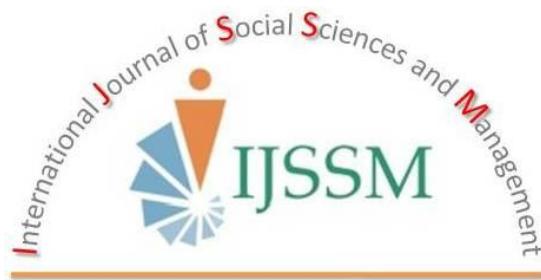




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Research Article

RESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAMESE DONG HO FOLK PAINTING

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Abstract

Dong Ho folk painting is a line of Vietnamese folk painting originating in Dong Ho village (Song Hồ commune, Thuận Thành District, Bắc Ninh Province). It is a culture heritage of Vietnam; so the preservation and development have been requisite. In this study, we endeavored to discover the meanings and values of Dong Ho folk painting; to find out the reasons why Dong Ho folk painting fell into oblivion and recent status of Dong Ho folk painting village; then to propose some solutions to restore and develop it. Furthermore, in the trend of globalization, preservation and development of Dong Ho folk painting is the best methods to partly diffuse Vietnam's traditional culture with its diversification.

Keywords: Dong Ho Folk Painting, “Điệp” paper, National Intangible Cultural Heritage, natural colors, Vietnamese Folk Painting

Introduction

Vietnamese Folk Painting is one of traditional arts of Vietnam's common people (Bach, 2014). It has long time history and is divided into two main types, which are the Tet (Lunar New Year Festival) painting and the worshipping painting. Several researches have showed that Vietnamese Folk Painting early appeared due to Vietnamese belief in ancestor worship and deification of natural phenomena, which early developed in Vietnam. In 12th century (Ly Dynasty) there appeared many families, even a village that specialized in folk painting production. Through the rise and fall of history until 18-19 centuries, Vietnamese Folk Painting had a strong growth and painting production spread out nationwide and there new lines of paintings emerged that named according to their place of production (Cultural Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 1995).

Under feudalism, Dong Ho village, together with Hang Trong, Kim Hoang and Sinh village, is one of the few places where had the tradition of making folk painting. There is a fundamental difference in production and uses among these lines of paintings. Dong Ho painting is printed by hand on the surface of wooden plate. The Dong Ho painting is normally hanging for decoration on Tet occasion. Hang Trong painting also has two main types that is the Tet painting and the worshipping painting, however, Hang Trong painting is normally used to worshipping activities. In term of technique, production of Hang Trong painting is

combined by printing and drawing technique. To make a Hang Trong painting, craftsman starts with woodblocks to print bold black outlines, the details are drawn and finally colors are applied into the picture by hand. Ink used in Hang Trong painting is black Chinese ink and applied by brush so colours of Hang Trong painting are normally bolder than Dong Ho painting. The colours used in making Kim Hoang painting are obtained from black Chinese ink and other natural materials such as white gypsum, red vermilion and yellow gardenia (Quehuong, 2007). To strengthen the durability of the colours, the craftsmen often mixed colour paints with glue extracted from buffalo skin. Sinh painting is a genre of folk painting in Vietnam. This kind of painting is printed from folk woodblock painting for worshipping in Hue (Tran, 2009). Figure 1 displays example paintings of each style.

Among these lines of folk painting, Dong Ho folk painting had a flourished development period due to its own essence of great cultural values and unique. Together with the changes of the country and global trends, this line of folk painting is falling into oblivion and threatened to be disappeared, however, its cultural values remain forever and it is one of Vietnam's culture heritages always forever. Within this paper, we would like to introduce the exclusive values of Dong Ho folk painting and recommend some solutions to restore, develop this line of folk painting that is falling into oblivion.



Fig. 1: Example folk paintings of four styles (Dong Ho, Hang Trong, Kim Hoang and Sinh Village)

Distinctive values of Dong Ho folk painting

Concept of Dong Ho folk painting

Dong Ho painting (Tranh Dong Ho), full name Dong Ho folk woodcut painting (Tranh khắc gỗ dân gian Dong Ho) is a genre of Vietnamese woodcut painting originated from Dong Ho village in Bac Ninh Province, Vietnam. Dong Ho painting mainly reflect aspiration of a peaceful, happy and prosperous life by the common people. Dear animals in people's life, such as cow, pig, dog, cat and chicken are also depicted in a lot of paintings. On "Tet" (Lunar New Year) occasion, The painting is annually held in every family's

Table 1: Some types of Dong Ho Folk Painting

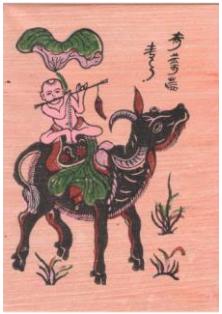
Type	Pictures	Name of picture	Used colors	Denote	Means
1		Bé bé rùa (Wisdom)	Skin Rea Green Black Yellow	+ Choppy baby: rich, wealthy, pureness + Turtle: 1-symbol of wisdom; 2-longevity	+ Advising people to live with ethical behaviors and wisdom + wishing to live as long as turtle + Vietnamese people are pure and closed to nature
2		Thánh Gióng (THANH GIONG)	Red Green Black Yellow White	+ The man riding horse: Thanh Gióng (also known as Phù Đổng Thiên Vương, is a mythical folk hero of Vietnam's history and one of The Four Immortals. The boy Gióng grows in size to be a giant hero, who rides on a iron horse leading the Văn Lang to victory against invaders) + The stick in Gióng's arm is a weapon to fight against enemy + Escaping soldier: foreign enemy	To praise the unity and bravery spirit of Vietnamese people
3		Thày đò cóc (Toad Master)	Red Green Black Yellow White	+ Toad: uncle of God + Tadpole: look like the Nôm letter of ancient Vietnam	To remind not to forget the ancestor

house in Dong Ho village, people bought the paintings and stuck them on the wall for displaying and replaced by the new ones until the next Lunar New Year coming. Hence, Dong Ho folk woodcut painting is also called "Tết painting" (Bach, 2011). Displaying Dong Ho painting on Tet occasion became an elegant hobby, a beautiful tradition of the people in Vietnam. Dong Ho woodblock carving appeared in 17th century and flourishedly developed until the early half of 20th century. The Tet painting are not just decorative but also contains dreams, wishes, hopes of beautiful and peaceful life by the common people. These dreams, hopes are simply expressed by common images but conveying humane messages. Therefore, the hidden contents on the folk painting are various and diversified.

Classification of Dong Ho folk painting

There are many ways to classify Dong Ho folk painting, but the classification is mainly done based on the meanings of paintings. Within this research, by surveying 100 samples, the author devided Dong Ho painting into 5 types: 1. Painting of Good luck wishes (29 paintings); 2. Painting of Historical figures (10 paintings); 3. Painting of Mythical stories (12 paintings); 4. Paintings of Social activities (40 paintings); 5. Worshipping paintings (13 paintings)

In the Table 1, we would like to analyze 5 typical paintings based on: name of paintings, colours used on the paintings, images, conveyed messages of paintings in order to categorize paintings into themes.

Type	Pictures	Name of picture	Used colors	Denote	Means
4		Mục đồng (Shepherd boy)	Pink Red Green Black	+ Buffalo: denoting the hard farming + shepherd boy: the hard working person + leaf of lotus: expressed the purity, clarity + Flute: is a family of musical instrument of the woodwind group + the meaning of Hán Nôm letters in the picture: the echo of flute to the sky	+ means that the tilling is not hard + Buffalo also heard the flute's sound, it means the shepherd boy and buffalo are felt very comfort → further meaning is the outlook on life of Vietnamese people are very optimistic and enjoyment of life
5		Táo quân (God in kitchen, which is folk beliefs in Vietnam and China)	White Red Green Black Orange	+ Goddess sitting in the middle is the god controlled the market. + The left of Goddess is the god look after the house + The right of Goddess is the god governs the kitchen + Below are the people who have wisdoms to their family	+ Praise the knot + Respect the sacrifice: on December 23 on the lunar calendar, the gods of kitchen reported to the Jade Emperor, and then return to the kitchen on December 30 of lunar calendar. + Will burn the paintings after offer sacrifices on December 23 of lunar calendar + The gods of kitchen gives homeowners the happiness and prosperity.

Distinctive values of Dong Ho Folk Painting

“Diệp” paper

Diệp paper is made from the bark of Dó tree. It is a kind of folk papers in Vietnam, often mentioned along with Dong Ho Folk Painting. To produce Do paper, the bark of Dó tree is boiled and soaked in lime water for a period of three months for removed blackened cover outside, the next is pounding with a mortar and pestle, and then uses the mucus from the tissue for creating adhesive mixtures. To treat on the paper, the workers used a sickle (made by the shape with bamboo blinds or thick copper fiber) dived in the pool of the adhesive mixtures. The powder on the sickle continues for the process with pressed, dried, compressed and rolled to flat by some tolls. Fibrous matter was tied together like a spider's web with many layers, it so called Dó paper. To strengthen its durability, seashells are grinded to ash then mixed with glutinous rice into glue, and then it is swept onto Do paper by using a pine-made broom. This process produces supple parallel lines and silvery lighting effects on the paper. Dó paper is very light but persistent and not being destroyed by insects, or being crunchy, crush or get moist. With these characters, it allows pen brush to be written on without blurs and its colours are kept for a long time. “Do” paper can last for 500 years! (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Papermaking process of Diep paper

Natural colors

As above analysis, most of the colors used in the painting are pink, red, yellow, orange, yellow, and green, white, black. By the site survey, we learned how to create the colors as following:

- ❖ White: the color of Diep paper. As mentioned above, Diep paper is made from Do paper with being covered by Diep glue. The sparkling white derived from the color of powder of seashells.
- ❖ Red: taken from brick Son is taken in Thien Thai Mountain (located in the province). Son red brick was grinded to ash then mixed with water into colorful water.
- ❖ Yellow: Made from Hoe and Danh Danh flowers. These flowers are roasted, grinded and then mixed with the glued into yellow color. The light yellow is created by roasting flowers in sufficient time and

- yellow chrome made by roasting followers longer time
- ❖ Green: created by mixing ash of Hoe flowers with Cham leaves. First, turquoise is produced by burning Cham leaves. Then it is mixed with powder of Hoe flowers to create light green otherwise dark green is produced.
- ❖ *Black: made by mixing the coal of burned bamboo leaves and water.

These are the basic colors, to create light or dark colors, just mix the colors together. Especially, those are not artificial colors but natural, refined from various materials that are easily found and very close to the people. Producing colors

is a difficult process; it needs to go through stages of color mixing, tracing and braking, which require craftsmen having the highly skilled professionals to create natural and bright colors. In additions, the way of mixing colors also depends on weather conditions and quality of paper. This depends on the experience, creativity or even the own traditional recipe of each artisan. Due to the sophisticated, careful stages of color production, Dong Ho folk painting is always bright and its colors keep over all the time. After printing completed, even when paintings become dry, viewers still see brilliance of the colors as it is wet. The shapes and parts of colors are naturally arranged harmoniously. The meanings and values of Dong Ho folk Painting are shown in Fig. 3.

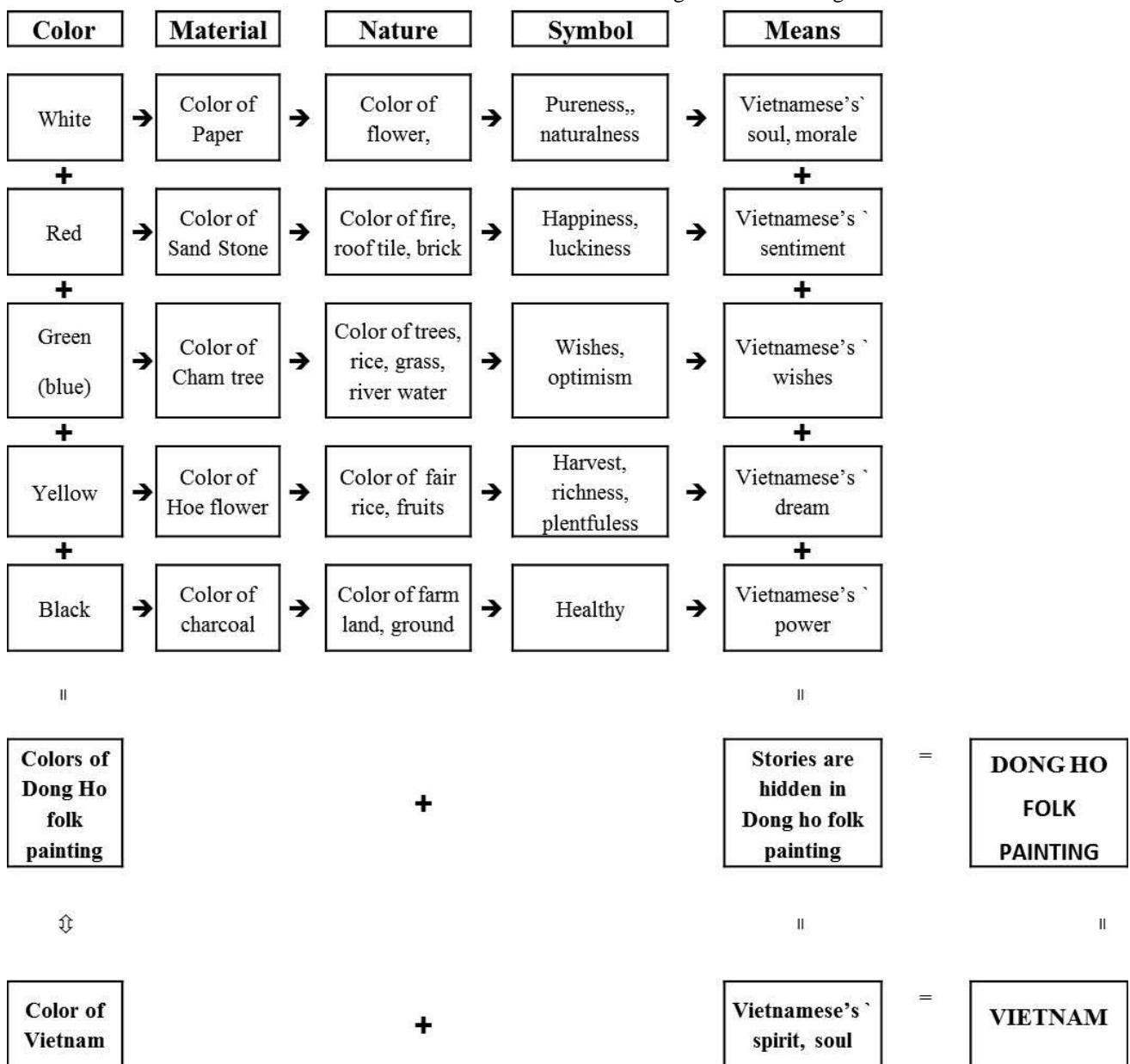


Figure 3: The meanings and values of Dong Ho Folk Painting

Diversity and plentiful contents

Displaying paintings in “Tet” festival days has become an elegant hobby, a beautiful custom of Vietnamese farmers in the old time. In the past, after harvest, to welcome New Year coming, people buy paintings and wait until the New Year Eve to hang on the wall to display for a year. New Year Festival is the biggest event of a year, so the folk painting with bright colors usually posted on the wall to make family’s atmosphere to become more boisterous, cozy and affluent in the New Year days. The “Tet” painting is used not only as a décor but also contains dreams, wishes, and hopes of beautiful and peaceful life of people. These dreams, hopes are simply expressed by common images but containing humane messages. Therefore, the hidden contents of the folk painting are various and diversified. It can be said that Dong Ho folk painting hides the beauty of Vietnamese soul. One of the reasons to make Dong Ho folk painting become famous and popular is its simple but intimacy themes to people.

Firstly, as many types of other folk forms of art in Vietnam, Dong Ho painting truthfully reflects the daily life of ordinary people. Their dreams, desires, feelings and perceptions of life can be found in the paintings. It can be said that Dong Ho painting portrays realistically the optimistic and peaceful life of people in Kinh Bac area, the homeland of many festivals – a civilized area with distinctive culture features of Northern of Vietnam: shepherding Boy, Wrestling, “Blindfold to catch goats” (Bịt Mắt Bắt Dê)... therefore, the sensitive matter as “Jealous” (Đánh Ghen) portrayed naturally and vividly in Dong Ho painting.

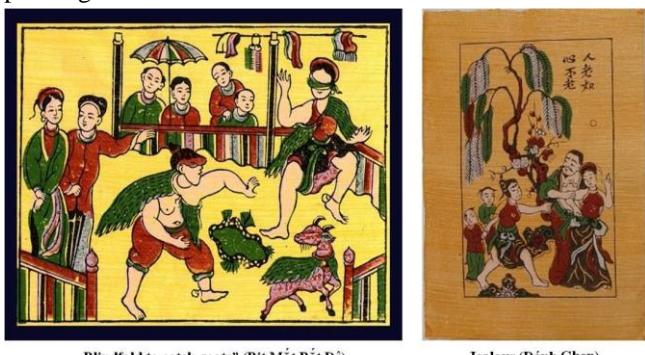


Fig. 4: Dong Ho paintings portrayed realistically the optimistic and peaceful life of Vietnamese people in Kinh Bac area

Secondly, desires, dreams of ordinary people hidden in the paintings are simple wishes of prosperous life as living, eating and dressing, strength to work and having many children: “Honors and Riches” (Vinh Hoa – Phú Quý), “Pigs” (Lợn đòn), “Chickens” (Gà đòn)....

The humanity of Vietnamese is also showed in Dong Ho painting that is: optimism, love of life and hope of a bright future always.



Fig. 5: Dreams of ordinary people hidden in the paintings

Techniques of printing

Dong Ho painting is not a simply drawn painting but it is absolutely printed by hand with woodblock of colors. There is one woodcut for outline and several others for each colours printed because the details of picture printed first then the outline. When printing, more lighting color woodcuts are stamped firstly then the dark colors. The more the variance between woodblocks is small the more the quality of paintings is high. After the details printed, a basic woodcut (black color) is used to make the outline for the picture. This outline woodcut creates bold, soft lines to define the shapes of painting. The final stage is to colorfully correct the pictures or “đò tranh”. There are 5 main colors in Dong Ho painting, normally, to print picture requires 5 engraved woodcuts, which are used for 5 times (Bach, 2011). The woodcuts are made from jackfruit wood (white color, highly durable and ductile character), which is suitable for small perforated lines. Each type of painting shows the style of individual family, most of woodcuts are differently made by each family in order to print the painting. To make the woodcuts at sophisticated level, it requires patterns drawn at first. The craftsmen who draw patterns and do engraving on board must have love of art, artistic soul, meticulous character and much experience as well as advanced skills. Thanks to this way, paintings are made in bulk and do not require sophisticated techniques. However, due to its handmade engraving on board, the painting is limited in dimension; normally its dimension is 22x31 cm.

Dong Ho folk painting serves as an intangible cultural heritage, a line of folk painting that is indispensable in folk knowledge treasure of Vietnam. Dong Ho painting has its own artistic materials that cannot be seen or used in any other line of paintings in Vietnam. Engraving, printing is both the traditional craftworks and forms of folk arts of Vietnam, which are well known all over the world. Values of painting and craftworks need to be preserved, promoted and widely popularized.



Figure 6: Techniques of printing Dong Ho Folk Painting

The recent status of Dong Ho Folk Painting Village

Generalization of Dong Ho folk painting village

Dong Ho is a small village in Bac Ninh province, 30 km far from Hanoi, located in the north bank of Duong river. Bac Ninh is the smallest village in Vietnam but it has many geographical advantages: belonging to Hong River valley with well-off and fat land; having many famous traditional craft villages (Dong Ky wood village, Dai Bai bronze casting village, Phu Lang pottery village, Van wine distilling village); having many historical and cultural relics (But Thap pagoda, Do temple) and homeland of many traditional festivals (Lim festival, Dau temple festival).

Though Dong Ho is a small village, it carries the full features of the province. Geographically, the location of Dong Ho village is convenient for transportation and tourism development: located on the route that both the National Highway 1A and 1B (Ha Noi - Lang Son) go through; beside the highway that links Noi Bai International Airport to Halong Bay (natural culture heritage of the world).

Recent status of Dong Ho village

Until the early of 20th century, there were a total of 20 families specializing in production of folk painting in Dong Ho village. Annually, by the end of July and the early of August, after the harvest, people often buy the paintings and prepare for Tet holiday, therefore the craft families are busy with making paintings until the end of the year. By the end of December and January (according to Luna calendar), Dong Ho folk painting was sold in every market in the village, province and people who came from other places flocked into to Dong Ho village to buy. However, through the fall and rise of the country, especially under the French colonist and impact of the wars, along with other traditional craft villages in the country, Dong Ho villagers could not keep going on production of the folk paintings but also their traditional craft could not be maintained due to their evacuation. Besides, due to impact of western culture,

people's taste of the folk painting has been changing, their custom of displaying Dong Ho folk painting during Tet occasion is going to be disappeared and replaced by western arts. Furthermore, due to a remarkable decline on the demand of consumption, Dong Ho villagers gradually stop making this kind of paintings. In addition, there is an interior conflict between the skilled craftsmen and non-skilled ones in the production of paintings, which leads to a competition in making and selling the paintings. For these subjective and objectives reasons, the painting production is interrupted and falling into oblivion.

Until 1954, when the peace was restored in the North of Vietnam, thanks to Vietnam's Communist Party and Government policies on restoration and protection of craft villages and culture heritages were focused, restoration and preservation work were carried. At the same time, the foreign relationships between Vietnam and other countries widely opened, export of paintings was begun. However, the production and consumption of the folk paintings met a lot of difficulties right after a short time. At that time, people mostly concentrated on making votive objects such as paper money, paper puppet, or even paper motorbikes, which helped them get a higher and soon income. Thus, most of Dong Ho villagers shifted into making votive objects and there were only two families of Nguyen Dang Che and Nguyen Huu Sam artisans upholding the production of this kind of paintings. Thanks to their love for folk arts and sense of traditional craft protection, the production of folk painting is not absolutely disappeared but its flickering existence seriously gives a signal of oblivion if restoration and preservation work is not focused.

On the verging of disappearance of a traditional handicraft village, Bac Ninh government and Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism puts Dong Ho folk painting on intangible culture heritage items at national level that should be restored and preserved. Since 2011, there have been many seminars, workshops are held to discuss the restoration, development as well as promotion of Dong Ho folk painting consumption, and however these still come to no end.

Necessary of protecting the unique village

Until now, Dong Ho folk painting is recognized as National Intangible Cultural Heritage. However, like many other traditional handicraft villages, Dong Ho folk painting village is threatened to disappear by the pressure of the market mechanism. Due to the development of technology, today many works of art or souvenirs are mass produced, which currently overwhelms traditional products. Statistically, Dong Ho Village in Song Ho Commune has more than 1,500 inhabitants with approximately 400 households. Of these, more than 200 households leave woodcut making in order to switch to producing and trading "votive objects" and there are only few families still cling to their work with the desire to preserve tradition of "the ancestor's leaving" (Bacninh, 2013). Besides, it is said that

many antique woodcuts have been damaged and got lost, however, as estimated; thousand of woodcuts are still kept by many families in the village.

In mid March of 2013, with the consent of the Prime Minister of Vietnam, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in collaboration with the People's Committee of Bac Ninh province and the specialized agencies conducted preliminary studies, and established the scientific documents for Dong Ho Folk Painting. Then a proposal to recognize Dong Ho folk painting as Intangible Cultural Heritage submitted to UNESCO. This is the premise as well as the opportunity to develop and reserve the unique cultural values of the country. (Bacninh, 2013).

Accordingly, in order to preserve and promote the cultural values of this precious line of painting, the People's Committee of Bac Ninh has approved the project "Protection and promotion of National Intangible Cultural Heritage - Dong Ho folk painting, period from 2014 to 2020 and orientation to 2030 with a total budget of nearly 60 billion Vietnam dong (Green Heritage, 2014). The scheme has been developed with the aim of confirming the outstanding values of Dong Ho folk painting; determines the current status and future risks to this line of painting; awareness and actions of local government and communities in protecting and promoting cultural values of Dong Ho folk painting; propagate and introduce Dong Ho folk painting to the world, and complete the scientific documents to submit to the UNESCO.

Some solutions for the development of Dong Ho folk painting village

Creating cultural tourism products from Dong Ho Village

The culture-tourism product is a combined word that is a combination of culture products and tourism products. Culture products are "spirit products created by human during the history progress of development to serve human life and satisfy various purposes and demands by individuals, community. Tourism products are to serve various types of tourists and culture products are used in this kind of business creates culture-tourism products". Based on the understanding of cultural tourism products, we would suggest as below:

+ Building Dong Ho Reservation Center

Based on the above analysis, the author would like to propose to build up a reservation house for Dong Ho folk paintings named "*Dong Ho Reservation Center*" to reconstitute Kinh Bac old time right at Dong Ho village with aiming to serve domestic and foreign tourists. Within this house, 5 background colors that used in printing paintings are used to define spatial color frame. The restoration house contains various rooms: for introducing history and displaying materials, tools of paintings production; room of painting production; room for displaying and introducing

painting products and room for tourists to make paintings by themselves. Also, vocational training classes set up into the house to train people who have demand to learn about painting production and for students to have opportunities to make paintings by themselves. Room for introducing and displaying painting products can be arranged by subjects as following: Beauty and happiness, Heroes, Mythical, Settings of Vietnam countryside.

Building a reservation house helps not only mustering all craftsmen into an organization to protect the traditional craftwork, stimulating people who meet financial difficulties to come back to painting production but also raising income to the villagers. When the tours combined with local activities, it can attract more visitors to visit and sell more products.

+ Defining the date and organizing Dong ho folk painting festival

It can be said that festival is a "live gallery". Defining a date and organizing Dong Ho folk painting festival will be an event to advertise the distinctive artistic values of Dong Ho folk painting and remind people to remember of a kind of folk art. Organizing this festival or bringing back "Tet" paintings market is to attract tourists. This is also to restore a hobby of displaying "Tet" painting.

Using characters, colours of painting to make souvenirs

Products used in daily life: adding pictures of lotus, chicken...., to wallets, keys hooks, ceramics, and business card box.

- (1) Jewelry: engraving patterns on rings, neck chains, wrist-rings, jewelry boxes.
- (2) Study utensils: printing images on notebooks, notes, pen boxes.
- (3) Applying images into fashion design: printing paint on Ao Dai, embroidering on ties, shirts or handkerchiefs....
- (4) Applying into toy production: producing cotton barbies with characters of Dong Ho paintings (boy holding a chick or duck....)
- (5) Applying into wrapping production for foods: boxes of Moon cakes, Chung cake, "Phu The" cake, and wrappings of other foods of daily consumption.

Making tour schedules

Local government and the village should make plan for Dong Ho Village to be a destination for tourists. However, Dong Ho village is just a point of one day tour, so we suggest combining Dong Ho village with other destinations nearby for a day tour.

Here we suggest one and multi-day tours:

Tour No. 1: Hanoi - Bat Trang Pottery Village (Hanoi) – Dong Ho Painting Village (Bac Ninh Province) - Dong Ky Wood Village (Bac Ninh Province) (one day tour by car).

- Tour No. 2: Hanoi – Dâu Pagoda – Dong Ho Painting Village – Phat Tich Pagoda – Đô temple
- Tour No.3: Hanoi - Đô temple – Phù Lâng Pottery Village – Thô Hà Village
- Tour No.4: Hanoi - Phat Tich pagoda - Dong Ho Painting Village - Halong Bay (multi-days tour)
- Tour No.5: Hanoi - Phat Tich pagoda - Dong Ho Painting Village – Cát Bà Island (Haiphong Province) (multi-days tour)

Education

Enhancing the public awareness of historical and cultural values of the folk painting as well as traditional craft village; improving intellectual standards and knowledge for people who get involved in painting production; artistic education for craftsmen aiming to create the fine products; selecting and improving knowledge for tour guides.

For artisans and training painters

Launching movement to restore the folk handicraft village, granting titles for artisans. Government and local authorities should financially support for artisans to study and research the materials in production in order to enhance competitiveness. Open training classes for the artisans to train and impart their own skills

Outbound and inbound advertisement

- Building a restoration house in combination with tours
- Organizing the folk paintings festival
- Setting up media and online sale channels
- Publishing publications to introduce the folk paintings, handicraft village to advertise in tours, fairs
- Advertisements on media channels
- Promoting export of the folk paintings, widening its consumption market

Conclusion

Dong Ho folk painting carries its features of pictography, categorized into graphical arts of Vietnamese common people. Its contents and themes are various and diversified, which realistically reflect Vietnamese philosophy of life and world view. In other words, Dong Ho folk painting truthfully shows the beauty of Vietnamese characters and souls. In term of forms, Dong Ho folk painting is unique in printing technique, which is traditionally made by hand, color mixing method of naturally refined materials bearing

the bold mark of Kinh Bac area, using Diep paper with the beautiful and silver lighting effects. Though, through many historical rise and fall, Dong Ho folk painting has had some changes of its contents, the village's painting production is falling into oblivion and there are only two families still maintain the craftwork, its distinctive values remain forever. Though it is on the verge of sinking into oblivion, the government and local authorities early define solutions in order to reserve and develop as well as to revive a distinctive culture heritage of Vietnam. As mentioned above, all the proposed solutions are feasible because Dong Ho folk painting carries its own priceless values, additionally; Dong Ho was ever the biggest center of the folk painting production in Vietnam. Dong Ho village location is very convenient for transportation, having potentialities for culture exchanges and economic development, especially tourism development because it has many cultural festivals and historical relics. Dong Ho folk painting is a spiritual unique product of Vietnam's culture and arts, an invaluable asset, therefore, reserving and developing Dong Ho folk painting also means protecting national asset.

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