NARRATION OF SOCIAL EDUCATION OF'HARVESTING COCONUTS'DONG HO PAINTING IN AXIOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract - Dong Ho folk woodcut painting is a typical traditional work art of Vietnam, which contains many Asian philosophy and social education lessions – the lessons of lifetime.Harvesting Coconutsis one of famous Dong Ho folk woodcut paintings in Vietnamese society. In stead of understanding the traditional way of the Harvesting Coconuts painting, this paper is aimed to search for the core of philosophy meanings of artin order togain more useful social educated methodsabout sexuality. The multidiscipline method is used in this paper, including the approach of cultural study of art, semiotics theory of Roland Barthes and the philosophy of Vietnamese folk art. The painting of Harversting Coconut is a polite, elegant social lessons of the way of reproduction next generation from Vietnamese ancestor to our younger generation with the specific systems of symbols.

Index terms - Dong Ho folk woodcut painting, folklore, Harvesting Coconut, social education, symbols, cultural study, Vietnamese traditional folk art,and semiotics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Treasure of the folklore culture in Vietnam is various and diversity. Dong Ho painting folk woodcut is one of typical traditional art and gains so many philosophy of Vietnamese cognitive of culture. The painting named "Harversting coconut" is so popular to their coummunities, however, the traditional way of understanding is still not so well. Most of the people, they can just enjoy the beauty of the bright colour of Dong Ho painting, more than that they can understand the meanings of the symbols in that painting, but the scientific analization of this painting have not yet studied. In this article, we would like to make a new way of consideration to Dong Ho painting entitiled "Harvesting coconuts" with the approach of semiotics from Roland Barthes adn also with another approaches like Cultural study of Art, Philosophy of Vietnamese folk art. The values of social education, especially the education of sexual can be understand via the system of the symbols in Dong Ho painting named "Harversting Coconut".

II. METHODS

Methods of multidiscipline are used in this research, which inclued the approach of cultural study of art, semiotics of Roland Barthes and the philosophy of Vietnamese folk art.

Cultural study of Art

Art is one of the basic significant parts of the culture, which is able to provide the lifetime belonging to one specific nation. "Art is one of foundation instistutes of culture, which has a multidimentional relationship with culture. Art, therefore, is absolutely deserved to be consider one of the starting-point of study culture" (Phan Thi Thu Hien, 2006). Furthermore, the approach of cultural study will provide the structure to locate the exactly area where the art is created. According to Professor Tran Ngoc Them, there are three categories of cultural system, such as cognitive culture, behavioural culture and organizational culture. The art is classified in the cognitive culture because all the experiences of ancestor conducted through lifetime can be read from the symbolic documentaries in art. Natural life and communities provide the conditions for people to earn the philosophy of human and cosmos for them to create many values of art. "Cultural art is the mind product of human, which is born during the process of human history foundation and development" (Le Ngoc Canh, 1999: 31).

Symbols – a foundation unit of culture

According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, the fifth version, "Symbol is a picture or shape that has a particular meaning or represents a particular organization or idea". The word "symbol" originates from the word "symbolum" in Greek, which could mean "a commitment, a sign, to link or to connect…" There are so many definitions for the word "symbol" in many scientific aspects with many suitable structures, but in generally symbol has two correlative parts: the form and the content or the meanings. A symbol could be a door leading us to reach to the wide world, which is full of unknown knowledge and able to transcend all descriptive abilities of human. (F.W. Dillistone, 2002: 25)

Symbols play an important role in many practical aspects of human life, from art to communicative system. Nowadays, people try to explain the meanings of the symbol systems through ancient literature, architectures, art…in order to understand the value of traditional culture and to gain more useful knowledge about the universal where they are living in. "Symbol is considered as a center and a "cell" of cultural life" (Nguyen Van Hau, 2009). The

power of symbol is to connect the things used to be a symbol with the meaning of it or the content in order to make it valuable in a specific community social life. It could be say that symbols are a form of language – symbolic unit of culture. "It is created by the power of "symbolizing" of human, using images to express the other meaning to recognize and discover some abstract value…It could form all behaviors and communication means of human and connect them together into one specific community". (Nguyen Van Hau, 2009) Furthermore, symbol is a great means of communication for human every day that is why it can transfer the value and the information of social cultural life. "Human communication is achieved by means of expressive actions which operate as signals, signs and symbols". (Edmund Leach, 1976:9) Therefore, it could be said that "Culture is one system of social informative symbols". (Nguyen Van Hau, 2009).

Semiotics of Roland Barthes

Semiotics or Semiology, the study of signs and sign using to analyze human behaviour. It was established by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913). Then, the theory of semiotics is developed by many other scholars. However, until the modern semiotic theorist Roland Barthes (1915-1980) brought up the theory of the Myth and connotation, the idea of semiotic really can be apply in the study of culture. Roland Barthes declared that "Semiology aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gesture, musical sound, objects, and the complex associations of all of these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification" (Daniel Chandler cited Roland Barthes, 1967: 9). With Roland Barthes' definition of semiology, semiotics now is not the priviledged part of linguistic, every institutes of life could be the system of sign and can be explained by the approach of semoitic. Theory of the Myth and connotation is concerned about that Myth (popular belief) is the second order system (the level of connotation meaning or metalanguage) operating on the the first order system (the lever of denotation meaning). There is a double system of symbol – symbol explains symbol- in this structure of semiotics.

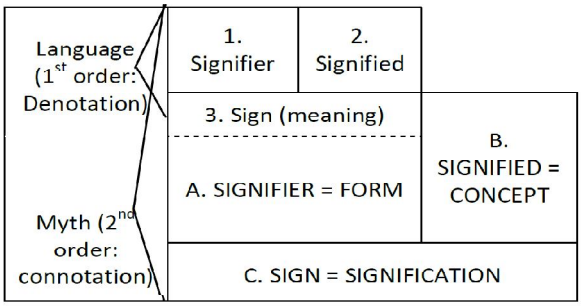


Table 1. Semiotic structure of Roland Barthes' Myth and Connocation

To apply this semiotic structure we can explore more meanings underneath the system of symbols in art, especially the traditional folklore art.

Philosophy of Vietnamese folk art

Vietnamese folk art is famous for the reflection of water rice - agricultural culture from Vietnamese countryside. The way of thinking is found from through the agricultural daily activities. "The living environment of Vietnamese agriculture exerts a powerful inflluences over many other activities, thingking and working of human, in that conditions men create cultural products, some genres of art which have typical influence from their original regions and environments" (Vuong Hoang Luc, 2007: 34). The beauty of Vietnamese folklore is not came from the fantastic line or drawing or the extreme beautiful colour, but the meanings of Asian philosophy expressing through the symbols from art. It is the story of Vietnamese national spiritual life. All of these can be seen in Dong Ho folk woodcut painting. Dong Ho painting has four themes and explains to us the philosophy of different aspects of life, which aims to take good care to Vietnamese community.

III. DONG HO FOLK WOODCUT PAINTINGS

Dong Ho Vietnamese folk woodcut paintings (Tranh khắc gỗ dân gian Đông Hồ) or Dong Ho Vietnamese folk woodprint paintings, with the short form for Dong Ho paintings, are one of the folk woodcut paintings of Vietnam orignating from Dong Ho village, Bac Ninh province, North Vietnam. Dong Ho paintings has appeared in the lifetime Vietnamese people for long time, but there was no historic trusted documentaries about the first painting of this types. However, the custom of decoration by Dong Ho painting has already taken a good place in the mind Vietnamese people every Lunar New Year. "Dong Ho paintings mainly reflect aspiration of a peaceful, happy and prosperous life by the common people. Dear animals in people's life, sucah as cow, pig, dog, cat and chicken are also depicted in a lot of paintings"(Bach Thi Ngoc Trang. Young -Soon Kim, 2015). Dong Ho painting contains dreams, wishes, hopes of beautiful and peaceful life by the common people, which expressed through the simple images of daily life. Therefore, these types of painting contains a treasure of hiden philosophy.Accordings to Bach Thi Ngoc Trang and Young – Soon Kim (2015), there are five themes of Dong Ho painting, such as:

[1] Painting of Good luck wishes (29 paintings)
[2] Painting of Historical figures (10 paintings)
[3] Painting of Mythical stories (12 paintings)
[4] Painting of Social activities (40 paintings)
[5] Painting of Worshiping (13 paintings)

All of the paintings are drawn with simple line and colour, but the colour is always bright to show the Vietnamese opstimistic thinking of life. That is one of

Vietnamese folklore characteristics. "Almost all of the Dong Ho painting is scarved with glorious colour and full of the meanings of the opstimistic thingking to life". The important thing about the special characteristic of Vietnamese folklore is the realistic point expressing through the system of symbols. "The aesthetic styles of Dong Ho painting, just like other genres of Vietnamese folklore, is the realistic style." (Nguyen Thanh Phong, 2009).

IV. DESCRIPTION OF "HARVESTING COCONUT" PAINTING

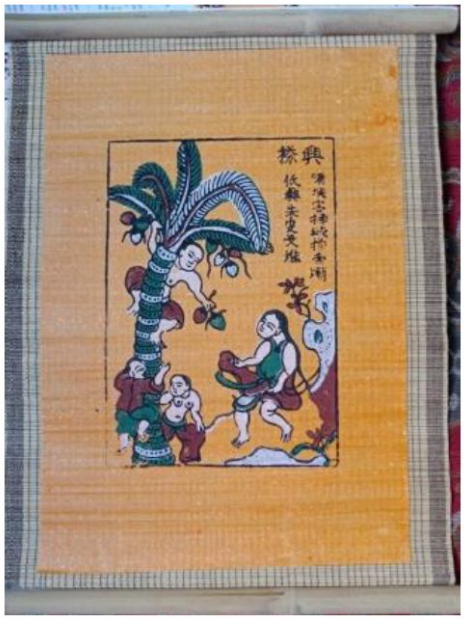


Figure 1. Dong Ho folk woodcut painting 'Harvesting Coconut'

Dong Ho painting entitled "Harvesting coconut" is one of the paintings of Social activities. This painting describes the daily activities in every countryside of Vietnam. In this painting there are four people, three men and one woman. This painting can be divided horizontally into two parts, one part on the left and one part on the right. The right part includes three men is tryting to climb the coconut tree, there are two men down the tree is trying to climb up, and there is one man on top of the tree is trying to drop down two coconuts. On the left part is the woman is trying to catch two coconuts with her front skirt, river, flowers, rock on the corner down to the left and the Han Viet poem on the top of right corner of the painting. To take a close look to the eyes of man at the root of the tree, who do not wear shirt, we can see the sense of humor of Vietnamese culture.

According to the tradional teachings and understandings, the meanings of painting "Harvesting coconut" is understood so simple and not yet go to the core of the philosophy lesson. "Harvesting coconut" is the symbol of the happiness of love. In Spring festivals, many man and woman join in the custom of picking up the first luck of the year. The first luck could be any types of founa, like flowers, leaf, and so on. In this situation, the first luck is the coconut fruits. The coconuts in this context is represented for the pure love of the lovers because of its white colour of water. The man does not drop one by one coconut, but he takes two fruits at the same time just like a naughty game and wants to tease the woman down there. The woman can not take two coconuts at the same time with her own hands, she could drop one of them, so that she take her front skirt to catch them all. That is the symbol of earning all her happiness. The Dong Ho painting is always writen with the Han Viet poem, and read from the right to the left:

"Khen ai khéo dựng lên dừa Đấy trèo đây hứng cho vừa một đôi"

Translate:

"Thanks to who planted the coconut tree,
You climb up the tree, I catch in order to be a perfect match"

However, the traditional explanation is just stop at understanding one level of meanings. To be honest, the younger generation can not understand the core meaning of the Harversting Coconut painting, in their head is just an abtracts of the philosophy. It is also because of the characteristic of Asian culture, that is too shy and scared to talk about something complicated and so sensitive, like social education of sexuality.

V. UNLOGICAL DETAILS IN THE PAINTING AND REALITY

To think calmly about two details of the Harvesting Coconut painting, which are "two coconuts" and "the skirt of the woman", we can realize the unlogical things in this painting and the practical activity of harvesting the coconut in daily life. First, the "two coconuts" is droped down by the man on the top of the coconut tree. In reality, usually no one wil able to drop down the two coconuts at the same time because of the heaviness of that fruit, it could lead to the result of breaking that fruits. Second, the "skirt of the woman" which she used to catch these two coconuts from the man on top of the tree. To be honest, usually everyone will catch the coconuts with their two bare hands, because that is the only way to keep the fruits in the best condition.It is a little bit unlogical in this painting that the woman use her front skirt to catch the coconuts, especially with that kind of skirt. The skirt in this painting is Northern Vietnamese traditional clothes and the qualitive of the cloth is too easy to tear apart if the two coconuts drop down. Furthermore, the upper clothes of the woman is called "áoyếm" and it never be wore to go outside like this situation. Vietnamese women only wear "áoyếm" and the skirt inside their house and always put on some other clothes whenever they go outside. However, in this context, these two unlogical details "two coconuts" and "the skirt of woman"are the symbols

of art, which contains the hiden lessons from Vietnamese ancestor.

VI. SOCIAL EDUCATION (EDUCATION OF SEXUALITY)

To apply the structure of semiotics theory of Roland Barthes into analisize the meanings of Harvesting Coconut painting, we can gain more knowledge about the philosophy lessons. One symbol could be understand in many ways depends on the text and context. With one meanings of the symbol could be classified into some level of the meanings structure. First, the symbol of "two coconut", if we connect the theme of the painting "Happinese of lovers", we can see that that symbol is represented for the testis of the male reproductive system. (Nguyen Ngoc Tho, 2013). Further more, the symbol can be understand as a sign of process of the copulation. This symbol is one of index to express the culture of fertility, which is one of the characteristic of Water rice agricultural of Vietnam. The second level of popular belief of the process of the copulation is operating by the first level of language or symbols (two coconuts). In another word, Vietnamese ancestors used these symbols to express one significant sensitive daily activities of human, based on the same shape, structure of coconuts and the testis of the man.With the table below can explain more the meaning of this symbol.

1st level of Denotation	**1. Signifier (form):** Two coconuts	**2. Signified (concept):** A tropical fruit with form almost round, contained with a lot of white sweet coconut milk and white flesh.	
	3. Sign (Meanings)		
2nd level of Connotation	**A. Signifier (Form)** The Testis of the male reproductive system		**B. Signified (Concept):** Fertility
	C. Signification: Symbol of Copulation		

Table 2. The meanings of symbol "Two coconuts" by Roland Barthes' semiotics

Second, the symbol of the "skirt of the woman", can be understand that it is represented for the hygen of the female reproductive system and in the relationship with the action catching the "two coconuts" it can be defined the process of fertilization. This symbol is also one of a sign in index of the system symbol of the Feritility. Vietnamese popular belief about the process of fertilization is operating by the symbols of the "skirt of the woman" or it could be the picture of the whole inside clothes of the woman. Once again, Vietnamese ancestor is very smart when they borrowed a woman clothes to describe a sensitive part of their body because of the hymen and the skirt have the same shape and quality. Table below will explain the meanings of these symbols in details.

1st level of Denotation	**1. Signifier (form):** Skirt of the woman	**2. Signified (concept):** A traditional clothes of Northern Vietnamese woman, which is usually wore below part of the body and easy to be tear apart	
	3. Sign (Meanings)		
2nd level of Connotation	**A. Signifier (Form)** The hymen of the female reproductive system		**B. Signified (Concept):** Fertility
	C. Signification: Symbol of Fertilization		

Table 3. The meanings of symbol "Skirt of the woman" by Roland Barthes' semiotics

With those two meanings of the symbols "two coconuts" and "the skirt of the woman", the ancestor would like to teach their younger generation the way of reproduction through the beauty of the art. Through the system of symbols the ancestors not only preserve precious information or data about significant needs of human for lifetime, but also would like to communicate with their community and the younger generation. The older generation uses the simple dailyobjects existing in the environment around us, like coconut fruits and skirt to talk about other serious social isues: Sexual education, which is still hard to say it outloud in Asian cultural context. It is honestly the most polite, elegant way to express so meaningful meassage with art through the system of symbols above. Furthermore, the meanings of symbols of one man and one woman do the activity of drop and catch the coconut, is also another lessons of ethical value about the loyaty of the couples or husband and wife in reality. One husband is allowed to get married with only one wife, which is one of some value lessons Vietnamese ancestor wants to teach to their younger generation. Additionally, back to the past, in Asian context, and also in Vietnam, man and woman are not allowed to date offically like modern life, but every year at Spring time and Lunar New Year, they are allowed to join in the festival, to dance and sing together, to get to know each other by talking, and of course to pick up the first luck of the

year together. Thanks to that annual events, many couples fallen in love and become husband and wife. The Dong Ho painting "Harvesting Coconut" is already draw a beautiful picture of Vietnamese annual festivals with full of meaningful cultural details. The tropical environment is represented through the symbols of river, the flower in this painting. This piece work of art can be foundation documentaries for the history of the culture.

CONCLUSION

Dong Ho paintings and other folklore are the treasure of Vietnamese philosophy lessons. Teaching gentlely about the reproduction of the next generation to the yonger generation and the loyalty of one couple husband and wife through visual art, Dong Ho painting entitled "Harvesting Coconut". The social education, especailly of education of sexuality nowaday needs to take a look to consider this peice work of art as an useful source to learn how to educate young generations or even the community of our social. The beauty has come from the simple, elegant and meaningful of Dong Ho painting.

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