

Film assignment

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Raise the Red Lantern: Cultural context In the film Raise the Red Lantern, the role of women in the traditional Chinese community is effectively addressed. In this traditional society the role of women was dictated by men in their lives. For instance, women were always under the care of their father or their husbands. In the film, a woman is portrayed as a property that can be owned. Upon ownership, a woman was required to submit to their husbands. In addition, the number of women that can be married in one household could not be limited as men could acquire as many women as they could afford.

In analyzing the role of Songlian, the film uses her character to depict the role of women in the traditional Chinese tradition. Songlian is placed in a homestead which houses mistresses (Yimou, 1991). The house is owned by Master Chen who has four mistresses. Songlian is the fourth mistress. Her arrival in the house was well prepared for as she was pampered. However, this was not the case of all mistresses in the house. Each mistress was pampered upon request by the master (Yimou, 1991). For this reason, there was competition on the mistress who could capture attention of the master. As a woman, Songlian was subjected to discrimination. Firstly, her marriage to Master Chen was the only way that she could be accepted in the society. A married woman could be more respected than a woman who could not. This argument could be justified by the fact that Songlian and other mistresses were content with their position. However, this exposed them to dangers and risky moments. For instance, Songlian is punished for lying about her pregnancy. At the end of the film, she is almost going mad due to her tribulations under Master Chen (Yimou, 1991). One may point out that

marriage in form of ownership was responsible for the poor life led by Songlian.

Songlian was also from a poor background which made her more vulnerable. From her family's perspective, her marriage to Master Chen was the only hope for the family. In addition, her family could not be able to protect her vulnerability in the hand of Master Chen due to their class differences. For this reason, Songlian was required to submit and be respectful to her husband regardless of her living conditions. Her dowry payment gave her husband the right to control her life completely.

From the film, it is an obvious assumption that the Songlian's gender and social class made her very vulnerable. In addition, the traditional Chinese culture did not provide much hope for women. The culture had mandatory requirements from women. For instance, a woman did not have the freedom to question a decision made by their husband. Disobeying their husband would lead to punishment. Songlian needed to adapt in the culture and develop a personality that would favor her existence in her community. This, however, put her in a vulnerable position. Her condition at the end of the film depicts the risks that her community subjected her into.

Work Cited

Yimou, Zhang. (Director). Raise the Red Lantern. China: Orion Classics. 1991. Film.