

The Currently Economic Changes of the Raglai Ethnic People in Vietnam

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Abstract: By field survey data in the residence area of the Raglai ethnic people in Ninh Thuan province at districts such as Bac Ai, Thuan Bac and Ninh Son... I notice from 1986 until now, beside traditional economic characteristics, economic activities of the people there have many changes. On that basis, the article has given some typical economic characteristics for economic development but still preserves the Raglai traditional cultural heritage in the future.

Keywords: The Raglai economy, The changes of the Raglai economy, The Raglai ethnic people.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Innovation Policy (1986) together with the formation and development of a market economy, international integration in our country has created tremendous and unprecedented changes in economic, social and cultural. This influence was not only strong in lowland urban areas but also in remote areas, long-term settlements of ethnic minorities, including the Raglai in Ninh Thuan.

According to the 2009 Population and Housing Census, the Raglai in Vietnam have 122,245 people, ranking 19th in population among 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, they are present in 18/63 provinces and cities [1, p.134]. This is a long-standing ethnic group in Vietnam, belonging to the Indonesiens ethnic group, with close language relations with ethnic groups: Cham, Chu Ru, Ede, Gia rai. The Raglai live for a long time in provinces such as: Khanh Hoa (45,915 people, accounting for 37.6% of the Raglai in Vietnam), Binh Thuan (15,440 people, accounting for 12.6% of the Raglai in Vietnam), Lam Dong (1,517 people, accounting for 0.1% of the Raglai in Vietnam) and the largest in Ninh Thuan province (58,911 people, accounting for 48.2% of the total the Raglai in Vietnam) [1, p.193-203].

II. CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL CULTIVATION METHOD OF SLASH AND BURN FARMING TO WET RICE CULTIVATION AND NEW CROP VARIETIES

1. Cultivation method of slash and burn farming

Cultivation is the main traditional production activity, the traditional economic foundation of the Raglai, occupying the leading position in their economic life. In cultivation, slash and burn farming occupies an important position and is a major source of food: corn, rice, sorghum, and kinds of beans. Depending on the type of tree planted on the field, they are called with different names: maize fields, rice fields, etc. However, Raglai people often intercrop with other types of crops on the same field [4, p.40].

Each village, the Raglai often choose from one to many mountains near each other to do farming. Their mountain fields often lie on the slopes of high mountains. According to traditional production practices, the Raglai rotate crops on their fields. Depending on whether the land is good or bad, after 3-5 years of cultivation they move to other places, within about 10-15 years they will return to the old land where was previously cultivated because the land then will become fertile again.

Method to classify mountain fields: the Raglai divide fields into two basic types (new and old mountain fields). In mountain field cultivation, based on the growth cycle of maize and rice, the Raglai have established a seasonal agronomy system [2, p.35]. The Raglai cultivate crops on a seasonal basis and the production cycle of a field season corresponding to 12 months of the year.

Changes in process of mountain field cultivation: In the past, the process of mountain field cultivation included: selecting land, slashing and burning fields, clearing fields, planting seeds, tending and protecting fields, harvesting [2, p.36-57]. However, in recent years, the Raglai's process of mountain field cultivation has changed a lot: finding new land to cultivate is no longer available; slash and burn work is just carried out in a few pieces of fields (most of the fields are no longer left behind); ways of planting (just growing corn and cassava, not growing upland rice); tending and protecting field work is much changed because some

families use herbicides instead of manual weeding, and do not need to protect fields out of wild animals (because wild animals are no longer exist); many families use fertilizers and pesticides.



Figure 1. Mr. Ya Chanh, Tra Giang 2 Village, Luong Son Commune, Ninh Son District, Ninh Thuan Province.

2. Method of cultivating wet rice and new plant varieties

Wet rice is a crop that has appeared in the Raglai community since 1986 when local authorities instructed techniques for planting and caring for wet rice. The main growing place is in the valleys along the mountain, relatively flat places near the river and stream to lead the dam to the field, especially the areas with flat terrain, close to the water sources.

In the first period, encouraging people to cultivate rice paddies faced many difficulties, although the authorities mobilized the ethnic people to move from upstream to lower, supporting each other to build houses according to each hamlet, reclaiming paddy fields and establishing groups to exchange water farm work.

From 1986 to now, with the policy of establishing a new economic zone, many Kinh people move to live in communes with the Raglai that created the process of cultural exchange and reception between the two peoples of the Kinh - the Raglai. Also from there, Raglai people continued to be encouraged by the local authorities to reclaim the land, expand the area of rice cultivation, and mobilize the use of fertilizers for crops, especially wet rice, using new varieties with high productivity. Besides, the formation of irrigation systems from irrigation dams, with solidified canals and ditches contributed significantly to the effectiveness of wet rice cultivation of the Raglai.

III. CHANGES IN ANIMAL HUSBANDRY ACTIVITIES

On the basis of agricultural economy of mountain fields and wet rice, the Raglai also raise cattle (buffaloes, cows, goats, and sheep...) [2, p.67]. In the period before 1975, Raglai people mainly raised pigs and poultry, which were commonly raised in all families. Since after 1986, animal husbandry has started to change, when people started to cultivate wet rice, the demands for raising oxen and buffaloes have been developed.

Especially in this period, people also got support for capital and breeds. Since then, Raglai people have many changes in breeds and ways of raising cattle. From the support policies of the State and the proactive development of animal husbandry, the application of science and technology to animal husbandry, the number of cattle has led to an increase. Besides raising cattle (buffaloes, oxen, etc.), 100% of Raglai households raise poultry (chicken, duck...). Previously, the main purpose of raising households was to improve meals in the family, but now the Raglai know to trade at markets to improve their lives.

Regarding the previous livestock breeds such as chickens or ducks, they were raised freely, there were no breeding facilities, the scale was small as households, each family often raised a few to a few dozen (more or less depending on the ability to breed of the households' livestock). In recent years, the Raglai have participated in many technical training programs on animal husbandry and been supported new breeds to improve productivity and quality of animals. However, the current situation of poultry farming is less developed, has not yet formed a professional breeding farm, they are also not yet interested in disease prevention and use of animal feed. Because the purpose of breeding is only supporting the demand for food or sacrifices that have not changed in the direction of commodity breeding, hence, the number of poultry of the Raglai is not developed in recent years.

IV. CHANGES IN HANDICRAFTS

The traditional handicrafts of the Raglai are known as forging iron, weaving, pottery making and paper making. In the development process, the handicrafts of the Raglai have many changes. Pottery making is no longer available. Forging is also only available in a few households. Only weaving is developing but it is only concentrated in some households. Weaving is a long-standing traditional job of the Raglai. The products are mainly used for daily living needs such as: bamboo papoose, large and flat bamboo baskets, bamboo baskets... The type of product currently being consumed the most is the bamboo papooses. For the Raglai, the bamboo papoose is not only a pure tool but also shows artistic value and the skill of the artisans.



Figure 2. Mr. Kator Hung - born in 1935, a wounded soldier, 45 years old serving the Party, is a weaving artisan, Da Mai Duoi Village, Phuoc Khang Commune, Thuan Bac District, Ninh Thuan Province.

At present, weaving products of the Raglai mainly serve the consumption needs of local people, but not yet turned into handicraft products sold in the market to create jobs and increase income for people like the famous weaving villages like in Phuoc Tien Commune, Bac Ai District, Ninh Thuan Province. In addition, the Raglai also do some handicrafts such as carpentry, brick and tile making...

V. THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Trade activities: Trade is one of the main economic activities of the Raglai formed before 1975. However, the trade was also promoted in the region, forming a small network to exchange between the Raglai people, the Kinh and the Cham people in the plain [2, p. 99]. In the past, the way of trading of the Raglai was done by exchanging objects (take corn, beans, rice, potatoes... to exchange for fish sauce, salt, dried fish; pork, chicken to exchange for cloth; buffaloes and oxen exchange for bicycles, radio...). In order to measure and quantify exchanged items, the Raglai use weighing and measuring units according to traditional practices such as bamboo papoose and small bamboo basket.

Today, cash is commonly used and measurement unit is kilogram. The trading network of the Raglai has many changes, with many different forms. People can go to commune markets, district markets or buy from peddlers everyday. Besides, the agencies and shops selling necessities and purchasing agricultural products are formed more and more. There are grocery stores that sell necessities such as fish sauce, salt, instant noodles, cigarettes... along with some motorbike repair shops and electrical shops... serving local people.

Working as a hired labor: In the past, the Raglai only helped each other in the form of labor exchange between members of their family or the same village. Today, due to the development of the market economy, Ninh Thuan province has formed many industrial parks with factories and enterprises with the need to use many labor sources. Therefore, in recent years, local authorities have taken care of the education career in order to raise the people's intellectual level and train local human resources to serve the locality. Most especially, in the crops, many well-off families need Raglai people to work as laborers. Payments are usually paid by day. Employees are often those from poor and near poor families; those without arable land, relying only on who calls what to do, takes money to cover life through the day. Life is quite precarious.

VI. CONCLUSION

As an ethnic group in mountainous areas, who used to live as nomadic life with a slow-growing natural economy, the economic activities of Raglai people now have the following outstanding features:

1. Previously and now, the main source of the Raglai's income is cultivation. Nowadays, many new crop varieties (Anacardium occidentale, green pomelo, custard-apple, coconut, mango, sugarcane, cassava...) together with wet rice bring higher income than the cultivation of rice, maize, and beans on mountain fields... as before. Currently, the production method has changed quite a lot compared to before (there are many new varieties, improved production tools and techniques...).
2. The profit from livestock production is not high compared to farming activities. However, animal husbandry activities in the past few years have had certain changes such as the access to many new varieties and the introduction of new animal husbandry methods (though not much and popular).
3. Many traditional handicrafts have been lost (forging, pottery making, paper making...). A number of new occupations appear such as working as hired labor, doing services, doing business... However, the tendency to work and do business has not developed strongly and does not occupy an important position in the income structure of the Raglai there.

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