

The Art of Using Allusions in Du Fu's and Nguyen Binh Khiem's Poetry

Nguyen Hong Linh

University of Education, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: Besides influencing content, Du Fu's poetry also greatly influenced Nguyen Binh Khiem's poetry in terms of artistic merit. This is evident in the art of using allusions in the poems of both authors. Comparing the art of using allusions in the works of the two authors reveals similarities in how they reflect social reality, particularly the contrast between the impoverished lives of the people and the luxurious lives of the official class, thereby expressing a profound sense of humanism and critical awareness. Furthermore, the use of allusions demonstrates erudition and conciseness in poetic language. While Du Fu leaned towards historical allusions to express his concern for the times, Nguyen Binh Khiem adopted and creatively adapted them to express a philosophy of leisurely living, affirming his own unique artistic style.

KEYWORDS: Du Fu, Nguyen Binh Khiem, allusions, Tang Dynasty poetry, Vietnamese medieval literature.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the development of medieval Vietnamese literature, Tang Dynasty poetry had a profound influence on both thought and art. As a representative of realistic Tang Dynasty poetry, Du Fu left a deep mark with his humanitarian spirit and sense of social responsibility. Nguyen Binh Khiem, a great poet of the 16th century in Vietnamese literature, was clearly influenced by Chinese poetry, especially Du Fu's. However, this assimilation was not merely copying but selectively adapted and creatively adapted to his historical context and personal thought. Therefore, studying the influence of Du Fu's poetry on Nguyen Binh Khiem's poetry in terms of art contributes to clarifying the relationship of Sino-Vietnamese literary exchange, while affirming Nguyen Binh Khiem's unique identity and value in the development of national literature.

II. CONTENT

According to the *"Essentials of Vietnamese Literary History,"* allusions (originally meaning "old events") are understood as words or sentences that allude to events or stories from the past, requiring the reader to relate them to the allusions in order to fully grasp the meaning and aesthetic value of the text. In classical Chinese literature, the use of allusions is also called "utilizing allusions" or "historical allusions," that is, using events and characters from the past to enhance the intellectual depth of the work. Therefore, in traditional artistic creation, the conciseness of language is always highly valued; allusions become an effective method of expression, helping to convey "more meaning with fewer words," being both concise and evocative.

The poet Du Fu's poems always contain a sense of nostalgia for the past, influenced by the social circumstances of his time. He witnessed the rise and fall of the Tang Dynasty. His life was filled with hardships, his achievements were unfulfilled, his fame unattainable, joy was scarce, and sorrow was abundant. Du Fu was deeply concerned about the times and greatly admired extraordinary talents. These talents served as role models for scholars throughout the land, such as Yi Yin, Xiao He, Zhang Liang, and Lian Ke, among others. For example, in his poem "Autumn Feelings" (Part III), Du Fu mentioned Kuang Heng and Liu Xiang, both upright individuals who cared deeply for the affairs of the country and its people.

Transcription:

*"Khuong Hanh khang so cong danh bac,
Luu Huong truyen kinh tam su vi."*

Poetic translation:

*"Like Khuong Hanh submitted a memorial but his fame was meager,
Like Luu Huong lectured on the scriptures but his feeling was troubled."*

Du Fu also frequently used allusions referring to famous figures, wise and virtuous emperors in history, and talented rulers, such as Emperors Yao and Shun in his poem "From the Capital to Fengxian County," a five-hundred-character poem expressing his feelings.



Transcription:

*“Sinh phung Nghieu - Thuan quan,
Bat nhan tien vinh quyet.”*

Poetic translation:

*“Born to meet Emperors Yao and Shun,
How could I bear to leave them forever?”*

Yao and Shun are two very famous virtuous rulers in Chinese history. They were talented and exemplary kings. Du Fu also mentions other kings such as *Lap Lu, Viet Vuong Cau Tien*, etc.

The allusions in Du Fu's poetry also relate to famous figures, those who were talented writers and poets, learned and virtuous, but who lived in the wrong era, were dissatisfied with reality, and refused to cooperate with the rulers, thus choosing a life of seclusion and finding pleasure in seclusion.

*“Many talented people have missed their chance,
The father and son of the Ke Nguyen.”*

The poet Nguyen Binh Khiem also used many allusions in his poetry to demonstrate his erudition and profound understanding of various contents and meanings, expressing his thoughts and feelings in a rich and diverse way.

Nguyen Binh Khiem used allusions to convey his wish for a peaceful and prosperous society. Like Du Fu, Nguyen Binh Khiem was born into a turbulent society, so he always dreamed of a peaceful life, a country living in peace, and happy people. A life of "a virtuous ruler and wise followers," like the time of Yao and Shun. Unable to fulfill his desires and aspirations, Nguyen Binh Khiem retreated to a life of pure and elegant seclusion. During his time in seclusion, he used many allusions to the lives of reclusive Confucian scholars and chose place names associated with hermits, such as *La Vong, Nghiem Tu Lang, Phu Xuan, Vi Thanh, Cua Khong, Nhan village, Ha Phan, Ho Hoc, Han cauldron*, etc. He used allusions to the wise Confucian scholars of the past who abandoned officialdom to find joy and mastery over their own lives. Nguyen Binh Khiem mentioned the Confucian scholar Nghiem Quang in his poem 125:

*“Ban nhieu cay cuoc ngay ngay hop,
Ganh nang yen ha chon chon thau.
Kham ha Nghiem Quang tu tuoc Han,
Tam Cong khung doi mot can cau.”*

Nguyen Binh Khiem mentioned the ancient sage who once aspired to become a bird soaring over the northern sea, but who was also willing to renounce wealth, glory, and luxury to seek refined pleasures in the mountains. Or in poem 142, he mentioned *Luu Vong*, a talented character who still chose to live in seclusion.

*“Kia kia La Vong cau Ban Thach,
No No Nghiem Quang nau Phu Xuan.
Mung thay thoi van doi mo tri,
Thai binh thien tu, thai binh dan.”*

Nguyen Binh Khiem also borrowed many allusions referring to hermits who shunned fame and fortune, feeling weary of worldly affairs and seeking pleasure in leisurely days. Their daily lives were intertwined with practicing Confucianism, reading, writing poetry, reciting poetry, drinking wine, gazing at the moon, and wandering through mountains and rivers. To live a peaceful life, free from the burdens of officialdom, to achieve inner peace and maintain a pure soul like hermits such as *Yan Zi, Chao Fu, Lin Bo, and Xu You*, the use of allusions makes the language of the poetry concise and succinct, showing that Nguyen Binh Khiem was influenced by the use of allusions in Du Fu's poetry and, in particular, adopted the refined and elegant use of allusions in Tang Dynasty poetry.

III. CONCLUSION

From examining the art of using allusions in the poetry of Du Fu and Nguyen Binh Khiem, it can be seen that both poets, representative of the Confucian scholar class in China and Vietnam, utilized allusions as an important means to express their



thoughts and worldview. While Du Fu leaned towards historical allusions to reflect social reality and the aspiration for a peaceful era, Nguyen Binh Khiem used allusions associated with a leisurely lifestyle, expressing a choice of reclusion and a noble spirit. This difference contributes to highlighting the unique nuances of Confucian thought in two different cultural and historical contexts.

REFERENCES

1. NGUYEN HUE CHI (editor) (1991). *Nguyen Binh Khiem – Poetry*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
2. DANG THAI MAI (1978). *Du Fu – The Great Realist Poet of China*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
3. DUONG QUANG HAM (1998). *A Concise History of Vietnamese Literature*. Hanoi: Literature Publishing House.
4. LE TRI VIEN (2001). *Characteristics of Medieval Vietnamese Literature*. Hanoi: Hanoi National University Publishing House.
5. TRAN DINH SU (2005). *Poetics of Medieval Vietnamese Literature*. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.
6. 叶嘉莹 (2004). 《杜甫诗论》. 北京: 北京大学出版社.
7. 冯至 (2001). 《杜甫传》. 北京: 人民文学出版社.
8. 仇兆鳌 (2010). 《杜诗详注》. 北京: 中华书局.
9. 刘明华 (2012). 《杜甫诗歌艺术研究》. 北京: 学苑出版社.

Cite this Article: Linh, N.H. (2025). The Art of Using Allusions in Du Fu's and Nguyen Binh Khiem's Poetry. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 8(12), pp. 6686-6688. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V8-i12-78>