(Q) A Tale of Kieu-plets (1/2) [10 Points]

The Tale of Kieu is an epic poem written in Vietnamese by author Nguyễn Du in 1820, which details the life of the talented young woman Thúy Kiều. The poem is composed of 1,627 couplets, or groups of two lines. Here are some couplets from The Tale of Kieu in no particular order:

1. Trấm năm trong côi người ta,
   Chữ tài chữ mình khéo là ghét nhau.
2. Đâu lòng hai á tó nga,
   Thúy Kiều là chỉ, em là Thúy Vân.
3. Nửa năm hoi tiếng vừa quen,
   Sân ngôi cảnh biệt đã chen lá vàng.
4. Ván rằng: Chỉ cùng ngược cười,
   Khéo dư nước mắt khóc người đội xưa.
5. Người đầu gặp gỡ làm chí,
   Trấm năm biết có duyên gi hay không?

Each couplet of the Tale is written in the poetic meter known as lục bát\(^1\), which has several rules. Even if we don’t speak Vietnamese, we can still use these rules to identify whether a couplet has been corrupted. For example, here is a corrupted version of couplet #1:

1a. Trấm năm trong dải người ta,
   Chữ tài chữ mình khéo là ghét nhau.

This couplet does not follow the rules of lục bát and consequently must have been corrupted. However, this is not always the case. Consider this other corruption to couplet #1:

1b. Trấm năm trong cá người ta,
   Chữ tài chữ mình khéo là ghét nhau.

This corrupted version of couplet #1 still follows the rules of lục bát; we would need to know Vietnamese in order to determine that there was a mistake.

In Vietnamese, the diacritics (accent marks) á, ạ, ả, ã, ă, and â indicate five of the six Vietnamese tones (known as sắc, huyền, hỏi, nặng, and ngã respectively); the absence of a diacritic indicates the sixth tone, ngang. Importantly, the diacritics à, ả, ē, ē, u do not represent tones; instead, they represent slight changes to the pronunciation of the vowels. Traditionally, Vietnamese tones are divided into two groups: sharp tones, of which there are four, and flat tones, of which there are two.

Q1. Which tones belong to which groups? Write your answer on the answer sheets.

1. From the Middle Chinese words liuk-pat, or ‘six-eight’.

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(Q) A Tale of Kieu-plets (2/2)

While searching in your local library for linguistics papers, you find six more couplets from *The Tale of Kieu*. However, some have been damaged. Only two of them have remained uncorrupted—the other four have had **exactly two words changed or removed** so that they no longer follow the rules of *lúc bát*. Fortunately, even if you don’t know Vietnamese, you can use the rules of *lúc bát* to determine which couplets are original.

6. Vàng trình hội chưa xem tướng,
   Mà sao trong số đoạn sân có tên.

7. Âu đánh quả tốn nhân duyên,
   Củng người một hỏi, một thuyết đâu ngại!

8. Thưa rằng: Chút phân ngày thơ,
   Dương sóng đối tiền tóc thờ chửa đen

9. Ngoài song thơ Thế uanh vàng,
   Nách tương bồng liễu bay ngang trước mình.

10. Chàng Kim tự lai thư song,
    Nơi nâng cánh cánh bên lòng biếng khuây.

11. Mạnh tướng phát Phát gió Truyền,
    Hướng gây mùi nhỏ, tròn khàn giông.

**Q2.** Determine which two couplets are authentic and which four have been corrupted. For each couplet, circle “corrupted” or “authentic”. For each corrupted couplet, write the two words which have been corrupted, or write REMOVED if a word has been removed.

Here is one more couplet from *The Tale of Kieu*. The couplet has been transmitted in damaged form: for some of the words, two choices are possible (marked in parentheses).

**Q3.** For each combination in parentheses, determine which of the two words is correct. If both of the two words could occur and still follow the rules, circle the word BOTH. Write your answers on the answer sheets.

12. Nhân (ở/tử) (quán/rap) (khách/tuổi) lần (la/khác),
   Tuấn rằng thảm thoát nay (đá/ých) thêm hai.

**Q4.** Explain your observations about the structure of *lúc bát* in your answer sheets.
(Q) A Tale of Kieu-plets Answer Sheet (1/2)

(Q) A Tale of Kieu-Plets

Q1  sharp tones

flat tones

Q2  6. corrupted / authentic
    Corrupted words: #1 _________________ #2 _________________

  7. corrupted / authentic
    Corrupted words: #1 _________________ #2 _________________

  8. corrupted / authentic
    Corrupted words: #1 _________________ #2 _________________

  9. corrupted / authentic
    Corrupted words: #1 _________________ #2 _________________

 10. corrupted / authentic
    Corrupted words: #1 _________________ #2 _________________

 11. corrupted / authentic
    Corrupted words: #1 _________________ #2 _________________

Q3  a. ơ   tử   BOTH
    b. quán  ráp   BOTH
    c. khách  tưới   BOTH
    d. la    khác   BOTH
    e. đà    ách   BOTH
(Q) A Tale of Kieu-plets Answer Sheet (2/2)