



Research about Bai Choi – A form of folk in Vietnam

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Received: 07 Jul 2021; Received in revised form: 01 Aug 2021; Accepted: 09 Aug 2021; Available online: 19 Aug 2021

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Abstract— Bai Choi is a form of folk cultural activity popular in South Central, especially Binh Dinh. In each verse of the Bai Choi partly shows the attractiveness of folk performances to the working people. This folk art contains strong cultural, artistic values, and vitality, which have been preserved for generations by the community in the South Central region. In 2017, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has also honored several performing arts values in Vietnam, including the Bai Choi as the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. For a long time, the performing arts of the Bai Choi have become the object of much scientific collecting and research works in the country. In the scope of this article, we would like to present the basic characteristics of the traditional Bai Choi in Binh Dinh. Through that, it helps readers to understand more about Bai Choi - a type of performance that is in danger of being eroded, to contribute to preserving and promoting good traditional values.

Keywords— Bai Choi, Binh Dinh province, folklore culture, heritage.

I. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, the performing arts of the Bai Choi have become the object of much scientific collecting and research works in the country. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has also honored several performing arts values in Vietnam, including the Bai Choi as the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

The art of playing the hut and singing the folk songs of the hut has a history of hundreds of years in the southern central provinces, including Binh Dinh and Tuy Phuoc. It originated from the process of production labor, cultural exchange, and artistic creativity of indigenous people. Bai hut has become a cultural routine, an indispensable spiritual dish of many classes of people, collecting both the old and the young in all regions of the Central region, not only during Tet also at local festivals, especially Cho Go festival, festivals to celebrate the Lunar New Year, Thanh Minh, ... or cultural activities in local communities.

The characteristic of this form comes from the rustic, rustic, and fun nature, so this folk art game attracts a lot of people to join and cheer. Its meaning also goes beyond a simple form of folk art activities, where the artist shows

his talents in improvisation and performance while singing and responding; The playing card festival in the hut is also the community communication environment and a place where young men and women come to meet, entertain, learn, exchange love ...

II. BAI CHOI'S CARDS

The card is an indispensable part of the Bai Choi because according to many researchers has been confirmed that the Bai Choi is a combination of the card and the hut. So almost all research works when learning about the hut mentioned the "Bai" factor. Cards are made from big bamboo cards for the big card - is the "Bai cái" and small bamboo cards for the small card - is the "Bai con". They are drawn in Chinese ink, on wind paper, and then cut and pasted on bamboo tags.

Typically in Hoi An, the cards are divided according to "pho" very clearly and have a certain order as 9 cards, including "Pho vãn bậc nhất", "Pho sách bậc nhất", "Pho vãn bậc nhất"; "Pho vãn bậc lục", "Pho sách bậc lục", "Pho vãn bậc lục"; "Pho vãn cặp yêu", "Pho sách cặp yêu"; "Pho vãn cặp yêu". The remaining cards are divided

into “Pho vạ”, “Pho sách”, “Pho Vãn”, 10 cards each, the total is 30 cards. All cards will contain 39 cards. But in Binh Dinh, especially the Bai Choi’s performance at the Cho Go festival, there will be 27 cards divided into 3 “Pho”, each “Pho” of 9 cards.

According to the author Doan Viet Hung has presented in his book on the post: “In Binh Dinh alone, the division of pho is slightly different from Phu Yen and elsewhere: “Pho Vãn” has 9 pairs: “Chín gỏi”, “Nhì Bánh”, “Ba búng”, “Tứ tượng”, “Ngũ rún”, “Sáu miếng”, “Bảy liểu”, “Tám miếng”, “Chín gan”. “Pho Vạ” has 9 pairs: “Nhút trò”, “Nhì bí”, “Tam quăng”, “Tứ ghê”, “Ngũ trọt”, “Lục chạng”, “Thất vung”, “Bát bông”, “Cửu chùa”. “Pho sách” has 9 pairs: “Nhất nọc”, “Nhì nghèo”, “Ba gà”, “Tứ xách”, “Ngũ dùm”, “Sáu buồng”, “Bảy thưa”, “Tám dây”, “Cửu điều” [1].

From the lessons passed down from the previous generation by contemporary folk artists, the Bai Choi is still divided into three “Pho”: “Pho Vãn”, “Pho vạ”, “Pho sách”. However, during the time we verify it a little bit differently. The cards are no longer divided into three “Pho” as before but are arranged in the order of the name of the card, the numbers are in Sino-Vietnamese language, so that it is easy to remember that: “Nhút trò”, “Nhút nọc”, “Nhì nghèo”, “Bánh hai”, “Ba gà”, “Ba búng”, “Tam quăng”, “Tứ móc”, “Tứ tượng”, “Tứ xách”, “Tứ cẳng”, “Năm dùm”, “Ngũ trọt”, “Lục chạng”, “Sáu ghe”, “Thất vung”, “Bảy liểu”, “Bảy thưa”, “Tám miếng”, “Tám dùm”, “Bát bông”, “Cửu chùa”, “Cửu điều”, “Chín cu”, “Chín gỏi”, “Ông âm”, “Bạch Huệ”.

Talking about the material to make the cards, the traditional material is still made of bamboo. However, the cards are no longer drawn in Chinese ink on wind paper but instead printed on the material decal to be easily pasted on bamboo cards. The two sides are stuck with the name and the picture of the card, one side is stuck with the picture of the card and the name is in “Nôm” language - is the logographic writing system of the Vietnamese language, the other side is also stuck with a picture but the name of the card is stuck in “Quốc ngữ” - is the modern Vietnamese writing system. Not colors like black, white, red like in Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, but in Binh Dinh province the cards are more colorful, look more fun. There are no assumptions about this difference, but it can be seen that this is also a characteristic to distinguish Binh Dinh province from other regions where the game is played.

III. BAI CHOI’S THE OPERATOR

Bai Choi’s performance is the result of an enthusiastic accumulation, selection, research, and creation of generations of artisans over the centuries, directly to be

“Hiệu” - the anonymous artist who plays a key role in the folk performance.

A master of ceremonies dubbed “Hiệu” plays the important role of controlling Bai Choi and engaging the audience., considered the soul of the game [4]. Whether the Bai Choi game is lively, juicy, attracting players and viewers depends on the singing talent of the “Hiệu”. In each juggernaut at Cho Go festival, “Hiệu” can be either a man or a woman singing monologue or in response, plus a humorous juggling style, juggling together and special effects, increasing communication with players makes the card association more exciting.

A good “Hiệu” must be a quality singer, that is capable of flexible improvisation, capable of graceful tricks, humor, agility, memorizing poems, rhymes, folk verses, and proverbs; must know how to sing “Hát Nam”, “Hát khách” that are typical folk songs of Central Vietnam.

Initially, the “Hiệu” only did the chanting task, gradually changing the chant voice by humming and then going to sing, thereby producing the melody of the chant. This development is a very important milestone in the history of the Bai Choi, the melody of the Bai Choi was born through the process of labor and artistic creation over a long period of many “Hiệu” and has is selected according to the law of nature. With the melodious, rhythmic, and melodious chants of the choral leader, the “Hiệu” has brought both players and viewers into the joyful, exciting, and exciting atmosphere of the Bai Choi’s performance.

Considering the costumes of the “Hiệu” in the Bai Choi game at the Cho Go festival, it is a little different from the regions where they have a chance to play cards. The difference is that instead of the dress of the “Hiệu” in Quang Nam - Da Nang - Hue, the “Hiệu” in Tuy Phuoc in particular and Binh Dinh province, in general, appear two types of clothing, which are soldiers' costumes Tay Son period war and civilians. In civilian attire, we noticed that there was a short four-body or five-bodied blouse and the “Áo bà ba” – is traditional Southern Vietnam clothing.

If tracing the origin, the reason leading to this difference, there must be a process of further understanding, but from image materials, documentary films, as well as actual observations we can explain:

First, stemming from the origin of the Cho Go festival as well as the organization and maintenance of the gambling festival inside the festival is derived from helping soldiers less miss their close relative ones during the war. However, it is not difficult to predict the fact that it is not difficult to predict the appearance of being a soldier. Surely these are soldiers who are not only good at martial arts but also talented to write beautiful words.

Second, the origin comes from the peasant class, so it is understandable that the costumes of the “Hiệu” also come from the daily clothes of Vietnamese peasants.

Regardless of the type of outfit, the current attire of the cardigan nowadays, despite many changes in color and shape, shows a partial imitation of the historical image, the image of a floor popular class in the feudal period.

IV. BAI CHOI’S MUSIC

Bai Choi is a type of performance that combined folk songs with old music. The constituent factors that make up this type of performance include: poetic bowl - tales, music (melodies - instruments) are the most basic elements.

Bai Choi’s music has 4 main melodies: “Xuân nữ”, “Xàng xê”, “Cổ bản” and last, “Hò Quảng” [2]. Particularly “Xuân nữ” melodies also have modifications, many forms of transitions are very flexible, it seems that they are many different melodies. Among the four melodies, “Xuân nữ” is the most unique and frequently used melodies of chanting the Bai Choi.

Talking about musical instruments to support the Bai Choi’s performance must mention that “Đàn cò” - is Vietnamese two-chord fiddle, “Đàn nguyệt” - is Vietnamese two-chord tute, “Trống chiến” - the war drum, the “Song lang”, the “Sanh – Sứ” - are a Vietnamese percussion instrument [6]. The use of these instruments in the accompaniment of the Bai Choi’s performance is said to be the absorption from the instrument of the elegant music, of the “Tuồng” to perform the Bai Choi’s performance as stated by the Artist Nguyen Kiem [7]. Although this assertion is controversial over whether the Bai Choi has its traditional musical instrument or whether it fully accepts musical instruments from “Tuồng”. But in general, the accompaniment instruments for Vietnamese folk tunes in Central Vietnam are more or less the presence of “Đàn cò”, Sona trumpets, drums, “Song lang”, “Thanh la”, “Sanh – Sứ”. The accompaniment for chanting the hut is also not out of the above instruments, but perhaps the instrument that is not lacking when singing Bai Choi’s song is drums and “Sanh - Sứ” made from bamboo.

V. AGENDA FOR BAI CHOI’S PERFORMANCE

A Bai Choi’s performance is started with a long drum festival to attract everyone’s attention. Right after the time was empty, everyone gathered together, the huts had people sitting and handing big cards. At this time, the drummer chanted loudly: “Hiệu đâu?” Participants in this game will reply out loud with a long sigh: “Dạ!”. As if ready, the “Hiệu” approached the table of the village

council, bowed down, and accepted the tube of cards that had been prepared to begin the Bai Choi’s performance.

When the conductors of the Bai Choi’s performance finished the opening procedure, the “Hiệu” gathered, the “Hiệu” came in front of the board solemnly and replied: “Hiệu phát bài đã đủ, cho Hiệu thủ bài tỳ”. The host gave an order for a drumbeat, the orchestra emerged, the two-handed “Hiệu” carried a tube of 27 cards at the board table, walked around the hall. The “Hiệu” walked both sides to knock out “Sanh – Sứ” in the accompaniment so that the corrector would recommend 27 cards. The chant of this song is the first one to sing the old song. This song is not only to introduce 27 cards inside the bamboo tube, but it is also how the gamer sits on the cabins, the gamer can check that there are missing cards in the bamboo tube. No, the “Hiệu” is cheating or not. Instead of a simple test, this test is more artistic. Just starting to open Bai Choi’s performance to play cards, I can see that the folk activities of the ancient people in the past were not as “popular” as the way the Bai Choi was created.

Following the introduction of the 27 cards, the “Hiệu” will begin singing the greeting to the brawler. With this song, the elite artist Minh Lieu shared that he could use many melodies flexibly such as “Xuân nữ”, “Xàng xê”, “Cổ Bản”, “Hò Quảng”. However, the more commonly used melody is “Xuân nữ”. The solicitation part is used to call upon people to attend the Cho Go festival to stick around to buy cards to join in or simply listen and stock up for the festival to fight more fun. However, the content of this traditional invitation has almost no documents to record, but in today’s era, the content is changed to suit the times.

Right after this song, the “Hiệu” will pull out a card from a bamboo tube and see what it is? And singing the lyrics corresponding to the name card, in Bai Choi’s song treasure trove of thousands of songs, the effect must change very quickly to sing. It can be seen that a “Hiệu” is a person who not only has a good memory but also has to be quick while singing the song, responding well to other “Hiệu”.

At the end of a singing part, all “Hiệu” will have a pattern of singing as follows:

“Con (tên con bài) nó đã ra rồi
Hiệu tôi rút tiếp thử coi con gì
Con gì thì hiệu cũng hô ngay
Chòi nào trúng thưởng hiệu đây dâng cờ”.

Not only that, but the “Hiệu” must also have lyrics connecting between singing parts so that they are so good, reducing the boring repetition between singing parts. According to the observation of the Bai Choi in the Cho Go festival, the “Hiệu” will often use verses and verses to praise their homeland and to Binh Dinh to add special

features. Particularly the elite artist Minh Lieu shared more, “Hiệu” with professions (understood as literate, know a lot of poetry, with long experience) will change and take more historical stories to sing, still following the principle of conception will appear the name of the card drawn.

Besides, the “Hiệu” can use poems about the attractiveness and charm of the Bai Choi, causing local people to arrange work, leave their children and family to pull each other to come to listen. It can be seen that the Bai Choi plays an important role in the cultural and spiritual life of Tuy Phuoc people in particular and the Binh Dinh people in general.

The “Hiệu” would sing like this continuously in a sequence: pick the card - sing a song to call the name’s card - pick the new card. The “Hiệu” would sing until finding out the winner. Each cabin will be issued a card on which 3 cards are arranged randomly. When there are 3 cards in the deck corresponding to the “Bài cái” is called “Bài tới” – is enough cards to win. At this point, the “Hiệu” will stop honoring the card that will sing for the winner.

Following the opening of the next article is the prize offering. Each place will have different items for the person who comes to the card. For the matchmaking festival at Cho Go festival, there will be a roll of specialties in the district market in Tuy Phuoc countryside, a common gourd wine, a bonus, and a flag for the winner of this game. Giving rewards is not merely giving the prize to the winner, but also comes with a singing part.

Although depending on the number of games, there may be many disciples, but through the process when we attended the Bai Choi’s performance at the Cho Go festival, we have not seen the “Hiệu” exceed nine games. The “Hiệu” groups will take turns playing three games to change to another group of “Hiệu” and so on until there are no more customers playing cards. Holding a tray of money in his hand, the brand went to the hut with a song to offer the prize, and sang along the “Nam xuân” melody with the following content:

“Khẩn cấp dâng...u... cờ, đệ nhất ...u ...u...
 Dạ... mình niên năm nay, chúc cho gia đình quan khách
 Gặp nhiều may mắn
 Đắc tài đắc lộc, đắc bình an... là hiệu tui đây... u...u...
 Chúc cho gia đình, vạn sự bình...u... an... u...u...”

This time is like the call to receive the money tray, the signal will have to change a little bit in the song for the third: “Khẩn cấp dâng...u... cờ, đệ tam dâng tới...u...u...”. Although there are such differences, even those with seniority in the singing of Bai Choi’s song such as the elite artist Minh Lieu, artist Nguyen Phu cannot

explain why there is much difference. They only took it from their predecessors and took it for granted. Is this an interesting or profound coincidence in that a concept of human life of the common people but has not been revealed?

VI. CONCLUSION

In summary, Bai Choi’s performance can be seen as a unique folk performing art form on the Central Coast. Not only that, but the Bai Choi also shows the unique characteristics of each region, increasing the richness in the treasure of folk culture in general and folk performance in particular. The above characteristics of the traditional Binh Dinh hut gambling association are gradually eroding. The attention of people and authorities in preserving and promoting good traditional values is very necessary. Not only are the policies, but also need to take specific actions to always live in the cultural and artistic life of the people of Binh Dinh in particular and the people of Vietnam in general.

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