors, family ghosts, children and grandchildren, daughter-in-law and son-in-law to leave. The family must get one person to accompany the magician to his house and bring with an offering tray which includes 1 chicken (at least half of a chicken and having head - *phuong mi hua*), sticky rice (if not, rice is replaced), 1 pork foreleg (if the ritual got pork), if the ritual used ox as an offering then one of its hind leg is left for the magician. It is explained by the opinion that people take forelegs of animal eating bran, and hind leg of animals eating grass to offer. (*tô kin hăm au hà nà, to kin nhà au ha lăng*).

## **2.4. Eggs in wedding ceremonies**

### **2.4.1. Eggs in worshipping for the bride's parents**

The ceremony to welcome the daughter-in-law is a big event for a Thai family. Besides the matchmakers (*lạm*) obliged to attend this ceremony, a shaman is also invited to make offerings to their ancestors and carry out worshipping and engagement ceremony for the newly - married couple. In addition to such offerings as wine, meat, eggs, and sugarcane, a shirt of the bride called soul owner is also used in the ceremony. The shirt placed next to a worshipping tray must be already worn by the bride. A new shirt is not accepted because they believe it does not carry the soul of the bride. When the ritual starts, the shaman will worship and explain the reason to carry out this ceremony. Afterwards, he will invite the soul to enjoy the meal and tie a thread to the wrist of the bride.

In the wedding ceremony of Thai people in Con Cuong district, worshipping for the bride's parents and the newly - married couple is also held. Worshipping for the bride's parents is carried out almost at the same time with the ritual of making offerings to ancestors when the groom's family comes to meet the bride and bring her home. Therefore,

two different shamans are needed to be in charge of these activities. Shamans who perform these two ceremonies are usually men coming from the groom's family, who may be his uncles. The ceremony of making an offering to ancestors is usually conducted by the uncle of the groom while ritual for the bride's father is carried out by their matchmaker. The tray used for worshipping consists of 2 bowls of sticky rice, 2 plates of meat, 2 plates of boiled pork intestine, 1 silver bracelet, 1 plate of betel and areca and 1 bottle of wine. All of them are placed in a tray made of rattan. To carry out this ceremony, a silver bracelet is compulsory due to its meaning of the Gods' protection for the soul. Besides, two sets of the bride parents' clothes placed next to the tray are also needed. The special thing about this ceremony is that the yolks of two boiled eggs are given to the bride's parents to eat. By doing this, the bride can show her love and respect towards her parents after marriage because the yolk is considered as a very precious thing.

### ***2.3.2. Eggs in the first meal of a newly - married couple***

Worshipping for the newly - married couple is held right after the bride finishes climbing upstairs to the groom's house. Worshipping called *van po* by Thai people is carried out before the bride is accepted by the ghost living in the groom's house, according to their belief. The tray used for this ceremony is prepared by a young man and a young woman and includes sticky rice, meat, boiled pork intestine and compulsory offerings such as a plate of split sugarcane and two eggs, each of which is sliced into four smaller pieces. In addition, a red dress made by Ikat dyeing technique and worn by the bride after her parents - in - law die is also needed. Eggs for the first meal of the couple must be newly-laid with pink color and round shape. The best eggs are laid by young female chickens, they are believed to be perfect eggs to use in the couple's first meal. Regarding split sugarcane used in the meal, shaman Vi Thi Bien from Chi Khe commune, Con Cuong district explains, "*The first meal of a newly-married couple represents their love for each other and hopes for a happy family. Eating sugarcane shows their expectations for their life after marriage to be always sweet and full of happiness. Besides, sugarcane is symbolized*

*as a stick which helps to link them closely to grow old together and bring them to the heaven after their death. Moreover, the egg which is the beginning and the end of a life in our belief also represents an expectation of a couple living together for the rest of their life".* In this ceremony, the couple does not have to eat up everything but the plate of split sugarcane and eight pieces of boiled eggs to wish for their happiness and the completeness of their marriage. Especially, the two eggs sliced into eight pieces and placed on one plate is the hope for the couple giving birth to a lot of children. After worshipping, another ceremony will be held in order to make the ghost living in the groom's house accept the bride. Since then, the bride officially becomes part of the groom's family and is under the ghost's protection.

## **2.4. Eggs in funeral rituals**

### ***2.4.1. Rice bowl and eggs in the culture of Thai people***

Thai people in Con Cuong district, do not use the rice bowl of eggs as Kinh people, they use steamed sticky rice, chicken for the dead. This ceremony is called "*pan khàu cáy tằng hua*". The meal also means that the dead will have a full stomach, won't become a ghost hung back to *Muong Then*. The offerings include a boiled chicken, a bowl of sticky rice with chopsticks and eggs, betel leaves, two cups of wine, a cup of water. The chancel was placed at the head of the coffin during the funeral procession. According to Thai people's tradition, the egg is symbol of livestock, cultivation (glutinous rice), and the wine drunk with food, eating and drinking tea, chewing betel leaves to pink lips, clean to return to the ascendant. The egg on the rice bowl means that the dead has lived the whole life in the world. In addition, the egg is a food for the dead to eat along the road and bring him back to the ancestors.

After preparing the offerings, usually the eldest son will perform the ritual, the vow as the conversation between the living. A prayer is an invitation to the dead to wake up to eat rice, chicken, eggs prepared by the descendant. They donated to the deceased so that they later did not come to ask for their children, the children have done all the work. For the children to prosper, raising livestock do not make them die. The ceremony with sticky rice chicken, egg finish, the children wear

mourning clothes, white towels and prepared for the next ritual during the funeral.

#### **2.4.2. Augur eggs to choose graves**

Each Thai village has a cemetery (*Dong heo*), located on the natural land of the village. People abstain from cutting down trees, logging, bamboo shoots, slash... because of the fear of dead souls. Graveyard is usually located in the west of the residence of the villagers, sometimes near the stream. According to Thai people, the village of the dead must have the opposite of the living place of the living, as they follow the sunrise as the place of living, the west represents the aging and death. The burial of the dead was also based on the lineage of each clan, nobles and high-ranking people are buried above the cemetery. Choosing grave land is a very important, so Thai people must invite the priestess to see the date, time and place. Choosing a land, prepare offerings including: a bottle of wine, five cups of wine, a cup of water, an egg, two yin-yang coins, a betel nut and a mat. Coming in the cemetery, the priestess looks for a vacant lot to lay the curtain and place the rites, and then he invites the souls of the deceased at the graveyard, including those inside and outside the family, to gather for food. wine, betel and ask for permission to choose a piece of land "home" for the soul of the dead (Le Hai Dang, 2013, p.214). While praying, the priestess just tosses the yin-yang coin, if a coin tips and a coin overturns, it means the request was accepted. At the same time the priestess tosses the egg in front, the egg is broken where the grave is, if the egg is not broken, then the priestess re-offers and re-tosses. In the case of the egg is tossed so many time but still not broken, the land must be selected in other places, and when the eggs are broken the selection of new land will end. After selecting land, the priestess informs the landlord of the grave site. After two time of drumming (every time six drumbeat), the grave digger and tomb worker began to bring the tool to the selected site. During the digging of the grave, people have almost no taboo. If they meet roots or rocks, they must continue to dig. The size of a grave of the Thai people is usually about 1.5m deep, 2m long, slanting along the slopes, along streams.

### 3. Conclusion

Thai people in Con Cuong district have three local groups, they live in the valley, the hills with agricultural practices. The Thai people there still retain a strong traditional cultural identity with the ritual life cycle and other religious rituals. In ceremonies, there is an important offering role in the Thai religious ritual that is the egg. The habit of using eggs in the practice of rituals and in the cultural life of Thai people in Con Cuong district is various. According to the Thai conception, the egg is the beginning and the end of a cycle life. Their ritual for children, offering eggs is a wish for a healthy start, peace. With the wedding ceremony, the egg is considered as a wish for a happy couple, have a lifetime together. As for the funeral ritual, the egg is considered to complete the life of the world to begin an eternal life in heaven (*Then*). Therefore, Thai people consider eggs as gifts to express their desire for a full and happy life. The use of eggs in rituals of the Thai people have the color of religious beliefs, expressing their view in worldview and humanity. /.

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