

# LOCKING UP MUSICAL SYSTEMS THROUGH TRANSLATED ORAL TERMINOLOGY IN THE SOUTH-VIETNAMESE MUSIC OF THE TALENTED

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## INTRODUCTION

The South-Vietnamese Music of the Talented (Đờn ca tài tử Nam Bộ; an item inscribed in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List of the World) provides a wide field of possibilities to study a relatively closed system of musical terms, orally transmitted and academically explored since the mid-20th century. A central question of this paper is the capability of the musicians to memorize or to depict their musical thoughts for self-guidance. Looking into the history of the given musical system and its realization in musical practice, some remarkable observations can be made that result in considerations far beyond this one specific example.

Interestingly, the lead instrument, the đàn kim (long necked moon lute), served for a long time as didactic tool in teaching and practicing a quite strictly used framework of repertoire and performance categories that were widely discussed among the musicians. Latest in the 21st century, this highly valued part of South Vietnamese music traditions is taught and practiced with teaching tools in modified staff notation or in a transformed and individually modernized gongchepu of which exist different versions and representing different schools or circles. This paper is to discuss the possibility of re-introducing vernacular terminology in order to refine core features of this tradition instead of eliminating them through an imposed terminology taken from classical European standard writings and from sinophile re-interpretations.

Field work consisting of long term participant observation and regular discussions with musicians from diverse lineages add up to the complex picture of a musical tradition that is relatively young yet old enough to be considered closed. As a theoretical framework discourse analysis and hermeneutics are applied. The author has been researching about this topic since 20 years and wants to present concise results made in this very specific area that is often under-represented in general publications on the topic.

## ĐỜN CA TÀI TỬ NAM BỘ: SOME BACKGROUND

The “Traditional South-Vietnamese Music of the Talented”, as it is often translated from Vietnamese into English, is an item listed as Intangible Heritage of the World. It is a special item of musical practice which evolved in a historically short period of time with a large structured repertoire and outstanding potential in providing an ‘identity tool’ for the South of Vietnam. The musical sources and personal skills of this music practice draw on experiences with the Central Vietnamese entertainment music cultivated outside the court and the ritual ensemble music practice which delivered numerous categories to the repertoire of the Traditional South-Vietnamese Music of the Talented.

## TRANSMISSION METHODS

Here, I will examine the multi-layered transmission methods. Đờn ca tài tử Nam Bộ is transmitted through face to face teaching. However, in order to spread throughout the entire South in a higher speed and due to the increasing complexity of the fast-grown repertoire, an impressive terminology was quickly established and became part of the transmission, which was later enriched with modern “translations into Western idioms”. In the following, I will list all important terminological categories such as general terms, terms used for the musical source material, for the modal phraseology, the

rhythmic syntax, the metric phraseology, the framework syntax, the playing techniques, and the aesthetic evaluation.

It is important to understand that these terms derive from actually three origins: the central Vietnamese common language, Sino-Vietnamese as spoken by the upper class and court officers, and the Western solfège introduced in the early 20th century by French music teachers. The table differentiates the common Vietnamese and the Sino-Vietnamese first. This is to show that terminologically overlapping appropriations have a history before being affected by globalized Western school music terminology.

## TERMINOLOGY

The following table shows the use of Sino-Vietnamese (normal letters) versus Vietnamese (bold & italic) terms used in the verbal repertoire about Đờn ca tài tử Nam Bộ. The distribution of Vietnamese terms is indicative for an understanding of its history.<sup>1</sup> (translated into English by the author):

Terms	literally	meaning
<b>general</b>		
<i>đờn</i> ca tài tử ( <i>đàn</i> ca tài tử)	playing (instrumentally) music and singing of the talented	Ensemble music
âm nhạc tài tử Nam bộ	Music of the talented in the South (Nam bộ = sinoviet. term for the geographical area)	South-Vietnamese ensemble music
<i>nhạc cổ Nam phần</i>	<i>old music of the South (Nam phần = viet. Term for the geographical area)</i>	<i>South-Vietnamese ensemble music</i>
nhạc tài tử	(abbreviated term)	
<i>bài</i>	<i>piece (colloquial)</i>	<i>Tune, song, lyrics</i>
<i>bài bản</i>	<i>piece</i>	<i>Definite piece</i>
<i>bản đàn</i>	<i>Instrumental piece</i>	<i>Instrumental version of a tune, song, piece</i>
<b>Musical material</b> (regarding their sources)		
<i>lòng bản</i>	<i>Core piece</i>	<i>basic framework of a piece, scheme, model</i>
bắc	northern	name of a mode
lễ	festive	name of a mode
nhạc	arty	name of a mode
nam	southern	name of a mode
ai	elegiac	name of a mode
xuân	spring-time-like	name of a mode
đảo	reversing	name of a mode
oán	lamenting	name of a mode
ngự	ruling	name of a mode
hạ	lower	name of a mode
dựng	hesitating	name of a mode
vọng cổ	nostalgic	name of a mode
Quảng	from Quang area	name of a mode
Tiêu	from Tieu area	name of a mode
( <i>khách</i> )	<i>alien, joyful</i>	<i>name of a mode</i>
<b>modal phraseology</b>		
điệu	way of doing, art	mode

<sup>1</sup> First mentioned yet uncategorized in Jähnichen, Gisa. 1997. Studien zu traditionellen Instrumentalpraktiken des HAT A DAO and des CA VONG CO. 2vol. Vol. 1, Chapter 3, Section 3.1.1. Begriffsapparat und Interpretation der Terminologie im ca vọng cổ, erweitert auf das Repertoire der südvietnamesischen Ensemblesmusik.

điệu thức <i>hơi</i> cung bậc cung bậc	Art in practice <i>breath, smell, atmosphere, nuance</i> tone step rank, degree, step Set of steps (plural)	actual mode <i>mode</i> fixed sound, frequency tone step, also frets in lutes relationship between tone steps or the distance between frets used within an actual mode
<i>âm rung</i> <i>âm</i> biến	<i>oscillating tone</i> modified tone	<i>hovering/oscillating tone</i> <i>specific tone step unique to the given actual mode</i>
<i>mở</i>	( <i>surgery</i> )	<i>creating a compulsory sequence of tone steps</i>
hò, xự, xư, y, xang xê, xê, cống, phan, oan, liu, u... <i>tôn, là</i> chuyển hò chuyển hệ <i>chấn</i>	(names of tones/tone steps)  ( <i>name of tones</i> ) shifting hò Shifting the whole system <i>developing</i>	Actual names of tone steps (relatively, not absolute) <i>Tone names when using open strings</i> shifting the scale's starting tone Changing the mode (Metabolé) <i>extensive development of the source material in the bắc-mode</i> <i>extensive development of the source material in the bắc-mode</i> <i>basic source of a piece in the bắc-mode</i>
trường	long	<i>Extracted from the basic source of a piece in the bắc-mode</i>
<i>vấn</i>	<i>short</i>	
tẩu mã	riding, rushing	
<b><u>rhythmic syntax</u></b>		
<i>nhịp</i> <i>ô nhịp</i> <i>nhịp</i> nội <i>nhịp</i> ngoại <i>ô</i> <i>song lang (song loan), phách</i>	<i>bar, beat, phrase</i> <i>one bar, one beat, one phrase</i> within one bar outside the beat, the bar <i>cube, square, "bar"</i> <i>"wooden clapper used by foot"</i> <i>main beat</i>	<i>phrase</i>  on the main beat <i>syncope</i> <i>phrasing</i> <i>Beat of the song lang</i> <i>counting unit</i>
<b><u>metric phraseology</u></b>		
<i>nhịp</i> một (1) <i>nhịp</i> đôi (2) <i>nhịp</i> tư (4) <i>nhịp</i> tám (8) <i>nhịp</i> 16 <i>nhịp</i> 32 <i>nhịp</i> 64 <i>nhịp</i> 128	one bar- two bar- four bar- eight bar- 16-bar- 32-bar- 64-bar- 128-bar-	phrase with one basic beat phrase with two basic beats phrase with four basic beats phrase with eight basic beats 16-phrases 32-phrases 64-phrases 128-phrases
<b><u>framework syntax</u></b>		
<i>lớp</i> <i>câu</i> <i>câu</i> vọng cổ <i>câu qua</i> <i>vế</i> phần	<i>scene</i> <i>sentence</i> sentence in a ca vọng cổ <i>transferring sentence</i> <i>part, section</i> opposite, anti-	<i>section of a piece</i> <i>row in a section</i> section of a ca vọng cổ <i>interlude</i> <i>row in the ca vọng cổ</i> possible intersection between two different pieces last row of a câu vọng cổ Relatively independent beginning of a piece continuation of a section or an entire piece including "head"
thòng thủ	lowering, letting down head	
vĩ	tail	

### Playing techniques

<i>chữ nhạc</i>	music sign	syllable notation
<i>chữ đàn</i>	<i>sign for instrument players</i>	<i>combination of syllable notation and playing instruction</i>
<i>chạy</i>	<i>rushing, running</i>	<i>running out of the main beat rhythm in fast movements towards the end of a phrase, a sentence, or a section.</i>
<i>đạo</i>	<i>strolling, going around, cueing in</i>	<i>metrically free prelude according to the modal rules</i>
<i>vào</i>	<i>boarding, entering</i>	<i>transition into a fixed meter</i>
<i>gảy</i>	<i>beating a string</i>	<i>plucking downwards</i>
<i>hắt</i>	<i>plucking</i>	<i>plucking upwards</i>
<i>nhấn (nhấn nhá)</i>	<i>pressing</i>	<i>the entire possibilities to deal with tone steps within a mode</i>
<i>rung chậm</i>	<i>slowly oscillating</i>	<i>periodically slowly pressing and loosening a string (main hovering tone)</i>
<i>rung mau</i>	<i>quickly oscillating</i>	<i>periodically quickly pressing and loosening a string (hovering tone)</i>
<i>rung nửa chữ</i>	<i>oscillating on one half of the tone</i>	<i>combination of straight and hovering tone</i>
<i>luyến lên</i>	<i>being upwards attached</i>	<i>raising frequency</i>
<i>đặt mạnh</i>	<i>heavily pulling</i>	<i>string pulling heavily down between two neighboring frets</i>
<i>đặt nhẹ</i>	<i>slightly pulling</i>	<i>string pulling slightly down between two neighboring frets</i>
<i>luyến xuống</i>	<i>being attached downwards</i>	<i>lowering frequency</i>
<i>hãm (hãm) mạnh buông</i>	<i>brake strongly or holding back and then loosening</i>	<i>string strongly pulling between neighboring frets and then slowly let go (long glissando downwards)</i>
<i>hãm (hãm) nhẹ buông</i>	<i>brake slightly or holding back and then loosening</i>	<i>string slightly pulling between neighboring frets and then quickly let go (short glissando downwards)</i>
<i>mượn</i>	<i>borrowing</i>	<i>playing a tone on another fret through pulling the string</i>
<i>nhấn thế mạnh</i>	<i>pressing at another place</i>	<i>borrowing the tone from a fret far away of the assigned fret</i>
<i>nhấn thế nhẹ</i>	<i>pressing gently at another place</i>	<i>borrowing the tone from below the assigned fret</i>
<i>nhấn thế mạnh buông</i>	<i>pressing strongly at another place and then releasing</i>	<i>string strongly pulling near another distanced fret and then slowly let go (long glissando upwards and downwards)</i>
<i>nhấn thế nhẹ buông</i>	<i>pressing gently at another place and then releasing</i>	<i>string slightly pulling near another distanced fret and then quickly let go (short glissando upwards and downwards)</i>
<i>hưởng</i>	<i>receiving, get</i>	<i>tie</i>
<i>đặt mạnh, rung</i>	<i>strongly pulling and vibrating</i>	<i>string pulling strongly down between two neighboring frets and periodically vibrating and relaxing</i>
	there are further combinations of nhấn-types according to Nguyễn Hữu Ba)	
<i>dây ngoài, dây dài</i>	<i>outer string of the đàn kìm</i>	<i>lower, thicker string of the đàn kìm</i>
<i>dây trong, dây tiểu</i>	<i>inner string of the đàn kìm</i>	<i>higher, thinner string of the đàn kìm</i>
<i>dây đàn</i>	<i>string tuning</i>	<i>system of interval between the strings and fret positions of the đàn kìm</i>

<b>hò nhất:</b>	first hò	hò on the outer open string of the đàn kìm
dây bắc oán (fourth)	name of the string tuning	hò on the outer open string of the đàn kìm, fourth between both strings
dây bắc (fifth)	name of the string tuning	hò on the outer open string of the đàn kìm, fifth between both strings
dây ty* (octave)	name of the string tuning [according to Trainor an invention of Vĩnh Bảo]	hò on the outer open string of the đàn kìm, octave between both strings
<b>hò nhì:</b>	second hò	hò on the first fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm
hò nhì (minor 3rd)	(nameless)	hò on the first fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm, minor 3 <sup>rd</sup> between both strings
dây Tố Lan thượng = dây oán	name of the string tuning	hò on the first fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm, 4 <sup>th</sup> between both strings
hò nhì (4th)		hò on the first fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm, minor 5 <sup>th</sup> between both strings
dây <b>chinh</b> = dây bắc hò nhì (5th)	name of the string tuning	hò on the first fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm, minor 7 <sup>th</sup> between both strings
dây Tố Lan (minor 7th)	name of the string tuning	hò on the second fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm
<b>hò ba:</b>	third hò	hò on the second fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm
hò <b>ba</b> (5th)	(nameless)	<b><i>hò on the second fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm, 5th between both strings</i></b>
<b>hò tư:</b>	fourth hò	hò on the third fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm
dây oán (4th)/(5th)	name of the string tuning	hò on the third fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm, 4 <sup>th</sup> or 5 <sup>th</sup> between both strings
<b>hò năm:</b>	fifth hò	hò on the fourth fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm
hò <b>năm</b> (4th)	(nameless)	<b><i>hò on the fourth fret of the outer string of the đàn kìm, 4th between both strings</i></b>
<b><u>aesthetic evaluation</u></b>		there are no specific musical evaluation terms. most of them are derived from common Vietnamese language, such as:
<i>mềm</i>	<i>soft</i>	
<i>mau</i>	<i>vivid, wild</i>	
<i>lạt lẽo (nhạt nhẽo)</i>	<i>tasteless, boring, dead</i>	
<i>vô vị</i>	<i>not interesting, without color, without spices</i>	

**FIGURE 1: Table of terms used in the verbal repertoire about Đờn ca tài tử Nam Bộ.**

	rung chậm		dặt mạnh, rung
	rung mau		dặt nhẹ buông, dặt mạnh
	rung nửa chữ		dặt nhẹ buông, dặt mạnh, rung
	dặt mạnh		dặt nhẹ buông, hám mạnh
	dặt nhẹ		dặt nhẹ buông, hám mạnh, rung
	dặt mạnh buông		nhấn thế mạnh, dặt nhẹ buông, rung
	dặt nhẹ buông		nhấn thế mạnh, rung
	hám mạnh		nhấn thế mạnh buông, rung
	hám nhẹ		hám mạnh buông, hám mạnh
	hám mạnh buông		hám nhẹ buông, dặt mạnh
	hám nhẹ buông		dặt mạnh buông, hám mạnh
	nhấn thế mạnh		dặt nhẹ buông, dặt tiếp
	nhấn thế nhẹ		hám mạnh buông, dặt mạnh
	nhấn thế mạnh buông		hám nhẹ buông, dặt mạnh, dặt nhẹ buông, dặt tiếp
	nhấn thế nhẹ buông		hường, hám mạnh
	hường		dặt mạnh buông, rung
			hám mạnh, dặt tiếp
			dặt tiếp nửa chữ
			hám mạnh buông, rung

**FIGURE 2: Unknown author’s collection of playing instruction for Đờn ca tài tử Nam Bộ played on đàn tranh (the 16-string half tube zither).**

### NOTATION

In the notation used recently, all these layers of instructions are combined. Additionally, parts of the repertoire are taught using simplified solfege at state music schools. This practice adds a third dimension to the musical practice. In detail, the following parameters of the musical framework are named in order to indicate the way of playing music:

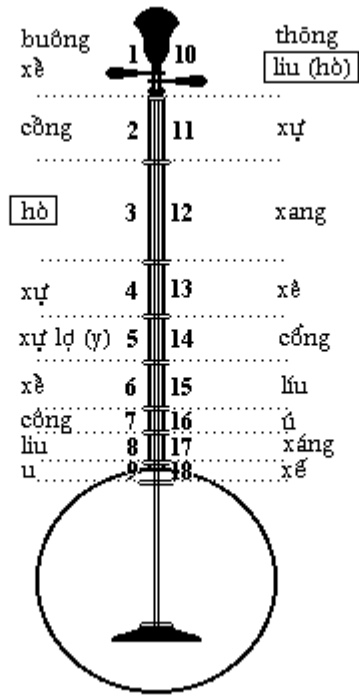
The title of the example chosen is “*Phú lục chân*”, meaning the piece is dedicated to “Spring Feelings” in its developed version from the set of 18 pieces in the bắc mode played in the tuning *dây bắc, hò tư*, except the Vietnamese guitar, which uses the tuning *dây tứ nguyệt*. All categorizations follow a Sino-Vietnamese background, which implies the involvement of musicians who were familiar with court traditions due to their local provenience or the friendship to a former court musician. From the indication the the piece is the developed version, one can then conclude that it has musical phrases of 4 bars in length and that these phrases are marked on the end of each 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> bar with the wooden clapper song lang. Further, one understands that this version includes the full piece with head and tail.



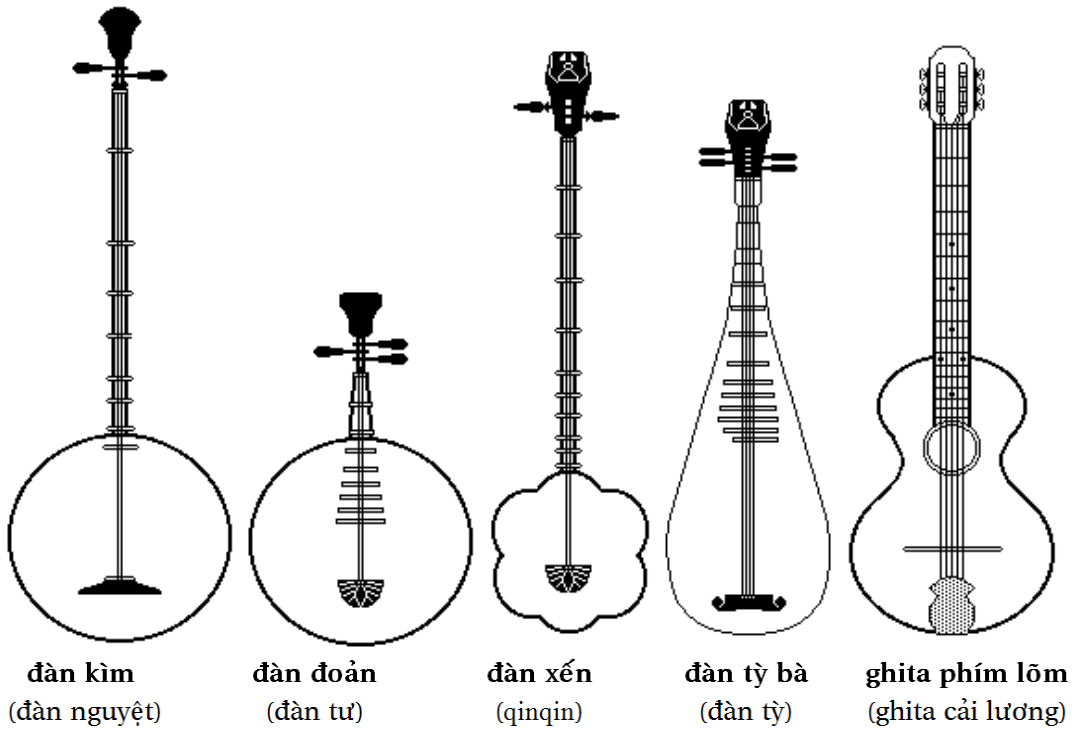
**FIGURE 3: Song lang, a small slit drum played by foot. The sound structures the phrases. For example, song lang đôi "3-4" means that the *song lang* is played on the main beat of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> bar within one phrase of 4 bars length.**

1.								
	xú	xang	hò	xê	ư	công	liu	xáng
2.								
	hò	xú	xang	xê	công	liu	ư	xáng

**FIGURE 4: Translating simple *gongchepu* into Vietnamese syllables for 2 different tunings.**



**FIGURE 5:** The đàn kìm and the fret numbering for an instrument tuned in a fourth with additional syllables for identification.

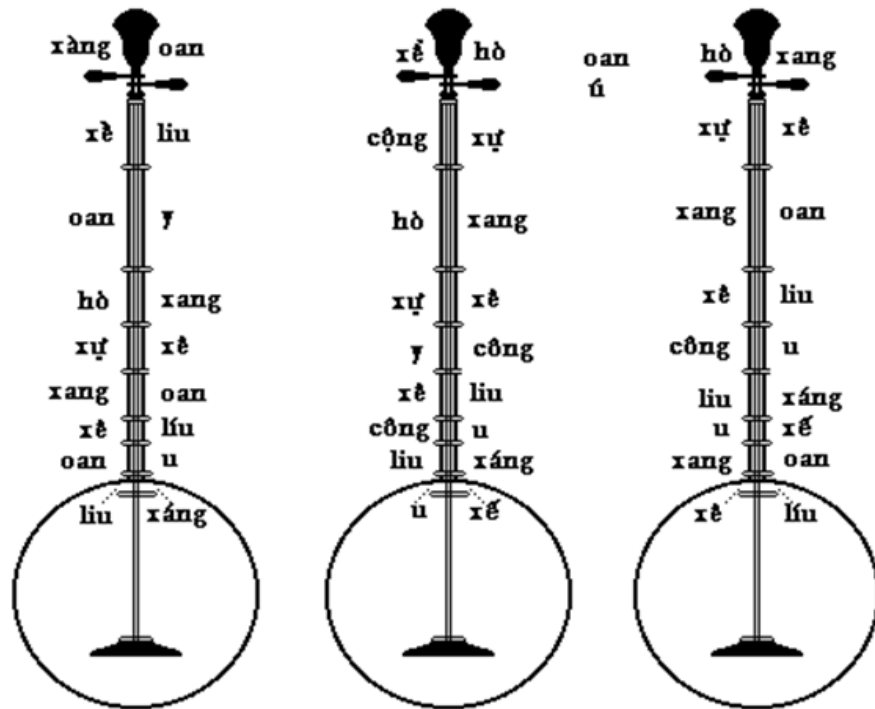


**FIGURE 6:** The different lutes used in Đờn ca tài tử Nam Bộ.

dây hò nhì:

dây bắc oán:

dây hò tư:



If hò = c

frets:  
open string

1	F	B	10
2	G	c	11
3	B	e <sup>-</sup>	12
4	c	f	13
5	d	g	14
6	f	b	15
7	g	c	16
8	b	e <sup>-</sup>	17
9	c	f	18

1	G	c	10
2	A	d	11
3	c	f	12
4	d	g	13
5	e	a	14
6	g	c	15
7	a	d	16
8	c	f	17
9	d	g	18

1	C	F	10
2	D	G	11
3	F	B	12
4	G	c	13
5	A	d	14
6	c	f	15
7	d	g	16
8	f	b	17
9	g	c	18

FIGURE 7: Examples for different tunings and the change of syllables per fret (translated into possible pitches, not in absolute frequencies).

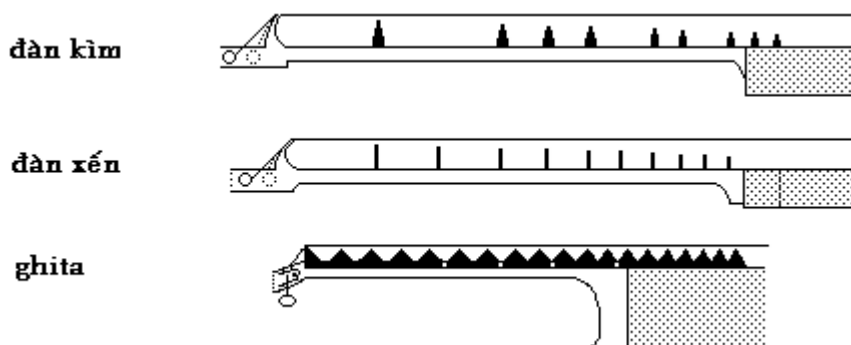


FIGURE 8: Different fret positions of lutes used in Đờn ca tài tử Nam Bộ.



The traditional transcription of the piece taken as an example for the discussed issues is as follows:

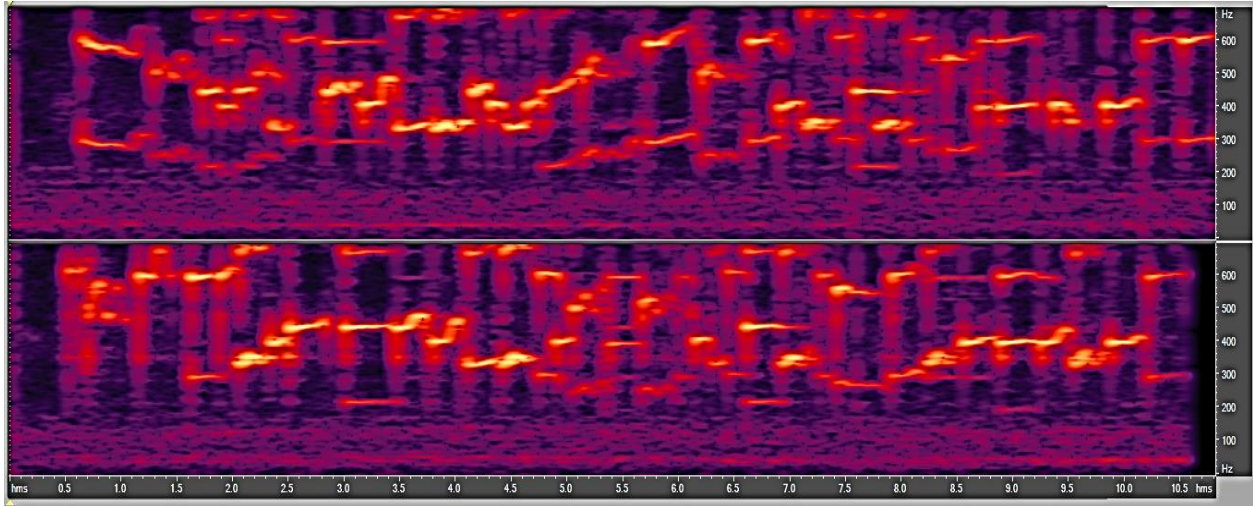
## Phú lục chẵn

thập bát vĩ (nhịp tư - song lang đôi "3-4")

I	1.	-- tồn U xáng xáng -- ú liú CỘNG			
	2.	tồn u -- liú cộng -- ú liú CỘNG tồn cộng liú U			
	3.	-- tồn U xế xáng -- ú liú U			
	4.	tồn liú CỘNG tồn u -- xế xáng U liú ú xáng LIU			
	5.	tồn LIU liú tồn liú CỘNG ú liú -- cồng liú XẾ			
	6.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn xê -- cộng liú XẾ cộng tồn LIU			
	7.	tồn LIU liú tồn liú CỘNG liú liú -- cộng liú U			
	8.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn ú -- xế xáng U xáng tồn LIU			
II	9.	-- tồn CỘNG liú liú -- ú xáng LIU	III	17.	-- tồn CỘNG liú liú -- ú xáng LIU
	10.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn liú -- ú xáng LIU tồn cộng liú XẾ		18.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn liú -- ú xáng LIU tồn cộng liú XẾ
	11.	-- xê XANG xang -- xê liú XỰ		19.	-- xê XANG xang -- xê liú XỰ
	12.	xang liú XỰ xang xê -- tồn liú -- cồng xê XANG		20.	xang liú XỰ xang xê -- tồn liú -- cộng xê XANG
	13.	tồn XANG xang tồn XẾ cồng liú -- xê xang liú XỰ		21.	tồn XANG xang tồn XẾ cồng liú -- xê xang liú XỰ
	14.	xang liú XỰ xang cồng -- liú hò XỰ xang cồng liú XẾ		22.	xang liú XỰ xang cồng -- liú hò XỰ xang cồng liú XẾ
	15.	tồn XẾ xang xê liú CỘNG tồn liú -- cồng xê XANG		23.	tồn XẾ xang xê liú CỘNG tồn liú -- cộng xê XANG
	16.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn xang -- xang liú XỰ xang xê --		24.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn xang -- xang liú XỰ xang xê --
			IV	25.	-- là HỒ xê xang -- hò xang XỰ
				26.	xang hò -- xang xự -- xê xang XỰ hò xự xang XẾ
				27.	-- tồn XẾ xang xê -- xê xang XẾ
				28.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn xê -- xang xê -- xang cồng xê XANG
				29.	tồn XANG xê xê xang HỒ xê xang HỒ tồn hò xự XANG
				30.	xang cồng -- xê xang -- xang xê XẾ tồn xê xang HỒ
				31.	-- tồn CỘNG ú liú -- tồn cộng liú XẾ
				32.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn xê -- cộng liú XẾ cộng tồn LIU
				33.	-- tồn CỘNG liú liú -- cộng liú U
				34.	tồn tang TỊCH tồn ú -- xế xáng U xáng tồn LIU

**FIGURE 9: Structure of the piece in *Phú lục chẵn*. This piece of music consists of IV sections with 8+8+8+10 phrases. Section II and III are intentionally similar. Section I and IV show 3 similar phrases at the end (see black bracket).**

The notation is analyzing writing similarities. Lines 9-16 and 17-24 are not only similarly written. They are also appearing in the same frequency. The last three lines of the first and the last section are completely similar, too. Yet they are played differently.



**FIGURE 10: spectral comparison of line 9 and 17, played the same day, by the same musician, in the same piece of music.**

From the notation it is clear that the piece has 4 sections (câu) of 8, 8, 8, and 10 phrases. All together these are 34 phrases. In the notation scheme, similar phrases are marked with similar colours. The way of notation is not a playing instruction but a framework that has to be fulfilled by the musician's musical interpretation, a skill that is far beyond improvisation. So, usually, a musician does not repeat a phrase with the same notation in the same way, neither at different times nor even in the same piece.

I analysed this by audibly paralleling phrases which are written similarly in the framework.

### MODIFICATIONS

Given the fact that only very few terms are deriving from Vietnamese and most of the theoretical categorization is Sino-Vietnamese, it is surprising that this musical practice could be developed in such a relatively short time of only 20 years with such an important impact on other newly developing local art forms such as the modernised urban theatre and the early urban entertainment.

The observations, however, do not indicate that the entire music practice is foreign or Non-Vietnamese since the way of developing pieces and the application of already available systems such as the Chinese gongchepu, their translation into Vietnamese syllables after the Romanization, and the adaptation of Western ways of indicating phrases and metric units, contributed in a unique way to the steadily changing repertoire. Most significantly, this happened in the repertoire of the modernized urban theatre (Kieu Tan 1993, Gisa Jähnichen 2014).

--	HỒ	XỰ	XANG	XỀ	CÔNG	LIU	U
tòn tang T CH	là HỒ	lú hò XỰ	tòn XANG	tòn XỀ	tòn CÔNG	tòn LIU	tòn U
	xề xang HỒ	xang lú XỰ	xề XANG	xang tòn XỀ	tòn liú CÔNG	xáng tòn LIU	xề xáng U
	tòn xề xang HỒ	xề xang lú XỰ	cống xề XANG	cống liú XỀ	liú tòn liú CÔNG	cống tòn LIU	ú liú U
	xề xề xang HỒ	xề lú XỰ	xang cống xề XANG	tòn cống liú XỀ	ú liú CÔNG	ú xáng LIU	cống liú U
	xang hò --	hò xang XỰ	tòn hò xự XANG	xang cống liú XỀ	xang xề liú CÔNG	liú ú xáng LIU	tòn cống liú U
		xề xang XỰ	xang --	cống liú XỀ	xang cống --	tòn liú --	tòn u --
		xang xự --	tòn xang --	tòn cống liú XỀ	liú cống --	liú liú --	
			xề xang --	hò xự xang XỀ		cống liú --	
			xáng xáng --	xề xang XỀ		ú liú --	
				xang xề XỀ			
				tòn xề --			
				xang xề --			

**FIGURE 11: Phú lục chân phrase variations. For each final tone of a phrase a specific repertoire of possible tone sequences exists. The red marked are the most common.**

Another terminological refinement is analysed for the piece Phú lục chân. The following table shows the 4 bars per phrase and their emphasized finals as signs in the unique outer shape of their syllable

definition. The details show that finals in an octave have a completely different melodic and constructive environment. Also, the shape depends on the position within the given metric unit.

ho	xu	xang	xe	cong	liu	u
□*▲◆	--**◇	◇▲●*	●□●▲	--+*□	□+++●	+□□+
	*▲●◇	▲□●*	⌘●●▲		⌘▲▲●	--+*+
	--◆*◇	⌘▲▲*	◇□◇▲		⌘+++●	●□●+
		*◆◆*	⌘*◇▲		--□●●	--□●+
			*◇◇▲			
			--▲▲▲			
			--□●▲			

**FIGURE 12: Translation of tone syllables in geometric signs.**

The next table shows that different emphasized finals are differently “expanded” or “refined”.

An expansion or refinement takes place if the entire phrase shows varied intra-melodic directions or a varied order of demanded tone steps. Then this emphasized final will sound distinct, too. So, the possibilities of a piece are also implied through the amount of refinements that can take place. This refinement is here shown in the geometric signs to make differences clearer visible. So, the geometric signs had to vary according to their pitch categories such as squares, stars, or crosses, in order to show the differentiation.

		Possibilities for differentiating the emphasized tones per phrase		
I	1.	--+*□	--+*□	--+*□
	2.	✦回回◆	◆回回+	+□□+
	3.	--+*+	--+*+	--+*+
	4.	□✦+●	□◆+◎	□+++●
	5.	○□◡△	●□○▽	●□●▲
	6.	⌘▲▶▷	⌘▶▽◎	⌘▲▲●
	7.	○□○+	●□○+	●□●+
	8.	⌘✦+◑	⌘◆+●	⌘+++●
II	9.	--■○●	--■○◎	--□●●
	10.	⌘◎●◁	⌘○◎▽	⌘●●▲
	11.	--**◇	--**◇	--**◇
	12.	◇◡◎*	◇▶○*	◇▲●*
	13.	✦▽◡◇	✦▲○◇	*▲●◇
	14.	◇□◆◁	◇□◆▽	◇□◇▲
	15.	▲□◎*	▲□○*	▲□●*
	16.	⌘*◇◡	⌘*◇▶	⌘*◇▲
III	17.	--■○●	--■○◎	--□●●
	18.	⌘◎●◁	⌘○◎▽	⌘●●▲
	19.	--**◇	--**◇	--**◇
	20.	◇◡◎*	◇▶○*	◇▲●*

	21.	☆ ▽ ◐ ◇	☆ ▲ ○ ◇	* ▲ ● ◇
	22.	◇ □ ◆ ◀	◇ □ ◆ ▽	◇ □ ◇ ▲
	23.	▲ □ ◎ *	▲ □ ○ *	▲ □ ● *
	24.	⌘ * ◇ ▽	⌘ * ◇ ▲	⌘ * ◇ ▲
IV	25.	-- ♠ * ◆	-- ♠ * ◆	-- ♠ * ◆
	26.	★ ❖ ◆ ▷	★ ❖ ◆ ◀	* ◆ ◆ ▲
	27.	-- ▲ ▽ ▽	-- ▲ ▲ ◀	-- ▲ ▲ ▲
	28.	⌘ ▽ ▽ *	⌘ ▲ ▲ *	⌘ ▲ ▲ *
	29.	☆ ★ ● *	☆ ● ● *	* ♠ ♠ *
	30.	□ * ▽ ●	□ * ▷ ●	□ * ▲ ♠
	31.	-- ■ ◐ ◀	-- ■ ○ ▽	-- □ ● ▲
	32.	⌘ ▽ ▷ ▽	⌘ ▽ ▽ ○	⌘ ▲ ▲ ●
	33.	-- ■ ○ +	-- ■ ○ +	-- □ ● +
	34.	⌘ ✦ + ◐	⌘ ◆ + ●	⌘ + + ●

**FIGURE 13: Translation of tone syllables in geometric signs showing differently expanded or refined final phrases.**

Though this way of extension is purely hypothetical, it could be applied at any time now or in the future. The musicians are open towards such applications (Kiều Tấn 1993).

## CONCLUSION

The application of various layers of terms that were adapted from Sino-Vietnamese sources through court musicians and musicians of the ceremonial music in the South, many of them having been former court musicians, and the appropriation of Vietnamese terms in order to develop a refined repertoire that became later on the main source of the urban theatre music, enabled this type of unique music practice. It was not just an educational tool or a memory support. It was rather one of the most influential methods in creatively adding up to the repertoire. The translated ‘oral notation’ can be depicted in many different ways without losing this creative potential. The agents of this music practice have chosen to not lock up the terminology but to keep the terminology open towards innovative applications of visual aids.

The observations and analyses show clearly that without the manifold impact of terms for categorizations, the distribution of this music practice would have been limited to a very few generations and local circles. Only the exchange of music and its sophisticated construction expressed through exchangeable means could mark the difference to a number of other locally grown music practices long before modern media could have had an impact on musical distribution.

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