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**NGÔN NGỮ HỌC
CHỨC NĂNG
VÀ VẤN ĐỀ
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PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE
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THE PORTRAIT OF NGUYỄN HUỆ IN “ĐẠI NAM CHÍNH BIÊN LIỆT TRUYỆN” THROUGH THE LENS OF ATTITUDINAL EVALUATIVE LANGUAGE

Nguyen Thi Tinh Thy¹, Nguyen Lam Thang², Nguyen Thi Hoai Phuong³

Abstract: *The paper is to examine how Nguyễn Huệ was described in the preface of Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện, from the perspective of the Appraisal theory. It seeks answers to the issues of whether or not the Nguyễn Dynasty's historians had biases and prejudices in describing Nguyễn Huệ - their rival, and if so, to what degree their descriptions of this character influenced. The study investigated the evaluative language on Nguyễn Huệ's character at the attitude level using the Appraisal framework created by Martin and White (2005). The multidisciplinary data that blends properties of literature, history, and linguistics helped to portray the character of Nguyễn Huệ. The findings indicate that the majority of the evaluative patterns about Nguyễn Huệ and his Tây Sơn regime were unfavorable, particularly concerning the linguistic resources Judgment, with common lexical items like “nguy” and “tiếm.” However, there were a few positive evaluations that focused on Nguyễn Huệ's diplomatic relations with the Qing. In terms of Appreciation, a dichotomy was observed. While the evaluation regarding Appreciation-Quality was negative, the appreciation concerning Appreciation-Impact was positive. This study lends a possibility to interdisciplinary text analysis.*

Keywords: *Appraisal Theory, Attitude, Judgement, Appreciation, Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện.*

Tóm tắt: *Bài viết này khảo cứu cách Nguyễn Huệ được miêu tả trong “Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện”, theo góc nhìn của lý thuyết ngôn ngữ đánh giá (Appraisal). Bài viết tìm hiểu liệu việc các sử gia triều Nguyễn có thiên vị và định kiến khi miêu tả Nguyễn Huệ - đối thủ của họ hay không, và nếu có, thì mức độ ảnh hưởng của những mô tả của họ về nhân vật này như thế nào. Nghiên cứu đã xem xét ngôn ngữ đánh giá về nhân vật Nguyễn Huệ ở bình diện “Thái độ” bằng cách sử dụng khung ngôn ngữ đánh giá do Martin và White (2005) khởi xướng. Dữ liệu đa ngành kết hợp các đặc điểm của văn học, lịch sử và ngôn ngữ học đã giúp miêu tả nhân vật Nguyễn Huệ. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng phần lớn các biểu thức đánh giá về Nguyễn Huệ và chế độ Tây Sơn của ông là không mang tính tích cực, đặc biệt liên quan đến các nguồn ngôn ngữ Đạo đức (Judgement), với sự xuất hiện các từ ngữ phổ biến như “nguy” và “tiếm”. Tuy nhiên, có một số đánh giá tích cực tập trung vào quan hệ ngoại giao của Nguyễn Huệ với nhà Thanh. Về nguồn lực ngôn ngữ Thẩm mỹ (Appreciation) trong hệ thống ‘Thái độ’, có sự phân hóa thành hai xu hướng. Trong khi đánh giá về chất lượng (Appreciation-Quality) là tiêu cực, thì đánh giá về ảnh hưởng (Appreciation-Impact) lại mang tính tích cực. Kết quả nghiên cứu này mở ra triển vọng phân tích văn bản liên ngành.*

Từ khóa: *Lý thuyết ngôn ngữ đánh giá, thái độ, đạo đức, thẩm mỹ, Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

East Asian historians often refer to Confucian principle “述而不作” (literally ‘to record, not to create’) when writing the work *Spring and Autumn Annals* as the guiding principle in historiography. This is to say that the historian’s duty is concerned with solely the task of recounting, and not creating at all. Nonetheless, the act of ‘recounting’ inherently carries the properties of ‘storytelling.’ To tell a story in the written mode involves great efforts in the language art, and thereby transforming ‘a story’ into ‘a narrative.’ The concept of ‘historical narratives’ is formulated, accordingly. In various historical series, there are chapters or volumes dedicated to ‘narratives’ (stories about a certain type of people sharing similar social class, status, profession, or traits), such as those of imperial consorts, officials, virtues, and the *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện* (Official History of the Nguyễn Dynasty). Historical narratives inevitably contain elements or techniques of literature, and even if the Confucian principle of “to record, not to create” is adhered to, Hayden White (cited in Hieu, 2008, p.114) argues that historical narratives still require the sequencing of events and characters, as well as careful word selection. Therefore, the work of a historian is inherently creative. In this regard, the choice of words falls within the realm of evaluative language.

This paper is an attempt to explore the description of the character Nguyễn Huệ, an implacable enemy of Nguyễn Ánh, who was the founding emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty, in the preliminary section of *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện*. It addresses the questions as to whether or not the historians of the Nguyễn Dynasty were influenced by biases and prejudices when they described this character, and to what extent were their biases and prejudices, if any. Using the Appraisal Framework developed by Martin and White (2005), the paper will focus on the analysis of evaluative language regarding the character of Nguyễn Huệ on the Attitude level. The interdisciplinary research combining linguistics, history, and literature will help reevaluate the portrayal of Nguyễn Huệ in the historical texts and the historiographical perspective of the historians.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1. Theoretical framework

Grounded in the theoretical system of M.A.K. Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) that offer insights into three metafunctions of language: the experiential function, the interpersonal function, and the textual function, Martin and White (2005) proposed the Appraisal Theory in their research work *The Language of Evaluation*, which postulated that the system of evaluative language is instrumental in evaluating the emotions, attitudes, or assessments of the language user towards objects, including events or people. The theory is considered as an extension of the SFL, focusing on the interpersonal meaning of text. The source of evaluative language is used by the speaker/writer (hereafter referred to as ‘the speaker’) to exchange social relationships, to express their attitudes, stance, and subjective perspectives regarding the contents presented in the text and towards the entities interacting with them. Martin and White (2005) divided Appraisal into three systems of linguistic resources: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation.

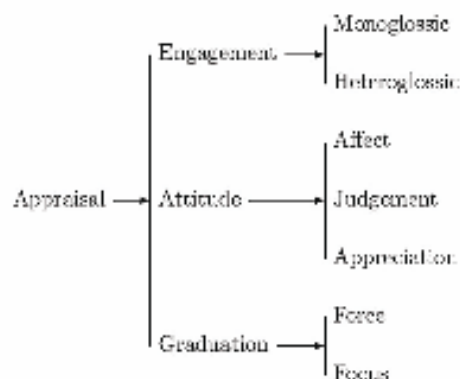


Figure 1. The simplified Appraisal framework

Attitude comprises the linguistic resources associated with nuances of emotion while Engagement is related to the stance of speaker. Graduation is concerned with the evaluative scales of the emotion and stance.

Attitude is realized through three linguistic resources: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. Affect is the evaluative linguistic resource used to express emotions about ongoing actions or surrounding entities. Judgement is the evaluative linguistic resource used to express morality and norms of human behavior and character, while Appreciation is the evaluative linguistic resource to evaluate the quality of events, occurrences, and the external characteristics of phenomena. All three resources of Attitude can be expressed explicitly or implicitly, either positively or negatively, and can be contextualized in specific circumstances, according to Martin and White (2005). As the present study focus on the attitude expressed through descriptions of the historical figure Nguyễn Huệ in the *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện* from the perspective of his oppositions, only the linguistic resources of Appreciation and Judgement within the Attitude system of the Appraisal will be used as the analytical baselines.

The subsystem of Judgement involves assessments of morality or legality. It is divided into two categories: Social esteem evaluates individual qualities such as *cruel* or *unkind*. This category is further divided into the judgement of normality, capacity and tenacity. Social sanction involves assessments in accordance with systems of legality, called veracity, and morality, called propriety. The subsystem of Appreciation is concerned with the assessments of objects and states of affairs. Appreciation is classified into three categories: Reaction, Composition, and Valuation. In each category, there are two subcategories. Reaction includes the Impact and Quality, Composition includes Balance and Complexity, and Valuation includes Significance and Benefit.

2.2. Nguyễn Huệ in Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện

Nguyễn Huệ (1753–1792) was often titled by the Vietnamese as the “hero in a plain robe.” Among the “Three Heroes of Tây Sơn”, Nguyễn Huệ stood out for his most prominent reputation and achievements. Since the uprising, Nguyễn Huệ had fought against the Nguyễn lord in South (Đàng Trong), defeated the Trịnh lords and supported the Lê Dynasty in the North (Đàng Ngoài).

When the Lê Dynasty could no longer maintain its historical role, he proclaimed himself king to pacify the country. With his exceptional military talent, Nguyễn Huệ defeated the Qing army in 1789.

Throughout his life, from the uprising in Tây Sơn Thượng (in present-day Bình Định) to his ascension to the throne and death in Phú Xuân, his greatest rival was Nguyễn Ánh (later Emperor Gia Long, the founding ancestor of the Nguyễn dynasty). After Nguyễn Huệ's death, his son Nguyễn Quang Toản succeeded him at the age of nine. The Tây Sơn regime became internally divided and surrounded by internal enemies and external enemies, giving Nguyễn Ánh many advantages. In the end, Nguyễn Ánh completely triumphed, overthrew the Tây Sơn regime, unified the country, and established the Nguyễn Dynasty as Vietnam's last feudal dynasty.

Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện is a historical text compiled by scholars of the Nguyễn Dynasty at the Imperial Historical Institute (Quốc Sử quán). The main section consists of two volumes. The First Volume contains 33 books; the section on the Tây Sơn dynasty appears in Book 30, after the chapter "Biographies of Virtuous People" (mostly commoners), and before the chapter "Accounts of Foreign Countries." In terms of placement, it is evident that Nguyễn Huệ was given a very low ranking. Moreover, he was labeled as a "rebel" (ngụy), one of the three figures of the "Rebel Tây Dynasty" (including Nguyễn Văn Nhạc, Nguyễn Văn Huệ, and Nguyễn Quang Toản).

The focal language sources lie in the text about Nguyễn Huệ. Different narrative voices in historical storytelling, including narration, description, and commentary, will be examined through the tone and wording from the perspective of Appraisal theory.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study adopts the interpretive qualitative research design, which is to explore and comprehend the significance of human experiences, interactions, and behaviors within their broader social and cultural environments. This research approach is well-suited for history-related studies because it allows for a deep, nuanced understanding of the past, focusing on meaning and context.

3.2. Data source

The data source for the present study was extracted from pages 699-725 of the Chinese version of *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện* by the National History Institute of the Nguyen Dynasty, archived at the National Library of France, code 045532, in comparison with the Vietnamese translation by Ngo Huu Tao and Do Mong Khuong, published by the Institute of Vietnamese History and Thuan Hoa Publishing House, 2005, pages 554-597.

3.3. Data processing and analysis

Vocabulary items from the data source were sorted under Judgement and Appreciation categories, following the Martin and White's (2005) framework for case-based interpretation. In addition, statistics were also applied to support the interpretation and reduce the subjectivity of an interpretive qualitative research.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the investigation in terms of the evaluative language of Judgement and Appreciation of the Appraisal theory. In a general sense, the vocabulary used by historians of the Nguyễn Dynasty to describe Nguyễn Huệ was negative.

4.1. Vocabulary items of attitudinal Judgement

It is found in the data that the vocabulary items of Judgement can be grouped into the Judgement by historians and Judgement by the Qing Emperor.

4.1.1. Judgement by historians

Regarding the organization of the book, the description of Nguyễn Huệ was ordered the last and in the appendix. This indicates a negative attitude towards Nguyễn Huệ. The alternative vocabulary for Tây Sơn/Nguyễn Huệ was "*tiếm thiết*" (僭竊). These are compounds with negative meanings (*tiếm* (僭): to occupy/rob; *thiết* (竊): to steal/steal), which can be considered as belonging to both social esteem (capacity) and social sanction (propriety) of Judgement.

As far as the content of the book is concerned, the 33rd volume about the Tây Sơn regime is titled "*Ngụy Tây*" (偽西). *Ngụy* (偽) has a negative meaning of being *bandit, fake, illegitimate* (Nguyen, 1994, p. 990), just as a traitor who usurps the throne of a lord is called a usurper dynasty. Thus, the Tây Sơn regime of Nguyễn Huệ is not considered legitimate, it is a dynasty of robbers.

The historians also described three Tây Sơn kings: Nguyễn Văn Nhạc, Nguyễn Văn Huệ, Nguyễn Quang Toàn in the 33rd volume. The description of Nguyễn Văn Huệ (Nguyễn Huệ) occupied 26 pages (699-725), twice as long as that of Nguyễn Văn Nhạc and three times as long as that of Nguyễn Quang Toàn. This length is commensurate with Nguyễn Huệ's role in the Tây Sơn regime. However, throughout these pages, the word "*ngụy*" was used frequently to combine with all the titles and deeds of Nguyễn Huệ. For example, the Tây Sơn regime was labeled as "*Ngụy Tây*" (偽西 – False Tây), Huệ's name is "*ngụy Huệ*" (偽惠), his throne as "*ngụy vị*" (偽位 – false throne), and his posthumous title as "*ngụy thụy*" (偽諡 – false posthumous title). To generalize Nguyễn Huệ's reign, the historian wrote: "usurped the throne (*tiếm vị* – 僭位) for 5 years". The word "*ngụy*" was used four times and the word "*tiếm*" twice. They concluded that the Tây Sơn regime in general and Nguyễn Huệ in particular were political robbers, an item which is substantially different from "rebellious bandits, rebellious ministers".

Although the number of occurrences of these negative words was not high, the effect of the judgmental meaning was extremely powerful, because they appeared in a universal, conclusive role. From the appraisal view, these words belong to both social esteem if seen as words to describe Nguyễn Huệ's qualities and as social sanction if seen as words for the Tây Sơn regime.

When Nguyễn Huệ passed away, historians used the word "*tử*" (死). In Vietnamese and Chinese, there are many synonyms of "death": *tử* (die), *hết/tuất/tốt* (end), *ra đi/xuất khứ* (depart), *hy sinh* (sacrifice), *mãn phần* (finish). According to historical documents dating back to the time of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, when the emperor died, the word "*băng/băng hà*" (崩遷) was used, while a vassal died, the word "*hoăng*" (薨) was used. When a good person died, the word "*tuất/tốt*" (卒) was used, and when an ordinary person or a bad person died, the word "*tử*" (死)

was used. Although his five-year reign was short, Nguyễn Huệ's career was glorious. The fact that historians described his death with the word "tử" implied that meaning he was a "usurper", a bad person. Meanwhile, in the same record, when King Lê died, it was recorded as "băng" (崩).

"Ngụy", "tiếm tiết" and "tử" have been expressions of a contemptuous (negative) attitude and imply judgment on the subject. Killing two birds with one stone, the historians of the Nguyễn Dynasty used very effectively the *Spring and Autumn* writing style, which is soft words but great effects. With just one or two words, they could revive the dead and kill the living. This indicates that in their words, there was an attitude of "satire" (praise and criticism) (Anh, Du, Q, Thu, Tien, C & Ninh, Pham, 1988).

The nuances of "ngụy", "tiếm tiết" and "tử" were collocated in expressions of the activities throughout the chapter about Nguyễn Huệ's life, from fighting with Nguyễn Ánh's army, supporting Lê and destroying Trịnh, to ascending the throne in Phú Xuân, defeating the Qing army, and establishing diplomatic relations with the Qing Emperor. Nguyễn Huệ's military, political, and diplomatic strategies and his success were all fully recorded. However, the tendency was quite negative, and coupled with the judgement of Nguyễn Huệ's characters, which could be seen as Appreciation.

Table 1. Linguistic resources of Judgement by historians

Evaluative Expressions	Situations	Positive	Negative
rob (寇)	Gia Định battle		(-)
spy (窺視)	Đô Thành battle (Nguyễn Ánh controlled lands)		(-)
fierce killing (大肆殺戮)	Đô Thành battle		(-)
massacre (皆殲)	Đô Thành battle		(-)
forced (強)	forcing King Lê to summon a court meeting to receive the celebration		(-)
occupation plot (謀據)	occupation of Nghệ An		(-)
implicitly despise (心易)	Nguyễn Hue to the Qing Emperor	(+)	
impersonation (冒) (twice)	sending a fake person to meet the Qing Emperor	(+)	
spy (窺視)	Liangguang (the possibility of wanting to open up land to the North)	(+)	
complacent, calling himself emperor (得志。儼然以帝)	calling himself emperor		(-)
cruel and immoral (殘虐無道)	to the Nguyễn ancestors		(-)
invasion (犯)	to all the holy tombs		(-)

Table 1 shows an obvious difference in the number of negative and positive judgements: 9 times versus 3 times. Most of the judgements about Nguyễn Huệ's actions and attitudes were of normality category, showing his ambition and conspiracy rather than his capacity. For example, at the Gia Định battle, Nguyễn Huệ's was considered to be a "robber" (寇) who committed a massive killing (大肆殺戮), "killed everyone" (皆殲). This implies that the judgment is not intended to

affirm the determination and bravery of the character (i.e., his capacity and tenacity), but rather to show bloodthirsty nature (a negative tendency). Similarly, "cruelty and immorality" (殘虐無道) attributed to Nguyễn Huệ in the situation where he destroyed the mausoleums of the Nguyễn lords is also evidence of a very harsh and cruel judgment. However, this situation helped uncover a historical reality, which is the very common way of revenge of factions when they defeated each other. Therefore, later, Nguyễn Ánh's punishment of the Tây Sơn king and mandarins and the destruction of Nguyễn Huệ and Quang Toàn's tombs were also cultural characteristics of the time and should not be attributed to the moral quality of the behavior.

Three positive judgements of Nguyễn Huệ's actions were all related to dealing with foreign countries. This shows that the historians still respected and appreciated Nguyễn Huệ's fight against the Qing invaders although they had a tendency to lower the prestige of Nguyễn Huệ to protect the prestige of the Nguyễn Dynasty.

In terms of narrative perspective, in judging Nguyễn Huệ's actions, the historians used different points of view to increase the objectivity of the judgment: of the people, of the historian, and of the foreigner, the Qing Emperor. For example, when Nguyễn Huệ followed Nguyễn Hữu Chỉnh to lead his army to the North, the elders of Thanh – Nghệ region said that Chỉnh had set a fox to keep the geese. This idiom is a very harsh judgment as the historian wanted to include this sentence to increase the credibility of the argument with a negative attitude towards Nguyễn Huệ, which is the denial of the legitimacy of Nguyễn Huệ's involvement in the Lê Dynasty.

On the contrary, the historian also used documents such as diplomatic documents of the Qing Dynasty commenting and writing about Nguyễn Huệ. This type of document is very important, showing another view on Nguyễn Huệ - a politician (diplomat) who was both tough, confident, and gentle, and who understood himself and his enemy so well to win every battle.

4.1.2. Judgement by the Qing Emperor

In *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện*, there were the Qing Emperor's edicts and written documents evaluating Nguyễn Huệ's actions and attitudes in the form of oral edicts, or offering parallel sentences, competing poems to pay tribute to Nguyễn Huệ. Table 2 presents linguistic resources of judgements by the Qing Emperor.

Table 2. Linguistic resources of Judgement by the Qing Emperor

Judgement expressions	Situations	Positive	Negative
an intolerably action of relying on force to usurp the country, (恃強奪國, 法所不容)	a comment accusing Nguyễn Huệ while hearing King Lê's plea for help		(-)
rebellious (猖獗)	a comment accusing Nguyễn Huệ while hearing King Lê's plea for help		(-)
self-awareness and fear (自知愧懼)	upon reading the memorial, Nguyễn Huệ "respectfully" sent his nephew to meet and make peace with the Qing Dynasty, despite having defeated the Qing army	(+)	

meritorious (可嘉)	about the words in the memorial, which Nguyễn Huệ considered the emperor as his teacher and father who raised him and gave birth to him, hoping to receive deep gratitude.	(+)	
credible (最嘉)	for the fact that he personally came to the gate	(+)	
sincerely submit (拱極歸誠)	to the Qing Emperor	(+)	
keep the heart forever (永矢丹忱知弗替)		(+)	
sincerity shows from the heart (忠個出哀眞)		(+)	
loyalty to the court (効忠特獎其趨朝妥魄)		(+)	
I will never forget the lingering nostalgia (沒世無忘於戀闈)		(+)	

In the Qing Emperor's words, there were only two instances of negative judgement about Nguyễn Huệ, which were "relying on strength to usurp the country" (恃彊奪國) and "rebellious" (猖獗). This judgment further demonstrated Nguyễn Huệ's strength and heroism. Therefore, the negative attitude here has the opposite meaning, because it affirmed Nguyễn Huệ's positive merit in his conquest and fighting against foreign invaders.

In the description of Nguyễn Huệ's receiving a letter from the Qing Emperor, it was stated: "Huệ received the letter and knew that the Qing people wanted to make peace, he implicitly despised (心易)". However, he submitted a petition to the Qing Emperor with humble words: "I humbly think it is the will of Heaven to make an order in accordance with natural law, please forgive me for my crime of opposing Sun Shiyi, pity me for my sincerity in knocking on the door many times to present my petition, let me be the king of An Nam, so that I can rule. I respectfully sent an envoy to the gate to request to become a vassal, to correct the tribute and to bring all the remaining population to show my sincerity. In fact, with the grand Celestial Dynasty comparing wins and losses with the petty barbarians, why must we fight to the end, to tire of military affairs, to satisfy our greed and cruelty? Surely the Holy Emperor would not bear to do so. If the army continues to fight endlessly, it will not be what I want, and I dare not know it" (Nguyen, 2005, p.588-589).

Following that petition, according to the Qing Emperor, Nguyễn Huệ had a series of positive actions and attitudes: being aware of shame (social esteem – capacity), knowing his mistakes and repenting (social esteem – normality), personally going to the gate to apologize. After his death, Nguyễn Huệ still attached to the gate (social esteem – tenacity). The Qing Emperor was confident in his reputation, prestige and position, even though Nguyễn Huệ had once defeated his army and scattered it. His positive judgments on Nguyễn Huệ (8 occurrences) all had the meaning of an admonition from a superior to an inferior, a big country to a small one. His commendations on Nguyễn Huệ for having changed his mind (social esteem – capacity), knowing how to respect a big country and the emperor (social sanction – propriety). At the surface level of Qing Emperor's admonition, there must be certain disappointment that heroic and resourceful Nguyễn

Huệ accepted to beg for help from the enemy of the nation. To clarify these concerns, from the narrator’s perspective, the historians presented Nguyễn Huệ’s attitudes and behaviors according to the contrasting method between his words and actions, his actions and thoughts in this special military-diplomatic strategy. It can be argued that the Qing Emperor made a wide range of the judgements about Nguyễn Huệ.

The Qing Emperor did not know that Nguyễn Huệ looked down on (心易) him. Therefore, the emperor praised him to the fullest. For example, when defeating the leader of the country of Văn Tường, Huệ sent his servants Vũ Vĩnh Thành and Trần Ngọc Thị to the Qing to present the news of the victory. “It was said to be respectful and obedient (social sanction – propriety), but in reality, it was to show off” (名為恭順寔則誇示). This comment of the historian shows Nguyễn Huệ’s cleverness, confidence, and strategy of “killing the chicken to scare the monkey.”

“Showing off” in this case is an arrogant threat, and thus the Qing Emperor’s commendations on Nguyễn Huệ turned neutralized ironic. This is evidence in the climax which was an unprecedented action in the history of the feudal period of Vietnam: Nguyễn Huệ twice dared to send someone to impersonate him to meet the Qing Emperor. The actions and attitudes of the fake Nguyễn Huệ that the emperor saw became a comedy, and the one being laughed at was the Qing Emperor. Thus, positive and negative in the judgmental language of the Qing Emperor had opposite meanings. What was positive would turn into negative and vice versa, praise would turn into criticism and vice versa. This showed Nguyễn Huệ’s political talent (social esteem – capacity, positive) and affirmed Nguyễn Huệ heroic qualities, and negated the misconceptions of the Qing Emperor.

It can be seen that the Qing Emperor’s comments about Nguyễn Huệ’s quality of being rebellious was accurate, but ironically, the most arrogance was towards the Qing Emperor. This is a manipulative strategy by historians of the Nguyễn Dynasty. The implied judgement is also on the Qing Emperor: he was misconceived (social esteem – capacity, negative).

4.2. Vocabulary items of attitudinal Appreciation

In the linguistic resources of Appreciation, data have shown the main trait of describing Nguyễn Huệ’s appearance, actions and characters.

The opening sentence of *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện* is as follows: “Nguyễn Văn Huệ [...] had a voice of a big bell, his eyes were as bright and flashing as lightning, he was cunning and clever, he liked to fight, and everyone feared him.” This introduction yielded a large number of negative Appreciation expressions rather than positive ones. Table 3 presents the linguistic resources of Appreciation made by historians.

Table 3. Linguistic resources of Appreciation made by historians

	Evaluative expressions of Appreciation	Appreciation types	Positive		Negative	
			No.	%	No.	%
1	voice like a big bell (聲如巨鐘)	Reaction -Quality	1	20	0	0
2	eyes flashing like lightning (目閃閃若電光)	Reaction -Quality	1	20	0	0
3	cunning and clever (狡黠)	Reaction -Impact	0	0	1	20
4	bellicose (善鬪)	Reaction -Impact	0	0	1	20
5	everyone is scared (人皆憚)	Reaction -Impact	0	0	1	20

The findings showed that the positive Appreciation has a lower rate than the negative (40/60%). Although there are many categories of appreciation, the evaluative expressions about the character Nguyễn Huệ in the data set centered around the Reaction category. Notably, the negative Appreciation was related to Nguyễn Huệ's quality. The Nguyễn Dynasty historians portrayed Nguyễn Huệ as a scary person, addressing him by his given name without attaching it to his position, title, or posthumous name. Pham and Vo (2024) argued that Vietnamese address terms could serve as evaluative expressions as they connoted four types of nuances: formal, neutral, intimate/informal, and vulgar/disdainful. This falls into the fourth type of attitudinal meaning of disdain, proving that the historian has no respect for Nguyễn Huệ.

The historians used the comparison technique to describe Nguyễn Huệ's voice and eyes as a big bell with a positive meaning, but along with this meaning is a very negative generalization of personality/morality: "*giảo điểm*" (狡點). In Chinese and Vietnamese, "*giảo điểm*" means cunning and sly (Than, 1994, p.477). Thus, Nguyễn Huệ is evaluated with words that carry a very severe negative meaning. In particular, the comment phrase "everyone is scared" implies an generalization expressing an opinion with the subject of the discourse about the potential subject, using terms indicating the majority (people/everyone). This strategy contributes to affirming the evaluation of Nguyễn Huệ as a person with a martial nature rather than a refined nature. If the word "*sợ*" (fear) were replaced with "*né*" (respect) or "*phục*" (admire) it would be different. "Fear" implies both the sinister meaning of "cunning" and the recklessness of the action of "fighting".

Nevertheless, when describing Nguyễn Huệ's military activities, the historians wrote: "In battles, he always went first, the generals and soldiers followed strict and clear orders, all the soldiers were respectful" (臨陣必親先, 士卒號令嚴明, 部曲皆屬心). The character of dedication, determination, pioneering spirit, and strict discipline are the properties of heroic Nguyễn Huệ. Those are the properties that a hero must have. Therefore, the generals and soldiers were all respectful. In this regard, historians acknowledged Nguyễn Huệ's strengths and impact in military, and in this field alone, the evaluative language is 100% positive.

5. CONCLUSION

In general, this study has looked into the evaluative language used to portrayed Nguyễn Huệ in the Nguyễn's Dynasty historical text of *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện* under the analytical framework of Appraisal provided by Martin and White (2005). The study particularly focuses on the Judgement and Appreciation linguistic resources within the Attitude system of Appraisal. It has achieved certain results. Standing in the position of the opposing dynasty, the historians denied Nguyễn Huệ's legitimacy in raising an army and proclaiming himself emperor. Therefore, in *Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện* most of the evaluative patterns were negative, especially in the Judgement of Nguyễn Huệ and his Tây Sơn regime, typical lexical items include "*nguy*" and "*tiếm*". Rare instances of positive evaluation, however, were about Nguyễn Huệ's diplomatic activities with the Qing. In terms of Appreciation, there was a dichotomy. Regarding the Appreciation-Quality, the evaluation was negative, but the Appreciation-Impact was positive. This implies that the Nguyễn Dynasty still acknowledged his political roles. This investigation has initially contributed to the understanding of a historical text. It can serve as a first step to interdisciplinary text analysis in the future.

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Acknowledgement

This paper has been part of a larger research project (Grant number: DHH2025-03-210) granted by Hue University.