

*A Comparative Study of Chinese and Japanese Female Characters Portrayed in in
Hirokazu Koreeda's and Ang Lee's Family Films*

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Abstract

China and Japan are both in the circle of Confucian culture. Under the influence of Confucian culture, the basic unit of Chinese and Japanese society was the family rather than the individual. At the same time, the patriarchal-dominated social structure was derived. With the modernization process and the influx of western thoughts, the tolerant image of traditional women under the oppression of "patriarchal culture" has been broken. With the absence of father's role and the decline of "patriarchy", the consciousness of women's identity has begun to awaken, and the new family pattern has been reconstructed. This paper takes the family theme films directed by Hirokazu Koreeda and Ang Lee as the main research object, and deeply analyzes the similarities and differences of the female characters in the two directors' works, and conducts multi-modal discourse analysis on women in the films. With the combination of the visual, auditory and evaluation resources, the paper re-examines the construction of women's gender image in Chinese and Japanese society and the cultural and psychological phenomenon in Chinese and Japanese society. At the same time, on this basis, the article also discusses how the positive female images are shaped to help women to break the stereotype and create a diversified female image.

Keywords: Confucianism, Female Characters, Feminism, Hirokazu Koreeda, Ang Lee, Family Films

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Introduction

In the cultural context of the patriarchy of Chinese feudal society, women have always been in a state of dominated and ruled property rights. They have always been oppressed and discriminated genders and have been marginalized as "second sex" (Wang Shuqin, 2014). Women are insulated from any public political activities, and they have no opportunity to hold public positions on the same level as men. The backward concept of "male superiority and female inferiority" left over from feudal society and the basic content of "three principles and five permanence" and "three obediences and four virtues" as the basic content of feudal ideas have long confined women's consciousness and internalized into female psychology in the process of "unconsciously" acceptance by women. The social division of labor between males and females has caused serious absence of women in the public sphere (Shen Yifei, 2013).

Under the influence of Confucian culture, both China and Japan compiled women's precepts to admonish women's behavior. The concept of yin and Yang was first created in Chinese culture. Ban Zhao's "women's commandments" said: "Yin and yang are different, men and women have different behaviors. The masculine is the virtue, the Yin can be soft, the strong is the most valuable for the male, and the weak is the beauty for the female. " In order to maintain the order of men's society, women use men's standards to cater to men's needs in an almost servile way of self-discipline. The purpose of women's training is to warn women to better adapt to men's society (Li Yinhe, 2018).

In the traditional Chinese ethical system, women's self-values are submerged in family affairs. Women regard their husbands and children as their inborn vocations, and women themselves regard "wife is honored by husband, mother is precious by son". As the highest realization of self-worth, self-consciousness is weak, and self-worth cannot be reflected.

With the birth of New China, Chinese women ushered in opportunities for their own liberation and development. For thousands of years, in feudal society, the concept of the distinction between men and women and the inferiority of men and women has been deeply rooted. The influence of this gender essentialism cannot be eliminated within a short period of time. The traditional gender concept of "male dominates female follower" has not been fundamentally challenged. To a large extent, women's own value is still measured by means of the status and value of husband and son.

The Japanese have extremely strict regulations on order and hierarchy. Different people in society or different countries in the world should have their own positions. The people below the pyramid should not challenge higher-ranking figures, and their behavior must comply with appropriate established etiquette or rules. Therefore, Japanese people are straightforward in their behavior, and the rules are not chaotic. They are especially concerned about what others think of themselves, especially when they are in a crowd. They must quickly adapt and integrate into the mainstream atmosphere of the audience to guide their behavior language mode (Ruth Benedict, 2020).

In Japanese history, women have always had a high social status until the formation of the samurai society. However, the emergence of private ownership requires women to maintain chastity and give birth to pure and pure property heirs for their husbands. With the development of productivity, women are gradually excluded from productive labor, which has led to a fundamental change in the status of women. A male-centered private ownership society deprived women of their political participation rights, economic independence, cultural education, and marriage autonomy. Today's Japanese society is still a patriarchal society. Men occupies a core position in society and the family. Women must absolutely obey men. Even though the social status of women is rapidly improving, the current Japanese society still follows the patriarchal culture (Li Yinhe, 2018).

Japanese traditional women have always been inseparable from the word "Yamato nadeshiko," which refers to women who are quiet and reserved, gentle and considerate and have noble virtue temperament. For a time, it was regarded as a symbol of the traditional Japanese women who advocated patriarchal ideology, obeyed three obediences and four virtues, and taught their husband and son.

In the traditional gender norms of "men are superior to women" and "men are strong and women are weak", men and women have completely different responsibilities and roles in marriage and family. Under the traditional gender norms, the family's social capital is mainly generated through the husband's social activities and social network. The family's social status depends on the male's career achievements, the wife's social status depends on the husband's generation, and the family's role playing appears. Complementary characteristics (Tai Lin, Li Junfeng, 2002).

In modern times, with the changes in society and family life, the ideal woman is no longer a good wife who is ignorant and ignorant and only knows to obey her husband, but a "good wife and virtuous mother" who has knowledge and respect for women. With the popularization of education, a large number of "new women" have emerged in pursuit of freedom. Masaru Nakamura pointed out that "children's mental skills are roughly similar to their mothers, and even their later hobbies and habits are more like mothers. The people must change their moods and customs to enter the enlightened realm. They must create kind mothers. Only a perfect mother can have a perfect one. "Children", and "the kind mother must teach women (Yuzawa Yasuhiko, 1976)." In the eyes of Enlightenment thinkers, good wives and virtuous mothers are not women who are dominated by men and subject to the norms of Confucian feminism, but wives with equal personality with their husbands and mothers who are able to educate their children like those in Western Europe.

With the continuous improvement of women's status, people pay more and more attention to the status and image of women in movies. The image changes of women in video works not only deeply reflect historical changes and the development of family civilization, but also reflect the changes in women's social status. Chinese and Japanese women are a group of mixed images that have both traditional factors and contemporary awareness. From the analysis of their images, we can see the image characteristics of Chinese and Japanese women and the evolution of their self-awareness.

This article is based on text analysis. This article takes the images of Chinese and Japanese women in Ang Lee and Hirokazu Koreeda's films as the research object, selects representative film cases for targeted analysis, and strives to examine China and Japan from the development of Chinese and Japanese culture and society. The ecological pattern of female image creation, in-depth exploration of the cultural connotation behind the female images in Ang Lee and Hirokazu Koreeda's family-themed movies, and discussing the interactive relationship between female images and the real society, causing more film and television creators and researchers to pay more attention to female images. More attention and thinking will promote the generation of a film and television discourse system for gender equality dialogue.

Chinese and Japanese family movies

Family film is a film with the theme of society and family ethics. It depicts the process of deconstruction, transmutation and reconstruction of family members' functions and ethical relations through real and delicate stories, and arouses public attention and recognition with its strong secularity and popularity (Xu Nanming, Fu Lan, 2015). Taking the family as the basic object of expression, through the various events in the family, this paper discusses the ethical and moral problems such as love, marriage, filial piety and so on. Through the ethics and morality of individual family, it reflects the moral value of the national society, and causes the public to think about the society and the individual family view.

Because they coexist in the Confucian cultural circle, Japan and China have always attached great importance to ethics and morality. With Confucian ethics as the conceptual framework and patriarchal blood relationship as the social support, they guide people's moral values and daily behavior norms. Because of China's strong and deep-rooted cultural tradition of ethics, it pays great attention to the family, and the expression of family ethics has always been a traditional theme in Chinese and Japanese movies.

The evolution of women's "other" status in films

In traditional films, male creators are keen on portraying angelic women in their works. Angel women are often beautiful, loyal, docile and full of sacrifice spirit. This expresses the expectation imagination of male visual threshold to female. Mothers are regarded as "angels in the family". They are "good mothers" wrapped by "traditional virtues", such as forbearance, diligence, selflessness and dedication. They are the carriers of men's emotion and desire expression, and the "object" to realize men's aesthetic desire.

The female roles in traditional films are the lovers, mothers, wives and daughters of male roles attached to male roles. The male role is in the absolute dominant role, and he can decide which kind of female role should be given as a foil. In traditional films, women are only in the perspective of "onlookers" or "being appreciated" in the whole plot laying and unfolding. When people limit the role of women with the virtues of sacrifice, dedication and selflessness, women fall into the siege of male chauvinism and become the "other" forever.

With the advent of the new century, women's roles are no longer just seen as objects, nor as the "other" mentioned by Beauvoir in the second sex. "She is a subordinate, a minor against the main. Women's other consciousness is manifested in their attachment to men (Simone de Beauvoir, 1949). After stepping into the modern development of the film industry, after the continuous improvement of women's status and the same social status as men, the film industry has gradually got rid of the portrayal of female stereotypes. In the film, women's emotional expression has become an important theme in the film.

In the films directed by Ang Lee and Hirokazu Koreeda, we can see that women and men are no longer dependent, and women are no longer in the perspective of "onlookers" or "being appreciated". Although there are compromises under the male power, their personality is independent. Women come out from the "other" status in the "male perspective" and become the main body in the "female perspective", and exist equally with men.

The female images in Ang Lee and Hirokazu Koreeda 's films

Forbearance and firmness

In Ang Lee's film " wedding banquet " , Gao Weitong's mother is a typical image of a good wife and a good mother. When she found out that the marriage between her son and his daughter-in-law was only a contractual marriage. Her son was gay. In order to satisfy Gao's parents' desire to let him have a family, Weiwei married Gao Wei in order to get a Permanent Resident Card in the United States. But Gao's mother didn't force her son to obey her will. She had to accept all this and choose to forgive. Like other Chinese and Japanese mothers, Gao Weitong's mother has become the patron saint of the family, defending the integrity of the family and taking responsibility with her own actions. When personal freedom and happiness conflict with family responsibilities, they tend to choose family and sacrifice themselves.



Figure 1: wedding banquet

There is another character Weiwei in " wedding banquet ". Weiwei is a girl who has a sense of self independence and yearns for freedom and personal ideal. However, he was alone in the United States, because she could not live in the United States for a long time without a green card. In order to survive in the United States, Weiwei accepted Gao Weitong's suggestion and married him in a fake way. When she found

out that she was pregnant, she was determined to kill her baby for the future. However, Gao Wei and his parents begged, she finally left the child. In the end, everyone seemed happy, but Wei Wei became the biggest victim. Her emotional appeal has never been noticed. Under the strong traditional culture and male discourse, there is a woman's sorrow.

In the movie, "After the storm" by Hirokazu Koreeda, on the night of the typhoon, the divorced son and daughter-in-law had to live at home with their grandson. The mother happily took out the soup she had kept in the refrigerator and cooked a pot of noodles. The son was very happy and said that the dishes his mother cooked were delicious "Your father liked it when he was alive, so I kept a lot of it in the fridge." The son stopped the chopsticks in his hand and said, "isn't it half a year?" Mother side from the pot to get noodles, while turning back at her son: "you still mean this, anyway, has eaten into the stomach." From their mother and son's dialogue, we can see their mother's tenacious and humorous temperament and her open-minded attitude against the depression of life.



Figure 2: After the storm

The awakening of self consciousness

Minko is a traditional Japanese mother in the film "still walking ". Her life is a full-time housewife. In the family relationship, Minzi not only undertakes the corresponding responsibility, but also shows a strong self-consciousness and discourse power. In family dinners, mother Minzi is busy and runs the family, but her husband seems to be of little help. When Minzi chats with her daughter and son-in-law, her husband becomes a "marginal person" and can't get into the conversation. It can be seen that at home, the wife often has the right to make decisions and speak on the basis of her ability and understanding of family members. Minzi not only inherits some good qualities of traditional women, but also shows different personality characteristics from traditional women, subverting the stereotype of traditional women in a weak position in the family.

In addition to the pain of her eldest son's death, the mother kept silent about her husband's affair many years ago. After dinner, the family listened to the record. The song in the record is exactly the music that was playing in the mistress's room when Minzi found her husband cheating years ago. While doing the work in her hand, Minzi inadvertently tells the story of her husband cheating years ago. Facing the fact

that her husband has a "third party", Minzi is not as vulnerable as the traditional female role. From the beginning to the end, she was very calm and calm, and seemed so indifferent. She did not yield to fate, but expressed her resistance to the real society in her own way.

The arrogance and resistance under patriarchy

For a long time, men have controlled all the logic of film production and operation, satisfying their own needs and desires through the "peep" and "gaze" of film mirroring, regardless of the appeal and resistance of women. Women who are negatively affected by patriarchy and husband's power urgently need a cathartic outlet. The unequal learning accumulated over a long period of time does not help magnify women's desire to resist patriarchy. Women began to resist, subverting the fixed social rules and power relations.

In Ang Lee's films, the daughters appear in images that are not controlled by the family and have a sense of rebellion. They decide for themselves emotionally and professionally. If they do not get the permission of the family emotionally, they will choose to leave. In order to escape the fettered family under the control of the power. The female characters in the film have a sense of freedom bred from the suppression of patriarchy and husband's power, breaking through all kinds of self-restraints, other people's restraints, and social restraints to complete self-liberation. In Lee's film world, the beauty of female images starts from within the women. With the sure beauty of independence and freedom, women are no longer just objects of "gaze". Like men, they have equal and independent right to choose and think.

In " EAT MAN DRINK WOMAN", the three daughters of the Zhu's family, under the "contemporarity" of contemporary society, the orientation of the concept of marriage and love is autonomy and enlightenment. Jiazhen is a person who is constrained by traditional culture, but is in a contradiction between modern and traditional ethical concepts. She wears a veil of traditional ethical concepts and bears the self-warning of her father's traditional ethics. In fact, she desires to be free from it. . It wasn't until the appearance of the physical education teacher Zhou Mingdao that she broke free from the shackles of traditional ethics. She declared her separation from her native family by means of flash marriage, and also declared the collapse of the patriarchal family that Lao Zhu had worked so hard to maintain for many years. The second daughter, Jia Qian, bought her single apartment and planned to move away from the family's constraints. In the depths of Western thinking, marriage and sex are the products of two levels. She and her ex-boyfriend broke off the relationship, but still maintain the sexual relationship.

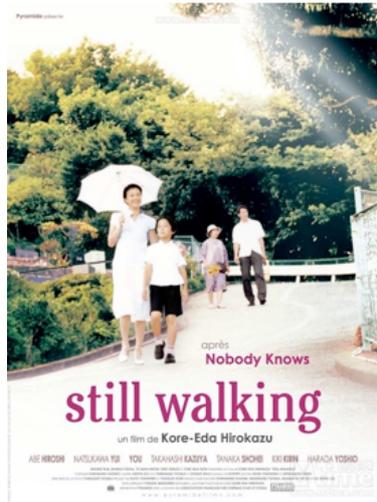


Figure 3: still walking

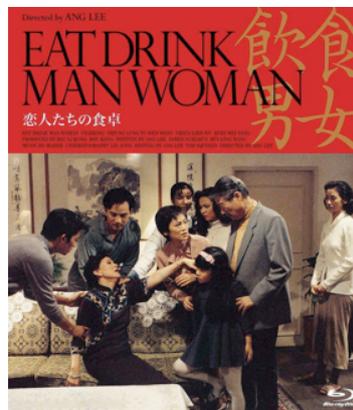


Figure 4: EAT MAN DRINK WOMAN

The third daughter, Jianing, grew up in the consciousness of the "new generation" since she was a child. Love is no longer a mutual attraction between men and women, but an active counterattack. Regardless of friendship, she robbed each other's boyfriend and had children. In a family dinner, he announced that he was unmarried and pregnant. Jianing is one of the most thorough breakthroughs from traditional family culture. She advocates freedom and has a personal mind and will. All imprisonment becomes an object that can be overridden and resisted. The etiquette constraints of five thousand years of Chinese culture have put many modern urbanites under different pressures, but Chinese women choose to break through the shackles of traditional patriarchy and patriarchy and begin to seek their own freedom and happiness. Jianing's awakening of consciousness is a direct expression of women's will to dominate their own destiny, seeking the beauty of balance and independence between the two sexes, quickly transcending superficial expressions, and interrogating deep spiritual pursuits.

Independence, self

In "still walking", Yukari brings her ten-year-old son and Yoshita to form a new family. Wearing a white professional shirt in the play appears very capable. When the parents-in-law talked about the former eldest daughter-in-law, the words "drag oil bottle (children from the preceding marriage)" between the words inadvertently hurt

Yukari. When the family was embarrassed and at a loss, Yukari was the first to laugh at herself. Because of the early death of her ex-husband, Yukari raised her son alone and life was very difficult. In the hard days, Yukari has long developed an independent and tough character.

Weiwei in " Wedding Banquet" emphasizes personality and economic independence, does not rely on men, but focuses on self-awareness and emotions. After the wedding banquet, Weiwei unexpectedly discovered that she was pregnant. When she realized that her efforts could not change Weitong's homosexuality, she insisted on destroying the child. The mother-in-law begged Weiwei to keep the child. The mother-in-law advised her: "Women are still the most important family and children, aren't they?" Wei Wei replied, "Not necessarily." From their dialogue, we can see that Weiwei does not accept that the female body is a tool for "passing on from generation to generation" in the family, but emphasizes the autonomous status of women. She pays more attention to her own feelings and her own development, and wins her dignity by pursuing her own independence.

Discussion

In Ang Lee's films, besides the complete absence and departure of patriarchy, the image of father in the films is more represented by the dim and lost aura of patriarchy. With the disintegration of the traditional patriarchal system, women have assumed the family responsibilities that were assumed by men in the original society. The balance of power structure began to tilt towards women, and the image of women became more powerful and had more discourse power. The positioning of male and female roles in the family has changed. In Ang Lee's family films, there are the image of a middle-aged wife who protects the family and endures everywhere; there is an image of an old woman who is hard to enjoy the happiness of her family and sacrifice for the next generation; at the same time, Ang Lee also portrays the image of young women fighting for love and freedom.

Weiwei in wedding banquet has the characteristics of Chinese women's gentleness, filial piety and human feelings, as well as the characteristics of Western women's independence and self. However, Wei Wei's choice to give up his dream life temporarily and continue his descendants for Gao family reflects that Ang Lee, the creator of the film, created Wei Wei's female image from the male perspective under the influence of patriarchal culture.

In " EAT MAN DRINK WOMAN", it can be seen from the image of Jianing that the image of this character has completely faded away from the traditional Chinese thought of "from the father at home, from the husband after marriage". Jianing is out of the shackles of the feudal family system, she can abandon the family for love. In Ang Lee's films, the new generation of young women tend to have a weaker sense of family responsibility than the older generation. They pay more attention to personal emotional experience and freedom.

In Ang Lee's films, middle-aged women put responsibility and family above everything else. What they do is to protect their families and fulfill their responsibilities. Their character is often strong and tolerant, the responsibility of the family fetters them, and the family causes their pain. Some female characters in Ang

Lee's films express themselves in the process of resisting patriarchy and pursuing independent marriage. They are an important means to break the "Marginalization" and strive for social identity.

In Hirokazu Koreeda's films, the role of "mother" becomes the most important link in the family due to the father's absence or absence. Compared with women, the men in shizhiyuhe's movies always seem weak and incompetent. In the movie "After the storm", although the mother often criticizes her husband and son, she is still proud of her son. The composition written by her son as a child is carefully kept by her mother. However, we can also see the director's persistent infatuation with Madonna motherhood. Although the mother has been criticizing her son, she is still proud of her son. The image of women in Shi zhiyuhe's films is still influenced by the patriarchal society, the life of "mother" is always closely intertwined with her husband, son and other family members. Hirokazu Koreeda's perspective as a "son" does not reach the level of mother's appeal desire, soul and spirit.

Conclusion

Director Ang Lee and director Hirokazu Koreeda have created female images with different personality characteristics, showing their independent, strong and optimistic spirit. Through their external characteristics and identity characteristics, they show their amazing strength in conflicts with family and society. They gradually mature and independent consciousness guides themselves to get rid of the shackles of the family, seek themselves, and find their place in society.

Both of these directors showed the audience the survival and ethical dilemma of modern Chinese and Japanese women in the context of social, cultural and ethical changes with calm eyes, objective perspectives, and documentary techniques. Observing the female images in the film works of Hirokazu Koreeda and Ang Lee has important research significance for us to understand the living conditions of women in the social transformation period; their appearance creates a brand-new aesthetic experience for movie audiences.

In the real society, the relationship between men and women is moving towards equality, the power relationship of gender has changed, the order of social gender roles has also been shaken, and the separation of female media images from the world of male subjects has become inevitable. However, from the analysis of several films, it is found that Chinese and Japanese women still have not escaped the shackles of patriarchy. If there is pressure from the family, women may still return to the family. In the process of film and television creation in the future, it is necessary to continuously deconstruct the patriarchal consciousness and subvert the central idea of patriarchal ideology, so that the image of women can get rid of the status of "others". The existing predicaments and their courage and difficulty in pursuing independent personality are effectively expressed. Finally, in the process of creating and appreciating films and TV dramas, creators and audiences should use a broader perspective of both sexes to observe the fate of women, and strive to build a harmonious relationship between the sexes on the basis of acknowledging the differences between the sexes.

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