

Four important careers of the human (Vietnamese: Tứ dân)

Southeast Asian Collection

Accession Nr.: 59.82.1 

Type: woodblock print; hanging scroll

Date of production: 1950s

Place of production: Hanoi, Hàng Trống, Vietnam, Southeast Asia

Materials/Technique: paper, woodblock printing, hand coloured, mounted as hanging scroll

Dimensions: height: 131 cm
width: 42. 6 cm

In the foreground of the scroll we can see a farmer ploughing with a buffalo, in the centre above is a road scene, while in the background, under Chinese inscriptions, are blue mountains.

Tứ bình is a 16th-century Vietnamese folk painting form that arranges four images with a common theme into a single series. Made in the Hàng Trống workshop in Hanoi, these pictures were usually made for the Tết, or Vietnamese New Year, similar to Đông Hồ prints, and were very popular with the population. The themes of the quartets all revolve around different states of things and change, such as the four seasons, the ages, four female musicians with different instruments, or the four classical careers of the human shown here.

