

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Dissertation title: Decorative patterns on the Nhat Binh robe of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945)

Major: Theory and history of fine arts

Code: 9210101

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Doan Thi My Huong

Institution: Vietnam Institute of Culture, Arts, Sports and Tourism

CONTENT OF THE ABSTRACT

1. Aims and object of the study

1.1. Aims of the study

This study aims to analyze the artistic characteristics and symbolic meanings of decorative patterns on the Nhat Binh robe of the Nguyen dynasty (1802-1945), thereby clarifying the artistic value and symbolic significance of this decorative system within Nguyen court art.

1.2. Object of the study

The object of the study is the system of decorative patterns on the Nhat Binh robe of the Nguyen dynasty (1802-1945). The study focuses on formal characteristics, including lines, composition, color, density, and spatial placement, as well as materials, techniques, thematic content, and the symbolic system associated with this type of decorative ornamentation.

2. Methods of Study

The research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating historical studies, social sciences, cultural anthropology, art history, design studies, and heritage studies in order to conduct a comprehensive analysis of decorative patterns on the Nhat Binh robe of the Nguyen dynasty.

2.1. Sampling Method

The sampling strategy is designed to ensure representativeness and to identify formal variations. It combines four approaches: stratified sampling, typical case sampling, maximum variation sampling, and snowball sampling. Samples are selected according to artifact type (original garments, reconstructed examples, and contemporary applications), geographical regions, and ritual hierarchy, thereby reflecting the spatial and temporal diversity of the decorative system under investigation.

2.2. Primary Data Collection Methods

Primary data are collected through three main sources: (1) Fieldwork conducted at museums, royal tombs, and craft villages such as Dong Cuu and La Khe to examine techniques and visual language; (2) Direct observation and the use of digital tools to analyze structural organization, materials, and techniques; and (3) Expert consultation through interviews and academic seminars at Hue University of Arts, aimed at validating and expanding the research arguments.

2.3. Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis is based on synthesis, comparison, classification, and visual mapping. These methods facilitate the identification of formal characteristics, symbolic meanings, and aesthetic values of Nhat Binh decorative patterns within Nguyen court art.

3. Main Findings and Conclusions

The research findings indicate that decorative patterns on the Nhat Binh robe of the Nguyen court constitute a coherent visual language that both adheres to court regulations and expresses a distinctive aesthetic identity. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the study identifies three principal artistic characteristics of the patterns: curvilinear lines that articulate femininity; stratified and multi-directional compositions reflecting an East Asian cosmological worldview; and a relief-oriented decorative style that demonstrates the technical sophistication of court craftsmanship. Together, these characteristics shape a court aesthetic that is visually rich in expression and structurally balanced, reflecting the artistic spirit of the Nguyen dynasty.

Five principal symbolic axes are identified: blessing, longevity and auspiciousness; confucian ideals (wisdom and moral virtue); gender and fecundity; the integration of the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism); and harmony between the cosmos and nature. These axes demonstrate how visual language functions as a medium for expressing authority, social order, gender, and philosophical conceptions of life.

The decorative patterns on the Nhat Binh robe thus transcend a purely ornamental function to become an artistic language embodying the aesthetic identity of the Nguyen dynasty. The study contributes an academic foundation for research on Vietnamese court art and expands possibilities for application in heritage conservation, art education, and contemporary creative practices.

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