

THE SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES OF HÁT XẨM AND THE SOUTHERN NÓI THƠ (a performing art that combines epic poems with distinct Southern melodies and speeches): A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Hát Xẩm is a genre of folk music and a performing art that has existed and circulated in villages in the North since the 14th century. The Southern Nói thơ (famous for two styles of Nói Thơ Lục Vân Tiên in Bến Tre and Nói Thơ in Bạc Liêu), born in the 20th century, is also a folk performing art form with unique characteristics of Southern Vietnamese people. This essay examines the similarities and differences between these two varieties of cultural performance, looking at their ways of combining folk poetry, kể thơ (hát kể, kể tích) (musical storytelling) and performing styles in other art forms.

Xẩm's performance environment is often in the corner of village communal houses, water stations, poor rural markets; The singing voice of the blind, accompanied by the two-stringed nhi, typically evokes sadness. The Nói Thơ combination of harmoniously singing, speaking, and reciting, on the other hand, with its distinct style of elaborating melodies and punctuating rhythms, creates more of an empathetic atmosphere. It can be sung at any activity, at the death anniversary or a friends' gathering. Hát Xẩm became more of a profession to earn a living whereas Nói Thơ developed more as a hobby pursued in moments of contemplation, happiness, or sadness. To explain this difference, the article takes a historical perspective of two cultural regions, two different times of origin, and two different paths of existence.

Keywords: historical perspective, Hát Xẩm, Southern nói thơ, similarities - differences.

