

The Evolution of Hui'an Women's Image in Chinese Cinema

Maner Lin

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Arunee Sriruksa

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Papitchaya Teawkul

Faculty of Agriculture, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

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Corresponding Author:	Maner Lin
E-mail Address:	maner.l@kkumail.com

Abstract

Hui'an women are a special ethnic group of the Han nationality living in four towns in the east of Hui'an, Quanzhou, Fujian. This paper uses textual analysis to study the evolution of the image of Hui'an women in Chinese cinema from a feminist perspective, and explores the changes in the social status and female consciousness of Hui'an women in different historical contexts. The image of Hui'an women in films have undergone four stages of evolution: before the founding of New China (1949), the Great Leap Forward period (1958-1960), the early stage of reform and opening up (1980s), the 21st century. In the first stage, the tragic image of Hui'an women in feudal society implies the budding of female consciousness; In the second stage, the game between national ideology and traditional gender culture has shaped the image of "Iron Lady" of Hui'an women; In the third stage, the conflict between closed society and modern civilization has shaped the image of women who strongly oppose patriarchal discourse; In the fourth stage, the image of Hui'an women includes independent women who break traditional gender roles and power structures, pursue self-worth, as well as women who have not yet established new values in the transition between modern and traditional society. The evolution of the image of Hui'an women in films reflects the improvement of their social status and the process of female consciousness from germination, development, to sublimation. At the same time, it exposes the dilemma faced by Hui'an women in different historical contexts. This study contributes to a reflection on the process of liberation and development of marginalized female groups from the perspectives of society, culture, and gender.

Keywords: Hui'an women, Female image, Chinese cinema, Gender representation, Social change

Introduction

Women's studies, as an interdisciplinary academic field, is dedicated to exploring the root causes of gender inequality and the roles and contributions of women in social, cultural, and historical processes (Butler, J., 1990). In the context of globalization, the topics of women's studies are becoming increasingly diverse, covering many aspects from the awakening of female consciousness to the complexity of gender construction. The shaping and interpretation of female images is not only an important theme in literary, artistic, and film forms, but also reflects the evolution of gender consciousness in different social and cultural backgrounds. As a popular cultural product, movies can not only reproduce existing gender norms in society, but also serve as important tools for deconstructing and reflecting on gender concepts. The presentation of female images in movies has become an important topic in gender and film studies due to its ability to reveal the complex relationship between gender culture and social consciousness.

In Chinese cinema, the portrayal of female characters has gone through different historical stages, reflecting the changes in social values. From the traditional maternal image of the early 20th century to the independent pursuit of modern urban women, researchers have extensively explored the portrayal of women in Chinese cinema. For example, Geng, M., and Zuo, Y. (2004) analyzed the multiple identities and female consciousness conveyed by female characters from different perspectives in Chinese women's films. Huang, S. (2015) pointed out that after the founding of the People's Republic of China, female images in Chinese films often became ideological projections and carried social expectations of gender roles. However, these studies mostly focus on female characters in mainstream narratives, such as revolutionary women, urban professional women, or traditional housewives, with insufficient attention to the visual representation and attention of marginalized female groups in local cultures. As a special ethnic group of the Han ethnic group, Hui'an women possess both mainstream and regional cultural characteristics. However, systematic academic research on female images in Hui'an women themed films is still lacking.

Hui'an women refer to women born and living in four towns (Chongwu, Jingfeng, Shanxia, Xiaozuo) in the east of Hui'an County, Quanzhou City, Fujian Province. They are a special ethnic group of Han nationality. Han nationality, the inheritor of Huaxia nationality, is the main body of Chinese nation. The special ethnic group of the Han nationality refers to the ethnic group of the Han nationality, which is far away from the main area of the Han nationality, has a relatively small population, and retains both the cultural characteristics of the Han nationality and its own cultural characteristics in terms of living habits and customs. In earlier days, people born and living in the east of Hui'an are known as the Huidong ethnic group. The eastern region of Hui'an is geographically remote and barren, surrounded by the sea on three

sides. In the past, most men in Hui'an went fishing on the sea or left their hometown to make money all year round and have been assimilated by the Han people earlier. The unique culture of Huidong ethnic group is mainly reflected in Hui'an women who have remained in a closed environment for a long time. Today, the "Huidong ethnic group" is no longer mentioned. Most people regard "Hui'an women" as a special ethnic group of the Han nationality, and even call them "the 57th minority in China" (Zhang, G. L., 2015).

The most representative unique culture of Hui'an women is their costume, life-style and marriage custom. Hui'an women's costume is one of the first batch of intangible cultural heritage in China. The life-style of Hui'an women is different from the traditional division of labor between men and women. Due to the special geographical environment, Hui'an women undertake most of the physical labor on the land. When men leave hometown to make a living or go fishing at sea, Hui'an women are the main force in building their hometown. As for marriage customs, the undesirable customs of child marriage and early marriage and the strange custom of "long-living in parents' home" in the past brought Hui'an women many misfortunes in history.

In 1978, China's reform and opening up promoted the prosperity and development of culture and art. Hui'an women's unique culture attracted a large number of literary and artistic creators in China, including painters, photographers, writers, sculptors, and film directors (Zhang, G. L., 2015). As a popular cultural product, movies are one of the important means of recording, interpreting, and disseminating heterogeneous cultures. Up to now, there have been six films focusing on the unique culture of Hui'an women: *The Village of Widows* (1989), *The Twin Bracelets* (1991), *At First Glance to Recall* (2015), *The Legend of Eight Women* (2019), *Haimen Depths* (2019), *Koali & Rice* (2020). The style of the films includes historical film, feature film and documentary.

In film narratives, female images can be a projection of the ideology of female groups, or a typical profile of complex social, cultural, and contemporary issues (Liu, M, Q., 2001). The female images in Hui'an women's films bear special traces of social culture and gender norms. It showcases the survival and development status of a special group of women in different historical context. This paper will study the image of Hui'an women in films from a feminist perspective. Feminism believes that sex is biological, while gender is cultural, and special attention should be paid to various sociocultural factors related to gender differences. Distinguishing the two makes it easier for people to recognize the root causes of women's oppression. As for female consciousness, it is the core discourse in feminist theory, referring to women's pursuit of self liberation, as well as their awareness of affirming and realizing their self-worth (Du, J., 1996). The research objective of this paper is to study the evolution of the image of Hui'an women from a feminist perspective in six Hui'an women's films, including *The Village of Widows*, *The Twin Bracelets*, *At First Glance to Recall*, *Legend of the Eight Women*, *Haimen Depths*, and *Koali & Rice*. Based on the different historical

backgrounds presented in six films, four historical stages are divided, and textual analysis and semiotic analysis are used to analyze the film images of Hui'an women in different time periods. Through the characteristics, behaviors, and values of Hui'an women at different times in the film, this paper will explore the changes in their social roles and the development of female consciousness, as well as how these changes are interconnected with the transformation of social culture and ideology. The expected impact of this study is to provide readers with an important reference perspective for a deeper understanding of the role and status of Hui'an women in social change, filling the research gap in this field and helping people reflect on the liberation and development process of marginalized female groups from social, cultural, and gender perspectives.



Figure 1 The Village of Widows
Source: Wang, J. (1989)



Figure 2 The Twin Bracelets
Source: Huang, Y. S. (1991)



Figure 3 At First Glance, to Recall
Source: Wang, Q. (2015)



Figure 4 Haimen Depths
Source: Li, Y. C. (2019)



Figure 5 The Legend of Eight Women

Source: Wang, J. D. (2019)



Figure 6 Koali & Rice

Source: Ye, Q. (2020)

The Evolution of the Image of Hui'an Women in Films

From a historical timeline perspective, the image of the Hui'an woman in films has undergone four stages of evolution.

1. Before the founding of New China (1949)

The Village of Widows shows the different destinies of three sisters in Hui'an on the eve of the founding of New China in 1949. In the village where they live, there is an ancestral motto: after marriage, women are not allowed to stay in their husband's house until they have children. In a year, only on Tomb Sweeping Day, Mid-Autumn Festival and New Year's Eve can the wife return to her husband's home for reunion, but she must enter his home after dark and leave before dawn. Women who have been married within three years cannot conceive. But if they cannot conceive soon after three years, they will be considered useless and ridiculed by others. This marriage custom is called "long-living in parents' home."

In the face of such absurd marriage customs, the three sisters have different attitudes. After many years of infertility after marriage, Ating lived in the shadow of being ridiculed and became accustomed to her husband's scolding and mother-in-law's complaints. Aduo has been married for three years and hasn't seen her husband. After discovering that she had fallen in love with a kind man who helped her, she decided to muster the courage to divorce her husband. Coincidentally, the "kind man" is her husband. Alai, who grew up in another city since childhood, is not a traditional Hui'an woman. When she first returned to Hui'an, she didn't even want to wear traditional Hui'an women's dress. Hui'an women usually wrap their heads in floral scarves and wear tops with exposed navels. This kind of attire is known as the "feudal head, democratic belly". But the main reason for this so-called "democracy" is that such clothing is convenient for women to work by the seaside. Fortunately, Alai's husband is the person she loves. When Ating and Aduo warned her not to have sex with her husband within three years of marriage, she was very contemptuous. Her husband refused to have sex with her because he was worried about her reputation, but she believed it was her right.

The values of Ating and Aduo are based on the precepts of their ancestors. They believe that obeying the precepts of their ancestors is honor and obligation. Although Aduo ultimately made a bold and reckless divorce decision, she felt extreme torture and guilt. Unlike them, Alai dared to challenge tradition and became pregnant within three years of marriage. The villagers believe that women who violate ancestral regulations should jump into the sea and commit suicide. Because her husband was conscripted by the Kuomintang, Alai and her child were fortunate enough to survive, but she could only wait day and night at the beach for her husband who would not come back. Ating and Aduo's husband were also conscripted into the military. Ating, who worships witchcraft, believes that her husband wants her to go to the underworld to give birth to a child for him and end her life in the sea. After learning that her husband was the "stranger" she had fallen in love with, Aduo didn't even have time to meet him for the last time. With a sorrowful heart, she decided to spend the rest of her life taking care of her husband's mother. At the end of the film, Alai stood by the seaside holding her child and looking into the distance. The surging seawater seems to foreshadow the insignificance and unpredictability of human fate.

The film presents two images of Hui'an women. One is women who take it upon themselves to follow the teachings of their ancestors and are had no right to speak under the norms of patriarchal society. Under the rules of suppressing human nature, Ating pinned her hopes on her husband, her imaginary child, and even on witchcraft, but she never thought of herself. Another type is Hui'an women whose female consciousness is beginning to sprout. For Aduo, although traditional norms were still deeply ingrained in her heart and her divorce ideas could not have been successful at the time, her mother-in-law didn't even know what "divorce" was. But her self-awareness was indeed awakened after encountering love, even for a moment. As for Alai, she is more like an outsider, and her education is incompatible with the entire village and traditional values. She believes that women have the right to pursue what they want, which is a manifestation of her self-awareness. Although Alai brought some new ideas from the outside world, it was no different from a mayfly shaking a tree in Hui'an at that time and could not be understood by people. The entire film is almost presented in dim tones, creating an oppressive and desperate atmosphere, hinting at the survival predicament of Hui'an women.

During the Republic of China period, with the rise of the bourgeois political movement and the women's liberation movement, the self-awareness of Chinese women began to awaken. Some advanced women began to advocate for gender equality in economy, politics, culture, and other aspects to achieve women's self-worth (Ding, W. P., 1991). But in Hui'an, where the geographical environment was closed and feudal consciousness was deeply rooted, women at that time were difficult to be influenced by new external trends and still had a low status. And the wars during this period undoubtedly added insult to injury to the lives of Hui'an women. Therefore, adhering to traditional beliefs and having a tragic fate are

typical characteristics of the image of Hui'an women at this stage. But behind their tragic images, there emerged the sprouting of female consciousness.

2. The Great Leap Forward period (1958-1960)

The Great Leap Forward refers to the movement launched by the Communist Party of China in 1958 to try to develop industrial and agricultural production at a high speed. The Legend of Eight Women tells the story of eight young women in their twenties on the Liancheng Peninsula of Hui'an in 1958, who, with the support and encouragement of the local party branch, crossed the sea for more than ten miles in a solitary boat to explore and produce on the deserted Dazhu Island.

In the film, the eight Hui'an female militiamen represented by Zhou Yaxi received the task of reclaiming land from the production team. At first, not everyone readily accepted. Some of them worry about the difficulty of the task, while others worry that the elderly and children at home are not taken care of. After a fierce ideological struggle, in order to solve the shortage of food, they disregarded the opposition of their families and boarded a boat heading for Dazhu Island. Under extremely simple conditions of production tools and daily necessities, they lived in caves, reclaimed farmland, dug wells, planted fruit trees... When many days of hard work have yielded no results, some of them have thought of giving up. But with the mutual encouragement of their companions, no one became a deserter. With their spirit of fearing hardship and dedication, they launched a new revolution with nature, and in just over 20 days, they cultivated and reorganized 33 acres of farmland, laying a solid foundation for Hui'an to successfully pass the three years of difficult times.

The laboring female image in The Legend of Eight Women are a typical representative of the female image in Hui'an during the Great Leap Forward period. This change can be seen in the external appearance of Hui'an women. In the movie, the attire of Hui'an women is more simplified compared to traditional clothing, with the most obvious change in head decoration: the complex "Jinzai" (decorated and wrapped around the head with headwear and headscarf) is simplified into a simpler and shorter headscarf. The appearance changes facilitated for the convenience of labor have strengthened the image of Hui'an women as laborers. The industrious nature of Hui'an women was infinitely amplified during this special period. They are strong, brave, not afraid of hardship and difficulties, and willing to dedicate themselves to the people. Engels said, "The first prerequisite for women's liberation is for all women to return to public labor." (Marx, K. & Engels, F., 1972) The eight Hui'an women in the movie step out of their family space, explore deserted

islands and benefit the people. They liberate themselves from traditional values and subvert the traditional concept of male superiority, and find their own value through social construction. This is a manifestation of the improvement of the status of women in Hui'an and the further development of women's awareness.

However, the driving force behind this change is not spontaneous. At the beginning of the film, the vast majority of Hui'an women who received tasks were hesitant or even confused. The changes in the image of Hui'an women during this period are actually the externalization of the game between national politics and traditional gender culture. The strong guidance of national policies led to a large number of Hui'an women stepping out of family space and participating in local construction during this period. The construction of the Hui'an Women's Reservoir, which began in 1958, is another typical example. It is from this period that the spirit of diligence has become a landmark symbol of Hui'an women in the eyes of the world (Yang, Q. F. & Wang, W. W., 2011). As the political slogan of "serving the people" is repeatedly emphasized in the film, the guidance of national political ideology is the driving force behind the image of the "Iron Lady" of Hui'an women and the development of women's self-consciousness.

3. The Early Stage of Reform and Opening up (1980s)

The story of *The Twin Bracelets* took place in the 1980s. The heroine Huihua, like Alai, is a typical "rebel". She often refutes her mother's preaching about "what a woman should be like". But unlike Alai, Huihua is a native Hui'an woman. Huihua has witnessed the unfortunate marriage of women around her since she was young, including her sister-in-law who died of domestic violence by her brother, and developed a deep fear of the opposite sex and marriage. She unconsciously poured her emotions into her best friend Xiugu. When she confided her emotions to Xiugu, Xiugu was also infected by her. They swore before Mazu not to marry, but to be "sister couples." But later, Xiugu easily succumbed to the family's demands for her marriage. In a fit of anger, Huihua also agreed to marry the man arranged by her family. But Huihua soon found out that her husband was a scum who used women as playthings. Huihua decisively decided to divorce, but her husband threatened her with the safety of her family. At this point, the news that Xiu Gu and her husband were leaving Hui'an became the last straw that crushed Hui Hua, who had fallen into a desperate situation. She even had a crazy idea of killing Xiugu and committing suicide. Finally, after learning that Xiu Gu was pregnant, Hui Hua walked to the sea alone, ending her young life.

The reform and opening up in 1978 injected vitality into the liberation of Chinese women (Liu, J. H., 1993). But just as tourists to Hui'an in the film were surprised by the local experience, it is difficult to believe that there was such an unequal marriage custom and gender relations in China in the 1980s. But we can see the further development of female consciousness from Huihua. The new ideology and culture brought

about by the reform and opening up have had a great impact on her. She filled the room with posters of her favorite stars, yearned for a mutually respectful marriage in love movies, and resisted the arranged marriage by her parents. The movie uses multiple camera language and symbolic metaphors to suggest the awakening of Huihua's self-awareness, such as the director's close-up of Huihua throwing off her headdress, unbuttoning her shirt and chest while taking a bath. Through this set of shots, it metaphorically represents the dual constraints of traditional gender systems on women's bodies, spirits, and also implies Huihua's awakening to control her own bodily rights. The symbol image of mirrors appears multiple times in the film, and several important paragraphs highlight the role of mirrors in both the textual and real-life aspects of the film. In the film, there are multiple scenes of Huihua bathing and looking in the mirror. Faced with her own body in the mirror, Huihua passionately kisses herself in the mirror, indicating that she has truly "seen" the beautiful and charming body in the mirror and truly wants to pursue her "ideal self"; At the end of the movie, before Huihua decided to commit suicide, she also gazed at herself in the mirror for a long time, lovingly caressing her body. The mirror stage is the mother of all identity processes, and the mirror serves as a model for describing the intersubjectivity of imagination (Lacan, J., 2006). The cognitive awakening of women towards their bodies is not only about physiological experiences, but also about realizing through their bodies that their gender identity can be expressed and shaped (Butler, J., 1990). Although *The Twin Bracelet* has been labeled as a homosexual film by people, the relationship between Huihua and Xiugu is not simply "homosexual", but rather the emotional alienation resulting from the extreme evolution of the disadvantaged women's alliance. Behind this special affection is women's resistance to patriarchal society.

In addition to Huihua, the image of Xiugu is also thought-provoking. Xiugu is a typical female image swaying between traditional values and self value pursuit in the context of an era where the new and the old alternate. Fortunately, Xiugu married a good man who respected her. However, the fate of a woman is entirely determined by the kind of man she marries, which in itself is also unfortunate. Xiugu's traditional cultural psychology of suppressing herself enabled her to survive, while Huihua's pursuit of human nature and freedom led her to be buried in the ocean. This role shaping reinforces the conflict between closed society and modern civilization.

There is another female character similar to Huihua in the movie. A Hui'an woman was discovered secretly meeting her husband within three years of marriage, and the villagers encouraged her husband to kill the "slut". When she saw her husband take off his belt and prepare to hit her, she threw herself at the stake on the roadside, with spikes piercing through her body. She couldn't figure out what she had done wrong and accused her grief, anger, and despair through death. In the author's opinion, although the approach is negative, it is also a manifestation of female consciousness, a rebellion of women against the image expected by society.

Although *The Double Bracelet* is a tragic movie, people can still see the development of self-awareness among Hui'an women during this period in the film. After the period of national construction, the strong collision and contradiction between the resurgence of traditional gender culture and the new concepts brought about by reform and opening up have intensified the resistance of Hui'an women in traditional society to patriarchal discourse, further igniting the spark of self-awareness.

4. The 21st Century

There are three films that reflect the lives and changes of Hui'an women in the 21st century: *At First Glance to Recall*, *Haimen Depths*, *Koali & Rice*. The image of Hui'an women in these three films have both similarities and differences.

The heroine of *At First Glance to Recall*, Yuqing, lost her father in a shipwreck when she was a child. With her own efforts, she entered the university and returned to her hometown to teach after graduation. Encountering and falling in love with the sculptor Haifeng has made her life more colorful. When Yuqing heard that Haifeng was about to go to sea with her brother in debt to do business, the shadow of losing her father as a child made her panic and had a fierce argument with Haifeng. In the end, she chose to respect her lover's choice and work together in their respective fields of work. Through the movie, the audience can see Yuqing grow into an independent and strong woman through her own efforts.

Mingyue in *Haimen Depths* is the spokesperson for the Hui'an women's cultural brand, and the operator of Hui'an women's folk custom inn. In order to promote Hui'an women's folk culture, she has gone through a difficult entrepreneurial path. When her lover Mai Ye was in pain due to discovering the truth of the family tragedy caused by the old marriage customs, her kindness and strength deeply influenced him, and helped him complete the repair of the pain and self redemption. Mingyue is very different from the image of Hui'an woman in Mai Ye's childhood memories 20 years ago. Like Yuqing, they are no longer male appendages. They no longer wear traditional clothing, have higher levels of education, more career choices and clear life goals, and have their own voice in gender relationships. It can be seen that the female status and subject consciousness of Hui'an women have greatly improved in the 21st century. However, the female characters in these two films did not break away from the traditional gender narrative mode, conveying more of an idealized new generation of Hui'an female characters.

Different from previous Hui'an women's films, *Koali & Rice* tells the story of an elderly Hui'an woman. After her son grew up and became a family, widow Lin Xiumei gradually felt that she was no longer needed and confused about the significance of living. The pursuit of Xiumei by A Shuishi, an old man from the same village has given her a second vision of marriage. However, the gossip of the people around her made her ultimately lack the courage to break through the secular prejudices. After the death of her only good friend, Qing'e, Xiumei's self-awareness, which had been dusted with old ideas, was finally awakened at the end of

her life. At the beginning of the film, Xiumei wears a red headscarf. After experiencing the huge blow of estrangement from family, disappointment in love, and the death of a good friend, she becomes mentally exhausted and lost. The color of her headscarf also changes to blue, which symbolizes melancholy. At the end of the film, when she received encouragement from Qing'e in her dream to participate in a waist drum performance and fulfill her long-standing wish, she once again put on the red headscarf symbolizing hope in front of the mirror. Despite the opposition of her children and the ridicule of her neighbors, she participated in the Waist Drum Team, expressed her emotions to A Shuishi, and set fire to the vegetable greenhouse that affected Qing'e's business. These behaviors contrast sharply with Xiumei's consistent introverted and tolerant behavior. Her love and hatred are completely displayed in front of the viewer as if they are a trapped animal released from a cage. Despite some extreme behaviors, this is proof of the budding of Xiumei's female consciousness. For an elderly woman who has been shackled by traditional ideas for a lifetime, this sprout is very valuable.

In Koali & Rice, there is another kind of image of Hui'an woman. Despite feeling unwell, Xiumei insists on working at the seaside salt farm every day. But one of her daughter-in-law only shoveled salt for a while before shouting loudly that she was hungry, while the other daughter-in-law stayed at home every day, buying lottery tickets based on TV cartoons, hoping to get an unearned income. In addition to hard physical labor, contemporary Hui'an women have the opportunity to choose other jobs. But Xiumei's two daughter-in-law did not have any thoughts on life planning and values. They no longer adhere to the life style of traditional Hui'an women and can live as they please. But the transformation of their values is incomplete. They do not want to constrain themselves with traditional values, but they are also unwilling to seek their own value through other means. While being "tolerant" of themselves, they view others with stereotypical perspectives, and even publicly humiliated their mother when they saw her pedaling on the waterwheel with A Shuishi. This indicates that during the transitional period between traditional society and modern society, with the deconstruction of rural society, some Hui'an women gradually abandoned some old concepts that are detrimental to themselves, but did not yet establish a new and correct value system. This is the dilemma that many young women in Hui'an face in the process of deconstructing traditional rural society. This film, through a female narrative perspective, conveys the director's feminist concern.

Conclusion

The evolution of Hui'an female characters in Chinese cinema reflects to some extent the process of this special group of women gradually breaking free from the constraints of traditional gender roles and pursuing self realization and autonomy. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the image of Hui'an women was mainly characterized by adherence to patriarchal social norms, which limited their

social status and self-awareness through the oppression of gender roles. During the Great Leap Forward, the image of women in Hui'an was influenced by national ideology, presenting the image of model workers who devoted themselves to socialist construction, reflecting the game between national politics and traditional gender culture. In the early stage of reform and opening up, Hui'an women faced the collision of traditional gender roles and modern values, showing a tendency to further accept new values and strongly challenge patriarchal discourse, which also indicates the dynamic changes of gender culture in different historical periods. In the 21st century, the transformation of the image of Hui'an women indicates the pursuit of self-worth and identity by marginalized women in modern society, while also revealing the new challenges faced by Hui'an women in the deconstruction of traditional society and modern transformation. The evolution of the image of Hui'an women in the movie reveals the complex process of special female groups responding to gender inequality and seeking identity recognition in social and cultural transformation, reflecting important issues such as gender identity, gender liberation, patriarchal criticism, and the awakening of women's bodies and consciousness in feminist theory.

Compared with the female images in mainstream Chinese culture, the Hui'an female image presented in the movie clearly has distinct regional cultural characteristics. The special geographical environment and gender division of labor make Hui'an women bear more labor responsibilities (specifically refer to physical labor) and have fewer opportunities for education compared to other Han women. At the same time, the unique cultural constraints of Hui'an region, such as special marriage customs that oppress women, have long existed in remote Hui'an areas that were isolated from the outside world, causing dual constraints on the physical and mental health of Hui'an women. Therefore, from a feminist perspective, compared to other female images in mainstream Chinese culture during the corresponding historical period, the process of Hui'an women breaking free from traditional gender roles and seeking self liberation is more lengthy and difficult. The liberation of women is not just a matter of gender equality, but a multidimensional issue involving social structure, cultural traditions, historical background, and regional differences.

Certainly, Although film creation originates from reality, under the influence of mainstream social narratives and the director's personal aesthetics and creative intentions, the female images presented in films and the real female images in daily life may have vertical differences on the historical timeline, or internal differences within the same group during the same period. This is also a limitation of this study. Future research can further explore the specific differences between the portrayal of Hui'an women in films and their real-life images, in order to reveal the diversity and complexity of gender issues in films.

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