



The hammock is an instrument very familiar to the Vietnamese. For many generations, one was used to hearing its resonant creaking with a regular cadence from the South to the North of Vietnam. This strident sound blended with the crying of the little children and lullabies becomes a tune of music eternally rooted in the Vietnamese soul. Poor or rich, each Vietnamese possesses at least one hammock. It is not only the cradle of the little Vietnamese children but also their swing.

It is used by adults for relaxing. It is also a resting bed for people of old age. It is the only instrument that no Vietnamese could do without. It is a habit to say that in Vietnam one has grown up with the sound of the hammock ( lớn lên trong tiếng võng ) and will grow old in the lullabies ( già trong lời ru ) because the latter are sung tirelessly by the mothers or grand-mothers to pamper their children or grandchildren.

By listening to the creaking sound made by the back and forth swinging of the hammock accompanied by the lullabies imprinted with melancholy, it is impossible for a Vietnamese not to be touched because this has revived the memory of his or her childhood, and sometimes that of his or her first love.

# Cái Võng

The lullabies stay the same but this time they are sung by a young mother who by a curious coincidence may be the girl he had known at the time he was an adolescent, or an old ferry crossing. It is sure there will be in this case the same resentment felt by a person returning to his or her native village after so many years of absence, proven in this following lullaby:

Bước chân vào ngõ tre làng  
Lòng buồn nặng trĩu nghe nàng ru con  
Bước lên thềm đá rêu mòn  
Lòng buồn nặng trĩu nghe buồn võng đưa

One feels sad, setting foot on the village entrance  
Hearing the nursery rhyme lulling her baby in cadence,  
One feels sad, stepping on the worn and mossy rock  
Hearing the melancholic creaking sound of the hammock.

# Cái Võng



One cannot stay insensitive when one is the issue of the Mekong delta when listening to the following lullaby:

Ấu ơ .. Bao giờ Chợ Quán  
hết vôi,  
Thủ Thiêm hết giặc em thôi  
đưa đò,  
Bắp non mà nướng lửa lò  
Đố ai ve được con đò Thủ  
Thiêm.

Ấu ơ .. When the Chợ Quán  
market is out of lime,  
The Thủ Thiêm region is out of  
war, I will stop being a  
ferrywoman.  
Young and tender corn baked in  
oven,  
I bet anyone who could court me,  
the boat of Thủ Thiêm.

This has without a doubt, made us relive the time of our youth, a time when we were still carefree, we would like very much flirting the girls even the ferrywoman

Even the hammock is simply made of jute or fabrics, the sound provoked by its back and forth motion continue to anchor itself softly in the intimacy of our conscience and in our spiritual lifestyle and become as the years go by, the most talked about in the Vietnamese popular songs.

**Đố ai nằm võng không đưa,  
Ru con không hát, đò đưa không chèo**

**Let's bet who is sleeping on a hammock without swinging,  
Lulling a child to sleep without saying nursery rhyme, conducting  
a sampan without rowing.**

# Hammock

In the old days, the hammock was also used to transport women or mandarins who did not know how to ride on horseback. The hammock is held up by a big bamboo resting on the shoulder of two men who trotted along with a rhythmical look. To shelter from the sun, a sedge matt is placed astride the bamboo. This assembly is often known as palanquin. This one has to follow certain protocols when it comes to a palanquin used by mandarins. According to their rank, the line that accompanied the palanquin was more or less important. One or several persons preceding the official palanquin bore arms (sabres, sticks etc...). By the sides of the palanquin walked the porters of parasols, betel nut box, spittoon, water pipe etc... This palanquin was replaced only at the appearance of the rickshaw in 1884 in Hà-Nội.

The hammock was also the dream of most of Vietnamese young girls to be married to a mandarin as in our tradition, the young bride was riding in a palanquin preceded by her husband on horseback. ( **Ngựa anh đi trước, võng nàng theo sau** ).

In the West, one has the Eye of Cain to symbolize the torture of moral conscience. In Vietnam, to talk about this torture, one refers often to the creaking of the hammock of " **Con Tấm**" (or **Vietnamese Cinderella** ) because this creaking brings back the thought the wandering soul of Tấm, victim of a plot hatched by her half-sister Cám and her step mother, trying to take revenge on Cám. The moment this one lay down on the hammock, its creaking became so deafening and menacing that Cam had the feeling her sister Tam's wandering soul substituted for the hammock.

Nowadays, in the cities, well-to-do people replace the hammock with a bed for their little children. But it is certain that the bed, despite its comfort and attractiveness, cannot be recognizable as a familiar instrument, own and intimate of the Vietnamese people because its use is very limited and it lacks another part, the creaking that comes along with melancholic lullabies to become an eternal and irreplaceable tune of music. In spite of its rudimentary constitution, the hammock continues to give rhythm to the Vietnamese life and witness as the years go by, the intimacy and cultural specificity of the Vietnamese people.

## Cái Võng

*Việt-Nam, mon pays natal. Terre des dragons et des légendes.*

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