CASE STUDY IN RETURNING ANTIQUITIES OF VIETNAMESE CULTURE FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO VIETNAM

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I. Real situation on the inventory of objects of antiquities in museums

• In Viet Nam, the inventory of objects of antiquities in museums, monument has been implemented many years.

• Since 2013, some museums in Viet Nam has been experimentally applied the Object ID Program.

• However, the Object ID Program has not been applied widely in Viet Nam due to the lack of:

  ➢ Finance
  ➢ Human resources capacity
  ➢ Equipments
• Department of Cultural Heritage has developed and applied software on object managing and promoting objects to museums, relics management boards in the whole country to reach consensus in inventorying and listing objects of antiquities in museums and monuments in the nationwide level.
• November 2015, Cultural Heritage Department has opened 03 training classes for guiding the use of software on managing objects, museums, and intangible cultural heritage for leaders, professional staffs of units in 3 parts of country.
Through this software, Cultural Heritage Department will get more information in the management system of the whole institution and be able to:

- Research
- Coordinate to organize activities such as exhibition
- Collect information about lost artifacts
- Prevent buying unknown source objects
Example of
the restitution of Viet Nam’s antiquities

• Viet Nam has not had effective measures to bring
  antiquities back to Viet Nam.
• The difficulties are lack of:
  ➢ Legal foundation
  ➢ Information of antiquities
  ➢ International cooperation
  ➢ Willingness from imported countries.
The return of the Ngu Ho Pagoda’s bell
(Bac Ninh province)

1940s  Japanese army occupied Bac Ninh province, found the bell in Ngu Ho Pagoda and bought to Japan

1977  Mr. Watanabe Takuro, Japanese lawyer found a bell in Ginza street and discovered it was a valuable bell of Viet Nam belonging to Ngu Ho Pagoda (Bac Ninh province).

News spread out and Japanese people who love Vietnamese culture calling for a donation of efforts and money to buy the bell and restitute it to Viet Nam.

1978  The bell was returned to Viet Nam.
Ngu Ho’s Pagoda bell
1m height, 42cm diameter, 120 kg
The restitution of antiquities of Nguyen Dynasty

• June 2014: Learnt that there were 02 antiquities in Nguyen Dynasty were kept in France and would be auctioned.

• 6th June, 2014: Hue Monument Conservation Centre (HMCC) send a document requiring assistance from People’s Committee of Thua Thien Hue Province and related institutions to find solution in order to bring back to Viet Nam these antiquities.

=> In the end, HMCC had collected 40,000 Euro to participate in the auction
The rickshaw was made mostly by metal and wood 136cm height, 230cm length, 102 cm wide. The wood part was made with the technique of lacquer ware, inlaid mother-of-pearl, one of the popular form used in wood items in ancient palace.
Thanh Thai King’s bed
The bed was made of wood
191cm height, 212cm length, 140cm wide, carved in Hue Court style.
This is an antiquity in Nguyen Dynasty time, used by royals and about 100 years old.
Result of the auction:

• **The Thanh Thai King’s bed**
  - The Thanh Thai King’s bed had been priced up to 100,000 Euro and now belonging to Mr. Ta Van Quang, Thanh Thai King’s nephew

• **The rickshaw**
  - Representative of Hue paid the highest price: 45,000 Euro
  - However, National Museum of Asian Art Guimet (Paris, France) announced to buy the rickshaw regarding to the principle of “pre-emptive rights” for local country
25th June 2014, after more than a week of diplomatic campaign between Viet Nam and France, Ministry of Culture of France had agreed to give the right to buy the rickshaw to Viet Nam

- Price for the rickshaw: 55.800 Euro
- The Rickshaw is currently kept in the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and will be displayed in Hue Museum of Royal Fine Arts once it is returned to Viet Nam.
Suggestions

• Build up a separated strong and flexible financial system used for this significant case
• Encourage the cooperation in international level
• Calling for donation, restitution of antiques and valuable relics which are now the properties of collectives and individuals in foreign countries in a spirit of friendship, exchange and development of cultural cooperation.
THANK YOU!