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Conserving and Promoting the Value of Cultural Heritages, serving the Development of Local Tourism Experiences from the Bat Trang Village Community

Hang Pham Thu, Dung Ly Thi Ngoc

Hanoi University of Culture - 418 La Thanh, Hanoi, Vietnam

Email: hangpt@huc.edu.vn, dungltn@huc.edu.vn

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### Abstract

In Vietnam today, communities have made many remarkable contributions to the process of socializing cultural heritage conservation activities. In fact, communities in many localities and regions have demonstrated their positive role in cultural heritages with very specific and practical activities. Along with the local community, cultural heritage is nurtured and preserved in a dynamic state, not isolated but closely connected to daily life. In addition, cultural heritage is also recognized by society through the information channels of local people, with the genuine feelings of insiders. The article aims to affirm and introduce experiences in preserving and promoting the value of cultural heritage, serving the development of local tourism, through the case of Bat Trang village community (Bat Trang commune, Gia Lam administrative unit, Hanoi city).

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage; Community; Tourism; Locality; Bat Trang Village

### Content

#### 1. Bat Trang is a famous traditional pottery craft village of Hanoi

Located on the left bank of the Red River, Bat Trang village consists of 5 hamlets, including 2 old hamlets (hamlet 1, hamlet 2) bordering the Red River and 3 new hamlets



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(hamlet 3, hamlet 4, hamlet 5); belonging to Bat Trang commune, Gia Lam administrative unit, Hanoi city. Bat Trang has been famous for its traditional pottery craft for over 700 years, still operating and developing to this day. With talented hands, from soil and fire, Bat Trang people have created gems for life. For a long time, traditional pottery products of Bat Trang have been closely associated with the daily life of Vietnamese people, and have also conquered the world with their beauty and excellent quality. In 2025, the new Bat Trang commune will have a total natural area of 5,42 km (Bai Dang Van, Toan Nguyen Huu (2006), with over 15.000 people (Department of Cultural Heritage (2007). The majority of households (in the former Bat Trang commune) directly produce pottery, or provide services to support production and consumption of products. The name Bat Trang is still retained after the process of rearranging the commune-level administrative units, showing respect for the local heritages. At the same time, this also affirms the strategy of promoting the development of tourism brands associated with traditional culture and typical handicraft products of Bat Trang.

In the 15th century under the Tran Dynasty, the name of Bat Trang commune appeared in historical documents and was recorded as a famous pottery village. From the 15th to the 19th century, although Vietnam's history had many ups and downs, Bat Trang pottery was still preserved and developed. During the French colonial period, although Bat Trang pottery kilns were competed by a number of ceramic and imported enterprises, they still maintained normal operations. In 1954, peace was restored in Northern Vietnam, the traditional pottery craft was organized in factories, developing in the direction of socialism. After 1986, in the renovation of Vietnam, Bat Trang pottery had many major changes in the direction of a market economy. Bat Trang not only created jobs for people in the commune, but also attracted hired workers from neighboring provinces, such as Hai Duong, Hung Yen, Bac Ninh

In the context of the market economy, Bat Trang not only stands firm, but also develops the most strongly compared to other pottery villages in Vietnam. Bat Trang pottery products are becoming more and more elaborate and diverse. In addition to traditional products, Bat Trang pottery workshops also produce many new products to meet the consumption needs of domestic people such as new types of teapots, bowls, plates, vases; as well as construction materials, insulating porcelain and products ordered from abroad. Bat Trang pottery products have been presented in the market nationwide from the North to the



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South, from the capital Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City and had also exported to many Asian and European countries.

To increase competitiveness, pottery businesses in Bat Trang have used information technology to promote their products. Many websites, Fanpage, and personal Facebook pages have been set up to post update information and images about Bat Trang. These activities have created useful promotional channels to more widely introduce the traditional craft of Bat Trang. In fact, about 50% of households have introduced their products on e-commerce platforms and social networks. Many people here have also livestreamed on their personal Facebook pages to sell products. In recent years, the number of visitors to Bat Trang for sightseeing and shopping has been about 200.000 visitors per year. Of these, international visitors account for about 10%, students and young people account for about 40 %. In particular, during the peak season, nearly 10.000 visitors have visited Bat Trang every day (Peter Horward, 2003).

Bat Trang commune has more than 100 artisans, nearly 200 businesses and about 1.000 households producing and trading pottery products. Many artisans have been awarded the titles of Hanoi Artisan, Meritorious Artisan, such as artisans Tran Do, Vu Duc Thang, Le Minh Chau, Pham Anh Dao... In Bat Trang, many cultural heritages associated with material and spiritual life have also preserved and maintained by local people. The system of historical and cultural relics includes 9 religious and architectural relics; 2 historical and revolutionary relics, 23 ancient houses and 16 family temples (Hung Nguyen Quoc 2015). Many traditional cultural features of the ancient Bat Trang village are preserved at these places. In general, Bat Trang is a village with cultural traditions, both bearing the common community characteristics of villages in the Northern Delta region and reflecting the unique features of the pottery craft.

### 2. Bat Trang Village Community with the Preservation and Promotion of the Cultural Heritage Value

#### 2.1 Preserving the Cultural Heritage Value of Craft Village

The community is both the creators of cultural heritages and the cradle that nurtures and cares for cultural heritages (ICOM & OECD, 2018), Over the centuries, Bat Trang pottery craft village has been maintained as the main occupation, bringing income to local people.



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During the production and living process, Bat Trang people have been very conscious of protecting their professional rights. Production stages have been specialized and assigned to each group of people in charge. The secret of making handmade pottery has been protected quite tightly. This secret has only been passed on to sons and the village has a rule of not teaching the craft to people who are not their own descendants. In the past, Bat Trang had a custom of marrying within the village, or men could marry women from other villages, but women were not allowed to marry men from other villages for fear of revealing the craft's secrets. However, this custom has gradually faded and recently has been considered to be eliminated.

According to statistics from the Bat Trang Pottery Association, 90% of Bat Trang youth have been known how to make traditional pottery. Basically, they have been trained in a "father-to-son" style right in their families. Currently, in addition to famous older artisans, Bat Trang has about 100 young artisans who love traditional craft. They are intelligent and healthy people, always seeking to innovate and create new handicraft products, but do not forget the good traditional cultural characteristics of the village. The Bat Trang Craft Village Artisan Association has been established as a form of association and self-honor of the traditional pottery craft. The Association's activities have been maintained regularly, such as meetings, exchanges, and sharing experiences about difficulties and advantages in production as well as market demand, organizing tours for members to visit other craft villages in Vietnam, participating in exhibitions, etc. After graduating from universities in Vietnam and abroad, many Bat Trang youth have returned to work in the village, following the traditional handicraft.

In addition, Bat Trang people have also preserved and maintained many cultural heritages associated with the life, production and activities of the community, such as historical and cultural relics, traditional festivals, customs and practices, culinary culture... In Bat Trang, many outstanding individuals have voluntarily preserved and maintained traditional cultural values for themselves, their families and the community. Thanks to them, many heritages have been saved from the risk of being lost. Typical examples include the family of Ms. Luong Nguyet Minh who preserved the ancient Bau kiln (a type of pottery kiln that appeared in the early 20th century), and the family of Ms. Phung Thi Ca who preserved the nearly 200-year-old ancient house (the only remaining evidence of a ground-floor house in Bat Trang).



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It can be said that Bat Trang people always have a deep love for their homeland and have been attached to local cultural heritages. The community has developed the economy to ensure life in the context of a modern society. Local people have also reached a consensus in preserving handicrafts and honoring the traditional cultural features of their ancestors. Therefore, Bat Trang pottery village has always been recognized as a new rural unit with a developed economy, based on handicraft production and business and service activities, along with preserving and developing the craft village and traditional cultural activities.

### 2.2 Promoting, Introducing and Developing the Cultural Heritage Value of Craft Village, Developing Local Tourism

Thanks to the preservation of traditional crafts and culture of the village, Bat Trang has many potentials in handicraft production and tourism services. In 2001, the Hanoi People's Committee officially approved the detailed planning of Bat Trang traditional craft village with the goal of preserving and developing the craft village associated with tourism, serving the needs of domestic and foreign visitors. Up to now, many specific and meaningful activities have been carried out by local people.

Since 2004, Bat Trang Pottery Market has been established and put into operation with an area of 6.000 m<sup>2</sup>, including 100 stalls. In addition to the function of trading and selling products, the Pottery Market has become a common showroom of the village, a bridge and a form of promoting products quite effectively, when the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Flickr, Instagram ... has become extremely popular. Since 2010, the service of practical experience of handicrafts has also been deployed with the formation of the Pottery Playground. This playground has attracted a lot of visitors, especially teenagers because it has met the needs and psychology of exploration and experience of this age group. With the activities "Try to be an artisan", "Paint and decorate handicraft products", visitors have been provided with clay materials and guided to practice the experience. They have been able to use the turntable to make simple, rough products such as cups, bowls, vases; paint and decorate products, or choose to buy souvenirs according to their preferences... Visitors have paid for the activities depending on their level of participation in the practical experience.

Besides, other attractive destinations have been opened to tourists, such as historical and cultural relics, including communal houses, pagodas, temples, Bau kiln, ancient houses...



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Bat Trang people are very hospitable, the young people in the village are very dynamic. The people here understand very well about the traditional pottery craft, so everyone can talk, introduce, explain very clearly, attractively and naturally about the village, about the pottery craft. Visitors have been able to around the village to explore, experience by themselves or have been guided by local people. Since 2005, Bat Trang has also organized the form of Buffalo Cart to serve visiting the craft village, often applied to foreign tourists. With this package tour by Buffalo Cart, visitors have been free to visit the Pottery Workshops, ancient houses, Pottery Market.

Lunch services in Bat Trang has become quite convenient, so visitors can rest, eat and continue their tour. The stalls next to the Pottery Market have sold a variety of dishes such as rice, vermicelli, glass noodles, hot pot... at reasonable and affordable prices. Lucky visitors have invited to local homes to enjoy dishes such as Banh te, Banh chung, Che lam, Xoi vo hat sen... These are still Vietnamese dishes, but through the hands of Bat Trang people, they have their own extremely attractive flavors and suit the taste of many people. Mang Muc soup is the most famous dish among Bat Trang dishes. This dish has become a tradition, only available in Bat Trang. The secret to cooking Mang Muc soup has been preserved and taught to generations of women in each family. Mang Muc soup has been popularly used by local people during festivals, death anniversaries, weddings, etc. Ready-made ingredients of Mang Muc soup have been also sold or given to customers and acquaintances by village women. Following the instructions on the plastic boxes, many families have enjoyed Mang Muc soup right at home.

Every year, Bat Trang village organizes a traditional festival from the 14th to the 16th of the second lunar month, with fireworks on the full moon night, to honor the pottery craft and offer sacrifices to the village's tutelary gods. The cost of organizing the traditional festival is entirely covered by the villagers themselves. Bat Trang village households always voluntarily contribute money; the amount is not important. Wealthy families can contribute hundreds of millions of VND; other families can contribute less, or even be exempted. After the festival, the village holds a meeting, evaluates the organization of the traditional festival, and publicly settles the budget. If there is a shortage of funds, it will be compensated from the village fund; if there is a surplus, it will be added to the village fund for use in the village's common



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work. However, according to Bat Trang people, there is always a surplus. By maintaining the organization of traditional festival, Bat Trang people have demonstrated their internal strength, positive attitude, and sense of responsibility towards the community.

In Bat Trang, activities to promote the value of cultural heritage have been carried out professionally by individuals, families, and associations such as building antique exhibition house and establishing private museums. In 2002, collector Tran Ngoc Lam, a member of the UNESCO Center for Research and Conservation of Vietnamese Antiques, built Van Van Ancient House with the desire to develop tourism associated with culture. This Ancient House is located at the end of the village, where the owner has displayed more than 400 pottery items dating from the 15th - 19th centuries from many craft villages, most of which are pottery items from Bat Trang village. In 2016, artisan Vu Duc Thang established Bat Trang Museum in hamlet 5. The activities of this museum have been to collect, preserve, display, and introduce documents, artifacts, and images related to traditional and contemporary Bat Trang pottery products. Currently, Bat Trang Museum is a notable cultural and tourist destination, located right next to Bat Trang Pottery Market. In 2018, Bat Trang Pottery Museum was built in hamlet 5, and officially opened to welcome visitors from April 2022. This museum has been invested about 150 billion VND, belonging to the project of the Center for the quintessence of Vietnamese craft villages of Quang Vinh Pottery Company Limited and the Hanoi Craft Village Association. This project has been implemented to develop craft villages and preserve the characteristics of traditional pottery. The building of Bat Trang Pottery Museum is brown, has 5 floors above ground and 1 basement, including a total of 7 unique rotating pillars and is located on an area of over 3.000m<sup>2</sup>. This museum can be considered a work of art that creates associations with the process of kneading pottery. Here, nearly 1.000 ancient and contemporary pottery artifacts, along with handicrafts of famous artisans, are preserved and displayed. With beautiful scenery and architecture, there are many activities for visitors such as exhibitions, performances, experiences, cultural events, homestay accommodation, refreshments, restaurants, souvenirs, smart electric cars, etc. This museum is like a modern exhibition complex - a pottery cultural park in Bat Trang village. Therefore, Bat Trang Pottery Museum both honors the value and quintessence of handicrafts and effectively meets the comprehensive needs of modern tourists when they come to Bat Trang village.



### 3. Some Experiences from Bat Trang

With their creativity and flexibility, Bat Trang people have maintained their handicrafts, ensuring income for their lives. They always show respect for their ancestors' heritages, paying great attention to preserving and introducing the heritages of the craft village widely. Cultural tourism and community tourism services have been developed on the basis of the local cultural heritages. Bat Trang has been affirming its position as a typical heritage site and at the same time a quite attractive tourist destination for the Vietnamese and international public.

Coming to Bat Trang for sightseeing, trading, entertainment or learning about the craft village, people have seen handmade pottery products of all kinds and colors, watched the production process at the workshops, chatted with artisans, and even been guided to make their own products... Exhibition house and private museums have been established and opened to welcome visitors. These places have organized many experiential activities, cultural heritage introduction activities, along with various forms of services for sightseeing and tourism. In addition, a system of cultural heritages of the village including religious and belief relics, folk architecture, traditional festivals, traditional dishes... have also been introduced by local people in many ways. Therefore, visitors have felt the cultural heritage of the village through many senses such as sight, hearing, touch, and taste.

In fact, Bat Trang has always been an attractive destination for Vietnamese and foreign tourists. In 2019, the Hanoi People's Committee decided to recognize Bat Trang as a tourist destination of the capital; The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism recognized the traditional pottery craft of Bat Trang village (Bat Trang commune) as a national intangible cultural heritage. In early 2025, after a serious survey and assessment process according to economic, cultural, social and environmental criteria, the World Craft Council officially recognized Bat Trang craft village as a member of the Global Creative Craft Cities Network.

It must be affirmed that Bat Trang people have been able to implement and achieve positive results in preserving and promoting the value of cultural heritage, first of all thanks to the solidarity of the community, love for handicrafts, and love for the homeland. The community here has reached consensus on common interests. Furthermore, Bat Trang people have been able to apply some forms of preserving and promoting the value of cultural heritage to serve local tourism development. The application in practice depends on each



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specific case. However, we can identify and recognize typical methods from the perspective of a professional approach in the field of cultural heritage as follows:

- The viewpoint of conservation and development of village cultural heritage, especially intangible elements. With this viewpoint, the cultural heritage is affirmed, recognized and from there, the heritage is preserved and promoted not only as a symbolic value but also as a living element in the community, serving the community and developing the community. Accordingly, the cultural heritage exists in parallel with contemporary society; and the balance between heritage conservation and social development is established.

- The principle of preserving cultural heritage goes hand in hand with promoting its value. In fact, the cultural heritage can only be exploited to serve the progress of society and the interests of the community when it is effectively preserved. Conversely, preserving typical cultural heritage also creates an important premise for activities to promote its value in contemporary life.

- The form of museumization of village cultural heritage in the process of preserving and promoting the value of local cultural heritage. This is the process in which the local community takes the initiative in protecting and promoting the value of village cultural heritage according to the museological method, so that the village can become a living museum (Minh Quang, Trang Nguyen Thi Thu (2012).

- Systemic approach to local cultural heritage, including both tangible and intangible elements; along with appropriate forms of conservation for the existence of cultural heritage types (preservation at the site with real estate relics; living heritage associated with cultural subjects; display and introduction of movable relics/antiquities at the museum). This is a comprehensive approach to local cultural heritage, thereby conveying cultural messages to the public/tourists. This method has been affirmed in the *Yamato Declaration on a comprehensive approach to the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage*, adopted at the UNESCO International Conference on the Safeguarding of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Comprehensive Approach in Nara (Japan) in 2004 (Dinh Bui Xuan (editor) (2013).



- The motto is *Fun to learn, experience to grow, practice to be creative* in organizing activities to approach local cultural heritage for tourists, especially experiencing traditional handicrafts. This motto is very effective in the cognitive process because it brings opportunities for direct participation, vivid and authentic real-life experiences.

It can be said that, in the context of the development of the market economy, Bat Trang village has still ensured the maintenance of traditional craft, from clay materials to beautify life. Bat Trang village has combined traditional village culture with modern development trend. This method has helped Bat Trang create its own mark, contributing to affirming valuable experience in preserving and promoting the value of cultural heritage with the ability and strength of the community, to effectively serve local sightseeing and tourism activities.

## Conclusion

The provided academic article discusses the role of local communities in preserving and promoting cultural heritage values to foster local tourism development in Vietnam. Specifically focusing on the case of the Bat Trang pottery craft village near Hanoi, the authors detail how the community has maintained its traditional craft for centuries, adapting to market economies while safeguarding its history. The text outlines various strategies, such as family-based training, establishing a Pottery Market and Museum, and organizing traditional festivals, all contributing to Bat Trang's recognition as both a key heritage site and an attractive tourist destination. The conclusion affirms that community solidarity and respect for ancestral heritage are critical factors in the successful integration of cultural conservation with economic development through tourism.

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