

SOME REVELATIONS ABOUT THE SONG DẠ CỔ HOÀI LANG

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Abstract

Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang - the forerunner of today's song Vong Cổ, important to many events and performances in the South of Vietnam, still delivers many interesting facts. There have been some documents about the composer's biography, the origin of the song and its musical mood, the title and other names, the lyrics and their connection to the original melody, or versions of it. But at present, there are still many details that have not been clarified or agreed upon by those who need to know about this song. Insufficient research has affected a number of them. This paper, based on participant observation and literature studies in the broadest sense, is to give some more recent insights into the topic and to clarify some issues often discussed among scholars of Vietnam and beyond.

Keywords: South Vietnam, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, Vong Cổ, Historical Study, Music Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Through a number of historical documents as well as private texts and records, there were recently research materials added to the already available knowledge¹. New investigations could be made using methods such as comparison, notation, and analysis. At first, the intention of this particular research was to make new findings and comments on:

- the year of birth and the place of birth of composer Cao Văn Lầu
- the way and the cause of the composition,
- the naming and the year of publication,
- more information about the Hoài Lang,
- the original version of the Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang,
- the original music and lyrics of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang,
- the process of renaming the work.

From the results of the above research, we use it to try to interpret the main features of the history of formation and perfection of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang.

THE CREATION OF DẠ CỔ HOÀI LANG

How did the Đờn ca tài tử movement throughout the east and west region of South Vietnam influence the birth of the song?

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Southern region had many places for Đờn ca tài tử. In the beginning of the movement, groups in Vĩnh Long và Sa Đéc, later increasingly in other important places of early urban character such as: Sài Gòn - Chợ Lớn, Cần Đước - Tân An, Vĩnh Kim - Cái Thia (Mỹ Tho), and Bạc Liêu. These groups of talented musicians are linked, yet invisibly divided into two circles: The circle of Eastern talents (Biên Hòa - Sài Gòn - Chợ Lớn in the past) with the leader Nguyễn

¹ This paper consists of a large number of Vietnamese expressions that are used as they are. It would distort the reading flow to italicize them all. Nevertheless, the editor tried to mark important terms through capitalizing or through other means.

Quang Đại² in Cần Đước, together with talented writers and musicians such as Sáu Thới, Tám Hạnh, Cao Quỳnh Diêu, Cao Quỳnh Cư. The circle of Western talents (concentrated in the area of Vĩnh Long - Sa Đéc - Mỹ Tho in the past) with the is Trần Quang Quờn³ was created around in Vĩnh Long, joining forces with famous writers and musicians such as Phạm Đăng Đàn, Nguyễn Liên Phong, Nguyễn Tùng Bá, Tống Hữu Định.

Both circles have made great contributions to the music movement and created new compositions, they developed an academic system of musical issues. These musicians were teaching and spreading the music of *đờn ca tài tử* in their own way. Among the Western circle members, the most significant activities were conducted by the Bạc Liêu musicians with Lê Tài Khí⁴ as the head and other disciples such as Bảy Kiên, Cao Văn Lầu, Ba Chột, Trịnh Thiên Tư, who became later famous musicians. From the early years of the twentieth century, the repertoire of the *đờn ca tài tử* was developed through new compositions of the members of both circles. Going ahead, Ba Đợi of the Eastern circle had some pieces such as the bộ bát Ngự (set of 8 pieces in Ngự mode) : Đường Thái Tôn, Vọng phu, Chiêu Quân, Ái tử kê, Bắc Man tấn công, Tương tư, Duyên kỳ ngộ, Quả phụ hàm oan; then the pieces called bộ ngũ châu (a set of five pieces): Kim tiền bản, Ngự giá, Hồ lan, Vạn liên, Song phi hồ điệp, then the instrumental versions of the Bạc Liêu group had a four piece set (bộ tứ bửu [set of four pieces]: Minh hoàng thượng nguyệt, Ngự giá đăng lầu, Phò mã giao duyên, and Ái tử kê.

Not stopping with that number, the western circle of musicians later (from 1919 onwards) also released a series of new works, for example those by Ký Quờn: Hiệp điệp xuyên hoa, Thanh đình điểm thủy, Kim oanh trích liễu, Anh vũ năng ngôn; or those by Cao Văn Lầu like Thu phong, Dạ cổ hoài lang, Chiết hoa, Giọt mưa đêm; or those by Ba Chột: Liêu giang, Ngũ quan, Mẫu đơn, Tam quan nguyệt...; Trịnh Thiên Tư: Hận tình, Đông mai, Thu cúc, Hạ Liên and some others.

THE TOPIC OF " CHINH PHỤ - CHINH PHU " AND ITS CREATION INITIATED THROUGH NHẠC KHỊ AMONG THE TALENTED MUSICIANS IN BẠC LIÊU

The success in the field of composing among the musicians of Bạc Liêu has to be attributed to the great role of their leader, Nhạc Khị, who trained his disciples in this way. He advocated that the apprentices would later be not only musicians but also composers, not only artistically but also humanly, bringing lyrics to the country and the people in the world. Vietnam's social scene had this vision at that time. In that spirit, musically trained students were expected to create new versions of songs and pieces as soon as they could find a possibility. Letting his students do the creative part, he also, in addition to it, particularly emphasized the theme " chinh phụ - chinh phu " - taken from the song " Tô Huệ chức cầm hồi vãn"⁵ in the version of the mode 'Nam ai', expressing the faithfulness of the wife who looks after

² Nguyễn Quang Đại is also known as Ba Đợi. There is a legend that he was a mandarin of the Hue court and went into the South in 1885, lived in Đa Kao and then returned to Cần Đước, and died (in a year unknown to friends and family) in Rạch Cát, Bình Đông, District 8 of Ho Chi Minh City. He achieved merits in perfecting and completing with great effectiveness *nhạc lễ* and *nhạc tài tử* [ritual music and music of the talented musicians].

³ Trần Quang Quờn was also called Kinh lịch Quờn and Ký Quờn (1875-1946). He is a versatile talent in music: using a variety of instruments, improving musical instruments, composing new musical ideas and creating his own way of writing music.

⁴ Lê Tài Khí was often called by the name Nhạc Khị, and Hai Khị (1870-1948). He had a special talent in performing instrumental music, composing and transmitting *nhạc lễ* and *nhạc tài tử*. He is considered to be the founder of the Bạc Liêu school of traditional music and he is honored as an ancestor of it.

⁵ According to the legend: the historical reference is attributed to Tô Huệ who was a silk-weaving daughter, married to a soldier from a distant village (the theory says Tô Huệ [357-?] was married to Đậu Thao - a mandarin of the pre-Qin dynasty of China, who was arrested (surrounded by unforgiving mountains and rivers). After three years of waiting and waiting, with her outstanding literary talent, Tô Huệ embroidered 10 great poems on a square brocade to give them to her husband, each word arranged in a reading style around and back and forth. The piece "Chức cầm hồi vãn" [Poems about literature weaving on brocade] touched the king and he gave order that this divided couple should be reunited. Tịch Tô Huệ spread to Vietnam

her husband, who is fighting at the border. This was also a type of metaphor for cleverly trying to bypass the authorities, reflecting the tragically dispersed parts of many families within the country. This content has been imbued by his students and expressed successfully through some new works, such as *Liêu giang, Tam quan nguyệt* (Ba Chột), *Đưa Chồng Ra Mặt Trận*, *Chinh Phụ Thán*, *Sầu Chinh Phụ* (lyrics by Trịnh Thiên Tư), especially the piece ‘*Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang*’ by Sáu Lầu alias Cao Văn Lầu.

SOME BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND THE BACKGROUND OF THE PIECE DESCRIBING THE SEPARATION OF HUSBAND AND WIFE BY MUSICIAN CAO VĂN LẦU

The musician and composer Cao Văn Lầu⁶ was born on 22 December, 1890, in Cây Cui, a small hamlet of Thuận Lễ settlement in the village Thạnh Mực Hạ, Tân Thạnh district, section Tân An, in Gia Định province (now this is the Thuận Mỹ commune, Vàm Cỏ district, Long An province). He was from a poor family. His father Cao Văn Giỏi alias Chín Giỏi was also a musician, and his mother was Đỗ Thị Tài. The family consisted of six brothers. Therefore, he was also called Sáu Lầu, meaning the ‘sixth’.

When he was young, he followed his parents to go and beg for food when he was four years old. Finally, in 1900, the family settled along the Ông Bồn canal, now ward 2, of Bạc Liêu city. He died there on 13 August, 1976. In 1901, the little boy Sáu Lầu was temporarily sent to the Vĩnh Phước An temple to get familiar with the scriptures, until three years later he returned to learn writing in Vietnamese. In 1908, Sáu Lầu studied ritual music and the music of the talented musicians under the leading teacher Nhạc Khị. In 1915, Cao Văn Lầu got married to Trần Thị Tấn (1899-1967) who was just in the right age. In 1917, according to the music delivered by teacher Nhạc Khị on his theme song “Chinh phụ vọng chinh phu”, composer Cao Văn Lầu immediately sketched a draft consisting of 22 sentences, in a two-beat scheme but did not yet complete the structure.

The creative work was still in the process of exploration and rethinking, when in 1918, an incident happened to his family. His simple and seemingly happy marriage went through a stormy situation and the relationship was broken. The reason is that after three years of living together, his wife did not have any children. According to the feudal notion at that time, this was a very serious issue because the male part of the family that was considered to be the leader, would not continue the family line without children. He had to kick out the wife of the husband's house in accordance with the phrase “three years wasted immortality”. Obeying his mother, Sáu Lầu felt pity to say farewell to his young wife. In their hearts both were still filled with a love intact as if from the beginning. So, the composition to be completed had to be shelved, because he no longer had the mind to invest into creativity.

THE PROCESS OF FORMING, PERFECTING AND RENAMING THE PIECE

The situation lasted for about a year, with the love still salty and the silently growing nostalgia, the young couple had discreetly sought each other occasionally, making Cao Văn Lầu's spirit somewhat stable again. the creative work was continued.

The Piece Hoài Lang

At this time, it was already in 1919, on the one hand he wanted to have a “spiritual child” for his wife, on the other hand, he also wanted to finish the piece to be submitted to the teacher. So, he had seen it as

at the end of the nineteenth century and was popularized through the songs *Nam xuân* and *Nam ai Tô Huệ chức cầm hồi văn*”, which is considered by the musical world as one of the classic songs of the talented musicians.

⁶ As previously announced, Cao Văn Lầu was born in 1892, in Thạnh Hội Hạ village. However, in the old ID card [used from 1970-1976], the year of birth was 1890; Since 2014, on his tombstone in the relic his birth year has also been revised to 1890. Particularly, the place Thạnh Hội Hạ village, is not published in his letter to the newspaper *Buổi Sáng* (and some other newspapers in Saigon). In this letter, dated 18 November, 1963, is clearly stated: “I am the musician Cao Văn Lầu, 73 years old, ID No. 62074, born in Thạnh Mực Hạ (1890), Tân An, living in Vĩnh Lợi, Bạc Liêu”.

a double task and on the basis of the previous sketch he developed a sad, fragmented music, expressing the feelings of loving his wife. But deeply inside, he also reflected optimism and hope. The instrumental music that Cao Văn Lầu dedicated to his wife was named *Hoài lang*, meaning ‘Remembering her husband’. This version had still the 22 sentences at first, but later he decided to cut them down to 20 sentences. The tune is as follows⁷:

Hoài lang

Sáng tác: CAO VĂN LẦU
Độc tấu cò: SÁU LẦU
Ký âm: KIỀU TẤN

$\text{♩} = 80$

^{*)} Cao độ thực tế của Fa, Sol và Do = Fa⁺, Sol⁺ và Do⁺⁺ [dấu + = cao hơn trong khoảng nửa cung bình quân, r = rung].

FIGURE 1: Transcription draft (by the author).

This version, according to the analysis, the whole song is in true Oán (Oán 1 mode)⁸ on the basis of the tone order: Hò, Xu, Xang⁺, Xê, Cồng and the modifier slightly higher than an average Phan⁺. Normally, while noting down the way to play *Tài tử* and *Cải lương* musical instruments, all types of songs are written in the simplified form of the moon lute’s score, because this is the teacher’s lute, the main instrument, so to say, it also keeps the meter and this score is considered being the frame. Based on this core frame of the instrumental music, the further development adds up to suit the instrumental features that are used. *Hoài lang* is the version that was transformed through playing the two-string spike lute *đàn cò*. Because the author did not transmit the original, any research has to rely on this version to restore the core frame for comparison.

⁷ In 1979, an audio recording “Interview with composer Cao Văn Lầu” with a length of 7’39”, was made by Kiên Giang on 15 November, 1963 at the headquarters of the Kiên Giang Drama Theatre, in the street Nguyễn Tấn Nghiệm (now called Hồ Hảo Hớn), Sài Gòn. The content includes questions and answers about the origin and future of *Vọng cổ*, especially *Hoài lang*, which the author played on the two-string spike lute *đàn cò*. This is a document that preserves the voice and sound of the author and is historically very valuable. It illustrates the cause and case of the composition as well as the fact that *Hoài lang* is the origin of the song *Dạ cổ hoài lang*. This document was just recently (November 2018) returned to the Cao Văn Lầu memorial site in Bạc Liêu.

⁸ According to Lư Nhật Vũ (1983: 295-297), the scale system of Oán modal pitches consists of 5 derivations with different intervals. He structures these derivations using an absolute Western Solmization approach putting the base tone on Re. So, his outcome declares: Oán 1 = Re, Fa, Sol, La, Si; Oán 2 = Re, Fa#, Sol, La, Si; Oán 3 = Re, Fa, Sol, La, Sib], Oán 4 = Re, Fa#, Sol, La, Sib, Oán 5 = Re, Fa#, Sol, La, Do. Taking this scheme to better understand, here are temporarily used the names of these derivations, mostly Oán 1 and Oán 3. To facilitate the analysis, only Oán 1 is called a true Oán.

This core frame in traditional writing looked as follows:

Hoài Lang

(dây Bắc-Oán, according to Kiều Tấn)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <u>Hò</u> Xê Xang Xê Cống <u>Xê</u> | 11. Xư, Xang <u>Xư</u> Cống Xê Xang <u>Hò</u> |
| 2. Liu <u>Xê</u> Liu Cống Xê Xư <u>Xang</u> | 12. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Hò <u>---</u> |
| 3. Hò <u>Xê</u> Cống Xê Xang <u>Hò</u> | 13. Xê <u>Xang</u> Hò Xang Xê Cống <u>Xê</u> |
| 4. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Hò <u>---</u> | 14. Xê Cống <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê Cống Xư <u>Xang</u> |
| 5. Xê <u>Hò</u> Xê Xang Xư <u>Xê</u> | 15. Liu <u>Xê</u> Liu Cống Xê Xáng <u>Xàng</u> |
| 6. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Xư Xê Xang <u>Hò</u> | 16. Xê Xáng <u>Xê</u> Phạn Liu Xáng <u>Liu</u> |
| 7. <u>Hò</u> Xê Xang Xê Cống <u>Xê</u> | 17. Xê <u>Xư</u> Cống Xê Xang <u>Hò</u> |
| 8. Xê Cống <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê Cống Xư <u>Xang</u> | 18. Xê <u>Xư</u> Cống Xê Xang Xư <u>Xang</u> |
| 9. Hò <u>Xê</u> Cống Xê Xang <u>Liu/Xư</u> | 19. Liu <u>Xê</u> Liu Cống Xê Xáng <u>Xàng</u> |
| 10. Xê Cống <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê Cống Xư <u>Xang</u> | 20. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xáng Xư Xê Xáng <u>Liu</u> . |

FIGURE 2: Traditional syllable transcription of the instrumental part (by the author).

Please be aware that all syllables Xang are actually Xang^{r+}. The 9th final tone Liu, is Hò sliding up to Xư. This piece is noted as if it is for the moon lute đàn kìm in the tuning Bắc-Oán (which corresponds to Xê-Hò or also Xê-Liu). Therefore, the lower register at the end of the 15th sentence cannot be played in this relation and has to be transposed an octave above. In the 16th sentence it is similar in order to achieve the right microtonal environment. Analog to it, the 19th and 20th sentences are constructed.

Looking at this and considering the changes in five sentences, the core frame of Hoài lang can be transcribed as follows:

Hoài Lang

core frame: Kiều Tấn
composition: Cao Văn Lầu

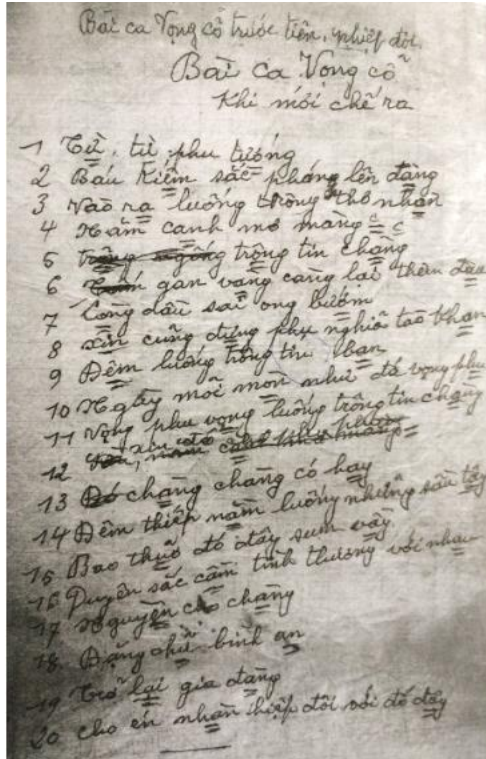


FIGURE 3: Transcription draft for comparison (by the author).

The tone set can be usually compared to F, G⁺ and C⁺ (the sign + indicates a pitch that is a quarter tone above, while r (meaning ‘rung’) indicates a compulsory hovering over the average frequency or vibrating of the tone).

The First Version of the Song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang

After completing the song Hoài Lang, Cao Văn Lầu continued to use the core frame of Hoài Lang to put the lyrics in accordance with the theme of the music the teacher assigned to him. The author of the lyrics



originally wrote them with 22 verses, but Cao Văn Lầu following the advice of his friends⁹ decided to remove the last two sentences (the verses 5 and 6) and left only 20 sentences.

At the Mid-Autumn Festival, the work was de facto completed but the author was still wondering how to name it appropriately, because the content of the lyrics was no longer a private affair of him and his wife.

The lyrical content of the piece was created in the following shape by the author¹⁰:

Accordingly, the lyrics with some crossed out letters are the original lyrics that the author has just finished writing and submitted to the teacher - temporarily called the version one (or version 1).

When comparing the lyrics of the song in version 1 with the music of Hoài Lang, it is visible that the sentences with crossed out lyrics are carrying almost the same tonal of each music syllable in the piece Hoài Lang, while the edited lyrics are not equipped with the same tonal.

FIGURE 4: Copied autograph of Cao Văn Lầu (1974) as exhibited at the memorial site (Photo by the author).

Music syllables in Hoài lang:

Lyrics deleted:

Lyrics corrected:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 5. (Xê) <u>Hồ</u> Xê Xang Xư <u>Xê</u> | <u>Trông</u> ngóng trông tin <u>chàng</u> | <u>Trông</u> tin <u>chàng</u> |
| 6. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Xư Xê Xang <u>Hồ</u> | <u>Tám</u> gan <u>vàng</u> càng lại thêm <u>đau</u> | Gan <u>vàng</u> càng lại thêm <u>đau</u> |
| 12. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Hồ | Sầu, năm <u>canh</u> mơ màng | Xin đó <u>chớ</u> phụ phàng |
| 13. Xê <u>Xang</u> Hồ Xang Công <u>Xê</u> | Đó <u>chàng</u> chàng có <u>hay</u> | <u>Chàng</u> chàng có <u>hay</u> |

Unlike in the song, there was always a similarity of the music syllable’s tonal and the lyrics. In the traditional music of this kind, the tonal of the lyrics does not necessarily follow each music syllable but only needs to meet the tonal of the main beat in the music, while the space between two main beats can be flexible (Jähnichen, 1997, 2014).

Therefore, the song Hoài Lang’s music and its lyrics of version 1 are still satisfyingly keeping to this rule because they still retain the structure of the core frame which is obvious when listening to it. Only

⁹ Some documents claim that this comment was made by Ba Chột, Bảy Kiên, Trần Xuân Thơ.

¹⁰ This seems to be an autograph hand-written by the author himself and given to Trần Phước Thuận in 1974, now on display at the Memorial site of Cao Văn Lầu, in Bạc Liêu.

the end of sentences 1 and 7 seem like the tonal of the lyrics (being an upwards moved syllable) and the music syllable (being a straight tone) do not match:

Sentence 1: *Từ, từ phu tướng* [Hò Xề Xang Xê Cồng Xê]
Sentence 7: *Lòng dầu say ong bướm* [Hò Xề Xang Xê Cồng Xê]

That is why it is called incomplete, because the author's level of lyrical composition at the beginning was limited. Compared to Nam Ai "Tô Huệ chức cầm hồi văn"¹¹ it is clear that in version 1 or 2, there is an inheritance of the content and lyrics of this piece:

Words and metaphors used in Dạ cổ hoài lang are listed as follows:

v.1/v.2: *Từ* [first sentence], exists in Nam ai "Tô Huệ chức cầm hồi văn": [2/61]; *Báu kiếm sắc phán* [2]: [33]; *luống* [3/9/11/14]: [4/9/40]; *trông thơ nhàn* [3]: [62]; *Năm canh mơ màng* [4 or 12 v.1]; *Trông tin chàng* [5/11]: [29/62]; *Lòng* [7]: [51]; *dầu/dầu* [7]: [25]; *say ong bướm* [7]: [20/25]; *nghe tào khang/tào khương* [8]: [26]; *Đêm* [9/14]: [17/29]; *bạn* [9]: [31/55]; *Ngày* [10]: [28]; *Sầu* [12-v.1]: [31/52]/*phụ phàng/phũ phàng* [12-version 2]: [51]; *chàng* [13/17]: [2/8/37/50/53/59/61]; *chàng có hay* [13]: [15]; *thiếp* [14]: [7]; *nằm* [14]: [29]; *sầu tây/niềm tây* [14]: [55]; *Bao* [15]: [44]; *thuở* [15]: [45]; *Nguyễn* [17]: [7]; *Trở lại* [19]: [38]; *hiệp* [20]: [68].

Keen to use this "two-in-one" piece, on the full moon night of the 1919, Cao Văn Lầu brought the song to the home of teacher Nhạc Khị, but did not show the title and asked him to name it. At that time, the monk Nguyệt Chiếu¹² attended the talk. After listening to Cao Văn Lầu playing and singing, he commented: "... Although the music and lyrics still have some inconsistencies, in general it still describes Tô Huệ's feelings. So, just follow this scheme and name the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang"¹³ (meaning: Listen to the drum and remember your husband). Of course, this was not yet an official song because it was not completed regarding its music and lyrics, but a mark for the birth of the work. Thus, the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang in its version one most likely includes:

- Music: is the core frame of Hoài Lang in 20 sentences, each with 2 beats, following the mode of true Oán.
- Lyrics: is the "Vọng Cổ" handwritten autograph of Cao Văn Lầu, in which the crossed-out letters were the original words.

Version Two of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang

After commenting and naming the title by monk Nguyệt Chiếu, the author has also given the manuscript to some musicians in order to improve the lyrics and the music.

Accordingly, from version one of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, Cao Văn Lầu corrected the words in some sentences:

Sentence 2:	<i>Báu kiếm sắc phong lên đàn</i>	→	<i>Báu kiếm sắc phán lên đàn</i>
Sentence 5:	<i>Trông ngóng trông tin chàng</i>		<i>Trông tin chàng</i>
Sentence 6:	<i>Tấm gan vàng càng lại thêm đau</i>		<i>Gan vàng càng lại thêm đau</i>
Sentence 12:	<i>Sầu, năm canh mơ màng</i>		<i>Xin đó chó phụ phàng</i>
Sentence 13:	<i>Đó chàng chàng có hay</i>		<i>Chàng chàng có hay</i>

¹¹ Trần Phước Thuận (2014: 341-343).

¹² Sư Nguyệt Chiếu (1882-1947) - a master of Sinology and ritual music, is considered to be one of the two leaders, following Nhạc Khị, who reformed and revised Bạc Liêu's music traditions.

¹³ In this regard, the common entry in Wikipedia about Cao Văn Lầu is interesting: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cao_V%C4%83n_L%E1%BA%A7u, last visited 22 November, 2019.

According to Nguyễn Tuấn Khanh (2018: 183). Nguyệt Chiếu named the song "Dạ cổ hoài lang". It is derived from the two sentences in the piece Nam ai "Tô Huệ chức cầm hồi văn". According to the lyrics by Phụng Hoàng Sang, (1905), verse 54 (58): The drum is empty, vibrates in the night (khuya = dạ, trống = cổ); and verse 55 (59): I don't bear to miss him, as if the sting was left (nhớ chàng = hoài lang).

Also, the music was revised as follows:



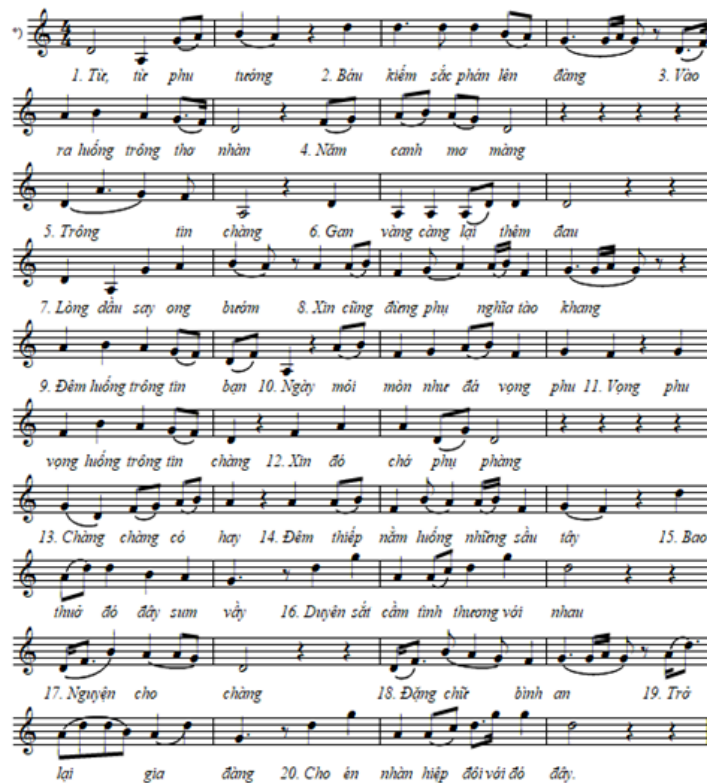
FIGURE 5: Revised version 3 in a transcription of the author.

Here, Cao Văn Lầu named this piece according to the monk Nguyệt Chiêu, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang. It should now be called Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, version two (or version 2). Because the simple editing may not have taken much time, so it is likely that this version two was completed between the full moon night of the Mid-Autumn-Festival and the end of the year 1919, a time in which no special events took place. It can be imagined that the musical melody in the beginning was followed closely by the singer, similarly to the way of playing the two-string spike lute đàn cò for the piece Hoài Lang with lyrics as follows:

Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 2)

Composed by Cao Văn Lầu

Transcribed by Kiều Tấn



*) Cao độ thực tế của Fa, Sol và Do = Fa+, Sol+ và Do+ (đầu = = cao hơn trong khoảng nửa cung bình quân, r = rung).
Câu 15-16 và 19-20 có thể ca lên xuống một quãng tám.

FIGURE 6: Transcription of version 2 with lyrics (by the author).

And based on the core frame of Hoài Lang (version 1), it is possible to restore the core frame of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang version two as follows:

Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 2)

(tuning in Bắc-Oán, core frame notation according to Kiều Tấn)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Hò Là Xang Xê <u>Công</u> | 11. Xư, Xang <u>Xư</u> <u>Công</u> Xê Xang <u>Lìu</u> |
| 2. Líu <u>Công</u> Líu <u>Công</u> Xê <u>Xang</u> | 12. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Lìu __ |
| 3. Lìu <u>Xê</u> <u>Công</u> Xê Xang <u>Lìu</u> | 13. Xê <u>Xang</u> Lìu Xang Xê <u>Công</u> <u>Xê</u> |
| 4. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Lìu __ | 14. Xê <u>Công</u> <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê <u>Công</u> Xư <u>Xang</u> |
| 5. Xê <u>Lìu</u> Xê Xang Xư <u>Xê</u> | 15. Líu <u>Công</u> Líu <u>Công</u> Xê <u>Xang</u> |
| 6. Xê Xư <u>Xê</u> Xang Xư Xê Xang <u>Lìu</u> | 16. Lìu <u>Xang</u> <u>Xê</u> Oạn Lìu <u>Xang</u> <u>Lìu</u> |
| 7. Hò Là Xang Xê <u>Công</u> | 17. Xê <u>Xư</u> <u>Công</u> Xê Xang <u>Lìu</u> |
| 8. Xê <u>Công</u> <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê <u>Công</u> Xư <u>Xang</u> | 18. Xê <u>Xư</u> <u>Công</u> Xê Xang Xư <u>Xang</u> |
| 9. Lìu <u>Xê</u> <u>Công</u> Xê Xang <u>Lìu/Xư</u> | 19. Líu <u>Công</u> Líu <u>Công</u> Xê <u>Xang</u> |
| 10. Xê <u>Công</u> <u>Xư</u> Xang Xê <u>Công</u> Xư <u>Xang</u> | 20. Lìu <u>Xang</u> <u>Xê</u> Oạn Lìu <u>Xang</u> <u>Lìu</u> |

However, this piece was from that time onwards further revised and eventually considered the basic and official version of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, which Cao Văn Lầu later called the "historical" Vọng Cổ. Thus, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, version two, is a song composed of:

- Music: Hoài Lang version as it was initially corrected, 20 sentences, second beats per sentence, true Oán mode.
- Lyrics: the lyrics are the handwritten autograph of the author, called "Vọng Cổ", in which the remaining words after the outcrossing become the original words.

According to the traditional notation, it is visible that version two is a song with 3 sections:

Section I [Sentence 1 – 6]: “*Từ, từ phu tướng.....Gan vàng càng lại thêm đau*”.

Section II [Sentence 7 – 16]: “*Lòng dầu say ong bướm...Duyên sắt cảm tình thương với nhau*”.

Section III [Sentence 17 – 20]: “*Nguyện cho chàng.....Cho én nhàn hiệp đôi với đó đây*”.

There should also be noted that the Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 2) right from the original has fixed the first 6 sentences as sequential sentences in negative order with the final tones being Công, Xang, Hò, Hò, Xê, and Hò. This order became then the default order in the Cải Lương based versions from which the rhythm and the basis for the core frame of the "6 sentences" Vọng Cổ were developed.

Version Three of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang

Music and Lyrics: In 1920, with the vigilance and effort to complete the song, Cao Văn Lầu continued to edit according to his friends' suggestions. This was the second revision and is considered to be perfect in terms of music and lyrics of the later famous song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang.

Through the printed text of Trịnh Thiên Tư's “Bạc Liêu Classical Music”, from 1962, this version, temporarily called the old Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 3), is by everyone believed to be introduced by the composer of the music himself. Cao Văn Lầu, so it is written: "... the song 'Vọng Cổ' with my lyrics in this book is basically a four-beat song...".

Music notation: historical Vọng cổ (Bắc mode, four beats per sentence)	Lyrics: historical Vọng cổ (four beats per sentence)
1. __ Hồ Là __ Xang Xê Cổng	1. __ Từ là __ từ phu trưởng
2. __ Ú Liu Cổng Liu Cổng Xê Xang	2. __ Báu kiếm sắc phán lên đàng
3. __ Hồ Xê Liu Cổng Xê Xang Là Hồ	3. __ Vào ra luống trông tin nhận
4. __ Xê Xang Xê Xang Là Hồ	4. __ Năm canh __ mơ màng
5. __ Liu Xáng U Liu Xàng	5. __ Em luống trông tin chàng
6. __ Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Liu Ú Liu	6. __ Ôi , gan vàng thêm đau __
7. __ Hồ Là Xang Xê Cổng	7. __ Đường dầu xa ong bướm
8. __ Xê Liu Xừ Cổng Xê Liu Xừ Xang	8. __ Xin đó đừng phụ ngĩa tào khang
9. __ Hồ Xê Cổng Xê Xang Xự	9. __ Còn đêm luống trông tin bạn
10. __ Xê Liu Xừ Cổng Xê Xừ Xang	10. __ Ngày mỏi mòn như đá Vọng phu
11. Xừ __ Xang Xừ Cổng Xê Xang Là Hồ	11. Vọng __ phu vọng luống trông tin chàng
12. Xê Xang Xê Là Hồ “Xê Là Hồ ”	12. Lòng xin chớ phụ phàng __
13. __ Cổng Xê Xang Hồ __ Xang Cổng Xê	13. __ Chàng là chàng có hay
14. __ Xê Liu Xừ Cổng Xê Liu Xừ Xang	14. __ Đêm thiếp nằm luống những sầu tây
15. __ Ú Liu Cộng Liu __ Cộng Xê Xàng	15. __ Biết bao thuở đó đây sum vầy
16. Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Phạn Liu “Ú Liu ”	16. Duyên sắt cầm đình lọt phai __
17. __ Là Xự Cổng Xê Xang Là Hồ	17. __ Là nguyện __ cho chàng
18. __ Xê Liu Xự Cổng Xê Liu Xự Xang	18. __ Hai chữ an __ bình an
19. __ Ú Liu Cộng Liu Cộng Xê Xàng	19. __ Trở lại __ gia đàng
20. Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Phạn Liu “Ú Liu ”.	20. Cho én nhàn hiệp đôi __

Attention: The noted musical syllables (left) and the lyrics (right) printed bold are the emphasized beats of a measure as used in the cited book.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

In the completion of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 3), compared to the previous version (version 2), there are noticeable changes:

- Regarding sentence structure: sentence 5 changes from the Xê to Xàng and the 9th from the Xừ (actually pronounced Lìu meaning Hồ Luyến¹⁴ to Xừ) changes to Xự.
- About the beats: Within the lyrics, a silent final beat is in verse 12, while verse 4 changes to a sounding final beat. At the same time, by removing some of the lyrics, verses 6, 16 and 20 all turned into silent final beats. Regarding the music, all sentences have sounding final beats, no silent beats.
- About the lyrics: out of 20 sentences, there are only 6 sentences left: 2, 4, 10, 11, 14 and 19 which are completely in line with the lyrics of version two, the rest are sentences with more or less words or replaced words. The last two words of verse 3: "thơ nhàn" are replaced by "tin nhận" from the tone of the heavy accent to the simple heavy accent; while in the instrumental part, it remains the same with the heavy accent is Hồ. In verse 20, we find that the book is still printed as "én nhàn" but not "én nhận", the arbitrary word here is consistent with the mysterious tone of the Xàng in the instrumental music. This detail shows that one is due to the printer's fault,

¹⁴ Luyến is a specific treatment of a tonal microstructure that consists of a sequence of tone glides.

the other is that the author himself is also inconsistent between the word *nhàn* and *nhận*, it seems not to matter.

Hơi-điệu (Modal Features)

The highlight of this adjustment is that the author used two alternating beat systems in the same song and used on the tuning *Bắc* for the moon lute đàn kim. Specifically, besides the true *Oán*, there is also the "Oán pha Bắc": "Oán pha Bắc": *Hò, Xự, Xang^{tr}, Xê, Cống*.

Although it is recorded as "four-beat piece", it is actually a two-beat piece, so there is a copy of the two-beat version to ease the comparison.¹⁵

Nhạc: Dạ cổ hoài lang (version 3) (tuning in the mode Bắc, two-beat meter)		
1. <i>Hò Là Xang Xê Cống</i>	}	true Oán
2. <i>Ú Liu Cống Liu Cống Xê Xang</i>		
3. <i>Hò Xê Liu Cống Xê Xang Là Hò</i>		
4. <i>Xê Xang Xê Xang Là Hò</i>		
5. <i>Liu Xáng U Liu Xàng</i>		
6. <i>Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Liu Ú Liu</i>		
7. <i>Hò Là Xang Xê Cống</i>	}	Oán pha Bắc
8. <i>Xê Liu Xừ Cống Xê Liu Xừ Xang</i>		
9. <i>Hò Xê Cống Xê Xang Xừ</i>		
10. <i>Xê Liu Xừ Cống Xê Xừ Xang</i>		
11. <i>Xừ Xang Xừ Cống Xê Xang Là Hò</i>	}	true Oán
12. <i>Xê Xang Xê Là Hò "Xê Là Hò"</i>		
13. <i>Cống Xê Xang Hò Xang Cống Xê</i>	}	Oán pha Bắc
14. <i>Xê Liu Xừ Cống Xê Liu Xừ Xang</i>		
15. <i>Ú Liu Cống Liu Cống Xê Xàng</i>	}	true Oán
16. <i>Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Phạn Liu "Ú Liu"</i>		
17. <i>Là Xừ Cống Xê Xang Là Hò</i>	}	Oán pha Bắc
18. <i>Xê Liu Xừ Cống Xê Liu Xừ Xang</i>		
19. <i>Ú Liu Cống Liu Cống Xê Xàng</i>	}	true Oán
20. <i>Liu Xáng Xàng Xê Phạn Liu "Ú Liu"</i>		

This was a unique and new way of composing music at that time, which was usually just a simple tune. It happened also thanks to the intriguing impact and implementation from the sentences of the piece *Hành vân* played with a Northern tuning of strings.

A comparison between the two pieces in a specific version, it is visible that there are some musical lines of the older *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* (version 3) influenced by some sentences of *Hành Vân*:

¹⁵ Oan 1 = true Oan.

Musical syllables:	<i>Hành Vân:</i>	<i>Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang</i> (version 3):
Là <u>Xư</u> Công Xê Xang <u>Hồ</u>	= câu 1/câu 2/câu 12	câu 11/17
Liu <u>Công</u> Liu Công Xê <u>Xang</u>	= câu 17	câu 2/15/19
...Liu <u>Ú</u> <u>Liu</u>	= câu 14/câu 18	câu 6/16/20
...Công Xê Xư <u>Xang</u>	= câu 19	câu 8/10/13/18

This might be the reason for some scholars and musicians to consider *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* is a piece in the modes described as “điệu Bắc/hoi Bắc”, or “dây Bắc-hoi Huế”. Therefore, these questions are discussed as follows:

Is *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* in the Northern mode and/or using a Northern tuning?

There seems to exist some evidence discussed among musicians that the musical core frame noted for the song is thought to be in the Northern mode following the scale *Hồ, Xư, Xang, Xê, Công, Phan* and the strings of the moon lute and the two-string spike lute were in the Northern tuning. In my opinion, this interpretation is not accurate because:

- Though the music is a scale of the North, the expression is a little bit dependent on the way of playing styles are applied to it. For example, pressing for a strong vibration according to the Northern convention and other considered embellishments are different and even compulsory.
- The Northern tuning is the basic open string for the moon lute *kìm* based on *Xàng, Hồ* [i.e. G-D], used for male and female voices. The Northern tuning noted on the instrument is an indication of which system the tuning, in this case called *dây*, should be compared to such as *dây Bắc*, *dây Bắc-Oán*, *dây Hồ nhì*, *dây Hồ tư*, in order to perform the correct expression of the song. Indicating a Northern tuning does not mean that the piece is in that mode.



Therefore, just relying on the musically indicated scales through the core frame of the song or the Northern tuning indicated to determine the mode of the song is definitely not enough. Moreover, *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* (version 2) is consisting of an *Oán* melody and the lyrics and content of "chính phủ vọng chính phủ" within *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* (version 3), would be of such a construction that the mood of the music may contradict each other and switching between the melody of sadness (version 2) and the brighter Northern mood (version 3) is ridiculous.

FIGURE 7: Record label mentioned (photo by the author).

Is *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* in the Northern mode and/or using a **Huế** tuning?

The audio material of *Cải lương* music is considered to be the oldest available source, only one Pathé disc of teacher Năm Tú survived, dating back to 1922-1928. Among the recordings that are known, is one carrying the number 44623, which is a part of the opera *Kim Vân Kiều*, the scene number 4, where Hai Cúc sings an aria according to the model of *Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang*.

Although the production year is unknown, the name *Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang* can tell whether this record falls in the time period whenever “*Vọng* or *Dạ*” was kind of right. Meaning, the record was done before the name of the piece was changing to *Vọng Cổ*, which was about 1923-1926. With the musical appearance not being far from the original as found in 1920, the modal analysis of this song can shed some light on the true melody of the earlier *Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang* (version 3).

The following is a song as in staff notation as it has been sung on the record.¹⁶

Song in the core frame of the piece **Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang**

(excerpt from the opera Kim Vân Kiều)

Music: Cao Văn Lầu

Singer: Hai Cúc

Notation: Kiều Tấn

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. Ngày vào ra phu từ 2. Chắc phải chốt gà cho xong 3. Thuyền
quyên tới nơi yêu trèo 4. Thật yêu quý còn gì quý bằng
5. Duyên (ý... ý) tiên trần 6. Rồi loan phòng hiệp hiệp vạn mây
7. Ngày rồi đêm trăng trở 8. Quan hết vì tóc rối, đầu quần 9. Trời
oi, giúp bao nhiêu nợ 10. Giờ oán nào giúp miếng thăng kia 11. Thằng quan
kia có ai đâu mà 12. Nhờ biết nói làm gì, làm gì
13. Oi, trời thiệt trách thân 14. Đem với thân lái cây đa nằm, mây đen 15. Da
nám, tóc xanh hơi kiếm 16. Vác đi nài ngoại lang ở đâu 17. Trời
thiệt giúp ? ? 18. ? ? thân nói thiệt cho hoãn ? ? 19. Trốn
lo (ý ý) vô cùng 20. Thiếp bao giờ hiệp long với loan.

Please, note: The exact frequencies are different. The notation is relative as any other type of solmization. The average pitches written as F, G, and C, are slightly higher than noted and some carry a compulsory. Starting from sentence 8, the average pitch E also vibrates at times making two different qualities for this average pitch that could be marked with a superscript *r* or an apostrophe.

FIGURE 8: Notation of Version three by the author (from an audio recording).

¹⁶ Nguyễn Tuấn Khanh (2018). Because the record was too old, the sound quality is quite bad, although having tried hard noting the music down. But some lyrics were heard unclearly and could not be identified.

This piece has a complete sentence structure similar to the one in Lê Mai's reformed song presented in 1924.

The entire song has a far more diverse repertoire of tones that can be seen as Hò, Xư^r, Xư, Xang^{+r}, Xê, Cống, Phan^{+r}, Liu, Ú.

Based on this observation, the melody of the sentences, can be temporarily arranged into two main tone sets, called *Điệu*:

- Set Oán: Hò, Xư, Xang^{+r}, Xê, Cống with 2 complementary syllables Ú and Oan^r.
- The temporarily called ‘strange’ set: Hò, Xư^r, Xang^{+r}, Xê, Cống.

Comparing the strange set with the following:¹⁷

Điệu Nam in the mood of Huế (also called <i>Dụng</i>)	Hò	Xư ^r		Xang ^{+r}	Xê	Cống ^r
Điệu Bắc:	Hò	Xư ^r		Xang	Xê	Cống ^r
Điệu Oán	Hò		Xư ⁺	Xang ^{+r}	Xê	Cống
Điệu “lạ”	Hò	Xư ^r		Xang ^{+r}	Xê	Cống

Điệu Nam in the mood of *Dụng* (Huế) is very similar to the ‘strange’ *Điệu*, except for the different compulsory vibration on Cống^r.

In addition to the other Northern mode of Cống^r, there is a very basic difference in the third step, Xang or Xang^{+r}. So, it is very difficult to consider a kinship.

In particular, the Oán melody is very close to that ‘strange’ construction and could easily become one when the hovering above the pitch of Xư^r is added to it as visible in the Northern mode while the main step stays with the frequency between Xư^r and the higher Xư⁺ as a main step, though Xư⁺ is auxiliary (if used at all).

Based on that consideration, I suggest to temporarily name the ‘strange’ mode ‘Oán pha Bắc’ [Oán mixed with Bắc] to facilitate a later comparison.

Observing the music, it is clear that:

- From sentence 1-7, second half sentences 11-12, sentences 15-16 and 19-20: the scale of the Oán mode is used with the complementary ending Xư⁺ (in sentence 5) and Oan^{+r}. Both complementary sounds appear in sentences 16 and 20.
- From sentences 8 to the first half of sentences 11, sentences 13-14 and 17-18: the scale of the Oán pha Bắc is used.
- The Ú and Oan^r often appear in the weak beat or part of a measure, and fall only sometimes on a strong beat. In such a case the strong beat is rather understood as an ‘embroidery’ or transition. In the lower octave it reads Xư^r, but in any Nam/Oán mode it is still pronounced as Ú or U, for example, in sentence 5, when the melody is taking a downwards movement below the main octave, the musical syllables are written: ‘Liu Xáng^{+r} U Liu Xê’ rather than ‘Hò Xang^{+r} Xư Hò Xê’ or ‘Liu Xáng^{+r} Xư Liu Xê’. In such a case, Xư without vibration can still be used and is considered a complementary sound of the Oán mode, which is different from the Oán pha Bắc mode where Xư^r is part of the main tone set.

This transformation of modes from one to another, as shown above, is one of the methods in creating a mutation and a diversity of emotional nuances through the melodic flow, commonly found in Southern songs and is called the modal mix in an ‘alternating’ way.

¹⁷ According to Dương Bích Hà (1997: 142-143), the 5-tone scale Hò, Xư-, Xang^{+r} [rung = hovering, vibrating], Xê, Cống is called Nam Ai in the tradition of Ca Huế, and associated with a sad mood. When the song is using this tone order in the melody line, there are many Xư, Cống [of the Northern mode *điệu Bắc*] that make the character not as sad as the mood in Ai. This application is then called *điệu Nam hơi Dụng* or *điệu Bắc hơi Khách*.

Thus, the key point here is the combination of modes and Xự^r in the điệu Oán pha Bắc. Because of this Xự^r, many observers find it strange and have used different solutions to describe a new scale Hò, Xự^r, Xang^{tr}, Xê, Cống as “North-mood of Hue” / “North-tone set mixed with Hue” / “Northern-Central mood and tone set”. Or the innovation was praised as ‘new features’, ‘strange modalities’ as narrated by the two young authors, such as Cao Kiến Thiết (2009: 61) who says “... after a period of popularizing the music and lyrics, my father had plaid many times songs in front of his friends, among his brother musicians, singers, monks, and poets. ... He listened to their comments. Regarding the music, all of us praised it for its new features”. Cao Văn Bình (2010: 131-132) “... after long nights of pondering over the poem, the tones have gradually formed in his mind a kind of music with a strange tune, it does not match any of the previous works ...”.

It can be said that the success of the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 3) is based on to the wise combination of two alternating styles of Oán and Oán pha Bắc, and at the same time the adding in of some similarities of the piece Hành Vân into the composition. That has created a nostalgic Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version 3) with the music that is both passionate and plaintive, more typical of the mood in the songs of the Southern region, while reflecting the inherent optimism-brightness of the Northern mode. It has a hidden sadness of Huế’s Điệu Nam in the mood Dựng, which some researchers say is “a little bit of Xuân (Hành Vân) and a little bit of the mood Ai (Xuân nữ), then transformed into the mood Dựng (Tứ đại oán)”.¹⁸

Renaming Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang into Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang

With vigilance and effort to perfect the song, Cao Văn Lầu continued to ask for some advice and the monk commented further. Among these comments, especially the contribution of Trần Xuân Thợ benefitted the lyrics and lead to the renaming of the piece.

According to Cao Kiến Thiết (2009: 61): “Teacher Thống alias Trần Xuân Thợ from the North, was very good at Confucian writings. He proposed to replace the old fashioned Dạ Cổ (night drum) with Vọng Cổ (meaning the drum echoes). The reason is that my father used the classic “Tô Huệ chúc cầm hồi vân” as the content of the song and the musical piece, imagining that Tô Huệ when recalling the poem, the sound of drumming from afar was echoed, not that the drum beat at night, so the word Dạ Cổ is obscure, and the word Vọng Cổ seemed more clarifying and, therefore, during that meeting, my father agreed to change the word Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang into Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang, meaning that the drum echoed and the husband felt missed. But at that time, the older version of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang was popularized and widely distributed in many places, so it took quite a long time for it to introduce the name of Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang”.

Vũ Văn Thiện (1963) also recalls Cao Văn Lầu’s words: “Let me continue what my father was telling: I took my music, hid it, I gave it to an advisor to read, and asked, please, give it a name ... When he finished reading, I sang and played the song for him to listen to, and he took it very well announcing to name it Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang.”

Taking the narrative of Cao Kiến Thiết as a connection, it is clear that the person he calls advisor or teacher is Mr. Thống alias Trần Xuân Thợ.

In the piece Lục Vân Tiên by Trần Tự Thành, composed in 1923, there was integrated a song Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang using the following lyrics:

“Ten years of Confucius
Up to now, even in mourning ...”

¹⁸ Trương Bình Tòng (1997: 81).

This piece has a remark noted below the text which says “Vọng or Dạ are both possible”.¹⁹

The above data show that the name Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang has appeared since 1923 and at this time the local world of music has not yet decided between the two names Vọng or Dạ at the beginning of the song's name Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang.

The Name Changes from Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang to Vọng Cổ

In a recorded interview (1963) made by a journalist who asked: “Why the name changed from Hoài Lang to Vọng Cổ?”, Cao Văn Lầu replied, “before that it was a nostalgia [hoài lang], but after the Trần Xuân Thơ corrected it, the piece became the ‘Vọng Cổ’ [The Drum Echoes]”.

The comments are explained. In a meeting, sharing about the success of the Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang – as this was Cao Văn Lầu's very subject, his wife gave birth to a son – the author recalled the old “married three-year wife without children” and Trần Xuân Thơ proposed to rename the song into “Vọng Cổ” [Vọng = remember; Cổ = old, 'Remember the olden times'] with the idea of the entire work. Cao Văn Lầu happily approved this and the Vọng Cổ began to be popular from then.

In a letter sent to Chín Tâm on 22 July, 1962, Trịnh Thiên Tư wrote: “In his days, Trần Xuân Thơ was called a master of Hai Thống (who passed away), a very great authority who was working as a composer for the singer Ba Xú (Bạc Liêu), he proposed to name this music Vọng Cổ to ‘remember the olden times’ that fits the music best and he found the agreement of the author.”

According to Trần Văn Khải (1970: 132): “For example in the play Tham phú phụ bần performed in the year 1926 in Biên Hòa, when Ai Châu complained to Huỳnh Kỳ Thoại because her father wanted the fiancé was married to a wealthier person, a ‘Vọng Cổ’ with two beats per sentence using, among others, the lyrics:

Tham phú phụ bần (Vọng Cổ) [Join the Poor]

1. Because where should be encouragement if not
2. The father could start sharing ...”.

Sỹ Tiên (1984: 24) describes another case: “We try to revisit an old play, Trần Nhứt Chánh, performed by the troupe of Văn Hí Ban ... the second scene has the all the pieces and songs like Hành Vân, Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang ... the sixth curtain has Vọng Cổ, and Long Hồ Hội ... It should be known, in the period of time mentioned above, the piece Vọng Cổ was still with 4 beats per sentence... Ms. Ba Hui (the sister of Ms. Năm Kim Thoa) plays the role of Kim Dung as one of Trần Nhứt Chánh 's three wives, singing a paragraph of Vọng Cổ:

1. The one who is torn apart,
2. The eyes are piercing like needles ...”.

According to Trần Phước Thuận (2014: 367-369), who got to know about it through the retelling of Trần Tấn Hưng, the word ‘Vọng Cổ’ has been used since August of the year of the Pig (1935) at the suggestion of Trịnh Thiên Tư. Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang and Vọng Cổ are two different pieces, but Vọng Cổ is still existing, so, Vọng Cổ must have the meaning of ‘looking back to the past’. However, according to Trần Văn Khải's material the word Vọng Cổ has existed since 1926 and the idea that Vọng Cổ is proposed by Trịnh Thiên Tư contradicts the letter Trịnh Thiên Tư wrote himself to Chín Tâm.

According to some researchers, from the time Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang was developed up to containing 8 beats per sentence (1935), the name Vọng Cổ was agreed upon to be used to designate the fourth beat and the

¹⁹ Trần Tự Thành. 1923. Bài ca Lục Vân Tiên. Mỹ Tho: Imprimerie Provinciale, 5. Also cited in Nguyễn Tuấn Khanh (2018: 219).

later extensions of meter. Only the early version with two beats per sentence still was called Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang.

The above evidence proves that the name Vọng Cổ was found very early (1926) and during that time the name was used interchangeably, there was no distinction between Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang, Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang, and Vọng Cổ until 1935. Only at that time, there was a common understanding of what is Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang and what is Vọng Cổ.

Taking all these considerations and discussions into account, it is possible to summarize the milestones of the time of writing of the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang as follows:

- 1917-1918, conceived and drafted a 22-sentence and two-tone set.
- 1919, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang was a completed draft.
- Mid-Autumn Festival, 1919, Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang was created (version one), having 20 sentences, each with two beats.
- Around the end of 1919, the first editing started as well as disseminating some sections of Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang (version two).
- 1920, this edition was completed and officially disseminated as " Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang " (version three).
- From 1923 onwards: renamed on the song Vọng Cổ Hoài Lang.
- About 1926 the song changed the name to Vọng Cổ.

For a long time when the details have not been clarified yet, many researchers looked at this problem from different angles such as the case at the time of drafting, at the time of publication, at the time of finalizing the work in order to determine the year of creation. The birth of the song Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang is, therefore, inconsistent throughout academic and scholarly literature in this matter.

The results of the research are also preliminary, suggestive in tracing as well as contributing to unravel the issues surrounding the earliest Dạ Cổ Hoài Lang. It is hoped that this brief elaboration will be a reference of interest to everyone.

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AUDIO RECORDINGS

- Record of the company Pathé, opera Kim Vân Kiều, fourth scene, *Vọng cổ hoài lang*, HAI CÚC performs, Number 44623, Theatre group Cải lương của Thầy NĂM TÚ in Mỹ Tho (1922-1928).
- Audio Cassette with the recorded interview containing the part of CAO VĂN LẦU, Sài Gòn, 1963.

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