Traditional crafts play an important role in the socio-economic life of the people. They do not only reflect the historical, economic and aesthetic development but also represent significant cultural values of the nation. However, some of the craft products using the traditional techniques and materials have been diminishing. What can we do and how can we preserve and promote traditional crafts?

The revitalization of traditional crafts is not an easy task, especially in the present market economy where traditional crafts produced by traditional materials and techniques are competing with the quicker and cheaper production of standard, mass-produced crafts. So which approach should be taken to promote and develop traditional crafts? What should be preserved? What should be changed? Is it possible to apply modern technology? If applicable, what should be applied? In order to address these questions, the craftspeople need to have the knowledge and expertise of the traditional skills and techniques alongside an innate understanding of the history, economy, aesthetic and techniques.

The Vietnam Museum of Ethnology (VME), which was established in 1995 and opened in Hanoi in 1997, is the premier museum and research center in Vietnam for documenting and bringing to life the rich cultural heritage of the nation’s 54 ethnic groups and that of our neighboring peoples in Southeast Asia.

Since the earliest days of its establishment, Vietnam Museum of Ethnology has been concerned about how to preserve and develop the culture heritage, especially traditional craft by many different ways.

I/ “Craft in the Classroom” project

In 1990, UNESCO Paris initiated the Project on “Arts and Crafts Awareness Workshop-classes” in France to make arts and crafts known to and appreciated by youth through weekly visits to craft workshops. Since its inception, the “Crafts in the Classroom” Project has been successfully
implemented with its various names in a number of countries including: Ghana, Guatemala, Nepal, etc.

At the beginning of 2002, funded and assisted by UNESCO Hanoi Office, Vietnam Museum of Ethnology conducted preliminary research and identified five craft villages in Hanoi and its adjacent areas which are on the verge of extinction. Further research on these five traditional crafts was conducted with the aim to teach the traditional crafts to the school children because the most effective way to encourage the artistic creativeness to preserve the traditional crafts is through the education of the children.

Based on the results of the research (2002-2003), pottery from Phu Lang Village, Que Vo Commune, Bac Ninh Province was selected as the first traditional craft to be introduced to the school children.

The selection of crafts for the classroom activities fulfill the following criteria:
- The craft must be suitable for children
- It should not be too easy for children to complete, but should have some degree of complexity that the children have to work through.
  - It must have historical value
  - It must have aesthetic values
  - It has economic potential
  - Traditional materials and techniques should still be used in the production of the craft
  - It has the potential to produce modern and innovative products based on traditional techniques and available materials

**What was taught in this traditional craft class?**

1. A training workshop for research and documentation skills was opened for children. The content of the training include the following aspects:
   - Working in groups
   - Collection of information and its documentation (interview question and observation)
   - Activities that encourage logical thinking, discussion and illustration skills
   - Activities that foster exchanges between the children, craftspeople and master artists
   - Activities that encourage creative thinking, observation, note taking and the conveyance of this information.

   During the training workshop, the facilitators always observe and identify the talents and abilities of each student. Then they have a short meeting to review and evaluate each of these daylong sessions
2. Organizing the first trip to visit the pottery village for children after the training session

- To give the children an overview of the traditional craft
- To encourage the children to collect and document information on the traditional craft using different techniques such as note-taking, illustration, drawing, taking photos, collecting samples (materials, tools and products)

Children were divided into 3 groups according to the number of workstations to be visited. Each group was divided into three subgroups based on different tasks as: researching, interview, illustration.

After the field trip, the students gathered at the museum to rewrite and redraft the information that they had collected at the craft village. Based on their noted information each group designed a poster that introduced their workstation. Facilitators analyzed, evaluated and commented on each poster made by the students. When the students were working on their writing and designing poster processes, the facilitator observed and identified three or four students who were accomplished in drawing and design; the three best students at researching; and the three best students in interviewing. They would work together on development of the workshop poster and brochure at the third stage.

3. Workshop classes-basic skills

After the first field visit to the village/workshop, the craftspeople and master craftspeople were invited to the museum to teach the students. The workshop was divided into 3 periods.

In the first period all students came together in one class to learn the basic skills.

Following this, the students learn new designs and how to create new products. Students were divided into two groups. One group studied the traditional skills and techniques, other group studied designs. Then, those studying traditional skills and techniques will study designs and vice versa.

After the students had mastered basic skills (one month), they moved onto the second stage. Based on their skills, ability and interest, the facilitators divided the students into 2 groups: the technical group and the design group. In the following weeks, the two groups learned intensively. The design group learned design techniques and skills, while the technical group studied the techniques of making the craft products in depth (however, to avoid boredom, the groups were changed sometimes to study the other skills).

4. Second field trip and museum visit

In the second field trip to the pottery village, the students were divided into 3 groups: technical group, design group and documentation.
group. The technical group will record all shapes and models of craft products. The design group will record all the design and patterns.

Before the second field trip, facilitators selected students who were best at drawing and writing, to work in the documentation group (including the members of the technical and design groups). The documentation group would review the documents collected from the last field visit by their classmates, find out what is missing and collect more information during this trip.

**The visit to History Museum and Vietnam Museum of Ethnology:**
- To give students an overview of the history and development of the traditional craft village throughout history and its importance in social and economic life.
- To help students understand the evolving patterns and designs throughout history; and the traditional Vietnamese decorative patterns.

So the technical group would be able to create craft products with new and diversified shape and models. The design group would create new design patterns. The product made by the students would be a combination of traditional and modern.

### 5. Workshop classes specialized skills
After the students have mastered specific skills and visit the history museum and village a second time, they move on to the third stage. In this stage, the students design and create the various craft products with diversified patterns and designs.

The technical group will make the products with new shapes and models using their own ideas but based on traditional models.

The design group will decorate the products made by the technical group using their own imagination based on traditional decorative motifs.

The documentation group (including the members of the technical and design groups) will spend two extra days per week to work on designing the posters, brochures and invitations.

These products were used for the exhibition at the end of the craft workshop.

### 6. Documentation development
The researchers and interviewers in the documentation group rewrite all the documents of the craft workshop. The facilitators helped to edit and revise these documents. Then students selected the content to be put in the posters and brochures.

The drawers and illustrators in the documentation group chose the class drawing that they would use to illustrate for the text.

Each student presented their design idea on A3 paper. The facilitators assisted and instructed them on how to present the design so that it could...
best express their ideas. The students would then have to review and give comments on the work of their peers and discuss the design they like best. They then decided on the final version for the design of the whole group.

The students presented the content of the documents and the drawing on the A0 paper based on the selected design.

**What benefit children and craft people got from the project**

1. **For children**
   - Raising the awareness and understanding of the historical, economic and aesthetic values of crafts
   - Bringing the dream of making pottery to children, creating new generations of artists in the future:
     + Understanding the historical, economic, and aesthetic values of the crafts.
     + Understanding traditional material and traditional skills and the use of these skills for their job orientation and create new products based on the traditional values.

   “Before studying pottery making, I did not think that to make one pottery product you have to go through so many steps. I was impressed by what I saw at Ms. Phuong’s and Mr. Nhung’s workshops. I was surprised that there were such beautiful products. Therefore I would like to learn pottery so that I can be a master artist in the future. Taking part in this program helps me a lot with my art subject at school.” (Ngo Manh Cuong, 7 grade student, at SOS Orphanage Village, 2003)

   “My dream is to become a pottery master artist in the future, and I will return to the pottery village to enhance and promote this traditional craft.” (Do Duy Hoa, 6 grade student, Tan Dinh Secondary School, 2003)

   “When I first started learning to work with the wheel, my hands were not very flexible. Ms. Phuong and Ms. Lan had to hold my hands and showed me very slowly and carefully. Now I can make one pottery product all by myself. My dream is to become a master artist like Mr. Nhung and to set up my own workshop.” (Hoang Thi Ly, 8 grade student, SOS Orphanage Village, 2003)

   “Through this program, I have learnt the basic skills about pottery making. If I have the opportunity in the future, I would like to learn more and become successful as Mr. De, Mr. Nhung, Ms. Lan, Ms. Phuong and Mr. Bay. In the future I would like to set up my own workshop.” (Ha The Thao, 6 grade student, Thuc Nghiem School, 2003)

   “This class is very meaningful. Children are very creative now, if we have the right approach to educate them, Vietnam will have a generation of master artists like Mr. Nhung and will have many diversified styles.” (Mr. Le Trong Doan, Pottery Master Artist, Hanoi, 2004)
- With children who may follow a different path in their future employment, the project encourages new ways of learning, new ways of thinking which can be applied in their chosen field.

“After the intense lessons at school, I was lucky to attend the pottery class organized by Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and UNESCO. The pottery lessons are very interesting and useful. I am very happy because I can make pretty pottery products by myself, using my own creative ideas and what I have learned from Mr. Nhung, Mr. Doan and Ms. Phuong. I liked every lesson, I am very happy!” (Hua Truc Quynh, 8 grade student, Le Quy Don Seconderay School, 2003)

“The pottery class offered us the opportunity to go to the new places that are different from what I see everyday. The knowledge that I gained from the pottery class can be applied to my home village in Bat Trang - such as how to use the clay, the enamel... I like the red and yellow enamel in Phu Lang. I would like to continue to study classes like this because it offers new method of learning, learning and playing and meeting many new friends.” (Bui Hoa Ha, 6 grade student, Thuc Nghiem Secondary School, 2003)

- Creating new generations of customers for traditional crafts in the future.

“I hope people will see that behind the beautiful products made by the students, behind our efforts are the craftspeople and the master artists who helped us to learn pottery and the traditional arts of the Vietnamese. We would like to convey our sincere thanks to Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and UNESCO who have organized such a wonderful class!” (Le Tuyet Lan, 8 grade student, Le Quy Don School, 2003)

“Pottery making is an art that has a long culture of Vietnam. Learning to make pottery products challenges your creativity skill.” (Pham Xuan Hung, 7 grade student, Le Quy Don School, 2003)

- Through their contacts with the craftspeople, the children also understand and appreciate more the culture heritage and tradition of the country and hence will promote the development of the traditional crafts.

“I would like to thank my father for allowing me to attend this class. My father told both of us, my brother and I: I allow you to attend this class so that you can preserve the Vietnamese traditions.” (Ha Thien Can, 3 grade student, Thuc Nghiem School, 2003)

“In the future I may become a pottery craft person or I may work in the cultural sector. At the moment I can not decide my future, but what I have learnt here helps me understand more about a Vietnamese traditional craft and I can tell my friends about the beauty of the traditional craft that is on the verge of extinction.” (Bui Thi Quyet, 8 grade student, at SOS Orphanage Village, 2003)
2. For craft village, craftspeople, artist

Phu Lang pottery village, in Bac Ninh Province is a traditional craft village that has the history of nearly 600 years. Before 19th century, Phu Lang pottery achieved major developments. The decoration is mainly eel/skin-colored enamel. One of most famous products of 18th century is the incense burner. From 1959 to 1986, under subsidy economy, Phu Lang craftspeople join in pottery cooperative. In 1987, with the introduction of the market mechanism, the pottery cooperative was dissolved. The craftspeople left it and starting to work at that household’s scale. Phu Lang traditional product were jars, kettles for medicine decoction, small pots, mortar… Urns and sarcophagus appeared only about 20 years ago but were provided to all northern Vietnam market. These products do not require many high skill, but require person’s physical strength. So price of products were very cheap, income of craftspeople was very low. Many craftspeople quitted their craft and went to the South to be vendors. Others are engaged in agriculture or hires by the households who still continuing the occupation, are lack of labors. Since 1998, one – third of the households have quit the job. In 2002, the number of kilns and the frequency of kiln firing reduced 17% compared to 2001.

In 2002, Vietnam Museum of Ethnology organized the demonstration about the pottery of Viet, Cham, Thai. Mr. Vu Huu Nhung was born in 1975 in Phu Lang, graduated from sculpture department, Industrial Fine Arts University, won special price from the British Council for the “Golden Hands” contest in January 2001; Mr. Pham Van Bay, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Phuong, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Lan were invited to demonstrate in VME. Many visitor including trader started be interested in Phu Lang pottery. “After demonstration in VME, I recognized that Phu Lang pottery can develop. So when I came back village, I decided to establish a workshop. First, with only two craftspeople. In March 2003, I set up a new workshop with more than 20 craftspeople” (Mr. Vu Huu Nhung, 28 years old, Phu Lang artist, 2003)

- After the “Craft in the Classroom” project, all craftspeople understand that they need to find new direction for their craft and have some idea how to develop their job from the creative work of students in class

“Before participating in this project, my hair were very black because I only made what product my parents and grandparent taught me. Now my hair are whiter because I always think how to make new products. After teaching in museum, I saw my craft could develop. I want my son will continue my trade but I understand that he need to have knowledge as Hanoi children in craft class” (Pham Van Bay, 46 years old, Phu Lang craftspeople, 2007)
- Through children and their products, the project encourages craftspeople to develop and create new products and to believe that they can do that.

“After the demonstration in VME in 2002, I thought our craft would have chance to develop but I didn’t know how to do. But after teaching children in craft class of VME, I thought children could make wonderful pottery product, I have good skills why I couldn’t do that, I had to do some new thing” (Pham Van Bay, 46 years old, Phu Lang craftspeople, 2007)

- Craftspeople have more skills to transmit their craft to the young generation and can use these skills to train for their staff later

“I was very happy when Phu Lang pottery was chosen by UNESCO to teach the children. The children were very enthusiastic and motivated, more than the children in our pottery village. In my village, children usually start learning pottery at the age of 14, but here in this class, many children are much younger but after 3 months they are very skillful. If they go through official training, they will be excellent. I hope that Phu Lang pottery will be revived and it will develop further.” (Ms. Nguyen Thi Phuong, 28 years old, Phu lang craftspeople, 2003)

- Craftspeople understand the importance of using natural materials, protecting the environment and creating new products but they still depend on tradition.

- Newspaper and television programs about the pottery class were produced. A film about the class was presented in the museum, and also an exhibition of the children’s pottery products and their documentation about the pottery craft, the pottery village and craftspeople which introduced Phu Lang pottery to Vietnamese and foreigners.

At first, the project only required that after class the children could make products themselves and could make brochures to introduce about craft village or craft class. But then I had an idea to let the children make panels with texts and illustrations about craft, crafts village, craftspeople, and to organize an exhibition of the children’s products. Thus, children and craftspeople would be more proud of their work and would want to come back to the traditional crafts. Craftspeople would have to think about their job and make changes when they saw the children’s products. Children from other schools would want to join in class when they visit the exhibition. Depending on the information of exhibition about craftspeople, traders would go to the pottery village to buy their products.

And here are portraits of craftspeople who participated in the project:

In 2004, Mr. Vu Huu Nhungh developed his workshop to be a company with 110 craftspeople in Phu Lang village. He focuses on household art
products and construction art. Now he has 3 showrooms in Hanoi, 1 showroom in Ho Chi Minh city and he has started to export Phu Lang pottery products to Southern Europe, America, Japan.

In 2005, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Phuong opened a pottery workshop with 12 craftspeople. She focuses on household art products. In 2006, she exported some vases and jars to Korea. In 2007, she started to export to Australia.

Before pottery demonstration in 2002 in VME, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Lan quit her job but after demonstration she returned to work for Mr. Vu Huu Nhung. And after she participated in the craft class in 2003, 2004 in VME, she opened pottery workshop with 5 craftspeople in 2005.

“I quitted making pottery products few years ago because of the low income and tough work. But now, when I teach the students, I find it very exciting and I would like to preserve the traditional skills” (Mrs. Nguyen Thi Lan, 35 years old, Phu Lang craftspeople, 2003).

In 2004, Mr. Pham Van Bay opened a pottery workshop with 7 craftspeople. Most of his products are sold in Hanoi city. His wife, son, daughter, and son in law also join in his workshop. Before the project, he planned for his son to go to military school, but now he hopes that his son can continue his craft and can go to Industrial Fine Art University “My son has very good skill and he is very creative. I see my craft can develop, so I want my son have more knowledge and continue my trade”. After seeing exhibition about product of city children, Pham Van Trung – Mr. Bay’s son (12th grade student now, 2007) created many beautiful products “I feel very proud of our village craft and want to make wonderful product as Hanoi children. I also want to open a pottery company as Mr. Nhung”. And he will be new generation of artist in Phu Lang village.

Mr. Bui Quy Sang and Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Do graduated from Industrial Fine Art School. They worked for Mr. Nhung and took part in the project “Craft in Classroom” in 2004. Now they also opened separately new workshops in 2006 after leaving the workshop of Mr. Nhung. They also want to create their own pottery style.

“Accept Mr. De died, all of us who taught in craft class are also successful in our job. The class encouraged us to keep and develop our craft” (Mrs. Nguyen Thi Phuong, 32 year old, Phu Lang craftspeople, 2007)

“Our products now have higher values, so our income also is much higher. Making old product, our income was only 600.000-700.000VND. But now with traditional materials, techniques, but new style and design our income is 5.000.000VND-6.000.000VND per month. Salary for employee is about 1.200.000VND-1.500.000VND” (Mr. Pham Van Bay, 46 years old, Phu Lang craftspeople, 2007)
The changes and development of Mr. Vu Huu Nhung and these craftspeople influenced Phu Lang village. Nowadays, there are 1 big pottery company (Mr. Vu Huu Nhung), 2 small companies, 7 pottery workshops in Phu Lang village. Many traders have opened Phu Lang pottery shops in Hanoi and Hochiminh city. But finding a market for their products is still difficult for Phu Lang people.

**II/ Other teaching intangible cultural heritage programs**

1. **Teaching to make and to play traditional toys and games**

   In Vietnam, there are many traditional toy craft villages. But nowadays, there are so many plastic toys and many computer games and very small space for traditional games and toys. That's why many toy making villages and toy makers disappeared. But these crafts do not have the degree of complexity that the children have to work through. So we cannot open a craft class for the children but in 2002, I had the idea to organize a special event for children for the Mid-Autumn Festival to make children return to a love of traditional toys and to help restore toy-making crafts.

   At the first we researched all procession of making toy, took photograph and learned to make toys, then we chose what steps in process can be taught to the children, which age is suitable for making different kind of toys, how long it will take to teach the children. Then we ordered craftspeople to make traditional toys for exhibition and for selling. Especially, we asked them to prepare materials and tools for demonstration and make half-finished toys (the parts which children can not make) and materials for children completing the toy in museum.

   During 2 festival days we divided the museum staffs and volunteers into many toy guiding groups. After seeing the exhibition and demonstration of toy-making, they will choose the toy they like, then they bought the materials in the shop next to the demonstration area for making whatever toys they like. Then they would bring the materials to the craftspeople or museum staff or volunteers for learning how to make the toy. Many parents also joined with us to teach their children making the toys.

   Children and their parents liked the program very much. So many other organizations and institutions in Vietnam organized similar programs for children in Hanoi city and Hochiminh city. Toy makers can sell their products and continue their trade. So each year, some traditional toys have returned to the market in Middle Autumn Festival.

   In this way our program has had a good influence and change in Vietnamese society and has made a good contribution to preservation and development of traditional culture. So after that every year we have continued to research new toy crafts for the program.
And we also recognize that cultural practice is the best way not only for children, but also for adults to learn about culture.

When we organized a drawing competition about the Mid-Autumn Festival, one child explained his picture: “I draw the beauty of Hanoi city with many new buildings, electric and very modern but children still play with traditional toys”

2. A pilot project to build methods to integrate Hanoi intangible cultural heritage in natural science subjects in secondary school

From 2005, with the suggestion and advice of Dr. Frank Proschan of the Smithsonian Institute (now with UNESCO), we built a pilot project to develop methods to integrate Hanoi intangible cultural heritage in natural science subjects in secondary school and to use cultural heritage as an experimental tool, and also to raise the cultural practices for educating in school. We integrated the 8th grade physics lesson of “floating with water puppet”, the 8th grade physics lesson of “Radiation with shadow lantern”, the 9th grade chemistry lesson of “Canxi Hydroxide (lime) with betel nut” and the 9th grade chemistry lesson of “silica and silicate industry with pottery”.

3. Textile class

In 2005, using the experience from the pottery class, I had an idea to create a textile class. In this class we taught children some decorative techniques of Viet, Thai and Hmong people, to help them to understand and recognize the designs and costumes of different ethnic groups in Vietnam. Then, students used these techniques and knowledge to make paper dolls and cloth dolls in traditional costumes of some of the 54 ethnic groups and used decorative techniques to make new products. After the class we also organized an exhibition about the class and children’s products. The class lasted 2 months, but did not require as much money as the pottery class. So we could open the class without external funding because the children can pay for participating. So in summer 2006, we continued to open another class for children and developed more decorative techniques for the class.

_Hanoi 19/2/2007_

Tran Thi Thu Thuy