


Traditional New Year painting - Martial Arts' School / Fighting Elephants (Vietnamese: Chọi Voi)

Southeast Asian Collection

Accession Nr.:	2018.1.2 
Type:	woodblock print
Date of production:	1960s
Place of production:	Bắc Ninh province, Đông Hồ village, Vietnam, Southeast Asia
Materials/Techniques:	paper, coloured woodblock print
Dimensions:	height: 42.5 cm width: 27.5 cm

The image, taken at the Đông Hồ workshop in Vietnam, shows a martial arts schoolyard tournament in vivid colours. On the podium (the inscription on the top literally reads: martial arts school), a man dressed as an official and his entourage of flag bearers and gunmen watch the battle in the arena. At the centre is a wheeled, fire-breathing mythical animal: a qilin, with two warriors battling five men riding on the backs of war elephants.

Each element of the engraving contains auspicious symbols: the five warriors / five male children sitting on elephants, representing strength, besieging the height (also representing high office) of the qilin, which makes the image a New Year's image. On the other hand, it may also evoke the chi-lin dance of the Vietnamese New Year celebrations. A very rare woodcut.

