

Kinship Relations in Weddings and Funerals as a Dimension of Human Security: The Case of Quynh Doi Village, Quynh Luu District, Nghe An Province, Vietnam

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Abstract

Kinship traditionally played a significant key role in Vietnamese village life until the 1945 Revolution; from the 1950s to 1980s, the state tried to shape the family and kinship following its ideology, which led to a weakening of kinship relations. Since the mid-1980s, however, after the government adopted comprehensive socio-economic reforms, there has been a revival in activities involving kinship relations. This article examines the role of kinship relations in everyday village life, especially life-cycle events. By applying a human security perspective, the article shows that since the reforms, kinship relations have been the mainstay for individuals and their families to reduce difficulties or insecurities in organizing life-cycle events such as funerals and weddings at the village level.

Keywords: kinship, human security, wedding, funeral, Vietnam

บทคัดย่อ

เครือญาติมีบทบาทสำคัญในวิถีชีวิตของชาวชนบทเวียดนามตามขนบธรรมเนียมประเพณีที่ตราบจนถึงการปฏิวัติในปี ค.ศ. 1945 ในช่วงทศวรรษ 1950-1980 รัฐได้พยายามปรับสร้างระบบครอบครัวและเครือญาติใหม่เพื่อให้สอดคล้องกับอุดมการณ์ของรัฐ ซึ่งทำให้ความสัมพันธ์ทางเครือญาติอ่อนแอลง อย่างไรก็ตามนับตั้งแต่กลางทศวรรษ 1980 เป็นต้นมาคือหลังจากที่รัฐบาลได้ทำการปฏิรูประบบเศรษฐกิจสังคมแบบรอบด้าน ก็ได้มีการรื้อฟื้นกิจกรรมต่างๆ ที่เชื่อมโยงกับความสัมพันธ์ทางเครือญาติ บทความนี้ได้ศึกษาวิเคราะห์บทบาทของความสัมพันธ์ทางเครือญาติในชีวิตประจำวันของหมู่บ้าน โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง

ในกิจกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับวงจรชีวิต บทความนี้ได้นำเสนอความคิดเห็นความมั่นคงของมนุษย์มาใช้ในการวิเคราะห์และเสนอว่า นับตั้งแต่การปฏิรูประบบเศรษฐกิจสังคม ความสัมพันธ์ทางเครือญาติได้กลายเป็นหลักสำคัญของปัจเจกและครอบครัวในการลดความยากลำบากหรือความไม่มั่นคงในการจัดกิจกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับวงจรชีวิต เช่น งานศพและงานแต่งงานในระดับหมู่บ้าน

คำสำคัญ: เครือญาติ ความมั่นคงของมนุษย์ งานแต่งงาน งานศพ เวียดนาม

Introduction

Kinship with neighbors and friends belongs to primary groups in terms of face-to-face, permanent, affective, non-instrumental and diffused relationships (Litwak and Szelenyi, 1969). Classic sociologists like Tönnies, Wirth and Simmel contend that in modern Western societies, primary groups fall into decay (Litwak and Szelenyi, 1969), in line with the historical loss of economic, political and religious functions of kinship, family and household (Shorter, 1975). Others, however, are of the opinion that with the help of modern communication and transportation, kinship continues to retain its importance regardless of geographic distance (Höllinger and Haller, 1990; Wellman, 1979; Litwak and Szelenyi, 1969).

In the context of modern Asian societies, Siaw (1981) points out that the solidarity among Malaysian Chinese is based on kinship ties. Bruner (1961,1973) confirms the continuity of kinship ties under urbanization. Bruner (1961: 508) states that in many Asian cities, “the individual does not become isolated, kinship organizations do not break down.” In studies on India, Eames (1967: 167-169) and Rowe (1973) report that migrants in Indian cities maintain close contacts with their relatives in their village through ties of property, mutual aid, visiting etc. Similar ties, particularly remittance, with families and relatives at distant home are found among Lao work migrants in Thailand (Thongyou and Ayuwat, 2006). In China, lineages have strong influence on their members through exhorting, praising, reprimanding, or punishing their members (Freedman, 1970). Kuah (1999) shows that cultural dilution

and moral vacuum in the modern society of the Chinese Singapore community is the reason its inhabitants seek to strengthen their kinship relations. Ton Van Trang (2015) suggests that Chinese Vietnamese in Ho Chi Minh city negotiate and construct their Chinese identity through the use of Chinese language among three different generations, indicating the importance of family relations and kinship ties. Watson points out the connection between Chinese in Hong Kong and Shenzhen through kinship ritual which creates a framework for trans-border business among kin (Watson, 2004). In brief, we see that kinship relations still play a significant role in modern society.

Kinship, in general terms, is the relationship among people who are related to each other by real, putative or fictive consanguinity (Fox, 1967: 33). This paper approaches the Vietnamese kinship system in terms of ego's kin networks and patrilineage bearing social network features (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988; Howell, 1998). From the viewpoint of ego's kin network, each individual has ties with at least five networks: mother's kin, father's kin, spouse's kin (with married individuals) and kin of children's in-laws (if ego's children are married), kin of sibling's in-laws. From a patrilineage viewpoint, Vietnamese patrilineage includes all people who have the same source with a common patrilineal ancestor. A patrilineage is made up of several branches, each branch comprising sub-branches; and families make up a branch (Nguyen Van Huyen, 2003: 771; Le Van Chuong, 1999: 138). In this research, I look at the Vietnamese kinship system in terms of ego's kin networks and patrilineage.

Today, the concept of human security concerns not only national or military security, but also individuals and humanity. Many approaches to the question of human security have been developed in recent years. The Commission on Human Security, in its final report *Human Security Now*, defines human security as:

protect[ing] the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from

critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 4)

Applying this definition in this article, I will look at the economic and cultural dimensions of human security. I will show the ways in which villagers help their relatives reduce economic and cultural difficulties in order to achieve fulfilment in organizing funerals and weddings. In practice, the host households, when organizing these events, need a great amount of money, labor and advice that may exceed their capacities. Thus, support from their relatives helps them avoid economic and cultural insecurity. As Eriksen puts it:

Although people may, in a traditional past, have been no more secure in their lives than we are ...at least they tended to belong to a community by default. Nobody challenged their group membership, they knew who to turn to in times of need and scarcity, and they had a clear notion of the moral universe within which they lived. (Eriksen, 2005: 6)

In this connection, kin membership helps to achieve spiritual satisfaction and economic support in terms of reducing the risks and alleviating crises of individuals and their immediate families in their life cycle. By applying a human security perspective, I will show that village kinship relations that were suppressed in the socialist period began to re-emerge since the reform period and have exerted considerable influence on village life. This influence is being particularly felt in matters of funerals and weddings.

Vietnam since the period of socialist transformation

During the colonial period (from the late 19th century to the mid 20th century), Vietnam was under French domination, which brought about deep changes in the country. The changes included the areas of

administration, taxation policy, social polarization, the recruitment of labor for French enterprises, the establishment of modern factories, discontentment with the new rule and anti-colonial movements (Beresford, 1988: 8-16). The socialist transformation period lasted from the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945 until the initiation of the Reforms in 1986.¹ During this period, the country went through two major wars, first against the French, which ended with the Dien Bien Phu victory in 1954, and then against the Americans, which culminated in the liberation or fall - depending on one's perspective - of Saigon in 1975, bringing reunification to the country under the leadership of the Communist Party. Throughout this time, socialism in Vietnam was built along the guidelines of three revolutions: a production revolution dealing with production relations or mode of production to eliminate capitalist exploitation by creating a system of socialist ownership; a scientific and technical revolution to create a modern industrial base to lend support to large-scale agricultural production; and a cultural, ideological revolution to transform people into "socialist men" and build a socialist culture (Quang Truong, 1987: 55; Woodside, 1970: 708; Malarney, 2002: 60).

Faced with socio-economic difficulties reaching crisis proportions in the late 1970s, the Communist Party launched a full-fledged reform program (Doi Moi) in the mid-1980s. These reforms in fact had their beginnings in 1981 in the area of agricultural production. Economic reforms were carried out not only in agriculture, but also in industry and trade. There was growth in private domestic enterprises and foreign investment (Sikor & O'Rourke, 1996), accompanied by a shift from protectionism to a liberal trade regime (Mazyrin, 2007). On January 11, 2007, Vietnam became the WTO's 150th member, marking the historical integration of Vietnam into the global market economy. Although the reform policies primarily focused on the economy, there was also "a profound reorientation of the party and state role in Vietnamese life" (Malarney, 2002: 1), leading to extensive changes in Vietnamese society.

¹ One significant point here is that from 1954 to 1975, Vietnam was divided politically into two rival states, North and South Vietnam. The policy of socialist transformation in this period happened only in the north of Vietnam. Nghe An province belongs to the north of Vietnam.

Study settings and methodology

This paper is intended to shed light on kinship relations in weddings and funerals from a human security perspective against the background of economic, political, social and cultural changes in the reform period, compared with the socialist transformation period. Fieldwork was conducted in Quynh Doi village, Quynh Luu district, Nghe An province. Nghe An is located in the northern part of central Vietnam, about 300 kilometres south of the capital of Hanoi. This province lies between Thanh Hoa to the north, Ha Tinh to the south, with Laos to the west and the sea to the east. Nghe An was chosen for this research for the following reasons. First, it is an area where little research has been conducted on the question of family and kinship relations from a sociological and anthropological perspective. Second, Nghe An is often considered to be a social-cultural zone of its own. Among cultural features of this zone, this province, especially Quynh Doi village, has strong kinship relations and many rituals related to kinship relations throughout history (Ho Phi Hoi, Ho Trong Chuyen and Ho Duc Linh, 2005 [1856, 1963]).

Quỳnh Luu district is located in the northern part of Nghe An province, bordering Thanh Hoa and the Eastern Sea. The national highway runs through the district. Quynh Luu has 43 communes. Quynh Doi was established some 600 years ago, and in 2010 it had eight hamlets with 1256 households and 4925 people. Quynh Doi has an area of 399.19 *ha* (hectares) of which 305.30 are used for agriculture. The rest consists of housing areas, ponds and lakes, roads, historical sites and one market. The majority of people are involved in agricultural production (growing wet rice), with others employed in making rice vermicelli and incense as well as woodworking, bricklaying, and petty commerce. Gross income per capita in 2010 was 7,660,000 VND (Doan Dieu tra Quy hoach Lam nghiep Nghe An, 2012: 5- 10).

The field research was carried out intermittently between 1998 and 2012. I returned to Quynh Doi to collect data between one and five times every year except for 2005 when I was not in Vietnam. Each trip

lasted from one to two weeks. After collecting data from each trip, I analyzed them before returning again to collect more data. The methods used in this study are participant observation and in-depth interviews. I interviewed several commune officials, including the secretary of the party executive committee, the chairman of the people's committee, the members of the committee for culture and land of Quynh Doi, and various hamlet heads. I also talked to the chairmen of the patrilineage council and people from various professions as described above. In addition I took part in several kin festivals in Quynh Doi. Quantitative data came from a survey carried out from late December 2006 to early January 2007. The sample size of this survey was 300 individuals who accounted for 6.46 percent of the total population of 4,640 people in the year of 2006. In this survey, 148 men (49.33 percent) and 152 women (50.67 percent) were interviewed. Each individual was chosen from a household. Among these informants, 67 people (22.33 percent) were between the ages of 18 and 29, 168 people (56 percent) were between 30 and 59, and 65 people (21.67 percent) were aged 60 and over.

Funerals and weddings in the period of socialist transformation

In Vietnamese villages, marriage for centuries has been essential not only for individuals but also for the community, especially the kinship system. In the traditional village, marriage was the common concern of all relatives (Doan Van Chuc, 1997). The purpose of marriage was to perpetuate patrilineage. Therefore, marriage was a kin affair (Dao Duy Anh, 2000: 132; Tran Ngoc Them, 2001: 256). Along with marriage, funerals in Vietnamese society are also important life cycle events related to family and community networks (Krowolski, 2003: 217). Funerals reflect the sentiment, morality and social relations between the living and the dead, between the deceased's family and their relatives. The Vietnamese believe that after death the spirits or souls will live on in another world. The souls are always close to the living and continue to affect their relatives (Pham Van Bich, 1999: 220; Le Van Chuong,

1999: 178-179; Mai Van Hai and Phan Dai Doan, 2000: 131). Funerals are the duty not only of the deceased's family but also of relatives, neighbors and friends. Relatives attend a funeral because of their sentiments and a sense of duty (Mai Van Hai and Phan Dai Doan, 2000: 131). In other words, kinship relations play a significant role in funerals, marriages and weddings in traditional Vietnamese society.

After the August Revolution 1945, under the motto "Building New Ways," people cast off many cultural norms, values and practices that were considered as belonging to the feudal regime. In this respect, on April 3, 1946, the Central Committee for Propagation of the New Life (*Ban Trung uong Van Dong Doi Song Moi*) was founded (Malarney, 2002: 61). One of the salient features of this movement was the rejection of ideas regarded as superstitions and simplification of old rituals that were considered as vestiges of the old culture, including rituals related to funerals and weddings. The campaign of building the "New Life" exhorted the people to "reduce expenditures for weddings, funerals, and temple and mausoleum construction, and devote the savings to communal benefit" (Malarney, 2002: 61). In practice, marriages and weddings during this period changed significantly and were described as "simple" and "sketchy" [*Don gian va so luoc*] (Le Ngoc Van, Mai Van Hai, Tran Dai Nghia and Dang Bich Thuy, 2000: 51).

Moreover, the state tried to neutralize the role of family and kinship members and to make funeral rites a proxy of the state and its ideology by having cadres take on important roles in funerals such as pallbearers and speakers (Malarney, 2002: 110). Similarly, the role of state and political organizations in organizing weddings was quite important. The Communist Youth Union² took charge of wedding entertainment and encouraged villagers to hold ceremonies at the communal hall (Luong, 1993: 285).

In short, funerals and weddings changed profoundly during the period of socialist transformation under the direction of the state.

² The *Communist Youth Union* (The Ho Chi Minh *Communist Youth Union*) is the largest social-political organisation of Vietnamese youth. The union is led by the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Support formerly given by relatives was transformed into support given by the state e.g., social and political organizations.

Kinship relations in weddings since the reform

Following the adoption of reform many rituals related to weddings and funerals have returned as a number of researchers have noted (Kleinen, 1999; Le Ngoc Van et al., 2000; Luong, 1993; Mai Van Hai and Phan Dai Doan, 2000; Malarney, 2002). The intensification of rituals related to weddings and funerals is due to a weakening of the Party ideology over culture; and the loss of coercive power of the Party regulations led to the revival of these rituals (Kleinen, 1999: 171-185; Malarney, 2002: 125-127, 163-167; Luong, 1993: 259, 270; Mai Van Hai and Phan Dai Doan, 2000: 145). Patrilineage and kin networks are once again helping to care for villagers in funerals and weddings through mutual support, expectation and obligation among relatives.

First, in order to examine the role of kinship relation in wedding, I shall explore the ways in which weddings are organized. Today in Quynh Doi when a family prepares for a wedding, close relatives are invited to their home to discuss the matter. The first step is setting up an organization consisting of four or five close relatives. The group begins to carry out the following tasks: making a list of invited guests; making the necessary preparations for the wedding feast and the ceremony; and going to the bride's house to fix a date for the wedding and to discuss details pertaining to the wedding requirements.

Wedding ceremonies usually take place over a two-day period. The first day and the morning of the second day are spent offering feasts for kin, neighbors and friends. On the second day the time between 10 am and noon is devoted to 'receiving the bride's procession' (*don dau*). On the afternoon of the second day, feasts are served for representatives of both the bride's and the groom's families. In organizing the wedding, relatives assist the family in extending invitations to guests, preparing meals, setting up tents for seating guests, etc. Through the following case study, I will examine the organization of a wedding.

The case of Cu Ngoc Trung's household³

I have enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with Cu Ngoc Trung's household in Hamlet Number 6 of Quynh Doi commune. Each time I return to collect data I always stay with his family. Cu Ngoc Trung was born in 1942, his wife, Hoang Thi Quan, was born two years later. Their oldest son, Cu Tuan Lanh, was born in 1973. Lanh and his wife are workers in Dac Lac province and have two children of their own. The second daughter of Cu Ngoc Trung and Hoang Thi Quan is Cu Thi Na, born in 1976. She is married to a fellow villager and lives in Hamlet Number 7. Both are farmers and they have two children. The youngest son is Cu Tuan Anh, who was born in 1980. He and his wife are high school teachers in Dac Nong province. In an interview on January 1, 2003, Cu Ngoc Trung told me about the wedding of his daughter.

My wife and I organized the wedding ceremony for our daughter in 1999. The ceremony was held in our house. The wedding feast was served on 70 tables or trays [mam co]. Each table seated six guests. Invitations were sent out three days before the wedding. The list was prepared several days before the ceremony. One of my younger brothers and two older brothers of my wife helped us to prepare the list. We had to consider the guest list carefully because it would cause a big problem if we left out some relatives. They would blame us for not attaching much importance to kinship relations. A nephew (son of an uncle - mother's brother) helped us to prepare the wedding feast. He led a group of relatives in preparing the food and serving the guests. At the wedding ceremony, my younger brother received guests who are relatives of mine. Two older brothers of my wife received relatives on my wife's side. My wife and I also took part in receiving our guests. Our children took care of their own guests. At that time, a guest offered 20,000 VND (1.40 USD), as a gift to share our happiness.⁴ Today, guests attending wedding ceremonies would offer their hosts between 25,000 VND (1.50 USD) and 30,000

³ The names of informants in this paper are fictitious in order to ensure the anonymity and privacy of the informants

⁴ In January 1999, 1 USD was equal to approximately 13,888 VND

VND (1.80 USD).⁵ However, the amount of cash also depends on the relationship between the hosts and their guests. Usually relatives offered more money than neighbors, friends or people from the same associations. With relatives, helping each other in weddings implies the maintenance of good relations between the hosts and the guests. If you don't help your relatives in wedding affairs, in the future it will be difficult to receive help, cooperation, or trust from the hosts not only in marriage and wedding affairs but also in other affairs.

Obviously, relatives have important roles in organizing the wedding ceremony. Their support is manifested at every step of the wedding from making the guest list to preparing wedding feasts and receiving guests. Without support from relatives, it is difficult for households to organize wedding ceremonies because of the large number of guests and the many meals to be served.

Concerning the support of relatives, neighbors, and friends in organizing wedding ceremonies, in the survey of December 2006 and January 2007 I asked the question: “Which family households did you help and what kind of help did you give when they organized wedding ceremonies?” The results are found in Table 1.

Table 1: Support relatives in organizing wedding ceremonies

Kind of relation	Way of support (Percentage) (n=300)		
	Offering money	Offering items	Supporting labor
Mother's kin	94.3	13.0	65.0
Father's kin	94.0	13.7	62.7
Spouse's kin	87.7	10.0	49.7
Sibling's in-laws	74.7	1.3	17.3
Children's in-laws	57.0	0.3	7.0
Friends	95.0	1.3	19.0
Neighbors	97.3	0.3	17.3
People from the same association	66.3	0.3	5.7

⁵ In January 2003, 1 USD was equal to approximately 16,009 VND

Thus, from the data we have some details. First, besides giving advice and support in organizing the wedding, the role of kinship relations also can be seen from the financial support of relatives. Wedding guests usually offer the bride and groom gifts (often in cash) to express their congratulations. There is a distinction between the gifts presented by relatives and those presented by neighbors and friends. The gifts from relatives usually carry more financial value than those from neighbors and friends. Besides expressing their warm sentiments to the newlyweds, the relatives want to make a tangible contribution to the new couple in starting a new life together.

Second, not many invited guests offered items to the hosts. In contrast, before Doi Moi, in the socialist transformation period, most guests offered items to the hosts and the newlyweds, reflecting the situation that in collective period, items were usually scarce (Le Ngoc Van, Mai Van Hai, Tran Dai Nghia and Dang Bich Thuy, 2000). In the reform setting, when goods are prevalent, most invited guests offered money. We see that most of the guests offering items to the host belonged to mother's kin, father's kin, and spouse's kin. Through interviews, we found that normally the guests offered money to the host when they were invited to the wedding feasts. For close relatives, usually close relatives belong to father's kin, mother's kin and spouse's kin beside offering money they also offered extra items.

Third, those who provided labor in organizing wedding ceremonies such as inviting guests, receiving guests, preparing feasts, decorating wedding halls, we see that the majority were relatives belonging to the mother's kin, father's kin and spouse's kin. Only 5.7 percent of informants said that they helped the hosts who are the same association.

From the human security perspective, we see that kinship relations serve as a mainstay for families and their offspring in weddings. As demonstrated above, several types of relatives helped host households to organize wedding ceremonies. They provided not only labor but also money to organize wedding ceremonies. As we can see in the case of Cu Ngoc Trung, without support from several groups, especially kin

groups, Cu Ngoc Trung's households would have faced difficulty or insecurity in preparing a feast of 70 tables (or trays) to serve more than 400 guests.⁶ In addition, with many rituals related to wedding ceremonies, the host household might make mistakes if they did not have relatives to help them prepare the ceremonies carefully.⁷ Thus, from the human security perspective, we can say that kinship relations help host households avoid economic⁸ and cultural insecurities or difficulties in organizing weddings.

Kinship relations in funerals since the reform

Funerals in Quynh Doi today are held in the home of the deceased. In organizing the funeral, kinship plays an important role. An organization group consisting of three to four people is established. One person is put in charge of preparing materials for the funeral, another is responsible for the funeral rites, and another takes care of the visitors. The head of the group assigns definite tasks to relatives and neighbors, such as digging the grave, making the funeral tent in the yard of deceased's house, etc.

The case of Cu Thi Nhan's funeral

On January 14, 2007, I went to Ho Si To's house to interview him regarding the funeral of his mother, Cu Thi Nhan, who had died on December 16, 2006 at the age of 93. Just after the funeral the host recorded in a ledger the names of all the people who offered money and the amount they offered.⁹ The purpose of recording this information is

⁶ Today in urban areas, the hosts can order wedding feasts from restaurants, hotels or catering services.

⁷ In practice, I have experienced many cases in which villagers criticized with each other because of mistakes in organizing wedding ceremonies.

⁸ There have recently been more concerns about increasing economic insecurities among the poor in Vietnam. For example, Hoa Quynh Nguyen (2016) assessed the impact of economic growth on social advancement in Vietnam since 2001 onwards, and pointed out that economic growth has had negative impact on human development and poverty reduction, and that the depth of inequality will be exacerbated.

⁹ Malarney also observed this practice in a village in northern Vietnam (Malarney, 2002: 132).

to facilitate returning the kindness when these people themselves have funerals or other concerns. From the ledger created by Ho Si To, I gathered the following data.

Table 2: Money offered at the funeral of Cu Thi Nhan

Amount of money	VND	USD ¹⁰
The total amount of money	7,075,000	426.4
The largest amount offered by one person	200,000	12.0
The smallest amount offered by one person	10,000	0.6

Table 3: People offering money at the funeral of Cu Thi Nhan

Types of relations	Number	Percentage
Father's kin	34	20.9
Mother's kin	20	12.3
Husband's kin	37	22.8
Sibling's in-laws	8	4.9
Children's in-laws	9	5.5
Friends of children	11	6.7
Neighbors	35	21.5
Representatives of communal authority and associations	4	2.4
Friends of grandchildren	5	3.0
Total number of people offering money	162	100

The case study shows nine kinds of relations in Cu Thi Nhan's funeral, five of which are kinship relations. If Cu Thi Nhan is regarded as the ego in her kinship network, this network of people offering money to the host is an ego-centered kin network.

One important aspect of funeral organization is that both patrilineage representatives and hamlet officials are involved. The hamlet authority appoints an official to the organization group. At the burial ceremony the hamlet head gives a speech, which summarizes the life of the deceased, particularly the good things he or she had done,

¹⁰ In December 2006, 1 USD was equal to approximately 16,592 VND

and expresses sorrow at the passing of the deceased. The patrilineage representatives and patrilineage head present ceremonial offerings of money in addition to incense and wine. The patrilineage representatives together with the hamlet authorities organize the funeral procession. In the funeral procession, the patrilineage has a set of five funeral flags and a set of drums. The patrilineage assigns members to hold the flags and beat the drums. The hamlet has its funeral set of seven flags and a set of drums with people holding the flags and beating the drums. During the procession, the hamlet representatives with its flags and drums go first, followed by the representatives of the patrilineage together with its flags and drums; following is the coffin resting in a wooden hearse pushed by pallbearers. Family members walk alongside the hearse, then comes the group of relatives, neighbors and friends. The patrilineage organizes funeral not only for male members but also for female members daughters in-law of the patrilineage.

Through funeral organizations, we can see that both hamlet officials and the patrilineage representatives play important roles. As discussed earlier, in the traditional society, funerals were mainly the affairs of patrilineage and kin. During the socialist transformation period, the role of village officials and cadres were significant in funeral organization. Today, both patrilineage and village authorities share responsibility in funeral matters. This implies that the control of the funeral ceremony by the state through local authorities, which began in the period of socialist transformation, still exists. On the other hand, there is a revival of patrilineage responsibility in funeral.

In addition to the role of the kinship relations in terms of patrilineage representation in organizing funerals, each individual has the responsibility to support the deceased's family. As a relative lies on his deathbed, close kin keep watch nearby. At the news of a person's death, all relatives and neighbors immediately go to the deceased's house to pay their respects to the dead, comfort the deceased's family and organize the funeral. Moreover, the responsibility of relatives also can be seen in financial support for the deceased's family. Table 4 shows the support in terms of money, items and labor by relatives.

Table 4: Support relatives in funerals

Kind of relation	Way of support (Percentage) (n=300)			
	Offering money	Offering items	Supporting labor	Only giving condolences
Mother's kin	98.0	54.0	64.0	1.3
Father's kin	97.7	53.0	60.7	1.3
Spouse's kin	88.0	44.3	46.7	1.0
Sibling's in-laws	75.0	30.3	18.3	3.3
Children's in-laws	57.0	23.3	6.0	2.7
Friends	94.3	48.7	23.0	1.0
Neighbors	97.0	49.3	28.3	1.0
People from the same association	64.3	30.7	6.7	2.7

Thus, it is not only patrilineage that plays a role in funerals. As shown above, several kinds of relatives such as father's kin, mother's kin, spouse's kin, sibling's in-laws, children's in-laws, friends, neighbors, and people from the same associations also offer money, and provide labor to the deceased's house. As shown through the quantitative data, very few people offered only condolences to the hosts, without any support. Almost all kinship relations in terms of father's kin, mother's kin, spouse's kin, and friends and neighbors besides giving condolences to deceased's house, also offered money. On average, each funeral has around one hundred and fifty people offering money, and/or items, and/or volunteering their labor. However, there is a distinction between the amount of money offered by groups of friends, neighbors and groups of relatives. The relatives, especially relatives within four generations, often offer more money than do friends and neighbors. This money is aimed to help the deceased's family organize the funeral and the funeral meal of the three-day sacrifice. All people who offer money and/or items and/or labor are invited to attend the funeral meal but most of them decline in order to reduce the expenses for the host. However, most close relatives attend the three-day sacrifice.

From the human security perspective, we can say that kinship relations play an important role in two aspects. From the patrilineage organization's viewpoint, the patrilineage assigns people to the funeral organization group and co-operates in the funeral procession. In addition, patrilineage representatives visit the home of the deceased and present offerings. From the individual's viewpoint, besides paying respect to the deceased and offering comfort to the deceased's family, each relative offers the family money, items and/or labor in organizing the funeral. It can be said that kinship relation is the strong foundation both spiritually and financially in organizing funerals. In other words, kinship relations help to bring security physically and spiritually for host households in organizing funerals.

Conclusion

Kinship relations have played an important role in the life-cycle of Vietnamese in the traditional village. In traditional society when mentioning an individual, it was often stressed that the individual belonged to a certain family and kinship network. Individuals are linked closely with family and kinship groups in economic, political, cultural, legal and religious dimensions. From the human security perspective, kinship relations were the basic foundation of the individual and his family. However, since the 1945 Revolution, kinship relations have changed profoundly under the influence of the state. Indeed, the state tried to shape the family and kinship following its ideology, which led to a weakening of kinship relations.

Since the reform period, with the changes in the state's policies, kinship relations have gotten stronger. Through funerals and weddings, we can see that the role of relatives in funerals and weddings is not only an expression of their sentiment but also a way of supporting the host family in matters of finance and labor. This is an exchange through performing life-cycle rituals. People support their relatives in their rituals and receive their relatives' support in the future. The situation, then is one of enforcement of mutual sentiment and cooperation among

relatives. It creates a symbol and a means of mutual strength and solidarity through kinship relations. In other words, from the human security perspective, kinship networks help host households to avoid economic and cultural difficulties and insecurities in organizing funerals and weddings.

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