MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORT & TOURISM

**HANOI ACADEMY OF THEATRE AND CINEMA**

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**THE ACQUISITION OF FOLK FINE ART IN SET DESIGN FOR CHEO STAGE OF THE TWO PAINTERS NGUYEN DINH HAM AND NGUYEN DAN QUOC**

**Major: Theory and History of Stage**

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**ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL THESIS OF ART**

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**Instructor: Assoc. Prof, Ph.D. Nguyen Dinh Thi**

Reviewer 1: ................................................................

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Reviewer 3: ................................................................

The thesis is presented at the Thesis Assessment Asembly of Hanoi Academy of Theatre and Cinema.

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**INTRODUCTION**

**1. Reasons for choosing topic:**

Acquiring and applying the space treatment in the ancient Cheo art as a solution to express the narration, the typical conventions of Cheo art to bring Cheo on the box stage is a question for the artists and researchers of Cheo art.

Through surveying and verifying the set designs for Cheo stage of Cheo fine art painters since the August Revolution up to now, the researcher found that early painters had constantly searched, researched and experimented many styles, but they got many failures because the ancient Cheo form was unproper with the box stage. However, in the 50s and 60s, painter Nguyen Dinh Ham discovered and successfully exploited the conventionality of folk fine art, putting them into the set designing for Cheo plays, giving Cheo a suitable form with the characteristics of Cheo. The second painter who has made great contributions to Cheo's development the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc. He was one of the most outstanding students of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham. At the same time, he was also the person who successfully developed a creative method to bring folk art to the Cheo stage, successfully following the path that the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham had experienced.

The two painters - the People's artists: Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc had left a shaped style as a sign of identifying Cheo stage through the form of plays. Therefore, the researcher has chosen **"The acquisition of folk fine art in set design for Cheo stage of the two painters Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc"** as the research topic of his doctoral thesis of art.

***2****.* ***Objective and tasks of the research:***

***2.1. Objective of the research***

Discovering and explaining the creative thinking of the two painters - the People's Artists: Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc in the set design of Cheo stage. The effect of applying elements of Vietnamese folk art in the process of set designing for Cheo stage by these two painters.

***2.2. Tasks of the research***

- Researching and analyzing the changes in each specific period of the two painters Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc in the set design for Cheo stage.

- Identifying the style of Cheo stage design of the two painters affirms that the application of folk fine art is a style of set designing for the present Cheo stage.

## - Practically applied lessons for successive generations of painters in building the artistic image of the modern Cheo play from the set design style of the two painters.

## 3. Subject and scope of the research:

***3.1. Subject of the research:***

Some set designs for Cheo stage of the two painters Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc in the relation to influence from folk fine art in both theory and practice are the subjects of the research.

***3.2. Scope of the research:***

Researching, surveying and analyzing the success and limitations of set design from the materials of Vietnamese folk fine art in some exemplary Cheo plays of the two painters Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc. On that basis, comparing and contrasting them to find out the basic features and affirm their value as a designing style of the present Cheo stage.

## 4. Research question and research hypothesis

***4****.****1.******Research question***

- How have the two People's Artists Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc received folk fine art in their creation?

- What is the effect of the acquisition?

- What is the influence of the two painters on the next generation of painters?

***4.2. Research hypothesis***

- The two painters Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc have acquired folk fine art with a profound awareness of the purpose towards building the image of the play.

- The painter Nguyen Dan Quoc has absorbed folk fine art and was influenced by the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham, therefore, there was a continuation from the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham to the painter Nguyen Dan Quoc and the later generations of set designers in terms of acquiring folk fine art in Cheo stage design. However, each painters had his own method to make his own mark.

## 5. Theoretical basis and research methods

***5.1. Theoretical basis***

The topic applies theoretical bases: Theory of theatre, theory of traditional theatre and theory of acculturation. So as to evaluate both theoretical and practical aspects of the designs of these two painters - the People's artists, the research topic needs new perspectives with feature of interdisciplinary research, including History, Culture, Archeology, Ethnology/Anthropology, Sociology of the Arts, Theatre and Traditional Fine Art.

***5.2. Research methods***

As the research direction of the thesis is folk fine art in Cheo stage design, based on Cheo fine art and Vietnamese folk fine art, the research methods used are: *filedwork - description; document processing to provide new research data; interdisciplinary research; compare - contrast; analysis and synthesis; interview; professional method.*

**6. *The scientific and practical significance of the thesis***

***6.1. Scientific significance***

On the basis of scientific awareness of the theory of Cheo fine art reflected on creative practice in a number of Cheo plays, designed and received by two painters - the People's Artists Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc, the definition of the role of fine arts in today's world stage explains the principles for the creativity of these two painters – the People's Artists in the current Cheo stage design, in order to form a theory system of set design for Cheo stage in general, set design for Cheo stage from Vietnamese folk fine art in particular.

***6.2.*** ***Practical significance***

The set designs for Cheo stage of the two painters - the People's Artists Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc need to be researched, gathered, and systematized scientifically by both text and images; helping folk fine art appear on the Cheo stage more efficiently and specifically, as a basis for the application and creativity in today's set designs for Cheo stage. The research results will be used as a reference for schools training theatrical human resource, theaters, and artists who love Cheo art.

**7. The structure of the thesis**

In addition to the Introduction, the Document Review, the List of published works related to the topic of the thesis, Conclusion, References and Appendix. The content of the thesis is divided into 3 chapters:

**Chapter 1:** Theoretical and practical basis of the thesis

Chapter 2: The acquisition of folk fine art in set design for Cheo stage of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham

Chapter 3: Inheritance and development of design style from folk fine art in set design for Cheo stage of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc and the lessons for the next generations of painters.

**Chapter 1**

**THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL BASIS OF THE THESIS**

## 1.1. Concepts

The concept of "fine art" understood in the usual sense is "the art of beauty", including the fields of visual arts such as: Painting, graphics, sculpture, architecture. "Folk fine art" is a category of "fine art" including painting, graphics, architecture, and folk sculpture. The forms of folk fine art having an influence on the set design for Cheo stage include: The styles of folk paintings, worship paintings, pagoda architecture, Buddhist sculptures, engraved graphics on antique objects, decoration of worship objects, patterns on bronze drums... Folk fine art is in favor of emotions, harmony between people and nature according to the Asian people's thinking way.

The concept of "theatrical fine art" is the art of beauty in the field of theatre. In theatre studies, fine art is considered as one of the important components, besides dancing, music, acting... to build a theatrical work, a synthetic work of art. Theatrical art includes many constituent elements, which are:

Set designs, costumes, props and makeup…

In terms of "stage set design" that is the decoration and designing for the stage to be more beautiful, along with sound and light to determine the space, time and place for the performance, contributing to showing the content and ideas of the play.

The concept of "Stage set design”: It is the thinking to come up with a sketch for the play on the box stage. The set designer is responsible for discussing with the director, creating, and processing the space of the play according to a certain intention based on the script and the stage genre.

The concept of "Cheo stage": Is a type of traditional theatre art of Vietnam. Cheo originated in the Red River Delta, the cradle of the water rice civilization of Vietnamese people. Time has gone by, Cheo entered the box stage showing a high ability to well coordinate with other art forms such as: Fine art, music, dancing, light, sound...have opened a new direction for Cheo to develop into a modern performance stage. Since then, there has been the concept of "Cheo stage design". The painter, who designed for Cheo performance, has created sketches to work with his team to create the scenes for Cheo stage.

Cheo is a folk art form, originating from the Red River Delta. The “Chèo sân đình” is also known as the ancient Cheo. Looking at the set designs for ancient Cheo plays, we can see a number of objects placed on the show mat by the people in the past, in addition to the task of helping artists perform, evoking the audience's imagination, the mentioned objects also has the function of the decoration for the play, that is: *The Cheo mat, the background, the curtain, the igniter, the objects displayed on the show (the chest, the pot,...)*. Cheo mats are also decorative elements for the performances. Along with the Cheo mat, the background was also considered as a decorative element for the play by the ancient people, the background was selected in a suitable color for each type of play. The appearance of the curtain hanging along the stage has also opened up a new possibility to handle two spaces on the stage at the same time and the audience can watch the event taking place in two different locations at the same time. Another noticable thing is that the boxes also become an art element that participates in the decoration of the stage along with the actor's acting, creating the space where the drama happens. The space of the Cheo stage is unknown without the presence of actors. Along with the actor's acting, movements, words, and singing, the space of Cheo mat shows a specific place and time. When an actor goes on stage with his role, his appearance is very necessary to form a specific character, so the role of costumes and make-up is also one of the elements of fine art that gives the form to the play.

**1.3. The stylization and convention of folk fine art**

**1.3.1. Genres of folk paintings**

In general, genres of folk paintings such as Dong Ho, Hang Trong, Kim Hoang, and Lang Sinh folk paintings are highly stylized in terms of shapes and colors, and the colors refer to the five basic colors of the five elements of yin and yang: such as blue for wood, red for fire, black for water, yellow for earth, and white for metal. In folk paintings, the convention - stylization is considered as one of the core characteristics, creating the unique beauty of the folk fine art form. Thanks to that method, the artist, when making paintings and carving engravings, has ignored the detailed elements of form; focused on the expression in terms of content, so that the work carries its own language and feelings of the creator. The symbolism, stylization, convention of color scheme, use of colors, escape from the nature of things' natural structure, enhance with highly generalized colors and arrays...The lines in the picture are shaped as basic geometric shapes: triangle, trapezoid, circle, creating stylization and convention of folk paintings.

**1.3.2. Sculpture**

Sculpture in the treasure of Vietnamese folk visual arts is quite rich such as reliefs carved on ancient architectural works, Buddha statues, divine statues with all materials: wood, earth, stone, metal...The topics of sculpture are also extremely various such as: Themes about mascot, four seasons, sun, moon, birds, fish, flowers, leaves, clouds... and topics about scenes of daily life such as: Natuarism bathing, crane riding fairies, tiger fighting, hunting, rowing boats, processions…The themes of statue sculpture are also very rich and unique such as: Statues of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Arhats, then statues of Saints such as: Holy Mother, Confucius, Lao Tu, De Thich, Jade Emperor, besides we must mention to the statues of ancestors such as: Progenitor, The Queen,... and all kinds of senior mandarins, junior mandarins, rich men, poor farmers, old people, dancers, singers... The quintessential value of folk sculptures is also reflected in the stylized decorative shapes, with large and strong chisels, has created extremely unique artistic images.

**1.3.3. Architecture**

In the treasure of Vietnamese visual arts, it is necessary to mention ancient architectural works such as: citadel, sarcophagus, communal house, pagodas, temples, shrines, mausoleums, folk houses, etc. From scale to materials, the shaping all have a very distinct style, showing the beauty of culture through each historical period. The shaping style of ancient architectures through the periods has inheritance and continuity in the process of labor and artistic creation, creating historical and cultural imprints of Vietnamese people.

The ancient architectural imprints have created their own characteristics such as: The temple buildings with straight tile roofs, or curved in the shape of a dragon's head, etc. The folk community architectures such as: Village gates, bamboo bridges, wooden bridge, stone bridge, water wharf...Traditional wooden houses: House with five compartments, house with three compartments and two lean - tos, supports the eaves, carved trusses, wooden pillars supporting stone legs....The structure of thatched cottages in the countryside: brick yards, fences, vegetable gardens, bamboo gates...create unique features in Vietnamese culture. These are unique characteristics imbued with Vietnamese cultural identity.

**1.3.4. Application fine art**

Besides, folk fine art is also expressed through decorative images, application fine art on daily utensils, worshiping objects with all materials such as: Bronze ware with bronze jars, urns, bronze drums (Dong Son bronze drum has decorative patterns such as: figures of dancing people, musicians, boating scenes, birds and animals on bronze drums), bells, musical stone, incense table, cauldrons, gongs, copper kettles, sconce, etc. Stoneware includes: ink slab, paperweight, lampstand, stele, musical stone...Wooden furniture: Collapsible, cabinet, table and chair, pedestal, incense bowl, screen...Pottery: jar, flower pot, tile pipe...Porcelain items: incense bowls, teapots, dishes, lamps, vases, sconce. In addition, the decorations painted, embroidered on the costumes, jewelry also have the value of shaping that bears folk characteristic.

In short, shaping thinking in folk paintings, sculpture, architecture, and application fine art boldly embodies stylization, convention and symbol, creating a distinct cultural identity. This is one of the core values to develop Vietnamese art in a new context while maintaining the national identity.

1.4. Realistic set design in civilized Cheo and Cai Luong Cheo by Cheo innovator Nguyen Dinh Nghi in the early 20th century

The process of bringing Cheo to the urban audience, from the communal house to the box stage, was initiated by the civilized Cheo movement, originated from the actual needs of society. Nguyen Dinh Nghi and his collaborators entered the stage with other artistic components such as dance and fine art, sound and light... Regarding the fine art elements, including the stage set design, civilized Cheo, Cai luong Cheo still use the traditional background, but the difference here is that it has been painted on with natural scenes in a descriptive style "just like the real thing". The set design for the stage, apart from the background on the Cheo stage, people also see the interior decorations, or the exterior decorations according to the layout like in real life, creating a narrow space, especially the scenes in the house, there is no space for dancing performance.

Looking back at Nguyen Dinh Nghi's theatrical career, we can see that he has made comprehensive contributions to the development of Cheo stage. Despite the certain limitations, the next generation Cheo artists have inherited the innovative achievements of Nguyen Dinh Nghi to create a period of revival and development of Cheo since the August Revolution. Each of his successes or failures is considered as a valuable lesson. The appearance of Civilized Cheo and Cai Luong Cheo was an inevitable transition for Cheo to transform and develop as it is today.

**1.5. Set designing in modern Cheo with the appearance of new themes**

Looking back at the huge volume of plays, showing a variety of themes in all areas of life. The authors mainly based on the narrative principle of traditional Cheo. The authors Hoai Giao and Cao Mat used many conventional and stylized elements in handling space and time, and authors Viet Dung and Ha Van Cau paid attention to the humor in Cheo art to express character's personality. Author Tran Dinh Ngon has emphasized the romantic element with mythical thinking...All the ways of handling the script by the authors give spirit to the Cheo art to survive sustainably and ready to face the challenges of reflecting new reality, new people on the path of development. And before the urgent requirements of contemporary life and people, Cheo stage must not only be recognised to find out its beauty, but also have to be changed to adapt to the new time, new reflection theme. It is that challenge is the motivation for the creators of Cheo plays to change and develop, including Cheo fine art.

In the early days of finding the old style, set design in Cheo stage were in a confusion state in expressing the conventional space of Cheo. However, the set design for Cheo has created a space for actors to perform, creating the integrity of a theatrical performance, marking the first step of the cheo stage design on the box stage. With the requirements of creative reality, set designers of modern Cheo have created methods to adapt and match the content of Cheo plays with new themes. The appearance of new themes on the modern Cheo stage is both a motivation and a challenge to set designers of Cheo stage in their artistic creation.

1.6. The background and career of the two painters - the People's Artists Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc

1.6.1. The background and career of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham

The late painter Nguyen Dinh Ham, a son of a well-off family, was born on May 16th, 1931. He attended the Indochina Fine Arts College. However, when he was in the middle course, the nationwide resistance war broke out, he joined the artist group of inter-zone 3. In here, he expressed his interest in theater, especially in Cheo, and often approached artists and actors in this subject. Along with the half of the country, Hanoi was liberated, the painter - Nguyen Dinh Ham was more interested in watching the conferences on ancient style exploitation organized by the Theater Research Department, getting acquainted with Cheo art, thanks to meeting with famous artisans one time and exchanging with art officials and artisans, he realized the beauty, and the limitations of Cheo art, including the fine arts.

He has contributed to the formation of fine art of new Cheo, to the process of preserving and developing Cheo art today, the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham was awarded the title of Noble People's Artist by the State in the first phase in 1984. He died in 1997, leaving the next generation a new direction, the direction of exploiting folk fine art materials in Cheo set design. He is one of the few painters who laid the first bricks as a solid foundation for revolutionary Cheo fine art. With his efforts to learn from the old style, together with his serious working spirit, and rich creativity, the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham, with his achievements, was recognized by the whole art world as the leading bird of the fine art industry in the preservation and development of Cheo fine art in particular and Cheo stage in general.

1.6.2. The background and career of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc

The painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc was born in 1943 in Hung Yen. He was born in an intellectual family. He was the only son of writer Nguyen Dan Giam, a famous writer in Vietnamese literature in the period 1930-1945. He lost his father at the age of 2, he soon had an awareness and power to develop himself, improve knowledge, and he had a passion for painting, therefore, at the age of 15, he received a certificate of merit at the International Children's Painting Exhibition in Hungary in 1959. After graduating from Hanoi Fine Arts School, he returned to work at the Animation Studio. Then, as a predestination, he was fascinated by the paintings of Cheo characters: Chau Long, Thi Kinh, Suy Van, Mang Ong, and the clowns: He Moi , He Gay by teacher Nguyen Dinh. Ham represented by silk paintings, gouache and lacquer paintings. Since then, he was helped and guided wholeheartedly from the first strokes in the set designs of Cheo stage by the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham, his father's best friend.

In 1974, he started working as a painter at Vietnam Cheo Theater and when he retired in June 2003, he had designed 22 Cheo plays in the repertoire of Vietnamese Cheo Theater and more than 100 Cheo plays for local and military groups. He is the painter having wisdom, passion and talent in Cheo Fine Arts industry of Vietnam…It is not coincidence that most of his set design works are filled with the following: Moon, clouds, bamboo, apricot, pine , willow, banana, areca... have become the soul of Cheo art today.

Sub-conclusion of chapter 1

From the theoretical basis of the traditional stage, the use of space in ancient Cheo (Chèo Sân Đình) is mainly through the' acting and dialogue of the actors. Space for Cheo performance is an open space, a space that constantly changes during the process of a Cheo play. With that naration and convention, when Cheo transforms and appears on the box stage, it must adhere to the theory of Theater with its full synthetic nature. Therefore, it is very important to find new forms of set design for Cheo art.

Vietnamese folk fine art is a part of the treasure of cultural quintessence of Vietnamese people, full of convention, stylization and symbol in the style of oriental visual art.

In the interference with Cheo art, folk fine art was accepted as a necessity. The person who first applied folk fine art in the set design of the Cheo stage was the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham, and later, the person who developed this method into a standard style of set design for stage, becoming the typical feature of the modern Cheo stage, is his student, the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc.

The theoretical and practical system as the basis for solving the objectives of the topic expressed on the basis of the perception of ancient Cheo and folk fine art that have the origin of cultural quintessence of the Vietnamese people in common and the same artistic expression.

# Chapter 2

THE ACQUISITION OF FOLK FINE ART IN SET DESIGN FOR CHEO STAGE OF THE PAINTER – THE PEOPLE’S ARTIST NGUYEN DINH HAM

**2.1. The process of discovering folk fine art - the suitable material for the set design of Cheo stage of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham**

After the peace gaining in 1954, Cheo was first brought to the stage with full sound and light. The Central Cheo company produced the play *The Buffalo of the two houses*, directed by Tran Bang, and designed by painter Nguyen Dinh Ham, using scenes with real objects such as fiberboard, banana tree, grass field, roof, buffalo cage brought to the stage encountered many shortcomings in expressing the conventional space as well as the limitations in acting of actors on the stage, the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham also faced many difficulties and concerns when performing a conventional space on the box stage. In fact, in the first steps of recovering ancient style, there were many difficulties and surprises. In 1956, the Cheo industry began to gather the most famous artisans of the directions, opened conferences of performances and study the traditional excerpts. Actors are trained systematically. The way of expressing the characters of the artists has aroused in the hearts of the set designers the initial thoughts on how to design in accordance with that performance. At that time, the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham claimed that there is nothing better than using the achievements and folk paintings of ancestors to participate synchronously in a Cheo performance. Because ancient Cheo and ancient Vietnamese folk painting are both in the category of national culture. The way of feeling, thinking and expressing the two subjects have close points to each other. “We have researched in the treasure of folk paintings such as the paintings of *That Dong, Hung Dua, Danh Ghen*, etc and found that there are satirical images bearing Cheo characteristics, apart from the costumes in the statue pictures in the pagodas, we also found out the most distinctive motifs and arranged them into a collection”.

One of the plays showing the process of receiving a new design style according to the convention of folk fine art, it is necessary to mention the play Quan Am Thi Kinh, the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham found out the philosophical image of the play, created "performance space" for the set design of the play. In other words, after certain concerns and difficulties when set designing for Cheo on the box stage, the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham gradually found his own direction, in which the set design applied the folk fne art material is an important discovery. The set design for his next successful plays should be mentioned: *Suy Van*. The folk materials showed by him through the colors and lines of the design left a deep impression on the viewers. The set design for the play Suy Van won a gold medal at the Cheo Festival in 1962 with a unique image of a spider web covering the backstage with a red dragonfly trapped in it. This image expressed the tangled feudal society which is full of traps, and a girl with full of hidden memories and deadlocks like Suy Van, it is difficult for her to escape, like a dragonfly that has fallen into a spider's web, the more it struggles, the more tightly it is bound. In the play Luu Binh Duong Le, the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham felt many lyrical feelings combined with dramatic elements. He carefully discussed each scene with the director, watched the staging, thinking, acquired, and exploited folk fine art. Finally, he selected a set of paintings of four seasons of Hang Trong folk paintings shown through bamboo and apricot curtains to decorate the play, leaving the audience with unforgettable impressions.

Thus, the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham was the one who laid the first foundation for the cause of preserving and promoting the ancient style in traditional Cheo theater art. The most remarkable thing is that the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham has much contribution in preserving the pure beauty of fine art of Cheo stage and affirming the role of the paiter in the play.

**2.2. The elements of folk fine art are applied in the set design of some Cheo plays of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham**

In the process of designing set for Cheo stage, the late painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham carefully studied Dong Ho folk paintings, learned how to use black strokes to outline floral patterns, leaves, statues, columns expressed in color without using block display. He also collected and repainted the traditional patterns carved in communal houses and pagodas for reference when designing set for the plays and he has contributed to the fine art designing for over thirty Cheo plays in many different styles and themes. Nevertheless, after much searching with some plays rebuilt many times through different creative forms, he has found a method to apply folk fine art in composition, a style that has become a model for Cheo fine art, leading to a standard form for Cheo stage that is both national and modern.

The materials from folk fine art, the familiar images selected by him such as: peach tree, plum tree, moonlight, tile roof, Buddha statue, temple architecture... were used to decorate the Cheo plays: *Quan Am Thi Kinh, Suy Van, Luu Binh Duong Le, Mau cua chung ta da chay, Lo* *nuoc than, Tu Uyen - Giang Kieu and Co Son*...which have loaded into Cheo a typical stage form, showing the suitability with the language of the Cheo art form.

**Sub-conclusion of chapter 2**

Although the number of plays of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham contributing to the fine art design is just over thirty works, it has shown a whole process from the reality remaining many shortcomings when bringing Cheo to the box stage until finding a set design method from folk fine art and facing difficulties in expressing the diverse and complex nature of Cheo stage with the full synthetic nature of the stage in general. Therefore, the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Ham has successfully used the elements of folk fine art in a number of traditional traditional Cheo plays and some modern Cheo plays. It has shown the narrative, conventional and symbolic nature of Cheo, opening a whole new way of seeing for the next generations of painters in designing and decorating the Cheo stage from the genre language.

# Chapter 3

**INHERITANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF DESIGN STYLE FROM FOLK FINE ART IN SET DESIGN FOR CHEO STAGE OF THE PAINTER – THE PEOPLE’S ARTIST NGUYEN DAN QUOC AND THE LESSONS FOR THE NEXT GENERATIONS OF PAINTERS**

**3.1. Acquiring the set design style in Cheo stage of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham**

The method of designing stage applying folk fine art inherited by the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc from his professor was shown in a number of the plays which are acquired by the method of thinking and visual materials. In 1985, the Central Cheo Theater Company restaged the play *Quan Am Thi Kinh*, the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc was invited to join as a set designer of the play. He acqiured the design style of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham, using images rich in folklore. The painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc has chosen the village communal house, where cultural activities are available in village festivals.

Then, in the play *Suy Van* (Ha Nam Cheo Company, 2001), he used four screens of four seasons. Particularly, he chose an image of a yin and yang circle on the background of a golden moon with a spider's web and four screens of Spring - Summer - Autumn - Winter, which shows the sad fate of a woman under the ancient feudal times. Also acquiring the idea of a spider's web from the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham, the painter Nguyen Dan Quoc paid more attention to using more folk fine art materials, which is the four-season painting of the genre of Hang Trong folk paintings, but it is shown on the relief material showing the exploration of folk fine art materials, intentionally creating conventional set designs at different levels in each performance.

In the play *Luu Binh Duong Le*, he has acquired the image of the roof of communal house and apricot tree of the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham to represent the scene with many layers of design, creating convenience and mobility during the scence transition for the play. This is an ancient Cheo play about noble friendship, a beauty in traditional culture of Vietnamese people. In the 2000s, at the festivals, Cheo lovers were probably very familiar with the image of a river wharf with banyan trees and a part of the roof of the communal house painted in the style of Dong Ho folk paintings. It is the inheritance from the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham, but the painter Nguyen Dan Quoc has clearly and coherently repainted it in the style of folk art, so it has become a popular "river wharf" scene in Cheo, used for many plays. This is the success that the painter Nguyen Dan Quoc has achieved from the influence by his professor.

The play *Lo nuoc than* restaged by the director Tran Bang in 1992, which was designed by the artist Nguyen Dan Quoc, acquired the image of the background painted with three onions with stylized cloud motifs in folk decoration of the painter Nguyen Dinh Ham.

Therefore, the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc has inherited some methods and ideas of Cheo set design from some Cheo plays by the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham. This provided a solid foundation for him to develop his next set designs from Vietnamese folk fine art.

**3.2. Developing the style of set design for Cheo stage from folk fine art**

In the play *Thach Sanh* (1973), the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc used Dong Ho folk paintings to emphasize the sense of folk designing, and the content of the play left a profound impression on the audience because the iridescent color arrays are fully exploited, even somewhat exaggerated beside the strong black outlines. The play has brought a lot of emotions to the audience probably because the image of Dong Ho folk painting was put on the Cheo stage in an impressive way that was very close to the real life of farmers in the Red River Delta.

In the play *Tran Anh Tong*, stone sculpture was uesd in the set design by the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc. The seriousness and carefulness of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc in expressing with folk sculpture style elaborately researched and explored has increased the artistic value of the set design of this play. A surprise in this design style is not the real stone color, but a decorative work carved out of stone in the traditional style of folk stone carving with the unique style of the Tran dynasty.

The play *Cay tre tram dot* by Hai Phong Cheo Company is conveyed in a conventional way, taking the main ideological content of lacquer paintings. It is the color of lacquer with the colors of scarlet, vermilion, brown, vermilion, black, gold, silver and eggshell that creates a conventional color of painting. The exploitation of the method of evoking space through colors from folk paintings was also thoroughly exploited by him. Nature and color gamut have always had the most systematic and dialectical relationship with each other in folk fine art and that relationship has been vividly and diversifiedly expressed in each of his works such as: *An Tiem - Nang Ut, Tu Thuc, Loi Sam truyen tu quan Trung Tan, Ky nu Ai Chau, Hoang tu co doi tai bo, Truong Vien, Tam Cam Tron, Song Tra Khuc, Bao giua nha ong, Anh lai do song vi, Nghia non song...*

The plays exploited from collages such as *Hoang tu co doi tai bo*, *Duyen no Ba Sinh*. Traditional mosaic art is also selected to decorate Cheo mats, using the chamber as in the play Nang Thiet The - Vietnam Cheo Theater 2001.

From the inheritance of Cheo stage design style of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham, the painter - People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc has developed it into a stage design style that is recognized by the audience as "really Cheo" or as for the experts is "the person who keep soul of Cheo" because of the effectiveness of his design style for Cheo stage. Generations of painters who have continued their career as Cheo set designers today can still effectively apply the design style of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc (which actually includes the design style of the. painter- the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham) as an effective measure to express the content, as well as show the convention, a basic feature of Cheo.

**3.3. Lessons for the next generations of painters on the set design for Cheo stage using folk fine art**

The painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc, when designing set for Cheo stage, has inherited the method of stage set design from folk fine art such as:

*- Applying the stylization method of folk fine art*

*- Applying the conventional method*

*- Applying metaphorical method*

*- Applying symbolization method*

However, when acquiring the valuable knowledge of the previous masters, we do not passively absorb it but always see the methods in its constant movement, the movements are: As society develops, the cultural values of the nation are constantly changing and becoming more and more diversified, some cultural values are new today, but if they are true values, they will be received and kept for the next generations and become part of the nation's cultural values. The question is whether we can recognize those cultural values, develop and preserve them in the cultural treasures of our nation. Thus, the painters of Cheo stage need to acquire but at the same time also need to refine and absorb new forms of culture in general and visual arts in particular to develop their creation methods.

**Sub-conclusion of chapter 3**

On the basis of the findings of folk fine art applied to the stage set design of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham, the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc has selectively acquired in his set design.Since then, the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc has known well the design methods from folk fine art, he developed and embodied in a series of his works as a means to express each level of convention, stylization, and symbolism of each Cheo scenario, through which determining a shaping style to apply folk fine art to the set design for Cheo stage. Thereby, the next generation of painters will have a more correct view of the value of folk fine art as well as acquire folk fine art in the design of modern Cheo plays.

**CONCLUSION**

In chapter one, the researcher has studied the theoretical and practical bases of the topic, the issues relating to the application of folk fine art in the set design for stage Cheo of the two painters Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc.In chapter two, the researcher has analyzed the discovery and application of folk fine art of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham and in chapter 3, the researcher has mentioned to the inheritance and development of design style from folk fine art in set design for Cheo stage of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc and the lessons for the next generations of painters. From those the researcher has come to the conclusion as follow :

Through practical experiences and the process of researching and understanding, the lovers of folk fine art, Cheo theatre, stage set design, are all wondering: Why is folk fine art and Cheo theatre of the nation, which has been strongly preserved with Vietnamese characteristics through wars and poverty, is in danger of degenerating right in the middle of peace time? Is traditional art caught up in the process of industrialization, modernization, and urbanization massively in a world of digital technology that is completely transforming the values of the origin of the wet rice civilization. At the same time, along with new development opportunities, the social foundations from which the nation's traditional art and culture are formed, marked and xists; it is essential to find a form that matches the content of Cheo stage form so that Cheo stage can develop without losing its identity.

The role and artistic contributions of the two painters - the People's Artists: Nguyen Dinh Ham and Nguyen Dan Quoc in set designing for Cheo stage from Vietnamese folk fine art with profoundly practical significance, is the result of their non-stop art creation in the professionalization of Cheo stage. The design style applying folk fine art has become an exemplary style, which is the foundation for young painters to develop their creativity, leaving achievements for the present and future fine art of Cheo stage. With the spirit of "Using the ancient to develop the modern", taking traditional quintessence as the foundation on the way of preserving, creating and developing folk fine art in set design for modern Cheo stage, with the view to contributing a part to making the set design on the Cheo stage more beautiful, interesting and suitable for the stature of exemplary Cheo performances, which are reproduced with the following meanings:

- Vietnamese folk fine art in historical flow, the interference and acculturation in set design for traditional and modern Cheo stage.

- Affirming folk fine art in the set design for Cheo stage.

- Developing design style applying folk fine art for modern Cheo stage.

Through the results of this research, generations of painters who have continued their career in set design for Cheo stage clearly identify what has been achieved, what is still ahead and what needs to be continued and developed on the creativity path, in order to help folk fine art develop in accordance with the requirements of the Cheo theatre genre - bearing the values of folk fine art, which is both national and modern.

**LIST OF PUBLISHED RESEARCH WORKS RELATED TO THE THESIS BY THE RESEARCHER**.

1. Vu Dinh Toan (2020), *Learning about the set design of the Cheo stage of the painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dan Quoc* - Journal of Theatre and Film Studies, Hanoi University of Theatre and Cinema. Issue number 25/2020.

2. Vu Dinh Toan (2020), *Applying folk fine art in the set design of Cheo stage* - Journal of Theatre and Film Studies, Hanoi University of Theatre and Cinema. Issue number 27/2020.

3. Vu Dinh Toan (2020), *Applying folk fine art in the set design of some Cheo plays by the late painter - the People's Artist Nguyen Dinh Ham* - Journal of Theatre and Film Studies, Hanoi University of Theatre and Cinema. Issue number 29/2021.