

# Patterns Symbols in Auspicious Animal Decorate in the Imperial City of Hue, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

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**Abstracts:** The Imperial City of Hue, the capital city of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945), was the last dynasty in the feudal era that ruled Vietnam for 143 years. Emperor Gia Long ascended the throne ruling the Kingdom of Vietnam, choosing Hue as the capital city and building the Imperial City of Hue for the Nguyen Dynasty. The construction took 27 years. Emperor Gia Long adopted a system of governance and Confucian concepts to rule Vietnam. The emperor was likened to the Son of Heaven and sent to rule the human world. It was then necessary to create a living space that resembled heaven. The Imperial City of Hue was modeled after the Forbidden City in Beijing, China, to ensure that the royal palaces of the Imperial City of Hue were as marvelous as the Chinese Forbidden City. It also reflects the royal authority of the Vietnamese monarchy following the Chinese monarchy. According to the Cultural Diffusion theory, Vietnam has been culturally influenced by China through the architecture of the Imperial City of Hue, which emphasizes the uniqueness of its important strategic city location; suitable topographic features containing rivers, mountains, and sea as natural defenses against external invasions, and the uniqueness of the Vietnamese capital and the Imperial City of Hue, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam during the Nguyen Dynasty.

**Keywords:** Animal Patterns Symbols, Auspicious, Decorate, Imperial City of Hue, Vietnam.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam has a long historical background and has had significant relationships with neighboring countries: the Empire of China, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand (Sripana, 2009). The history of Vietnam spans a long period (from 111 BCE to 939 CE), originating from Vietnam being under the rule of the Chinese empire that expanded its power to the Red River Delta. The northern region of Vietnam within the Red River Delta is governed by various Chinese dynasties. Consequently, its beliefs, ways of life, and various cultures have been influenced by the Chinese (Ramet, 2006). Historical evidence in Vietnam reveals the influence of Dong Son culture, with a significant cultural artifact being the bronze drum used in ceremonies, mainly found in the Red River Delta, north of Vietnam (Chaiyapotpanit, 2013). The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is located in the South China Sea in Southeast Asia. It has diverse climates and is the only country in the Southeast Asian region that has received Chinese cultural influence in its past and continues to have cultural traditions as a part of the Vietnamese ways of life until the present (Kitkamontham, 2016). Vietnam has been impacted by Chinese cultural influence, including the construction of the Imperial City of Hue, formerly known as Phuc Xuan, which became the capital city after Nguyen Anh defeated the Tay Son Dynasty (1788–1802). The city of Hue became the capital of the Kingdom of Vietnam during the Nguyen Dynasty.

The Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) was the last imperial dynasty of Vietnam that ruled the country for 143 years. It began in 1802 when Emperor Gia Long was enthroned after suppressing the Tay Son Rebellion and ended in 1945 when Emperor Bao Dai abdicated and transferred power to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. During his reign, Emperor Gia Long unified the country and established Hue as its capital. Subsequently, a citadel was constructed in the military architectural style known as Vauban (Phan Thuan An, 1999). It became the residence of the emperor and royal family of the Nguyen Dynasty, namely the Imperial City of Hue.

The Imperial City of Hue was constructed based on the design of a Forbidden City in Beijing, China. Construction began in 1805, with a layout facing south-southeast (Nguyen Ngoc Tung, 2014). It served as the

residence of the emperor, also known as “Huangdi” in Chinese (symbolizing the Son of Heaven, who rules the entire universe). Therefore, the construction of royal palaces for the Nguyen Dynasty was akin to simulating the celestial concept in the human world, serving as the living place of the emperor (Siripaisan, 2008). The people of Vietnam believe that everything and everyone possesses a spiritual essence (Pinmanee, 2007). The Imperial City of Hue has a rectangular layout resembling a nearly square shape, surrounded by moats on all four sides and three-tiered surrounding walls. The first tier is the Imperial Citadel of the capital city, which serves as the residence of nobles, officials, and the military. The second tier is the Imperial City of the Emperor, housing the various administrative buildings of the royal court. The third tier is the Forbidden Purple City, which serves as the residence of the emperor and royal family (Phan Thuan An, 2000). The architecture of the Imperial City combined traditional Vietnamese architectural designs, Eastern philosophy, the Chinese Yin-Yang principle, and five basic elements (fire, earth, metal, water, and wood), including influences of Western military-style architecture, political significance, and its proper natural geographical characteristics (Hyunh Thi Anh Van, 2010). Decorations with auspicious symbols and four sacred animals—the dragon, Qulin, turtle, and bird—symbolizing Vietnamese beliefs in power, greatness, prestige, fortune, prosperity, longevity, reputation, and wisdom can be found in various architectural structures throughout Vietnam (Nguyen Ngoc Tung, 2007). The Imperial City of Hue, a symbol of the imperial authority of the Nguyen Dynasty, embodies a harmonious blend of traditional customs, ceremonial rituals, and architectural constructions associated with society and culture. It represents religious beliefs and values intertwined with political ideologies, and serves as a vehicle for transmitting social and cultural beliefs. Its role has evolved over time. Its utmost significance lies in its proud fundamental wisdom (Chaiyapotpanit, 2013). The composition of buildings within the Imperial City depends on their type and function, reflecting their importance, faith, and beliefs held during that era. This is manifested through the architectural works of value found in the Imperial City of Hue, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Based on documentary evidence, it was recognized in 1993 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Based on the aforementioned significance, efforts have been made to create a conservation center for the Imperial City of Hue to preserve and restore the Hue monuments complex, recognizing it as an invaluable world cultural heritage site. The city authorities collaborated with partners from South Korea, Japan, Germany, the United States, and Poland to safeguard the cultural heritage of Hue and align it with the development of tourism potential, following plans for the economic and social development of the nation. Considering the reasons and significance, it has become an area of interest for studying and conducting research on the background of the Imperial City of Hue, Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

### **1.1. Objective**

To study the history of the Imperial City of Hue in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

## **2. METHODS**

The research was qualitative. Target Population: The research was conducted using a purposive sampling method by selecting samples who are knowledgeable and involved in patterns and symbols of auspicious animal decorations as follows: 1) Knowledge group consisting of academic experts on Vietnam’s history, society, and culture, 2) a practicing experts group consisting of official staff inside the Imperial City of Hue, and 3) Relevant group consisting of local people and tourists of the Imperial City of Hue, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

**2.1. Research Tools** consist of surveys, interviews, and questionnaires. The scope of this research is to study patterns and symbols of auspicious animal decoration within the area of the Imperial City of Hue, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

**2.2. Data Collection** consisted of 1) Document data collection; a documented study of relevant content issues, and 2) Field data collection with sequential data collection using research tools.

**2.3. Data analysis** Surveys and interviews were used to analyze the data and were considered in conjunction with cultural diffusion theory, structural functional theory, and semiology theory.

### 3. RESULTS

Regarding the study of the historical background of the Imperial City of Hue, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, results were as follows:

#### 3.1. History of Vietnam

1. Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) In 1802, Nguyen Anh, the heir of the Nguyen Lords, suppressed the Tay Son Rebellion and united the country. He was enthroned as the first Emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty, took the title Gia Long, and replaced Hanoi, the former capital in the north, with Hue, formerly known as Phuc Xuan, in central Vietnam, as the new capital. He constructed a citadel and palaces within the new capital city to showcase the Nguyen dynasty's imperial powers.

2. Hue: Formerly known as Phuc Xuan, it was a prosperous city and the capital of central and southern Vietnam. It was the capital of the Tay Son Dynasty (1738-1775). The Nguyen Dynasty chose it to be the capital of the Kingdom of Vietnam, where the citadel and palaces were constructed.

3. Imperial City of Hue: The Imperial City of Hue was constructed based on the architectural design of the Forbidden City in Beijing, China. Construction began in 1805. The city faced the south-southeast direction, adhering to the principle of "the ruler faces the south to govern the north" from the ancient divination text I-Ching. The layout of the city is nearly square, surrounded by moats and three-tiered walls. The first tier is Hue Citadel, the residence of nobles, officials, and the military. The second tier is the Imperial City, the various administrative buildings of the royal court. The third tier is the Forbidden City, the residence of the emperor, and the royal family (Phan Thuan An, 2002). The construction took 27 years (1805-1832) and blended the natural landscape aesthetics with traditional Vietnamese architectural principles, Eastern philosophy, the Chinese Yin-Yang principle, and five basic elements of earth (fire, earth, metal, water, and wood). It also incorporated military architectural influences from the French architect Vauban.

#### 3.2. The significance of the Imperial City of Hue

The Imperial City of Hue was initially constructed during the reign of Emperor Gia Long in 1805 and was completed in 1832 during the era of Emperor Minh Mang. The construction spanned 27 years. With a long historical background of 143 years, it has served as the residence and administrative center for 13 successive Nguyen emperors ruling the Kingdom of Vietnam. Its historical significance extended until 1945, when Emperor Bao Dai, the last Nguyen emperor, abdicated the throne (Phan Tien Dung, 2004).

This Imperial City of Hue symbolizes the power and sovereignty of the emperor (the Son of Heaven, who rules the world) in ancient Vietnamese culture. It serves as the central hub of the universe and the center of politics and governance in Vietnam. Throughout the history of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945), each newly reigning dynasty had to completely destroy the previous royal palaces to establish their rightful authority. These actions demonstrate the immense power of the monarchy. The construction of a royal palace establishes a new capital city that serves as the central hub for each monarchy. It aimed to select a capital city with more significant power to establish the centralized authority of the new monarchy. Once the capital city was established in a particular location, it transformed into the center of the kingdom, aligning with the geographical and natural characteristics suitable for the city of Hue. It became the ultimate unified land of the Vietnamese empire, and it was believed that at the center, the emperor's Imperial City of Hue represented the symbol of the ruling power of the Nguyen Dynasty (Nguyen Thi Ha Thanh, 2010). This new royal palace was constructed on land that was once the capital city of the Tay Son Dynasty. When Emperor Gia Long came to power and unified Vietnam, he consulted geomancers and selected Hue as the capital city. The emperor established a kingdom in which he constructed the imperial city at the center. The construction of the Imperial City followed the model of a Forbidden City in Beijing, albeit on a smaller scale. Emperor Gia Long's admiration for the Qing dynasty was reflected in aspiration to emulate the grandeur of the Chinese Forbidden City, aiming to create glory like the Chinese dynasty. The imperial palace of Hue was the center of the most significant history of Vietnam (Quoc Le, 2017). At present, there are several architectures, buildings,

memorials, citadels, and other structures preserved for visitors to trace the prosperity that symbolizes the royal authority of the Nguyen Dynasty. The ruling of the Kingdom of Vietnam was unique to the Nguyen dynasty (Vu Hong Lien & Chakrabongse, 2015). After Emperor Bao Dai abdicated, the Imperial City of Hue became the final architectural testament of the last imperial dynasty of Vietnam.

### 3.3. The Relationship with China Leading to the Construction of the Imperial City of Hue

Throughout Vietnam's history, China's various dynasties had long-lasting rule over Vietnam. Chinese, therefore, had a socially and culturally significant impact on Vietnamese. Beliefs, Confucianism, and lifestyles have been inherited from the past and still in the present in Vietnamese ways of life, including fine arts. During the reign of Emperor Gia Long, the first emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty, there was a connection between Vietnam and the Qing Dynasty. Following China's governance system, administration, legal procedures, tax collection methods, nobles examination systems, selection of officials, the use of Han characters, Confucian values upholding (Noiwan, 1986), and calling himself the "Son of Heaven," Emperor Gia Long admired the Chinese Qing Dynasty so much that he initiated the idea of constructing a capital city and palace complex following the model of the Forbidden City in Beijing, with the aim of achieving grandeur and the pursuit of a prosperous and magnificent dynasty similar to the Chinese Empire. It began with the construction of the Imperial City of Hue, the new capital city of the Kingdom of Vietnam, which bore a resemblance to the Forbidden City of Beijing, China.



**Figure 1.** Architectural landscape of the Forbidden City of Beijing, China during the Qing Dynasty Source: [www.mozaweb.com](http://www.mozaweb.com)



**Figure 2** Architectural landscape of the Imperial City of Hue during the Nguyen Dynasty. Source: <https://stock.adobe.com/bg/images/aerial-view-of-hue-citadel-and-view-of-hue-city-vietnam-emperor-palace-complex-hue-province-vietnam/528357667>

### 3.4. The Layout of the Imperial City of Hue

Emperor Gia Long chose Hue as the capital of the Kingdom of Vietnam. It is strategically situated on the northern bank of the Perfume River. The Hue Citadel, designed in the architectural style of Vauban, consists of three interconnected components: 1. The Hue Citadel itself, 2. The Imperial City or Royal Palace, and 3. The Forbidden City. (Phan Thuan An, 2000)

The Imperial City of Hue is located within Hue Citadel and was constructed based on the architectural model of the Forbidden City in China. It was built on the foundation of blending Eastern architectural principles with military defence techniques in the style of Vauban's fortifications, uniquely adapted to the terrain. It showcases the unique architectural and cultural heritage of the nation's art and cultural traditions. Hue was the capital of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945), and today the Imperial City of Hue has been recognized as a significant cultural and artistic center and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1993.

### 3.5. The Buildings

Architecture was a symbol of the grandeur of the emperor's royal authority. Each building, from its components and overall architectural design to the smallest details, was meticulously planned to reflect philosophical and religious principles and, above all, to demonstrate the symbolic power of the emperor.

The Architectural Layout of the Buildings was arranged along the main axis (north-south). The interior architecture of the buildings within the Imperial City followed a rectangular pattern, with large and small structures in accordance with the layout and functional usage principles of the common architecture of the Imperial City of Hue. The observed architectural style is predominantly yellow, which is the color of the emperor. Therefore, most of the roofs in the Imperial City of Hue were covered with yellow glazed tiles, except for the library, which was covered with black tiles because of their association with water, believed to have a protective effect against fires. Similarly, the prince's pavilion was covered with green tiles, as green is related to wood symbolizing growth. The roofs and ridges were decorated with auspicious animal figures, representing the symbolic power of the emperor. These unique architectural structures and features contribute to the distinctive appearance and identity of the Imperial City of Hue (Phan Thanh Hai, 2005).

The Construction of the Imperial City of Hue was the first site surveyed by Emperor Gia Long in 1803. The official construction began two years after under the supervision of the Nguyen Dynasty. The construction continued from the 19th century to the early 20th century by Emperor Gia Long in 1805, with completion occurring during the reign of Emperor Minh Mang in 1833. The construction period spanned 27 years. The architecture was complexly designed and built with a blend of the West and East. The Hue Citadel has a nearly square layout and was built upon a foundation that combines Eastern architectural principles with military defense techniques influenced by Vauban, that is, the city wall, which was adapted to the natural terrain in a harmonious circular manner. The distinctive architectural work embodied the integration of architecture and the environment, showcasing the unique creativity and abilities of the Vietnamese people during the first half of the 19th century.

The Design The Imperial City of Hue was situated on the northern bank of the Perfume River (Huong River) facing the southeast. Its three-tiered fortified walls start from the inside and progress outward, with the outer wall being bigger. The outermost were 1) the Hue Citadel, 2) the Imperial City, and 3) the Forbidden City (Phan Thuan An, 2002).

First Tier: Hue Citadel is located on the outermost perimeter of the citadel. It was constructed with stone, brick, and earth, standing at a height of 8 meters, a thickness of 20 meters, and a length of 10 kilometers. It has 10 gateways and is fortified with 24 defensive bases. Construction began in 1805 during the reign of Emperor Gia Long (Nguyen Dynasty). The layout of the citadel is almost square in shape with slightly rounded corners and small moats surrounding it. It faces south-southeast. On the front side, there is a large flag tower called "Ky Dai," which serves as the residence for officials and military personnel.

Second Tier: Imperial City is located in the central part of the citadel. It was built during the reign of Emperor Gia Long in 1804 and completed in 1833 during the reign of Emperor Minh Mang. It was designed to resemble the Forbidden City in Beijing and was constructed with stone, brick, and earth, standing at a height of 6 meters. It has a square layout with surrounding walls and a gate in each the of four directions. It comprises over 100 beautifully crafted architectural structures. The area is divided into ceremonial spaces for important court rituals such as Ngo Mon Gate, Thai Hoa Palace; venues of worship such as Trieu Mieu Temple, Thai Mieu Temple, Hung Mieu Temple, The Mieu Temple and Phung Tien Palace; the department of the interior; royal treasury warehouses; royal artifact workshops; places where princes studied and relaxed such as Co Ha Gardens, and Kham Van Palace; locations for royal office buildings, and the administrative center of the Nguyen dynasty guarding and protecting royal courts, palaces, temples, and gardens.

Third Tier: Forbidden City: The Forbidden City is located in the innermost part of the Imperial City. The construction began during the reign of Emperor Gia Long in 1804 and was completed in 1833 during the reign of Emperor Minh Mạng. The Forbidden City had an almost square layout and was for the private use of the emperor. No one was allowed to enter without permission from the emperor, except for the emperor himself. It includes the emperor's working place (Can Chanh), the emperor's living area (Can Thanh), the residence of Hoang Quy Phi (Cung Khon Thai), the royal theater (Duyet Thi Duong), the kitchen for the emperor (Thuong Thien), and the emperor's reading room (Thai Binh Lau). The Forbidden City served as the residence of all 13 emperors and members of the royal family of the Nguyen Dynasty.

Site Layout Design The Imperial City of Hue is architecturally divided into five functional areas (Tri Nguyen, 2007).

1. Ceremonial and Celebratory Area is a large-scale architectural complex located at the main axis of the Imperial City, aligned with the north-south direction. The rectangular buildings were only used for significant and formal royal ceremonies. There are the Ngo Mon Gate and the Thai Hoa Palace (Number 1 and 2).

2. Royal Ritual Areas used for worshipping the emperors of the Nguyen Dynasty have a rectangular shape. They are located to the east and west of the central axis of the Imperial City, with the main entrances facing south. Examples of buildings in these areas include Trieu Mieu Temple, Thai Mieu Temple, Hung Mieu Temple, and The Mieu Temple. These structures, used for important rituals that held significant meaning within the royal court, were where the emperor worshiped the spirits of past emperors and the nation in a specific order (Number 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13).

3. The Private Quarter for the Emperor's mother and grandmother is located to the west of the central axis of the palace's layout. It consists of a group of rectangular buildings, with the main entrance facing south (Number 14).

4. Royal Gardens Compound contains the garden for the prince's study and relaxation, located on the western side of the central axis of the palace complex. It consists of rectangular structures, such as the Co Ha Gardens and Truong Sanh Building (Number 15).

5. The Emperor's Workplace and the Residence of the Emperor, Empress, the Emperor's consorts and concubines, and other members of the royal family are located according to the principles of the northern and southern axes of the imperial palace's layout. These rectangular-shaped buildings were used as residential and recreational areas for the emperor and members of the royal family (Number 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10).





**Figure 3.** Architectural layout of the Imperial City of Hue during the Nguyen Dynasty

### 3.6. The Usage of Buildings

1. The important ceremonial sites for conducting significant ceremonies within the Imperial City of Hue are the Thai Hoa Palace and the Ngo Mon Gate.



**Figure 4** Picture of Ngo Mon Gate



**Figure 5** Picture of Thai Hoa Palace

According to a survey, the Thai Hoa Palace was the most important and magnificent building in the architectural system of the Nguyen Dynasty that remained within the Imperial City of Hue. It has received recognition from UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage Site. The Thai Hoa Palace was built to celebrate the coronation ceremony and hold important court ceremonies for both domestic and foreign affairs. Inside the palace, there is a Golden Throne where the emperor sat solemnly for council meetings. The palace is located on the north-south central axis of the Imperial City and has a building orientation facing south. The most distinguished part of the Thai Hoa Palace is the red-lacquered columns decorated with gilded dragons. The front was a huge courtyard with stone tablets on the left and right sides. On these tablets, the position of the mandarins was inscribed according to their rank: civil mandarins on the left and military mandarins on the right. The placement of stone tablets can also be found in ancient Chinese culture. Ngo Mon Gate is the main gate of the Imperial City of Hue. It is located on the central axis, facing south. It is considered one of the most significant architectural structures among the many historical sites of the Nguyen Dynasty. This gate drew inspiration from the Forbidden City of Beijing, China. The resemblance can be noticed by its name, "Ngo Mon," which is derived from the Vietnamese pronunciation of Chinese "Wu Men," the gate of the Forbidden City. In addition, it is U-shaped, similar to the Wu Men Gate. This gate was built as a pathway for the emperor and royal family and as an observation point for royal ceremonies and military parades. Thai Hoa Palace and Ngo Mon Gate of the Imperial City of Hue bear resemblance to Gu Gong Palace, also known as the Forbidden City in Beijing, China. The architectural features of these buildings exhibit similarities and are influenced by the grandeur and style of the Forbidden City. They are decorated with symbols, that is, auspicious animals to signify the importance of the buildings. Dragons decorating the roofs (central left and right) and eaves (left and right) are reminiscent of the dragons seen in the decoration of the Forbidden City. This style of decoration with dragons was prevalent from the middle period of the Ming Dynasty until the Qing Dynasty. The decorative style of the Imperial City of Hue decorating with dragons corresponds to the auspicious decoration of animals found in the Forbidden City in Beijing, China.

2. The ceremonial sites for the worship of ancestral spirits and religious rituals were 1) Hien Lam Pavilion, 2) The To Temple, 3) Thai Mieu Temple, 4) Hung Mieu Temple, and 5) Trieu Mieu Temple.



**Figure 6** Picture of Hien Lam Pavilion (Number11)

**Figure 7** Picture of The To Temple (Number12)



**Figure 8** Picture of Trieu Mieu Temple (Number 13)

**Figure 9** Picture of Hung Mieu Temple (Number 9)

**Figure 10** Thai Mieu Temple (Number 8)

According to the survey, it was found that the ceremonial sites for the worship of ancestral spirits and religious rituals within the Imperial City of Hue consist of Hien Lam Pavilion, The To Temple, Hung Mieu Temple, Thai Mieu Temple, and Trieu Mieu Temple. Located on the western and eastern sides, the buildings are symmetrical in pairs along the main axis of the architectural layout of the Imperial City of Hue. They were constructed as places to conduct religious and ancestral worship rituals.

3. The personal Residence of the Emperor's mother and grandmother is called Dien Tho (Number 14).



**Figure 11** Pictures of Dien Tho Palace Compound

According to the survey, it was found that Dien Tho Palace is located in the western direction along the main axis of the Imperial City. It was built as a private residence for the emperor's mother and grandmother. The largest architecture in the old capital of Hue comprises more than 10 interconnected buildings. The buildings are arranged in a rectangular wall and linked by an open corridor to Can Thanh Palace, where the emperor lived. The emperor walked along this path every day to visit and check the health of his mother. The decorations of this palace are phoenixes that represent females.

4. The sites of study for leisure and entertainment and gardens for the emperor and the princes are places that offer lessons, leisure, and entertainment for the princes. The garden for the emperor included the building of the Truong Sanh Residence (Number 15).





**Figure 12** Picture of Truong Sanh Residence building

According to the survey, it was found that the Truong Sanh Residence building is located in the northwest corner of the Imperial City, behind the Dien Tho Palace. It was constructed as a place of leisure, entertainment, and gardens for the Emperor and princes. The architecture of the palace is arranged along the main axis in a shape of three parallel lines, resembling the look of the Chinese word “王,” meaning “Monarch.” With the main power, The Tho Khanh Palace in the central part, the Ngu Dai Dong Duong building at the front, and the Van Phuc Pavilion at the rear. These three buildings were connected by open corridors.

5. The Forbidden Purple City, the residence of the Emperor and the imperial family, comprises several buildings, including Can Chanh Palace (Number 3), Can Thanh Palace (Number 4), Long Corridor (Number 5), Duyet Thi Royal Theatre (Number 6), Thai Binh Pavilion (Number 7), and Royal Office (Number 10).



**Figure 13** Picture of Can Chanh Palace (Number 4)  
(Source: <https://one-million-places.com>)



**Figure 14** Picture of Can Thanh Palace (Number 3)



**Figure 15** Picture of Long Corridor (Number 5)



**Figure 16** Picture of Duyet Thi Royal Theatre (Number 6)



**Figure 17** Picture of Thai Binh Pavilion (Number 7)



**Figure 18** Picture of Royal Office (Number 10)

(Source: <http://sailingstonetravel.com>)

According to the survey, buildings within the Forbidden Purple City, the residence of the Emperor, and the royal family serve as places for the Emperor and the royal family to live, work, and enjoy entertainment of various types. The buildings were symmetrical in pairs along the major axis from the Ngo Mon Gate to the tier of the Forbidden Purple City. The architectural layout corresponds to heaven, that is, the Forbidden Purple City, where the five-clawed dragon, symbolizing the Emperor, lives. In general, the overall architecture ensemble of the Forbidden Purple City holds artistic value in terms of architectural layout and decorations and historical evidence of the existence of Vietnam's last dynasty.

#### 4. Discussion

The relationship between Vietnam and China can be traced back to the extensive period when China ruled over Vietnam under various dynasties. The prolonged Chinese domination has had social and cultural impact on Vietnam. Beliefs, Confucianism, and ways of life came into Vietnam in the past, and some inherited cultural traditions, including artistry, have still been part of the Vietnamese ways of life. Emperor Gia Long of the Nguyen Dynasty constructed citadel and royal palaces in the new capital city to showcase the elegance, power, and symbols of prosperity of the Nguyen Dynasty. This palace complex has a long history, spanning 143 years, and serves as a royal residence and great hall for the Kingdom of Vietnam.

The building of a royal palace establishes a new capital city serving as the center of each dynasty, aiming to select a capital city with more imperial power than the previous dynasty. The new royal palace is then established as the institutionalized center of ruling power and administration for the new regime. When a capital city is established, wherever it may be, that location becomes the new power center. Given its suitable geographical and natural characteristics, Hue is considered the ideal land for the feudal era in Vietnam. The center is, of course, the imperial palace of the emperor. The Imperial City of Hue confirms the symbolic imperial authority of the emperor (Son of Heaven, who rules the world) and serves as the political center for ruling the kingdom of Vietnam during the Nguyen Dynasty. Emperor Gia Long had so strong admiration for the Chinese Qing Dynasty that he had the idea of constructing a capital imperial city, the layout design of which was modelled after the Forbidden City in China (Phumplab, 2016). He aimed for greatness, prosperity, and glory, resembling the Chinese Empire.

Culture arises from the behaviors that humans create through the processes of learning and interrelated communication that lead to both physical and mental development. It is passed down according to the practices of a particular group of people or community, from generation to generation, as successive traditions. Culture is an important characteristic of learning ways of human life in society. There are regulations, rules, and procedures for practice, as well as organization of belief systems, values, knowledge, and various technologies, all of which have traditionally evolved and passed down, been learned, and inherited through living together

(Sakdejyont, 1979). According to the theory of Cultural Diffusion, cultural diffusion is a social interaction between two groups of people from different cultural societies that accept each other's cultures (Pongsapich, 1990). Cultural diffusion is a reason why people living in different places have the same customs and traditions. Considering the identity and form of belief in the Imperial City as the residence of the emperor, who is the Son of Heaven ruling the entire universe, the construction of an imperial city is therefore likened to a simulation of heaven into the human world.

From the information mentioned above, it can be concluded that cultural diffusion is a feature of social development through mutual acceptance and exchange of culture. In the case of cultural societies interacting with unequal power, one tends to accept the culture of the other. It was found that those with less cultural power tended to be assimilated into the group with more cultural power. At the same time, they may be interchangeable. Similar to the Imperial City of Hue, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, China has a cultural influence in many aspects: education, ideas, languages, arts, architecture, and Confucian concepts. It also encompasses the assimilation and adaptation of various influences, blending harmoniously with others while preserving their own cultures, especially for the language aspect. For ancestor worship, Cultural Diffusion theory explains that the architectural style appearing in the Imperial City of Hue, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, looks similar to that of the Chinese's Forbidden City due to

the fact that the emperor believed that the Imperial City was the residence of the emperor, and that its construction is therefore likened to a simulation of heaven into the human world.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Imperial City of Hue, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, was built in the reign of Emperor Gia Long in 1805 and completed in 1832 in the reign of Emperor Minh Mạng. The construction took 27 years in total, with the purpose of being used as the capital city, that is, center of Vietnam's administration and government, and symbol of the imperial power of the feudal era and the prosperity of the Kingdom of Vietnam Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945). The Imperial City of Hue was built according to Chinese beliefs and the style of the Forbidden City in Beijing, China. The inside is a rectangular layout. The buildings were located along the north and south axes. Building plans and important components of the building are divided into five areas consisting of 1) Area for celebrating important ceremonies of court, 2) Area for worship ceremonies for ancestors, 3) Private residence for the emperor's mother and grandmother, 4) The emperor's gardens, used for relaxation, entertainment, and education, and 5) Area where the emperor works and the residences of the emperor, empress, and royal family. The Nguyen dynasty's Imperial City of Hue is one of the ancient capitals of Vietnam with a long history and rich cultural values, which is the identity of the whole country. It is a cultural heritage site listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1993. The ancient capital city of Hue retains many of its unique architecture. There have been attempts to conserve, restore, decorate, and promote the restoration of the cultural heritage value of the ancient capital of Hue.

## Recommendation

From this fieldwork, the result is a collection of specific data, selected to explore issues of interest and draw conclusions. I sincerely hope that there will be further specific studies about auspicious animals' decoration in other places with more evidence, in order to obtain more complete information in the future.

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