



THE VALUE OF PATTERNS ON WHITE PANTS DAO WOMEN'S COSTUMES IN HUNG DUC COMMUNE, HAM YEN DISTRICT, TUYEN QUANG PROVINCE IN CULTURAL EXPRESSION

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Abstract

Hung Duc commune, Ham Yen district, Tuyen Quang province, has been the residence of White Pants Dao people for many generations. Here, numerous distinctive cultural values of the Dao Quan Trang community have been preserved and are continuing to thrive. One of these values lies in the patterns adorning their women's traditional clothing. Through this study, an effort is made to recognize and emphasize the importance of preserving, promoting, and conserving these valuable cultural elements, contributing to the diversity of Vietnam's ethnic cultural landscape. To conduct an effective research, the author employed various research methods including secondary document research methods, statistical and descriptive methods, analysis and synthesis methods, fieldwork and survey methods. As a result, several observations regarding the cultural values of patterns on White Pants Dao women's costumes were made: 1/ Patterns reflect the characteristics of daily life; 2/ Patterns reflect the value in festivals and ritual practices; 3/ Patterns reflect the value of cross-cultural communications among ethnic groups. This is a cultural feature that enriches the material and spiritual life of the White Pants Dao people in Hung Duc and needs to be preserved for future generations.



GIÁ TRỊ CỦA HOA VĂN TRÊN TRANG PHỤC NỮ NGƯỜI DAO QUẦN TRẮNG Ở XÃ HÙNG ĐỨC, HUYỆN HÀM YÊN, TỈNH TUYÊN QUANG TRONG BIỂU ĐẠT VĂN HÓA

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Từ khóa

Giá trị, văn hóa, hoa văn, trang phục nữ, người Dao Quần Trắng

Tóm tắt

Xã Hùng Đức, huyện Hàm Yên, tỉnh Tuyên Quang, nơi mà người Dao Quần Trắng cư trú từ nhiều đời nay. Tại đây đã và đang lưu giữ rất nhiều những giá trị văn hóa đặc sắc của người Dao Quần Trắng. Một trong những giá trị đó là hoa văn trên bộ trang phục nữ của họ. Thông qua nghiên cứu này để thấy được những giá trị văn hóa quý giá cần được gìn giữ, phát huy và bảo tồn, góp phần tạo nên sự đa dạng trong bức tranh văn hóa các dân tộc Việt Nam. Để nghiên cứu đạt hiệu quả cao, tác giả sử dụng các phương pháp nghiên cứu như: Phương pháp nghiên cứu tài liệu thứ cấp; Phương pháp thống kê, mô tả; Phương pháp phân tích, tổng hợp; Phương pháp điền dã, khảo sát. Từ đó, đưa ra những nhận định về một số giá trị văn hóa của hoa văn trên trang phục nữ người Dao Quần Trắng như sau: Hoa văn phản ánh đặc trưng đời sống; Hoa văn phản ánh giá trị trong Lễ hội và thực hành nghi lễ; Hoa văn phản ánh giá trị giao thoa văn hóa tộc người. Đây là nét văn hóa làm phong phú đời sống vật chất và tinh thần của người Dao Quần Trắng ở Hùng Đức cần gìn giữ cho thế hệ mai sau.

1. Introduction

Tuyen Quang, with its beautiful natural landscapes, is a land rich in deep and diverse cultural heritage. Inhabited by 22 ethnic groups who have coexisted and bonded for generations, it is a place where unity prevails. Among these ethnic groups, the White Pants Dao people belong to the linguistic cluster of Hmong-Dao ethnic groups. The White Pants Dao people live in harmony with nature, preserving their unique identity through traditional attire, with a particular emphasis on women's costumes. The intricate patterns on women's

garments serve as the most authentic expression of the cultural and folk artistic values of the White Pants Dao people. Through this, we can observe the hidden cultural values behind the vibrant language of patterns, rich in both form and emotion, expressed and passed down throughout the extensive cultural history of the White Pants Dao people in Tuyen Quang.

2. Research methods

- Secondary document research method: Conducting a synthesis of secondary materials related to the White

Pants Dao people, their costumes, and elements associated with patterns on clothing. Research will be carried out at the Tuyen Quang Provincial Museum, focusing on relevant materials for the study.

- Statistical and descriptive method: This method will be employed to statistically analyze and describe various types of patterns, thereby identifying the cultural values they convey.

- Analytical and synthesis method: Providing an overall analysis of the cultural values inherent in the patterns of the White Pants Dao people and examining the formation of White Pants Dao culture in this context.

- Fieldwork, survey method: Utilizing reliable data from recent sources to address the research objectives. The author will directly observe, capture photographs, and collect information and materials related to floral patterns on women's costumes at the chosen location.

3. Research results

3.1. Overview of patterns on the costume of White Pants Dao women

According to some documented sources on the origin of the Dao Quan Trang people, it is stated, "In the 13th century, the White Pants Dao people migrated from Phuc Kien to Quang Yen, then upward to Lang Son, Cao Bang, Thai Nguyen and finally to Tuyen Quang". [1] Additionally, in the book "Ethnic minorities in Tuyen Quang" it is mentioned, "Tuyen Quang has 9 Dao branches" and "White Pants Dao people is present in 20 communes, mainly in Ham Yen and Yen Son districts. [2]

For the White Pants Dao people in Hung Duc commune, Ham Yen district, their clothing-related customs are diverse and rich, reflecting their worldview and outlook on life. Patterns, primarily expressed through decorative motifs and colors, serve as an aesthetic manifestation of their beliefs. Furthermore, the language of patterns allows us to recognize aspects of history, society, and cultural beliefs. It represents a developmental process in the history of ethnic groups, a fusion of cultures. In summary, the woven patterns on fabric serve as the preservation of the cultural foundation of any ethnic group, in general, and the White Pants Dao people, in particular.

"Geographically, Hung Duc commune is situated in the southern part of Ham Yen district. Before the August Revolution, it was called Phong Nam commune, and after the August Revolution, it was renamed Hung Duc commune. The commune comprises 23 villages, where five ethnic groups coexist, along with a few households

of other ethnicities: White Pants Dao, Kinh, Tay, Cao Lan, Hoa, etc." [9] "700, Khuan Thang, Deo Te, Khuan An, Xuan Hung, Cay Sau, Xuan Duc, Cay Pine, Cay Queo, Khanh Xuan, Dong Ham, Thanh Van, Lang Phan, Thang Binh and Van Nham villages are 100% inhabited by White Pants Dao people" [9]. With this distinctive feature, the traditional cultural heritage of the White Pants Dao people in Hung Duc commune is well-preserved and actively promoted. In recent years, it has received attention from the community, contributing to the economic, cultural, and social development in a clear and profound manner.

The attire of White Pants Dao women consists of clothing such as headscarves, bridal hats, tunics, waistcoats, belts, trousers, leggings, and jewelry including earrings, necklaces, key chains, and bracelets. Each detail is meticulously considered by women who embroider and weave various patterns onto the fabric. This meticulous craftsmanship results in a harmonious and elegant overall outfit, creating a distinctive identity. Through these details, the traditional cultural values are vividly expressed, showcasing the uniqueness of floral patterns as a form of decoration.

3.2. The value of patterns on White Pants Dao women's costumes in cultural expression

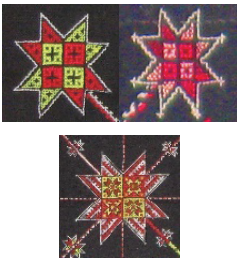


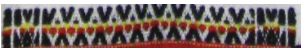
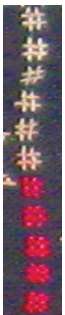

3.2.1. Patterns on White Pants Dao women's costume

Geometrical patterns

Geometrical patterns on White Pants Dao women's costumes are inspired by nature and daily life, creatively transformed into decorative motifs using intricate lines, straight lines, and curves. Notable examples include the eight-petal flower pattern with various variations, created by combining zigzag lines, straight lines, and dots. Another example is the patterns cluster around the collar featuring crab and cross lines motifs. There is also a patterned strip along the spine with a cross lines motifs, a pattern cluster at the hem of the apron with V and circular motifs, a double cross pattern strip, and a cluster pattern with dots forming a square. The geometrical patterns motifs are depicted realistically, clearly, and intricately. This reflects the typical creative thinking of the White Pants Dao people, utilizing simplicity to combine into complex structures, creating richness and diversity in floral patterns.

With such decorative pattern motifs, the White Pants Dao people have innovatively expressed various ornamentation styles, each carrying profound meanings that vividly reflect the cultural identity of people living amidst mountains, forests, and beautiful nature.

Table 2.1. Some geometrical patterns decorated on women’s costumes









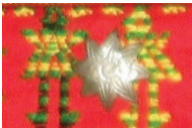

No.	Name of the pattern	Pattern
1	Variations of the eight-petal flower pattern	
2	The pattern cluster around the collar with crab and cross lines motifs	
3	The patterned strip along the spine with a cross lines motifs	
4	The pattern cluster at the hem of the apron with V and circular motifs	
5	The double cross pattern strip	
6	The pattern cluster with dots forming a square	



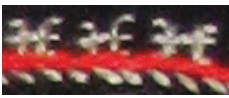


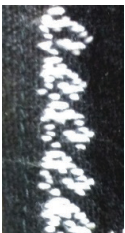

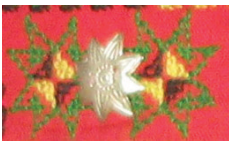


Realistic patterns



The realistic patterns are depictions of real-life images observed and creatively interpreted by the White Pants Dao people. They have created stylized images that are conditional and highly simulated, but still retain the characteristics and spirit of things. With the stylization of each part to bring out the characteristics, the highlight is the lines that create patterns that always have the form of geometric lines. With a natural, flexible, and emotional depiction, the images of nature embroidered onto the outfit seem to breathe the soul of things into them.

Through images such as: sharp point of knife patterns, schizostachyum aciculare leaves patterns, winter melon seeds patterns, canari seeds patterns, human body patterns, mountain and hill patterns, pines patterns, crabs patterns, “Lông” (a mythical creature) patterns, birds patterns, flower branches patterns, grasses and trees patterns, dog paw patterns, dragon paw patterns, silver flower patterns, butterfly patterns, fish bone patterns, eight-petal flower patterns and wave patterns... these are images that are attached and close to the life of the White Pants Dao people. The patterns are skillfully crafted, delicately integrated onto the fabric without disrupting the overall composition.

Table 2.2. Some realistic patterns on women’s costumes

No.	Name of the pattern	Pattern
1	The pattern resembling sharp point of knife	 
2	The pattern resembling schizostachyum aciculare leaves	 
3	The pattern resembling winter melon seeds	 
4	The pattern resembling canari seeds	 
5	The pattern resembling human body	
6	The pattern cluster resembling the mountain and hill	

No.	Name of the pattern	Pattern
7	The pattern resembling the pine	
8	The pattern strip resembling the grasses and trees	
9	The pattern strip resembling the crab	
10	The pattern resembling the “Long” (a mythical creature)	
11	The pattern resembling the bird	
12	The pattern strip resembling the dog paw	
13	The pattern resembling the dragon paw	
14	The pattern resembling the silver flower	
15	The pattern resembling the butterfly	
16	The pattern resembling the word “Thọ” (longevity)	

No.	Name of the pattern	Pattern
17	The pattern resembling the fishbone	
18	The pattern array resembling the eight-petal flower and wave	

Color in patterns

Color is one of the artistic elements that plays a crucial role in the visual impact of visual arts, contributing to the aesthetic value of the artistic piece. Costumes, as a lively form of art, utilizes patterns and colors to assert the unique characteristics and individual nuances of a particular ethnic group. In the traditional color palette of White Pants Dao clothing, five main colors are prominent: indigo black, red, yellow, green, and white. To achieve these colors, the community historically employed natural dyeing methods for cotton fibers through manual processes. In the past, natural materials were used for dyeing, sourced from nature. However, in the last 20 to 30 years, the community no longer grows cotton, and raw materials for weaving are entirely purchased from the market, including raw fabric, cotton fibre, and embroidered patterns.

“At present, the White Pants Dao people in Van Nham village, as well as neighboring villages in Hung Duc commune, no longer use indigo black dye. While the indigo plant still exists, the residents no longer cultivate cotton for weaving, rendering the indigo dye unnecessary. The black indigo-dyed fabric pieces of the past are now replaced with coarse raw fabric purchased from the market. Although it still maintains the black indigo color, the texture of the fabric is stiffer, heavier, and less breathable.” [9] “Along with the indigo black color, the community uses dyeing methods for red, green, and yellow. These are the basic colors for dyeing embroidery threads, with the White Pants Dao people using silk threads for pattern embroidery. For green dyeing, the community uses forest plants, but the specific plant names have been lost over time. The plants are collected, boiled in water, with a bit

of lime added to prevent fading. After simmering for about half an hour, the green water is filtered, and the threads are dyed”. [9] “For yellow, the Dao people use Lu plants, which are grown around their houses. The dyeing process is similar to that of green dyeing. The Lu plant produces a vibrant and beautiful yellow color, with a pleasant fragrance and colorfastness”. [9] “As for red, the White Pants Dao people use red rice leaf plants, grown around their houses. The dyeing process is similar to the above, and after dyeing, the fabric must be dried in the shade and wind to prevent quick color fading”. [9]

It can be observed that the color palette of the White Pants Dao group is not overly diverse, but they exhibit a sophisticated approach to color coordination, balancing the indigo black base with the main and secondary floral motifs, presenting a harmonious overall effect. A distinctive feature in the White Pants Dao people’s color coordination in patterns is the pairing of contrasting colors, such as green with red or white on a black fabric background, creating focal points and visual appeal. White is prominently used in embroidery or as border lines for main color segments, adding emphasis to each pattern cluster. Particularly, white is extensively employed in embroidered patterns on aprons, highlighting a large floral pattern with precision and creating a strong visual impact.

The White Pants Dao people’s unique approach to color coordination in clothing patterns is characterized by simplicity and subtlety, incorporating focal points and creating balance within large floral patterns: primary and secondary motifs coexist with moments of rest. The colors enhance the beauty of the patterns, resulting in a dazzling and mystical appearance that conveys the profound and contemplative aspects of White Pants Dao life in Tuyen Quang.

3.2.2. Some cultural values of patterns on Dao Quan Trang women’s costumes

Patterns reflecting the characteristics of life

Traditional cultural activities are deeply rooted in daily life, arising from specific needs intertwined with the ordinary, becoming an integral part of life. The White Pants Dao women’s apron not only satisfies material needs, serving as a garment to cover the body, but it also fulfills aesthetic needs. Beautifully decorated aprons serve as a measure of the talent of White Pants Dao women. The beauty of aprons,

headscarves, and traditional dresses, like cultural and artistic masterpieces, seamlessly connect the practical needs of daily life with aesthetic preferences.

The patterns and motifs on the costumes of White Pants Dao people tend to feature warm, gentle colors, expressing a minimalistic yet sufficient language. It is a combination of warm colors, with red as the focal point, creating a striking and impressive feeling. The patterns motifs depict human life and natural landscapes. The harmony and inseparable connection between nature and humans are reflected here. Clear patterns of leaves and animals adorn the woven fabric, representing real and useful elements for humans. Some patterns even provide explanations regarding their origins or the reasons they are depicted on various products. Additionally, as an art form, patterns also reflect the emotional thoughts of White Pants Dao women. Beyond showcasing individual talents, they reveal the inner thoughts and contemplations of these women. The elderly often embody a simple, modest style, while younger women express a more liberated and diverse approach in both patterns and colors.

Patterns, in addition to expressing feelings and emotions, for girls are also the standard for evaluating the talent, virtue and beauty of women in the family. Skillful embroiderers are esteemed and cherished by the community. For young girls, learning embroidery is a duty: taking care of the family’s attire. Even after becoming wives and mothers, White Pants Dao women continue to embroider various patterns, ensuring their family members are dressed warmly and beautifully. The art of floral embroidery is inherited from the maternal family and further absorbed within the husband’s family lineage. As they age, these women continue to care for beautiful outfits to wear when reuniting with their ancestors. Thus, the cultural signal embodied in the art of pattern decoration is preserved through generations in the lifecycle of White Pants Dao women, with the flow of patterns continuing to flow through their hands.

Patterns reflecting cultural values in ritual practices

The significance of patterns in the ritual practices of White Pants Dao women is profound. At each moment, women carefully choose garments with patterns that suit the occasion. “In the past, in daily life, White Pants Dao women often wore clothing woven from cotton fibers, with simple tailoring, including headscarves, tunics,

belts, aprons, and pants”. [9] “Traditional women’s attire for White Pants Dao women in weddings and festivals includes headscarves, tunics, aprons, cloth belts, white pants, and leggings. For brides, there is also a bridal hat”. [9] Nowadays, on festive occasions such as Lunar New Year, March 3rd Festival, July 14th Festival, and September 9th Festival, women still wear ceremonial attire with white pants. However, during “Đám chay” ceremony (a ritual of the Dao ethnic group to absolve guilt, pray for the departed souls) and mourning ceremony, ceremonial attire is not worn due to the belief that sad events are happening in the house. In ceremonial attire, the patterns are meticulously embroidered, carrying distinct meanings. During weddings, the bride wears a “Bồ đãi” hat (ceremonial hat) and white pants. The patterns used in festival clothing also carry spiritual and religious elements, which are avoided in everyday use. Notably, the unique hats and headscarves of White Pants Dao people are significant. In Hung Duc commune, only brides and bridesmaids wear hats; others wear headscarves.

Several representative patterns symbolize the connection between material and spiritual life. Tigers and dragons patterns symbolize power. In the highland areas, squash fields, schizostachyum aciculare hills, and the canaris are familiar images for White Pants Dao people, present in every household. The squash pattern symbolizes ethnic reproduction, commonly used within family lineages. Patterns of people, sharp knives, and fishbones help preserve good spirits and ward off evil. The eight-petal flower pattern symbolizes the eight precious things, expressing wishes for prosperity, fertility, and abundant harvests.

White Pants Dao people highly value honor and are always conscious of their ancestral roots. These values are reflected in the patterns on their clothing. On the aprons of White Pants Dao women, horizontal waves reflect the process of migration, crossing oceans to find new lands in White Pants Dao history.

Patterns reflecting the value of cross-cultural communications among ethnic groups

In each stage of development, through creative labor, people always seek what is better, what is more beautiful to learn from the experiences. Traditional clothing is no exception, and White Pants Dao women always find ways to learn from each other through the exchange of goods. Particularly in the field of

weaving, cultural exchange is evident in weaving tools, techniques, processes, embroidery, and pattern decoration. In terms of pattern decoration, aside from random repetitions, many decorative motifs are similar. Patterns like the eight-petal flower, pine patterns, hill and mountain patterns, bird patterns, human body patterns, etc., and the color palette used in clothing are often shared among various ethnic groups. This shows a significant influence and the adoption of new elements between different ethnic communities.

Moreover, patterns are used to exchange feelings between couples in love. They gift each other embroidered scarves, bags, or patterned fabric as tokens of love. At that moment, the act of gifting serves as a cultural exchange and a strong bond of a vow. From simple objects, emotions arise, and these items convey messages of love. All these aspects converge to express the significance of cultural exchange.

4. Conclusion

The patterns on the clothing of White Pants Dao women are not only material products of labor but also cultural expressions, vividly showcasing the craftsmanship intricately linked with aesthetic abilities. White Pants Dao people have a unique way of decorating and utilizing clothing based on their distinct cultural characteristics. This is an expression of a high aesthetic level and a spiritually rich life, impressively harmonizing with the surroundings of their land and sky. It has transcended ordinary utilitarian values to achieve a high level of folk aesthetic thinking. The patterns on the clothing of White Pants Dao women are a unique cultural heritage with distinctive features that are easily recognizable—a type of cultural value that needs to be promoted and preserved for future generations.

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