

The Nguyen Dynasty with the Aesthetic Value of Bronze Relics in Hue

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Abstract. *The purpose of this paper is to review the Nguyen dynasty by using the element of visual sense with bronze relics in Hue. The method using observations, experience, synthesis analysis, historical and dialectical methods and draws some educational lessons for students. From the above findings it is clear that Copper material is also one of the used most in objects that are related to religious material such as bronze bells, bronze bells, etc. Finally is the esthetic value of the decorative art on bronze in Hue is also the blending of the basic elements and the integration of the cultural factors.*

Keywords: *The Aesthetic Value, Bronze Relics, The Nguyen Dynasty*

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INTRODUCTION

Bronze items are common in the daily life of the palace with many properties: household items embossed trays, pots, kettles, clay stoves, iron and two faced tripods and hammers used with betel nut food; utensils printed items, betel nut food playing cards, bronze books and coins and measuring instruments; designs animals and vases; musical instruments bells and gongs; worship and ritual items candlesticks, censers, vases and animals; weapons can All of the above products are made at Chu Tuong Ty agency of the court and folk craft guilds across the country. Vietnam believed in performing a lot of sacrifices and ancestor worship hence the reason of creating lots of self-made products. The self-made objects are placed on the altar, decorated in the temple, used for sacrifices, so they are made of good copper material, of various designs and sizes, especially the urns, the art (source: of the Department of English for International Communication, Bac Tay Gas, Bac Tan Cung Dinh (baotangcungdinh.vn)).

Copper material is also one of the materials used a lot in objects with religious aspects such as bronze bells, bronze bells etc (Scott et al., 2019; Karagözoğlu & Karagözoğlu, 2017). May be that is the reason why copper material has been regarded as the spiritual color by the appearance of this material with religious works like Buddha statues, trios, incense burners, incense bowls, offerings and decorative items in folk arts and crafts is also used in temples, palaces.



Figure 1. Nguyen Dynasty Cauldrons in Hue

Source: vietnamnet.vn

The Nguyen Dynasty, the last imperial family that govern Vietnam, greatly affected the country's history, culture, political, and art (Xuan Hiep et al., 2021; Ly, 2021). Some of the things they have left behind include complicated bronze articles, especially those which are in Hue which was the capital of the dynasty. Such artifacts that incorporate a basin, a vase, jewelry, as well as minor and large pottery, toys, and even uncovered vessels which were used for cooking food processing implement more than only the purpose in everyday naughtiness, and advancements in art and culture.

According to Hung (2017) that the use of bronze as material was important for the Nguyen dynasty as this metal is durable, functional, as well as has symbolic implications. The artisans of the dynasty produced items from bronze and the made cauldrons, bells, urns and other complementary items and fittings of temples, palaces and other important establishments, in research by Shao et al. (2022) and Flad (2018). Most of these objects were made under the watchful eyes of the Chu Tuong Ty which was a government appointed factory for metal products or local craft associations across Vietnam. It is not surprising that bronze was used in reviewing so pervasively in both secular and ritual spheres since it is an important material in Vietnamese culture in connection with religious beliefs and ancestor worship, which were an essential part of the worldview of the Nguyen rulers.

Among the most inspiring categories of the bronze articles from this period, one has to identify the group of the bronze cauldrons, which are considered to be the symbols of the Nguyen lord power and their ideas about art (el-Efendi, 2021; Gilbert, 2020). The three cauldrons are currently exhibited at three different places in Hue, namely at Dong Khanh Mausoleum and at Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities, these signify the pragmatic and architectural fashion of the dynasty. Every cauldron is different and has the different looks, dimensions, location of reliefs, etc that in turn may point to the social, political, and the spiritual practices of the time. The decoration patterns of these cauldrons in most cases contain distinguished animals, plants and celestial aspects and this underlines the beauty and cultural and artistic period of the Nguyen Dynasty.

The objective of this research is to identify and understand the aesthetics and culture of Nguyen Dynasty that is depicted in the bronze relics especially the cauldrons, align with research from van Driem (2020). In particular, the research is historical and descriptive, which implies that, using both quantitative and qualitative data, the authors investigate the multiple meanings hidden in these artifacts (Lê & Schmid, 2022; Sovacool et al., 2018). That is why this work will investigate the context of their production, the semiotic functions of the motifs depicted on these cauldrons, and their general correlation with the art of the given epoch. Thus, the research will help to extend the knowledge about the legacy of the Nguyen Dynasty and its role in the contemporary Vietnamese culture as well as to consider the importance of the art work under analysis for the further development of the sphere.

METHODS

In this study, the authors adapted an interrelated approach where the authors use several methodologies in researching the subject areas. The major approach that was applied was historicism the process of understanding history and studying the historical materials, taking into consideration the historical context. The application of this method enabled the authors to assess the impact of the bronze cauldrons and other products of the Nguyen dynasty within the historical context of Vietnam during its production.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Describe the Cauldron at the Same Time as the Nguyen Lords

At present, there are very few remnants that are attributed to Lord Nguyen as many factors during the Different eras and wars, calamities are inevitable. However, through the remaining artifacts we also partly see a period of development of the art. Vietnamese bronze art, in which 11 copper cauldrons are currently kept in Hue city is one of the most typical artifacts for this period, this is considered a symbol of the power of the government as well as the style of creating

art. the appearance of Nguyen lords on the land of Dang Trong. These cauldrons are currently placed at the relic sites in the Hue city area, namely Dong Khanh mausoleum, three at the Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities and remaining seven at the Dai Quang area interior (Abdollahi et al., 2022; Van, 2020). Assessment of shaping, these cauldrons are somewhat developed based on the fairly uniform shape, particularly, the cauldron made of bronze in 1631 by Lord Nguyen Phuc Nguyen has a far more distinct shape as has been authored above. supposed to have been created and built with an architectural designing template from a huge antique container that is usually used in boiling foods for the soldiers.

The remaining cauldrons can be grouped with reference to size, or by the number of handles on the cauldron, 8 handles cauldron, small straps and cauldrons with 4 large handles. Small straps and cauldrons are other products that are classified into pannier, basket and box with different specifications as well for instance, pannier, basket, and box with size of 300mm x 180mm x 300mm, pannier with size of 250mm x 150mm x 300mm and pannier basket of 200mm x Copper cauldrons and decorative elements for these cauldrons are a beautification point in the process of forming the development and partly reveal the social reality of Cochinchina through language (Hien et al., 2021). As for the symbolism, this can be observed on the cauldrons. That's why the patterns were embossed on the cauldron; it has manifested the artistic ingenuity and passion of the artisans into a typical work of the art deco on bronze wares of Cochinchina. These bronze cauldrons were later in 2015 declared as the national relics of Vietnam (Flecker & Sim, 2021; Li et al., 2022).

Next, Features of Shaping on Cauldrons at the Same Time as Lord Nguyen

Animal and plant motifs can be distinguished in the decorating patterns at the copper cauldrons; they are mixed quite vividly, and the most emphasis is given to the body and the region near the outlet of the vessel. However, there are some skillful using of dotted patterns, and they are so rich in variety. Something quite peculiar in these patterns is the focus on the folk animals including wild boar, fish, squirrel and juxtaposed with recognizable symbols of Vietnam. Kingship like phoenix, or like a swallow which is a signal of spring, apart from the metaphorical motifs such as carp changing into a dragon on 8 handled cauldrons are recognized as symbols of admiration are subjected to a new degree of idealization. Every of the selected animals is depicted in the body of the cauldron: In addition to the visual perspective, it has a metaphoric meaning. For example, the boar wild boar is depicted with many contents. According to the Hinduism, what they acknowledge to be the circle of life is exhibited by the white boar (Archetti, 2020; Prinz et al., 2019). The boar in Japanese culture is the god of war and is protective in nature and also represents courage.

According to the Dictionary of World Cultural Symbols "The boar has the northernmost nature, so it is primitive. It is avatàra, a form of incarnation, in which Vishnu brings the earth above the water and creates the land". In the symbolism of the East, the pig signifies, succulence, glut, the picture of the piglets on the maternal side equally symbolizes reunion, offspring and grand children huddled. The appearance of wild boar on the field cauldrons is the early period of Lord Nguyen a reflection of the wildness of the early period of Dang Trong because this is considered the land of "Evil land". It is added in the manner of the continuation between wild deer and flowers, wild deer and cranes, squirrels and cranes. This combination will have the properties of the motion in soft curves move around the body of a cauldron. Phung, it belongs to the Category of the Four Spirits Animals and is recognised as the symbol of elegance, nobility and power. In case of Oriental implication, it seen as a bird that perch on the ground but flies up towards the sky, a symbol of a message, a link between the ground and the sky, the image of birds soaring up to the sky, flapping their wings in mid air message of human aspirations and dreams being conveyed to the heavens. The figure of the squirrel has existed in the folklore for a long time, the figure of the squirrel and the bunch of grapes has been transmitted in the folklore in the proverb "The house is tiled with the brick yard, the bunch of grapes is the squirrel".

Researcher Phan Cam Thuong has also said that is a decoration that ancient farmers used to touch on the porch of a wooden house, a metaphor for longing for gold and many children. Flowers and leaves are the main motifs on cauldron body decorations in terms of decorative style, which can be divided into two types, stylised flowers and leaves, natural flowers and leaves. In Vietnamese fine arts decoration, the floral decorative patterns become a familiar subject in a wide variety of types of decorations on materials including stone, bronze, wood and that is why does not astonished that, this pattern is depicted the body of the cauldrons at the same time he, lord Nguyen.



Figure 2. Bronze Cauldron Cast in 1659 Under the Reign of Hien Vuong Nguyen Phuc Tan (1648 - 1687)

Source: ape.gov.vn

The aesthetic value of broomed relics in Hue arouses as a result from the decorative elements by means of themes, arrays, layout, lines and space (Ganguly, 2017). Thus, they have the legacy from Dang Ngoai with the addition of the Later Le, further the Ly and Tran dynasties. Therefore, in the decoration of bronze in Hue, especially in the early period such as the Bells, cauldrons or cannons having a simple and deep decoration, a shallow space, images of rattan and arrows continued to the sides or the arrangement of square shape in accordance with the division of decorative schemes. Besides, the cultural and technical interference of western countries with these social arts has made art of decoration on relics and Nguyen kings to have new values of development about aesthetic elements and decorative language. This is done in order to establish a relationship between endogenous and exogenous factors to develop aesthetic values on bronze relics in Hue.

The aesthetic value of decorative art on bronze in Hue is also the integration of the use of basic elements and the synthesis of cultural factors (Crippa et al., 2019; Radivojević et al., 2018). The remaining two Nguyen fine art decorative values Huu Thong, the researcher, also evaluated that this value was borrowed selectively from Tonkinese rather than mimicking though doing so stereotypically. This shows that Nguyen's fine art has abstracted stereotypical values to incorporate in ornamentation projects, so in themes, ornamental motifs on bronze in Hue encompasses aesthetic and literate components culture and passed down values (Ngu & Huy, 2021). Bronze works always have double meanings of originality and the symbol of assimilation on the cultural stratum and it is the traditional elements that form the pedestal, therefore, in bronze works in Hue, everything has two significances. It is this which gives the art of this period nearness and unite, the constituents into a harmonious whole. When it comes to the other bronze workpieces connected with the court and religious views these elements are chosen consciously since it concerns the country's works, the work for the religious community religion.

It is as well important to note that most of the bronze relics in Hue focused on in the book are symbolic even though the constituent elements from posing to details can be functional. For example, the Cuu Dinh or the Nine Cannons in the war, despite the name, are cannons but are merely symbolic, and have not been used although they are used and the cauldrons at the same time as King Nguyen are solely decorative objects with the exception of some which had decorative and practical use for example the bells and the bronze bells in temples.

Thus, revealing finesse as well as workmanship in their hands alongside with imaginative thinking when developing many graphical expressions signifying varied expressive undertones and many layered messages embedded with symbolic meanings. Thus in bronze art of this time there must be the early Nguyen apoptosis of the dragon images and the hiding somewhere in contrast to the dragon images of the Nguyen kings of Nguyen Dynasty. The postures inhabit the space and there are pictures on head level as well. The hiddenness in space gives a reality of space and virtual space hence giving a mystery in the types of themes of dragons, two dragons by day.

From Thuan Hoa (since 1036), Phu Xuan Capital of the Tay Son dynasty (from 1788-1801), the capital of the Nguyen dynasty (from 1802-1945) and Thua Thien Hue today, Hue culture has been the great influence in Vietnamese culture for the past 700 years. The values of Hue culture are not only of the palaces, pavilions, walls, and tombs linked with specific natural factors. However, lies also in the sophistication, as well as inventiveness of the ornaments, more vivid are the styles of decorative art one verse, one picture and one character, one picture. All of them were established during the process of planning and construction of Hue constructions which took place during the period between 1802 and 1945. They were selected from Nguyen emperors well known pieces, and were then polished, inlaid, carved, enamelled or coated with alto rilievo with plaster, porcelain and terracotta.

The contents are about asserting the national independence and the sovereignty of the country, representing some policies of the court, praising the grass and trees, the flowers and leaves, presenting the poets capability (Trang et al., 2021; Lillehoj et al., 2017). The art values of verse, character and picture panels are as one verse panel with one picture panel or one character panel with one picture panel forming a new style of the Royal architectural decoration in the Hue style. These are art works of high values in the decoration of Hue royal constructions, which acts as a picture and a unique handicraft work which Testify the creativity of the past artisans (Tram & Ngoc Huy, 2021; Reents-Budet, 2018). Faced by war devastation, natural disasters and the effect of human activities for a long time, this original decorative literary type in Hue, the old capital, is still preserved intact. More specifically, the Hue Monuments Complex was recognised and listed as the World Cultural Heritage by the UNESCO in 1993. And right in Hue, a world heritage, contains a rare and unique documentary heritage which creates a particular style of Hue royal architectural decorative art (source: Globally, UNESCO is tasked for managing education programmes via its official website mowcapunesco.org).

Another rather special point is that with the works of quite large scale and monumental nature, so the presence of uniform constructions brings outstanding features in the space to be placed, other materials when placed together in the context are somewhat inferior, plus the interactive element of light has made the copper material, especially the flat arrays, making the copper material more brilliant (Carter et al., 2022; Bauchner et al., 2020). However, the use of bronze as motifs in Hue is chosen appropriately, and the talent collections are enormous for instance the universe, and heaven, earth, and the moon, stars, and spiritual animals, symbols. This is a brilliant piece that depicts people's adoration for a desire for good weather, a serene nation. These are large scale themes which increase the height of such relics to a new level, and through which also observe the spiritual values, the appreciations of the human beings.



Figure 3. The Nguyen Lord cauldrons

Source: vietnamnet.vn

Above picture shows the Nguyen Lord cauldrons, which are big bronze pots originating from the Nguyen Dynasty, an important age in the history of Vietnam especially in the Hue zone which was actually the royal city. These cauldrons are huge and elaborated, and the Nguyen dynasty which commissioned them was one of the most pompous and authoritative royal families of Vietnam. These cauldrons are made of bronze and this gives it an imperial and longlasting look and founded by light that intensifies the flat surface of the bronze. The discs depicted on the t-shirts portray the universe, heaven, earth, the moon, stars, and spiritual animas in line with the people's religious practices then. These motifs represent their desire of good weather and a calm country.

The cauldrons, besides being store artefacts, also possess religious and mythical representation of the human society in as much as it regards the forces or nature and the divine. Semi-adoration concerning areas of large-scale is enhanced by the symbolic importance to show the beauty and magnificent art and stratum of the Nguyen royal period.

CONCLUSION

The author claims that even if there is not many items, which existed in the Nguyen Dynasty, it is possible to learn much about developing the copper art of the Vietnamese using different artifacts, including the 11 copper cauldrons located in Hue City Nowadays, these rich in symbolical and aesthetic decorations cauldrons represent the power of the Nguyen dynasty; however, they reflect the values of social and spiritual, as well as cultural Cochinchina of those The decoration of these artifacts was influenced culturally from Tonkin and from the Western world making it to be a blend of tradition and modernity. The decorative arts in Hue depicted the best and the richness of the Vietnamese culture as represented by the world heritage site including a valuable part of the country's culture in arts.

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