

ANCIENT VIETNAMESE WORDS IN SOUTHERN FOLK SONG COLLECTIONS PUBLISHED IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20th CENTURY

La Mai Thi Gia^{a*}

*^aThe Faculty of Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Viet Nam National University
Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

**Corresponding author: Email: thigialm@hcmussh.edu.vn*

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Abstract

The article examines and explains the meanings of archaic Vietnamese words in southern folk song collections published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. We have identified and selected typical Vietnamese words that are now rarely used or used differently. To explain these words' meanings in folk songs, we use dictionaries, such as Vietnamese Dictionary, Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary, Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit) – the first Vietnamese dictionary, and Southern Dialect Dictionary. This research outlines a unique and exciting feature of the southern language that was popular in folk songs and people's lives in the South.

Keywords: Archaic words; Early 20th century; Folk songs; Southern Vietnam.

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1. INTRODUCTION

To identify the time when people started writing down folk sayings, ethical poems, romantic songs, and oral stories of the Southern people, 1888 is perhaps a suitable milestone since collector Truong Vinh Ky in that year first published six verses in the first issue of *Lectures Instructives (Miscellanées)* – the first private newspaper in Vietnam and the first literary academic journal in Vietnam using the Vietnamese alphabet. Within two consecutive years, 18 issues of *Lectures Instructives* were published. Many of the published works belong to different folklore genres, such as children’s songs, folk songs, proverbs, family ethical songs, narrative poems, legends, anecdotes about historical characters, jokes, and fairy tales. And other genres of folklore include rhymes, idioms, riddles, *câu thai* (which consist of four verses with alternating lines of six and eight syllables), quotations, descriptive poems, etc.

Besides Truong Vinh Ky’s first six verses in *Lectures Instructives*, other folk song collections were published in Saigon from the late 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. Collectors, such as Huynh Tinh Paulus Cua, Dang Le Nghi, Khau Vo Nghi, Nguyen Cong Chanh, Nguyen Ba Thoi, Ho Cong Minh, and Dang Trong Quon published collections of southern folk songs under different names, such as *Tục diều, Câu hát An Nam, Câu hát góp, Câu hát huê tình, Câu hát chèo ghe, Câu hò xay lúa, Hát huê tình đối đáp, Hát đối đáp, Hát và hò góp*, etc. These collections were published by the publishing houses of Dinh Thai Son, Le Van Thinh, Duc Luu Phuong, Nguyen Quoi Loan, and Xua Nay in Saigon in the first half of the 20th century. Some collections have never gone out of print.

We have gathered ten southern folk song collections published in Saigon before 1945 (1888 to 1939) and re-published after 1945 from national and local libraries and even from the bookcases of private individuals. The collections range from a few hundred to about a thousand verses recorded consecutively without numbering. The collection with the fewest verses is *Câu hát huê tình* of Dang Le Nghi with 360 verses, and for parallelism *Câu hát góp* of Huynh Tinh Paulus Cua with 1,010 verses.

After studying these collections, we found some common linguistic features of southern folk songs related to the formation and popularization of the Vietnamese alphabet in southern Vietnam in the period before 1945. These features are Vietnamese spellings, ancient Vietnamese words, Sino-Vietnamese words, words transliterated from French, and words from southern dialects. There are unlimited uses of historical and scholarly literary classics from Vietnamese and Chinese history and culture to express the meanings of southern folk songs in the early 20th century. This article will examine some typical ancient Vietnamese words in the collections listed below. After identifying these words and counting the number of times they appear in the ten collections, we used several dictionaries to look up their meanings: *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)* by Huynh Tinh Cua, *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary* by Nguyen Ngoc San and Dinh Van Thien, *Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary* by Dao Duy Anh, *Southern Dialect Dictionary* by Huynh Cong Tin, and *Vietnamese Dictionary* by Hoang Phe.

For our survey and research, we used the collections of folk songs named below (in chronological order of publication).

1. Truong Vinh Ky (1888-1889). *Lectures Instructives/Miscellanées*. Impr. Commerciale Rey-Curiol. Issues 1 to 8 were published in 1888, issues 9 to 12 were published in 1889, and issues 1 to 6 were re-published in 1889. Each issue contains 16 pages. We found six verses in these 12 issues.

2. Huynh Tinh Paulus Cua (1901). *Câu hát góp (Recueil de Chansons Populaires)*. Saigon: Impr. Commercial Ménard Legros. Second edition with 32 pages, 1,010 verses.

3. Dang Le Nghi (1907). *Câu hát đối theo bạn cây*. Saigon: published by Dinh Thai Son, 24 pages, 635 verses.

4. Dang Le Nghi (1928). *Câu hát huê tình*. Pham Van Thinh Publishing House, 23 pages, 360 verses.

5. Nguyen Cong Chanh (1928). *Câu hò xay lúa*. Xua Nay Publishing House. Second edition with 19 pages, 554 verses.

6. Dang Trong Quan (1932). *Hát đối đáp*. Xua Nay Publishing House. The sixth edition.

7. Khau Vo Nghi (1933). *Hát huê tình đối đáp*. Xua Nay Publishing House, 18 pages, 359 verses.

8. Nguyen Ba Thoi (1933). *Câu hát đối đáp*. Impr. Pham Van Thinh. Second edition with 18 pages, 300 verses.

9. Nguyen Ba Thoi (1934). *Câu hát đối đáp*. Impr. Duc Luu Phuong. Second edition, 14 pages. Pham Van Cuong Publishing House, reprinted in 1959, 15 pages, 188 verses.

10. Nguyen Cong Chanh (1967). *Hát và hò góp* (rewritten), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Cho Lon, 18 pages, 534 verses.

Since the folk verses in these collections meet the typical criteria of folk songs in Vietnamese folklore in terms of content and linguistic form, we use the term “folk songs” (*ca dao*) to refer to these verses in this article.

2. INTERPRETATION OF ANCIENT VIETNAMESE WORDS IN SOUTHERN FOLK SONGS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20th CENTURY

Among many concerns about the language used in southern folk songs in the early 20th century, in our opinion, spelling error is the one that can be solved most efficiently and thoroughly. On the other hand, the main challenge is identifying and explaining the ancient Vietnamese words commonly used in different contexts in folk songs of previous times but rarely used in folklore and written literature or daily communication nowadays.

To overcome this challenge, we need to understand ancient Vietnamese words from different researchers' perspectives.

Đào (1975), in his work *Chữ Nôm – Nguồn gốc cấu tạo, diễn biến*, did not use the concept of “ancient words” but instead used the term “old words” and said that those words are no longer used or rarely used. In addition, he also considers monosyllabic Chinese words in ancient texts as a type of ancient word: Among the ancient words, there are also simple words borrowed from Chinese characters to express some concepts, which later on are only expressed in Vietnamese (Đào, 1975). According to Nguyễn and Đinh (2001, p. 187) in *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary*, ancient words:

...are original Vietnamese words commonly used in everyday speech. Over time, they are no longer used and only exist in old works of literature or ancient folk songs and proverbs. “Ancient” can be understood under the circumstance in which modern Vietnamese people no longer understand the meaning of these words. The reason for this is their absence in the modern language, or that these words no longer retain their old meanings, which does not mean that these words appear the earliest.

Nguyen (1984, as cited in Trần, 2010, p. 17), in her research *Truyện Song Tinh – khảo đính, phiên âm, chú thích*, has presented ancient words in relation to dialects as:

...ancient words are generally understood as words with sounds and meanings. Using ancient words to make sentences is slightly or completely different from using common words nowadays. Ancient words or words still used in a certain region are called archaisms.

From the above perspectives, we show that ancient words in southern folk songs in the first half of the 20th century are related to the interpretations of the above researchers. They are old words that are no longer used or rarely used today; they only exist in old literature, folk songs, and proverbs or have different meanings from common words used nowadays, etc. These ancient words were used in everyday speech and are found in folk songs from the late 19th century and early 20th century. Later on, they are less used or combined with other words to generate different meanings. Therefore, it is not easy to find these words in Collections of recent folk songs. To look up the definitions of these ancient words, we use the dictionaries mentioned above and interpret the words in the context of folk songs.

Firstly, we want to mention a rare word only seen once in the collection *Câu hát góp* of Huynh Tinh Cua and not seen again in any other collection. It is the word *tổ nễ*:

*Ngó lên tổ nễ chau mà
Mãng lo sự khó quên ngày muối dưa*

Translated:

The ancestors are in anger since

Decedents feel poor without worship and filial piety
(Huỳnh, 1901)

According to the explanation in *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*, the word *tổ nễ* refers to the ancestor, the great grandfathers, the ones who established the family business (Huỳnh, 2018b). The word *tổ nễ* refers to the ancestors and appeared quite commonly in the vernacular used in the countryside of the Six Provinces of southern Vietnam. Also, in the folk song above, the word *mãng* is an ancient Vietnamese word that is used with the different meaning. But in contrast to the word *tổ nễ*, which appears only once, the word *mãng* appears twenty-six times in the ten collections, often in phrases such as *mãng sầu căn dươn*, *mãng sầu dươn nợ*, *mãng sầu người nghĩa*, *mãng sấm soi*, *mãng thương*, *mãng lo*, *mãng coi*, *mãng con trắng*, *mãng con nước*, etc.

*Cửa song loan đóng chặt còn nêm,
Mãng sầu dươn nợ lại thêm sầu mình*

Translated:

The gate closes tightly and wedges
Minding sorrow that brings yourself sadness
(Nguyễn, 1928)

*Dọn cơm chống đũa ngồi nhìn
Mãng sầu người nghĩa thất tình quên ăn.*

Translated:

Serving rice and sitting still just to stare
Minding sorrow of the one being lovelorn
(Nguyễn, 1928)

*Tiến bẩy công anh lao lung, lo vun bển cây tùng, bớ em nó ôi!
Mãng sấm soi trên ngọn, dưới gốc sùng chẳng có hay*

Translated:

I worked hard and took care of the cedar tree, oh my dear!
Just focusing on reaching the top yet abandoning its root
(Khâu, 1933)

*Mãng thương anh nên ba má rầy la,
Choàng tay qua cổ anh Ba khóc rờn.*

Translated:

Minding the love for you that worries parents
Wrapping arms around then starting to cry
(Nguyễn, 1967)

According to *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary*, the word *mãng* means focusing on something (Nguyễn & Đình, 2001). In *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, the word *mãng* is defined as working hard, minding one thing. Moreover, according to this dictionary, the folk song, *Ngó lên tổ nề chau mà, mãng lo sự khó quên ngày muôi đưa*, means worrying about poverty without worship and filial piety (Huỳnh, 2018b).

Another ancient word that we rarely see in folklore, including folk songs from the early 20th century, is *mưa hề*. This word appears only once in Dang Le Nghi's *Câu hát huê tình*, published in 1928. Among the fourteen words in the six-eight-word couplet (*lục bát*), there is one ancient Vietnamese word, one word of the southern dialect, and two words transliterated from French.

Ô-rơ-voa đây giã bạn ra về
Căn đươn chưa bèn, mưa hề phát-sê.

Translated:

Goodbye, my dear, as I am leaving now
Our fate is never shared, don't be sad
(Đặng, 1928)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, the word *mưa* is no; *mưa hề* is do not (forbidden) (Huỳnh, 2018b). *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary* also explains that *mưa hề* is do not (Nguyễn & Đình, 2001). Furthermore, the word *đươn* is how people pronounce *duyên*, which is a common word in the South. The word *căn đươn* is *căn duyên*, meaning fate. In this folk song, there are two words transliterated from French, namely *Ô-rơ-voa* and *phát-sê*. *Ô-rơ-voa* is how Vietnamese people say *au revoir*, which means goodbye in French. It is probably as common as the English word goodbye used in everyday communication. *Phát-sê* means sad or angry, transliterated from the French word *fâcher*. The linguistic system transliterated from French is also an essential feature of folk language in these collections. We also discuss this issue in the article *Dấu ấn văn hóa Pháp trong ca dao dân ca Nam Bộ đầu thế kỷ XX* (La, 2021).

Another unusual word that we only come across twice in the collection *Câu hát góp* of Huynh Tinh Cua is the word *âm can*:

Gió hiu hiu đây chịu đứt đoạn

*Âm can trời nhớ bạn ta xưa
Bạn cũ ta xưa nay đã biệt lộ
Giả khách qua đàng thượng lộ hỏi thăm*

Translated:

The wind is blowing and the string is untied
It is gloomy and I'm missing you
My old love is far away
Pretending to be a stranger, I ask about you
(Huỳnh, 1901)

*Trời ôi ai đánh trời gấm,
Mây mưa dứt đoạn, tư bề âm can
Cơ trời dẫu bể đã đoạn,
Tơ duyên vẫn vôi thiếp chàng xa nhau.*

Translated:

What makes the sky roar loudly?
Rain to rain then it is so gloomy
Heaven gives chance and quickly changes
Why love is short-lived to part you and me
(Huỳnh, 1901)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*, the word *âm can* can be understood as less sunny. If the weather is *âm can*, the weather is not sunny. The phrase *phơi âm can* means drying something under the shade (Huỳnh, 2018a). The word *âm can* in the two folk songs above can be understood to mean that the weather is cloudy; the weather is not good; it is gloomy like the mood of couples who are apart because of a short-lived love (*tơ duyên vẫn vôi*). The word *vẫn vôi* is an old way of saying *ngắn ngủi* (short) (Nguyễn & Đình, 2001). There is a method of drying medicinal herbs under the shade called *phơi âm can*. However, these words are rarely used today, both in literature and daily life.

We encounter the word *khủng* twice in the following folk songs in Dang Le Nghi's *Câu hát huê tình* performed by a call-and-response song between a male and a female.

- Male part:

*Đó quyết cây mai đây phân hoài chẳng khủng,
Cha chả: có một tiếng ừ, vàng xúng mấy cân.*

Translated:

Why does it take so long to accept?
It's just a "yes," gold is worth a few more

- Female part:

*Một tiếng phải doan, ngàn vàng không đổi,
Huống việc vợ chồng biết nổi mấy cân.*

Translated:

Our fate crossed is worth a thousand gold
Now becoming husband and wife who knows its worth
(Đặng, 1928)

- Male part:

*Miệng bậu đành ừ, qua chẳng từ lao khổ,
Dầu dãi sơn cầm hổ, dầu nhập hải tróc long
Trước sau giữ trọn một lòng,
Bớ em ôi, vào lòn ra cúi, anh đánh sòng theo em.*

Translated:

If you say "yes," there is nothing I cannot do
Whether hunting tigers in the mountains or going to the sea
I forever keep my heart for you and only
Oh, my dear, going through all these, I'm with you always

- Female part:

*Em ừ bây chừ, cha mẹ từ chẳng khứng
Có phải hại anh, đau ngồi đau đứng,
Bảo anh lo ngược lo xuôi, trước sau lại không vui,
Bớ anh ôi, chi bằng anh cậy mới nói hỏi ban sơ.*

Translated:

To say "yes" now will bring discomfort to parents
Will it worry you, whether sitting or standing?
Telling you to be so protective, no one is happy

Oh, my dear, if only you believe in the very first bonding
(Đặng, 1928)

And this word also appears once in the collection, *Hát đối đáp* of Dang Trong Quon:

- Female part:

*Phải gặp ông Tư em hỏi sơ cho biết
Phải gặp bà Nguyệt em hỏi thiệt cho rành
Vì đâu hoa nọ lìa cành anh ơi
Nợ duyên sao sớm dứt cho đành dạ em*

Translated:

When I meet the matchmaker, I will question him
When I see the matchmaker, I will ask the truth
Why did the flower leave the branch?
Why does our fate mean to end so soon?

- Male part:

*Trên mẹ cha chẳng chịu, dưới anh điếu làm con
Tại nơi em chẳng khứng chịu lòn, em ôi
Tuy là lúc giận chứ còn lúc thương*

Translated:

Parents' disagreement, I am a child not dare to disobey
Where you live shows no sign of concurrence
Even though a tough time, we still have love

(Đặng, 1932)

Khứng is a rare word that is no longer used. This word means “accepted, endured” (Huỳnh, 2018a) or “accepted, resigned” (Nguyễn & Đinh, 2001). We notice this word in call-and-response songs about marriage preparations. It can be seen that this word formerly appeared in the context of weddings and proposals. *Khứng* is not the state of approving in general but has a meaning similar to the phrase “I do” in marriage. A girl accepted the proposal, accepted to become a wife, or the girl’s parents agreed to let the boy marry their daughter.

In the three pairs above, the word *lòn* appears twice in the two verses: *Tại nơi em chẳng khứng chịu lòn, em ôi* and *Bớ em ôi, vào lòn ra cúi, anh đánh sòng theo em*. This word also appears in a few other folk songs:

*Sắt kia đá nọ còn mòn,
Làm dâu vô cúí ra lòn khổ thay.*

Translated:

Iron and stone are still worn
Submissive as a daughter-in-law, she is so miserable
(Nguyễn, 1967)

*Tháng ba cơm gói ra Hòn
Muốn ăn trứng nhận phải lòn hang Mai
Hang Mai anh cũng muốn lòn
Sợ e trứng nhận hãỷ còn vỏ không*

Translated:

In March, rice is ready for trips to the island
Wanting swallow eggs to eat, Mai cave is where to go
Mai cave, I'm willing to go
Just being afraid to swallow eggs that still have shells
(Đặng, 1907)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*, *lòn* is to lower down to go through and the phrase *vào lòn ra cúí* means being submissive (Huỳnh, 2018a). *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary* explains that *lòn* is *luồn*, meaning wriggle (Nguyễn & Đình, 2001). The term *lòn* is rarely used in today's folk songs and only appears in literature that uses much dialect. It has been replaced by the word *luồn*.

The word *lòn xòn* in the following folk song is rare. It only appears once among the ten collections:

*Đôi ta duyên nợ lòn xòn,
Bớ anh ôi, mặt tuy giáp mặt dạ còn ước ao.*

Translated:

We met in such a hurry
Oh, my dear, we met but it is never enough
(Đặng, 1928)

We have used many dictionaries such as *Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary*, *Vietnamese Dictionary*, *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị*, *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary*, etc. Still, this word does not belong to any category. When we used Huynh Cong Tin's *Southern*

Dialect Dictionary, we found only one word, *lòn sòn*, meaning equal, almost equal, not much inferior to each other (Huỳnh, 2007). In terms of word structure, it can be said that the word *lòn xòn* in the above folk songs is another spelling of the word *lòn sòn*, but they do not have the same meaning. Therefore, in our opinion, the word *lòn xòn* in these folk songs is the other way of saying *lon xon*. *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)* claims that *xon* is an old word meaning “hurried, hasty” (Huỳnh, 2018a). The *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary* also defines *lon xon* as “in a hurry” (Nguyễn & Đinh, 2001). From the context of the folk verse, *Bớ anh ôi, mặt tuy giáp mặt dạ còn ước ao*, it can be affirmed that the word *lòn xòn* is used in this sense, meaning that the couple met in a hurry, so they do not feel satisfied. It is not possible that the couple has the same amount of affection towards each other according to the meaning of the word *lòn sòn* in the sense of southern dialect.

In two collections, *Câu hát đối theo bạn cây* of Đặng Lê Nghi and *Câu hò xây lúa* of Nguyen Cong Chanh, there is a word *lượng khương*, which is unusual in both old and modern folk songs.

*Nước có khi chảy khi ương
Gãm tui với bậu lượng khương quá chừng.*

Translated:

The water does not flow nor stop
You and I cannot be together nor apart
(Nguyễn, 1928)

- Female part:

*Anh đừng có Qua lâu mà em sầu nhớ,
Thục địa anh sớm về xin chớ lượng khương.*

Translated:

Do not go far so that it makes me sad
Come back to me soon; please do not hesitate

- Female part:

*Lòng Hậu phát đây anh gìn khăn khăn,
Phận Hồng hoa bậu gắn giữ ràng,
Sa non mển nghĩa, đôi hàng Châu sa.*

Translated:

My heart for you, I treasure without fail
You're a rose to me and should keep it in mind

Being apart, I miss you and cry

(Đặng, 1907)

The word *luong khuong* is absent in *Vietnamese Dictionary* by Hoang Phe. And in *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, this word is defined as “troublesome, unlucky” (Huỳnh, 2018a). In *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary*, the only word that is similar in terms of phonetics is the word *lườn khuron*, with the meaning of “interact, live with” (Nguyễn & Đinh, 2001). In our opinion, *luong khuong* and *lườn khuron* are not the same. In the folk songs above, there is also the word *uong* in the verse, *Nước còn khi chảy khi uong*. The word *uong* is separated from the reduplicative word *uong uong*, meaning “not this nor that” (Nguyễn & Đinh, 2001). This meaning can be seen as a synonym of *luong khuong* in the verse, *Gắm tui với bậu luong khuong quá chừng*, to indicate the dilemma of a couple. They cannot be together nor leave each other.

The word *luong khuong* in the next folk verse is used in contrast to the word *khấn khấn*, which is the boy’s response to the girl’s doubt. When he heard her saying *Thực địa anh về xin chớ luong khuong*, the young man replied *Lòng Hậu phát anh đây gìn khấn khấn*. According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, the word *khấn* means “truehearted”; if you miss someone *khấn khấn*, it means you cannot stop missing them, you are always faithful and loyal (Huỳnh, 2018a). *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary* also defines *khấn khấn* as always keeping something in mind (Nguyễn & Đinh, 2001). Thus, the boy uses the expression *khấn khấn* to affirm his feelings towards only one girl, and it is not *luong khuong* like the girl’s worries. At the same time, the word *luong khuong* capitalized in the folk verse is also the name of a traditional medicine. It can be seen that the couple has used herb names, such as *Qua lâu*, *Thực Địa*, *Luong Khuong*, *Hậu Phát*, *Hồng hoa*, *Sa Nhơn*, and *Châu Sa* in talking to each other.

The reduplicative word *khấn khấn* appears one more time in the collection, *Câu hát góp* of Huynh Tinh Cua. It is also used with the meaning of faithful, loyal, or undoubting:

*Thuyền dời, bến cũ không dời
Khấn khấn một lời quân tử nhưt ngôn*

Translated:

The boat left but the wharf is still
Loyal to what has been said and told

(Huỳnh, 1901)

In *Câu hát Góp*, there is another reduplicative word that is no longer used, which is *năng năng*:

*Tiếc thay con thỏ năng năng
Núp lùm chờ đợi bóng trăng bầy chày*

Translated:

Pity, the rabbit is resolutely waiting
Hiding and waiting so long for the moon
(Huỳnh, 1901)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*, the meaning of the word *nặng nặng* is unwavering (Huỳnh, 2018b). *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary* defines this word as “resolutely doing it to the end” (Nguyễn & Đinh, 2001). Thus, we can see that the word *khấn khấn* in the previous folk song and *nặng nặng* in this one have the same meaning, indicating certainty, stability, and determination (mental or emotional state). And both of these words are now rarely used. Only two synonyms are phonetically equivalent to them, *khăng khăng* and *nặng nặc*. In the folk verse, *Núp lùm chờ đợi bóng trăng bầy chày*, there is a word, *bầy chày*, meaning “for so long” (Huỳnh, 2018a). Compound words like this are rarely seen in today’s literature. If this word is separated into *bầy* and *chày*, it still retains the old meaning. And when combined with other words, we have phrases such as *vô duyên bầy* – that is so charmless, and *chi lắm bầy* – that is so much. The meaning of the word *bầy* is “that so, that much” (Huỳnh, 2018a) and in phrases, *không chóng thì chày* and *năm canh chày*, the meaning of the word *chày* is “slowly, late” (Huỳnh, 2018a).

In the same way that the reduplicative words *nặng nặng* and *khấn khấn* are composed, we also notice the ancient word *tri tri* with similar meaning.

- Male part:

*Bậu có chồng sao bậu không tu bị,
Mỗi buổi chiều, bậu dạo thúy dạo sơn.*

Translated:

You have a husband, why don't you contemplate
Every time you go out to a different place?

- Female part:

*Anh đừng có đem dạ nghi nan,
Em dạo chơi giải muộn, chứ lòng vàng tri tri.*

Translated:

Do not be skeptical and doubtful
I go out for enjoyment, but I'm truehearted
(Đặng, 1928)

*Sóng xao mặc sóng với thoàn,
Bớ anh ôi duyên duyên xưa em tạc dạ, lòng đá vàng tri tri.*

Translated:

Waves are waves; boats are boats
Oh, my dear, no matter what, my heart is pure and still for you
(Đặng, 1907)

Nhứt ngôn trúng vạn ngôn dụng, nhứt ngôn bất trúng vạn sự bất thành

*Em đừng có dạ nghi anh, bớ em ôi
Anh là quân tử lòng thành tri tri*

Translated:

Keeping your word is everything; nothing works if you fail to keep it
Do not doubt my heart and intention, my dear
You have my word and sincere heart
(Đặng, 1932)

*Rèn lòng vàng đá tri tri
Một ngày cũng gọi tương tri với chàng*

Translated:

Keeping faithfulness like gold and stone
One day, I wish I shall be with you
(Huỳnh, 1901)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, the word *tri* is knowing, mastering, knowledge, old acquaintance, confidant, prophet, or the word *tri* in the proverb *Họa hồ họa bì nan họa cốt/Tri nhân tri diện bất tri tâm* (Huỳnh, 2018b). This proverb means that when an artist paints a tiger, he can only paint its skin, not its bones; when we observe people, we can only know their appearance, not their truest intentions. However, in the context of the folk song above, the word *tri tri* is not used in this sense. The word *tri* in *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)* is explained in the context of a Sino-Vietnamese word. The word *tri tri* in phrases such as *vàng đá tri tri, lòng thành tri tri, lòng thành tri tri, or năn nỉ tri tri*, etc., is similar to the meanings of the two words, *khấn khấn* and *năng năng*, that we have analyzed. The word *tri tri* means the state of being truehearted, faithful, and confident. In folk songs, *tri tri* refers to the certainty of the characters in love. It is as solid as gold and stone. In addition, in the verse, *Bậu có*

chồng sao bậu không tu bị, there is an ancient word *tu bị*. The word *tu bị*, as explained in *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, means “correcting, improving” (Huỳnh, 2018b). In the situation where the husband suspected that his wife’s behavior is not proper for a married woman because she goes out often (*dạo thủy dạo sơn*), the girl used the phrase, *lòng vàng tri tri* (I’m truehearted), to affirm her faithfulness.

A phrase formed by combining dialect with an ancient word that we found in the collection, *Câu hát góp*, is *lụy san san*:

Lụy san san đưa nàng xuống vịnh
Anh trở lộn về nhuộm bệnh tương tư

Translated:

My tears are pouring as you leave
I come home to my love sickness

(Huỳnh, 1901)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, the word *san san* means pouring out. The phrase *lụy san san* means tears pouring out, tears falling, crying profusely (Huỳnh, 2018b). Therefore, the phrase *lụy san san* was used to refer to crying instead of the phrase *nước mắt chứa chan*, as would be used nowadays. We encountered the word *lụy*, meaning tears, multiple times in southern folk songs of this period. This word occurs in phrases such as *hai hàng lụy*, *roi lụy*, *lụy nhỏ*, *lụy ứa*, *lụy tuôn*, *lụy dầm*, *lụy thấm bầu*, *lụy ướt bầu*, *giọt lụy hồng*, *hột lụy*, *lụy ngọc*, *châu lụy*, *hột lụy châu*, etc.

Đại mộc lưu giang bất đắc hồi cố lý
Em xa bạn nhơn tình hột lụy chứa chan.

Translated:

Trees drifting in the river do not expect to return
Our separation brings so many tears to my eyes

(Đặng, 1928)

Đôi hàng lụy nhỏ lâm ly, em xiết chi rầu rĩ, anh ôi
Riêng trách ông trời già đày hủy hồng nhan

Translated:

Tears I cry profusely; I am in deep sorrow, my dear
Only the creator is to blame for destroying a beauty’s fate

(Đặng, 1932)

*Sụt sùi lụy ứa thâm bâu,
Bấy lâu vắng mặt, biết đâu trao lời.*

Translated:

Tears of sorrow wet the collar
With a long time of absence, words are hard to explain
(Nguyễn, 1928)

Suppose the word *lụy* (tears) in the above folk songs is not an ancient Vietnamese word but a word in the southern dialect – a different way of saying the word *lệ*. Surprisingly, it is not mentioned in *Southern Dialect Dictionary* by Huỳnh Cong Tin. In this dictionary, the word *lụy* is defined as falling down and no longer able to function (Huỳnh, 2007). It goes with an example of the word *lụy* in a folk song, *Nhạn đậu cành sung anh giương cung bắn nhạn, con nhạn lụy rồi anh làm bạn với ai* (The swallow was perching on a fig branch; he raised his bow to shoot it. The swallow fell off the branch, so he got no friend to be with). There are also cases that we have studied for which the meaning of the word *lụy* is falling down:

*Anh hùng trường trái chín châu,
Tới đây lâm lụy phải lao nhà người.*

Translated:

A hero conquered across nine continents
Till this point falling down because of your spear
(Huỳnh, 1901)

*Chiều nay người nghĩa xa anh,
Chim sa cá lụy, kiếng đờng xanh vội tàn.*

Translated:

My loved one will go far this afternoon
Birds and fish are impaired as green plants quickly wither
(Nguyễn, 1928)

Looking up in the *Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary* of Dao Duy Anh, we found the explanation of the word *lụy* is “binding, involving” (Đào, 1992). We also found the word *lụy* with this meaning in these folk songs:

*Đặng hoa thom em đơm cài mái tóc, bó anh ôi
Sợ lụy cái tay phàm như vóc thiên hương*

Translated:

I use beautiful flowers to decorate my hair, my dear
Being afraid of binding with hands that touched the beauty
(Đặng, 1932)

*Vì ai gây lụy cho mình
Mẹ cha hay đặng hành hình thân em*

Translated:

Because of he who brought me tears
It will bring me trouble once my parents know
(Nguyễn, 1967)

Thus, the same phonetic form as the word *lụy* often appeared in southern folk songs in the early 20th century. The word *lụy* is both an ancient word and a regional colloquialism. When used in folk verses, it conveys three meanings, depending on the context of the folk song: *hột lụy* (tears), *lâm lụy* (fallen), and *liên lụy* (involved).

Bâu is another word appearing many times in southern folk songs and phrases, such as *bâu áo*, *hở râu*, *kết râu*, *nói râu*, *chia râu*, and *lụy thâm râu*.

*Nguyệt về rành rạnh tư bề
Đôi ta nguyệt chứng lời thề kết râu.*

Translated:

Moon is about to glow so brightly
The two of us testify to the oath of marriage
(Huỳnh, 1901)

*Áo dài năm nút hở râu,
Bớ anh ơi, thung huyền em còn đó, em dám đâu tư tình*

Translated:

Five-button tunic with opened collar
My dear, my parents are still here, I dare not deceive them
(Đặng, 1928)

*Bớ anh ơi, như ai rút xé ruột tằm
Mơ hình tưởng bóng lụy dâm thâm râu*

Translated:

Oh, my dear, like someone tearing the silkworm
 Dreaming of my love is wetting my collar with tears
 (Nguyễn, 1933)

*Mình đưa bâu áo tui viết tháo vài hàng,
 Trước thăm phụ mẫu, sau viếng nàng đôi câu*

Translated:

Give me your shirt lapel so I can write a few words
 Parents are first, then you are my next concern
 (Nguyễn, 1928)

Lụy thắm bâu and *kết bâu* are phrases appearing many times in southern folk songs. In many dictionaries, the word *bâu* is both an ancient word and southern dialect. For example, according to Hoang Phe's *Vietnamese Dictionary*, the word *bâu* in the old sense is a collar, and in the dialect sense, it is a pocket (Hoàng, 2003). *Southern Dialect Dictionary* explains it as the excess sewn at the collar to fold down every time you wear it (Huỳnh, 2007). According to *Ancient Vietnamese Vocabulary Dictionary*, the word *bâu* is the collar or the lapel (Nguyễn & Đình, 2001). *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)* also states that *bâu* is a collar and *kết bâu* means to tie the knot (Huỳnh, 2018a). Thus, it can be seen that the word *bâu* can be understood as different parts of the shirt, such as the collar, pocket, or lapel. *Kết bâu* means tying the two lapels of a man and a woman together, and the more profound meaning is to tie the knot. If it is combined with the word *lụy*, as in the phrase *lụy ủa thâm bâu*, *bâu* is a collar, but if it is accompanied by the word *áo*, as in the folk verse *Mình đưa bâu áo tui viết tháo vài hàng*, *bâu* is a lapel. If it is placed in verses *Áo dài năm nút hở bâu* or *Ai từng bận áo không bâu*, the word *bâu* might mean collar. In addition, the word *tháo* in *viết tháo* is also an ancient word that needs to be explained. The word *viết tháo* is derived from *viết thảo*, which is the way of writing *chữ Nôm* (a logographic writing system formerly used to write the Vietnamese language) with "raw" style. In the *Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary*, the word *thảo* means crude, rudimentary. *Thảo thảo* means "a literature sketch" (Đào, 1992). Later on, the word *viết thảo* was written as *viết thẩu*, meaning writing quickly, scribbling. In *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*, *viết thẩu* is writing like drawing, writing quickly or carelessly (Huỳnh, 2018b).

Trực tiết or *chực tiết* is also an ancient word found in the southern folk songs of this period:

*Nhạn còn nao nước hứng sương,
 Đây tui còn trực tiết nấu nướng chờ mình*

Translated:

The swallow is still excited about the dew
Here I am truehearted waiting for you
(Nguyễn, 1928)

*Tả phi đồng túc dọạ định công
Đêm nằm trực tiết, phòng không chờ mình*

Translated:

There is no one on my left side
Resting in faithfulness and waiting for you
(Nguyễn, 1928)

*Cách bầy thu tưởng đà ly biệt
Ai hay em còn chực tiết với anh*

Translated:

Many autumns passed without your loved one
Who thinks you are still so faithful?
(Huỳnh, 1901)

*Gió đưa dươn nước xao dòn dợn
Gió đưa mây mây lộn dật dờ
Đó đây duyên nợ sậm sờ, bờ bậu ơi
Bậu còn trực tiết đợi chờ trông ai*

Translated:

The wind makes the water turbulent
The wind makes the clouds flow
That's such an ultimate fate, my dear
For whom you are still waiting
(Đặng, 1932)

Dao Duy Anh explains in detail that *trực tiết* or *chực tiết* is a Sino-Vietnamese noun, literally referring to the node of a bamboo tree, and figuratively referring to a person's integrity (Đào, 1999). However, when used in southern folk songs, *trực tiết* (or *chực tiết*) is used as a verb. Therefore, its meaning changes, which is explained in *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)* as “disciplining, refusing to reform or marry”

(Huỳnh, 2018a). In the context of the folk songs mentioned above, it can be seen that southern folk used *trực tiết* or *chực tiết* in this period to refer to the value of faithfulness in a couple. This word no longer appears in folk songs collected from the later period but is replaced with the phrase *giữ gìn tiết hạnh*. In addition, in the folk verses, *Đó đây duyên nợ sậm sờ; bớ bậu ơi/ Bậu còn trực tiết đợi chờ trông ai*, we also see the word, *sậm sờ*, which is rarely seen or mentioned in dictionaries. In our opinion, *sậm sờ* might be a misreading of *sâm sờ*, which means “clearly exposed” (Huỳnh, 2018b) according to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*. Based on the content of the folk song, we think that *sậm sờ* and *sâm sờ* have a similar meaning: the couple’s predestined relationship is clear, as is why they are still hesitant.

Another word that appears ten times in the ten collections but is rarely used now is *xàu*, which refers to a wilting state of plants or a person’s dull mood.

*Cách xa nhau gan ruột héo xàu,
Anh phân tay, em lụy nhỏ tài nào không thương*

Translated:

The soul withers since being apart
To say goodbye, your tears, I treasure with my heart
(Nguyễn, 1967)

*Nghe anh than tâm ruột như bào,
Vì em mà anh đau đớn, ruột xàu héo hon.*

Translated:

Listening to you lament makes my heart ache
Because of me, you are in pain and sorrow
(Nguyễn, 1934)

*Huệ xàu vì bởi mất sương,
Em xanh xao vì bởi nhớ thương nghĩa vàng*

Translated:

The lily is faint due to the loss of dew
I'm pale because I'm missing you
(Nguyễn, 1967)

*Anh đoái cái bụi lan xàu
Nhánh đào nám, chim quyên cảm, bợn dế sâu,
Phải chi Ngô - Hòn có cầu,*

Khỏi lo Ngu - Nữ buồn râu đợi trông.

Translated:

I think of the wilted orchid dust
The herb branch, the cuckoo, and the crickets
If only the Ngo and the Han dynasties had a bridge
Then no need for the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl to wait in
sorrow

(Đặng, 1907)

In *Southern Dialect Dictionary*, *xàu* is defined as wilting, shrinking due to the lack of water, or drooping because of sadness (Huỳnh, 2007). According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*, *xàu* is wilted, like in phrases such as *héo xàu*, *bàu xàu*, *xàu mặt* (Huỳnh, 2018b). The word *xàu* in the above songs is used with two objects. The first one is the human body part, such as the liver or intestines, to indicate the sad and painful state of a man and a woman when they are apart. The second one is a flower, such as an orchid or lily, to show the withered form of the flower due to lack of water. The folk verse, *Huệ xàu vì bởi mất sương*, also appears in later folk songs collected in the southern provinces, but *xàu* has been changed into *sầu*. Furthermore, the word *sầu* can be used to personify the state of a plant to metaphorize human emotions, as in this verse: *Lan huệ sầu ai lan huệ héo* (Wilted orchid or lily is like my sorrow). But when this word is used in the verse, *Huệ sầu vì bởi mất sương* (The lily is faint due to the loss of dew), it is inappropriate and distinct from the word *xàu* used to refer to the wilting condition of plants due to lack of water.

Another word is *hài*. It always appears in compound words that are no longer used, such as *duyên hài* or *duon hài*:

*Anh cũng không dám chắc mê sắc hay mê tài,
Chẳng qua là tiền định duyên hài, bỏ em ôi!*

Translated:

I'm not sure if I love beauty or talent
It's just a predestined fate, my dear!

(Nguyễn, 1934)

*Bỏ em ôi, tấm lòng ai có lọt phai,
Bởi chơn chưa luận ngãi, duyên hài lời thôi,*

Translated:

Oh, my dear, whose heart has faded

Since love is not much, our fate is not sure

(Nguyễn, 1934)

Hai đũa ta đã xứng đũa hài

Em ham chi bóng sắt nó hành hài tâm thân

Translated:

The two of us have a predestined relationship

Do not love appearance which will ruin you

(Nguyễn, 1928)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*, the word *hài* means harmony, clarity, completion. If something is not *hài*, it cannot be done smoothly (Huỳnh, 2018a). Thus, *duyên hài* can be understood as a beautiful and predestined relationship, the duality of a couple. Furthermore, in the folk songs in which the word *duyên hài* is used, we notice a combination of many classic references or Sino-Vietnamese sentences.

Anh hùng hừ nịch sắc, Chí sĩ mặc tham tài.

Ngày sau dẫu trọn duyên hài,

Bớ anh ôi, xin anh chớ học theo ngài Thái Ung

Translated:

No need for heroes to indulge in lust and scholars to be greedy

Till these days your fate remains

Oh, my dear, do not follow Thai Ung's steps

(Đặng, 1928)

The folk song refers to an anecdote about the character, *Thai Ung*, a famous artist at the end of the Han Dynasty in Chinese history. This folk song includes a Sino-Vietnamese sentence, *Anh hùng chớ chìm đắm sắc dục và kẻ sĩ chớ tham lợi lộc*, which means that heroes should not indulge in lust and scholars should not be greedy for fortune.

Nghinh hôn giá thú bất khả luận tài,

Trăm năm chẳng hiệp đũa hài

Anh nằm lẩn xuống bệ, anh lạy dài ông tơ

Translated:

Marriage should not be defined by social status

The hundred-year fate cannot be reconciled

I fall on the ground and beg the matchmaker
(Huỳnh, 1901)

This folk song means that marriage should not be defined by social status. Still, the couple has filled themselves with the idea of *luận tài* (considering social class), so the hundred-year fate cannot be reconciled. The character intends to blame the matchmaker for their broken relationship (*chẳng hiệp dươn hài*). The word *dươn hài* is *duyên hài* in the proverb, *Duyên hài can lệ*, which means “the duality of husband and wife” (Huỳnh, 2018a).

Another interesting word is *trước* in *trước mai*, which is also an ancient Vietnamese word. This word used to be quite common in folk songs.

Tai nghe cung oán cơ cầu bớ chàng ôi
Phụng Hoàng, Phú Lục chạnh sầu trước mai

Translated:

Listen to the sad melody, oh my dear
Phụng Hoàng, Phú Lục tell the sad harmony
(Đặng, 1932)

Tưởng là mai trước lại vậy
Hay đâu mai trước một ngày một xa

Translated:

Thought it was union again
Cannot believe harmony is so far to reach
(Huỳnh, 1901)

Huệ tàn nên con bướm chẳng vắng lai,
Tình xưa anh đã phụ, trước mai kẻ gì.

Translated:

The lily fades so the butterfly doesn't stay
The love you have betrayed, harmony is nothing
(Đặng, 1928)

Thấy đó nói ra đây em đà hiểu ý,
Muốn cho đào lý hiệp với trước mai,
Quản chi biển rộng sông dài,

Bớ anh ôi, ôm duyên em đợi khách chơng dài bấy lâu.

Translated:

Seeing that, I understand what you mean

Wanting to be in harmony

Do not worry about big oceans and long rivers

Oh, my dear, I have been waiting for you for so long

(Đặng, 1928)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, the word *trước* means bamboo (Huỳnh, 2018b), so *trước mai* is *trúc mai*. This expression is a symbol that often appears in folk songs to refer to a typical male and female couple. The term *trúc*, which is bamboo, indicates a gentleman, and the word *mai*, which is a yellow Mai flower, refers to a beautiful woman. In the folk verse, *Muốn cho Dao lý hiệp với trước mai*, there is another symbol of love, which is *Dao* and *lý*. Furthermore, in the following folk songs, besides the word *trước*, we also have the word *sạ dĩ*. In *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, the term *dĩ* means “done” (Huỳnh, 2018b). *Sạ* is a misreading of the word *sự*, meaning a thing. So, the word *sạ dĩ* can be understood as the thing is already done.

Khi nào thanh vắng một mình,

Tôi phân sạ dĩ, dươn tình trước mai.

Translated:

When in solitude

The thing is done as well as our fate

(Đặng, 1928)

The word *chích* in *chích mác*, *chích bóng*, and *chích chiu* is also an unusual word in both literature and daily life.

Bấy giờ đôi ngã Sâm Thương,

Chiếu đơn chích mác thiếp chàng xa nhau

Translated:

The time when Sâm Thương are apart

How lonely am I when you and I are not together

(Huỳnh, 1901)

Liễu bỏ chích bóng cô phòng,

Vào ra hùi quạnh tâm lòng thiết tha.

Translated:

Willow tree friends with loneliness
In or out of solitude accompanies a sincere heart
(Nguyễn, 1934)

*Đất Sài Gòn nam thanh nữ tú
Anh về rồi đừng say đắm hoa tươi
Để em chiu chích tương tư một mình*

Translated:

The land of Sài Gòn is full of beauties
When you go there, don't fall for a new taste
Let me immerse into my lonely feeling
(Nguyễn, 1933)

According to *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamite)*, the word *chích* means single, odd. Therefore, the word *chích mác* means being alone, having no one by your side, which refers to the loneliness of a person in love with someone who has passed away. The word *chích bóng* means being alone without any companion. *Chiu chít* means moaning with sorrow (Huỳnh, 2018a). When the word *chích* combines with other single words to make compound words, such as *chích mác*, *chích bóng*, and *chích chiu*, the word *chích* retains its meaning. All three compound words refer to the loneliness or lonely lament of a man or a woman in a separation situation. Today, the word *chích bóng* is still being used, but it has changed into *chiết bóng*.

The word *dôi* in *dôi phấn* is also an ancient Vietnamese word that has now been replaced by another word:

*Mặt em nào có phấn đôi,
Có sao đẹp để vô hời thế kia.*

Translated:

Your face is covered with no beauty powder
Why are you always so pretty?
(Nguyễn, 1967)

*Thấy mặt em đôi phấn anh phải lòng,
Biết làm sao gá ngời bá tòng với em.*

Translated:

I'm in love when you apply beauty powder
I do not know how to create an eternal bond with you
(Đặng, 1928)

In *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, *dôi* means bringing up, tossing up, or filling (Huỳnh, 2018a). With this meaning, the word *dôi phấn* refers to the act of applying beauty powder to a woman's face. Today, the word *dôi* is still widely used, whether as a single word or combined with other words. However, *dôi phấn* is no longer used.

Similar to the word *dôi* in *dôi phấn*, the word *lậu* in *lậu tình* is also rare in folk songs nowadays:

*Anh có thương em anh phải làm ngơ,
Anh đừng sai trẻ đem thơ lậu tình.*

Translated:

You love me, so you have to ignore
Asking children to bring letters will let others know
(Đặng, 1928)

*Phụng hoàng từ giã Trùng Mây
Ra về thương nhớ, ở đây lậu tình.*

Translated:

The phoenix said goodbye to Truong May
Somewhere, not here, to show love; it will be exposed by chance
(Nguyễn, 1928)

*Tay cầm nhành quế lại kề nhành trâm,
Thương tui để dạ đừng viếng thăm lậu tình*

Translated:

Holding a rose next to a primrose
Love me, so please don't visit since people will know
(Nguyễn, 1928)

In *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, *lậu tình* is defined as accidentally letting others know (Huỳnh, 2018a). In the above songs, *lậu tình* can be understood in the context that your love for someone is accidentally exposed to people.

Your feelings are revealed by chance rather than willingly by you. If the word *lậu* is used separately, this is still a commonly used word. But when combined with the word *tình*, the word *lậu tình* is rarely seen elsewhere.

The last word we want to mention in this article is *hiếm hiệ*m, a rare word in folk songs nowadays and back then. It appears only once in the collection, *Câu hát góp* of Huynh Tinh Cua.

*Muốn chơi chậu cúc tam hường
Liễu huê hiếm hiệ*m dọc đường thiếu chi

Translated:

To want is to want potted daisies
Willow flowers along the road are not so rare
(Huỳnh, 1901)

The word *hiếm hiệ*m is both an ancient word and a particular word of the southern dialect. In *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị (Dictionnaire Annamit)*, it is defined as rare or messy. The word *hiệ*m means a lot, abundant (Huỳnh, 2018a). In his article, *Cách nói của người miền Tây Nam Bộ qua ca dao*, Trần (2011) explained that “when people say *hiếm hiệ*m, it means it is enough. Or when people say it is *bộn bâng*, it means they have more than enough.” In the above folk song, people used dialect to express deeper meanings and to implicitly compare potted daisies and willow flowers along the road. The word *hiếm hiệ*m has increased the number and lowered the value of the subjects mentioned since we cannot call something with many duplicates rare! To say *hiếm hiệ*m is to say it is not so rare.

3. CONCLUSION

The linguistic system of the southern people was formed in conjunction with the appearance of the national language script. The southern folk language has shown a unique characteristic of a new language through gradual improvements. It results from a convergence of features in folk languages from other regions of the country. Therefore, southern folk songs are a mixture of the national language and the unique language of the southern people in living and creating literature. From three elements: the formation of local history, the coexistence of many ethnic groups, and the fading of boundaries between localities in the same area, the southern people have created a vocabulary system of their own, which researchers continuously study, collect, and annotate into a unique regional dictionary known as the *Southern Dialect Dictionary*. It can be affirmed that the southern folk songs collected in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are repositories of ancient words and the unique dialect of locals in the South. These ancient words gradually disappeared and are no longer used in literature and everyday communication. If they are used, these words might be modified or combined with other words to express different meanings. Therefore, the research on ancient Vietnamese words in southern folk song collections

published in the early 20th century can contribute to sketching a unique and exciting picture of the southern language that was popular.

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