

DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF

LÊ HẢI ĐĂNG. *Rites of Tày Mường people in Con Cuông, Nghệ An**Majority: Cultural Anthropology**Code: 62.31.65.01*

In recent years, the socio-economic conditions have many changes and led to changes in many aspects of socio-cultural life, including family rites. Family rites is considered the cultural elements which clearly express cultural identity as well as the true value of moral, aesthetic, psychology, philosophy of life as well as the world view of ethnic group. Therefore, the study of family rites is defined as an urgent task with scientific and practical meaning. On the basis of studying and interpreting cultural identity in general and the cultural characteristics Tày Mường in particular, Postgraduate Lê Hải Đăng has chosen the theme of "*Rites of Tày Mường people in Con Cuông, Nghệ An*" as his doctoral thesis.

In addition to the introduction, conclusion, references, appendices and contents of the thesis is organized into six chapters

Chapter 1 (pg.9-50), the author presents an overview *of the study, the theoretical basis, methods and study area..*

So far, Thai people is one of the ethnic groups interested by many researchers but most research focuses on Thai people in Northwest. However, to this time, there have been a number of works

mentioned to Thai people in Nghệ An but only in the study of description rather than systematic.

Therefore, on the basis of systematic research, specializes in rites of the Tày Mường ethnic group (one of three local groups of Thai people in Nghệ An) from the perspective of cultural anthropology, the thesis points out the cultural characteristics, similarities and differences in the rites of the Tày Mường group with other Thai groups in Nghệ An. At the same time indicate changes in family rites, cause of change. Besides, the thesis clarifies the concept (*rites, family rites, parturition, weddings, funerals, and ancestor worship*), the terms related to the subject, theory as well as approaches. *Transition ceremony* of Arnold van Gennep's theory is mainly applied to explain the meaning and cultural values of the family rites. *Changing cultural* theory explains the movement, transformation of ritual practice, content and form of the rites in Tày Mường community today.

In order to provide an overview studied group to reader, the author gave a brief presentation on the life of the Tày Mường through the environment, landscape and habitat, history, population, population distribution, social organization and culture.

The family rites of Tày Mường express through parturition, child education,

marriage, funeral, ancestor worship... has been the practice, educated nation's cultural traditions and foster national pride for the community members.

In chapter 2, 3, 4, 5 (pg.51-181), the author describes *parturition and child education rites; wedding rites' funeral rites and others*

Parturition and child education rites

Rites and traditional conception related to parturition rites like *Taleo plugging rites, Ra bép rites, "Bốc vía" rites or rites to release somebody of bad luck, selling rites...* still practice and keep important place in the spiritual life.

Taleo plugging rites is taboo sign to prevent strangers to the house for fear that person's soul can be harmful to the child. *Taleo* is not only a sign of new born baby but also the symbolism of gender of the child...

Ra bép (oóc khọ) ceremony is the first social status transition rites of a child in the community, made after the women's confinement in the kitchen about 7 days for boy and 9 days for girl. When the women pass her confinement, they held a midwife worship (*văn tôóc lóm*), ancestor worship, and *bốc vía* ceremony to celebrate the presence of new member and for the health of the child.

Tày Mường people is conscious that parenting is not only to feed the stomach to develop physically but also interested in forging to educate ethic, lifestyle, behavior and teach the skills of labor, production to survive.

Wedding rites

Rites and practices before the wedding ceremony is *marriage asking ceremony* and *betrothal ceremony* marking the change in social status of the girl (from the free girl to be engaged girl) This is the beginning of a period isolation (*separation*) of the old position, not only girls but also boys.

Wedding rites and customs include a *small wedding (đoong lạy)* and *large wedding (đoong tang báo)*, end of the challenge of the bride's family to the bridegroom's. *Small wedding ceremony* was held in the bride, bridegroom must perform the clothes submit rite to spirit of the bride and live at wife's house obligations, then as big wedding. *Large wedding* is formal wedding which was held at the bridegroom's house, after when bridegroom finish living at wife's house obligations,

Rites and practices after the wedding ceremony includes *ceremony to express gratitude to matchmakers and Newly-weds' first visit to the bride's family*. Wedding Features in Tày Mường is the important role of matchmaker - intermediaries between boy and girl, guide the ceremonies to follow the customs and rites and they are second parents of the young couple.

Funeral rites

Funeral rites are manifest link between the living and the dead, the rite to relocate the dead into the home (*phi hươn*). In traditional funerals, Tày Mường people make rite to lay the dead in a coffin in turn, do chicken worship (*pà khàu cáy tăng hua*), pork worship (*xơ*

mu), cattle worship (*xơ quai/ngua*). The next include *cry to see the dead, bring the dead to graveyard, lower the coffin to the grave, open the grave door he feast of blood and opening the door*, is the main and important ceremonies. In the course of implementation this rites, the dead is in the transition (threshold phase). Come between rites to show respects and gratitude to parents, also see another rites performed by the children-in-law in the family like bride, groom (*pợ phi khươi phi*). Funeral rites and customs of Tày Mường people are both uniform and different with other Thai groups due to historical circumstances and conditions.

Other rites

Ancestor traditional worship of Tày Mường people originated for a long time and still exists up to now. The ancestor worship is only made on the occasion of New Rice Festival, Lunar New Year, Longevity, *ra bép* ceremony, or when there is a wedding, *vía* ceremony....

Ceremonies related to building house is extensive, including ceremonies to stand column of the house (*xau phi hươn*), soul column (*xau vãn*) and kitchen columns (*xau tàu phí*) is very important. After finished construction, the people celebrated the new house moving ceremony. In celebration to the new house, the wife will take the first step in the house for thriving, prosperity, satisfied life.

Bốc vía (ét vãn) ceremony is done in many different occasions sometimes happy, sometimes sad, sickness, accident with pray for health purposes.

Besides, *Bốc vía* is to pray for the parents to be long-lived, happy with children...

The Tày Mường people live on agriculture and these livelihood activities depend heavily on nature. So, the people expressed their devotion to nature by the worship, in the hope of a bumper crop that year.

Chapter 6 (pg.182-229), the author points out clearly the *change in family rites*

Parturition rites: more and more pregnant women go for health check and give birth in health facilities of the State. However, the rites associated with infants less modified by local knowledge in a number of care practices for women and infants up to now is still useful.

Regard to marriage ceremony, marriages between the Tày Mường and other ethnic group is more popular, many weddings is concise to one betrothal and one wedding. However, there still keeps the old tradition, although not intact.

Funeral rites are cultural elements at least change due to its purpose and belief's value. However, at present, the funeral also tends to shorten the time and organizations should simplify the sequence of all witch speeches under traditional customs and beliefs also changed significantly.

On other rites, worship space and rites related to housing also changed because they rarely build new traditional house but construct as Kinh people's house architect. Agriculture rites change

significantly or even completely lost in many places.

The level, scope and trend of changes in family rites in Tày Mường society is somewhat different, depend on the classes of the population and area of residence. Due to trade and cross-cultural trade with Kinh's culture Tày Mường people take many effect and influence. In addition, the policy of Vietnam Communist Party and State's policy on culture and the construction of new countryside, new cultural lifestyle has changed the perception of the people in many ways.

Tày Mường family rites play an important role in the shaping and development of morality and lifestyle of ethnic groups as well as regulate the behavior and express great value in terms of culture, creating cultural specific and local nuances of Tày Mường community.

The thesis was successfully defended in the State thesis Council, held at the Graduate Academy of Social Sciences in 12/2011.

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