

Impacts of Acculturation on Family Relations in Mixed Ethnic Families between Tay People and Kinh People

(Case Study in Chi Lang District, Lang Son Province, Vietnam)

Vu Phuong Nga*

Abstract: Under the influence of historical, economic, cultural, social, and policy factors, the Tay and Kinh people in Chi Lang District, Lang Son Province, Viet Nam have long lived in the same area. Mixed marriage between two ethnic groups, therefore, is an inevitable result of a long-term co-resident process, which has contributed to the acculturation between the two ethnic groups. This paper is the result of a fieldwork research conducted from 2012 to 2016 using the methods of Anthropology and applying acculturation theory. The author discusses the current status of mixed ethnic marriage in Chi Lang District in the early years of the third millennium, thereby pointing out the impacts of acculturation on the change of family relations within the scope of mixed ethnic families between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang with the focus on such aspects as labor division, children education, health care, and family belief activities.

Keywords: Family relation; Mixed ethnic marriage; Acculturation; Tay people; Kinh people.

* PhD., Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country where ethnic groups reside intermingled in different regions, not only at large administrative levels such as districts and provinces, but also within each village. Inter-residence has led to a strong cultural exchange among ethnic groups, and at the same time laid the foundation for mixed marriages between them in the acculturative process in each ethnic group.

In Chi Lang District, Lang Son Province, the Tay and the Nung are the two main ethnic groups while Kinh people resided there later. They, together with some other ethnic minorities who have small populations, have created a diverse local ethnic picture. The history of fighting against foreign aggression as well as the socio-economic development and cultural exchange process among ethnic groups in Chi Lang have led to the cultural change in each ethnic group. The Tay who is a long-term resident community in Vietnam with its own cultural identity built up through history has also been in the process of rapid cultural change in the context of industrialization and modernization, especially globalization and extensive international economic integration (Nguyễn Thị Thanh Bình, 2016). Their relationship with other ethnic groups, including mixed ethnic marriages, are taking place quite strongly today, especially marriages with Kinh people, and have been influencing their acculturation. In turn, this acculturative process has impacted on the family relationship in mixed ethnic families between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang.

This study was conducted in Quang Lang Commune and Bang Mac Commune in Chi Lang District that situates in the south of Lang Son Province, a province in the mountainous area of northern Vietnam bordering with China. The selection of two communes Bang Mac and Quang Lang aims to see certain impacts of natural geographical factors, population structure, socio-economic conditions... on the fields of cultural acculturation in the Tay within the context of mixed family between the Tay and the Kinh in the area. For example, Bang Mac Commune is 17km far away from the

national highway and Dong Mo Town (the center of Chi Lang District) while Quang Lang Commune is located next to the district center, with Hanoi-Dong Dang railway line, the national highway 279, and two old and new national highways 1A running through the South to the North of the commune. Bang Mac Commune is the main residence of Tay people while in Quang Lang, the population structure in each village is not the same, forming a very diverse exchange and contact environment.

The study analyzes the impacts of acculturation on the change of family relations in mixed ethnic families between the Tay and the Kinh, focusing on the areas of labor division, children education, health care, and family belief activities from 1986 up to now, which focuses on the period from 2000 to 2015 because the local statistics on this stage are fully recorded. The research uses typical methods of Anthropology, including participatory observation and in-depth interviews. Field information consisting of marriage registration data, ethnic background of couples, local economic, cultural and social characteristics etc., were collected from the Information Archive Department of Chi Lang District and the People's Committee of Quang Lang and Bang Mac communes. On the base of marriage registration data collected from the People's Committees of two communes, the author selected 48 mixed ethnic couples of Tay and Kinh people for in-depth interviews (35 couples¹ in Quang Lang Commune and 13 couples² in Bang Mac Commune). Participatory observations were used during secondary data collection, attending some local community activities as well as during in-depth interviews to verify the obtained information.

¹ 16 couples of Tay husband and Kinh wife, 19 couples of Kinh husband and Tay wife.

² 10 couples of Tay husband and Kinh wife, 3 couples of Kinh husband and Tay wife. There were totally 13 mixed ethnic couples of Tay and Kinh people in Bang Mac Commune in 2016.

1. Mixed ethnic marriage between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang District

Tay people in Chi Lang adhere to the principle of lineage exogamy; however traditional marriage between people of the same ethnic group was also a recognized practice. Accordingly, men and women when reaching their marriage age mainly got marriage with people of the same ethnic group but different lineages. This is partly because in the past, each village usually consisted of only one ethnic group. Not only that, hamlets and villages were often far from each other, communication and contact were limited, so “ethnic people have little understanding of each other, not much sympathy for each other and sometimes discriminate against each other” (La Công Ý, 2010). Therefore, marriage between people of different ethnic groups was very rare.

Gradually, the cultural contact among ethnic groups in Chi Lang through economic activities and cultural activities took place more and more often. Living together in the same area has also created opportunities for men and women of two ethnic groups to meet when they reach the marriage age. Up to now, the increasingly common practice of marriage between different ethnic people has shown that the concept of mixed ethnic marriage has become much more open. All respondents including the elderly, the middle-age, and young people said that “ethnicity” is not a factor to be considered in modern marriages nowadays.

Because of that, an increase in the number of mixed ethnic couples, including mixed ethnic marriages between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang, is a trend that could be easily observed.

Table 1. Number of couples registered for marriage in Quang Lang and Bang Mac communes (1999-2015)

Year	Number of married couples of the same ethnic group				Number of married couples of different ethnic groups				Unclear ³				Total of couples registered for marriage	
	Quang Lang		Bang Mac		Quang Lang		Bang Mac		Quang Lang		Bang Mac		Quang Lang	Bang Mac
	(1)	% Of the total	(2)	% Of the total	(3)	% Of the total	(4)	% Of the total	(5)	% Of the total	(6)	% Of the total	(1)+(3)+(5)	(2)+(4)+(6)
2015	30	56,60	14	87,50	23	43,40	2	12,50	0	0,00	0	0,00	53	16
2014	29	56,86	18	78,26	22	43,14	5	21,74	0	0,00	0	0,00	51	23
2013	41	56,94	26	72,22	31	43,06	10	27,78	0	0,00	0	0,00	72	36
2012	45	47,87	27	81,82	48	51,06	6	18,18	1	1,07	0	0,00	94	33
2011	38	51,35	25	75,76	36	48,65	5	24,24	0	0,00	0	0,00	74	30
2010	45	52,33	28	70,00	41	47,67	12	30,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	86	40
2009	32	47,06	26	78,79	36	52,94	7	21,21	0	0,00	0	0,00	68	33
2008	41	46,59	26	83,87	46	52,27	5	16,13	1	1,14	0	0,00	88	31
2007	32	52,46	22	84,62	29	47,54	3	11,54	0	0,00	1	3,84	61	26
2006	19	47,50	23	82,14	21	52,50	5	17,86	0	0,00	0	0,00	40	28
2005	23	54,76	10	71,43	19	45,24	4	28,57	0	0,00	0	0,00	42	14
2004	22	59,46	18	94,74	15	40,54	1	5,26	0	0,00	0	0,00	37	19
2003	37	63,79	31	83,78	21	36,21	6	16,22	0	0,00	0	0,00	58	37
2002	26	46,43	24	96,00	30	53,57	1	4,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	56	25
2001	17	54,84	6	60,00	14	45,16	4	40,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	31	10
2000	24	47,06	15	75,00	27	52,94	5	25,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	51	20
Total	501	52,08	339	80,05	459	47,71	81	19,24	2	0,21	1	0,24	962	421

Source: The Justice Office of Quang Lang and Bang Mac communes (March 2016)

³ Because the ethnic background of the wife or the husband or of both spouses were not specified in the archives.

According to Table 1, from 2000 to 2015, there were 459 mixed ethnic couples in Quang Lang Commune (accounting for 47.71% of total registered marriage couples), indicating an increase in mixed ethnic marriages in the area. Annual statistics show that the number of married couples of different ethnic groups each year accounts for nearly 50% of the total number of married couples. In 16 years, from 2000 to 2015, there are 6 years (2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2012) the number of couples of different ethnic groups registering for marriage accounts for more than 50% of the total number of registered couples. These data show a very popular trend of mixed ethnic marriage in Quang Lang. Meanwhile, also during this period, in Bang Mac Commune, mixed ethnic marriage only accounts for 19.24% of the total number of married couples registering for marriage. The number of couples of different ethnic groups registering for marriage each year is usually less than 10 couples (only 12 in 2010 and 10 in 2013) with only 10% to 20% of the total number of married couples in one year. This rate is higher than the period before 2000 but fluctuates between years, for example: in 2010, up to 30% of couples of different ethnic groups registered for marriage in Bang Mac, by 2012 this figure was only 18%, in 2013 it was 27.78% and most recently in 2015, the number of couples of different ethnic groups accounted for only 5% of the total number of married couples.

Regarding the mixed marriage between the Tay and the Kinh, according to household registration data in the research area, in Quang Lang Commune, mixed marriage between the Tay and the Kinh appeared in 12/13 villages, highest in Dong Mo Village (47 couples) and lowest in Pha Đeng Village (1 couple). In Bang Mac Commune, there are mixed marriages between the Tay and the Kinh at 7 out of 10 villages with no more than 4 couples in each village⁴.

The diversity of male and female origins can be seen in the mixed couples of the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang, partly reflecting the dynamics of the population in this area. In Quang Lang commune, Kinh people get married to Tay men or

⁴ The Justice Departments of Quang Lang and Bang Mac communes (March, 2016).

women from 20/63 provinces and cities of the country, concentrated mainly in the northern provinces and cities, a few come from the provinces in the North Central region and Central⁵. Far from the center than Quang Lang Commune, there are only 3 Kinh men married to Tay women in the entire Bang Mac Commune, all of them are from Bac Giang Province. The hometowns of 10 Kinh women married to Tay men are more diverse; they come from 6 different provinces/cities⁶. Although the mixed ethnic marriage situation in Bang Mac Commune is not as diverse as it is in Quang Lang Commune, statistics on the origins of Kinh people marrying Tay people in these two areas within the overall situation of Chi Lang District shows a certain openness of this area in population mobility (Vũ Phuong Nga, 2016).

The diversity of origin of Kinh people in mixed couples with Tay people reflects the geographical conditions and population dynamics of different areas in Chi Lang District, contributing to the diversity of jobs done by the mixed couples between the Tay and the Kinh.

Owing to diverse backgrounds, people have brought to Chi Lang many different jobs. The types of occupations for men and women in the mixed ethnic couples between the Tay and the Kinh in Quang Lang are quite diverse, including farming, trading, free labours, or jobs in state agencies such as teachers and district officials etc. Among 199 couples (398 people), the number of people doing farming is the largest (145/398 people, accounting for 36.43%)⁷. These are mainly couples of Tay husbands - Kinh wives because the Tay men inherit land from their parents. The number of people working as teachers, government officials and employees is quite large. In which, the number of women working as teachers are higher than that of men while the number of men working as State staff is higher than that of women. For

⁵ Bac Giang, Bac Ninh, Dong Nai, Ha Nam, Ha Noi, Ha Tinh, Hai Duong, Hai Phong, Hung Yen, Lang Son, Nam Dinh, Nghe An, Phu Tho, Quang Binh, Thai Binh, Thai Nguyen, Thanh Hoa, Thua Thien-Hue, Tuyen Quang, and Vinh Phuc (Data collected at Quang Lang People's Committee).

⁶ Bac Giang, Binh Phuoc, Hai Phong, Lang Son, Thai Nguyen, and Thanh Hoa (Data collected at Bang Mac People's Committee).

⁷ People Committee of Quang Lang Commune.

occupations in the business, service or self-employed sector, although the number of participants is small compared to other occupations, the statistics are evidence to an open economy in Quang Lang Commune, which enables people, regardless of ethnicity and origin, to earn their living by many different ways, depending on each person's conditions.

In Bang Mac, most of the mixed marriage couples between the Tay and the Kinh are at a young age (25-35 years old). These Tay men mainly do cultivation because they still live with their parents or receive land allocation after separating from the main house, except for 2 cases of working as workers in industrial zones in Bac Giang and Bac Ninh where they met their Kinh partners at work and got married⁸. With an estimated wage of 7-10 million per month that is equal to the income of the whole farming season, working in industrial zones has become a choice for many young people in villages and communes⁹. This fact has promoted the exchange between Tay people in the locality and the external social environment, thereby increasing mixed ethnic marriages in the locality.

In general, the increase of mixed ethnic marriage in Chi Lang has formed the base for the increase in the number of mixed ethnic families in the district. The existence of mixed ethnic families in Chi Lang is the basis of generations consisting of at least two bloodlines and inheriting the cultural heritages of many peoples. This fact has made the cultures of ethnic groups changed more and more, creating challenges for maintaining ethnic identities, especially in the current context of globalization and deep integration in mixed marriages.

2. The impact of cultural acculturation on the family relationship in the ethnic mixed marriage between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang district

2.1. Division of labor

Patriarchal family is a type of family both in Tay and Kinh societies where men are considered the breadwinner both in terms of spirit and economic aspects.

⁸ People Committee of Bang Mac Commune.

⁹ Data collected from in-depth interviews in 2016.

Therefore, this is also a popular type of mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang. One of its manifestations is that in most families, especially nuclear families, the man is the head of the household. The presence of the householder determines a man's right to represent his family in village-related affairs, such as joining funeral association or working with the village head when there are household statistics issues, register to vote, contribute money to local funds etc.

Table 2. Number of male and female heads of households in mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh in Quang Lang and Bang Mac communes¹⁰

Commune	Householder			Total (1)	Householder			Total (2)	Total (1) + (2)
	Tay husband - Kinh wife families				Kinh husband - Tay wife families				
	Husband	Wife	Another person ¹¹	Husband	Wife	Another person ¹²			
Quang Lang	10	0	6	16	9	4	6	19	35
Bang Mac	5	0	5	10	1	0	2	3	13
Total	15	0	11	26	10	4	8	22	48

Source: Quang Lang People's Committee and Bang Mac People's Committee (March 2016).

It can be seen that, except for the case of mixed ethnic couples living with their parents (19 couples as in Table 2), the proportion of Tay people who are householders in the mixed nuclear families between the Tay and the Kinh is

¹⁰ The data was collected on the base of the research samples.

^{11, 12} Since these mixed couples between the Tay and the Kinh are still living with the husband's parents or the wife's parents, whether or not they live separately, the householder belongs to the father or mother of the husband or wife.

very large (19 out of 29 householders according to Table 2). This could be partly explained that living in the socio-cultural space of the Tay and Nung ethnic groups, if the Tay wife or husband is the householder, it will be easier for the family to connect with organizations, local authorities as well as surrounding communities.

However, in terms of family economy, both husband and wife work to earn money for the family; there is a few families that only one person taking on the financial responsibilities of the whole family. For families who do not do farming, both husband and wife working in State agencies and get salary. For married couples who are self-employed, it is possible for each person to do separate works or both support each other in their livelihood activities.

For agricultural families, labor division is based on gender characteristics; men undertake heavy work such as ploughing, raking, and carrying; women do such works that do not require much labour as transplanting, sowing, and weeding. However, in some special cases, these norms of labor division are only relative. For example, Mr. G. V. T., a Kinh man, lives in his parents-in-law's house in Khon Nua Village, Bang Mac Commune. His wife, Mrs. N. T. D., whose eyesight was poor since her young age, could not be responsible for the family's farming work. Before their wedding, his parents-in-law had to perform all the farming works because Mrs. D.'s health is not good. Since the wedding of the young couple, Mr. T. has become the main labourer on the family's fields; he even does planting and transplanting seedlings that are usually considered female works. The co-implementation of a new way of doing business is one of the advantages of mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang as in addition to the relationship with the local Tay and Nung communities, the King wives or husband also maintain relationships with the ethnic minorities in their homeland and create a necessary network in economic activities.

Different from the equal contribution between husband and wife in livelihood activities, in other family activities, the wife takes on more work than her

husband, from housework to education and health care for family members; the husband only plays a supporting role, such as playing with the children while the wife cooks or sweeping the house while the wife does the laundry etc. However, for the fulfillment of the household's responsibility as a member of funeral association, husband and wife share the work together.

2.2. Family education and health care

2.2.1. Family education

Family education always plays a fundamental role in forming human personality. It is easy to see that the education in the mixed ethnic families between the Tay and the Kinh reflects the refinement of what is good in each ethnic group as well as the mutual learning between individuals of the two ethnic groups.

For Kinh husband - Tay wife couple, the wife easily recognizes the politeness in the Kinh way of speaking that they have to learn and follow. Meanwhile, the Kinh wives have also learned many good things from the Tay culture in family life, such as the Tay's cooking style, which was evaluated "sophisticated" by Mrs. V. T. N. (a Kinh wife in Lang Dang Village, Quang Lang Commune) when compared to Kinh people's way of cooking in her homeland (Hoa Xa Commune, Ung Hoa District, Hanoi). For example, Tay people stir-fry food with a pan, not in the pot as the Kinh does; or if Tay people want to cut cooked meat on a cutting board that was just used to cut raw meat, they wash the cutting board and place it above the hearth to let it dried because of the smoke and then use it to cut cooked meat etc.

Education in the mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh starts with the self-education of the wives when they become daughters-in-law. In turn, the children of the two Kinh-Tay bloodlines are taught good things that have been refined through the perception of their mothers in the process of adapting to a new life in their husband's family. In the past, in the Tay family, the girls were taught to cook and sew to fulfill their duties as a daughter-in-law when they

live with their husband's family whilst the boys had to know how to do farming to carry the family economy. Today, in mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh, the regular contact with Kinh culture - the culture of the majority, education in schools and many other communication channels as well as daily communication with each other have made the upbringing of children not just limited to gender-oriented family works. Parents in mixed ethnic families between the Tay and the Kinh also have to guide and support their children in choosing the latter's right mates.

It should be added that, for young couples living with parents, the upbringing of children in the family is also supported by grandparents. In addition to reminding children and grandchildren about the moral principles, in areas where Tay people have large population such as Bang Mac, grandparents also play a role in teaching the ethnic language to their children and grandchildren.

2.2.2. Health care

Taking care of the health of family members is usually the female's job, which covers preparing daily meals and taking care of the sick members (Đỗ Thúy Bình, 1999). One of the traditional characteristics of the Tay dish is that they are often processed using a lot of fat. The appearance of Kinh daughters-in-law in the family has created a transformation in the preparation of dishes. Boiled dishes appear more in the family meals.

“Kinh people have boiled dishes and soups. Most of Tay people here usually eat fried dishes that are so greasy. I couldn't eat at first but still had to follow the family's way of cooking. Gradually I got used to it. Now if I cook for my small family, I mix the dishes, a meal includes both boiled and fried dishes and also soups. But if we have meals with my parents-in-law, I still fry the food, it's difficult for me if only me eating boiled dishes in those meals” (Mrs. L. T. T., born in 1988, Kinh ethnic, Na Pe Village, Bang Mac Commune).

Meanwhile, for the Tay wives living in the Kinh families within the external social environment that is very close to the Tay and Nung culture, they follow

the lifestyle of Kinh people but still cook some dishes in the Tay style for the whole families.

Taking care of sick family members is also the work of women. Generally, both Tay and Kinh wives apply folk knowledge of both ethnic groups about health care to cure common diseases such as headaches, flu, stomachache etc. People of serious illness are taken to hospital. For children who are difficult to raise, many families often seek the help of *then* (the shaman).

Regarding the elderly's health, in addition to medical examination and treatment following Western medicine, families also hold *then* ceremonies with the wish for regaining the health of the elderly. The ceremonies, on the other hand, also help to relieve the elderly's mind if they get sick. Most of the elderly respondents answered that they held at least 1-2 *then* ceremonies, some have done it 4-5 times. Some families invite Kinh sorcerers to do the ritual. For example, in the case of Mrs. V. T. T. in Nui Da Village, Quang Lang Commune, in early 2016 she fell ill for unknown reasons, her family took her to the district hospital for examination but still could not recover. Then, the family looked for the sorcerer and learned that the cause of the illness was because the neighbor dug the ground to build a house and touched the Mrs. T.'s family altar. T.'s daughter-in-law has a sister who works as a medium in Thanh Hoa, so she discussed with her husband to invite her sister to Quang Lang for holding a ritual to solve this problem. This decision helped them save about 10 million dong in comparison to inviting a *then* shaman. Mrs. T. herself was initially skeptical about this decision, because she is a Tay woman and the medium is a Kinh one. However, after the ritual held in the morning, Mrs. T. "felt happy and comfortable in the afternoon and ready for cooking dinner for the whole family" said her son, Mr. P. M. D. It could be said that, living in a family environment with cultural exposure of two different ethnic groups provides an opportunity for individuals to choose cultural practices that they believe bring peace to their lives.

Obviously, the combination of folk knowledge and beliefs in caring and treating family members is one of the advantages of the mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang.

2.3. Family and lineage relations

In general, in the mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh, such basic family values in Kinh culture and Tay culture are still maintained such as “respect the elderly, love the children” (Tạ Anh, 2017)... Since both husband and wife contribute to the family economy, in these families, the relationship between husband and wife is quite equal. For couples who have separated from their parents, most of them discuss with each other in big jobs, such as job orientation or a new way of doing business; purchase property and valuables; children's education and job application; family relations with both paternal and maternal sides etc. For young couples who still live with their parents, they still need to ask their parents' opinions on the above issues.

In the real life of mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh, self-adjustment of each individual to maintain family relations is necessary. Although many local people believe that the Tay and the Kinh have many similarities, there are still some differences in customs, rules, and norms. The way to use personal pronouns between husband and wife is an example. Since the communication in these mixed ethnic families is mainly in Vietnamese, the fact that husband and wife call each other *anh - em* has created mutual respect between the couple, which is different from the *cau - mung* in Tay language.

For the Tay daughter-in-law, learning the manners of talking with her husband's relatives, especially in the early days of being a daughter-in-law, also put some pressure on them. According to them, Tay people in the locality have an easy-going way of speaking in comparison with the Kinh's style, which follows the hierarchy, so they have to learn those norms.

When being asked about this issue, Mrs. V. T. T. (born in 1944, Tay ethnic, Nui Da Village, Quang Lang Commune) said: “*Up here Tay daughters-in-law*

speak loudly and freely but Kinh daughters-in-law always address their parents-in-law in a respectful way. But there's nothing that I can't learn, I can do likewise".

Ms. N. T. D. (born in 1970, Tay ethnic, Khon Nua Village, Bang Mac Commune) when returning to her husband's homeland also has similar feelings: *"Going back to my husband's homeland, I saw him greeting every neighbour walking along the village lane by simply saying "Where are you going?", then I repeated "Where are you going?". If you don't say hello, people will say that the daughter-in-law of this or that family did not greet people. There is no greeting here. You say hello if you like, you don't say it if you don't like, that's okay".*

Meanwhile, the easy-going characteristic of the Tay also affects the behavior of Kinh daughters-in-law in the family. In some cases, they are not hierarchical in dealing with their husbands' relatives.

Ms. H. T. L. (born in 1969, Kinh ethnic, Nui Da Village, Quang Lang Commune) told us about the behavior among her husband's relatives: *"It's not like that but like this up here. Even if Mr. C. (younger brother of L.'s mother-in-law) keeps talking but doesn't do anything, his descendants will not listen to him. The head of the family must deserve to be the head of the family, otherwise the descendants will shoulder the duties".*

Additionally, the wife's reception and familiarization with the new customs of the husband's ethnic group also shows the adaptation of the Tay's daughters-in-law in the process of integrating into the new family. In particular, in the past 3-4 decades, many traditional customs have been maintained quite strictly in Kinh families and lineages. Therefore, Tay daughters-in-law must pay attention to those customs, including but not limited to placing offerings on the altar in rituals and ceremonies, greeting neighbors every time they go out in the village's paths. Meanwhile, Tay husband - Kinh wife families, depending on each family as well as the relationship between daughter-in-law and her parents-in-law, some Tay customs are still practiced by Kinh daughters-in-law in family activities. For example, Mrs. N. T. K. N., born in 1975 in Lang Trung

Village, until now, usually brings a basin of water with a towel to her mother-in-law's bed for the latter to wash her face and a glass of water to rinse her mouth every morning.

Another principle in the Tay's traditional family activities is that daughter-in-law and father-in-law never have meal together (Đỗ Thúy Bình, 1994). However, most of the Tay couples who have Kinh daughters-in-law are those who had a lot of contact with the outside society, such as participating in the Nation's Revolution, working in State agencies... so they often have innovative thoughts. For those families, the principle of not having meal together has no longer maintained since several decades ago. However, in such areas that are far from the center where the Tay have large population like Bang Mac, this principle had been maintained in some families until about fifty years ago. Besides, family members are no longer bound by the rules of location in the home.

Usually, Kinh people have homeland in the Northern Delta and North Central province. In a year, they often return home to handle work related to the lineages. Some return to the homeland 2 times a year, sometimes up to 6-7 times if there are many family and lineage affairs.

In general, in mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh, women play an important role in regulating relations with the family and lineages of both sides. The cultural differences between the two ethnic groups put some pressure on them, but also showed their adaptation in the new family environment.

2.4. Practice religion, beliefs

2.4.1. Human life cycle ritual

Since the mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang live in an environment that is close to the Tay culture, the customs related to childbirth, whether practiced by the Tay wife or the Kinh wife, all reflect the Tay cultural nuances. For example, pregnant women do not do hard work, and are not

allowed to attend funerals. In addition, during the first 5 months, they do not put strange things such as sticks or fresh branches of trees under the bed where the pregnant woman lies, as well as the husband abstaining from cutting, not planting trees in the surrounding area to avoid miscarriage. After giving birth¹², before bringing the baby into the house, the elderly in the house makes a fire to let the person holding the baby (father or mother) pass over before enter the door so that the baby does not startle and cry at night. During the confinement, due to the notion that this is the time when a woman is not clean, they absolutely cannot walk past the altar of their ancestors. For some families, the mother during her confinement can go out (to the market...) but avoid entering anyone's house to abstain from bad luck for them. Food for the mother is also paid attention, for example chicken must be roasted with ginger, abstaining from fishy dishes. Tay people in Chi Lang do not have the custom of making midwives altar for children, and according to them it is Nung custom. However, in some mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh, people still set up a midwife altar for the children.

In the past, the Tay's traditional wedding ceremony consisted of a proposing ceremony, an engagement ceremony, a wedding ceremony and a first visit ceremony of the daughter to her parents. The engagement ceremony is usually 1-2 months after the proposing ceremony; after the engagement ceremony, the son-in-law had to go back to his parents-in-law's house for 3 years before the wedding; the wedding usually lasted 2 days. This process takes place with many specific customs and rituals of the Tay and the Kinh. However, since the marriage between the Tay and the Kinh appeared in Chi Lang, the length of time for wedding ceremony was shortened, the engagement ceremony and the wedding ceremony are usually held on one day.

In Chi Lang, according to many old people, since the 50s-60s of the 20th century, no one wore Tay traditional wedding costume anymore. For weddings

¹² Currently, 100% of women in Quang Lang and Bang Mac give birth in hospitals.

between the Kinh and the Tay, Tay traditional attire was totally absent. Up to now, the bride, regardless of the Tay or Kinh ethnicity, wear European-style wedding dresses; young couples born around 1985 also take art wedding photos before getting married.

Basically, each ethnic group will organize the wedding ceremony according to their custom. For the wedding of a Kinh bridegroom and a Tay bride, it is customary to tie the strings when the groom enters the room to get the bride or the bride must neither cry nor turn around when she goes to the door. As practices are still maintained to this day, even with weddings held in foreign countries still retain these customs. In addition, up to now, buying gifts for parents-in-law (new pillows, new towels) is still done by Kinh brides in the Tay family.

As for funeral rituals, basically the people in Chi Lang still maintain their tradition; funerals of the Kinh people follow the Kinh style, the Tay's funeral follows the Tay people's customs. However, the length of time for a funeral is now shortened to only one day, the dead must be buried after 24 hours. The development of funeral associations in the villages has linked the villagers, regardless of the Kinh, Tay or Nung, to support each other when families are in a mourning moment. In Chi Lang today, inviting a sorcerer to organize funerals or rituals of worshipping for 40 days and 100 days for the dead no longer required sorcerer to be of the same ethnic group, but the Tay can invite Nung sorcerer, Kinh people can invite Tay or Nung sorcerer. Notably, depending on the village, the exhumation is carried out in the third year after the funeral. However, some families do the exhumation after only a year.

2.4.2. Ancestor worship

The Tay and Kinh both worship ancestors. In Chi Lang, normally, in a Tay family, there are 3 types of altars: the ancestor altar is located in the main apartment of the house, the God of the soil altar is put in the front yard, and the Kitchen God altar is in the kitchen. Meanwhile, ancestors, the God of the soil,

and the Kitchen God are all worshipped on the same altar according to Kinh custom. For the mixed family between the Tay and the Kinh, since both the Kinh and the Tay are patriarchal, family worship is practiced according to custom of the husband. However, in the research area, there are some cases where there is a mixture of the Tay and Kinh worship practices: 1) Kinh husband (living in the wife's family) - Tay wife (Bang Mac Commune) worship the husband's aunt on the ancestor altar; 2) Kinh husband - Tay wife (Quang Lang Commune) worships the husband's aunt on a private altar placed in the front yard, not together on the ancestral altar (due to the Tay concept that the people who are unmarried and die young have not enough qualifications to be worshipped on the same altar with the ancestors); 3) Tay husband - Kinh wife (Quang Lang Commune) gather three altars in three separate places according to the tradition of the Tay people into one altar in the main apartment of the house (according to the way of the Kinh people). The different ways of organizing ancestor altars at Chi Lang as some of the above cases show the richness in this concept of belief in mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh. The fact that many ethnic groups reside intermingled in a small area and the contact between people of different ethnic groups in family life have created conditions for people to observe and test the effectiveness of practitioners of each ethnic belief, from that they decide how to practice beliefs in accordance with the family's conditions and aspirations.

In Chi Lang, both the Tay and the Kinh make commemorations for the dead, however the method of worshipping is different. In the Kinh, brothers, including sisters, contribute together to hold a death anniversary at the house where the main incense bowl is kept. Meanwhile, for the Tay people, each brother organizes the death anniversary at his own house while each sister prepares a set of sticky rice and a chicken to worship her parents at the main house. In this way, depending on the relationship and ability of each person, some people invite a large number of brothers and sisters to celebrate their parent(s)' death anniversary, some others do not. Talking

about the way of worshipping the ancestors' death anniversary of Tay people, Mrs. N. T. S. (born in 1938, Kinh ethnic, Dong Chua Village, Bang Mac Commune) said:

“Unlike Kinh people, sons and daughters contribute money to the eldest son to hold the ancestors’ death anniversary, for Tay people, on the father's death anniversary, four sons do the same thing at their own houses. This is the original house because my husband died here, so I attend the ceremony at noon. In the afternoon I go to other sons’ houses to attend their ceremonies”.

Currently, in some mixed families between the Tay and the Kinh, ancestor commemoration basically follows the old custom, but there are cases where brothers and sisters in the same house go together to the main house to commemorate. Some people give money to the main family to buy offerings, a form of transformation similar to the Kinh's death commemoration. Ms. V. T. N. (born in 1971, Kinh ethnic, Lang Dang Village, Quang Lang Commune) shared about her practices:

“Nowadays in this modern society, every time on the anniversary of my father-in-law's death, I give my sister-in-law a few hundred dong to prepare for the ceremony because she lives in the original house. It means that she makes it for me. Who doesn't have money can buy just a package of cakes and candy to put on the altar and then still attend the feast”.

It can be said that the similarity between Kinh culture and Tay culture (the type of patriarchal family, ancestor worship practices and death anniversary...) has created conditions for them to get closer, causing the insiders themselves - the mixed couples of the Tay and the Kinh - to have a feeling of the indistinguishable similarity between the cultural practices of the two peoples. Above all, the characteristics of both Tay culture and Kinh culture have been refined through family lives and carried out by generations of children of two bloodlines Tay and Kinh. Teaching each other to adapt to the family life of different cultural basis has help to promote the unity between two ethnic groups and contribute to the development of mixed ethnic families in Vietnam.

In conclusion, the process of acculturation among the Tay in the context of a mixed family between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang District operates according to three basic trends: 1) The tendency to maintain a number of traditional customs and practices; 2) The tendency to adopt new cultural values; and 3) The tendency of losing some traditional cultural elements. Spiritual culture, an important part of which are ancestor worship and related religious practices in festivals and New Year, in funeral rituals for the dead, or in grave custom..., is a long-lasting factor in family life. Meanwhile, many elements of material culture are rapidly disappearing, especially clothes and houses. According to Berry J. W. (2005), “during acculturation, groups of people and their individual members engage in intercultural contact, producing a potential for conflict, and the need for negotiation in order to achieve outcomes that are adaptive for both parties”. In general, in the context of mixed family between the Tay and the Kinh in Chi Lang, the strategy of acculturation among the Tay people is the integration with the Kinh culture as well as with the national culture. The long-term coexistence between the Tay and the Kinh people in Chi Lang as well as certain similarities between the cultures of the two ethnic groups further facilitates the process of integration and cultural adaptation of the Tay people in the locality to the Kinh.

Along with the process of economic, cultural, and social development at all levels, the increase of mixed ethnic marriages in Chi Lang District (Lang Son Province) has contributed to the development of mixed ethnic family, a type of multicultural family in the local multicultural community, especially when multiculturalism has become an inevitable trend for families and communities in ethnic minority areas in Vietnam as well as in border areas between Vietnam and some countries in the region for many years. The process of cultural acculturation in the Tay in particular and in other ethnic groups in general in mixed ethnic family has enhanced mutual respect for each other's cultures and respect for differences not only in family context but also in community life.

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