

**NATIONAL NOMINATION DOSSIER
SUBMISSION TO UNESCO FOR INSCRIPTION ON THE REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY**

BÌNH ĐỊNH TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS

INVENTORY REPORT

Hanoi – 2025

INVENTORY REPORT

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

I. Times of Inventory and Inventory Report Update: April 2024 – March 2025

II. Inventory Locations

The inventory and report update activities were conducted in areas where Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are practiced across 11 districts, towns, and cities in Bình Định Province, covering many martial arts villages, martial arts lineages, and generations of martial arts masters.

III. Collaborating Units on Inventory and Inventory Report Update

- Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Bình Định Province
- Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts Center, along with master practitioners and representatives from martial arts schools and clubs in Bình Định Province.

IV. Implementation Methods

1. Training workshops

- The purpose of training workshops is to provide practitioners detailed information on preparation of the dossier for Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts to be submitted to UNESCO for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- Content: Detailed explanation of the purpose of heritage inscription according to the 2003 Convention and the process of creating the file, which requires community collaboration throughout the implementation of tasks, particularly for the collection of detailed information on identification, current status, practitioners, and measures for heritage safeguarding within the community to be included in the inventory report and heritage file.
- Participants: Martial arts grandmasters, masters, and practitioners from martial arts schools and clubs; Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts Center and martial arts associations; representatives from provincial, district, and commune-level cultural management authorities.

2. Field research, data collection, and inventory forms at martial arts schools and clubs of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

Field research trips were conducted to collect information and documentation, and inventory forms were distributed, with a focus on certain martial arts schools in Hoài Nhơn and Hoài Ân towns; Phù Mỹ, Phù Cát, An Nhơn, Tuy Phước, Tây Sơn, Vĩnh Thạnh, Vân Canh, and An Lão districts, and the city of Quy Nhơn. Representatives of martial arts schools and communities actively participated, providing information and sharing insights on the value, role, and significance of the heritage in the cultural and social life of the people of Bình Định. Community representatives, with full understanding, voluntarily completed the inventory forms to identify and provide information on the current status of practices and heritage safeguarding measures for Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts.

IV. Inventory Report Content

1. Name of the Heritage

- Official Name: Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts.
- Other Names: Tây Sơn Martial Arts, Bình Định Tây Sơn Traditional Martial Arts.

2. Domains of Heritage

According to Clause 1, Article 4, Chapter II of Circular No. 04/2010/TT-BVHTTDL dated June 30, 2010, issued by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism on the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts falls under the category of “Folk Performing Arts”.

3. Geographical Space of the Heritage

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are practiced in various areas throughout Bình Định

Province. Martial arts schools and clubs are concentrated in 11 locations of 2 towns, 8 districts and one city including Hoài Nhơn and Hoài Ân towns; Phù Mỹ, Phù Cát, An Nhơn, Tuy Phước, Tây Sơn, Vĩnh Thạnh, Vân Canh, and An Lão districts, and the city of Quy Nhơn. The development of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are tied to various traditional martial arts villages such as Thuận Truyền village, An Vinh village (Tây Sơn district), and An Thái village (An Nhơn town).

4. Identification of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts have formed and developed over centuries within village communities in Bình Định. The practice of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts not only reflects the distinctive martial traditions of the region but also embodies folk knowledge, history, and local cultural identity. Over time, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts have existed under different styles and schools, closely linked to various communities and families. By the 18th century, in addition to being practiced among the common people, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts were also used by the military commanders and officials of King Quang Trung’s court to train soldiers, improve fitness, and develop self-defense capabilities. Today, in many martial arts schools in Bình Định, Emperor Quang Trung (1753–1792) is revered as one of the martial arts ancestors, reflecting the connection between martial arts and the history of the Vietnamese nation.

The core teaching of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts is a combination of techniques of hand positions and stances, based on the principle “Hands never leave the body, feet never leave the ground.” A distinctive feature of this aspect of the heritage is that each technique is taught together with an introductory poem or piece of prose to help learners memorize and master it more easily. The teaching of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts aims for the comprehensive development of both body and mind in practitioners, regardless of gender or age, and the improvement of practitioners’ health, perseverance, confidence, and martial ethics.

In addition to their role as a form of physical training and martial arts, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts hold profound cultural value, appearing in various forms of traditional arts and rituals, such as *Hát bội* (classical opera), Lion dance, and *Bả trạo* dance, as well as in important community festivals, such as the Đống Đa – Tây Sơn Traditional Festival, initiation ceremonies, fish praying ceremonies, and the Đổ Giàn Village Festival. Furthermore, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are closely linked to martial folk medicine through exercise and treatment methods based on the principle of “integrating medicine and martial arts”.

Currently, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are included in the school curriculum for physical and ethical education. They are also increasingly practiced by local people,

especially older women, as a method of wellness aimed at developing body, mind, and spirit. As a rich repository of knowledge about the history, culture, and people of Bình Định, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are considered the “flesh and blood” of this land. The spirit of martial sportsmanship, resilience, and determination of the people of Bình Định is vividly reflected in distinctive routines and techniques, such as “Thuận Truyền whip, An Thái fist”, that have become symbolic of this martial heritage. With its timeless values, the heritage of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts continues to be safeguarded and promoted, thus contributing to the ongoing development of a humanistic, united society with a rich cultural identity.

5. Practitioners of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

The practitioners of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts today include martial arts master practitioners, masters, and students of all ages and genders, from 175 martial arts schools and clubs with Approximately 5,000 people who practice regularly. Some representative martial arts lineages are associated with famous grandmasters and masters, such as Hồ family (5 generations) in Thuận Truyền, họ Nguyễn, họ Trần ở An Vinh, họ Phan ở Bình Nghi (Tây Sơn District), Trương family in Phước Sơn (4 generations), Hà family in Phước An (Tuy Phước District), Trương family, Lâm family, Diệp in An Thái village (3 generations), họ Đinh family, Lý family (3 generations) in Đập Đá (An Nhơn town), Trương family in Mỹ Hòa (Phù Mỹ district).

A number of Grandmasters and Masters have made significant contributions to the development of various martial arts styles and have passed on their martial knowledge to community members and future generations as Grandmaster Hồ Sùng (born 1938), Grandmaster Lê Xuân Cảnh (born 1938), and seven Meritorious Master practitioners in the field of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts, including Grandmaster Trương Văn Vịnh (born 1935), Grandmaster Huỳnh Lão (born 1930), Master Lâm Ngọc Ánh (born 1955), Master Lý Xuân Vân (born 1965), Senior Master Thái Hùng Vinh (born 1974), Senior Master Võ Thanh Hùng (born 1971), and Senior Master Võ Thanh Lương (born 1971).

Martial arts masters, particularly the heads of martial arts schools and clubs, are responsible for teaching and practicing this martial heritage, which includes martial techniques, ethics, and medicine. The Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts Center, the Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts Federation, local martial arts associations, temples, schools, and clubs also play an essential role in the practice and teaching of this heritage.

Table: Numbers of Martial Arts Schools, Clubs, Martial Arts Masters, and Students of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

(Statistical data as of March 3, 2025 from the Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts Center)

Number	Locations	Number of martial arts schools/ clubs	Number of martial arts masters	Number of Standard martial arts masters	Number of associate martial arts masters	Number of martial arts students who practice regularly
1	Hoài Nhơn	09	07	04	03	660
2	Hoài Ân	02	02	00	01	47
3	Phù Mỹ	14	07	04	17	710
4	Phù Cát	25	07	09	09	540
5	An Nhơn	29	31	29	48	1085
6	Tuy Phước	35	21	04	43	694

7	Tây Sơn	32	39	29	94	440
8	Vĩnh Thạnh	02	02	00	02	40
9	Vân Canh	01	00	00	01	30
10	An Lão	01	01	00	00	25
11	Quy Nhơn	25	19	31	36	728
Total		175	136	110	254	5000

6. The Development of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are closely linked to Vietnam's history of territorial expansion and the cultural convergence between the Việt people and local ethnic groups. The development of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts reflects the people of Bình Định's martial spirit and their skill and creativity in meeting their self-defense and health needs. As Việt people from different regions migrated and integrated into the coastal areas of Central Vietnam, they brought the martial arts practices they used for self-defense in daily life with them. In their new environment, the Việt learned from and absorbed the martial arts of local ethnic peoples, such as the Chăm and other ethnic minority groups.

The development of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts is associated with several historical figures skilled in martial arts who came to symbolize the martial spirit and the benevolent heart. The heritage's development was also linked to the peasant movement and the Tây Sơn Uprising that liberated the nation in the 18th century. Tây Sơn martial arts not only inherited traditional martial arts wisdom but also created and systematized new martial arts techniques for self-defense, protecting territories, and securing borders. Thus, signature martial arts routines of Tây Sơn such as Hùng Kê Quyền, Song Phượng Kiếm, and Đại Đao became classical forms.

Many traditional martial arts schools in Bình Định have quietly persisted through various historical periods, being passed down through families and clans, at temples and in villages. Throughout Bình Định's history, various styles of martial arts with their own techniques, routines, and weapons have been taught, developed, and used to safeguard villages and maintain security in local communities.

Since Đổi Mới (Renovation) in 1986, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts have been revived and further developed. Many martial arts schools and clubs have been established throughout Bình Định province, attracting a large number of practitioners. Today's martial arts masters are still dedicated to passing their knowledge on to the younger generations in local communities and at schools. Along with the establishment and development of school clubs, martial arts are also practiced by the elderly at wellness clubs, at temples, by soldiers in the provincial Military Headquarters, and by students at universities.

7. Characteristics of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are a vivid representation of the martial spirit and the cultural identity of the land of Bình Định Province. They are not merely a form of martial arts but also a crystallization of ethics, philosophy, and profound human values. Bình Định martial arts include many elements: martial ethics (*Võ đạo*), martial theory (*Võ lý*), martial techniques (*Võ thuật*), martial medicine (*Võ y*), martial etiquette (*Võ lễ*), martial attire (*Võ phục*), and martial music (*Võ nhạc*). The heritage's most distinctive feature is its emphasis on the ethical values of being human, grounded in the learning of ethics before techniques. The principle of "defense first, attack after" not only reflects the principle of using martial arts for self-defense, but also conveys a humanistic philosophy, helping martial arts practitioners understand their moral responsibility when practicing and using these martial arts.

Technically, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are distinguished by routines and stances, combining flexibility and smoothness with strength and speed. The techniques focus on striking with elbows and knees, along with other attacking moves, to achieve high efficiency in self-defense. At the same time, the movements are inspired by the natural world and by people's labor activities, and the weapons used – the whip, the staff, and the sword, and even agricultural tools like the plow, the rake, and the axe – reflect the deep connection between martial arts and people's daily lives.

A feature of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts is the introductory poems or proses that accompany the teaching of routines. These introductions not only help practitioners memorize techniques but also serve as cultural symbols that transmit the martial philosophy and humanistic spirit. The martial theory of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts is based on the “Eight Trigrams as foundation, Five Elements as essence” philosophy, which emphasizes harmony between humans and nature, and between strength and wisdom. The routines and techniques are built on the principle “Hands never leave the body, feet never leave the ground”, which expresses both flexibility and firmness, reflecting balance between defense and offense.

8. Values and Functions of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are an intangible cultural heritage that plays an important role in the spiritual and social life of the community, reflecting its identity and continuity. The heritage entails a comprehensive method of physical training that helps practitioners improve their health, stamina, agility, and self-defense skills. Through training, martial arts practitioners not only enhance their physical strength but also cultivate determination, resilience, discipline, and emotional control.

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts carry significant value for ethical education, promoting virtues such as compassion, courtesy, righteousness, wisdom, and trust. Practitioners, regardless of gender or age, are trained to be humble, righteous, and courageous in safeguarding what is right, and to live in harmony with the community. Martial arts students are encouraged to adopt a system of ethics, to respect their teachers and martial philosophy, to respect their elders, and to care for the young. They are taught discipline and responsibility, and are enabled to develop the mental strength they need to face challenges in life.

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts play a role in strengthening the community by fostering solidarity among generations, families, and individual practitioners. The teaching, exchange, and performance of martial arts not only help safeguard the heritage, but also create spaces for interaction, learning, and cultural exchange among members of the community.

The spirit of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts is clearly expressed through social principles such as respecting righteousness, safeguarding the weak, and living humanely. This philosophy, which is the foundation of the heritage's practice, is deeply embedded in the everyday life of Bình Định people, strengthening their community spirit and heightening their sense of social responsibility.

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are closely connected to traditional customs, rituals, and festivals. They are present in important events such as the Đống Đa - Tây Sơn Festival, martial arts initiation ceremonies, fishing prayer rituals, and the Đổ Giàn Village Festival, and thus contribute to the safeguarding of cultural spaces and safeguarding of the cultural and spiritual values of the region. Furthermore, martial routines, stances, and introductions are seen as repositories of folk knowledge, reflecting the integration of folk culture, martial arts, and life philosophy.

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are kept alive not only in martial arts schools but also in the community through martial arts exchanges and performances at traditional festivals and major cultural events, where they facilitate the creation of vibrant cultural spaces for the safeguarding of heritage and connection among people.

9. Safeguarding Measures of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

9.1. Support from the Government, Authorities, and Cultural Sector

- Cultural Heritage Law in 2024, in which the entirety of Chapter II on the safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage emphasizes and upholds the role of communities as the bearers of intangible cultural heritage.

- The National Target Program on Cultural Development for the period 2025–2035, which allocates significant resources to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

- The People's Committee of Bình Định Province issued Decision No. 3818/QĐ-UBND on October 28, 2016 to approve the proposal for the safeguarding and promotion of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts during the 2016–2020 period, with orientation toward 2030.

- The government has honored two People's Master practitioners, including Grandmaster Hồ Sùng (born 1938), Grandmaster Lê Xuân Cảnh (born 1938), and seven Meritorious Master practitioners in the field of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts, including Grandmaster Trương Văn Vịnh (born 1935), Grandmaster Huỳnh Lào (born 1930), Master Lâm Ngọc Ánh (born 1955), Master Lý Xuân Vân (born 1965), Senior Master Thái Hùng Vinh (born 1974), Senior Master Võ Thanh Hùng (born 1971), and Senior Master Võ Thanh Lương (born 1971).

9.2. Organization of Regular Training and Practice

- Martial arts schools and clubs actively train practitioners, participate in performances, and teach Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts during traditional festivals and local cultural events.

- Annually, the Department of Culture and Sports of Bình Định Province and the Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts Center organize training workshops for martial arts masters and school leaders, and hold martial arts competitions and festivals.

- Regular programs, festivals, and exchanges are organized to provide platforms for martial arts performances and foster strong relationships among martial arts schools, grandmasters, and practitioners.

- Certain localities, including Tây Sơn, An Nhơn, Quy Nhơn, Tuy Phước, and Hoài Nhơn, have particularly strong martial arts movements. Each of these localities has hundreds of grandmasters, masters, and coaches who tirelessly teach martial arts and organize practice sessions and performances, encouraging many students and younger generations to practice martial arts as part of their natural physical and mental development.

9.3. Formal and Informal Transmission of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts

- Martial arts masters and master coaches transmit techniques, skills, and ethics to the younger generations at martial arts schools, clubs, private homes, and cultural institutions such as temples, communal houses, and village cultural centers.

- The knowledge and skills of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts, including techniques of stance, punching, and kicking, as well as martial medicine and philosophy, are constantly passed down by masters to younger generations in families, schools, martial arts schools, clubs, and temples across the province. Following tradition, new martial arts students are introduced by their parents to a master for initiation and martial founders worshipping

ceremonies. The ethics, skills, and spirit of martial arts are extolled and their practice advocated in all aspects of life.

- Binh Định Province has implemented the educational program “Guidelines on using heritage use in schools,” co-issued by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism and the Ministry of Education and Training in 2013. The provincial government also issued Decision No. 03/CT-UBND to introduce Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts into schools across the province.

- Martial arts masters, in collaboration with physical education teachers, teach Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts to students in primary and secondary schools as part of Extracurricular programs.

- Heritage education in schools across the province has received effective interdisciplinary support and collaboration. The Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts Center has coordinated the program to introduce Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts Center as an extracurricular activity. Each year, nearly 1,000 physical education teachers at three levels of school receive training to teach extracurricular activities at school and guide all students through regular martial practice in accordance with the program distributed by the Department of Education and Training (six sessions per class, at three levels of school). The infrastructure and training grounds for martial arts have received sufficient focus and investment to ensure quality teaching at various educational institutions. Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts have been incorporated into competitions at all levels of the Phù Đổng Sports Festival, achieving many encouraging results. The Binh Định student team regularly participates in the National Traditional Martial Arts Competition for Secondary School Students, earning impressive achievements each year.

9.4. Revitalization, Documentation, Digitization, and Inventory

- The Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts Center, along with grandmasters, revitalizes traditional martial arts routines to train school leaders and martial arts clubs who will then teach them to students.

- Many martial arts masters collect routines, introductory poems, martial philosophies, and medical techniques as learning materials for practitioners.

- The Department of Culture and Sports of Binh Định Province and the Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts Center, with the active participation of martial arts masters, update the inventory of Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts and report it to the Cultural Heritage Department of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism annually.

9.5. Raising Awareness and Promoting Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts

- Traditional martial arts performances are integrated into contemporary cultural and social events, as well as traditional festivals in villages, towns, and through mass media. The official website of the Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts Center (<http://ttvtct.svhtt.binhdinh.gov.vn>) frequently updates and posts information about martial arts training activities and performances.

- The Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts Federation brings together martial arts associations, schools, clubs, and practitioners in Binh Định Province to organize annual competitions, performances, and martial arts exchanges.

- The program “Binh Định Martial Arts Night” is held every Saturday night and on major public holidays at Nguyễn Tất Thành Square in Quy Nhơn City to promote and raise awareness of the traditional martial arts heritage.

- Promotional programs of festivals and events are regularly featured on mass media. Traditional martial arts performances regularly take the stage at major arts events in the province, highlighting the enduring values and vitality of Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts

and the martial arts philosophy. Additionally, collaborations with media outlets have led to the production of various broadcast programs, both single features and series. Movies and documentaries are also released, such as *Võ Sinh Đại Chiến* (Battle of the Martial Arts Students) and *Nhất Đại Tông Sư* (The Greatest Master), and programs on Vietnam Television (VTV) have helped spread martial arts

10. The Active Role of the Community in Inventorying and Safeguarding

Throughout the process of inventorying Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts, the community has actively cooperated with researchers and management agencies to provide valuable data regarding identification, the current state of practice and transmission, and safeguarding measures. Representatives from martial arts schools and clubs, as well as prominent masters and grandmasters, shared information and ideas about their learning and practice of martial arts, offering insights into the identification, value, and function of martial arts in their communities. They also provided detailed information about martial arts masters and the founders of various martial arts styles and schools.

The community has actively supported and facilitated the filming and photography of martial arts activities at schools and clubs, and during community festivals and rituals. Not only did martial arts masters and practitioners participate, but they also contributed essential opinions regarding the selection of settings, practice sessions, and martial arts routines. Through filming and interviews, martial arts masters and practitioners showcased their deep understanding and pride in their heritage.

Community representatives provided numerous materials, including photographs, videos, and recordings of martial arts as performed at rituals and festivals, and as practiced and taught at martial arts schools and clubs. These materials offered researchers authentic information for the inventory report, from which data were selected to be included in the heritage dossier. The accounts they shared not only reflect the community's clear recognition of the heritage's values but also express their awareness of cultural identity and continuity, as well as their own roles in safeguarding the heritage.

The community of cultural bearers of Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts plays a central role in proposing and implementing measures for heritage safeguarding, from teaching and documenting to promoting and enhancing its values in contemporary life. Martial arts masters, practitioners, and master practitioners actively collaborate with local authorities to maintain training and transmission activities at martial arts schools and clubs, and to introduce martial arts into schools, ensuring their legacy across generations. They have also played a significant part in promoting the martial arts heritage through performances, exchanges, and martial arts festivals, and in sharing information through mass media. Thanks to the community's proactive participation, Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts continue to be practiced and developed sustainably.

Conclusion

Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are an intangible cultural heritage with profound historical, cultural, and social values, deeply intertwined with the formation and development of the region, and martial spirit of Bình Định people. The inventory process, with the active involvement of the community – including martial arts masters and practitioners – has provided essential materials for the identification, assessment, safeguarding, and promotion of the heritage in the contemporary context.

The inventory findings show that Bình Định Traditional Martial Arts are practiced and transmitted at martial arts schools and clubs, and performed as an integral part of certain

traditional festivals, rituals, and cultural and social events. Martial arts masters and practitioners actively contribute to the safeguarding and teaching of the heritage, ensuring its continuity across generations.

The inventory work is updated annually and reported to the Cultural Heritage Department to update in the intangible cultural heritage management system of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism. The inventory process involves collaboration from the community, local authorities, and management agencies, with consultation from researchers, to clarify the current state of practice, identify the heritage's bearers, and contribute to the heritage's documentation, digitization, and promotion, laying the foundation for long-term safeguarding strategies.

The inventory work, supported by the active participation of the community, provides a scientific basis for safeguarding and promoting Binh Định Traditional Martial Arts. The inventory also offers vital information to prepare the nomination file for possible inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. With the active involvement of the community in the inventory and safeguarding of the heritage, along with the support of local authorities and cultural sector, this heritage element will continue to flourish, not only as an essential part of Binh Định's cultural life but also as a representation of Vietnamese intangible cultural heritage from the Central Coastal region.