

## CHANGES IN MARRIAGE OF THE MUONG PEOPLE IN THANH HOA

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**Abstract:** *Marriage is a common custom of all ethnic groups in Vietnam as well as in the world. For the Muong families, marriage is especially important. In traditional society of the Muong, the wedding took place for long days with many different rituals. Nowadays, under the influence of the market economy and international integration, the practices of culture and marriage rituals of the Muong people have been undergoing significant changes. Specifically, changes in personal thoughts, in criteria for choosing a partner, in marriage rituals and practices, offerings, transformation in costume, in eating, and celebrating weddings. The changes have profoundly affected the traditional wedding culture of the Muong, thereby shaping a vivid and complex picture of cultural life of the Muong nowadays.*

**Keywords:** *Muong people, traditional marriage, rituals, customs, changes.*

### 1. Introduction

Marriage plays an important role in the life of each nation, not only for individuals but also for the families and clans. Marriage is associated with many rituals and customs, and it contains many cultural nuances of the nation. In different historical period, marriage has changed to suit new social circumstances. Therefore, there have been many authors interested in studying the field of marriage in general and the marriage of the Muong people, such as Nguyen Ngoc Thanh (1999), Duong Ha Hieu (2002), Nguyen Thi Song Ha (2010), Hoang Huu Binh (2009), Nguyen Tham Thu Ha (2010). All these works have mentioned quite clearly about the traditional marriage of the Muong and are considered as rich and valuable important sources for those who are interested in studying about the Muong ethnic group. This paper provides an overview of changes in marriage of the Muong in Thanh Hoa mainly from the Renovation 1986 (*Đổi Mới*) to present. It also figures out some key reasons of the changes.

### 2. Changes in marriage customs and wedding rituals of the Muong in Thanh Hoa

#### 2.1. An overview of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa

The Muong people in Thanh Hoa live scattered in 11 mountainous districts and some lowland communes mostly concentrated in Thach Thanh, Cam Thuy, Ba Thuoc, Ngoc Lac, and Nhu Thanh districts. The residence of the Muong is mainly in the semi-mountainous area, along the basins of the rivers including Chu, Am, Cau Chay Buo and

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Muc. The area has the large valleys, fertile soil, and alluvial ground along the rivers. Therefore, people have come in and lived here for a long time and developed early farming of wet rice and crops along rivers and streams. Besides, the Muong also combine shifting cultivation. Most of the forests are primeval forests with abundant animals. The system of rivers and streams brings great aquatic resources for the local people.

According to the statistics (2019), the Muong people in Thanh Hoa currently have a population of about 364.622 people, living mainly in the ancient Muong [3]. There are some large Muong population center such as *Mường Phám*, *Mường Gianh*, *Mường Vầm*,...(Cam Thuy district), *Mường Chénh*, *Mường Khát*, *Mường Giao Lão*...(Lang Chanh district), *Mường Rặc*, *Mường Ngòn*, *Mường Mèn*,...(Ngoc Lac district), *Mường Đủ*, *Mường La Khon*, *Mường Đẹ*,...(Thạch Thành district), *Mường Ống*, *Mường Ai*, *Mường Khô*,...(Ba Thuoc district). Later, a part of Muong population from Hoa Binh province migrated to Thanh Hoa and living in Thạch Thanh, Nhu Thanh and some other districts. This migration took place mainly before 1945. The Muong people who migrated from Hoa Binh and a part of Muong population living in the north of the Ma river in Thanh Hoa have similar voice called *Mường Ngoài*. Additionally, the part of "original - indigenous" Muong people in Thanh Hoa mainly lives in the ancient Muong in Ba Thuoc, Lang Chanh, Ngoc Lac ditrist and the right bank of the Ma river of Cam Thuy district called *Muong Trong*. *Muong Trong* have the same accent. Although the language is quite different in pronunciation, the basic vocabulary and grammar systems of *Muong Trong* and *Muong Ngoài* people are the same.

Furthermore, the traditional Muong society had a ruling and ruled class, however the social class division was not profound at that time. The head of each Muong was called *Cun* (if it is a large Muong), *Lang* (if it is a small and medium Muong). That is why it is called the *Lang Đạo* or *Nhà Lang* regime (the feudal regime of the Muong). This is a hereditary system, in which *lang cun* has great power in terms of spirit, economy and administration. People in the Muong must be responsible for plowing the fields of the Lang family. The feudal court of all times, including the French colonialists who later ruled the Muong regions, was through the Lang Dao class. Great Lang Dao was appointed as mandarins, the other Lang Dao as Chief General, Ly Truong, and Cham communes. In Thanh Hoa, the Lang Dao regime was abolished after 1945. However, in mountainous area of Thanh Hoa, it remained until the years 1950.

## ***2.2 Changes in personal conception and criteria for choosing a life partner***

According to the tradition of the Muong people, the wedding is considered as a mark that the community and the community recognize the love of a couple. Currently, the wedding is not only to announce to the villagers about the couple's cohesion but also to be recognized by law and to register the marriage before the local government is also very important, which is the legal basis to ensure the rights and obligations when a man and woman become husband and wife. This is the big difference between the traditional marriage and the present marriage of the Muong.

Today, the concept of when getting married with a woman looking at her relatives, when getting married with a man looking at his origin (*lấy vợ xem tông, lấy chồng xem giống*) is still raised in the Muong community, nonetheless, parents also know how to listen and respect the choices of their offspring. In the past, Muong people were especially interested in suitable alliance (*môn đăng hộ đối*) (similarity of social background between bride and bridegroom's families) (and through marriage increasing the labor source for the family. Before, arranged marriage was popular, thus the minimum age for marriage was around 12 and 13 years old [1]. Nowadays, the Laws on marriage and family has clearly defined the age of marriage, so the status of child marriage and marriage by bloodline is almost no longer available. The situation of parents forcing their children in love affairs has been limited. The introduction of the Laws on marriage and family has had a positive impact on the awareness of Muong people, contributing to raising their awareness of marriage and family matters. Currently, Muong people get married later than in the past, the age prescribed by the Government via the Laws, age for marriage for girls are 20 to 22 years old and the boys are 22 to 24 years old. The main reason for this change is that the younger generation is fully aware of the other side of getting married early may have greatly affect their future [3]. Moreover, Muong young generation have more chances to access modern education and go to higher education as well, so they want to equip themselves with basic knowledge to be able to be independent and improve their family economy status in the future. Thus, changing the age for marriage of the Muong to suit with the government regulations is a positive change of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa.

Regarding the beginning of a relationship before marriage, in the past, Muong young men and women got to know each other mainly through community activities and festivals of Muong village. Nowadays, the scope of time and space is more extended. Many couples get to know each other and become husband and wife through training courses on agricultural production workshops, youth union work, meeting at school, vocational training, and field trips, etc. Before, the songs and letters were considered as main tools for boys and girls to express their feelings and emotions in love; in recent years, along with the development of information technology, the internet and mobile phone have become useful tools for couples in love. There are many ways of expressing feelings in love for the Muong. In the past, the Muong did not have the habit of giving gifts and flowers, but today, flowers, chocolate, souvenir and so on have been used by young men and women, especially young people living in the cities, towns, district centers and places with convenient transportation. This cultural reception enriches the spiritual life of the Muong, promotes cultural exchanges among ethnic groups in the new context. Also, the process of free in love and marriage as well as the development of society have significantly affected the criteria for choosing a life partner of Muong young men and women. Recently, the criteria of a husband and a wife who are knowledgeable, well- educated, being a government's official or having stable job has been and is one of

the new choice of Muong youth. In the past, female virginity was highly valued and expected for marriage [7], today this concept is no longer a strict criterion for the Muong.

In the traditional society of Muong people, a man or a woman tended to get married with a person with the same ethnic group, the same hamlet, and the same Muong; however, at the present, due to social integration trend, there have been many cases of marriage between Muong people and other ethnic groups such as Kinh, Thai, Dao, Hmong [2]. In modern society, due to the rapidly expanding of economic, cultural, and social activities, the ethnic groups have lived closer and exchanged their culture, thereby arising the marriage relationship which contributes to enriching the cultural picture of ethnic groups and developing good ethnic relationships.

*Fig.1. Mixed marriage status of Muong people in Thanh Hoa by age group*

Age group	Ethnic composition				Note
	Muong	Kinh	Thai	Dao	
Over 60	74 (82.5%)	16 (17.5%)	0	0	
59 - 46	68 (75.0%)	11 (25.0%)	0	0	
45 - 36	60 (58.5%)	43 (41.5%)	0	0	
Under 35	52 (43.2%)	65 (51.4%)	3 (2.7%)	3 (2.7%)	5 unmarried people
Total	254	135	3	3	

(Source: Survey by the author 6/2022)

In the past, unmarried people were ridiculous in public view, but today the Muong are more open-minded on this issue. Many people think that being married is not important. The more important thing is to be able to get married with the right person who are responsible and willing to sharing housework, and taking care of the family [7]. Besides, nowadays a part of the Muong youth would not get married because of many duties and responsibilities that they must face, so they want to be single. Therefore, the view of the Muong towards unmarried people is also more opened than before.

## **2.2. Changes in wedding rituals and customs**

Before, the Muong couple had to go through many steps to conduct the wedding ceremony, nonetheless, the time for wedding has been shortened recently. When *Nhà Lang* regime (House of Lang- the landlord class of the Muong) existed and had a dominant role in the community, married through a matchmaker (*hỏi vợ mò*) (became quite popular [1]. These are marriages where the groom's family gives full authority to “*chí mò*” (matchmaker), only when the wedding takes place, the bride and groom can see other's faces. Therefore, the role of the matchmaker in the traditional marriage of the Muong is

especially important, reflecting the ethnic cultural nuances of the ethnic group [8]. Since the country reunification, especially since the Renovation in 1986, marriage through the matchmaker no longer exist. Muong men and women now are free in love and marriage. They are free to discuss with their parents about how to conduct a wedding celebration.

In many places in Thanh Hoa, the custom of challenging marriage in marriage has changed. The wedding attendees and affairs remained the same as before, but there was a big change in the offerings. The role of the head of the family clan in challenging wedding is no longer the same. How many wedding offerings is decided by the bride's family, then discuss with the head of the family clan, after that he is responsible for talking to the groom's family. The wedding challenge is completely based on the economic conditions of both bride and groom's families [4]. Since 2000 up to now, many the Muong communities have no longer challenged weddings with objects and animals, instead they use cash challenges. Depending on where the Muong live, the level of wedding challenge is much different. For example, the Muong people living in the cities, towns and some places near the highway, the wedding challenge fee is from 2 to 3 million dong; otherwise, in remote areas, the fee is usually from 1.5 to 2 million dong. This money is used by the bride's family to buy things such as food for the wedding. The trend that both sides of the family take care of their own wedding affairs without depending on the groom's family is expanding. Many families who are state officials no longer ask for wedding gifts. The gifts brought to the bride's house now are only a bunch of areca-nut, betels, bottles of wine, tea, tobacco, and confectionery as a common Vietnamese tradition.

Next, the way to calculate the date and time of the Muong's wedding is basically based on the traditional way. Beside using the Muong calendar, the Muong families also combine the use of the *can - chi calendar* (the ten Heaven's stems cyclical terms and twelve Earth's terms cyclical terms). In the past, the Muong people had a rule that the delegation to pick up the bride starting in the morning and back to the groom's home at nightfall but nowadays they still remain the ritual of picking up the bride in the morning and back to the groom's home early at around 2 pm- 3 pm becomes more popular [6]. However, the weddings of the Muong families in urban areas no longer follow the tradition way, they base on good hours (good times) for the couple. Moreover, in the past, when choosing a date for the wedding, the groom's family had to bring a lot of *khảo cake* (sweet short cake - made of roast glutinous rice flour) as an offering for the bride's family to invite guests to the wedding that rarely used today because this wedding invitation method is quite complicated and must follow the strict rules. Nowadays, to reduce the complexity of the custom, the Muong used the invitation cards of the Kinh people to invite their relatives, friends, and neighbors to the wedding. Many Muong families having a marriage alliance with the Kinh people use *xu xê cake* (a kind of rice cake), lotus jam and betel nut to invite the guests attending the wedding like the Kinh people.

In the past, after the date that the bride and groom's family had the first meet, after a half year or sometimes 1 to 2 years the wedding will be held accordingly, because the two families must prepare lots of things for the wedding. Nowadays, the time for organizing the wedding is shortened to only 7-10 days or a month at the latest. The

traditional wedding took place for many days with many rituals and sumptuous eating and drinking arrangements, which is expensive and wasteful. But now the wedding takes place only one day. The wedding gifts giving to the bride's house is carried by the groom and some of his family members to the girl's parents to prepare for the wedding day that is still carried out before the wedding day, but it is no longer cumbersome as before [5].

The rituals of the wedding day have changed significantly, especially the gong used for the wedding. There was a time, the Muong people had no longer used the gong, they used firecracker instead because the gongs were lost. Moreover, using firecracker was considered as a social trend. When the government banned the use of firecracker due to its dangers, along with propaganda and advocacy to practice a civilized lifestyle in marriages, funeral, and festival to promote cultural identity of each ethnic group, the use of gongs in weddings of the Muong is gradually being restored. Besides, in urban areas, there is the use of paper fireworks of China, when the delegation takes the bride to the groom's house or when the two families celebrate the wedding at the hotel like the Vietnamese Kinh people.

The image of a pair of sugar cane trees was quite common in the weddings of the Muong people in the past, now there have been many changes. The weddings nowadays no longer use a pair of sugar cane on the wedding day, especially in urban areas, so the ritual of using sugar cane is also simplified or abolished. Nowadays, the reason is that the car or motorbike is used more popular to take the bride to the groom's house, so the Muong people think that carrying two pairs of sugar cane is no longer appropriate. However, in remote areas, many places where the Muong reside still use the pair of sugarcane in weddings [7]. Although the extent is different, such as, sugarcane is only used on the day of the wedding and the sugarcane is cut off into pieces and put it in a bag for convenience rather than using the whole sugarcane tree like before.

Reciprocal singing between men and women was the basic feature of traditional wedding of the Muong, but nowadays it is gradually fading [4]. Young men and women like modern dancing and singing youth songs, because they think that the wedding will be fun and exciting. Therefore, many families have rented backdrops, tables and chairs, loudspeakers to serve their children's weddings. In the past, weddings had to have bridesmaids, and groomsmen who used to stay to help the couple until the ceremony was over, but nowadays it's almost gone. In urban areas, the bride will follow the bride's family to go home that day, while in rural and remote areas, only one bridesmaid will stay, but the next day must go to the bride's house with the couple. The face-to-face ceremony remains the same as before with 3 times.

The names in the current marriage rites have also changed. The reason for this is because in the 1960s-1970s when the government mobilized people in the lowland moving to the upland or the mountainous area to build and develop the mountainous economy, culture, and society. Accordingly, the number of Kinh people immigrating to the mountains of Thanh Hoa was quite large. This had a significant influence on the traditional culture of the Muong in Thanh Hoa province.

### **2.3. Changes in offerings**

The offerings used in marriage of the Muong people in Thanh hoa have changed in line with social trends. Indeed, buffaloes, cows, bronze, white silver were no longer in the wedding ceremony. A *wine pot* (*vò rượu dúp*) has an important meaning, as a gift from the groom to his mother-in-law in return for his gratitude for giving birth and raising his wife, which is now replaced by clothes [6]. The reason why a wine pot and the custom of drinking wine are rarely seen in weddings today is that there are not many people who know how to make wine, if any, they are too old to be able to do it themselves. At that time, young people were less interested in learning how to make wine. Besides, nowadays the Muong people often use white wine because it's easy to cook, cheap and doesn't take much effort. Previously abstained from using colored alcohol, nowadays many weddings not only use colored wine produced in the country but also use foreign alcohol; fresh tea leaves have been replaced by prepackaged dried tea.

In weddings, betel nut and wine are still symbols of indispensable happiness, but some other offerings have gradually changed. In the past, unfilled *Chung cake* (*bánh chung*) was indispensable and accounted for many weddings, but now it is no longer as important as before. Chung cake used as an offering is now only a formality, usually the boy's family brings 8-10 pieces to the girl's house for a custom. Many weddings, especially in urban areas, the Muong people no longer use chung cake in their weddings, instead using packaged confectionery.

Previously, the bride's gifts to her husband's house were usually blankets, cushions, pillows and clothes that made by the bride's hands. Nowadays, due to the impact of the market economy, the Muong brides' parents buy her a wardrobe and wooden bed instead. Buffaloes, cows, pigs, and chickens are no longer marriage offerings as in the traditional society. Alternatively, the Muong people use cash and valuable things such as televisions, refrigerators, and motorbikes as marriage offerings. Some families with good economic conditions even buy houses for their son and daughter.

### **2.4. Transformation in costumes**

The costumes used in weddings of the Muong today have changed quite a bit. Specifically, the costumes of both the bride, the groom and those attending the wedding have changed.

If in the past, the groom wore traditional clothes, today almost all wear casual clothes: casual pants, shirt, and tie. There are also changes in bride's dress. According to our observations, there are 3 trends. The first trend is the wearing of a wedding dress, curly hair, makeup and holding a bouquet of flowers - usually a bride living in urban areas; the second is that the bride wears casual clothes (the most beautiful, latest clothes); the third is that the bride wears a traditional Muong dress, but there has been transformed. However, nowadays the Muong's bride wearing traditional dresses is not popular, mainly seen in remote areas. Therefore, the custom of the bride to change her dress on the wedding day no longer exists. The custom on the wedding day of the bride wearing a red

robe with her hair down [2] bowing to the ancestral altar is no longer practiced. Instead, the bride must wear Muong clothes when introducing her ancestors to the groom's family. This change has a positive meaning to make the wedding less cumbersome, but it loses the typical cultural identity of the Muong ethnic group.

For those who attend the wedding ceremony today, there are also many changes in the way they dressed. The traditional clothes are mainly used by the old women. In urban areas, the Muong woman prefer to wear Vietnamese long dress (*áo dài*) and modern dress like the Kinh people to attend the wedding for beauty, convenience, and modernity. It is also impossible to mention a new trend that has been adopted in recent years in Muong weddings, which is wedding photography. In urban areas, most young men and women before marriage often take wedding photos and make wedding photo books as a souvenir. This trend is gradually spreading to rural, remote, and isolated areas; The bride and groom despite the difficult economic conditions also try to rent wedding clothes, make up and take some wedding photos. This trend is also happening quite commonly in other ethnic groups in our country.

### ***2.5. Changes in wedding cuisine and wedding gifts***

Today's wedding cuisine has many influences of Kinh people, such as the number of dishes has increased, not only familiar dishes such as boiled, steamed, traditional soup, etc. but also other dishes such as fried, grilled, fruit desserts... are displayed beautifully on copper and aluminum trays. Most people in urban areas like this change because Muong people think that it is rich, diverse, and suitable for modern social life.

Besides, the custom of celebrating the wedding has also changed significantly. In the past, only cousins and relatives of the bride and groom give them self-woven fabrics as a wedding gift. At the present, everyone who attends the wedding party also bring their own gifts, often cash for the couple [6]. How much money giving for the couple as a wedding gift depends on the economic ability of invited guests and their relationship with the bride and groom and their family. Furthermore, giving cash as a wedding gift are practical and much appreciated present because the couple can buy necessary items in need or help their families pay for the wedding's fee. In other words, the invited guests also want to give the couple cash because it's convenient, and they do not have think about buying gifts to suit the bride and groom's need. This reflects the nature of the market economy that has clearly affected the concept of marriage and life of the Muong, not merely an expression of affection. Moreover, the psychology of profiting through the marriage of a few people has appeared especially those with positions in society.

### **3. Causes of changes**

It can be stated that the marriage of the Muong in Thanh Hoa has changed a lot over time since the country entered the Doi Moi period until now. The changes that are evident in the concept of marriage, criteria for choosing a life partner, in the rituals, items, and wedding dress of the Muong are due to the following main reasons:



### ***3.1. Economic factors***

It can be stated that economic reforms since the launch of the Renovation in 1986, coupled with beneficial global trends have brought about great and rapid changes in the socio-economic status of the country. The shift from the central government-subsidy mechanism to a socialist-oriented market economy has made our country's economy gradually stabilize and develop, overcoming the economic crisis. Along with the development process of the country, Thanh Hoa province has had many outstanding economic developments. The investment of the State and local authorities in the construction and development of infrastructure, especially roads, electricity, clean water, schools, medical stations... as well as policies on investing in mountainous areas to develop the economy and society such as housing, land, credit, and vocational training. Therefore, the local people take the advantages from the policies.

In 1993, when the Law on Land was enacted, and then the Law on Amendments and Supplements in 1998, together with the Rural Renovation since the 10th contract in 1988, it ensured that people had the right to use their land in the future. develop the household economy in an active and effective manner. Resolution 22 of NQ-TW dated January 27, 1989, of the Politburo, VI, is an important milestone in the implementation of the Party's ethnic policy, aiming at socio-economic development in mountainous and ethnic minority areas. minorities. Resolutions of the 6,7,8,9,10 congresses of the Party also confirmed the basic contents of the ethnic policy in the renovation cause. It can be said that it is one of the reasons and basis for creating momentum to fundamentally change the socio-economic life of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa. Besides, the Programs 134, 135 and other socio-economic development policies have helped remote communes, in remote areas has significantly improved both in terms of material and spiritual life. The rate of poor households has decreased significantly, inter-provincial, inter-district, inter-commune roads... have been built solidly, contributing positively to the economic development of the province.

Accordingly, the developed market economy has directly affected the lives of the Muong people. The subsistence economy has shifted towards commodities driven by market mechanisms. A series of central markets and small markets sprang up, rich goods, busy trading created a completely new face of rural and mountainous economy. Some new industries have just begun to form and are quite developed, bringing significant revenue to the provincial budget, as well as improving the economic life of households, such as construction, processing industry, trade, etc. business, restaurant business - hotel, property business and consulting services, transportation, warehousing, communication...

### ***3.2. Socio-cultural factors***

The development of the market economy leads to socio-cultural changes. Cultural exchanges in the region and internationally in the period of opening- up and integration, along with the development of the media and many other cultural products have been having a significant impact on the spiritual cultural life including the marriage ceremony of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa. In addition to traditional culture, the people have

received more about international, regional, domestic culture and culture of other ethnic groups. Through receiving new cultural values from outside, the Muong people have collected, selected, and innovated to suit the new circumstance without losing their original cultural identity.

Looking at the current life of the Muong people, it is easy to see that the Muong people have absorbed many new elements from other ethnic groups living around, especially the Kinh people that makes the ethnic cultural life change rapidly. For example, in the past, stilt houses were the only type of the Muong's house, but now there have been many changes. The traditional stilt house has been transformed to suit the modern life. In addition, in urban areas, earth houses, well- built house, and modern buildings become popular replacing the old stilt house. The living amenities in the house, the interior layout also have many changes. The image of wood stoves in Muong people's spiritual life on stilts house is only seen in remote areas. Instead in the central area, the Muong tend to use gas and electric stoves for daily cooking. Many Muong families buy expensive wooden tables and chairs to decorate the house, cupboards, wine cabinets, two or three wardrobes, televisions, refrigerators, air conditioners... that make the space of the stilts house on changed. The practice of bathing in streams or bathing in water is now only practiced in remote areas, nonetheless, in urban areas, the Muong's families have bathrooms and toilets with modern equipment. In addition, customs and habits in clothing and eating have also changed. Today, almost all men wear suits and women only wear traditional clothes during festivals and on some special occasion. The Muong people not only eat boiled dishes as in the past, but they now are also familiar with stir-fried dishes. Towards the beverages, besides the most popular drinks used by the Muong people *ruou cần* (wine drunk out of a jar through pipes), they also drink foreign wines, beer, soft drinks, and other carbonated drinks.

It can be stated that market economy along with the urbanization process has had a strong impact, changing the economic, cultural, and social life of the Muong. This important factor makes the process of cultural exchange and acculturation of the Muong and other ethnic groups increasingly expanded and developed. This acculturation is voluntary and an inevitable trend because culture is both sustainable and constantly changing according to the general development rules of society. However, before the trend of globalization, especially when Vietnam became the 150th member of the WTO and the new development requirements of the nation, the reception of new elements of other cultures, especially foreign cultures is inevitable to the Muong in Thanh Hoa. Besides these positive aspects, it should be mentioned that the negative aspects have been affecting cultural life due to the process of integration, information explosion and cultural exchange as well. Through the mass media, foreign culture easily penetrates our country via movies, tapes, photo pages, mobile apps which has affected the ethnic community, especially a part of the youth class, shielding some national cultural identities that are being lost, and at the same time forming a pragmatic lifestyle in young generation, ignoring moral values in the community and society. Thus, the impact of the market economy and the globalization

process has profoundly affected to the lifestyles of not only the Muong but also for other ethnic groups in Vietnam. Those are key factors that directly affect the changes in rituals and customs in the marriage of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa.

### ***3.3. Legal and policy factors***

The changes in awareness and actions of the Muong in the field of marriage is due to the impact of the Law on Marriage and Family in 1959. However, when the laws was promulgated for the second time in 1986, especially the revised Law on Marriage and Family, which was most recently passed by the National Assembly on June 9, 2000, and Decree 32/2002/ND-CP on the Law on Marriage and Family for Ethnic Minorities encouraged ethnic groups to promote good customs and practices in marriage, such as the practice of monogamous marriage, freedom for men and women to learn and freely choose a life partner... Besides, resolutely eliminate Abandoning backward customs, negatively affecting social life in general and marriage and family in particular... the marriages of ethnic groups, including the Muong, are gradually adjusted by legal institutions.

The resolution of the 5th Central Committee (Session VIII) on Building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national cultural identity issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam on July 16, 1998. As a result, after over 10 years of implementation, the policy has created a rapid change in social life and formed many cultural movements in mountainous areas, preserved the national cultural identity to promote economic development. The content of Central Resolution 5 referred to 10 tasks of cultural work, which emphasizes building the Vietnamese people in the new period, building a cultural environment, preserving, and promoting cultural heritages, conservation, promotion, and development of ethnic minority cultures. It can be said that this policy has brought high efficiency in the development of ethnic cultures, positively impacted people's awareness, helped ethnic people population to promote the nation's traditional culture and selectively absorb the cultural quintessence of other nations without losing their own cultural identity.

## **4. Conclusion**

To sum up, under the influence of regional and international integration on socio-economic development, the traditional marriage rituals of Muong people in Thanh Hoa province have gradually changed to adapt to new circumstances. That transformation process takes place quite comprehensively in different aspects: concept, perception, space, time, rituals, offerings and even the Muong's mind and emotions. In the process of transformation, the Muong people have exchanged and received cultural elements from other ethnic groups, especially the Kinh people. This cultural exchange and acculturation are considered as a rule in the movement and development of ethnic culture which creates the cultural fusion, synthesis, and integration in communities, thereby creating a rich and

diverse cultural development. Briefly, the practice of marriage rituals of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa and Muong people in general has been greatly simplified. Some of traditional wedding rituals has disappeared gradually in their ethnic community.

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