



www.sacei07.org

A COUNTRY
STAYS ALIVE
WHEN ITS
CULTURE IS
ALIVE.

HOPE NEVER
DIES IN THE
INDOMITABLE
VIETNAMESE
MIND.

- SACEI Newsletter updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.
- It serves as a link between SACEI members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Editorial Note	1
Vietnamese history through popular music (Vọng cổ)	1
Social Stories	11
Historic Vietnam - Tim Doling's Heritage Portal	12

SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

NEWSLETTER # 136

FEBRUARY 2020



Editorial Note

Vọng cổ ("longing for the past") is a Vietnamese song and musical structure used primarily in the *cải lương* theater music and *nhạc tài tử* chamber music of southern Vietnam.^[1] It was composed sometime between 1917 and 1919 by Cao Văn Lầu (performing name Sáu Lầu), of Bạc Liêu Province in southern Vietnam. The song achieved great popularity and eventually its structure became the basis for numerous other songs. The tune is essentially melancholic in character and is sung using Vietnamese modal inflections. (Wikipedia)

Vọng cổ is uniquely South Vietnamese popular music of the late 1910s, which is widely embraced in the Mekong delta area. Vietnam as the crossroads for the world's ideas, ideologies, and migrations has been the battlefield for eastern and western ideologies since the beginning of the first millennium: the Chams with their Hinduism, the French and Americans with colonialism and western civilization, the communists with their atheist communist influence. Reaction surely will follow. Facing with all these changes, South Vietnamese use the heroic past as a prologue to deal with the future.

Vietnamese history through popular music (Vọng cổ) *Nguyễn Thanh Long*

Please go to [Google](#) or [Youtube](#) to look for "*co nhạc nguyen thanh long*" and to listen to the music.

1- An Dương Vương

Song: "*Trọng Thủy Mỵ Châu's Love Story*"



Trọng Thủy and Mỵ Châu

In order to take over An Dương Vương's kingdom, Triệu Đà fought against him for many years without success. He then decided to use a ploy to have his son Trọng Thủy marry An Dương Vương's daughter, Mỵ Châu. Mỵ Châu later revealed to Trọng Thủy that her father's power rested on the magic crossbow. Trọng Thủy then managed to steal the golden claw of the magic bow and replace it with a fake one. Triệu Đà sent his troops to conquer Âu Lạc. Defeated, An Dương Vương fled on horseback with his daughter behind him. Not forgetting her husband's recommendation, Mỵ Châu left a trail of goose feathers behind her to allow him to locate her.

Realizing how Triệu Đà's soldiers were able to track him down, An Dương Vương killed his daughter then drowned himself in the sea.

Trọng Thủy caught up with the group but found his wife dead. He returned her body to Cổ Loa and in despair drowned himself in a well.

2- The Trưng Ladies (40-43 CE)

Song: "*The Trưng Ladies*"

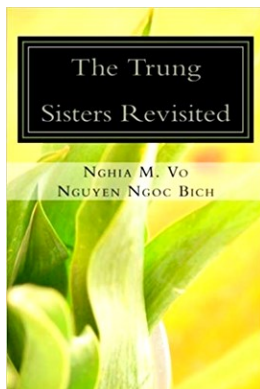
After destroying the Triệu of Nam Việt, the Southern Hán occupied our country for the first time for 150 years. The Trưng Ladies by revolting against the Hán put an end to this first occupation. However, this fragile independence lasted only three years and our country was occupied for the second time for the next 501 years.

The Early Lý were only able to keep the country independent for a short time before it was occupied for the third time for 336 years. The total occupation period lasted more than a millennium.

Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...

The country regained its independence under the Ngô Quyền's dynasty.



3- King Ngô Quyền (939-965 CE)

Song "[Bạch Đằng River](#)"

In 938, Kiều Công Tiễn killed Dương Diên Nghệ who was Ngô Quyền's father-in-law. Ngô Quyền in turn killed Kiều Công Tiễn. He then ordered his soldiers to implant wooden stakes tipped with iron in the bottom of Bạch Đằng River.

At high tide, he had boats with shallow draft lure the Hán toward the traps. As the tide receded, Ngô Quyền led his forces in the attack. The Hán ships got punctured and caught against the deadly traps. The trapped ships burned and Hán soldiers got killed. Some managed to get away but they were chased out relentlessly by the Annamese forces. The Bạch Đằng River thus helped An Nam write a glorious history for the first time. Later, Trần Hưng Đạo also used the same strategy at the same Bạch Đằng River to get rid of the Mongols.

With this victory, Ngô Quyền founded the Ngô Dynasty and moved his capital to Cổ Loa, the former capital of Âu Lạc, the ancient Vietnamese kingdom. He opened the way for the Đinh Lê Lý Trần dynasties to follow and keep the country independent.



King Ngô Quyền



The battle at Bạch Đằng River

Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...

4-Đinh Bộ Lĩnh or Đinh Tiên Hoàng (968-980 CE)

Đinh Tiên Hoàng was the king who defeated the 12 warlords and built the first Capital at Hoa Lư.
Emperor Đinh Bộ Lĩnh or Đinh Tiên Hoàng and his son Đinh Liễn were assassinated in 979



Emperor Đinh Tiên Hoàng



Empress Dương Vân Nga

5- The early Lê: Lê Hoàn or Lê Đại Hành (980-1009 CE)

Songs:

- "*Empress Dowager Dương Vân Nga and Emperor Lê Đại Hành*"
- "*The coxswain on Nhị River*"

Lê Hoàn's accession to the throne

After the death of her husband, the Dowager Empress Dương Vân Nga threw her support to Lê Hoàn who was now commander-in-chief of the army. To confront the Song army who had already arrived at the border, the Empress Dowager agreed to recognize Lê Hoàn and let him step up to the throne as a new king. With the crowning of Lê Hoàn, the early Lê Dynasty was founded.



King Lê Đại Hành



Queen Dương Vân Nga and her second husband

Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...

6-King Lý Công Uẩn or Lý Thái Tổ (1010-1225 CE)

King Lý Thái Tổ (founder of the Lý dynasty) who reigned from 1010 to 1028 moved his capital to Thăng Long (present-day Hanoi).



King Lý Thái Tông (second ruler of the Lý dynasty) who reigned from 1028 to 1054 had the renowned “One pillar-pagoda” built in 1049 in the capital.

Lý Thánh Tông, the third ruler of the Lý dynasty

King Lý Thánh Tông (third ruler of the Lý dynasty) who reigned from 1054 to 1072 was known for his compassion. According to legend, Thánh Tông despite getting old, did not have any son. One day, on his way to a prayer session, he noticed that everyone rushed out to take a look at him, except for a lady who was picking up strawberries next to a bush of orchids. Surprised by the encounter, the king invited her to become his concubine and named her Lady Ý Lan (Orchid Lady).

King Lý Nhân Tông (fourth ruler of the Lý dynasty) who reigned from 1072 to 1127 was only seven when he ascended to the throne. While the Empress dowager Dương dealt with royal household problems, the regent Lý Đạo Thành took care of the government business. Then Ý Lan who wanted to rule over the government, imprisoned the dowager Dương until she died and demoted the regent. These were Ý Lan's bad deeds. However, the brightest achievements of the Lý Nhân Tông's reign occurred when Ý Lan was made regent. During the Mongol attacks, she invited Lý Đạo Thành back to help take care of the country.



King Lý Thánh Tông



Queen Ý Lan

Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...

General Lý Thường Kiệt

Lý Thường Kiệt: While trying to prevent the Song army from invading the country, he realized that their army was strong. Their catapults launched stones that destroyed many boats. To boost his soldiers' morale, Lý Thường Kiệt told them about a genie who delivered to him the following four verses.

*Over mountains and rivers of the South, reigned the Emperor of the South
As it stands written in the Book of Heaven
How dare you, barbarians to invade our land?
Your army, without pity, will be annihilated.*

Song: *Long Giáng Pagoda*

(Written according to Thi Văn Hợp Tuyển)



King Lý Nhân Tông (1072-1127) was a compassionate and benevolent monarch who promoted education by establishing a national education for Confucian learning and the first imperial examinations while improving national defense and security. His daughter, Princess Văn Khôi competed with her father in preserving the country and nation's morals. Therefore, she vowed to become a nun under the Venerable Cao Huyền by trading the golden throne for a place in the Long Giáng Pagoda in Bắc Ninh Province.

Songs:

- " *Lý Thường Kiệt*"
- " *Long Giáng Pagoda*"

7 - The Trần dynasty (1225-1413)

Songs:

- " *The Love Story of Lý Chiêu Hoàng & Trần Thái Tông*"
- " *Royal Love story*"
- " *Trần Bình Trọng*"
- " *Princess An Tu*"
- " *Trần Khánh Dư*"
- " *Battle Bạch Đằng Giang*"
- " *Princess Huyền Trân*"

Lý Chiêu Hoàng was the ninth and last monarch of the Lý Dynasty (1224-1225) and the only reigning empress in Vietnam's history. King Lý Huệ Tông abdicated in favor of his daughter and enrolled into a monastery as a monk. As she was only six when enthroned, all the power at court rested with the regent Trần Thủ Độ who despite having minimal education, was intelligent, cunning, and unscrupulous.



Lý Chiêu Hoàng



first husband Trần Thái Tông

Trần Thủ Độ arranged the marriage between the 7-year old reigning empress and his 8-year-old nephew Trần Cảnh and ultimately overthrew the Lý Dynasty to usher in the Trần Dynasty in 1225. To gather all the power, he decided to kill all the Lý clan members. He forced the old King Lý Huệ Tông to commit suicide. He had most of the members of the Lý clan killed during a ceremony. As King Trần Thái Tông and Lý Chiêu Hoàng lived together without conceiving a child, Trần Thủ Độ forced Lý Chiêu Hoàng to give up her position of empress to her elder sister. The latter was pregnant with Trần Liễu who was Trần Thái Tông's own brother.

Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...

Lê Phụ Trần

Lê Phụ Trần was the person who by hiding the royal tag of the boat carrying Kings Trần Thái Tông and Trần Thánh Tông allowed them to escape the Mongols during their first invasion of Vietnam. To thank him for his role, Trần Thái Tông gave away his ex-queen to Lê Phụ Trần so that she could have some support in life. Lý Chiêu Hoàng later had two children with Lê Phụ Trần: Lê Tông and Ngọc Khuê. Lê Tông later was allowed to change his name to Trần Bình Trọng.



Lý Chiêu Hoàng



second husband Lê Phụ Trần

General Trần Bình Trọng

Trần Bình Trọng chose to die rather than betraying his country. In the battle against the Mongols during their second invasion of Vietnam, General Trần Bình Trọng sacrificed himself to protect Thiên Mạc so that the Trần army could escape to Thanh Hoá. Trọng was only 26 at that time. He bravely chose to die rather than betray his country when he was captured by the Yuan army.

**Khánh Dư and the victory at Vân Đồn which led to the final battle "Bạch Đằng Giang"**

Trần Khánh Dư was a Trần general. When he was young, he read a lot and therefore was knowledgeable in the art of war. Because he was good at war, the retired emperor Trần Thánh Tông, the second Trần monarch adopted him as his son. He was also known for his greedy character.

Trần Khánh Dư then made a grave error by having an extramarital relationship with Princess Thiên Thụy, who was Trần Hưng Đạo's daughter-in law. For his error, he was sentenced to death by flogging. But the king told the executioner to only cause pain, but not death. After the punishment, Khánh Dư returned to Chí Linh to remake his life by selling charcoal along the river.

King **Trần Nhân Tông**, the third monarch of the Trần dynasty, traveling to Bình Than Conference one day saw on the river someone who looked like Trần Khánh Dư. The king had him brought to his court. Dư came wearing only a short-sleeved shirt and a conical hat. The king felt sorry for him and forgave him.



The battle at Vân Đồn

Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...



Princess An Tư

Princess An Tư

Princess An Tư was Trần Thái Tông's youngest daughter and Trần Thánh Tông's youngest sister. She was scheduled to marry Trần Thông and the two parties were happy with their families' plan.

Once Trần Thái Tông died, the Mongols showed up at the border for their second invasion. The royal court and family had to flee Thăng Long to retreat to the south.

Hearing about the beautiful princess An Tư, the Chinese Mongol Toghan wanted to marry An Tư. In order to have time to regroup his army, King Trần had to accept the request.

Diễn Hồng conference

In 1284, facing the second Mongol's invasion, King Trần Thánh Tông and Trần Nhân Tông convened a conference asking the country elders to vote on the question of whether to fight or surrender? Everyone voted to fight until the last breath.



Diễn Hồng conference

**Princess Huyền Trân**

Princess Huyền Trân was King Trần Nhân Tông's daughter and Trần Anh Tông's sister. While fighting against the Mongols, the Việt and Chams were getting closer diplomatically and it was no wonder that when the war ended, the Cham ruler Chế Mân went to Thăng Long to discuss further rapprochement with Nhân Tông. He fell in love with Princess Huyền Trân and decided to ask her in marriage by ceding the two provinces of Ô, Lý (present-day Thừa Thiên, Quảng Trị Provinces).

The wedding took place in 1306 and the Cham King took his bride home on an elegant boat. Royal happiness did not last long because Chế Mân was killed a year later during a hunting accident.

By Cham customs, all the royal wives would be cremated with the dead king. King Trần Anh Tông ordered general Trần Khắc Chung to immediately sail to Champa and draw plans to rescue Huyền Trân. Using a stratagem, he was able to snatch the princess and her retinue and bring them back home.

Prince Lý Long Tường

In 1225, Lý Chiêu Hoàng by abdicating in favor of her husband Trần Thái Tông ushered in the Trần Dynasty that replaced the Lý. However, the regent Trần Thủ Độ was still not happy with the results and continued to find reasons to exterminate the Lý clan members.

Lý Long Tường was the son of Lý Anh Tông, the fifth ruler of the Lý dynasty. Finding difficult to live with Trần Thủ Độ, in 1226 he led 6,000 Lý clan members to settle in North Korea. He met with the Korean king who allowed him to settle in Korea and open a Đại Việt village with its unique traditions and customs.



Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...

When the Mongols invaded Korea in 1253, Lý Long Tường and his clansmen rushed out to defend their new county Korea. Today Lý Long Tường is the ancestor of a branch of the Lee in North and South Korea.

8- The later Lê (1428-1788)

Emperor Lê Lợi



Emperor Lê Lợi



the victory at Chi Lăng

Lê Lai

Lê Lai Rescued Lord Lê Lợi

Le Lai and his noble sacrifice. He tricked the Ming troops by dressing like Le Loi, distracted them, allowing his commander, Le Loi, to escape the siege by the Ming troops.



Nguyễn Trãi

Nguyễn Trãi was Nguyễn Phi Khanh's son. When Nguyễn Phi Khanh was taken prisoner by the Chinese, Nguyễn Trãi followed him crying all the way to Nam Quang Gate. Nguyễn Phi Khanh then told him:

"Son, you need to go home and take revenge for your father and country. There is no need to cry now."

Nguyễn Trãi later helped Lê Lợi in his insurgency war against the Ming. They were among the first eighteen men who made up their mind to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of their country and fought shoulder to shoulder against the enemy for ten years (1417-1427). Nguyễn Trãi later wrote the "Proclamation of Victory against the Wu" and made a name for himself by cutting off supply lines to the Ming Army causing it to seek the end of the war.

History recounted Nguyễn Trãi's encounter with Nguyễn Thị Lộ

Q: The lady of Tây Hồ who sold sleeping pads

Are they still available or sold out?

Young and beautiful, how old is she?

Does she have any children?

A: From Tây Hồ, I sold sleeping pads



Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...

Why would you enquire about them?
This spring, I would be 15,
Without husband, I have no children.

Tired of court intrigues, Nguyễn Trãi and Nguyễn Thị Lộ retired to the countryside in the early 1430s.

In 1442, King Lê Thái Tông the second monarch of the Lê, a known womanizer, while going to Chí Linh on "business" stopped by to see the hero Nguyễn Trãi. Thái Tông met again with Nguyễn Thị Lộ, whom he knew earlier at the court. He told her to accompany him and serve him. They departed that evening and the young king suddenly passed away the following morning. The wrath of the court was brutal and immediate: it accused Nguyễn Thị Lộ of regicide and Nguyễn Trãi of being an accomplice. It ordered Nguyễn Trãi to be put to death along with three generations of his family.

This odd decision of killing three generations of the Nguyễn almost wiped out the Nguyễn clan. Luckily when the court soldiers came to execute the tragic court decision, a few clan members were able to escape. Phạm Thị Mẫn, one of Nguyễn Trãi's concubines was at the market and escaped death. She was bearing Nguyễn Trãi's son and later delivered Nguyễn Anh Vũ, kept the family name going. It was only 22 years later that King Lê Thánh Tông officially pardoned Nguyễn Trãi stating that he was innocent of the death of King Lê Thái Tông.

The United Nations Unesco named Nguyễn Trãi one of the world's cultural personalities for his contribution to the counter-insurgency strategy, cultural education and poetry. Nguyễn Trãi's bust was set up in the Esplanade Park in Quebec Canada, close to Roosevelt and Churchill statues.



Nguyễn Trãi and Nguyễn Thị Lộ

9- The Tây Sơn (1788-1802)

Emperor **Quang Trung (Bắc Bình Vương Nguyễn Huệ)** Reign: 1788 - 1792

King Quang Trung (1788-1792), born Nguyễn Huệ was named King of Bắc Bình in 1788 with a residence at Phú Xuân



Emperor Quang Trung



Empress Lê Ngọc Hân



Victory at Đống Đa on January 1789

Continue on next page

VNese History Through Music...

Princess Ngọc Hân was the 21st princess of King Lê Hiển Tông. The latter was also the longest reigning monarch and the one with the greatest number of children of the Lê Kings. His son Lê Chiêu Thống was the last king of the Lê Dynasty. In 1785, Nguyễn Huệ went north for the first time to “support the Lê and exterminate the Trịnh.” Ngọc Hân, 16 years of age, was given in marriage to Nguyễn Huệ who took her back to Phú Xuân and named her “Princess of the Northern Court.” Nguyễn Huệ went north for the second time in December 1788 to fight the Chinese Qing. He defeated them in five days at the battle of Đống Đa in January 1789. He sent his wife some apricot blossom in place of a victory notice. They had two children together. In 1792, King Quang Trung fell ill and passed away. He was only 40. Princess Ngọc Hân, was 23.

Songs:

- "King Quang Trung"
- "Northern Court Queen Lê Ngọc Hân"



Northern Court Queen, Lê Ngọc Hân

10- The Nguyễn (1802-1945)

Song: "*Princess Ngọc Bình và King Gia Long*"

Gia Long defeated the Tây Sơn in 1802: fourteen years against Quang Trung Nguyễn Huệ and ten years against Nguyễn Quang Toàn. When he entered Phú Xuân, King Cảnh Thịnh and the Tây Sơn had to flee leaving behind Queen Ngọc Bình. When Gia Long entered the citadel, the frightened Ngọc Bình loudly cried.

At the moment Gia Long met Ngọc Bình, one did not know whether Ngọc Bình was really beautiful or whether she was a Lê clan member or whether the sad tears of Ngọc Bình suddenly touched his heart, but he restrained himself and uttered some incomprehensible words:

“This palace will not change master,
This land remains yours.”

Later, Gia Long made Ngọc Bình his third concubine. That was the fate of life. Gia Long and Quang Trung being the worst enemies ended up taking for wives two of Lê Hiển Tông’s daughters (Quang Trung married Ngọc Hân while Gia Long married her sister Ngọc Bình). Besides, Ngọc Bình who was a king’s daughter ended up marrying two husbands who were kings (King Cảnh Thịnh and King Gia Long). Therefore the phrases:

*The fate of a bride is sometimes strange
A king's daughter takes two kings for husbands.*



Emperor Gia Long



Princess Lê Ngọc Bình

Social Stories

"Give back my childhood"

Is there any love greater than a father's love, one that is always ready to thrust his arms around to protect wife and children? Is there any love greater than a mother's love? Raising children from the time they needed to be held till the time when they entered society without feeling tired.

"Trùng Dương"

A boat got lost in the immense ocean. So many days at sea without food and water. People are thirsty and starving. Rescued by



a ship, they were touched by the sympathy and dedication of the crew. When the day came to say good bye to the crew, they wonder if they would ever meet the crew members again.

"A foreign country"

To raise a child in a foreign country, a Vietnamese mother feeds him with her own sweat, tear, and bitterness. A mother is a stepping stone, a ladder to lead a child to the road of success on foreign soil. A mother also does not want her child to lose something from the past, an old culture or a beautiful and nice country.

These are the deepest personal worries of the Vietnamese mothers.

"The husband's shirt"

This is the story of a wife who sees her man off and who like many other Vietnamese wives, has to endure everything in life in order to raise the children without him no matter the distance or duration of the separation, no matter the struggle.

"A drifting life"

A young man left his poor country to search for a better life. He was the hope of the family. But life was full of bitter, sorrows: struggles, failures, temptations. And he no longer wants to communicate with his family because he does not want them to know he has deceived them.

One day, he met a singer who looked like his mother. Strangely the artist sang the same lullabies his mother once sang to him. His past comes back in a flash.

He remembers his family which had invested everything in him. He feels sorry and writes the first letter to his parents.

We wish to express our deepest gratitude to the many musicians, singers, actors and technicians for their contributions, encouragement, expertise, and enthusiasm.

Historic Vietnam *Tim Doling's Heritage Portal*

<http://www.historicvietnam.com/>



Provided by Bill Laurie