

Aesthetic Similarities Between Patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery in the North of Vietnam and Those on Ancient Pottery in the Southeast Asia and South China

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Abstract: Pottery is one of the most important criteria to study the aesthetic level of prehistoric people, in which decorative patterns are important evidence objects prove their creativity. Through the study of patterns on pottery, it can confirm that there was a multi-dimensional artistic contact exchange between the Phung Nguyen period in the North of Vietnam and Southeast Asia, and South China. Research on decorative patterns on ancient pottery needs to be based on archeological artifacts, but the pattern engraved with dotted lines, the letter S is considered a typical characteristic appearing mostly on pottery in the Southeast Asia region, South China. It demonstrates the similarity in the aesthetic creativity level of the prehistoric agricultural residents of Southeast Asia and South China. This research compares some typical patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery in the North of Vietnam with the same pattern of pottery in the same chronology in Southeast Asia and South China to find the similarities about the creativity and aesthetic value shown in pottery of this period.

Keywords: Decorative pattern, Aesthetic similarity, Phung Nguyen Pottery

1. Introduction

Pottery has experienced a long and diverse development since the human appeared on earth. Asia has existed since before Christ (BC) in many different countries, ethnic groups, and cultures, each of which has its own artistic identities. However, countries are affected and interacted with each other due to beliefs, immigration processes, and international sea trade, and pottery is clearly demonstrated most. Pottery became familiar items of the primitive people, and decorative and carved patterns were characteristic symbols to distinguish the identities of each clan and region. There are many studies in the perspective of archeology, culture, and history, etc. Of Phung Nguyen pottery, and ancient pottery in Southeast Asia and South China, but few ones in patterns of Phung Nguyen pottery, and ancient pottery of Southeast Asia and South China to find out aesthetic similarities, differences and multidimensional relationship in the primitive time. Here are questions in this study. Which patterns line-shaped on Phung Nguyen pottery are similar to ones on ancient pottery of Southeast Asia and South China? How are the characteristics and shaping value of patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery? What are their roles and significances in the primitive people in the above regions? To address the above questions, this study compares characteristics of patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery and ones on ancient pottery of Southeast Asia and South China.

2. Research Methodology

The study in similarities between patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery and ones on ancient pottery of Southeast Asia and South China has been carried out based on an analysis of and comparison with studies in pottery site lately exhibited at the

museum, images of documents, books, and magazines. Observing pottery artifacts: The primitive potteries are observed to find the similarities and relationships about decorative patterns to conclude. Observing in facts: The primitive potteries exhibited at Hung Vuong Museum, Hung Temple Historical Relic Museum, Vietnam History Museum, Hanoi Museum, Chimei Museum (Taiwan) are observed to find the similarities of their patterns.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Literature review

3.1.1. Brief of pottery in the Phung Nguyen age

Phung Nguyen pottery was excavated at the Phung Nguyen site, Kinh Ke commune, Lam Thao district, Phu Tho province, Vietnam. Phung Nguyen's pottery culture age was classified in the Metal Age. The needs of life motivated the Phung Nguyen people to use pottery to store and keep food. Phung Nguyen pottery was divided into 3 phases:

At the beginning of Phung Nguyen time: Pottery was made of extremely fine clay. Pottery products in this period had small sizes like bowls, cups, trays, etc. with major decorative patterns shaped in lines or hemp ropes on polished fine pottery. These are the main types of patterns in this period.

In the middle of Phung Nguyen time: Pottery was made of little fine clay. Pottery products with small size were replaced ones with medium size and line-shaped and S-shaped patterns. Their patterns were arranged aesthetically. Comb-teeth-shaped patterns were common, ones printed in the smooth fabric were no longer used and one's patterns shaped in lines or hemp ropes on polished fine pottery are

less used. Techniques in this period were enhanced to create more difficult, complicated, and beautiful patterns.

At the ending of Phung Nguyen time: There were significant improvements in pottery in comparison with the previous periods. The materials of pottery products were clay mixed with a crushed sea shell to create porosity. Previous types of patterns were gradually replaced with main spiral-shaped and S-shaped patterns accompanied with triangular sub-details to become typical characteristics of decorations of Phung Nguyen pottery. Techniques of burnishing white powder on pottery products to highlight S-shaped patterns and ones shaped in lines with dots.

In short, decorative patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery were mainly shaped in lines with striped dots, S-shaped sequentially, and its variations.

3.1.2 Briefs of ancient pottery in Southeast Asia

In Southeast Asia, ancient pottery first appeared at Yingshi Site (Taiwan) was made of iron-deficiency clay, and the surface was burnished shinily. Patterns were geometric shapes decorated on pottery parts. Pottery products at Ban Chiang Site (Udon Thani, Northeast Thailand) were drawn with brown and black patterns on a yellow or ivory white ground. Patterns were shaped in lines and soft curves.

Pottery products of Khok Phanom Di Culture (Thailand) existed around 2400-2000 BC. This place was considered as the center of primitive pottery production in Southeast Asia. The types of pottery of the Khok Phanom Di people were diverse and plentiful. The outside of pottery was burnished and polished before firing. Decorative patterns were mainly geometric shapes with carefully and clearly lines and curves.

3.1.3 Briefs of ancient pottery in South China

Chinese Primitive pottery civilization was divided into two categories of colored pottery and black ones. The South China region (including the provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi, and Yunnan) is a long and wide strip along with the coast, and close to the Vietnamese border. Ancient pottery of South China in the early period was mainly colored pottery, represented by Yangshao pottery (about 5,000 - 3,000 years). Pottery was drawn with reddish-brown, black or crimson. Pottery in this period was decorated in eight-point quadrilateral or quadruple style, creating a firm symmetry and balance. Patterns were mainly intricate curvy, straight, oblique, semicircular lines, round dots, or spiral patterns to create a dynamic state. Pottery at Banpo Site (6,800 - 6,300 years, Xi'an - Shaanxi) has many drawings showing yin and yang, which imply mutuality, opposition, and unity. The S-shaped patterns were used mainly because they are symbols of yin and yang moving and softly intertwined. Black pottery was also found at Hemudu Site, Majiayao Site, and Liangzhu Site. Pottery was made of high-quality iron-poor mud, thin wall, polished surface and was decorated with continuous curves, strict lines, squares, circles, orderly and very disciplined carved holes. In short, patterns of the ancient colored pottery in South China are biased towards decorations with joyful colors and intense emotions, and ones in black pottery are biased towards rationality with variations of unique shapes and bold folk elements.

3.2 Similarities between decorative patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery and those on ancient pottery of Southeast Asia and South China

Patterns on Primitive pottery were formed not by aesthetic needs but by technical ones. During the working process, the aesthetic thinking of primitive people was gradually formed, so decorative patterns appeared. The meaning of patterns that primitive people expressed through artistic language was a set of short, long, straight, curved lines arranged according to the principle of symmetrical composition and repetition. The drawings are mainly a combination of curves, straight lines, arcs, spirals, circles, which combine to create patterns of circles, squares, triangles, letter S, etc at different sizes. By the comparison, it can be seen that the S-shaped and dot-striped patterns appeared mostly on the pottery of Phung Nguyen, Southeast Asia, and South China. The S-shaped patterns from an artistic perspective can originate from curving lines, spiral shapes, or combined to become double spiral S-letter shapes. Those patterns can be derived from the replication of a real, natural-world object or from simulation arrangement, which follows the principles of magnetic simplicity and symmetry of geometries. They are all intentionally created from shapes. Their curvilinear form represents an inner swelling state, making the frill line become a clear rhythmic motion. Symbolically, an S-shaped pattern is a symbol of changes in the moon and thunder, of the origin of life and water, which represents a realistic symbol associated with a combination of a thunderstorm, thunder, and lightning. The Phung Nguyen people and the people of Southeast Asia and South China had an initial awareness of the universe, habitat still tinged with religions, mainly towards the divine and the desire to survive. In fact, the Phung Nguyen people and inhabitants of Southeast Asia and South China all adore natural forces such as the sun, moon, thunder, lightning, water, etc. Therefore, some line-shaped patterns on pottery were created with symbols such as squares for stability, and triangles for harmony and balance, "Zhi" for rattle waves, globe for sky and land, etc. The combination of line-shaped and S-shaped patterns becomes a seamless decoration, combined with the space surface and layout creates a harmonious beauty. They are highly symbolic and typical, so it appears mostly on pottery of Southeast Asia and South China. With the talented hands of the craftsman, patterns on the pottery hide the simulation of all-natural things, proving the development of primitive people's thoughts.

Similarities between decorative patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery and those on ancient pottery of Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia and Phung Nguyen Site are cultural and historical regions with many similarities. In addition to other cultural items such as jewels, axes, shoulder axes, etc., the line-shaped and S-shaped patterns on pottery confirm exchanges between groups of residents of Phung Nguyen with ancient residents in Southeast Asia in prehistoric times. In comparison, S-shaped patterns of Phung Nguyen pottery have a relatively close relationship with patterns of the ancient pottery at Phimai Site (Thailand). The spiral details are similar to S-shaped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery, and the small difference is shapes which could be size,

length, and directions only. S-shaped patterns with separation or connection to create the movement with triangular vignette appeared on the pottery at the Non-Nok Tha site (2000-1500 BC, Thailand). The body of S-shaped patterns on the pottery of Kalanay (Philippines) are long, soft, and curved to create dynamic movement from left to right. These patterns with a triangular vignette are similar to those of Phung Nguyen pottery. S-shaped patterns are open, big, and relatively picky on the pottery of Tan Shi Shan Culture at Xitou Site (Taiwan). Moreover, horizontal S-shaped patterns with many small and soft curves from left to right to create a continuing rhythm appeared on Ban Chiang pottery (2000-500 years BC, Udon Thani, Northeast Thailand). Those patterns were drawn with brown and black patterns on a yellow or ivory white ground and burnished with white powder to highlight patterns and create variations in shapes.

The shape of line-shaped and dot-shaped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery is similar to those on Borneo pottery (Malaysia) because of its straight, definitive clear, and coherent inclination.

In the perspective of shaping, both simple, and intricate line-shaped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery and Southeast Asian pottery help us to understand their multidimensional beliefs, life, and society. Those patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery could be due to great exchanges in the history of the development of residents on the former Pacific islands; however, they have been much transformed in Vietnam.

Similarities between decorative patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery and those on ancient pottery of South China

Phung Nguyen pottery has a relationship with pottery in Huanan, especially the ancient Tian land at Da Hanazawa Site and Dadunzi Site (Yunnan, China).

It obviously can be seen that dot-line-shaped patterns mostly appeared on ancient pottery in South China. Archaeologist Ripspoli (Italy) has stated dot-line-shaped patterns also appeared on pottery of the Xiankezhou Site (Guangdong) on pieces of Fuguodun (Fujian), and on Phung Nguyen pottery (3). Besides, Researcher Trinh Nang Chung (Vietnam) also confirmed dot-line-shaped patterns of Phung Nguyen pottery also appeared on pottery of Shixia, Shenwan, Dashanhu (Guangdong) (3). Thus, patterns of Phung Nguyen pottery have a relatively close relationship with ones of pottery at the same time in South China.

Some other patterns, namely S-shaped patterns, appearing a lot on Phung Nguyen pottery are similar to S-shaped patterns on pottery of Hemudu Site, Majiayao Site, and Liangzhu Site (China).

At Dadunzi Site (2200-1500 BC, Yuanmou, Yunnan, China), sunk line-shaped patterns combined with dot-striped details and dense and simple straight lines are similar to the ones of Phung Nguyen pottery. They also appeared on pottery at Shixia, Dashanhu, and Shenwan Sites in Guangdong (China).

Similarly, S-shaped patterns appeared on prehistoric pottery of Banpo Culture (6,800-6,300 years, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China). These patterns all used images of tai chi as a frame to transform into an S shape to imply the opposing unity of things such as heaven, men and women, sun moon, the upper and lower, etc. Besides, some Yangshao pottery also had geometrical patterns, concentric circles with shapes that change the density of strokes, spars, thick spots, or wave patterns by engraving and brushing techniques, which has many technical similarities to create line-shaped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery. Specially, S-shaped patterns on Dawenkou pottery (China) created a vivid and flexible sinus rhythm on the frill strip with both thin and bold engraving to bring out the harmony of the sharp and comfortable drawings. Variant patterns of the sun motif appearing on Hemudu spinning bar were drawn into a straight line in a triangle (serrated) connected together to form a radiant circle, which is close to this motif on Phung Nguyen spinning bar, mainly expressed in the way of understanding rather than the visual order. It can be seen from comparative studies that typical dot-line-shaped patterns on ancient pottery appeared all South China, shows that there are an artistic connection and the spread of pottery and patterns between cultures in this area.

Despite similarities, the identities of each ethnic group have been highlighted. In a comparison of Phung Nguyen pottery with ancient pottery in Southeast Asia and South China, it can be seen their differences are mainly in sizes and decorations. Patterns of Phung Nguyen pottery show the tendency of learning and accepting the exogenous shaping elements of pottery at the same time in Southeast Asia and South China. Through comparative researches, dot-striped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery are different from dot-straight ones on Baiyang Village (2200-2100 BC, China). Namely, Phung Nguyen patterns were made with a sharp stick or roller, so curves were often very diverse, while Baiyang Village ones were carried out by pressing the mouth of seashells on the surface, so they are straight, hard, and irregular lines.

It is confirmed S-shaped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery are generally close to ones on pottery of Dawenkou, Hemudu and Liangzhu Sites (China). However, from a shaping perspective, details have different characteristics to create richness and no duplication. S-shaped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery have a wide body, shaped by a closed surrounding line to create a pattern, arranged harmoniously between the background and images, between the main patterns and serial details, continuously connected together. Meanwhile, S-shaped patterns on Dawenkou pottery are created by five lines arranged together from left to right to create a spiral circle, main patterns with many parallel lines looking like fingerprints. These patterns account for a large area (1/2 pottery body) and the background has an almost no-frill strip and interlocking motifs. S-shaped patterns on Hemudu pottery are similar to ones on Dawenkou pottery with five parallel lines moving from left to right to form details. Ones on Liangzhu pottery are complicated by the combination of six lines, moving into an ellipse that covers more than half of the pottery body, overcoming the frill frame with one end connecting to the other end up to the neck of pottery products and relatively cramped layout. In

general, S-shaped patterns on pottery of Dawenkou, Hemudu and Liangzhu mainly uses the density of many lines to create the movement of patterns, so it can be affirmed that techniques of S-shaped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery completely expresses a different creative thinking and clear own characteristics.

Patterns on ancient pottery of South China have mainly focused on practicality and aesthetics, so the decorative layout is diversified, with tightened lawlessness, gradually moving towards complexity, fussy, and tends towards symbols of spiritual and religious nature.

4. Conclusion

Decorative patterns on pottery play an important role in increasing the aesthetic value of items, also hide profound symbols delivered into them. Through the analysis of patterns, it can be seen that Phung Nguyen, Southeast Asia, and South China Archaeological Sites are not coincidental, but they identify cultural features of groups and clans. It reflects the multi-dimensional relationship between the primitive clans.

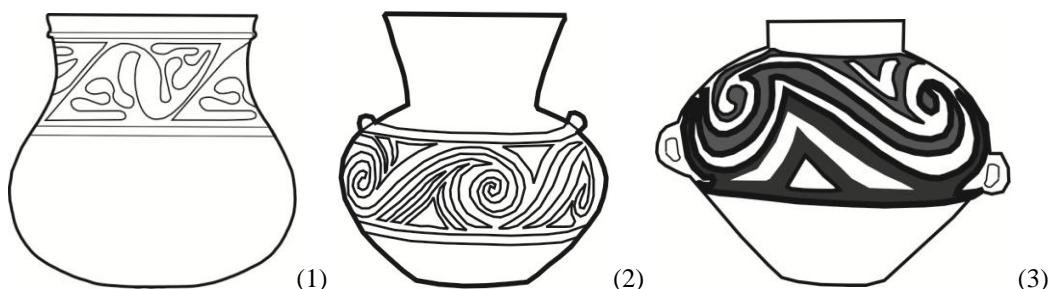
- 1) The aesthetic qualification of potters of Phung Nguyen, Southeast Asia, and South China represents the development and improvement over time through the accumulation of experiences in the working and creative life. Therefore, the subjects on pottery are often simplified, close, and highly stylized.
- 2) The value of decorative patterns on pottery of Phung Nguyen people, Southeast Asia and South China is the clearest evidence of aesthetic talents and descriptive capacities to specify objects according to a single and geometric tendency. The decorative patterns on pottery are mainly aesthetically applied to decorate and beautify objects for daily life to become an independent work of art.
- 3) Similar factors on the pottery in the above areas are the dot-striped and S-shaped patterns. Language shaping decorative patterns are clear and layout is expressed on

the principle of symmetry, repetition, delicate and flexible lines. The decorative properties are clearly shown through the depicted images from simple to more sophisticated geometries.

The density of decorative dot-line-shaped and S-shaped patterns covering almost all pottery of Phung Nguyen, Southeast Asia, and South China can clearly show the similarity in shaping language in these regions. From the aesthetic information mentioned above, it can be affirmed that the continuation of cultural flows and shaping arts in the primitive period between Phung Nguyen pottery and pottery in Southeast Asia and South China have a close relationship, which is an important prerequisite for the development of art in pottery in these areas in the later stages.

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S-shaped patterns on Phung Nguyen pottery (1) Ta Wen Kou pottery (2) and Yangsha pottery (3) (China) (Sources: Drawn by the writer)