

# Characteristics of Traditional Costume of Muong Women in Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam

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**Abstract**— After experiencing numerous ups and downs throughout history, the 54 ethnic groups of Vietnam have created, preserved, and maintained their own rich and diverse cultural heritage. Throughout history, clothing has been an essential element in shaping the cultural identity of a community, an ethnic group, or a nation. Each ethnic group's clothing has its own distinctive features, reflecting everything from the structure to the decorative patterns on each part of the garment. Through the lines, colors, patterns, and shapes of each component of the clothing, the customs, lifestyle, habits, and aesthetic essence of that ethnic group are also expressed. The traditional clothing of Mường women in Thanh Hóa has very prominent distinctive features in its structure; the garments are bright in color, creating a striking and unique impression. The decorative patterns on the clothing are intricate, showcasing the skill and delicacy of Mường women.

**Keywords**— Traditional clothing, Mường women, Thanh Hóa.

## I. MUONG PEOPLE IN THANH HOA

The Muong people, also known as the Mol, Mual, Moi, Moi bi, Ao Ta, are the third largest ethnic minority in Vietnam. The Muong people are most concentrated in Hoa Binh province and the mountainous districts of Thanh Hoa, Phu Tho, and Son La provinces. The Muong population in Thanh Hoa is 376,340, of which 191,668 are male and 184,672 are female.

The Muong people originate from ancient peoples in Southeast Asia, and have lived in Vietnam for thousands of years. They have a long history, thus forming and developing a rich and diverse culture.

The Muong people in Thanh Hoa speak the Muong language, a language belonging to the Tai-Kadai language family, and they also speak Vietnamese, the official language of Vietnam. The Muong people in Thanh Hoa mainly live on agriculture, growing crops such as rice, corn, and potatoes. They also raise animals such as buffalo, cows, chickens, pigs, etc. In addition, the Muong people in Thanh Hoa also have many traditional crafts such as weaving and sewing. In particular, the brocade weaving profession also has many famous artisans, and many brocade weaving classes are opened to preserve and conserve the traditional craft of the nation.

The Muong people's economy in Thanh Hoa is developing with many projects invested in agriculture and tourism. Education is also being paid attention to and developed as many schools have been built, many programs and projects for children in mountainous areas have been and are being implemented.

In the current trend of strong integration and development, the Muong people in Thanh Hoa are facing the risk of losing their traditional culture. However, with the attention of leaders at all levels, many traditional cultural activities of the Muong people in Thanh Hoa have been organized to preserve, maintain and promote the traditional culture of an ethnic group that has existed for a long time..

## II. TRADITIONAL COSTUMES OF MUONG WOMEN IN THANH HOA

Traditional costumes have been used for centuries, even thousands of years. Therefore, the traditional costumes of the Muong people, in addition to being a symbol of the cultural and historical identity of the Muong people, are also a measure of the length of history associated with an ethnic group. The traditional costumes

of Muong women in Thanh Hoa are impressive in terms of structure and shape. The overall color scheme of the costume is harmonious, with a tight white shirt, a colorful floral waistband in front of the chest, a half-blouse tied at the hem, and a green belt that makes the woman look slimmer when wearing the costume. On the head is a prominent white Klawn, a sparkling necklace around the neck and hands, ...

The traditional costumes of Muong Thanh Hoa women are handmade products made by the skillful hands of Muong women. The costumes have harmonious colors, not too bright. The skirt is usually made of black or dark blue, the scarf on the head is always white, but that does not mean that the costumes of Muong Thanh Hoa women are boring and monotonous. On the contrary, the overall traditional costumes of Muong Thanh Hoa women have harmonious colors, combined with delicate patterns.

The daily shirt worn by Muong Thanh Hoa women is called *ao pan* (short shirt). This is a short blouse, designed with a slit at the chest, long sleeves, and is usually yellow or white. Inside is a 3-hole *bang* shirt with straps tied at the shoulders or armpits. On the head is usually a simple white scarf.

In terms of the overall costume, the traditional skirt of Muong women plays a central role in the female costume, due to the highlight on the waistband. Muong skirts are made of cotton or silk. The skirt is covered from the chest down with colorful decorative motifs, this is also considered the most elaborate decoration, an important remaining part of the traditional national visual art, with similarities in the sculpture art on Dong Son bronze drums. The skirt is sewn into a tube shape, when worn, because the width of the skirt is still wide, it must be wrapped around the body, the excess fabric will be folded into a band along the length of the front of the skirt.

At first glance, the most prominent part of the outfit is the waistband, however, the body of the skirt is created quite elaborately from the dyeing process, so the color of the skirt is both durable and shiny. The skirt hem is decorated discreetly. The fabric is narrow but is decorated with flowers, when walking, the skirt flutters with each step, hidden in the hem of the skirt, appearing and disappearing. During festivals or performing arts, we often see the hem of the skirt of some Muong Thanh Hoa women embroidered with red flower strips in the front, which is extremely prominent.

Often on special occasions, Muong women also wear an outer coat called *ao khoai*, also known as *ao chung*, with the flaps reaching down to the calves. The coat is usually made of dark fabric, sometimes white or red. The coat is

sewn in a four-panel style, with an open chest and no buttons.

The belt (*tenh*) of the female costume is an important part of the traditional female costume, it enhances the luxurious beauty of the skirt waistband, blending with the color of the long dress. The belt is usually made of fabric or silk, about the length of an arm span, tied right in the middle of the waist on the skirt waistband. Muong belts are usually in the colors: white, blue, purple, yellow, but the most common is the belt in the color of young leaves, this color combined with the brocade motifs on the skirt waistband creates a harmonious overall color. After tying, the two ends of the *tenh* will be left loose on both sides of the hips (*tum tenh*). With each step, the *tenh* flutters, gliding with each step, creating a gentle and graceful look for the wearer.

In addition, the highlight of the neatly tied hair is the pure white headscarf, creating a neat and healthy look for Muong Thanh Hoa women. Muong women who reach adulthood often roll their hair into buns, and pin them with horn, wood or silver hairpins. When there is a funeral, women tie them into strips and wrap them around their heads. Although they wrap their hair in different ways, it is rare to see Muong women bare-headed, but they often wear a white cloth scarf (*Klawn*) on the top of their heads, the fringe of the scarf is slightly lowered to the forehead, and the bun at the nape of their neck is still exposed outside the edge of the scarf. When neatness and health are needed, women cover their heads with a scarf, then loop the two corners of the scarf around and tie the bun behind.

The *Klawn* scarf not only keeps hair neat, but is also used to decorate the head and has many profound cultural and human meanings. The white cloth worn by Muong women, like the white color of the *clang* flowers, symbolizes the loyalty and purity of Muong girls.

Muong women in their daily life and festival activities often use two types of hats. In festivals, they wear long dresses and hold conical hats, similar to the conical hats worn by Kinh women in the past. Muong women also wear conical hats woven from bamboo. Nowadays, some Muong women still have the custom of chewing betel and blackening their teeth.

In daily life, due to cultural integration and assimilation when living and interacting with Kinh people as well as foreigners, Muong women still wear daily costumes like Kinh people, only a few Me and sisters wear traditional costumes. Traditional costumes of Muong Thanh Hoa women are mainly worn during festivals, weddings and other important events. However, the traditional costumes of Muong Thanh Hoa women are a symbol of cultural identity not only of one ethnic group,

but are an indispensable part contributing to the cultural identity and pride of the Vietnamese people in general.

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