

DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF

DOCTORAL THESIS IN
CULTUROLOGY

Review of *Ca trù Singing Performances in Hanoi Today*, the doctoral thesis by Phan Thi Duyen; *Speciality: Culturology*; *Serial number: 92 29 90 40*.

Ca trù (“tally card song”) is an original genre of Vietnamese artistic tradition, appeared and developed from the 14th century. Ca trù has a special signification in Vietnamese music treasure, because it is attached closely to festivities, customs, beliefs, literature, as well as to thoughts and profound philosophy of life of Vietnamese. On purpose of contributing to clarify the new manifestations of ca trù activities in contemporary socio-cultural life, this thesis focuses on current situation of ca trù activities in Hanoi today through certain clubs, artists, training activities, performance activities, audience..., thence posing some issues related to preservation and promotion of ca trù values in population community of Hanoi.

Apart from Introduction, Conclusion, References, Annexe and the First Chapter (“*Overview of study subject; theoretical bases and survey areas*”), the main contents of the thesis are deployed from Second to Fourth Chapter.

The Second Chapter is entitled “Ca trù activities in Hanoi before 1986”

In that period, ca trù activities were developed in two main stages: From 14th to 18th century, ca trù songs and ca

trù activities was born and developed brilliantly, becoming part of village cultural patrimony of rural area. A series of ca trù singer groups was created in various villages like Lo Khe, Dong Tru, Thuong Mo, Chanh Thon of old Hanoi... At that time, ca trù singer groups created for their own the original singing manners such as: singing at the gate of a communal house, competitive singing, singing for entertainment, singing at longevity ceremony, singing at a reception of foreign ambassadors. From early 19th to early 20th century, ca trù and ca trù activities were controlled by the feudal-colonial regime, existing under the form of ca trù inn in Inner Hanoi with the manner for entertainment, meantime in the suburb, besides singing at village festivities, at memorial to ca trù profession founder, ca trù was performed essentially at residences and private house of mandarins and rich intellectuals. Ca trù activities became a luxurious pleasure of high class at courtesan streets like Kham Thien, Van Thai, Vong Cross-roads...

After 1945, ca trù almost was forgotten, due to the fact that it was considered a remnant of feudalism and in the new society it must be consequently eliminated. The ca trù singing manners were forgotten, the ca trù performers ought to hide their profession and never dared to consider themselves as singing girls in the professional group.

The ca trù groups and ca trù manners in this time were almost forgotten and didn't exist actually in social life as before 1945. On the other hand, because the country just gained independence, all activities were focused on defending the government and liberating the country, so all cultural and artistic activities were focused on realizing the political tasks of the country. In this time, the ca trù groups were disintegrated, singing girls abandoned ca trù profession for another one, due to the fear of accusation of being remnants of the old regime. In central Hanoi there remains only one Thai Ha ca trù group because this group was created in feudal time, being transmitted by consanguinity. Thus, the generations of the Nguyen family at Thai Ha street could be preserved ca trù art and transmitted it from generation to generation.

In the 1980s, ca trù activities in inner and suburban Hanoi had the signs of revival. Ca trù was performed abroad, was subject to certain studies, and some ca trù singing groups were visited by foreign tourists.

The Third Chapter of the thesis analyses "Ca trù activities in Hanoi from Innovation Day (1986) up to now"

After 1986, Vietnam began its radical and comprehensive innovation. Communist Party and the State of Vietnam have promulgated many important policies on the development of culture and arts, manifesting beginning interest to ca trù and ca trù artists. In fact, certain artists, female singers and instrumentalists of ca trù, with their professional passion, have restored ca trù by creating and changing

ca trù groups into clubs and revived the activities of this original folk genre of music in traditional village festivities for tourists... Despite their rather little remained number, the ca trù artists made great efforts to transmit the old repertoire to local younger generations and began to attract the participation of population community where existed ca trù. Especially in 2009, ca trù singing had the honour of being inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, this is a proud landmark of ca trù revival of Vietnam in general and of Hanoi in particular.

In this time, ca trù activities in both urban and suburb areas of Hanoi was seen as a sign of the revival of this specific artistic genre. This thesis points out the similarities and differences between ca trù activities in urban and suburb areas of Hanoi.

Similarities: All ca trù activities in both urban and suburb areas of Hanoi are regularly organized by ca trù clubs, depending on conditions of every club. The ca trù artists, female singers and instrumentalists are the focus attracting ca trù activities of population community in every region. Besides that, all ca trù activities in Hanoi are recognized and preserved by State, the local government and community. All ca trù activities in the community have great signification of preserving the profession of ancestors and transmitting to the posterities. Ca trù activities of clubs in Hanoi are always deployed in various performance spaces

such as worship singing, singing at the gate of the communal house, singing for entertainment, and singing in galas and festivals... Ca trù singing in Hanoi are always in service to the enjoyers who previously were “elites” (quan viên) who loved ca trù.

Differences: The ca trù activities in Inner Hanoi are developed in service to tourists besides to preservation of old profession. This characteristic is less obvious in places of suburban Hanoi. Due to the great number of ca trù clubs, Inner Hanoi has an advantage in regularly organizing the local ca trù festivals and galas. In Inner Hanoi, the artists and female singers often sing incorrect word and sound, not being impacted by other artistic types, meanwhile, those in the suburb districts are easy to be impacted due to their altered voice.

In a short time, the ca trù clubs in inner urban Hanoi have trained a number of young instrumentalists and singing girls expected to be the most active forces to build long-term ca trù units.

The Fourth Chapter of the thesis discusses “The essential impacts changing ca trù activities in Hanoi and some issues consequently posed”

Under the interests and investments of State and the assistance of international organizations, ca trù activities in Hanoi have got noticeable achievements, being highly appreciated by international tourists. These achievements are the development of a number of ca trù clubs, the increase in ca trù performance. Ca trù activities in

Hanoi are also fort impacted by current social conditions such as the need for integration, globalization, as well as the new policies of State on domestic and international cultures... causing ca trù activities to must be accommodated to conditions of contemporary society. These impacting factors have given birth to trend in changing ca trù activities on various aspects such as organizational pattern, operational mode, artist, a method of professional transmission and public attitude towards present ca trù activities. On this background, the thesis suggests some practical issues be discussed in order to reveal certain existing questions of ca trù activities in Hanoi today, these questions exist in the process of coordination between management organizations with community representatives in preservation and promotion of ca trù heritage values. However, on the whole, ca trù activities are reviving and have got the conditions to develop in contemporary society, therefore the socio-political moves of State and government of Hanoi towards organizing and managing ca trù activities must be more attached to special importance. This will help ca trù art and ca trù activities can exist and fort and sustainably develop in the life of the population community in Hanoi today. This thesis was successfully defended in 2018 at the academy level jury of the Graduate Academy of Social Sciences (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences).

Reviewed by QT.