


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

Southeast Asian Collection

Accession Nr.:	59.83.1 
Type:	woodblock print; hanging scroll
Date of production:	1950s
Place of production:	Hanoi, Hàng Trống, Vietnam, Southeast Asia
Materials/Techniques:	paper, woodblock printing, hand coloured, mounted as hanging scroll
Dimensions:	height: 131 cm width: 42.5 cm

The foreground of the scroll shows people sitting on a boat. One of them is casting a net, another is playing a wind instrument, while in the middle two anglers are crossing a small bridge. Two figures are resting on a high plateau between the mountains in the background (caption left).

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.

