



Sacred Space in the Cap Sac Ritual of the Dao Lan Ten People in Vietnam

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INTRODUCTION

In rituals, especially religious rituals, sacred space plays an important role. Sacred space regulates ritual functions while also reflecting ritual values. Sacred space as a material element contains historical and cultural values, reflecting the worldview and outlook on ethnic life. Holy space also represents decorative art, integrating performance art during sacred times. This article attends to the symbolic Structure and function of the righteous in the Cap Sac ritual of the Dao Tuyen (Dao Lan Ten) people in the mountainous areas of Northern Vietnam and the decorative characteristics in the holy space. The Ceremony of the Cap Sac recognizes a man's maturity in Dao society. If a Dao man does not undergo this ritual, he is not recognized as an adult and cannot participate in deciding essential matters in the family or society. The awarding Ceremony in each Dao branch is held differently. In particular, the article also clarifies the performance space and gender space of the Ceremony. A sacred space is a worship space set up and decorated during the Ceremony. But holy space contains information about the divine system, about the homeland where the gods reside. Each sacred space has a different function and task. The holy space also shows the elaborate paper-cut decoration art of the Dao Tuyen people. The holy space also reflects social relations in the Ceremony. Therefore, studying sacred space will contribute to decoding the Structure and function of holy sub-spaces in the Ceremony.

This paper has five sections. In the first section, we present the concept of sacred space. Section two studies the Structure of sacred sub-spaces in the Ceremony; section three writes the holy space of the Dao Lan Ten reflects the Dao's cosmology and the divine system; and the contain of section four is The

sacred space is a decorative project with Dao people's patterns; The section five presents about Sacred space reflects gender space and migration history.

RESULTS

1. Concept of sacred space

Sacred space plays a significant role in rituals, but authors rarely emphasize it in Vietnam. Phan Ngoc Khue, in the study *"Imperial Ceremony of the Dao Lo Gang people in Lang Son,"*² outlines the floor plan of the house where the Ceremony takes place. Unfortunately, the author does not describe the space or sacred objects where the gods are worshiped. In 1999, Pham Quang Hoan-Hung Dinh Quy published the project *"Traditional Culture of the Dao People in Ha Giang."* In the article about the Ceremony, the authors mentioned the location of the Ceremony, which was in the house and on the Ngu dai. The works of new authors suggest the sacred space of the Cap Sac ritual to readers. Like many scientific works and articles about the Cap Sac ritual of the Dao people in Vietnam, the authors do not mention sacred space.

Currently, there are few studies on the Dao ethnic identity ceremony. As of August 2023, only seven articles and research books have been on the graduation ceremony. Among the seven scientific articles and ethnographic books about the Dao people, only *"Thoughts on Decorating the Vegetarian Funeral of the Dao Tuyen People in Lao Cai"*³ by Dao Thanh Thai mentions the space of the Cap Sac ritual in detail. The author has approached and analyzed the Dao people's worship altars using symbol theory and decoded some symbols. At the same time, the author describes quite carefully the content of the couplets and the place names

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²Phan Ngoc Khue (2003), *Ceremony of the Dao Lo Gang people in Lang Son*, Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 52 - 53.

³Dao Thanh Thai (1999), *"Thoughts on decorating the vegetarian feast of the Dao Tuyen people in Lao Cai"*, Ethnology Magazine No. 2 - 1999, pages 63 - 69.

posted on the altar. However, the author has not looked at the worship altar - the sacred space of the Dao people's Religion, culture, and lifestyle. Therefore, some issues mentioned by the author, such as the cosmology and divine system of the Dao people, are incorrect or lacking. Thus, the authors have not focused and systematically researched the issue of sacred space in studies of the Dao people's ordination ceremony or Dao religious rituals, and sacred space has not even been placed in the entire community—Ministry of Religious Life and beliefs of the Dao people.

Many sociologists, anthropologists, and religious scholars study sacred space. Mircea Eliade (1956) mentioned sacred space in his works *On the Origin of Religions* (1948), *Sacred and Profane* (1956); he emphasized that "every sacred space implies a revelation, the intrusion of the sacred, which results in separating a piece of land from the surrounding residential environment and making it qualitatively different" (M. Eliade 1956: 27). M. Eliade also believes that: "sacred space always occupies a special position and is an intermediary place or an opening from which people seek communication with the gods." In Vietnam, Pham Quynh Phuong (2009), Do Quang Hung (2010), Nguyen Van Suu, and Chu Thi Huong (2015) also mentioned sacred space. Nguyen Van Suu and Chu Thi Huong emphasize sacred space as "a place containing sacred religious and belief objects and activities." Hoang Van Chung, who has researched deeply about sacred space, has proposed the characteristics and functions of sacred space ⁴as follows:

- A place containing sacred objects and sacred symbols;
- Created by humans, ascribed sacredness, and at the same time sought for it to be legalized;
- Is an intermediary place for people to communicate with the sacred through rituals;
- Preserving and transmitting collective knowledge and memories;
- Sacred spaces are not permanently fixed and isolated. They exist in other spaces (other sacred spaces or secular spaces). They can change in function, meaning, Structure, etc. This change is closely related to the actual social context.

However, the author does not associate sacred space with sacred time. In some ethnic minority areas, holy space has *religious meaning regarding sacred times* (holidays, festivals, etc.).

The Ceremony of the Dao Lan Ten people (in Lao Cai called Dao Tuyen) takes place inside and outside the Dao people's house. Before holding the Ceremony, the Dao house only had the sacred space of the house where the ancestral altar and house ghosts were placed.

When organizing the Ceremony, the Dao people build separate sacred spaces: *Thuong Bat Dan*, *Ha Bat Dan*, *Thien*

Dinh So, *Ngu Dai*, and *Kinh Buong*. These spaces are *sacred*. This is where the gods come to reside, helping the homeowner and shaman organize the Ceremony. *Thus, the sacred space is the meeting place between the gods and the priests in the holy house during a specific sacred time (the time begins when the gods come down and ends when they send them away).*

2. Structure of sacred sub-spaces in the Ceremony

The sacred space in the Dao Lan Ten (Dao Tuyen) people's Ceremony includes the main worship altar (*Thuong Bat Dan*), the secondary worship altar (*Ha Bat Dan*), *Kinh Buong* (where the people who receive the ceremony practice reciting sutras), *the Thien Dinh So*, *Ngu Dai*. Those five spaces are places to welcome gods and perform ceremonies with different rituals and functions.

2.1. *Thuong Bat Dan*

Among the sacred spaces of the Ceremony, the *Thuong Bat Dan* is the most significant area and plays the most crucial role. This is the worship altar where the gods from the fairy temples worldwide come to *Thien Phu* to reside during the Ceremony. Therefore, the central worship altar (*Thuong Bat Dan*) is prepared elaborately. The homeowner holds a ceremony to invite God *Lo Ban* into the forest to get materials to build a canopy in front of the altar, 2 meters high and about 3 meters wide.

The Thuong Bat Dan is decorated with patterns, altar paintings, rows of words recording the names of places (residences of the gods), and the positions of Taoist priests and teachers, along with parallel sentences and sentences. The doors have incense bowls where the gods temporarily reside. *The Thuong Bat Dan*, viewed from top to bottom (vertically), is divided into three sections, and the last row is where the incense bowls are placed to worship the gods. The three palaces, according to the concept of the Dao Tuyen people, are *Ung Thien Phu* ("*Anh tẽn pu*") - *Hon Nguyen Phu* ("*Hoãn nhôn pu*") - *Cuu Long Phu* ("*Chầu lòng pu*"):

- *Ung Thien Phu* is the world in the sky. This palace is dedicated to the residence of the gods, and at the same time, there is a lower area where the ancestors of the Dao people reside. *Ung Thien Phu* is also known as *heaven*. In the book "*Mysterious Luong Duyen*" (belonging to the Dao Tuyen scriptures, which records secrets, esoteric secrets, and magic that cannot be read aloud), There is an explanation that represents *the celestial palace* as the central planet Venus.

- *Hon Thien Phu* (*Dia Phu*): this is the ground level reserved for people, animals, and plants to live. *Hon Thien Phu* takes the sun as its center (Mars). *Dia Phu*, according to the concept of Dao Tuyen Taoist priests in Bao Thang district, Lao Cai province, believes that *Dia Phu* also has a part called *Am Ty*. *The Am Ty* world is also located in *Hon Thien Phu*.

⁴Hoang Van Chung - editor (2022), *ibid.*, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 72.

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- *Cuu Long Phu* is a water world, with the moon as the center (Moon Palace). *Water Palace World* is the world of water gods and aquatic creatures.

On three floors, there are four such worlds. Only shamans (Master Tam Nguyen and Master Tam Thanh) can travel through the world.

The three rows of patterns separating the symbols of the three palaces are all gourd-shaped patterns (above Thien Phu) running across *Thuong Bat Dan* (from left to right). The shape of a gourd and an ant symbolize the world of Hon Nguyen Phu. The world of *Cuu Long Phu* is shaped like a turtle (in some places, it is interwoven with the image of a dragon). The world of "*Thien Phu*" is represented by "*Famous Palace*" - the cultivation place of the gods of the Tam Thanh and Tam Nguyen sects. For example, *Ngoc Kinh Son* - a mountain with many precious towers; is Taoism's center (like the capital). This is where the masters Tam Thanh, the Zen masters, the four saints, and the five masters' reside. In addition, this is also the location of the mountains where Zen masters practiced, such as *Long Ho Son*, *Hac Minh Son* - the place of practice of *Truong Thien Su*, *Vo Duong Son* - the place of training of *Ly Thien Su*...etc. In Tam Nguyen

(Master), there is *Tam Nguyen Vien* (Tham nhon don) - the residence of the Tam Nguyen gods. In the middle of *Thuong Bat Dan*, there is the place "*Băn bự dên*" - *Van Vo Dien*. This is the division position between the Master side (Tam Nguyen) and the Taoism side (Tam Thanh). From here, the incense bowls that invite the gods are also divided into two sides: Monk and Dao. On the Monk's side, write down the names of the residences (place names) of the god Tam Nguyen. On the Taoism side, the name of the home (place name) of the god Tam Thanh is also written. The Master also wrote a long line of words throughout Tam Phu about the teachers' positions on the Master's side (Tam Nguyen). *The position* clearly states the priest's name and position in the Cap Sac ritual—for example, *Chinh gioi* (write full name on the Teacher's side) and *Dan giao*.

Similarly, the other side of the *Van Vo Dien inscription* is the Taoist side, which also records the names and positions of Taoist teachers. Like Master *Chinh Do* (name) and Master *Giam Do* (name). You can see the decoration diagram of *Thuong Bat Dan*:

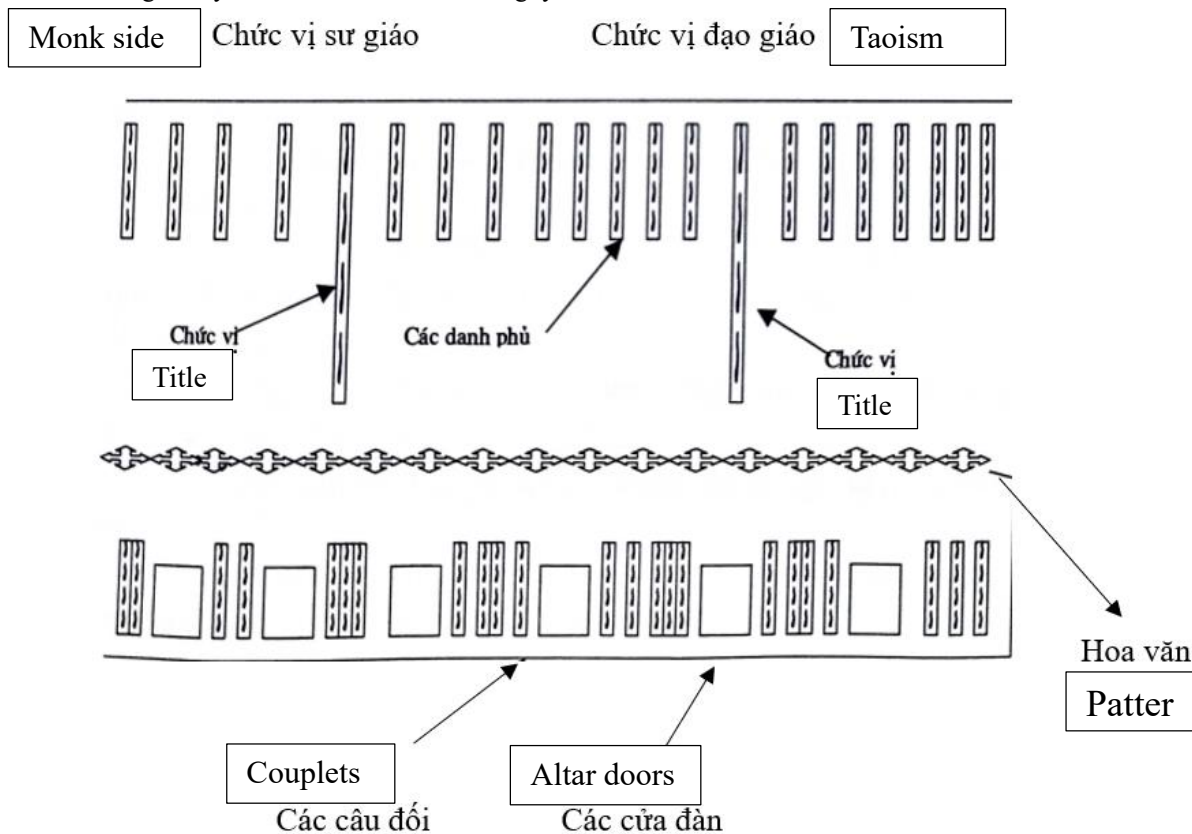


Diagram of the *Thuong Bat* altar offering honor to *Ban Cao Hanh's* disciples in *Nhai Ten* village, *Kim Son* commune, *Bao Yen* District, *January 29, 2005*.

The last floor of *Thuong Bat Dan* (about 10 cm above the ground) is a row of doors with incense bowls attached. Depending on whether the space of each house is ample or

narrow, the shaman can arrange from 6 to 12 different incense bowls. Each bowl of incense is placed at the door to worship Dao gods who come to attend the Ceremony:


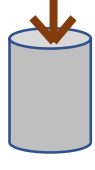
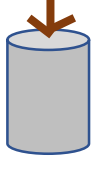
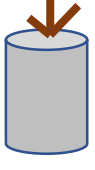
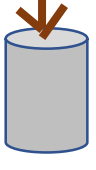
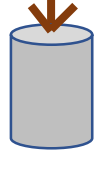

<i>The door to worship De Mau</i>	<i>The door to worship Patriarch of Master Chay Cai. (Monk side)</i>	<i>The door to worship the Patriarch of Master Den Cao. (Monk side)</i>	<i>The door to worship Master Kim Chinh's Patriarch. (Intermediate)</i>	<i>The door to worship Master Can Du's Patriarch. (Taoism side)</i>	<i>The door to worship Dao Chinh's Patriarch. (Taoism side)</i>	<i>The door worships the ancestors of five generations.</i>
						

Diagram of the *Thuong Bat* altar during the Ceremony of Mr. Trieu Van Chinh in Ban Phiet village - Bao Thang, Lao Cai on March 29, 2023.

Door to worship the Emperor Mother: when the Emperor Mother returns to attend the Ceremony, she will sit at this altar door. This is *the palace* (castle) of the Emperor's Mother. The door worships Patriarch Chay Cai (Thuong Nguyen) - Mr. Chay Cai is the most prominent Master in the Su (Tam Nguyen), and his Patriarch is the saint Thuong Nguyen.

The door to worship the ancestors of Master Den Cao is the door to worship the god Trung Nguyen. Master Den Cao is responsible for teaching students (young people of high rank) in rituals. In the Ceremony to go to Ngu Dai, Master Den Cao is tied to the umbilical cord connected to his students and is responsible for teaching and explaining each ritual to Ngu Dai, especially in the Ceremony Ngu Dai.

Master Kim Chinh's ancestor is the god Ha Nguyen (belonging to the Master). However, the Teacher is in an intermediary position with the responsibility of guiding and giving directions, similar to the duties of a courier. Therefore, the Teacher not only has the responsibility of the Teacher side but also has the responsibility of guiding the Taoist side. He often goes first and last in ceremonies. Master Can Du's ancestor is the god Thuong Thanh. Master Can Du is a Taoist teacher—Master Dao Chinh (Ngoc Thanh) is the main shaman of Taoism.

In the upper compartment of these doors, the priests cut many parallel sentences and pasted them according to the parts of the Teacher side and the Taoist side as well as the residence of the gods of the doors (Patriarchs, Gods, Patriarchs). Immortal, Emperor Mother).

In the 70s of the twentieth century, worship paintings were still hung on *the Thuong Bat Dan*. But after that, the altar

paintings were not turned at all ceremonies. Even there are very few altar paintings left. In Lao Cai province, only five priests had worship paintings, but they do not currently use them in worship ceremonies. But in Lai Chau, where the Dao Dau Bang people hang worship paintings, the dualistic nature and Structure are still bold.

A survey at Nhieung Sang village, Ho Thau commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province on January 5, 2012, showed that the *Dao Dau Bang people* (a local group of Dao Lan Ten - Dao Tuyen) have just decorated worship paintings at the temple: *upper Bat Dan* and *Lower Bat Dan*. Regarding worship paintings, there are sets of *Tam Thanh* (Thuong Thanh, Ngoc Thanh, Thai Thanh) hanging above *Thuong Bat Dan* (tilting to the left ⁵). On the right is a set of *Tam Nguyen paintings* (Thuong Nguyen, Trung Nguyen, Ha Nguyen). Below *the Thuong Bat Dan* hangs a set of paintings of *the Four Great Marshals* (including pictures of the four marshals). On the lower left side of the painting hangs the set of *Ta Su*; On the right side hangs the set of *Huu Thanh*. The sets of Tu Truc Cong Tao and Tong Si depend on the two sides of the door of the Ha Bat altar.

⁵The left side is understood to be from the altar looking towards the door.

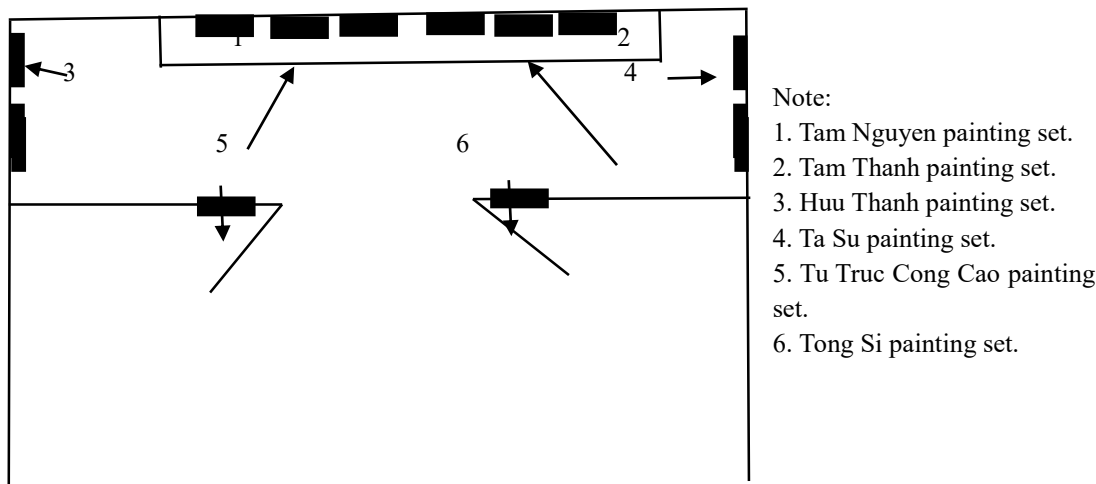


Diagram of hanging paintings at the altar of Cap Sac ritual at the Nieu Sang village, Ho Thau commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province on January 5, 2012.

Contrasting altar paintings of Tam Nguyen/Tam Thanh: The space for hanging altar paintings is divided into the left and right sides (looking from the altar to the door); the left side is the side worshipping Tam Thanh, and the right side is the side worshipping Tam Nguyen. Thus, the altar paintings also display the opposition between *Tam Thanh* and *Tam Nguyen* with *Tu Truc Cong Tao* and *Tong Si*. The paintings of *Ta Su* and *Huu Thanh* also contrast with each other. The Structure of the two opposing Principles governs the sacred space.

2.2. Ha Bat Dan

The *Lower Bat Dan* is opposite the *Upper Bat Dan*, on the other side of the floor of the middle room. On March 29, 2023, we observed that during the Ceremony for Mr. Trieu Van Chinh in K8 village, Ban Phiet Commune, Bao Thang Lao Cai, the priests also arranged the *Ha Bat altar* on both sides of the inner wall of the main entrance. Both sides of this wall face the *Thuong Bat altar*. *Lower Bat Dan* is divided into two parts on both sides of the wall: the left side of the door and the right side of the door⁶. On the left is a place to worship some Taoist gods (with an incense bowl and two figures - red masks); these two figures are the places to worship the Jade Emperor and the Taoists. To the right of the *Lower Bat altar* is an incense bowl where Ban Vuong and the Teacher's parents are honored on the Master's side (the Master's parents). The Master's parents are worshiped here and are responsible for preventing ghosts and evil demons from entering *Bat Dan*. The force that stops evil ghosts is a woman - the Master's mother. Only she has the power to halt

strong demons. On both sides of the incense bowl are two sugar cane trees, like those on the Kinh people's altar during the Lunar New Year⁷. *Ha Bat Dan* has the words of the place named: "Dạ phát đàn" - Ha Bat Dan; "Tành òa pu" – Thanh Hoa Phu; "Lên đu đồng" – Luyen Do Duong.

2.3. Kinh buong

Kinh buong is the sutra reading room for students who are granted excellent grades. Here, the shaman teaches his students to recite prayers day and night. The chamber is on the altar room's left side, symbolizing *Long Ho Son*. This is the mountain where *Truong Thien Su* practiced for more than ten years. Therefore, the sutra room represents a place to practice and study Taoist scriptures. Here, Taoist teachers will teach students essential sutras. When students go out, they must wear a hat to cover their face; the hat is enchanted by the gods with words clearly stating the protective function, such as: "Thien Su Bao Phu, Tam Nguyen Bao Phu, Tu Soai Bao Phu."

2.4. Thien Dinh So

Outside the door is a small shrine decorated with yellow and red paper. The words Thien Dinh So are prominent. "Thien Dinh So" is a temple to worship the village's Thanh Hoang; all gods from the Thien Phu world who come to attend the Ceremony must pass here. The gods can pass through only when the village's Thanh Hoang opens the temple doors. Therefore, the shaman must respect the town of Thanh Hoang and have specific reports.

"Thien Dinh So" also has landmarks: Thanh Do Phu - "Rảnh tú pu"; Thanh Hoang Palace - "Rain the rainbow." There are also two parallel sentences at the temple about the

⁶This is the direction looking out from Thuong Bat Dan.

⁷During the ordination ceremony of boy Dang Van Minh in Long Phuc, Bao Yen district, the priest explained: the

incense bowl on the right is both a place to worship Ban Vuong and a place to worship "Tam Thon" (ie the governing deity). ancestor)

village of Thanh Hoang's duties. The word "*Thien Dinh So*" means the meeting place of the Heavenly Gods. The Gods meet here and wait for the Village God Emperor to open the door so that the Gods can enter the altar to worship. "*Thien Dinh So*" also has the task of preventing bad ghosts and evil spirits. The stopping force is the village Thanh Hoang - male. Thus, the "blockers" of evil ghosts are *men outside and women inside the door (lower the altar)*.

2.5. Ngu Dai

The turret is on a flat land area, sometimes close to the house, about 50 - 70m (Trieu Van Chinh's granting ceremony on March 29, 2023). During Ly Van Khoa's investiture ceremony in Ban Lot village, Bao Thang district, Lao Cai province on December 26, 2017, the Ngu Dai was in the field, nearly 100m from the boy's house. But according to shamans Trieu Van Quay in Ban Phiet village and Hoang Si Luc in Mi village, Xuan Quang commune, Bao Thang district, about 50 years ago, the Dao villages in Lao Cai and Yen Bai were still sparsely populated. The space in the town has both houses and forests and fields. Therefore, Ngu Dai can be chosen on a high but relatively flat hill in front of the house. The turret is usually a wooden floor with four supporting columns. Ngu Dai door faces east; there are five stairs up. The five towers located on a high hillside are the symbol of Mai Son Mountain. This mountain is the practice center of the Tam Nguyen sect, and at the same time, it is also its sacred mountain. This holy mountain is said to be a dangerous mountain with many challenges for monks. The steps up to *the Ngu Dai Tower* are lined with knives. Before the Ceremony, the Monk's side must perform martial arts, deter and wipe out demons, and protect *the Five Towers*.

2.6. Comments on the Structure of Sacred Space

The small sacred spaces in the Dao Tuyen people's Ceremony reflect the Structure of two dualistic oppositions - Taoism and the Teacher's Structure. The only Taoist structure is the Sutra chamber, where children are given the distinction of reading sutras according to the instructions of the Taoist master (Tam Thanh). Here is the sacred space of *literature* (Taoism), which differs from *martial arts* (Su). *Kinh chamber* is the image of Long Ho Son cave - a learning center of the Tam Thanh sect (Taoism). On the Teacher's side is the *Ngu Dai* space. In this space - the child is given the identity to practice martial arts, reincarnated under the guidance of the teachers at the Master's side. Space is a symbol of Mai Son Mountain - the cultivation center of the Monk sect (Tam Nguyen). Thus, *Kinh Buong* and *Ngu Dai* are two opposing spaces with different functions; on one side, children practice and study scriptures (*Kinh Buong*), and on the other side, children practice and learn martial arts, magic (*Ngu Dai*), and reincarnation.

The Ha Bat Dan and *the Thuong Bat Dan* are two important worship altars for offering food and fasting. *The Thuong Bat Dan* is both a sacred space of the *Buddhist side* (Tam Nguyen) and a sacred space of the *Taoist side* (Tam

Thanh). The decorative altar is divided into two: on the left is *Taoism*, and on the right is *Su*. The mark separating the two is *Van Vo Dien* (Van Vo Song Toan). This is a structure with intermediate elements. The location and function of the door to worship Master Kim Chinh also have intermediate elements.

Regarding the performance stage, the left side is reserved for Taoist teachers to perform - there is also space for the Taoist orchestra and Taoist scriptures. On the right is the Teacher's performance space - arranging the orchestra and reading the Teacher's scriptures.

Structure of sacred spaces - The Dao Tuyen people have five separate spaces, but none can be missing. Although *Thien Dinh's* small space is in front of the house, it also plays an important role. This is the sacred space to worship the village God, the Emperor. Deities from the Palaces who come here must have permission from the town God Emperor to open the door to access other sacred spaces. The *Thien Dinh So* and the *Thuong/Ha Bat Dan* separate the door sill to create an inside/outside space. Inside the door is a sacred space, and outside the door (except for *the Thien Dinh So*) is mundane. Inside, the shaman prays and meets the gods; Outside, children and women walk around, talk, and laugh. However, both *Thien Dinh So* and *Ha Bat Dan* also function as blocking points to prevent evil ghosts. The only difference is that in *Ha Bat Dan*, it's a nun - a woman, while in *Thien Dinh*, it's a man - Thanh Hoang. *Male/female, inside/outside*, create opposing pairs with the same gatekeeper function. Thus, the sacred spaces of the Dao Tuyen people, although they have many different types of spaces welcoming other gods, are all meeting places of the gods. In the ritual of granting honor, it is indispensable to lack any sacred space.

3. The sacred space of the Dao Lan Ten reflects the Dao's cosmology and the divine system

In the life of the Dao people, many shamans, when asked, said that *the Dao people's universe is a universe consisting of four worlds: Thien Phu, Duong Gian Phu, Dia Phu, and Thuy Phu.* This cosmology is reflected in the paintings of Tu Truc Cong Cao - couriers traveling to four palaces with images riding different animals. But on *the Thuong Bat Dan* of the Dao Tuyen people, only three spaces are recorded: *Ung Thien Phu, Hun Nguyen Phu, and Cuu Long Phu.* In Luong Duyen Mysterious, Ung Thien Phu is explained as the heavenly world - heaven, the representative center of which is Venus. *Mixed Origin Palace is the earthly layer* - the ground level, with the sun as the representative nucleus. *The Nine Dragon Palace is the water world*, with the moon as the representative nucleus. (There is a part of *the Nine Dragon Palace*, which is *the Underworld*) Any vital ceremony of the Dao Tuyen people has these three palaces. In some localities, the three layers are divided into three layers of patterns. During the granting ceremony in Ban Phiet commune, Bao Thang, Lao Cai, on March 29, 2023, it was shown that the horizontal lines dividing the boundaries of the

Palaces were paper-cut paintings shaped like gourds and gourds.

The Dao Tuyen people's divine system is relatively complex (including the Monk side - Tam Nguyen, and the gods of the Taoism side - Tam Thanh). In the Taoist scriptures of the Dao people, there is a book called "*Thanh Muc*" that records the full names of the gods of the Dao people. But in reality, these are mainly Taoist gods that influence Korean people. Each volume has the names of some Dao gods. The unique thing about the rituals of the Dao people is the Cap Sac ritual, which involves making vegetarian food, worshiping altars, and praying for longevity. The Dao Tuyen people have a different deity system. Some authors do not notice this feature when writing about the Dao people's divine system but mistake it for the Taoist religious system recorded in the book "*Thanh Muc*." Before being influenced by Taoism, the Religion and beliefs of the Dao people still existed in many traditional primitive faiths, such as worshiping Ban Vuong, worshiping ancestors, worshiping the Mother Goddess, and worshiping natural phenomena. Course...etc. After approaching Taoism, although Taoist gods penetrated the Dao people's divine system, they were all Daoized. Therefore, the Dao spiritual system cannot be considered the spiritual system of Taoism. In the Ceremony of the Dao people, Dao people mainly invite their people's traditional gods to attend the Ceremony.

In contrast, the Taoist gods (founders such as Tam Thanh, Tam Nguyen, Marshal, Huu Thanh, and Ta Su) have mostly transformed into Dao. Therefore, studying the sacred space of the Dao people can identify the system of Dao gods coming to attend the Ceremony. This divine system is expressed in the system of altar paintings, the system of paper masks, the system of place names clearly stating the residence of the gods in the afterlife and the system of parallel sentences dedicated to the god's Spirit.

First of all, we study the system of altar paintings. Previously, the Dao Lan Ten people (Dao Tuyen, Dao Ao Dai, Dao Dau Bang) had worship paintings used in the Ceremony. Still, now only Dao Dao with flat head regularly use worship paintings: the Tam Thanh painting set (*Ngoc Thanh, Thai Thanh, Thuong Thanh*), Tam Nguyen painting set (*Thuong Nguyen, Trung Nguyen, Ha Nguyen*), Huu Thanh painting set, Ta Su painting set, Tu Truc Cong Tao painting set, Tong Si painting set (*ancestors, Ban Vuong*). But now, all Dao Lan Ten (Dao Tuyen, Dao Cham) have no worship paintings. Worship paintings are only used by the Dao Dau Bang group.

In the sacred space, there is also the divine system of the Monk sect represented by paper masks: 1. Thuong Nguyen - "Dang nhòn trang"; 2. Cung Nguyen - "Chóng nhòn trang"; 3. Ha Nguyen - "dạ nhòn trang"; 4. Tam Nguyen - "Thám nhòn trang"; 5. Lenh Cong - "Lanh công trang"; 6. Ban Vuong - "Bồn vôông trang"; 7. De Mau - "Tay mù trang"; 8. Cam co - "Cóm cú trang"; 9. Ngu Thuong - "ngụ xằng trang"; 10. Giam tru - "Cam dụi trang"; 11. Loi Vuong - "lùi

vồông trang"; 12. Cuu Nuong - "Châu nháng trang"; 13. Dong Nhi - "dòng nhì trang"; 14. Cong Tao - "cóng rồu trang"; 15. Dan Quan - "đàn cón trang"; 16. Tho Dia - "Lù pán trang"; 17. Lo ban - "Lù pán trang"; 18. Long phuong - "Lông bong trang". These masks are the masks of the 18 gods who came to attend the ceremony.

Each scene appears like a paper mask in the Monk's ceremonial program. When inviting Cong Tao, the child wore a *Dong Nhi* mask, and the two priests wore Thuong Nguyen and Trung Nguyen masks. In the scene going to *Ngu Dai*, the three priests wear *Thuong Nguyen, Trung Nguyen, and Ha Nguyen* masks, while the child wears Dong Nhi masks. In each level of worship, the masks worn are also different. At level 1, shamans wear *Thuong Nguyen, Trung Nguyen, Ha Nguyen, and Cong Tao* masks in the *Cong Tao* performance. At level 2, the shamans wear the same as at level 1, but in the stage of *recruiting soldiers*, they wear *Ngu Thuong* masks, and in the stage of *saving souls*, they wear the mask of the *Cam Chu* god. In high school, two children are wearing *Cam Co* god masks. At level 4, during the *bridging scene*, the god *Lo Ban* will wear a *Lo Ban* mask ... etc. Thus, the mask is the image of essential gods attending the Ceremony. The characters wear masks but can also be placed in the place of worship of the gods (the abode of the gods).

4. The sacred space is a decorative project with Dao people's patterns

The decorative art of the Dao people in the Ceremony is reflected in the shamans' costumes and the decoration of sacred spaces. In particular, the spaces of *Thuong Bat Dan* and *Ha Bat Dan* display decorative projects rich in Dao ethnic identity. The decorative art here is shown in the layout of sacred spaces. Depending on the location and plane of each holy space, Dao priests have built appropriate decorative layouts. The Dao people arrange the sacred space of Thuong Bat Dan in the style of horizontal strips interwoven with vertical strips. The Thuong Bat Dan horizontal band consists of three bands symbolizing the three palaces (Heaven Palace, Earth Palace, and Water Palace). Each strip concentrates the main contents represented by paper strips (glued along the horizontal strip). On the top ribbon are written the names of Dao gods, such as Tam Nguyen, Tam Thanh, Huong Hoa, De Mau, Lam Tao, Hoa Vuong, Ban Hoang, Ngoc Hoang, Loi Hoang, Tam Gioi, Tho Dia, Gia Tien... etc. but these gods are arranged in two vertical bands: the Tao side and the Monk side. The intertwining between vertical and horizontal bands is quite dense.

On the second floor of the *Upper Bat Dan* are the names of the residences of saints such as *Cuu Long Phu, Ung Thien Phu, Hun Nguyen Phu, Dong Luong Dao, Dang Dien Hoi, Hac Minh Son, Bao Hoa Hoi, Long Ho Son, Tam Nguyen Vien...* etc. On the third horizontal strip are parallel sentences recording the duties and functions of each deity posted right near the door of the incense bowl worshiping the deities.

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Regarding color, the colors of the words for place names, the words recording the priest's position, and the words recording parallel sentences also clearly distinguish between the *Monk* and *the Taoist*. According to the book "Mysterious Luong Duyen," the words of the Monk's side are human skin, so the color is yellow, while the words of the Taoism side are blood vessels, so the color is red. Therefore, the paper used to cut the words on the Monk side is yellow, and the words on the Tao side are red. Thus, the colors of places and positions also have an opposing nature between the red color of Taoism and the yellow color of Monk. The gods, the areas of the gods, and the parallel sentences of the gods all use red if the subject is Taoist - for example, Long Ho Son is the cultivation place of the saint Tam Thanh. Hac Minh Son. is the residence of Truong Thien Su, and Vo Duong Son is the residence of Ly Thien Su. If the names of the gods, the place of residence, and the parallel sentences of the Teacher's side are used, yellow is used, like Ngao Son Dien, Tam Nguyen Vien, Hoi Khe Son, etc. But the red and yellow strips are often intertwined to create the color. Complement each other. Therefore, the brilliant nature of the ribbons is even more prominent. The boundary tape between the buildings has a blue background, but the main pattern on the blue background is red or yellow, also to highlight the images of the pattern.

Regarding patterns, the main pattern in *Thuong Bat Dan* is the gourd pattern. This pattern symbol is associated with the story of the gourd that saved the lives of two Dao brothers. After a flood, the whole earth had only the Dao brother and sister, who survived by crawling into a gourd floating on the water. Therefore, the gourd pattern becomes a main pattern to remind people of the origin of the Dao people. Similarly, the symbol of the gourd - a sacred object of many religions - also became a prominent pattern in the horizontal bands of the *Thuong Bat Dan*.

5. Sacred space reflects gender space and migration history

All sacred spaces of the Dao Lan Ten people during the fasting and fasting ceremony are reserved only for men, mainly priests and students. In essence, this is the space of shamans who help prepare to become shamans (using musical instruments, writing to decorate the altar, reading prayers...). People who are not shamans, assistants to shamans, and granted children are not allowed to enter this sacred space. When we go on field trips, if we want to get close to observe the rituals, we have to sit behind the orchestra, but female researchers are not allowed to enter the sacred space. Women only stand outside the door, do not enter the house, or go near *the Ngu Dai or Thien Dinh*. Therefore, it can be seen that sacred space is the space of male shamans/shaman assistants. In rituals, when a female character performs, it is also a man

wearing female clothing. The image of women is only virtual and is all through male shamans. Thus, sacred space is the space of those who can contact gods. Of course, not women. But when performing the Ceremony, guarding the inside of the door at *Ha Bat Dan* is the altar to worship the mother of the ancestors and the shaman. She has transcended the male/female boundary of everyday life. She resides at *Ha Bat Dan*, guarding the door, eliminating evil ghosts, and helping the homeowner.

The Dao Lan Ten people entered Vietnam by two routes. The first route is from Van Son district, Yunnan province, China, following the Red and Chay rivers into Vietnam. The second route is from the roads in the south of China (in Guangdong, Guangxi), from the coastal roads by boat to the estuaries of the Northern Delta, and up the rivers to the northern mountains. Thus, there are two routes from mainland China and the sea to Vietnam. The route from the sea to Vietnam has created bold maritime cultural elements in legends, customs, religious beliefs... etc. The Dao people traveling by sea (currently residing in the south of Lao Cai province and the north of Yen Bai province) all have legends about their residence on islands at sea. In wedding folk songs of the Dao Tuyen people in Lao Cai, there are bold images of boats, the blue sea, and islands⁸... In the wedding ceremony, the head of the bride's family and the head of the groom's family welcome the bride. Both have a different name, like *the captain*. He puts his umbrella under his armpit - this is the symbol of the boat. In folk songs, the dialogue between the groom's family and the bride's family says that the boat sails on the blue sea, bringing the groom to meet the bride's family; Boats overcome wind and waves, storms at sea...etc. Marine cultural elements are also reflected in the Cap Sac ritual. During the Cap Sac ritual, a ceremony welcomes the group of priests from the Monk and Taoist sides. Each group has a group leader holding an umbrella under his arm. This is also considered the boat carrying the two sects of the Monk and Taoism sides. There is a lot of rice in the box; they are soldiers of the monks on the Monk's side and the Taoist side. After the Ceremony to worship the ancestors at the Thuong Bat altar, the two group leaders of the Master and Taoism side both hung umbrellas on the positions of the Monk side and the Taoism side on the Thuong Bat altar. The hanging of umbrellas is explained as the boats carrying troops of the two sects of Monk and Dao have landed at Thuong Bat Dan.

On the other hand, at Ha Bat Dan, both sides worship Ban Vuong, which has two sugar cane trees similar to those placed on the Kinh people's altar during the Lunar New Year. Two sugar cane trees are symbols of island culture and are kept on the Ha Bat altar of the Dao Tuyen people. Thus, the sacred space of the Dao Tuyen people also reflects the route to Vietnam (through the islands and the sea) - one of two

⁸Tran Huu Son (2002), *Dao Tuyen wedding ceremony*, Ethnic Culture Publishing House.

essential routes in the migration process of the Dao Lan Ten people.

CONCLUDE

In the Cap Sac ritual of the Dao Lan Ten people, the sacred spaces have formed a system of five different types: *Thuong Bat Dan*, *Ha Bat Dan*, *Kinh Buong*, *Thien Dinh so*, and *Ngu Dai*. Each sacred space has other functions and tasks, but they are all meeting places between shamans, awarded children, and a system of gods. These holy spaces also only exist for a certain period during the Ceremony. That time is also called sacred time. When *the blessed time* for the Ceremony ends, *the private space* no longer exists.

The sacred space reflects the Structure of Taoism introduced to the Dao Lan Ten people, including two sects: the *Monk side* and the *Taoist side*. Holy space is valuable in determining the divine system of attending the Ceremony and fasting ceremony. Studying the decoration in sacred spaces (especially *the Thuong Bat Dan*), we understand more clearly the system of *traditional gods* of the Dao people and *the gods introduced to Daoism* by the Dao people. *Sacred space* is a holy decoration project with high artistic qualities (color, layout, motifs, and patterns). At the same time, *holy space* also contributes to research on gender issues in the rituals of the Dao people. Previous research works on the Dao people's Ceremony (both works by domestic and foreign authors did not mention or very briefly mentioned the *sacred space*). This article hopes to be a new contribution to studying the Dao people's fasting and fasting ceremonies.

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