

BESSH-16**Intertextuality and Sunthornphu's 'Good Woman' Ideological Concept**

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Abstract

This article examined *Supaasit Sorn Ying* (Codes and Conducts for Women) by Sunthornphu, the renowned Thai poet of Early Rattanakosin (1786-1855) with the application of Julia Kristeva's Intertextuality and Ferdinand de Saussure's Semiotics as theoretical frameworks. The study illustrated how the ideological concept of 'good woman' was borrowed and repeated by other authors and being transmitted to readers in various forms of genres. The inheritance and reproduction of Sunthornphu's 'good woman' ideology were found to influence Thai women's value and ways of life for centuries.

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Keywords—Sunthornphu, Intertextuality, Ideology, Good Woman

Introduction

Sunthornphu was a renowned Thai poet of Early Rattanakosin (1786-1855). He had a talent in composing Thai verse namely '*Klorn pairt*'. Despite his fantastic talent, he was a womanizer and a drunkard. As his mother was a court lady, he was brought up in the court. This led him to the opportunity to provide advice to King Rama II about Thai literature. Unfortunately, his bold characteristic caused him hatred by the most powerful prince who later became King Rama III. Sunthornphuhad to ordain as a monk for his own safety and had to earn his living from selling his composition after leaving monkhood. According to Prince Damrongraachaanuparp, *Supaasit Sorn Ying* (Codes and Conducts for Women) was believed to be one of the literatures Sunthornphu composed for sale in 1837-1840 (Prince Damrongraachaanuparp, 1975:42). The contents covered the areas of behaving properly on the aspects of manner, verbal and husband choosing. These codes and conducts for women had a great impact in Thai society and became the norm of the society. 'Good Thai women' were supposed to behave according to the teaching in this literature. The codes and conducts were repeated again and again in different forms of literature over a wide period time span. This repetition confirmed the theorem that works of literature were built from systems, codes, and traditions established by previous works of literature. All texts were lacking in any kind of independent meaning. These make them became 'intertextual' (Allen, 2011:11). In the Postmodern epoch, theorists often claim, it was not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or novel, since every artistic object was so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art" (ibid.).

Good Woman' Codes and Conducts in *Supaasit Sorn Ying*

The following extracts were the illustrations of the codes and conducts for women on the aspects of behaving, dressing up and mating.

Dress

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| จะนุ่งห่มดูพอสวมศักดิ์สงวน | ให้สมควรรับพักตร์ตามศักดิ์ศรี |
| จะหัดหน้าทาแป้งแต่งอินทรี | ดูวิหิวนืออย่างเหลือเกิน |
| จะเก็บไรไผ่มาให้สมพักตร์ | บำรุงศักดิ์คานศรีมิให้เงิน |
| เป็นสุภาพราบเรียบแลเจริญ | คงมีผู้สรรเสริญองค์ทรง |

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ใครเห็นน้องต้องนิยมนมไม่ขาด ว่าฉลาดแต่งร่างเหมือนอย่างหงส์
ถึงรูปงามทราชมสงวนवलอนงค์ ไม้รู้จักแต่งองค์ก็เสียมงาม

Whatever you are wearing, you must consider whether it suits you or not. When you use a face powder, you must make sure it matches your skin colour. Your hair must be tidy. If you keep dressing neatly, people will praise you for being cleverly dressed. Although you're beautiful if don't know how to dress, it will degrade your look. (Sunthornphu, 1975:554)

Manner

ประการหนึ่งซึ่งจะเดินค่านินนาต ค่อยเชื่องขาดรอกช่อกไปกลางสนาม
อย่าก้าวเขนสุดเขนเขาห้ามปราม เสียมงามสงวนไว้แต่ในที่

When you walk, please walk gracefully and do not swing your arms. (ibid.)

อย่างนุ่งผ้าปกใหญ่ได้สะคือ เขาจะถือว่าเล่นไม่เห็นควร
อย่าลืมควมัวเดินให้เพลินจิต ระวังปิดปกป้องของสงวน
เป็นนารีที่ละอายหลายกระบวน จงสงวนศักดิ์สง่าอย่าให้อาย

Your sarong must cover your belly button.

Always be cautious about covering your private organs.

There are many things to cause embarrassment for women.

Be careful. Not to embarrass yourself. (ibid.)

อนึ่งเนตรอย่าสังเกดให้เกินนัย จงรู้จักอาการประมาณหมาข
แม่นประสพพบเหล่าเจ้าชู้ชาย อย่างม้ายทำชม้อยตะบอยแด
อันนัยนาคาพาควให้มัวหมอง เหมือนทำนองเนะออกบอกระแ
จริงมิจริงเขาเอาไปเล่าแ คนรังแกมันก็ว่านัยนาคาม

The other things to be concerned are your eyes.

When you meet those flirting men, do not glance at them.

The eyes could tell people what you think.

This would harm your reputation and cause criticism. (ibid.)

Mating

แม่นชายใดหมายประสงค้มาหลงรัก ใ้รู้จักเชิงชายที่หมายมั่น
อันความรักของชายนี้หลายชั้น เขาว่ารักภักนั้นประการใด
จงพิถีพิศดูใ้รู้แน่ อย่างทำแต่ใจเร็วจะเหลวไหล

When a man flirts with you, you must think carefully.

The word 'love' from men could mean many things.

Trusting men easily can be harmful. (ibid.,:555)

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| จงรักนวลสงวนนามห้ามใจไว้ | อย่าหลงไหลจำคำที่ร่ำสอน |
| คิดถึงหน้าบิดาและมารดร | อย่ารีบร้อนเร็วนักมักไม่ดี |
| เมื่อสูงงอมหอมหวานจึงควรหล่น | อยู่กับต้นอย่าให้พรากไปจากที่ |
| อย่าชิงสุกก่อนห้ามไม่งามดี | เมื่ออนุญมิจงมาอย่างปรารมภ์ |

You must keep your body and reputation.

Do not have sex before the right time.

It will embarrass your parents.

Stay calm to wait for your lucky day. (ibid.,:558)

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| เป็นสตรีมิใช่ชายเสียดายศักดิ์ | จะปลุกรักเรรวนหาควรไม่ |
| อันความคิดมีอยู่ดูจำไว้ | อย่าพอใจรักชั่วให้มัวมอม |
| จะมีคู่ก็ให้รู้ปรนนิบัติ | จงซื้อสัตย์สุจริตคิดถนอม |
| อย่าคิดร้ายช้ายแซกทำแปลกปลอม | มโนอ่อนสนหาต่อสามี |
| อย่าคบผู้ผู้สมนิยมหวัง | ไม่จริงกาลดอกบอกลมศรี |

Being a woman, you must be dignified.

You cannot flirt like a man.

You must be faithful to your husband.

Do not commit adultery.

There will be no lasting happiness. (ibid.,:571)

The above quotations were the illustrations of codes and conducts for women in Sunthornphu's composition. These codes and conducts had great impact in Thai society and ways of women's lives. They were transferred to Thai women in later generations via all kinds of literary genres.

Intertextuality and the 'Good Woman' Ideological Concepts

According to Graham Allen (2011), it is not possible any longer, in the Postmodern epoch, to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or novel, since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art" (Graham Allen,2011:11). The generalization was influenced by Julia Kristeva (1966)'s Intertextuality theory about the interrelationship between texts, especially works of literature.

Although Thai society has been influenced by modernity and globalization, the majority of people still value woman who possessed the quality of 'good' woman descended from Sunthornphu's ideology. These influences could be seen via Thai literature, both classical and contemporary literature in all forms of genre. For instance, in *Khon rerng meuang*, the novel composed by the famous woman writer Suwannee Sukhontha in 1973. It was the story of an orphan girl named Pring ,brought up by her cousin, Prathiap, who tried to teach her how to be a good housewife who can cook and take good care of the house and everybody in the family. Unfortunately, Pring did not care for this lifestyle and this made most people saw her 'bad' woman. (Orathai Panya,2007:78) Following are the illustrations of a 'bad woman' who behave against the codes and conducts for a 'good woman'

"There shouldn't be anybody else who can have such a bad mouth like Pring. She can always say anything without considering the consequences (Suwannee, 1997:5-6)".

And

“Pring never used any of the housekeeping lessons taught by Prathiap. She wins her husband’s heart with a trick which Prathiap never told her. She knows it herself. The kind of housework mentioned by Prik (an old servant at Prathiap’s house), Pring would never be bothered to do. Just being good in bed seems to be enough for Pring in order to win a husband’s heart (ibid.:93)”.

Another example the Intertextuality of Sunthornphu’s codes and conducts for good women could be illustrated via the song *Sao Sa-eun* (สาวสะอื้น) which literally means ‘a crying woman’.

เราเป็นหญิงชาวเขาป่าดง

ชายประสงค์เพียงหลงรูปกาย

ได้ชมพอสมใจก็หน่าย

ความหวานคลายกลับกลายเป็นรอยน้ำตา

เจ็บและอาชเหมือนคนใจง่าย

ใครเขาไม่นำพา

I am a country woman.

Men only fancy my appearance.

They left me after they have fondled me.

After the sweetness is decline, there is only sorrow.

This song is didactic. The moral of the song reflected the repetition of Sunthornphu’s teaching about mating as exemplified earlier that;

When a man flirts with you, you must think carefully.

The word ‘love’ from men could mean many things.

Trusting men easily can be harmful.

And

You must keep your body and reputation.

Do not have sex before the right time.

It will embarrass your parents.

The woman in the song *Sao Sa-eun* was left with sorrow because she did not behave according to the ‘good woman’s codes and conducts.

Conclusion

Sunthornphu composed *Supaasit Sorn Ying* (Codes and Conducts for Women) since 1837-1840 but it still influence Thai people’s ways of life, especially women’s. The transfer of his ideological concept of a ‘good woman’ was operated via the Intertextuality. The moral in his codes and conducts was borrowed and repeated by other authors and being transmitted to readers in various forms of genres.

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