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**SIMILARITIES IN THE STORY TYPE OF HEROES THAT KILL MONSTERS OF VIETNAMESE  
AND SOUTHERN KHMER PEOPLE IN VIETNAM**

Nguyen Thi Nhung

*Lecturer in Can Tho University, Vietnam.**Corresponding Email: nhung1976@gmail.com. Tel: 0945637676***ABSTRACT**

Research on fairy tales in general and miracle fairy tales of the people in particular in the point of view of type and motif has been effectively applied by worldwide Folklore researchers. In Vietnam, in recent years, the trend of the research is becoming popular and achieves high practical values. During the research on comparison between miracle fairy tales of Vietnamese and Southern Khmer people, we found that this trend of approach contributes an important part to find similarities and differences between miracle fairy tales systems of the people living in the same territory in the view of both literature and culture. In this article, on the basis of statistics, analysis and synthesis, we choose some typical types of story belonging to "Heroes that kill Monsters" of miracle fairy tales of Vietnamese and fairy tales of Southern Khmer people in Vietnam and then they are compared with each other to figure out the similarities between them.

**KEYWORDS :** Miracle fairy tale, Vietnam, Southern Khmer, type, motif.

## INTRODUCTION

Comparative research method is a very effective method in term of approaching the trend of culture – science research. The author Tran Thi An of the essay “Research on folk literature from the view of type and motif – possibility and impossibility” has a systematical point of view and indicates readers a possible trend of research in terms of type and motif. We choose to compare a type of Heroes that kill Monsters in the system of miracle fairy tale between Vietnamese and Southern Khmer people living on the same territory, Mekong Delta, to find similarity and first base on characters of history, religion, geographic culture, custom, habit,... to explain this similarity as a possible and practical trend of research, in our opinion, in Vietnam at present. Finding this similarity will help us to have an overall scientific view of intimate relation between type of Heroes that kill Monsters of Vietnamese and that of Khmer people living in the South of Vietnam.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To complete our research, we use the following methodology and trend of approach:

### \* Field research method

This method was used when we went to areas of Mekong Delta where Khmer people are living to get to understand the context where the fairy tales occurred to record, film and document. Besides, we create questionnaires and diaries to carefully interview native Khmer people so as to find out stories suitable to the trend of research topic.

### \* Method of analysis, statistics and classification

This method is used to count the texts that were available and gained by field research method, then classify motives of stories; and analyze factors and details relating to stories,... to consolidate basis of assessments and evaluations.

### \* Type comparison method

This method is used to examine stories; analyze and compare types of miracle fairy tales of Vietnamese and Khmer people in terms of culture and history that they were composed; in the relation between type and other cultural and social issues; compare texts to the others; compare type of a story to that of another story; ... Therefore, we found correlation between them.

### \* Interdisciplinary approach

The study to apply this approach to consider, approach from different view like: culture, history, literature, credit, festivals.... to show the characteristics of this type of story from the perspective of literature, culture and history. Of course, in this approach, the method of studying folklore is essential.

## RESULTS

### 1. Theoretical basis

In the world, the term Type was first known in the works of Verzeichnis de Marchen typen (List of fairy tales) of Antti Aarne in 1910. This work was later succeeded by S. Thompson in The Type of the Folktale - A Classification and Bibliography, Antti Aarne's Verzeichnis der Marchentypen (FF communications No.3). Translated and Enlarged by Stith Thompson.

In The Folktale established in 1977, Thompson defined the type of story as follows: “Type is a plot which can exist independently in the oral story treasures. It can be considered as a complete story, its meaning is not the same as any other story. Of course, it can also be combined with other stories at random, but appearing separately can also prove its independence. It can consist of one or more motifs ...” [19].

In this definition, Stith Thompson has initially distinguished two very basic concepts as **type** and **motif**. Accordingly, there may be one type of story that may have one or more stories; There can be many motifs or only one motif. Type is a relatively fixed set of motifs” [19] Thus, on the level, type is bigger than motif, in other words, the motif is a base unit to create the type.

In Vietnam, the first person to introduce and apply A-T theory into folk tales research is Nguyen Tan Duc. In the works About the table of type and motif of folk story contents search Nguyen Tan Duc has raised his understanding of type as follows: “Type is just a collection of stories with the same core of the same story or unit story; Motif indicates an element of the story, can be separable, can be assembled, more or less strange, unusual, especially the characteristic feature of folk tales.” [5]

The author Nguyen Bich Ha in Thach Sanh works and The story of the brave in ancient Vietnam and Southeast Asia, have given the definition of story style as follows: “story style is a collection of stories with motifs of the same type.

In a story with many motifs but not necessarily every story in that style must have all the general motifs. There may be stories have some motif with other stories but there are also many stories with so many the same motif" [6].

The author Nguyen Thi Hue, beside her research work "Ugly character but talented in Vietnamese fairy tales", second year..., has collaborated with some colleagues to compile a dictionary of Vietnamese folk tales type. This dictionary is also a basis for us in the process of identifying and naming types and motifs [7].

In this study, we used the type concept of Nguyen Tan Duc and Thompson as the basis for establishing Fairy tales of Khmer and fairy tales of Kinh type.

## 2. Survey results

To compare the type of The Valiant man of the two peoples, we studied nearly 70 tales of the South Khmer and more than 100 tales of Vietnamese miracle (Kinh). After statistics and classification, we have identified 19 stories has the type of Valiant man killing monsters, as follows:

With the type of the story Valiant man of the Vietnamese (Kinh), We choose 3 narratives: *Thach Sanh*, *Threeskilled boys* or *Kill the python* to survey. Based on the naming of motifs as in Table 1, we define the structure of this type with the following basic type [2],[3]:

NO.	Story	Beginning	Content	Ending
1	Thach Sanh	1.1	II.8 – II.9 – II.10 – II.11 – II.12 – II.13 – II.14 – II.15	III.35 – III.36
2	Killing the Python	1.2	II.8 – II.9 – II.10 – II.11	III.36 – III.37
3	Three skillful men	1.3	II.18 – II.19 – II.20 – II.21 – II.28	III.36

For fairy tales of Khmer people, we also conducted to examine 16 following stories: *Chau Sanh Chau Thong*; *Say V'oan*; *Rich Thi Sel and Kon Ray lady*; *The last child of 17 girls and the Ogress*; *(Xangxa Rachi, Sangsen Lochay, San sal La chi)*; *Seventeen children*; *Chao T'bat T'bu*; *Hero Maha Tho te*; *Areca flower*; *Three-color flower*; *Chau Pram Thngay*; *Nieng Soc Ko-ro-op*, *Fragrant hair lady*, *Fragrant hair princess*; *Bo-Piel kills giant crocodile*.

Base on the above analysis, we can systemize structure of type of stories Heroes that kill Monsters of Khmer people into the below categories [12]:

NO.	Story	Beginning	Content	Ending
1	Chau Sanh Chau Thong	I.4 – I.5 – I.6	II.11 – II.13 – II.8 – II.9 – II.10 – II.9 – II.14	III.38 – III.37
2	Say V'oan	No motif	II.16 – II.23 – III.37 – II.24 – II.8	III.39
3	Rich Thi Sel and Kon Ray lady; The last child of 17 girls and the Ogress	Type	II.26 – II.25 – II.27 – III.37 – II.30	III.38 – III.39
4	Xangxa Rachi; Sangsen Lochay; San sal La chi	Type	II.20 – II.27 – II.28 – II.16 – II.31 – II.9 – II.16 – II.13	III.38 – III.39 – III.37
5	Seventeen children	Type	II.16 – II.8	III.36
6	Chao T'bat T'bu	None	II.31 – II.14 – II.15 – II.3	III.37
7	Areca flower	I.22	II.25 – II.10 – II.29	III.37
8	Hero Maha Tho te	I.4 – I.5 – I.6	II.26 – I.8	III.36
9	Three-color flower	1.7	1.8 – II.30 – II.23 – II.16	III.36
10	Chau Pram Thngay	1.1	II.20 – II.21 – I.31 – II.8	III.36 – III.37 – III.39
11	Nieng Soc Ko-ro-op, Fragrant hair lady, Fragrant hair princess	None	I.2 – II.16 – II.8 – II.9 – II.13 – III.37 – II.10	III.37 – II.20 – II.34

*Note: Miracle birth (I.1); offering sacrifice (I.2); Son-in-law selecting (I.3); Eating so much (I.4); Leaving child in the forest (I.5); Strong man (I.6); Reward (I.7); Killing a python (II.8); Victory depriving (II.9); Killing Magpie*

(I.10); *Killing a crocodile* (II.11); *Going to underwater palace* (II.12); *Being mute* (II.13); *Miracle sounds* (sound of musical instrument); *Fighting against the invasion war* (II.14); *Fighting against the invasion war* (II.15); *Magical things* (rice pots, sword, hammer, shoes, drug, flower, bottle of water, talisman) (II.16); *Considering ogress as disciple* (III.17); *The left thing* (III.18); *Competing* (III.19); *Competing* (III.20); *Agreement to snake* (III.21); *Calumniation* (III.22); *Learning cabala and talisman* (III.23); *Jostling victory* (III.24); *Fighting over each other to have the father* (III.25); *Prediction of deviner* (III.26); *Work (wage earner) to support relatives* (III.27); *Fraudulent exchange* (III.28); *Passing the ocean* (III.29); *Adjudging* (III.30); *Transforming* (III.31); *Vying in wits and a challenge with a snake* (III.32); *Violating the taboos* (III.33); *Traitorous maiden* (III.34); *Invasion* (III.35); *Jostling and adjudging victory* (III.36); *Victory rewarding* (III.37); *Marrying and throne demise* (III.38); *Punishing the guilty* (III.39); *Reunion* (III.40).

### 3. The similarities between Viet people's hero and monster story type and the Southern Khmer's one

When studying the comparison between the story type involving heroes and monsters of Vietnamese and Khmer people, we found that besides the distinctive features of the two peoples, there are many similarities between them. The basic points are specified as follows:

#### \* Similarity in content

Giving a general view based on the statistics table above, we can realize that: The story content of Viet people's hero and monster story type and the Southern Khmer's one is basically similar, including 3 parts: the beginning, the content, and the ending.

#### + The beginning

The introduction of the story type involving heroes and monsters of Vietnamese and Khmer people often includes some motifs telling about the background and birth of the heroes. In the stories of Viet people, the motif of these stories is usually *the motif of miraculous births*. The expression of this motif can be shown clearly as in *Thach Sanh*, or it can be included in the contents of *Ba chang thien nghe* (*Three Skillful Men*), or *Tieu diet mang xa* (*Killing the python*). The heroes of these stories may have clear miraculous backgrounds, such as Thach Sanh (*motif of miraculous births*). He was a son of the Jade Emperor, and then he was reincarnated as a son of a farmer. After his parents had passed away, he became an orphan. In addition, a hero might be an orphan and be adopted by a Buddhist priest, like a young man who had magical powers in *Killing the Python*. Also, some heroes might not have a clear background, like the three men who had natural endowments in *Three Skillful Men*.

In the story of the Khmer people, in the beginning of the story of Chau Sanh – Chau Long is also a motif about the background of his birth. In the country of Pa-ria-na-xay, the capital city of the king Po-rum Mo-tot. There was a couple. They were old but they had no children. One day the old man entered the forest and saw a boy in a lotus flower in the middle of a swamp. Then, he took the child home.

In the story of the Prince Sang-Sen-Lo-Chay, the beginning was also the appearance of the prince Sang-Sen-Lo-Chay. When he was born, he had a preternatural strength. Right after he was born, he rode a sacred snail with a sword in his right hand, showing the ascendancy of the heroic descent, and a crossbow made of a precious wood as white as elephant's tusk in the left hand, with a tube of arrows on his shoulder. He looked so stately. The prince Rec-cho-say had a shape as a lion with an invincible strength. He could fly above the clouds like the wind. Therefore, we can see that although the men in the stories mentioned above had different backgrounds, when they appeared and grew up, they were burly and had miraculous talents.

#### + The content

The middle part of the Vietnamese stories involving heroes and monsters often has basic motifs such as: killing malicious snakes, being cheated, choosing a son-in-law, killing malicious bird, going down to the palace under the sea, becoming mute, miraculous mellow tones, miraculous sword, things that were left behind, fighting against the aggressive wars, miraculous rice pot, marriage and becoming Kings. This is the part centering around the challenges that these heroes need to overcome. Every challenge often comes along with one or some certain motif(s). Thanks to the magical force, magical things, or their own power, these heroes could overcome the challenges and complete their missions.

In the story of Thach Sanh, the brave and good-hearted woodcutter experienced the following basic challenges. *The first challenge is killing the monster* (*Motif of killing malicious snakes*) thanks to the magic taught by the josses and a magical hammer. After that, Ly Thong deceived him for the first time and deprived his achievement (being deceived); the second challenge was killing an eagle (*Motif of killing malicious birds*) to save the princess and then he was deceived for the second time by Ly Thong. Thanks to the musical instrument given

by the son of the King of water, Thach Sanh could cure the princess from being mute (*motif of magic mellow tones*) and get married to the princess (*motif of getting married*). His last challenge was defeating the invaders from 18 countries (*motif of fighting against the aggressive wars, miraculous musical instrument and earthenware pot*) to bring peaceful life to everyone.

Although the orphan man in Killing the Python did not experience as many challenges as Thach Sanh, he overcame a very dangerous challenge *which was directly fighting the python, killing it and saving a princess and people (motif of killing malicious snakes, motif of miraculous swords)*. After that, his achievement was deprived by a duke. However, *thanks to a remaining piece of a sword (motif of the things that were left behind)*, he could retake his achievement.

The three men in Three Skillful Men overcame a common challenge which was killing the eagle to save the beautiful princess of the Le dynasty based on their abilities. *The first man had the ability in shooting arrows with a bow in spite of difficulty and long distance. [9]. The second man could swim underwater for many weeks and dive for small things under the ocean. [9]. The third man was a skilled doctor. He could cure people of any diseases, including reviving people who just passed away [9].* The story's situation challenged all of them; however, they could overcome their own challenges by using their abilities.

Like Vietnamese stories involving heroes and monsters, in the Southern Khmer's stories, the heroes have to directly fight against the monster.

In the story of Chau long – Chau Sanh, the old man was too poor to raise Chau Sanh. Then, he took his son to the forest to kill him because he did not want his son to be rotten away. He cut a big Apitong tree laying on his son's body. He thought that his son had died. He brushed away his tears and went home. After a few moments, his son shouldered the apitong tree and went home. He was very surprised and happy. Since then, people called him hero shouldering apitong tree (Bo-ros com – benh ma – ha cho – tiel). After that he killed a crocodile, a monster, Ko-ruot bird, to save the princess and Dragon King's son.

In the story of *The prince Sang – sen – lo – chay*, being deceived by the King's wife, he expelled the two princes to the forest. When the princes' aunt was caught by the monster, he killed the monster and saved her. Besides, he also went down to the palace under the sea to save the princess.

**+ The ending**

When studying the three stories: *Thach Sanh, Killing the Python, Three Skillful Men*, we found that the endings were the victory of the heroes before the formidable battle between them and monster. The prize for this victory was that they can marry a beautiful girl. Getting married to a princess, they could be crowned king. Perhaps for Viet people, a happy ending and a dream of a happy family are always their dreams. Therefore, the fairy stories involving heroes killing monsters always go along with beautiful and smart princesses.

Chau Sanh was crowned king after having got married to the princess.

The prince Sang – sen – lo – chay saved his aunt from the monster and also saved her daughter. He was clear of accusation. Then, he and his mother went back the palace and he was crowned king.

As Viet people, the Khmer people also dream of a life of comfort and happiness and having a complete family. The worthiest prize is that the beautiful girl shall become the hero's wife after his famous victory.

**\* Similar in motif**

After statistically analyzing the motif in Viet people's type of heroes and monster tales and that of Khmer people, we found that both of them have common motifs such as: Motif of extraordinary birth and growth; Motif of killing malicious snakes; Motif of killing malicious birds; Motif of being deceived; Motif of becoming mute; Motif of miraculous sounds; Motif of getting married and becoming Kings. These motifs are almost comprehensively similar in terms of implications and connotation and denotation. The details are as follows:

Motif	Viet people	Khmer people
Motif of extraordinary birth and growth	Knowing that there was a couple who were poor but very kind, the Jade Emperor sent the Crown Prince to reincarnate as their son. All of these young men were outstandingly gifted: swimming, archery, saving people, etc.	The child was born after praying to heaven and Buddha (found on a lotus flower). The child learned to walk and talk only 5 days after birth.
Motif of killing malicious snakes	He used a hammer to fight against the monster. It was cut it into halves and had to reveal the real figure which was a huge python.	Chau Sanh used a hammer to cut the monster's head when he was cutting wood in the forest; three sons joined their father in killing the monster; Sayvoan kills the

Motif	Viet people	Khmer people
Motif of killing malicious birds	Seeing the eagle carrying a girl as it was flying by, Thach Sanh used the bow and arrow to shoot it. The eagle was injured but it still carried the princess back to its cave. Then, Thach Sanh led Ly Thong and the troops down to the cave to save the princess. He waited until the eagle fell asleep and used the rope to tie around the princess and signaled Ly Thong to pull her. When the eagle woke up, he used magic to fight against it and was able to save the son of the King of Water.	monster by an arrow; 17 siblings squeezed the monster's neck, break its teeth and killed it; thanks to 2 treasures of the monster, the younger brother was able to kill the malicious monster and save the princess. Chau Sanh shot the Maha kraut then followed the blood trace to the cave of the malicious bird to save the princess; the younger brother was attacked by a covey of malicious birds -> he used the sword to kill it and was unintentionally able to save the princess with fragrant hair who was left behind by the soldiers on the way running away from the covey of malicious birds.
Motif of being deceived	When knowing that Thach Sanh had killed the monster, Ly Thong devised a plan to deceive Thach Sanh that the python was raised by the King and he advised Thach Sanh to run away, otherwise the King will cut his head. Thach Sanh believed Ly Thong so he ran and hid.	Chau Thong deceived Chau Sanh that the monster was a precious creature raised by the King and told Chau Sanh that unless he hid, the King would cut his head. Chau Thong took the head of the monster from Chau Sanh and brought to the yard of the King's palace -> reaping the fruit of Chau Sanh's labor for the first time. When he knew that Chau Sanh had come back, Chau Thong stole the King's gold and jewelries of the King and took them to the tree where Chau Sanh was living to slander him
Motif of becoming mute Motif of miraculous sounds	After being taken back to the palace by Ly Thong, the princess became mute. Hearing Thach Sanh's mellow tone, the princess suddenly stood up and spoke and smiled.	The princess became mute after being saved from the monster. In the prison, because Chau Sanh was bored, he took out his musical instrument and played it. When the princess heard the mellow tone, she immediately asked her father to bring the person who played the musical instrument to her. Thanks to that, Chau Sanh was exculpated.
Motif of getting married and becoming Kings	The King allowed Thach Sanh to married the princess. The wedding was held very ceremonially. Later then, the King did not have any son so Thach Sanh was crowned as the King.	Chau Sanh married the princess and was crowned as the new King; the courageous warrior married the princess and was crowned as the new King; the younger brother married the princess and was crowned when the King became old.

**\* Some explanations:**

Firstly, these similarities are originated from the characteristics of the category. The characteristic of folk literature, in general, and the fairy tale type, in particular, is the acceptance of variants. Fairy tales were created from the time of primitive communism and developed flourishingly in hierarchical society in which the stratification between the upper and the lower classes, the rich and the poor, the lavish and the meager was clearly visible. In this society where the people who were not powerful enough to make themselves heard were always looked down and trampled, it is evident to have the desire to rise up, to dream of and struggle for a better and



fairer life. The type of hero tales, in particular, and folk literature, in general, is the place where ancient people put their thoughts and desires in. The dream of the kindness defeating cruelty, and the concept of courageous warriors with extraordinary strength and outstanding talents and the support from miraculous forces always ready to protect and help people in trouble have become a characteristic of the fairy tale category in general and courageous warrior in particular. This aspect governs the structure and the connotation of the tales' content of both ethnic groups.

Secondly, Southern Vietnam - Mekong Delta is the land on which 4 brother ethnic groups Viet, Khmer, Hoa (Chinese), Cham have been co-residing together. They have lived together, worked together and shared their culture, which is one of the characteristics contributing to the similarities between the story type, including the heroes and monster type. In ancient time, Mekong Delta was a land of sacred forest and poisonous water, "crocodile swimming under the river, tiger growling in the forest" or "mosquitoes buzz like playing the flute, leeches floating like thick noodle soup". Therefore, the residents of this land have to struggle against not only two-legged enemies but also four-legged enemies, malicious snakes, fierce crocodiles and cruel birds to survive. As a result, in the subconscious of the ancient people in the Southern Vietnam, the animals listed above are, at the same time, the dangers and the josses as well as their friends. From the reality, they became the characters in the folk tales of the ethnic groups. The courageous warriors are the robust and brave Viet and Khmer young men who were always the leaders in the struggles against the harsh conditions of the nature of the land they were living in. Ancient people always worshiped and respected these warriors and considered them as the heroes of the world. The common characteristics of living conditions and the effect and interfere of both ethnic groups' culture are amongst the important factors that make up the similarities between the heroes and monster story types of the two ethnic groups.

#### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Comparing of the tale systems in general and the heroes and monster story type, in particular, to figure out the similarities and differences between the story types of the two ethnic groups living in the same region and initially explaining these similarities and differences is a meaningful act. It is to satisfy the demand of teaching and studying folk literature in the universities in Vietnam, in particular, and the conservation of the basic values of folk tale of the ethnic groups in Vietnam in general. Within the scope of this writing, we have only mentioned a part of the similarities and provided the initial explanations for the similarities between the heroes and monster story types of the two ethnic groups Viet and Khmer, but we also hope that our study will also be a scientifically valuable study.

Within the scope of this writing, we are looking forward to receiving your attention and discussion of the following issues:

1. In your opinion, is the research method we are using conformable to the international trend of research? Has this research orientation been used in your country?
2. My postgraduate thesis that I am studying in in Vietnam is specialized in the field of fairy tale type and motif. Therefore, we hope to receive your sharing experience.

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