

**VIETNAM NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY
A PLACE TO PRESERVE THE NATIONAL CULTURAL VALUES AND A
BRIDGE FOR COMMUNITY: ROLES AND CHALLENGES**

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Vietnam National Museum of History

Vietnam in the context of globalization

Globalization is an objective trend, which has been strongly influencing every aspect of the social life of nations. Along with the development of science, technology and knowledge economy, globalization not only has a huge influence on the economic field, but also on the fields of politics, society and culture, especially on the field of culture. International integration requires us to open and interact with the global community in order to receive and absorb innovative cultural values. However, a nation will no longer be itself if it loses its cultural and national identity. International integration and preservation of national cultural identity are two unified sides, closely related to each other. Therefore, it is essential for Vietnam to be aware of this issue for performing the task of preserving, promoting the traditional values of the nation in particular and developing the country in general.

Characteristics of Vietnamese culture

The process of historical development, cultural and national identity has created an intense vitality, which helps the Vietnamese people to constantly existed and develop in the region and the international arena. It is emphasized in several directives and resolutions, that "sustainable values, and quintessence of the community of Vietnamese ethnic groups, which have been cultivated throughout the thousands-of-year history of founding and defending the country ". It is the passionate patriotism, national self-reliant will, unity of mind and community sense of connecting individuals, families, villages and nation; compassion, tolerance, respect for love and moral standards; industriousness and creativity at work, behavioral subtlety, simplicity in lifestyle, etc. Cultural and national identity is also clearly shown in the forms of expression that manifest the national and unique characteristics. Thanks to the strength of these traditional values, Vietnam has overcome many tough challenges, natural disasters, enemy and sabotage to survive

and develop as it is today. To preserve and promote the nation's cultural identity, it is necessary for us to protect, inherit and develop those beautiful spiritual values first.

Vietnam National Museum of History - A place to preserve the national cultural values.

Vietnam National Museum of History is a top museum in the Vietnamese museum system, which introduces the process of formation and development of Vietnamese history from prehistoric times to the present day. Currently, more than 200,000 documents and objects containing message of the past and the historical values of Vietnamese culture are preserved in the Museum.

The first exhibition part that presents form of Vietnamese national culture is the display of Early States Building Period (around the centuries BC and AD) that is also the period of foundation, creating Vietnamese cultural identity. This display introduces 3 cultural centers, which are Dong Son culture (in the North) - the foundation of Vietnamese cultural tradition, Sa Huynh culture (in the Central region) and Dong Nai (in the South) that contribute to the formation and development of Vietnamese cultural unified in diversity.

Vietnam from the 1st to the 10th century which presents the North Vietnam under the domination of Northern feudal dynasties (China). With the assimilation policy of China, Vietnamese people had to preserve the national cultural tradition, fight for national independence while acquire the quintessence of human culture for the later developments.

Vietnam from the 10th century to the mid-20th century, when the country entered the period of autonomy and independence, the Vietnamese feudal states were formed and focused on strengthening the government, building and developing the country in the political, economic and cultural fields, etc. Particularly, in the Ly - Tran dynasty (11th - 14th centuries), national culture was revived and developed, especially in the culture (Buddhist culture). Under the Le Dynasty (15th - 17th centuries), trade and commerce in the region and the world developed, which made Vietnam become a powerful country in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the Vietnamese culture was also exchanged and developed strongly with countries of Asia and the world. Besides, during this period, many resistance wars against foreign invaders to gain independence and territorial integrity

took place such as: resistance against Mongol-Yuan (13th century), Ming invaders (15th century), Qing (18th century), etc.

Vietnam from the mid-20th century to the present day. This is the period when Vietnamese people experienced the two great resistance against the French colonialists and the American imperialist. After these resistance wars, the people has been constructing the country, absorbing Western culture, building Socialism, conducting innovation and developing the country.

Throughout the process of founding and defending the country, the tradition of patriotism, solidarity, industriousness and creativity at work, and simplicity in the lifestyles of every Vietnamese people has been cultivated. While absorbing Chinese, Indian, Southeast Asian and Western cultural quintessences, Vietnamese people preserved and developed their cultural identity and continue to enrich the national culture. These values, which have been built up throughout the thousands-of-year history, have made the characteristic of Vietnamese culture become unified in diversity.

The diversity of Vietnamese culture is also reflected in the cultural richness of 54 ethnic groups living together in the nation's territory with different languages, customs, beliefs and behaviors. The diversity is also expressed through various local and region cultures such as the Northwest Region; the Northeast; plains and midlands in the North; Central region; highland region; Southern region, or "cultural regions": North, Central and South.

Vietnamese cultural unity is expressed as all ethnic groups participate in building and defending the Vietnamese. Throughout the process of overcoming natural disasters, enemies and sabotage, the people have fostered the patriotic tradition, solidarity, diligence and creativity, which forms a great Vietnamese family. Today, Vietnamese people are continuing to preserve and promote that precious values in national construction and development

The roles of Vietnam National History of Museum through activities of connecting communities.

In the current development trend, the functions of the Museum not only include scientific research and education but also entertainment, knowledge enrichment, sharing and meeting place... for the public. Mr. Peter Kaufman - an American museological expert is working as an exhibition consultant for the Late President Ton Duc Thang

Museum (Vietnam), assessed that most museums in Vietnam are operated in the traditional way, and the exhibitions are in a rut, not lively and creative enough to attract the public. He also highlighted that "What the community cares about is the connection not only between people and people but also between people and artifacts. The museums act as a catalyst to create a connection, sympathy and understanding among people". In fact, the Vietnam National Museum of History is performing the same roles, particularly a place to preserve and promote national cultural values, a bridge (between past- present, old - young generation) and a place for the public to share and connect, regardless of ethnicity, nation, region or social positions that not every institution can do. Vietnam National Museum of History also plays an important role in leading the Vietnamese generations to identify and recognize the role of national cultural identity. Therefore, we can build up Vietnamese culture and people to achieve comprehensive development, towards the truth - good - beauty, imbued with the spirit of nationalism, humanity, democracy and science. Not only is it of great cultural significance but also a political task to strengthen the great national unity. On the other hand, in the context of opening up and integration, preserving and promoting the values of cultural heritage has created resistance and a resource for socio-economic development. Being aware of that importance, in recent years, the museum has promoted all tasks such as research, collection, preservation, exhibition, education, communication, etc. As a result, the Museum has obtained significant achievements, such as researching and collecting documents and objects; adding more information for the collections stored and displayed at the museum; conserving objects carefully to ensure the source of objects for the display; especially through exhibitions, education and communication as detailed below:

+ *The Exhibition*: there has been extensive cooperation to hold exhibitions in domestic and foreign countries. Therefore, it creates opportunities to promote more values, understand each other, recognize cultural values and enable to understand the cultural characteristics of Vietnam. The more domestic and foreign exhibitions are organized, the more the public visit the value of artifacts.



Dai Viet's Nations and Capital Cities through the ages



The special exhibition "Treasures of Vietnam's archaeology" at Reiss-Engelhorn Museums in Mannheim, Germany

+ *The Education*: Technology has been applied in activities of display and introduction to help the public better understand the value of documents and artifacts stored in the Museum. Expanded educational programs, particularly the "I love history" club and "Historical lessons" held in museums and provinces across the country are very well developed in recent years. This model that Vietnam National Museum of History has well coordinated and effectively guided localities to implement has attracted many children, pupil, students.



Secondary School pupils took part in the Historical Class at VNMH



Activities at Discovery Room of VNMH

+ *The Communication*: it is indispensable in a modern museum. Communication is an effective tool for promoting and bringing the image of Vietnam National Museum of History as well as the value of heritage stored in the Museum to the public in the fastest way. In particular, in the current period of technology development, the communication channel through media plays an increasingly important role. The Museum has built many programs and strategies for communication and developed various information channels such as newspapers, television, social networking sites, etc to meet the public's need for studying history and Vietnamese cultural identity.

In addition to performing professional tasks, the Museum serves as an instructor in terms of professional knowledge and skills for the domestic museums to preserve and promote the national cultural identity together.



Publications introduce Vietnam culture heritage in Noi Bai International airport

The challenges and difficulties for the VNMH in preserving and promoting the national cultural identity, social harmony and connect communities

In the trend of globalization, Vietnamese culture has the opportunity to integrate and interact with other cultures all over the world to enrich and affirm its identity. However, in this period, the traditional cultural values of the nation have to encounter the negative impacts of globalization with many harmful cultural flows. In fact, in recent years, a significant part of the people, especially the youth have expressed signs of

disregarding or ignoring the traditional cultural values while following lifestyle, psychology and tastes that are unhealthy and strange to Vietnamese people. The considerably dangerous attitude that "xenophilia, disregard for national cultural values, pursuit of a pragmatic lifestyle and individualism, etc are damaging to the good traditional customs". Many young people don't interest in traditional features. Therefore, it's difficult for the Museum's education staffs in approaching the public.

This is the time of information, internet and global social network explosion that helps promote and spread information and images of the Museum to the public quickly and effectively. However, the Museum also confronts many risks and challenges unless the Museum has the adequate competence, professional qualifications and technology to control the content actively, or else leading to counterproductive education.

To educate historical tradition and cultural identity, The Museum staffs need to help the public understand what cultural values are, how do they can identify that cultural identity to preserve and develop. However, the cultural identity of Vietnam has always been fostered through the process of developing the national history while the research to provide knowledge is still limited. Vietnamese culture not only has a long history, but also is enriched and diversified by regional cultures and ethnic groups with different languages. Meanwhile, we only use Vietnamese (official language) which make the transfer of such cultural characteristics and values to ethnic minority people difficult due to language barriers. Therefore, they do not understand , that's why the cultural values are being eroded rapidly. Language barriers also make it difficult for the Museum to access information, research, collect documents and objects or implement educational programs to ethnic groups.

Economic development promotes cultural development. However, in the context of a market-based economy, the pursuit of material interests is damaging the traditional cultural values. The consequence of the culture to run the market is the insensitivity, the decline of love between people and people, etc. Along with that, the rapid development of social infrastructure also erodes traditional culture more quickly. The situation that the young generation ignores and disregard the historical and traditional cultural values makes it difficult for the Museum to approach the public.

Besides, the Museum is still facing difficulties:

Firstly, human resources. Humans play a vital role in implementing and actualizing museum activities effectively to attract the public. However, there is a limitation on the number of qualified and knowledgeable staffs. Moreover, language (an important tool for museum staffs to approach the world to communicate, understand and learn from the successful museums) is a barrier. Meanwhile, the official staffs have to hold many different positions so they have not reached the professional level. Since teamwork skills are still weak, it hinders staffs from showing their ability and knowledge in their work.

Secondary, budget investment, does not correspond with the potential of the museum. It leads to limitations of investment budget for training, refresher training and qualification improvement for staff; and inadequate facilities for museum activities, etc. Therefore, it is difficult to implement Museum activities, especially professional activities. For example, there is not available investment funds for research and collection work to collect rich sources of artifacts for display ideas; the management of artifacts is still difficult in researching artifacts' information; limited preservation work causes the rapid deterioration of artifacts, which leads to the loss of the heritage's value. In particular, the exhibition, education and communication:

- The Exhibition, there is still a lack of synchronous investment in technology, art and technology application. The exhibitions often serve political tasks and event objectives without conducting a survey of the visitors' interest before organizing exhibitions, thus can not attract the public attention. Moreover, since the exhibitions last only a short time, some exhibitions can not show the full message and artifact values that the Museum wants to convey to the public.

- The Education, the young generation is interested in the modern technology which is applied in the experience and interaction activities at the Museum. This trend enables visitors to actively explore information and values of artifacts. However, this is still limited in Museum.

- The Communication, the Museum still works in traditional methods. The strong spread of the global social network requires us to study properly and professionally, and actively control the content, or else it will lead to the ambiguity, which prevents the public from identifying the characteristics of Vietnamese culture and makes difficulties in preserving and promoting that cultural value even erodes them faster.

Facing those challenges and difficulties, to operate the Museum more effectively and strengthen the role of the museum in helping the public better identify and understand the role of preserving cultural identity, contributing to society harmony and pulling the public closer, the Museum serves as an important bridge. However, in order to promote all these roles in the current context while solving the difficulties and challenges as noted above, the Museum should focus on some of the following solutions:

- + Focus on human factors. Firstly, the Museum needs to invest in training to improve professional skills, update and improve supplementary skills, especially foreign language, skills. Foreign language is an important means to exchange expertise with international friends, quickly approach to the treasure of human knowledge, learn and flexibly apply the other museums' development model in the most effective way.

- + Invest more for professional activities and interactive experience activities, apply the achievements of the IT (4.0) by increasing the application of modern technology equipment to improve the efficiency of professional activities. Moreover, the Museum needs to enhance the exhibition, education and communication activities, and focus on technology application, experience and interaction activities to enable the public access the Museum more easily to obtain deeper understanding about cultural and historical values. Hence, every people preserves and promotes the national cultural values and identity and the international public respects our national culture. If we can do that, we can bring about the harmonious development of society not only in each country but also in the region and the world.

- + Strengthen and expand exchanges and cooperation with museums within the country, in the region and the world, thereby introducing the cultural quintessences and characteristics of Vietnamese culture to other countries, as well as learning and exchanging professional knowledge and development skills appropriated to the culture of each ethnic group.

- + Actively combine museum activities with other social and cultural activities, not only in the professional activities of the Museum but also in cultural and social activities such as festivals, cultural tourism programs, art exhibitions in order to bring museum activities closer to the public in a more vivid and intuitive way.

Vietnam National Museum of History has been carrying out our mission of preserving and promoting national cultural values. In the context of globalization, cultural exchange and integration through the museum exhibitions and activities make the public understand that Vietnam is a country with a long history and culture, an advanced culture imbued with national identity, unified in. However, Vietnamese culture is always developed toward humanity, for peace, independence and freedom, a harmonious and stable society which can help the country develop.

The ANMA Forum is also one of the opportunities for us to share and learn from other museums' experiences, especially the museums from countries with similar conditions and culture, and then we can apply it to Vietnam National Museum of History. We hope and look forward to have/receive new cooperations.