

# Some traditional rituals in the life cycle beliefs of the Ede people in the Central Highlands of Vietnam

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Ede ethnic minority community is a long-standing resident community in the Central Highlands provinces of Vietnam and has a very various and rich cultural and religious life. At present, the Ede ethnic minority community is preserving many traditional cultural values, contributing to cultural features of the Central Highlands, creating a culture difference compared to other culture regions in Vietnam. This article focuses on features of the Ede ethnic minority community in the Central Highlands and some traditional rituals in the life cycle beliefs of them to make it clear that special features in their spiritual life has contributed to enriching the cultural picture of the ethnic groups in the Central Highlands in particular and the Vietnamese cultural identity in general.

**KEYWORDS:** Traditional rituals, life cycle beliefs, Ede people, Central Highlands, Vietnam.

## **Introduction**

The Central Highlands is a land with many traditional cultures, customs, festivals, and various and rich religious life of ethnic minority communities living in this land. The Ede ethnic minority community is a long-standing resident community in the Central Highlands provinces, so it is considered the ethnic people with many of the typical matriarchal cultural identity traditions in this region. The cultural and religious life of the Ede ethnic minority community is very various and plentiful. "In the life of the Ede ethnic community, there are many rituals that are held periodically and irregularly. Those are rites or festivals associated with phenomena related to the human life cycle to the production cycle (mainly agricultural production, etc.). The scope and scale of such rituals depends on the specific content and requirements. Those are rituals performed for an individual, for a family, or for an entire village".<sup>[1]</sup> Currently, the Ede ethnic minority community is preserving many traditional cultural values, contributing to cultural features of the Central Highlands, making a culture difference compared to other cultural regions in Vietnam. The various and plentiful cultural features of the Ede people have really contributed to enriching the ethnic cultural picture of Vietnam. <sup>[2]</sup> This article focuses on features of the Ede ethnic minority community in the Central Highlands and some traditional rituals in the religious life of them to make it clear that special features in their spiritual life has contributed to enriching the cultural picture of the ethnic groups in the Central Highlands in particular and the Vietnamese cultural identity in general.

**Research Results****Overview of the Ede ethnic group in the Central Highlands**

The Ede ethnic minority community is a long-standing residential community in the Central Highlands and has many other names such as Anak Ea De, Ra De (or Rhade), E De, egar, De. The Ede people have local groups such as Kpă, Adham, Krung, Mdhur, Ktul, Dlie, Hrue, Bih, Blo, Kah, Kdrao, Dong Kay, Dong Mak, Ening, Arul, Hwing, Ktle, etc. The E De people belong to the Austronesian language family (Malayo - Polinexia), with a population of 398,671 people densely resides in the Central Highlands provinces such as Dak Lak, Dak Nong, Gia Lai, etc. [3] In production activities, the Ede people have a tradition of planting upland rice by the rotational plot method, with cutting and burning. After a period of cultivation, fields of the Ede people will be fallowed to enable the forest to be regenerated, then they will clear, burn and cultivate again. Depending on the type and resilience of soil, the rotational plot cycle for planting is about 05 to 08 years. The Ede people often cultivate in form of polyculture and only plant one crop per year. The Ede people also cultivate water fields, however, this form is less. In addition, they also raise livestock and poultry to serve religious ritual activities. The most popular handicrafts are bamboo and rattan knitting to manufacture household commodities, ton growing and weaving to serve family activities and exchange goods. [4]

In terms of cuisine, the Ede people often use plain rice by cooking it in a large earthenware or copper pot. Their food often includes salt and pepper, bamboo shoots, vegetables from gathering, fish, and meat from birds and animals from hunting. Drinks of the Ede people are mainly tube wine kept in glazed terra-cotta pots. On the occasion of making sacrifices to Gods, the Ede people often use sticky rice. In addition, the Ede ethnic minority community has a custom of betel chewing.

Regarding traditional costume of the Ede people, women wear a long skirt to their heels and bare or a short pullover in the summer, while, men usually wear loincloths and short blouses. In the cold season, Ede men and women often put on an extra blanket. The Ede people often use jewelry such as string of beads, copper rings, and bracelet for neck, hands and legs. The Ede people also have the custom of filing their teeth, piercing their ears, blacken their teeth and wearing a scarf and hat on their heads.

The Ede ethnic minority community often live in long stilt houses with boat-shaped architecture. The long house of the Ede people has only two rows of horizontal columns, the structure follows the columns and has two basic features: two vertical walls erected in form of broad upper - narrow lower part with and protruding roofs. The space of the long house is divided into two parts vertically. The first part of the long house is called Gah - this is both a living room and a common place for the whole matriarchal family. The end of the long house is called ôk and consists of many rooms with bamboo partitions for couples in the family.

Currently, the Ede ethnic minority community still keeps traditional family culture under the matriarchal system in Vietnam. In marriage, the Ede woman is the one who takes the initiative to ask for a husband by matchmaking and to marry him for living in the wife's family. After marriage, the husband will reside in the wife's house and the youngest daughter is the heir. When one of the two people dies, the deceased's family and lineage must have a replacement according to the custom of "chue nue" - wire connection, it means the husband must marry with his wife's sister. However, nowadays, this custom in marriage is no longer a mandatory practice. The Ede society is established according to traditional practices. The resident unit of the community is called village and is also the only social organization in the tradition. People in a village belong to many branches of a family of both lineages but still have one branch of a family as nucleus. [5] The head of each village is called the village elder or the water wharf owner (Po pin ca) on behalf of his wife to operate all activities of the community.

When a family member dies, the funeral is held at home and then taken to a cemetery for burial. It is a previous custom of the Ede people in the past that if persons in the same family at the same time die, coffins will be buried in the same grave. Wealth distributed to the dead is placed in a funeral house. The Ede people believe that when a family member completes the work of building a funeral house for the deceased and completes a grave abandonment, it also means taking care of the spirit and the grave of the deceased is fulfilled. [6]

The Ede people have the custom of new rice celebration in December (December of the lunar calendar). When the crop harvest is completed, depending on the conditions of each village, a new rice celebration will be held. After the new rice celebration (*hũa ngắ*t), the new year (*mnăm thun*) is organized to celebrate a bountiful harvest. This is the biggest festival of the Ede community [7] People in the village will slaughter buffaloes, cows or pigs and chickens to worship the God of rice. In the spiritual life of the Ede people, the biggest deity is the Creators *Aê Di* and *Aê Du*, followed by the God of Earth (*yang lan*), God of Rice (*yang mdie*) and other Gods. The Ede people believe that the Agricultural Gods are good Gods; and Gods such as: Gods of thunder, lightning, storms, flood and ghosts are considered Evil Gods. In the religious life of the Ede people, the blessing prayer ceremony and health ceremony are the great rituals of each person and in the life of each person, if anyone can organize many big ceremonies with many sacrifices with many buffaloes and cows, precious tea, tube wine, they are respected by villagers.

In agricultural activities, the Ede people calculate the calendar according to the lunar phase and each month has 30 days, a year has 12 months and is divided into 09 seasons corresponding to 09 stages in the cycle of cultivation such as: clearing for cultivation, new crop burning, tilling, weeding, etc. The Ede people base on this form of calendar in their cultivation and production.

Especially, the Ede people have many famous art forms such as singing to tell epics, epics, epic poem, challenge-and-response singing, quiz songs, genealogy songs, etc. [8] Regarding music background, the Ede people is famous for their set of gongs including 06 flat gongs, 03 bossed gongs and one great drum. At any festival, the Ede people also organize the beating of gongs. In addition to gongs, they also have musical instruments made of bamboo, dried gourd shells, etc. with many unique expressions of the ethnic group.

In the traditional Ede society, the real life of people is always closely linked with many beliefs and rituals to sacrifice to the Gods. According to the polytheistic concept of the Ede people, the Gods always govern the real life of people. Therefore, people who want to have good health, a peaceful life, favourable agricultural production, and beneficial hunting must pray the Gods to be supported. The Ede people believe that there is a close relationship between humans and the Gods. Humans can talk, form friendships, marry the Gods, and the Gods can also give up their noble status to live as a worldly person. With the concept of animism, the Ede people believe that all things and phenomena have spirit and souls (*Yang*). The spirit world of all things is very diverse and rich, thus people need to respect all things in order to be protected by them. [9] Therefore, the Ede people perform many rituals to worship the Gods to satisfy the spiritual needs in life, create a harmony between people and supernatural forces, and pray to the Gods to be supported in fulfilling their wishes or overcoming their insoluble difficulties.

### ***Life cycle beliefs in the religious life of the Ede people***

The Ede believe that the world has three layers: the heavens, the earth, and underground. There are gods who reign and govern human life at those three levels, "who are the highest perfection in both body and mind, understanding, intelligence, honesty, nobility, selflessness..."[10] In addition, there are the Gods residing everywhere such as the God of field (*yang hma*), the God of ancestors (*yang atâo*), the God of bun (*yang mboh buk*) and the Gods (*yang*) who govern human life and

surroundings. [9] With the concept of “animism”, the Ede people believe that each person when living has a body (*asei mlei*) and a soul (*mngăť*). When a person dies, the soul part (*mngăť*) becomes *atao* (the soul of the dead) and before the ceremony of grave abandonment, the soul of the dead (*atao*) still exists around their grave. After the ceremony of grave abandonment, the souls of the dead will return to the ancestral world, turning into a dewdrop that will reincarnate back into living people on earth when having an opportunity. The Ede people always care about human health and life and they believe that a person’s health or illness depends on the soul. If the soul (*mngăť*) is healthy, the body is healthy, and if the soul (*mngăť*) is sick, the body is sick. Therefore, in the life of the Ede people, from their birth to their death, there are many rituals associated with milestones in their life cycle and many festivals associated with the community’s beliefs. [4] The performance of sacrifice ceremonies has shown the Ede people’s harmonious thinking between humans and supernatural forces, with nature and creatures. They believe that, from birth to death, people go through three important stages: birth, adulthood and death. Therefore, they have rituals corresponding to each stage, reflecting their beliefs and knowledge about the human life cycle.

### ***Rituals in giving birth***

From the time a mother is pregnant until the baby is born and until the end of teenager, the Ede people have many rituals such as: Ceremony of pregnant mother, Ceremony of midwife, Ear blowing and baby naming ceremony, Incarnation ceremony, Bracelet wearing ceremony.

Ceremony of pregnant mother: The Ede people believe that a large family is not only a good fortune, but also honor and prestige. Therefore, when a woman in the family becomes pregnant, the Ede will perform a ritual to pray that the pregnant mother will always be healthy so that she can give birth smoothly. When a woman is 3 months pregnant, the Ede family will hold a ceremony to pray that the baby born will be healthy and intelligent. Sacrifices include a jar of wine and a grilled chicken. The pregnant woman sits with her feet on an iron axe-head and a copper ring tied to a wine cup in her right hand a copper ring tied to a wine cup. The shaman takes a flower, dips it in a mixture of chicken blood and tube wine, and then applies it to the pregnant woman’s leg to pray for the health of the fetus. Then, the shaman takes bead-tree leaves coated with dog’s blood and applies it on the woman’s forehead and around the belly to ward off evil spirits. During pregnancy, the woman also has to abstain from eating and drinking some things, such as not eating bitter eggplant soup, not eating jackfruit for fear of sticking umbilical cord, and not eating reptiles such as geckos and snakes., etc., and not eating in the pot, or not eating while walking, because that they fear that although it is not time to give birth, she has labour pains. [8]

Ceremony of midwife: the Ede people believe that when a child is born healthy, there is also the merit of the midwife, so in gratitude to the midwife, the Ede people make offerings. At the same time, the Ede people believe that if they don’t make a sacrifice to thank the midwife, if she has any fate after the delivery, the pregnant woman’s family has to take care of treating the midwife and if the situation is worse, when the midwife dies, the midwife’s family will convert to property and force the child’s family to compensate it. The time to organize the ceremony depends on the family, usually, the Ede people will organize when the baby is from one to seven days of age. Offerings include a jar of wine and a boiled chicken. The midwife takes the baby in her arms and the shaman apply chicken blood on the baby’s feet in the belief that the baby will grow up fast and healthily. After that, the midwife will feed the baby with chicken liver, with the meaning of praying for the baby’s health and peace.

Ear blowing and baby naming ceremony: This is an important ritual for the Ede people because after performing this ritual, the child begins to officially integrate into society through a name recognized by the community. After the baby is born, about a day to a month, the Ede people will conduct a naming ceremony for the baby.

Offerings include a chicken and a jar of wine, a bitter eggplant, a wild guava leaf, a bronze cup and if the baby is a boy, offerings will add an awl, a chisel and a paring knife. In the process of preparing offerings, the Ede people pay special attention not to break chicken intestines in the process of preparing the chicken, because the Ede people consider it taboo and bad luck to their descendants. In case of breaking, another chicken is requested. The ceremony takes place in the morning. The midwife will ask the parents what to name the baby, then she will ask the baby and she will take a piece of chicken liver dipped in wine and bring it to the baby's mouth. If the baby likes the name, the baby will lick the liver, and if the baby doesn't, it means the baby doesn't like the name yet. The midwife will say another name until the baby licks the liver, then, takes a guava leaf dipped in dew and apply it on the baby's mouth to hope that the child will become brave and enduring if he encounters any difficulties. Then the midwife bring the baby back to the mother and everyone will start a party.

**Incarnation ceremony:** In the process of giving birth, the Ede people believe that if a child is born on the same day as a deceased relative or a deceased reputable person in the community, the spirit of the dead person will enter the child. Therefore, when the child turns one month old, the Ede people perform the incarnation ceremony for the child - calling the child's soul back to the body so that the child can grow up in the healthy and fast way. Usually, the ceremony of incarnation for a child is held together with the naming ceremony. Offerings include a chicken and a jar of wine.

**Bracelet wearing ceremony:** The Ede people believe that a bracelet represents the God of life and each Ede person usually wears a bracelet for their life. When the child is one year old, the Ede people hold a ceremony to wear a bracelet for the child with the hope that the bracelet will bring peace and health to the child. Offerings include a chicken and a jar of wine. The child's parents prepare an unmarked copper bracelet and the shaman will put the bracelet on for the child. After the first bracelet wearing ceremony, the child's parents still offer the bracelet with a jar of wine and a chicken every year, or they can perform a ceremony to replace with the larger bracelet. When the child turns 12 years old, the Ede people perform an offering ceremony to Yang to raise the number of lines on the child's life bracelet. Offerings include a chicken or pig and 2 jars of wine. The shaman will change the bracelet and pray for health and peace for the wearer.

### ***Praying rituals for good health in the life cycle***

**Adulthood ritual:** For the Ede people, the adulthood ritual is mandatory in each person's life cycle to mark the village's official recognition of a person when he or she reaches adulthood. After this ceremony, a person can take control of his or her own life and get married and become a parent. The adulthood ceremony shows a very high sense of community because it has the participation of the whole village and this is a big ceremony because the Ede people have the belief that the guardian angel brings people health, courage and strength to fight against nature, to create material wealth. Depending on the conditions of each family, the ceremony is held when a person is 16 or 18 years old. Offerings included five jars of tube wine and a medium-sized pig. For boy, they offer a hog, and for girl, they offer a sow to pray for the better health of the beneficiary. While performing the ritual, the village elder will act on behalf of the village and the boy's clans, to conduct a ceremony to worship for Giang's witness. The bracelet given during the adulthood ceremony will be a symbol of life and strength. The adulthood ceremony has 04 times of worship: worshiping the God of kitchen who manages in the Boh Tao Yang Hleang house ; worshiping the God of birth and health - Yang Esse; worshiping the Yang Hleang and worshiping the God of heaven, the God of earth, the God of river, the God of stream, the God of mountain and hill - Yang Leang Kong. After the worship is complete, the shaman will put the copper bracelet prepared by the family into the boy's hand. The bracelet is an

affirmation that the village has given the boy the strength to shoulder the great responsibilities of his family, clan, and village. When this ceremony ends, the boy will be recognized as an adult by the community, able to shoulder heavy works of the family and village. Each Ede person, to be recognized as an adult by the community, needs to undergo a total of 05 rituals and there will be different offerings and rites each time. During such rituals, many traditional costumes and the sound of drums and gongs with traditional dances contribute to the unique cultural values of the Ede people. [11] The adulthood ceremony of the Ede people in the Central Highlands has a great spiritual significance and has existed for thousands of years, is one of the most traditional and typical rituals of the Ede people. This ritual is recognized as one of the national intangible cultural heritages and brings joy to the Ede ethnic minority community.

**Praying ceremony for peace:** The Ede believe that human health is bestowed by Gods. Every year, the Ede people perform a praying ceremony for health to ask Yangs to bless them with health, material wealth, bountiful harvest, and prosperous business. Depending on the conditions of each family, offerings and time of this ceremony are different. For wealthy families, the praying ceremony for health, also known as continuous eating and drinking ceremony (*huã blãm nmãm thũn*), takes place for many days to give thanks to ancestors, grandparents and Gods.

**Praying ceremony for health:** This is one of the important ceremony for the Ede people and in each person's life, depending on family conditions and personal success, the Ede people can hold 05 to 07 praying ceremonies for health. Those who are successful and powerful, their offerings will be more and their sacrificed animals will be more valuable, in which the most valuable offerings are buffaloes or cows. According to the tradition of the Ede people, before using buffalo as a sacrifice, they must have rituals with chickens and pigs respectively. [12] Offerings for health ceremony include a chicken and a jar of tube wine, a chicken and three jars of tube wine, a pig and three jars of tube wine, or a pig and five jars of wine. In each worshipping ceremony, especially the worshipping ceremony with pigs or buffaloes and cows, the Ede people will invite a large number of relatives in the clan to attend the ceremony with their families. From the previous afternoon, all family members and clans will be present to prepare ingredients to cook traditional dishes. Prepared offerings include a quid of betel placed in a copper cup, a brocade blanket, a copper ring and a brocade shirt, loincloth. The worshipping ceremony with 05 jars of wine should have 05 more bowls of meat and 05 copper cups filled with tube wine. The offerings are solemnly placed in a position perpendicular to the east wall of the long house, close to the largest and most precious jar of wine in the ceremony. This is also the position where the shaman will sit and pray for health of the homeowner with prayers for peace and health. The ceremony takes place in 03 parts with the sound of gongs and drums. The first rite of health praying is to worship the Gods, ancestors and the deceased to announce and invite them to attend the ceremony with the homeowner. The next rite is the worshipping rite for the beneficiary with offerings including 01 pig, 05 gourds with water, 05 copper cups filled with wine and 05 copper rings corresponding to 05 cups of tube wine. When the worshipping ceremony is carried out, the shaman reads a prayer for good health and puts 05 copper bracelets on the wrist of the beneficiary. The last ceremony is a celebration for the beneficiary with a buffalo. When the gong beats, the shaman reads prayers for the homeowner and the beneficiary, and members of the family also put copper bracelets and give congratulatory gifts to the beneficiary and wish the beneficiary and their family well. At the end of the ceremony, everyone will have a party together and drink all the wine bottles at the ceremony.

When the sun sets, everyone in the family and village leaves, the house owner will give everyone a small piece of meat wrapped in banana leaves. The praying ceremony for health of the Ede people, in addition to the meaning of honoring and expressing the homeowner's affection and respect for their relatives and clans, is

also a manifestation of wealth, affluence, and prosperity of each family according to traditional customs. Every praying ceremony for health organized by the Ede people is an opportunity for members of the clan to gather, meet and visit each other. During the ceremony, everyone will pray to Gods, remember the deceased and pray for the blessing to their families and clans with health, prosperity, good luck and peace in life. [13] This is also a way for the Ede people to always remember their roots and a beautiful custom preserved by of the Ede people to this day.

### ***Rituals in marriage***

In terms of marriage of the Ede people, there are many principles that have expressed ethnic cultural values as well as ethnic knowledge about relationships of community, society, family, clan. Marriage rituals of the Ede people always reflects the high matriarchy of this ethnic group. [8]

The Ede people believe that people in the same clan and having the same bloodline cannot marry each other, so they must marry someone from another village. If two people with the same clan get married, the water source in the village will become dirty or collapse underground. In addition, the Ede people believe that in each clan, there is a ancestor for worshipping and people share the same ancestor cannot marry each other. Therefore, the Ede community will severely punish for cases of marriage that are not in accordance with the village's customs. In case two people of the same clan marry each other, the village elder will punish them to worship the water wharf (the God of water) to pray that the God of water will not get angry and not make the water source black or sink deep underground. Offering to the God of water is a buffalo or a pig and if there is no buffalo or pig, they must stay and work for the village elder for 03 to 05 years. At the end of this period, the two of them can marry each other. In addition, the Ede people allow marriage of cousins because the Ede people think that these people are not from the same clan. At the same time, the Ede people forbid marriage with many wives/husbands at the same time. Each person is only allowed to have one wife or husband and if they violate the customary law of the community, the village elder will severely punish them.

In addition to complying with principles in choosing a marriage partner, the Ede people have certain standards in choosing their life partner. Criteria for choosing husbands of Ede girls include health, diligence at work and criteria for choosing wives of Ede boys include responsibility, ability to weave, home care, property management, etc.

The marriage rituals of the Ede people include three forms: voluntary marriage, arranged marriage and marriage as per wire connection (chue nue). In particular, voluntary marriage is recognized by a couple who fall in love with each other and decide to voluntarily get married. Arranged marriage is co-operated by the two families, and a wire connection marriage is when a wife or husband dies, the family member will appoint a person (maybe a unmarried brother or sister) to marry the deceased's wife/husband. This is the traditional marriage connection custom of the Ede people to preserve the assets created by their brother/ sister when they were alive. [8]

The Ede people follow the matrilineal system, thus in marriage, the girl's family will go to the boy's family to ask for a wedding and perform marriage rituals including: Propose marriage ceremony and groom procession (wedding ceremony).

Propose marriage ceremony and time of becoming daughter-in-law: In voluntary marriage and arranged marriage, the biological brother of the girl's mother plays the role of a matchmaker who will go to the groom's house to ask for a husband for the girl. If there is no elder brother of the girl's mother, the family can ask the eldest brother of the girl (who is older) or ask a reputable person in the clan to go to the boy's house. If two people know each other and agree to get married, the meeting with the groom's family is only a formality and they will discuss the wedding as well as the wedding challenge. If the two have not known each other before, the girl's

uncle brings a bracelet, a boiled chicken and a kilogram of sticky rice to the boy's house to propose marriage. If the boy agrees, the boy's family will use the boiled chicken and sticky rice to treat. If the boy and his family disagree, they will hammer a nail to hang the bracelet on the beam of the house. The girl's uncle would return the next day. If the boy agrees, he will take the bracelet down before the girl's uncle arrives. If the boy still disagrees, the bracelet remains on the beam of the house. His uncle will come back on the third day. On the third day if the bracelet is still on the beam, it can be seen that the boy definitely disagrees. The girl's family won't go to the boy's house anymore and the girl has to find another guy. In case the boy agrees, takes the bracelet down but changes his mind not to marry that girl, he must pay a fine to compensate for the bracelet and the honor of the girl's family. In case the boy agrees to marry the girl, the two families discuss the wedding challenge. On the wedding day, the bride's family brings gifts to the groom's family and the gifts are usually buffalo, cow, and bracelet given in the previous matchmaking. If the bride's family does not have enough gifts, the two parties must agree on a form of payment after the wedding. If the groom's family does not agree, the wedding will not be proceed.

After having enough wedding offerings, the girl has to go to the groom's house to stay for three years to work and help with her husband's family and to obey her mother-in-law's teachings and orders. From the day she moves to the husband's house, the two are considered married. The Ede people think that the girl's stay at her husband's house is to repay the nourishment of her parents-in-law and consider it as a time to buy a bridegroom to return to the girl's house. At the same time, the girl also learns to get used to getting married, gaining experience in married life. The girl's family can also negotiate a probationary period of less than three years and replace it with corresponding wealth such as buffalo, cow, or pig. In case the girl leaves ahead of time, according to the agreement for three years between the two families, the girl will be considered unable to get married and lose all the gifts. In case the girl comes to the boy's house but the boy changes his mind and refuses to marry, the boy's family must pay double compensation to the girl's family.

**Groom procession (wedding ceremony):** After staying at the groom's house at the required time, the girl and the girl's family will carry out a ceremony to bring the groom to the girl's house, also known as the wedding ceremony. The uncle will represent the girl's family to ask permission from the groom's family to take the groom to the girl's house. The wedding ceremony is held by both sides of the girl's family and the boy's family. The ceremony on the groom's side is called the groom farewell ceremony and the bride's ceremony is called the groom procession. This ritual takes place at the bride's house for two days and at the groom's house for one day. The interval between these two ceremony days of the bride's family and the groom's family is three or more days with specific rituals including groom farewell ceremony and groom procession ceremony.

**Groom farewell ceremony :** The groom's family holds a small Yang worship ceremony to see the groom off to the bride's house and to pray to the Gods to bless the couple with good health and many children. Offerings usually include chicken and pig. When the bride's family arrives at the groom's house, the boy's mother sits on the mat and the bride's siblings bring silver bracelets for the bride and groom. According to the ritual at the groom's house, they give the silver bracelets as soon as the couple walks through the door and when they reach the stairs, when they lead each other to the stream and they reach the hill. This ritual is to pray for the bond of the couple in each place. When going to the bride's house, the two families together have a party to celebrate their marriage.

**Groom procession ceremony:** This is carried out when the bride and groom celebrate at the bride's house in the presence of both families. This ceremony begins with the worship of Yang with pigs, chickens and wine. Traditionally, the bride has to cover her face and both of them have to wear traditional costumes of the Ede people.

The wedding ceremony begins at the bride's house when the uncles of both families hold the silver bracelets and request the ceremony of giving the bracelets to the couple. The groom will stand next to the boy's uncle and the bride will stand next to the girl's uncle. When the two uncles ask the couple to exchange the bracelets, the two parties will take the bracelet on their uncle's hand and immediately give it to the other party. Next, the representatives of the two families take the prepared pig blood to apply on the couple's feet, expressing the harmony and connection of the two hearts together. After this ritual, everyone drinks tube wine together and the bride and groom hold two tubes to drink quickly without moving and then have fun with their family and village. Everyone in the village when coming to celebrate with the family in the wedding ceremony usually brings rice, chicken or wine to congratulate the bride, groom and family.

After the wedding ceremony, depending on the economic conditions of each family, the uncles of the two parties are given pigs and chickens to thank them for their matchmaking and ceremony organization. Three days after the wedding ceremony, the groom will return to his mother's house and the groom's family will give some working tools such as knives, axes, hens, and land (if any) to the couple. Then, the groom will live in his wife's house. Living separately or living with the wife's family is decided by the wife's family. A few years after the wedding ceremony, when the couple has two or three children, both parties of the family will give this couple a cow to feed. In addition, after being married for a while, the boy's family will go to the girl's house to ask for permission so that the boy can come home and they can organize a meal to satisfy the nostalgia of the boy's family.

For a marriage according to the custom of wire connection when the husband dies: The Ede people believe that the wealth created by their brother and no one to take care of his family when their brother dies, thus, the husband's younger brother can marry his sister-in-law. If the younger brother does not marry his sister-in-law, the sister-in-law will marry someone else and the wealth made by his brother will belong to another person. In case if the wife dies, the husband is allowed to marry his wife's sister. All of these cases must be voluntary and approved by both families. Usually, when someone in the family dies, they will find a family member to replace right after the burial of the dead person and hold a small groom procession after that, depending on the family circumstances of each party. For the case where the groom is too young, the bride's family will give the groom's parents some gifts such as buffaloes and cows in return for their support, or if the wife dies, the husband has the right to marry another person.

### ***Rituals in funeral***

The Ede believe that when a person dies, it means that ancestors, grandparents and gods recall that person to another world. [5] In the funerals of the Ede people, there are both activities showing separation, death and grief to separate the dead and dancing, singing, and playing activities of boys and girls in the village so that people can better understand about the community's ritual culture, and this is also an opportunity for them to get to know each other.

In the opinion of the Ede people, each person's death is divided into two types: a good death and bad death. In particular, a good death is a death caused by a good God such as due to old age or illness, a bad death is caused by an evil God such as death in a traffic accident, death in a river, stream, forest, death during pregnancy, death from a tree, etc. From this opinion of good death and bad death, family members and villagers will have different funeral practices.

Funeral rites for a good death: When the family has a dead person, they will beat drum-call to notify the village so that they can come and help with the funeral. Everyone in the village will bring rice, meat, and wine to offer condolences to the family of the dead, Depending on condition of each person, they will contribute objects or effort. The Ede people do not make ready-made coffins, so when a family

member dies, they will send someone to the forest to choose wood for the coffin. Usually, Apitong is used to make coffins because it is a good, soft, durable and easy to use. The coffin is handmade, using only axes and knives to lower trees, so the completion time is from three to seven days with the number of participants from 20-30 people. After the coffin is completed, the Ede people will burn a palm to get coal, grind it finely and mix it with water and then apply it all over the coffin. Then, they take the white mucus of a banyan tree to draw patterns on the coffin. The pattern on the coffin has no definite shape, sometimes it is a buffalo, a crescent moon, a blooming flower or two pigeons with their heads together, etc. After the coffin is finished, the family will prepare for Entering the coffin. The dead body is washed clean, dressed in traditional clothes and placed in the coffin to worship the dead. Offerings are pigs or chickens or buffaloes, depending on the conditions of each family. Other living items of the dead such as jewelry, blankets, cigarettes, etc. are also put in the coffin. The Ede people believe that if the dead's familiar items are not put in the coffin, the soul of the dead person will linger to find their belongings. After the burial is complete, family members will carry out the wire connection custom if the dead person still has a wife or husband.

For good death, the dead will be buried in a concentrated cemetery in the village. The coffin is placed in the East - West direction, the head of the dead is turned to the East and the feet are westward. After the coffin was lowered, people will fill it with soil, put a temporary funeral house on it, plant four tree pillars at the four corners of the grave, and build an unchocked bamboo tube from the coffin to the top for the living to give food to the dead. The Ede believe that the dead need to eat and drink like the living until they return to their ancestors forever after the grave abandonment. The grave abandonment is an important ritual in the concept of the Ede people. [14] They believe that the dead can only truly be liberated from worldly ties and move on to another life to start a new life after the grave abandonment. This is the responsibility of the living to the dead, and depending on the economic conditions of each family, the grave abandonment is held on a corresponding scale. This is an opportunity for the family to invite people in the village to have a party, to congratulate the family on fulfilling their obligations to the dead.

For bad death: the Ede people will bury the dead right at the place of death. All preparations for the funeral of the dead do not take place at home, and all items used for the funeral must be purchased newly. They must eat up animal food at the place of funeral and no leftovers should be taken home. The Ede people believe that if they bring items and leftovers from the funeral ceremony to their home or village, the spirit of the dead will harm the people in the village and cause the same death to the people in the village. For bad deaths, people in the village often do not attend the funeral, in addition to the elderly and relatives of the dead. The Ede people believe that the spirit of the dead from bad death will enter mourners and cause bad things to them, especially pregnant women and children because the spirit of the dead from bad death can cause miscarriage for pregnant women and spirit possession by ghosts for children. When a family with a dead from bad death borrows a shovel or a hoe to dig a grave, people in the village must also carry out a few things before lending it to prevent bad luck. When burying the dead from bad death, people will turn the dead's head to the West to let their souls go to eternity and not return to their descendants, family, village and not to bring such deaths back to the family's next generation. Offerings include ducks, dogs, cats or goats. When leaving the grave, everyone attending the funeral must leave immediately and do not look back, and they must take a bath before going home.

The practice of funeral rites of the Ede people reflects the Ede's concept of death. In their opinion, death is a rule in the life cycle of every person. When a person dies, it is not a permanent loss, but a process of the human soul moving to live in another world. The Ede people do not worship their ancestors and when someone in their family dies, within one to three years, the family will carry out a

grave abandonment ceremony. The grave abandonment ceremony, in the religious life of the Ede people, is one of the major funeral festivals organized by the living to separate the dead, to let their lost relative to the new world forever.

In order to organize the grave abandonment ceremony, everyone in the family of the dead must focus on carving statues, build a funeral house and prepare rice, meat, wine and offerings, and then inform relatives and people in the village. The living people want to decorate with the most beautiful house to the dead, so the grave of the dead has a roof and is surrounded by wooden statues or decorative statues from buffalo horns and the living people also distribute wealth to the dead. During the grave abandonment ceremony, family members organize many activities such as: animal sacrifice, offerings, distribution of wealth to the dead, music and dance performances, etc. The Ede people believe that, after the grave abandonment ceremony, the dead can be born in another life to continue a new life. Therefore, if the family members carry out an early grave abandonment ceremony, the soul of the dead can soon enter the newborn baby and reincarnate back into life, and the family members can feel secure when fulfilling their obligations to the dead. Therefore, although the grave abandonment ceremony of the Ede people is associated with funeral, it is organized as a festival. This is also an opportunity to express the affection and responsibility of the community, family and relatives towards the dead.

### **Conclusion**

The Ede ethnic minority community has a rich cultural identity and a high sense of community. In the traditional Ede society and the real life of people, there is always a close association with beliefs and sacrifice rituals. The Ede people believe that people who want to have good health, peace, good production and support, they must pray for protection and support from supernatural forces, thus, from birth to death, the Ede people organize a lot of sacrifice rituals. Many religious rituals in cultural, religious and daily life have been passed by the Ede people through different generations. In the process of development, rituals in the religious life are selected by the Ede people, to meet the necessary needs for the protection of individual and common interests of the Ede people community. The rituals in the religious life of the Ede ethnic minority community are an indispensable part of the Ede people's cultural flow in the Central Highlands in particular and such rituals contribute to enriching the Vietnamese traditional cultural identity.

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