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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CHARACTERISTICS IN THE LAW OF THE EDE PEOPLE IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS IN VIETNAM

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SUMMARY:

The Ede people in the Central Highlands of Vietnam created customary laws by word of mouth and kept them in the consciousness of the community. This is a form of indigenous knowledge, formed during a long history to guide people to regulate social relationships and the natural environment, recognized and realized by the community. It has both elements of the law of trial and punishment, and the nature of customs and customs, from conventions and commandments to regulate the behaviors, lifestyles to educate people in the community towards good. Ede's customary laws contain the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the Ede people. It is a system of easy-to-remember words, easy to memorize through the art of syllable, duality, the use of words and the comparative art. In the language of customary law, Ede's cultural life is expressed in terms of living space, simple philosophy, beliefs and the desire for a full and peaceful life.

INTRODUCTION

In 1913, a French envoy named L.Sabatier initiated the collection of the customary law of Ede people in Dak Lak province. At that time, this document was called *Klei duê klei bhriăn kđi* (*Customary Law*). In 1926, the customary law of Ede people was documented in Ede language in France. In 1940, D.Antomarchi, a French translator translated this customary law into French and published it in the journal of the French School of Asian Studies. In 1984, Nguyen Huu Thau translated the customary law of Ede people into Vietnamese from the French version. Also since 1984, this document has been collected, added and

printed into a bilingual Vietnamese - Ede book. This book, compiled by Ngo Duc Trinh, Nguyen Huu Thau and Chu Thai Son and published by the National Political Publishing House in 1996, includes 11 chapters with 236 provisions. This is the book, of which language and contents show many similarities with the contemporary life of Ede people.

The customary law of Ede people is a system of conventions which was created by generations of Ede people and maintained by oral tradition and the conservation in their awareness. Those conventions were set to moralise and educate people in the community to adjust their behaviours and lifestyles as well as orient them to the goodness. The customary law of Ede people contains linguistic and cultural features of Ede people.

There have been some works researching the customary law of Ede people such as “Comparison Methods in the Customary Law of Ede People”, by Truong Thong Tuan (2009), a doctoral thesis in literature, Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy; or “Customary Law Research, Measure Recommendations for Preserving and Promoting the Cultural Identity of Ede People in the Renovation Period”, by Doan Thi Tam (2017), a ministerial-level scientific research project, coded B2016-TTN-05. The findings of this research clarifies the grammatical issues and cultural value conservation in the customary law. It also analyses the unique linguistic and cultural features of Ede people in their customary law with regard to specific aspects.

Linguistic features in the customary law of Ede people

When Ede people speak their language, they often insert "rhyming" into their communication, expression and conservation of community experience. In their customary law, such rhymes are called *duê kđi*. Simile, metaphor, metonymy, etc. in combination with other figurative languages make provisions in the customary law image-rich, lively, concise and close to the daily conversational language which is widely and easily accepted by the people at large.

2.1. The art of rhyming

The customary law of Ede people is written in a *klei duê* (rhyme) style and considered as the link and combination in quite a sufficient manner of features and characteristics in the rhyming of Ede language. Simultaneously, rhyming is the most basic factor creating the beauty of balance and harmony in the customary law's sentences, which helps people to understand and hand down this document to others easily. The general linguistic knowledge clearly points out that rhyming is the correspondence of rhymes among syllables in sentences and poem lines, abiding by certain rules. Thanks to the rhymes, sentences or poem lines can link to one another for harmony in almost all sentences of the customary law of Ede people.

Amâo mâo ruih, `u prah ho\ng hoh sãm niêng; amâo mâo tiêng `u cao ho\ng hjei; amâo mâo klei, `u duah pong ir, amâo mâo kđi, `u duah dhir dhar mã. (They do not have scabies, he takes sãm niêng (an itchy tree in the forest) fluid and splashes on their bodies; they do not have pimples, he uses a mallet to pear them; if they have no trouble, he will trouble them; if they do not have any problems that deserve punishments, he will make up crime on them) [6, p.327]. This sentence contains three repeated rhymes, *iêng*, *ei* and *ir*.

Tơ dah sit he\ tian gơ\ tle\ rôc próc kti, anak i kmar gơ\ mdjiê mnuih sa nong thâu mjơ mnuih tlâu buh, mnuih êtuh êbao hơ mjơ. (If they truly have had a secret abortion and killed the foetus/baby, at least one person must have known it, three people must have watched it, and hundreds of people must have heard about it) [6, p.327].

This sentence contains four rhymes, *e\ ôc*, *i* and *ơ* out of 28 syllables in total.

From the examples above, it can be concluded that in the customary law of Ede people, the rhyme correspondence is very dense. This is the factor to create the phonetic harmony for klei duê in the customary law's language. The following rhyming cases often appear in the customary law of Ede people:

- Consecutive rhyming: The rhyme of the first syllable in the following expression repeats the rhyme of the last syllable in the preceding expression. For example:

~u tluh kơ boh, kjoh mngă, `u buh mniê jăk siam dôk kô krei asej hjăn, `u duah gô. (He still craves fruit, wants to break flowers and manages to rape beautiful girls every single time they stay alone) [6, p.341].

The rhyming position in a linear order between syllables of the above sentences is listed as follows: *boh* (fruit) - *kjoh* (break, poke); *tluh* (crave) - *buh* (see); *krei* (one) - *asej* (self); *kô* (white) - *gô* (rape).

- Spaced rhyming: The vowel of some syllable (excluding the first one) in the following expression repeats the vowel of the last syllable in the preceding expression. For instance:

~u ngă sang pong, `u dong sang mne, klei `u tle chai. (He is standing secretly at a hidden corner of the house and is dragging the lady there to ask for sex) [6, p.304].

The rhyming part *ong* in the expression *dong sang mne* (drag to a hidden corner of the house) repeats the triphthong of the last syllable *pong* in the preceding expression *ngă sang pong* (secretly at a corner of the house).

The art of duality

Duality is a method of word arrangement, “*correspondence in pairs with regard to both wording and meaning*” [4, p.449]. According to our survey, in the customary law of Ede people, many sentences are formed by the art of

duality. There is also repetition in the syntaxes of the customary law's sentences. Sentences' parts include words which correspond to each other regarding wording and meaning, make the meaning of sentences transparent, and create a harmonised balance for sentences. For example:

{*rr*\ *grăn wa\ng amâo thâo đă*\, [*rr*\ *grăn kngăn amâo thâo gô*, *mô lac\ klei amâo thâo gut*. (He acts as the handle of the *niết₁*, which is too hard to straighten; he is as stubborn as a *chà gạc₂*, which strongly resists to bending; he never listens to his parents' teachings) [6, p.1].

The words *thâo đă*\, (straighten), *thâo gô* (bend) in the two structurally-repeated parts of the sentence helped to bring out the meaning and create harmonised rhythms for the wording. Another example is the following sentence:

C\iêm điêt c\hi\ [ăng kmông, *c\iêm pro\ng c\hi\ hla\m êi*, *kđi điêt mka\ brei điêt*, *kđi pro\ng mka\ brei pro\ng*. (Small pieces of meat are contained in the cornet, the big ones are stored in the basketry, trivial offences will be with light penalties, severe breaches will be harshly dealt with) [6, p.1].

This sentence is structured by two dual pairs because of semantically-contending word pairs *điêt* (small/light) /*pro\ng* (big/harsh), coupled with the use of comparative images to make the wording lively, image-rich, memorable and comprehensible.

Syntax-level repetition is the factor that forms symmetric structures. Therefore, the language arrangement in sentences of the customary law is symmetric, complete and especially sustainable. In addition, duality is also a crucial technique to deploy images and present the topics of provisions in the customary law. The transformation of factors and components into symmetric pairs to emphasise the parallelism or contrast in their contents helps to increase the expression effectiveness. For instance:

Êyui mnut amâo `u êmuh, *êyui hra amâo `u êmuh*, *ama ami\ amâo `u êmuh*. ([Why] not ask (i.e. consult) the banyan tree's shade although it is there, [why] not ask the fig tree's shade although it is there, [why] even not ask your parents although they are still there (i.e. alive)) [6, p.405].

The phonetic symmetry can be recognised in *êyui mnut amâo `u êmuh/ êyui hra amâo nu êmuh* (the number of syllables in two parts 5/5); *mnut* >< *hra* (the closed syllable is opposed to the open syllable), creating the harmony in rhythm and beat for the sentence.

¹ A kind of knife, the handle of which is bent. Being small, it is often used by Ede people to cut grass in beds of vegetables and fields of maize, etc.

² A kind of knife to cut grass, often brought along by Ede people when they go to the fields.

The art of duality gives sentences in the customary law a harmonised correspondence of beats, the syntactic structure repetition and two parts with the parallel and a balanced number of words. It also helps parts of a sentence to closely link to each other and produce balance and harmony, which aesthetically strike the readers. The customary law, constituted by rhyming sentences, encompasses many aesthetic factors with regard to its language, it thus impacts strongly on not only the reason but also the affection of people.

The art of word use

Words play an especially important role in composing artistic documents because they are the fundamental unit of a language to generate messages. The customary law of Ede people has endured with the space and time in their life. Hence, the customary law's language has always been selected, refined and polished through numerous generations. Some features of the customary law of Ede people are the arts of using reduplicates, synonyms, words of semantic approximation and antonyms.

- Using reduplicates: Linguists think that reduplication is a word structuring method of languages. The existence of reduplicates is very significant due to its clear onomatopoeic, hieroglyphic and expressive values. Each reduplicative sounds like a musical note and includes a specific picture of senses, namely sight, sound, touch and smell. It creates subjective impressions, judgements and attitudes of the speaker towards things and phenomena. In the customary law of Ede people, onomatopoeic, hieroglyphic and expressive reduplicatives are used to specify the natures and actions for great impressions on the subject. For example:

~u alê yur kpur pu. (He swings as a bamboo tip heading the wind) [6, p.252].

Mse\ si knu hlăm hlang. (Almost like a bison in the forest) [6, p.289].

Ruh ruah mse\ si mnu\ duah ktat. (Run around like a chicken finding its nesting box) [6, p.228].

- Using synonyms, words of semantic approximation and antonyms.

+ Synonyms, words of semantic approximation: Synonyms are words of similar meaning yet different pronunciations. They differentiate from one another by some semantic or stylistic nuances or both. From the result of surveying sentences in the customary law of Ede people, we conclude that the phonetic diversity creates their liveliness and smoothness. By using synonyms in one sentence or provision in the customary law, the folklore author wants to establish semantic diversity, realise the different semantic nuances of each synonym, trigger the artistic depth of words, demonstrate his or her standpoint on things and phenomena most concisely and profoundly. The semantic nuance differentiating one synonym from another allows it to be used side by side as the mean to express the sentence's content in a more precise way. Using two or more synonyms to express the same meaning is

aimed at highlighting the subject's features most adequately because each synonym expresses only one additional semantic nuance. Sometimes, synonyms are used in the figure of speech, replacement with a synonym, which means using a synonym to name an already-mentioned thing or phenomenon to add features of a new aspect to it. For example:

~u mã tiê êmông, tlông tiê kgôo, `u lông tiê kâo lu hong bảl; `u hea kba hong phi mđi lăng ai sah mđrong, thâu jhong thâu ktang be\. (They want to compete with a tiger and play chicken with a bear to test whether the claws of these animals are sharp or blunt. They want to know whether the salted soup is bland or salty. They want to irritate the rich chieftain to see whether he is truly brave or not) [6, p.156].

In this sentence, there are the following synonyms, *Jhong* (brave) - *ktang* (firm); *mả* (compete) - *lông* (compare).

Ti `u dđk, ti rai kmrong; ti `u đong, ti rai hđrah ti dđk, ti mach buđn sang, kogua `u, ti mach buđn sang, kogua `u\. (The forests are devastated anywhere they go to; the woodlands perish anywhere they stand, and they destroy villages wherever they stay) [6, p.156].

In this sentence, there are the following synonyms, *kmrong* (forest) - *hđrah* (woodland); *dđk* (wherever) - *đong* (anywhere); *rai* (perished) - *mach* (broken). *Ciăng kơ cing, tio êran; ciăng kơ êman, tio pah; ciăng kơ sah mđrong, `u duah ngă arăng.* (If they want gongs, they will assign subordinates to rob gongs; if they wish to have elephants, they force others to snatch elephants. Because he desires to become a rich chieftain, he will be the flashpoint for a fight with others) [6, p.156].

In this sentence, there is the following pair of synonyms: *tio êran* (rob) - *tio pah* (snatch).

The art of using synonyms or words of semantic approximation in the above sentences can not only make clear the multi-dimensional nature of the criminal but also emphasise the disrespectful attitude towards the criminal.

Therefore, using synonyms or words of semantic approximation is quite a common phenomenon in the customary law's language. This is a very original descriptive method and also a view of Ede people on the aesthetic art, largely shown not only in the customary law's language but also in other works on the language art of Ede people's folklore literature.

+ Antonyms: "Antonyms are words of opposite meanings in their inter-relationship. They differ in terms of phonetic aspect and reflect logically-contending concepts" [2, p.237]. In communication, especially in artistic documents, the use of antonyms to name things, phenomena, actions, natures, etc. that contradict each other is used to increase the informative value

compared to the common expressions. By using antonyms, the writer engages readers in the story to think and ponder about issues that he or she touched upon. From time to time, the readers reflect themselves in overarching issues. There are incidents and actions with connotative meanings that the writer does not directly criticise and condemn, but the readers can understand them through the gentle yet delicately satirical attitude or expression. In the customary law of Ede people, antonyms often accentuate the contrast between parts, events, subjects, etc. to help the readers understand clearly the issue's opposite aspects to convey a strong impression. For example:

Blu\ mlam sa klei, blu\ hruê sa asăp.

(He speaks this way at night and another way in the daytime) [6, p.246].

In this sentence, there are the following antonyms *mlam* (night) - *hruê* (day); *sa klei* (this) - *sa asăp* (another).

~u duah đue hiu jông mngo ko myu, si kru hlang. (He tramps here and there with his feet in the East but his head in the West, almost like a bison in the grass forest) [6, p.277].

In this sentence, there are the following antonyms *jông* (feet) - *ko* (head); *mngo* (East) - *myu* (West).

Mnu\ ana kma rô, mnu\ knô kma pông. (The cock goes into the cage, and the rooster goes into the bamboo cage) [6, p.330].

In this sentence, there are the following antonyms *ana* (female) - *knô* (male).

Ede people use antonyms, which are close to their living and working spaces in the customary law such as: *rain - sunlight, water - fire, mountain - mainstream (river), land - sky, etc.* By this way of expression, opposite things and phenomena will shed light on each other, thereby making the subject's natures and features clearer. For instance:

Sang dlông amâo `u mut, sang đut `u hgao, sang bong êmô kbao `u muc. (He does not enter the longhouse, he also just passes by the short hut, he dislikes the house where people still eat beef and buffalo meat) [6, p.243].

Antonyms such as: *dlông* (long) - *đut* (short) help to add more to the criminal's rakish character. He disregards everyone, even the rich and never needs to think about rituals, customs, etc.

- Using function words: Function words, in general, are words of only grammatical meaning. They include prepositions, conjunctions, particles, adverbs, interjections, etc. in isolating languages. In speaking and writing, function words are crucial grammatical instruments. They are used to express judgement thinking to establish relations, etc. According to our survey result,

Ede language has many function words. Function words commonly used comprise *leh anăn* (and, with), *nong* (with, by), *piot* (to), *ciăng* (to), *kyua*, *kyua dah* (because), *snăn*, *snăn lah*, *snăn yoh* (so), *amâo dah* (or), *biă dah* (but), *tơ dah* (if), *păt dah* (as if), *khă* (although), etc. Function words are used to connect words and word clusters or clauses of a sentence (compound sentence) in accordance with certain grammatical relationships, in many cases using function words is very necessary. However, in many other cases, whether or not function words are used does not affect the grammatical relationship in the sentence.

In the customary law, the function word *leh* (already) always appears in sentences having the phrase of time *knuê* (that time, a long time) at the beginning of the sentence. However, there are some cases that Ede people do not use the function word *leh*, but the sentence is still well understood. For example:

Knuê adih aseh amâo mâo pô mgô trao, kbao amâo mâo pô mgô klei, êkei mniê amâo mâo pô mgô kông anu. (In the past, they were not forcibly bridled horses or forcibly roped buffaloes, they were a nice couple, and no one pressured them to receive bronze bracelets and pearl beaded necklaces of each other) [6, p.317].

Most of the time, the function word *leh* never appears in sentences with the phrase *mong knuê* at their beginnings. However, in some cases, if some action or characteristic needs to be stressed in the sentence, *leh* can be used such as in:

Mong knuê bong leh kă, huă leh kin, leh duah din leh. (Before providing food and water (to the criminal), he should have been tied) [6, p.241].

Based on the context, Ede people can flexibly add or reduce some content words to change the grammatical meaning and expressive nuance. For example:

Êman leh tling, cing leh yuôl. (Elephants have already been chained, and gongs have already been hung) [6, p.314].

Êman amâo tling, cing amâo tuôm yuôl. (Elephants have not been chained, and gongs have not been hung yet) [6, p.315].

Anăn êman bi kning, cing yuôl bi kuôl kă. (Therefore, they chained elephants and hung gongs) [6, p.315].

Êman nu tle tling, cing nu tle yuôl. (He chained elephants and hung gongs in secret) [6, p.304].

Êman amâo tuôm tling, cing amâo tuôm yuôl. (Elephant did not use to be chained, and gongs did not use to be hung) [6, p.156].

The art of comparison

A comparison is the collation of two or more subjects which belong to different types with some similarity to figuratively express features of one of those subjects. The rhetorical comparison can produce expressive nuances and specific emotions and recreate the figurativeness. A comparison is the mean that helps us to have a deeper awareness of some aspect of things and show our love, hate, compliment, complaint, affirmation and negation towards things. It is also the mean used in many language styles, namely spoken and written language as well as artistic and mainstream literature. The comparison is characterised by the time's features, national style and writer's style. Some people prefer intellectual comparison, other like rustic, precise and humorous one. The comparison can depict images and convey strong impressions, which create a lively description. On the other hand, it is also effective in making speeches clear and precise to express all nuances.

In daily communication, Ede people often express by the rustic comparison method to make what they want to deliver clearer. In their customary law, Ede people use this method in a high frequency compared to others. Therefore, for Ede people, a comparison not only helps the listeners and readers to perceive things, phenomena, statuses and natures in the most precise way but also assists them to increase the appeal and figurativeness for sentences. Statistically, in the customary law, there are about 1.707 sentences, in which 318 ones use rhetorical comparison (even underlying comparison or metaphor, metonymy in other words). In those 318 sentences, 730 times of using comparison are recorded. In the customary law, many cases of rhetorical comparison used to bring about strong expressive values. In the section on violators and community norms in the customary law, Ede people often use the comparison with two parts, A and B. Accordingly, A is the violator and B is the multi-time explanation to clarify natures and harm of the crime. It is because they want to understand to the very best the natures of A and help the listeners adequately visualise things and incidents that they are comparing, thereby creating the attractiveness for sentences in the customary law. For example:

Ciêt gao ti trang, hlang gao ti mbô, hlô mnong gao ti pum êjung. (He looks just like the grass but wants to rise above the papyrus plant, like a stem of straw but wants to rise above the reed, like a wild animal but wants to overpass the cluster of *êjung*) [6, p.238].

That is the worst contempt because he is considered a really bad man, etc.
Cih braih hroh, boh êpang yang hruê, êkei mniê cih. (Those boys and girls are as innocent as the newly pounded rice, as shining as the *êpang* flower and as bright as the sunshine) [6, p.244].

That is the love, affection and sympathy of people for slandered boys and girls.

The comparison with such multi-time explanation dissects the described subjects and helps the listeners not only understand more about the described subjects but also feel dedicated emotions. In the customary law, Ede people often compare characteristics and personalities of human beings with those of some animals and daily stuff to create a lively and specific association. For example:

Aseh amâo mgô| trao, kbao, klei êkei mniê amâo bi mgô| asăp kbông ôh. Leh kbloh hũi mlam di ih blu\ sa klei, hruê di ih blu\ sa asăp, wir ro/ng anăp di ih lo\ blu\ klei mdê. (As a horse which is not forcibly bridled or a buffalo which is not forcibly roped, you are not pressured by anybody when answering questions) [6, p.269].
~u bi hluê hong gơ\ kuên djiê ana, kra djiê knô. (He forces others to comply with his requests and considers them as an ape having lost his girlfriend, a monkey having lost her boyfriend) [6, p.340].

Bu grăn wăng amâo thâu đă; bu grăn kă amâo thâu gô; mtô lac klei amâo thâu gurt. (He acts as the handle of a *niết*, which is too hard to straighten; he is as stubborn as a *chà gạc*, which strongly resists to bending; he never listens to his parents' teachings) [6, p.235].

The language does include not only the customary law but also other epics of Ede people which are very rich in comparative images, matching the feelings of people in the Central Highlands and landscapes here. For instance, the comparison appears in *The Great Epic of Dam San*: "Male and female helpers are as abundant as the clouds". In the Central Highlands, every dawn or dusk, people often see the cloud fully covering mountains and filling valleys. People saying as abundant as the clouds is a unique way of expression which characterises the Central Highlands and makes a deep impression.

Hence, the customary law of Ede people has reflected vibrantly the life as well as spiritual and material aspiration of Ede people. They expect to have a wealthy, equitable, and happy life that everybody cherishes, and where everybody helps and respects one another to create wealth, bear children and bring them up, maintain the lineage, protect the living space and fight against the illness, truthlessness and obscenity. The living space and customs of Ede people are reproduced in the customary law through a lively and bountiful way of describing events, natural sceneries and human life. Special attributes of the language in the customary law of Ede people are manifested through the art of rhyming, duality, word use and comparison. These attributes balance and harmonise the customary law of Ede people, thereby making it lively, image-rich and close to the life of Ede people and help them to remember and comply with its provisions easily.

Cultural features in the customary law of Ede people

A number of studies on ethnic cultures have made cultural features of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands understood more clearly, especially those of Ede people and the intercultural communication, cultural movements and acculturation in the Central Highlands. Typical are the following works: “Folklore Culture of Ede People”, by Ngo Duc Thinh (1995), Institute of Folklore Culture Research and the Dak Lak Provincial Department of Culture and Information, and “Acculturation of Ede People in the Central Highlands”, by Truong Thong Tuan (2012), in the *Sciences Review*, Tay Nguyen University. Arguably, there has not been any scientific work studying the culture of Ede people deeply through their customary law. With the purpose of researching the culture of Ede people and surveying contents in the customary law, this paper analyses and explains some positions on the culture of Ede people through their customary law.

The customary law’s language describes the living space of Ede people

Through the customary law’s language, the nature of the Central Highlands and the life of Ede people are manifested in a bountiful and diverse manner. Language layers indicate things, animals and plants which are close to the life of Ede people. These are images used for comparisons in the customary law, as while reflecting the living space of Ede people, such as:

- Words for stones, trees and animals: Stones: *boh tâo* (rock), *boh tâo sah* (whetstone), *boh tâo pui* (flintstone), *boh tâo [lia* (smooth stone), etc.; Trees: *êjung* (the giant sensitive itchy tree which has pollens in its cover), *êya* (ginger), *êpang* (dipterocarpus obtusifolius with large and flat leaves), *êrăng* (red lauan with firm wood), *klông* (Dipterocarpus intricatus dyer with many small tumour in its body), *kbang* (a plant with firm wooden body), *tông môn* (mythical with a magical growing level, equated with the plant having small red fragrant flowers by the people), *aroh* (a grass-bodied plant growing to the same height as a normal person and red flowers used as an edible vegetable), *lồ ô* (a common big plant of schizostachyum family in the Central Highlands), *hrac* (Dipterocarpus alatus), etc.; Animals: *ktong* (a kind of sika deer), *bhì* (a kind of forest bird with its feather colour changeable in the morning and afternoon), *kpung* (red-eyed carp); *kruah* (snake-head fish); *tê* (two kinds of cicadas sounding in the summer), etc.

- Objects: *ci\ng klông* (a type of gong of the Ede people), *niêc* (a tool to work in the field), *kgac* (a forest machete of Ede people), *so\ng* (an ancient currency presented in objects), *la* (a type of big gong), *yăng, bãng gri* (two kinds of valuable pot), *tra* (a clay pot with big mouth); *kwang kông* (a bronze bracelet - the jewellery of Ede people); *lâ/m* (a rice mow on the floor), etc.

- In addition, words representing families, ethnic groups of native tribes in the Central Highlands, festival's customs, things in ancient stories, etc. are also used as standards for comparison such as Mnong (a native ethnic group in the Central Highlands), *Bih / Mdhur / Ênin* (branches of Ede people), *Hroi* (a group of Cham people); *cuê nuê* (the levirate marriage custom of Ede people), *hang* (cave Adrenh, according to the ancient story of Ede people, it is the place that they first appeared), *kpih* (the immolation ceremony of Ede people), etc. For instance, in sentences such as:

~u suh kơ mnga tông mông, nữ dlông kơ myăp, nữ hung khăp hung ciăng kơ pô mkăn. (But if he still likes the cluster of tông mông flower, he still likes the kite with a long tail and loves her) [6, p.284].

Ih pô kiă băng, êwăng dliê, kriê kto\ng kdjar. (He (she) is the protector of the *hang*, forest, *kto\ng* and *kdjar* trees) [6, p.470]. (Hang: Adrenh cave; *kto\ng kdjar*: wooden-bodied trees growing in the forest).

The customary law's language is characterised by the simple philosophy and the psychical life of Ede people

The simple philosophy in the customary law is drawn from nature's laws through images, things, phenomena and activities in the bountiful life and nature of people in the Central Highlands. Based on those laws, the customary law unravels philosophical issues in a simple and comprehensible way which matches the community's cultural thinking and awareness. For instance:

Ciêt gao ti trang, hlang gao ti mbô, hlô mnông gao ti pum êjung. (He looks just like the grass but wants to rise above the papyrus plant. He looks like a stem of straw but wants to rise above the reed, like a wild animal but wants to overpass the cluster of *êjung*) [6, p.130] (*Êjung*: the giant sensitive, itchy tree which has pollens in its cover).

The psychical life of Ede people originates from the concept everything has its soul in the community's life and is presented in the customary law through such words as *yang* (god), *mjâo* (wizard), *giê* (fortune teller), *mgun* (god), *mngăt* (soul, spirit), *aduôm aê đum* (ancestor), *yang adiê* (sky, land, deity), etc. For example:

Anu\ đrông, kông msei, do\ mơ\ng aduôm aê đum. (Agate chains, bronze bracelets and iron rings are things handed down by ancestors in the past) [6, p.430].

~u mnuih yang biê adiê nga\, yang biê adiê ăl, `u amâo lữ thâu kral yu\ ngo\, nu\ duah kđi klei kơ ami\ ama. (He is criticised and punished by the heaven's king and gods. He can no longer identify the West and East, he even messes with his parents) [6, p.390].

The view of using numerals in the customary law of Ede people

Unlike Viet, or Kinh, people, Ede people often regard odd numbers as mysterious ones in their psychical life. The numbers three and seven are commonly used because the number three, according to Ede people's views, symbolises the soundness, equity, sensibility, rightfulness, etc. and the number seven represents the beauty, wholeness, goodness, enduringness and powerfulness. For example, sentences often appear many times in provisions of the customary law:

Mnuih sa bi thao, mnuih tlao bi buh, mnuih etul hmu. (To help some three people understand, four or five people see, and hundreds of people listen) [6, p.318].

Truh kjuh thũn sa bãng, truh bhang sa lỏ, lãn bhiãn kriê, dliê bhiãn ênăk. (In the new dry season of every seventh year, based on their customs, they have to visit their own lands, mountains and forests) [6, p.478].

In short, the customary law of Ede people is a mirror reflecting their society because it mentions issues of the life from the natural environment, environmental protection to production, ownership, social organisation and relations, marriage and family, credence and customs, rituals, etc. The customary law has brought about quite a unique and diverse picture of ethnic group's culture, including regulations on farming, cultivation, cattle raising, hunt, fishing, eating customs, costumes, jewellery, etc. These are precious documentation for researching cultural identity and nuances of Ede people.

Values of the customary law in the life of Ede people

The customary law has adjusted and oriented activities and customs of Ede people. These orientations help Ede people to connect with the community and to conform with common laws. Contents in the customary law are behavioural norms formed and shaped in the long history of ethnic groups. It is accepted and obeyed by everybody as a habit or custom. Provisions of the customary law show the collectivism, democracy and equality in the relations of people; in the family, big families, village and society (community relations) and people to nature and superstition forces (in corporeality). In addition, the customary law regulates very clearly responsibilities of individuals with the community, especially ones of members in a big family, regardless of their financial or social statuses, etc. At the same time, the customary law stipulates very specific forms of moralisation and punishment for someone with behaviours against the community's awareness. These are the categories of goodness and illness as well as right and wrong in the real life of society.

Because of its great prestige in the village, the customary law is considered a customary court and mediator for settling disputes and conflicts in the village to educate and mediate relations. This customary court exists together with the state law and authority's settlement measures, but it mainly deals with small conflicts or incidents related to people in the community. The local authority's settlement

is different from the village's customs because these customs are very familiar and match the awareness of Ede people. The customary law plays an active role in the adjustment of tradition-based social relations besides the state law and does not go against the law.

However, the customary law of Ede people remains inadequate because it is the product of an ancient society - the society originated from closed matriarchal families. Its goal is to regulate the relations between the village's head and villagers and relations of a family, customs and rituals, not the national issues. It is confined to the small scope of an isolated society. Therefore, the customary court and people's court at all levels need to have changes, inheritances and collaborations to harmonise both sides to create the concord between the strictness of state law and the convenience for communities of ethnic groups, especially Ede people in the Central Highlands.

CONCLUSION

The research on fundamental issues of language features in the customary law of Ede people through artistic elements, namely rhyming, duality, word use and comparison has highlighted its attributes of language structures. These artistic elements bestow sentences in the customary law with a pure, simple, balanced, complete and especially sustainable beauty, which makes it easy for the readers to memorise and hand down. Dual parts in sentences of the customary law are semantically similar or opposite in terms of its information to increase the expressive effectiveness. Onomatopoeic, hieroglyphic and expressive reduplicatives are used to specify the natures and actions to create great impressions on subjects in the customary law. Synonyms, words of semantic approximation, antonyms and function words creates the semantic and grammatical diversity, trigger the artistic depth of words and demonstrate standpoints on things and phenomena most concisely and profoundly. By the unique comparison of Ede people, the described subjects are dissected, helping the listeners to not only understand more about them but also feel dedicated emotions.

In short, the customary law of Ede people is the spiritual and cultural product of Ede people, which mentions issues of the life from the natural environment, environmental protection to production, ownership, social organisation, community's relations, marriage and family, customs, rituals, etc. Hence, the customary law has reflected the traditional cultural life of Ede people vibrantly. The culture of Ede people manifested through the customary law's language is diverse and bountiful. It describes quite sufficiently the living space of Ede people from images of natural things and plants to instruments, rituals, customs, relations and production modalities, etc. Details in the life described by the customary law's language have philosophical values to moralise and educate people in the community, adjust behaviours and lifestyles and orient people to the goodness. In addition to the state law, the customary law helps to adjust and orient

activities and customs of Ede people. These orientations assist Ede people to connect with the community and help to conform with common laws.

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