

**A STUDY OF THE POSITION OF CHINESE FEMALE AS PRESENTED
IN MAXINE HONG KINGSTON'S
“NO NAME WOMAN”**

**A MASTER'S PROJECT
BY
SAHUSSARIN KAMPANICH**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in English
at Srinakharinwirot University
October 2007**

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AN ABSTRACT

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Advisory Committee: Assistant Professor Dr. Nitaya Suksaeresup,
Dr. Prapaipan Aimchoo, Ajarn Tuanta Laosooksri.

This study aimed to examine the position of Chinese female in the early twentieth century China as reflected in Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman", the first chapter of her novel, The Woman Warrior. Confucianism that has strongly influenced Chinese cultural background including traditional belief, ways of life, and the attitudes towards Chinese women was studied as a means to analyze the position of Chinese female through the character of Kingston's "no name aunt".

Findings showed that the story of the "no name aunt" reflected the position of Chinese female in the early twentieth century China as powerless, inferior, voiceless, unworthy, and desperate. The traditional belief which was mainly influenced by the ideology of Confucianism was the main factor that affected Chinese women's status and lives. Another factor that led to the tragedy of Kingston's aunt was poor economic condition which condition resulted in intensifying the inferior position of Chinese women in the early twentieth century, and this inferiority of Chinese women has handed down to those Chinese migrants to the West.

การศึกษาสถานภาพของผู้หญิงจีนที่ปรากฏในงานของแมกซีน ฮอง คิงส์ตัน เรื่อง

“No Name Woman”

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

ศรัสน์ คำพานิช

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา ตามหลักสูตร

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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาสถานภาพของผู้หญิงจีนในประเทศจีน ในยุคต้นศตวรรษที่ 20 ซึ่งสะท้อนออกมาในบทที่ 1 ชื่อ “No Name Woman” ของนวนิยายเชิงอัตชีวประวัติ เรื่อง The Woman Warrior ของ แมกซีน ฮอง กิงสตัน ผู้วิจัยใช้ภูมิหลังทางวัฒนธรรมของจีน โบราณเกี่ยวกับ ลัทธิขงจื๊อ มาวิเคราะห์สถานภาพของผู้หญิงจีนโดยผ่านตัวละครเอกของเรื่อง

ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า สถานภาพของผู้หญิงจีนในประเทศจีนในยุคต้นศตวรรษที่ 20 อยู่ใน สถานภาพที่ไม่มีอำนาจ, ต่ำต้อย, ไม่มีปากเสียง, ต้อยค่า และ ขาดกำลังใจในการดำเนินชีวิต ความเชื่อ จีนโบราณที่ได้รับอิทธิพลจากลัทธิขงจื๊อ เป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่กำหนดสถานภาพและวิถีชีวิตของผู้หญิง สภาพเศรษฐกิจที่ย่ำแย่ของจีนในสมัยนั้น ความอดอยาก และความโกลา เป็นอีกปัจจัยหนึ่งนำไปสู่ โศกนาฏกรรมของตัวละครเอก ซึ่งได้รับการกดขี่ เอาเปรียบ ในสังคมจีน ซึ่งผู้ชายมีอำนาจเป็นใหญ่

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

How sad it is to be a woman!
Nothing on earth is held so cheap.
Boys stand leaning at the door
Like Gods fallen out of heaven.
Their hearts brave the Four Oceans,
The wind and dust of a thousand miles.
No one is glad when a girl is born;
By her the family sets no store.

(Curtin, 13)

This poem was believed to be written by some Chinese women in the Manchu dynasty. It portrays suffering and frustration that they received from being a Chinese woman in the patriarchal society. It reflects the indifferent status of Chinese women in both Manchu dynasty and the early twentieth century as the “no name aunt” in *No Name Woman* had been facing from birth to death. The poem shows how sharply different between being women and men is. Men are very superior and compared as gods while women are very inferior and devalued by her family and the society.

Also, there have been several studies on female inferior position in the society. For example, in “Curbing Domestic Violence in China: Towards an Effective Criminal Justice Response,” Wei Zhang (2006) claimed that many Chinese women were the victims of domestic violence in China, and it was still common as a private or family issue. The domestic violence against Chinese women was a reflection of inferiority and inequality between men and women in Chinese society. As a result,

Zhang expected to see both legal and social reformation such as the marriage law, women's law, administration law, and criminal law. It became a big social problem in China.

Likewise, in "Consequences of Son Preference in India: A Contextual Analysis of Discrimination against Daughters," Sunita Bose (2005) revealed that sons were preferred more than daughters in Indian society as seen from discrimination against daughters in the areas of nutrition, healthcare, and education. In nutritious way, young girls had a lower, standardized weight-for-age than young boys because of gender discrimination in malnutrition. In healthcare, there was a gender bias against females and that was why they did not receive good medical treatment like males. Lastly, in education, girls did not have a chance to have good education as boys had.

In the world of literature, there are several works that involve female position. Most of works reveal female inferiority which reflects the society of that time. In Western country, for example, in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* (1894), the female position in the Victorian period in England was presented through the female protagonist, Mrs. Mallard. She was oppressed and suppressed by the ideal of womanhood; purity, piety, domesticity, and submissiveness, all of which expected to control females' behavior in that period. This made Mrs. Mallard want to free herself from her oppressive husband and patriarchal view of the society. The story's climax is as she whispers, "Free! Body and soul free!," after receiving the news of her husband's death.

In Amy Tan's The Joy Luck Club (1989), Tan also reflects the oppressive status of Chinese female in Chinese society both in China and in the US. In The Joy Luck Club, Lindo Jong is betrothed to Tyan-yu's family who expect to have a

daughter-in-law like “ones who would raise proper sons, care for the old people and faithfully sweep the family burial grounds after the old ladies had gone to their graves” (45). This reflects a poor status of Chinese women because a daughter-in-law is compared to a slave in her husband’s household. Besides, *The Moon Lady*, a part of The Joy Luck Club, also reflects an inferior status of Chinese women. The Moon Lady cries sadly that “For woman is yin, the darkness within, where untempered passions lie. And man is yang, bright truth lightening our minds” (82). It shows that Chinese women have to suppress her passions and follow men’s guidance. According to the concept of yin and yang as influenced by Confucianism, women became muted groups and no active roles in society.

Like Tan’s The Joy Luck Club, Kingston’s *No Name Woman*, reflects the tragedy of a female protagonist, the no name aunt of the story. It emphasizes that Chinese culture and society in the early twentieth century China influenced by Confucianism impose inferior status on women in the society. As a result, to understand the story more deeply, social and historical backgrounds are important factors to take into consideration.

One of historic events reflected in Kingston’s *No Name Woman* is “the discovery of gold in California”, a land called Gum Shan, or “Gold Mountain” in the mid-nineteenth century. This motivated many gold seekers from all over the world including China to travel to America. Consequently, there were many ethnic groups in America, and of course, Chinese was one of them. Chinese came to California as laborers, to work in the mines and to construct the mountainous western section of the railroad because of the demand for employees of these two tasks. Chinese men came to America because they wanted to escape from war and poverty in China. The purpose of their trip was to earn money to bring back home (Chang 17-19).

Even though there was strong belief in Confucianism, there were few women among these travelers. It is reported that the first Chinese woman arrived in America as early as 1830's. There were two Chinese female nonconformists who bravely immigrated to the United States. Marie Seise migrated in 1848, to work as domestic servant, followed by Ah Choi, who came to the US in 1849, as a prostitute. These two females' inferior jobs nearly were the stereotypes of the Chinese, or Asian Women viewed by the Americans (Ling 9-10). However, in 1924, the US law prohibited Chinese women, including wives of American-born Chinese, to immigrate to America. It is the same year that Kingston mentioned in *No Name Woman*.

Kingston firstly tells her aunt's story by narrating that the aunt's male Chinese villagers and kinsmen embarked to America in 1924 to send money back home (3). This historic background and the events as mentioned in the story shows that there were not any women in that trip. However, Shien Woo Kung stated that the law was revised in 1930 and about 60 Chinese women were allowed to enter America each year. It had long lasted for ten years (98). Nevertheless, Chinese women had more freedom to immigrate in 1939-1945 or under pressure of World War II (Yung 43).

Even though there were a smaller number of Chinese women than men in America, it is surprising that there have been more Chinese female writers than males in literary world. Although it is against Confucianism, those women wrote and did not know if such works be recognized as rebels. It is interesting that these writings reflect strongly how much they had been repressed and oppressed. From the historical background and the novels discussed above, we learn that Chinese women not only have been oppressed by men but also negatively viewed by the white people.

Amy Ling mentions that women as members of ethnic groups in the world are dominated by men of both races, Chinese and America. Women writers portray more

of women's oppressed lives. Furthermore, David Leiwei Li argues that Feminist and Civil Rights- movements encourage women and minority writers to observe their own experiences and have their voices heard and appeared in the literary scene (497). As a result, it is a great time for ethnic female novelists like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, African-Americans, or even Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, Chinese-American who lived in the White- dominated country began to write their own stories in the twentieth century (Ling 130). Maxine Hong Kingston is the first feminist Chinese-American writer who wrote about the oppressive Chinese culture. Her autobiographical fiction, The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of Girlhood among Ghosts, published in 1975 was very well-known.

Especially, Kingston's The Woman Warrior is viewed as an outgrowth of the Civil Rights and Women's Liberation movements of the 1960's and 1970's (Ling, 120). It comprises five chapters: chapter one, *No Name Woman*, chapter two, *White Tiger*, chapter three, *Shaman*, chapter four, *At the Western Palace*, and chapter five, *Song for the Barbarian Reed Pipe*. In this novel, Chinese females' lives and the practices of traditional values in the Western world are explored. However, in this study, the researcher would like to study only the first chapter, *No Name Woman*, because it presents the status of Chinese women in the oppressive traditional culture- which is relevant to the title of this study.

No Name Woman is the first chapter of The Woman Warrior, Kingston, the narrator, recollects her aunt's real story told by her mother. Her mother tells Kingston about this forgotten ancestor who had illegitimate pregnancy when Kingston reaches puberty. This is to warn Young Kingston away from premarital sex and not to bring disgrace to the family like her aunt did. The tragedy of the aunt and her illegitimate child, on the contrary, encourages Kingston to create her own

fantasies explaining why her aunt committed adultery at that time. Her fantasies about her aunt's story reflect the Chinese culture and society, especially in the aspect of Chinese females' role and position in the early twentieth century China. Consequently, this study intends to observe what the old world China's society was like and how women were devalued in the early twentieth century.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are the following:

1. To identify the position of Chinese women in the early twentieth century China in Kingston's *No Name Woman*
2. To find out the impacts of the old Chinese culture on a female protagonist
3. To find out other factors affected a female protagonist's tragedy

Significance of the Study

The significances of this study are as follows:

1. To help readers obtain background knowledge of the position of Chinese women in the early twentieth century China in Kingston's *No Name Woman*
2. To help readers better understand Kingston's *No Name Woman*
3. To encourage readers to apply historical background and feminism in reading novels.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the “no name aunt”, the female character, and incidents reflecting her position as a Chinese female in *No Name Woman*, the first part of Maxine Hong Kingston’s The Woman Warrior.

Definition of terms

“Powerlessness” refers to the condition that women are not able to refuse or control the situation due to the lack of physical strength or legal status.

“Inferiority” is the position that women are assigned to be less important than men in society.

“Voicelessness” refers to the status of being able to express opinions or rights to explain.

“Unworthiness” is the state of being judged worthless or less value by society.

“Desperateness” is the emotional state that drives women to take risks fearlessly in making decision.

Procedures

The procedures of the study are as follows:

1. Accumulation of information

Information will be collected in three parts:

1.1 The biography of Maxine Hong Kingston

1.2 The related literature which is related to Chinese Culture in China

1.3 The review of literature which is related to Chinese female in China.

2. Information analysis

2.1 The primary text of *No Name Woman* will be examined.

2.2 The character of the “no name aunt” will be analyzed with a focus on background of the early twentieth century Chinese culture that affected Chinese women’s status.

3. Report of the findings

Findings of the study will be discussed.

4. Conclusion and suggestion for further studies

The findings of the study will be concluded and discussed, and then suggestions for further studies will be presented.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part is Maxine Hong Kingston's biography: her life, family, education, marriage life and her literary works. The second part is related literature pertaining to Chinese culture in China. The third part is related literature pertaining to females in Chinese culture.

PART I: MAXINE HONG KINGSTON'S BIOGRAPHY

Maxine Hong Kingston was born on October 27, 1940, in Stockton, a Chinatown in California, the United States of America. She is a Chinese- American autobiographer, novelist, journalist, and short story writer. Her parents were Chinese immigrants, Tom and Ying Lan. Her parents had the respectful and acceptable careers in China. Tom, her father, was a scholar and Ying Lan, her mother, was a practitioner of medicine and midwifery. Her father arrived in the United States in 1924. For fifteen years in America where Tom had struggled, Ying Lan joined him at the age of forty-five in 1939. Since they wanted to have their own business, they operated a laundry as family business. Certainly, the family members had to work hard including Kingston herself.

Her aspiration to be a writer started when she was only nine years old. She always wrote things but she never thought that she would earn money from writing to financially support her life and family. Because of her good skill at mathematics, she had decided to study engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. However, she later switched to study English and then got a bachelor's degree in 1962. She also got a teaching certificate of English and mathematics. Three years later, she actually

became a writer and also a teacher. She taught mathematics, English, English as a Second Language, and language arts in schools and colleges, mostly in Hawaii. She decided not to pursue a master degree because she thought that it would interfere with her writing. She married Earl Kingston, an actor, on November 23, 1962, and they had a son, Joseph, in 1963, after she had lived in Hawaii for many years.

The Woman Warrior was published in 1976 and renowned as the winner of the International Book Critics Circle Award for the best work of non fiction in the same year. Kingston might be viewed as the most widely taught living American author. Her masterpiece, The Woman Warrior, was rated by Time magazine in 1979 as one of the top ten nonfiction books of the decade (Fishkin, 78). The popularity of The Woman Warrior continues to the present day. The book becomes one of the most frequently studied literary texts used not only in the literary course but also in a variety of college courses. For example, it is used in “anthropology, ethnic studies, history, women’s studies and even Black studies” (Hoon Eng, 5). According to Gloria Chun, the popularity of her book was claimed by the National Board of Education as follows,

Recommended by the National Board of Education to high school students, the work is often located under “Sociology” in bookstores, placed in mainstream anthologies by literary pundits, acclaimed by Colored and White feminists alike as a manifesto about “women braking silence,” and adopted by instructors at the University of California, Berkeley, in some twelve departments, ranging from Comparative Literature, Sociology, Anthropology, Rhetoric, History, Political Science, to Ethnic Studies (85).

Besides, The Woman Warrior won the Mademoiselle Magazine Award and the Anisfield-Wolf Race Relations Award in 1977 and 1978 respectively. And it was labeled as “Living Treasure of Hawaii”.

Apart from The Woman Warrior (1976), her other novels are China Men (1980) and Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book (1988). Kingston’s stories and articles have been contributed to various periodicals, including New York Times, Ms., New Yorker, New West, New Dawn, American Heritage, and Washington Post.

PART II: CHINESE CULTURE

According to Theodore Wm. De Bary and others, Chinese culture is originally driven from the basic concept of Confucianism (15). “Confucian” has been defined as Chinese ways of life for the last two thousand years because Chinese thought has been significantly influenced by Confucianism. Chinese people themselves realize to be Confucianists although they say that they are Taoists, Buddhists or Christians (15). Nevertheless, Confucianism is literally explained as “The School of the Scholar”. There were several other meanings like “Study of Scholars”, “Teaching of Confucius, and “Religion of Confucius, all of which defined by the Chinese.

It is a fact that Chinese society was governed by Confucianism for many centuries. Moreover, other theories could not convince or even challenge the Chinese to shift from their belief in Confucianism. The central concept of Confucianism in the function of social institutions is the family system. According to Xinzhong Yao, Confucianism placed the family system at the root of society, thus the main function of family was to give opportunity for children to learn social obligations such as self- control, courtesy, a sense of duty, and gratitude towards parents and respect to elders (10-11).

Furthermore, Confucius doctrine mainly focus on three virtues; “filial piety,” (the foundation of the human relationships), “jen,” (the love of humanity or benevolence and the desire to help each others), and “li,”(the rules of proper behavior). These three virtues are characterized as Chinese virtues and later on become general rules of a family to teach their children to perform the proper conducts. As a result, filial piety, jen, and li have been tied with Chinese society and they become a Chinese’s way of life to the present day.

Filial piety has been viewed as the first and most important virtue among three virtues that a Chinese is expected to have. Husein Rofo and others state that that filial piety had been the most powerful and influential moral force in China long before Confucius was born (70). According to the doctrine of filial piety, children have to obey, serve and devote themselves to their parents with reverence. According to Paul Chao, filial piety is regarded as duties that expect children to do for their parents and adults. Besides, he defines “filial piety” as the very careful performance of duties naturally owed to parents and relatives (71).

In addition, Kenneth K. L. Chau states that filial piety emphasizes on the five human relationships: relationship between father and son reflecting affection and union, relationship between ruler and subject reflecting righteousness, relationship between husband and wife reflecting attention to their individual duty, relationship between the old and the young reflecting a suitable order, and relationship between good friends reflecting fidelity each other (6). It can be seen that Chinese society values the importance of family as seen from the “three in five human relationships” that expects from the family members. The Chinese are taught that good members are initially produced by family which subsequently forms good people of the state and

country because of their recognitions of individual responsibilities towards such relationships.

Also, the virtue of filial piety is appeared in a Chinese myth, horses and dogs that are fed are compared to children. In order to show gratitude, a son cut-off a slice of his flesh then cooked it for his parents who are being seriously sick. In addition, giving offerings to their dead parents is necessary to practice to Chinese tradition on ancestral worships. Furthermore, since only son could continue their lineage and perform ancestral worship rituals, women who could not have a son would be judged unfilial by her husband's family. The wife must let her husband have concubine or divorce if she could not give birth to a son (Smith 171-185).

Next, jen is the second virtue that Chinese has been taught and expected. Chau points out that jen is love or benevolence of humanity and a good desire to help the others (6). Besides, Yu Wei Hsieh claims that jen is an expected virtue of individual. It is believed that the problems of evil, cruelty and violence in the society can be solved by man's benevolence. Besides, Confucius emphasizes on a man's role; a man should be cultivated to practice benevolence by beginning to love his own parents, then expanding love to others and lastly achieving the universal love (169-173). So, the purpose of jen is to make peace in society. However, in the aspect of being a Chinese female, as being a Chinese wife, she is taught to love and devoted herself to serve her parents-in-law whereas a Chinese husband is not expected to love his wife or children more than his parents. Moreover, he expects his wife and children to love, respect, and treat the ancestors as he does (Poonpipatpon 11).

Lastly, li is the third virtue that Chinese has been taught and expected. Li is the rules of proper conduct. Also, li shows the relationship of hierarchy that can identify individual proper behavior (Chau 7). For example, parents have to have

parental love while a son is to have filial piety. Laurence G. Thomson states that everyone has his own role and responsibility to members in the society such as the role of father to the children, the role of ruler to a subject, the role of the elder brother to the younger, the role of wife to a husband, and the role of friends to friends (38). As being a Chinese daughter, she cannot refuse the arranged marriage provided by her parents. It is because marrying a man whom her parents choose is the duty or responsibility of daughters to their families. In contrast, men have been defined a superior status in society and his relationships with others.

It is seen that Confucius doctrine including filial piety, jen, and li influence Chinese females' status in family and society. Chinese women are taught to obey their parents and husband after marriage according to the virtue of filial piety. Besides, the virtue of jen expects women to love and devote themselves for their parents more than other people. Lastly, the virtue of li expects women to realize their role and responsibility to family. According to such values imposed by Confuciusim, Chinese women are governed by patriarchal norms of society. As a result, being Chinese daughters and wives seem to be powerless inferior, voiceless, unworthy, and desperate. "Powerlessness" shows when women do not have power and rights to refuse certain situations because they lack physical strength and legal rights. Likewise, "powerlessness" is sprung from other external factors. The lack of money, physical strength, legal status, and military forces are led in powerless condition (Online 2007). "Inferiority" shows women are assigned to be less important than men in the society. Inferior feeling primarily comes from weakness, helplessness, and dependency, especially, when being compared to older people (Online 2007). "Voicelessness" shows when women are taught to be silent and submissive because they could not express opinions or rights to explain. In the aspect of psychology,

voicelessness takes many forms such as relationship problems, depression, anxiety, etc (Online 2007).

Because Confucianism influences the society to believe that women as men's subordinate, women became unworthy. "Unworthiness" refers to the state of being judged worthless or less value by society. The position discussed above result in pushing to take risk in making decision to escape from pain or suffering.

"Desperateness" refers to the emotional state that drives women to take risks fearlessly in making decision because they lose identities and hope to live for themselves.

As the Chinese cultural backgrounds discussed above, the position of Chinese female as a wife or daughter is powerless and voiceless as seen from the marriage arranged by their parents. They do not have power to resist the marriage or even refuse it because li is the virtue that determines daughters to be responsible for their parents, and after marriage, the responsibility is extended to their husband's family. The status of Chinese women is inferior because a girl is destined to be property of a family, as a daughter, and as a wife. It can be seen in the virtue of li that assigns woman an inferior role among the older people in family. For example, a daughter has to obey her parents, and a wife to husband. They do not have rights in the family. The unworthy female position is presented when Confucianism classified women with slaves and small humans (Ling 3). They are born to serve men. As a result, Chinese women are in a desperate position in society as they lose their "selves" and hope in life.

Confucianism plays an influent role in placing Chinese women into powerless, inferior, voiceless, unworthy, and desperate position. The researcher would like to

apply these criteria to study the position of Kingston's "no name aunt", the position of Chinese women in the early twentieth century China.

PART III: FEMALES IN CHINESE CULTURE

During the Imperial Period China in the nineteenth century, the role of Chinese women was downgraded by two major social factors, economy and ideological beliefs. First, in the aspect of economy, men played a more significant role in both domestic and society whereas women were kept to work in the field of the family. For example, men worked in public sphere as civil service and became main income generally. However, Chinese females were available only for occupations such as prostitution, matchmaker, procurer, and mid-wife. However, woman did not have the rights in family's property. They could be heirs only when there were not any men or male relatives in the clan survived. However, such situation was rare. Furthermore, what women earned had to go to the family, only their male relatives—the father, husband, or father in-law could dispose of it.

It is significant to stress that the traditional belief was another factor that affected the inferiority of Chinese women's position in the society. Confucius, a powerful philosopher of the time, and his followers concluded that the world was composed of two complementary elements which were yin and yang. Yin was the representatives of all things which were female, dark, weak and passive. In contrast, yang was those of things which were male, bright, strong and active (Curtin 10). Therefore, the ideology that they had created assigned women to be men's

subordinate and inferior to men. Moreover, women were classified as low as slaves or small humans (Ling 3).

Furthermore, in the imperial period, the observance of ancestral worship of the feudal ruling class was extended to common people and became influential in people's belief. It was believed that sons were valued much more than daughters because only sons could perform the duties of rituals which were viewed as a very important task for the ancestral worship (Lang 18-19).

As a consequence, it was not a surprise that the Chinese received the birth of a son more joyfully than that of a daughter. It was because sons could continue their lineage and worship their ancestors. A poem from the Chinese classic, Book of Songs, was a good example for revealing how joyful the reception occurred when the son was given birth.

So he bears a son,
And puts him to sleep upon a bed,
Clothes him in robes,
Gives him a jade sceptre to play with.
The child's howling is very lusty;
In red greaves shall he flare,
Be lord and king of house and home.

According to the poem, when a son was born, he would be welcomed warmly, treated, and compared as a king in the household by his family. He would sleep well in bed and be clothed in a robe or a dressing gown. He has also a jade scepter, a symbol of sovereignty, to be his toy. His childish crying shows strength and power like a warrior in greaves.

In contrast, the reception of a baby girl was drastically different due to the fact that one day she would be married off and finally belonged to her husband's family.

Then he bears a daughter,
And puts her upon the ground,
Clothes her in swaddling clothes,
Gives her a loom-whorl to play with.
For her no decorations, no emblems;
Her only care, the wine and food,
And how to give no trouble to father and mother.

(Ling 2)

From this poem, it shows how different a daughter is poorly treated by her family since she was born. She is put to sleep on the ground and clothed in swaddling clothes without any decorations. Also, her toy is not extravagant because it is a loom-whorl which is easily found in the household. However, her parents' hope is that their daughter will not make trouble and disgrace to the family in the future. Obviously, the poems show that sons and daughters are treated differently in Chinese family. Sons are treated very superior whereas daughters are treated poorly as seen from the way they sleep on, the clothes they wear, and the toys they play as the poem presented above.

In the aspect of education, in the imperial period, having a son in the family could uplift their social status. It was because sons could be educated and one day might be the government officials. Unfortunately, education at that time was considered unnecessary for daughters (Yung 10). It was believed that a girl without talent was good and to educate her would bring calamity and harm.

According to Confucianism, the aim of female education is “perfect submission, not cultivation and development of the mind” (Ling 3). As a result, girls in China were trained for domestic work and prepared to be obedient daughters and wives. Apart from Confucianism, “Three Obediences and Four Virtues,” approved and made official by the first century A.D. imperial decree, were other values that intensified men’s superiority.

“In the first century A.D., a code governing the behavior and training of women, called the Three Obediences and Four Virtues, was promulgated by imperial decree throughout China and remained continuously effective, helping to maintain patriarchal power, until the early twentieth century. The Three Obediences enjoined a woman to obey her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her eldest son after her husband’s death. The Four Virtues decreed that she be chaste; her conversation courteous and not gossipy; her deportment graceful but not extravagant; her leisure spent in perfecting needlework and tapestry for beautifying the home (Ling 3).

It is seen that “Three Obediences” required a Chinese girl who obey her father at home, her husband after marriage, and her eldest son when widowed while “Four Virtues” composed of chastity, reticence, graceful manners, and domestic skills (3). Such values were to govern the behavior and training of women. Chinese patriarchal power was very strong and it remained strong until the early twentieth century. Furthermore, in her husband’s family, she had to obey her husband’s parents as he did. According to the law, if she did not obey his parents, she could be divorced (Lang, 40).

Besides, the tradition of footbinding played a significant role in the Chinese women's lives. In order to be easily married off, a Chinese woman had to have a small "lily feet", a symbol of beauty and gentility. This tradition began in the tenth century when a Chinese prince was impressed by the small feet of his concubine. The ideal size of a bound foot was not more than three inches. Apart from suffering the pain of footbinding, a Chinese girl was kept from wandering because of the difficulty of walking without assistance. Besides, the Chinese tradition expected a girl not to be seen in public or in men's company; therefore it can be said that the footbinding actually served the aim of keeping women not to have much power like men because they could not walk out to appear in public (Yung 11). Having desire for Chinese females to have more freedom, the Manchus banished this custom. However, the Chinese did not comply with it because they believed in its ideal (Lang 45).

Being a Chinese wife, it is necessary to obey not only her husband but also his parents. According to her female role, she was to bear children, especially a son to perpetuate the family name; otherwise she could be divorced, or her husband could have a concubine to have a son for him. Although polygamy was forbidden by law, a man from a rich family could have numerous wives, concubines, and slave girls for bearing a son, or domestic laborers to serve his sexual pleasure. Besides, female infanticide was common because of the belief that a female child was an expense to raise, and later she needed a dowry to marry, finally belonged to her husband's family (Curtin 10-11). On the contrary, if a woman committed adultery, or even exhibited jealousy, she would be severely punished or even divorced (Lang 40, 50). She was not expected to remarry after her husband died (Yung 11). On the contrary, she was pushed to commit suicide because of a belief that she had no right to live after her

husband died. Fortunately, imperial edict prohibited this barbarian practice in the eighteenth century (Ling 3-4).

Because of Confucian requirement for the young to pay respect to the old, Chinese females seemed to have luck in their lives. When she became older, especially, after her husband died, she would become powerful. Moreover, if there was not any adult male relative in the family, she would become a family head and the most respected person. However, she could not completely dominate her son because of her female inferiority. Although her son respected her, she herself had to obey him.

According to Ling, the old Chinese society is viewed as a patriarchal society and might be the strongest patriarchal family in the history (Lang 52-54). Therefore, it is not surprising that Chinese women of the time had a submissive and inferior position in almost all aspects of life. The researcher would like to apply the ideology of Confucianism and Chinese backgrounds to analyze Kingston's *No Name Woman* through the female character of the "no name aunt" and incidents of the story.

In Western novels, the researcher found one English novel and one American novel that clearly emphasize how female protagonist's life was forced by the power of patriarchal society like Kingston's no name aunt in "No Name Woman". The first is in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838). A female character of the story is Nancy. She is judged as a 'fallen woman' by the society because she is different from the ideal of womanhood of that time. In the Victorian Period in England, women were expected to have the four virtues, which were purity, piety, domesticity, and submissiveness, all of which are composite qualification of an ideal of womanhood. Dickens made Nancy died at the end of the story because he wanted to convey that the 'fallen women' is unaccepted by the society.

The second is William Faulker's *The Wild Palms* (1939). It is a twentieth century American novel. The female protagonist of the story is Charlotte Rittenmeyer. Because the society expected women to be pure, submissive, domestic, and pious, she could not deal with her illegitimate pregnancy. So, she decided to kill her baby by abortion. Unfortunately, Charlotte ran out on her family and died of a botched abortion at the end.

From these two western novels, it can be seen that these female characters in the European culture presented in both English and American novels as mentioned above are not different from the female character of the "no name aunt" in Chinese culture. Although, Nancy, Charlotte and the aunt are different in race and society, each of whom is the victim of the environment; society, culture, and traditional belief in which they grew up and these influenced and caused the tragic end of Nancy, Charlotte and the nameless aunt with their illegitimate babies.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS

In Kingston's "No Name Woman," the position of Chinese female in the early twentieth century China is told and portrayed in many parts of the story. The story of a nameless aunt is told by Kingston's mother to warn Young Kingston of premarital sexual affair. The story resulted in moving Kingston herself to look for information of her "no name aunt" who could represent Chinese women in the early twentieth century China. The story was mysterious. Her mother told Kingston,

"Don't let your father know that I told you. He denies her. Now that you have started to have menstruated, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful." (5).

So, in response of her mother's message, the readers are led to the scene of the old world of the early twentieth century China with Kingston's reconstruction about her "no name aunt" with her strong belief that patriarchal rationale was behind the tragedy. Kingston acts as an insider informant telling an authentic story about her own ancestral culture and society. As a consequence, the story of the nameless aunt is told in various incidents that play a significant role in intensifying powerless, inferior, voiceless, unworthy, and desperate position of Chinese women in the early twentieth century.

POWERLESS POSITION

Kingston's no name aunt is realized in terms of "powerless". According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, "powerless" means unable to stop or

control something because you do not have the power, strength, or legal right to do so (1281). In Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, “powerless” means someone who is unable to control or influence events (853). Besides, “powerless” was defined as the quality of lacking strength or power; being weak and feeble (Online 2007). Likewise, in [www. thefreedictionary. com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com) Online 27 Apr. 2007, “powerless” had two meanings: the first was lacking strength or power; hopeless and totally ineffectual and the second was lacking legal or other authority. Similarly, Judy Lightstone explained in psychological aspect that when someone feels powerless, he feels afraid to express his needs because he fears those, who have more money, physical strength, legal status, and military force to control him (Online 2007) To sum up, “powerless” refers to the inability to stop or control something because of lack of physical strength or legal right.

The story of the aunt's powerlessness is shown when Kingston, the narrator, first speculates upon how her aunt could develop romantic relationship with a male villager in defiance of the Chinese feudal tradition. She was blamed of committing adultery in the time of Confucianism when the patriarchal law of chastity and the value of women's obedience to men played the significant role.

“... My aunt could not have been the lone romantic who gave up everything for sex. Woman in the old China did not choose. Some man had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil. I wonder whether he masked himself when he joined the raid on her family.” (6).

Kingston's speculation shows that her aunt must have been forced to have sex with some men or she was possibly raped, by one of the villagers who raided her home. She also imagines that the aunt probably encountered this man while working in the fields. There, he ordered her to have sex with him. No matter how hard she had

tried to resist or fight against the man, she became his sexual victim in that situation. The incident shows that women can be men's victim because the former's physical strength is weaker than male's.

The powerless position of Chinese female is revealed again when the villagers invaded the aunt's house with rage. They believe that she committed adultery and should be severely punished. From the story, the people of the village had noticed the aunt's illegitimate pregnancy since her body shape was like a pregnant woman. The villagers started gossiping about her shameful affair. It is important to stress that the people of the village had planned how to do with the aunt. Her secret affair was regarded as a severe mistake in the society. The villagers had been waiting for the day the aunt gave birth and planned to punish her afterward, "The village had also been counting. On the night the baby was to be born the villagers raided our house (3). They had been counting and estimating the day when the baby was born. It was just before the due date of the baby's birth. The villagers decided to raid her home to punish her. During the raid, they wore masks and at first they threw mud and rocks at the house. Then they destroyed the family's crop, slaughtered their livestock, broke their household goods, and ruined their supplies. However, the only thing that the aunt's family could do was only to stand and stare in disbelief (3-4).

It is apparent that no one of the aunt's family dared to fight or even defy the villagers' raid. They all accepted the judgment of the community about their kinswoman who brought disgrace and trouble to the family. The aunt's family did not blame or anger the villagers' invasion but they all cursed the "aunt", instead. When the villagers left, the aunt's family started cursing her, "Aiaa, we're going to die. Death is coming. Death is coming. Look what you've done. You've killed us. Ghost! Dead ghost! You've never been born" (3-4).

The powerlessness of Chinese women is told again when “no name aunt” and other female villagers were married. It was “seventeen hurry-up weddings” between men who embarked for America and women of the village. They became husband and wife at the first night they met, and then he sailed for America the next day. Kingston imagines that the aunt probably had forgotten even what he looked like. Kingston writes:

“... She had almost what he looked like. When she tried to envision him, she only saw the black and white face in the group photograph the men had had taken before leaving” (7).

From this, it can be seen that Chinese women in the old culture including the aunt were forced by the power of “arrange marriage”. “Arrange marriage” is a marriage arranged by the parents of the man and woman getting married, instead of the man and woman choosing to marry each other. Similarly, Lang states that arranged marriage was common in China influenced by Confucianism, the tradition that stressed family’s interests more than the desire of brides and grooms (35).

Seventeen Chinese brides represent the women who are powerless because they cannot choose their ways of lives. They may not love or be loved by some men because they are too young to know about passions. Curtin explains this situation that the marriages were not based on love or even mutual consent. It was their parents who arranged the marriages through matchmakers. The couple often had never met each other before the wedding day. Moreover, after the marriage, the relationship between husband and wife was considered subordinate and supplementary to the relationship between parents and son. Besides, there was a Chinese proverb that clearly stressed women’s degraded marital status “A woman married is like a pony bought- to be ridden or whipped at the master’s pleasure” (10-11).

It is apparent that the aunt is one of the seventeen women of the village who were forced to marry the village men who, after marriage, embarked for America. Marriage of these young women emphasized their female powerlessness which sprang from lack of their maturation and experience. They were too young to learn how to refuse or even to tell their own feeling to others. As a result, these young women began to lose their identities. They depended on their parents' decision and guidance that they had been taught to do. Besides, the word "hurry-up weddings" conveys the sense of not or less important towards these seventeen Chinese women. They are like objects that could be fixed or placed anytime and anywhere by patriarchal power and interests.

Obviously, the events discussed above shows how powerless the aunt and other women of her time were. The three situations, the arranged marriage, the events of rape in the field, or even being raid by the villagers in her house, were out of her control because she was in the powerless position caused by the influence of Confucianism that empowered the patriarchal society which put women in the position of lacking strength, ability or power. It is a common practice for Chinese women to be in such position because they were taught to live submissively. The code of "Three Obediences and Four Virtues" estranged women from their selves and strength. While families, the societies, or the environments around them were powerful, the Chinese women themselves were powerless because their lives were determined by families, society and environment.

INFERIOR POSITION

The "no name aunt" represents an inferior Chinese woman in the early twentieth century China. According to Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English

Dictionary, “inferior” means if someone who is regarded as inferior to another, they are regarded as less important because they have less status or ability (567).

Likewise, the inferior feeling is rooted from weakness, helplessness and dependency. It is intensified by comparisons to elder and experienced people (Online 2007). So, in short, “inferior” means less important because of having less status or ability.

The first example of inferiority is obviously shown when Kingston recalls a conversation between her mother and father in which they had referred to as “the outcast table”. Kingston narrates, “On nights when my mother and father talked about their life back home, sometimes they mentioned an ‘outcast table’ (7). In Chinese commensal tradition, “the outcast table” is for the wrongdoers who are forced to eat alone. Kingston assumes that the powerful older people in the family had forced her aunt to eat alone in “the outcast table” because of her shameful fault. Because of the Confucius belief that expects the young to pay respect to the elder and the virtue of li that cultivates them to realize their duty and responsibility to the elder. The aunt must obey and follow the command of older people especially, father and brothers in the family. Accordingly, Confucius doctrine places the old to be in superior status because they could command the young to do and follow.

Kingston also imagines that when the aunt was at the outcast table, other family’s members seemed to pay less attention to her. For example, they turned their faces and their eyes sideways. Obviously, their gestures show disapproval towards their kinswoman who dared to violate the virtue of chastity that was the first important virtue that the Chinese women were expected to keep.

From the view of the family’s members, the aunt is regarded as inferior to them and less important because of her feminine and her severe fault. In the case of Kingston’s aunt, she is a female wrongdoer so her fault seems multiple. Her

inferiority is clearly intensified when the family forced her to eat at the outcast table, separating from them, to punish her. Ironically, Kingston adds that the aunt's case is unlike the Japanese who let outcasts leave the family to become samurais and geishas (7). Being a samurai, it is viewed as a heroic and honorable job. He left home like an outcast but finally he was trained to become a samurai, Japanese army officer, to satisfy and honor his lineage. Likewise, being a geisha, a Japanese woman had to be trained to entertain men with dance and song; however, it is regarded as a high aesthetical job for her. A geisha, at first, like a samurai, was forced to leave home and finally reached her goal.

For the "no name aunt", it seems worse and more terrible than leaving home because she is ostracized from her own family's relationship. She was left out in the crowded house. As a result, she was estranged by her family. According to Confucianism, three in "Five Relationships," ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder and younger brother, and friend and friend, were pertaining to family. The aunt's shameful fault deteriorated her relationship with the family members and led to the end of the harmony of relationship among the family members.

It can be said that the relationship between the aunt and other family members are problematic because there are gaps between them. While the majority of the family place themselves to be superior, the aunt is left alone and looked down. Besides, the reactions from the family's members emphasize her inferiority as seen from their indifferent gestures and facial expression of disapproving and disgusting towards her.

The Chinese female's inferiority is revealed when the family's properties are divided among the family. According to Curtin, since nineteenth century China, Chinese women lacked legal and property rights. The real levers of power of that time

were held by men both in the male clan institutions of the village and in the government bureaucracy (11). The “no name aunt” had four brothers and she was the only one daughter of the family. Three of her brothers took land and the youngest brother, Kingston’s father, chose education instead of other properties. However, being a daughter, the aunt got nothing from the family (8). As a woman, she had no right in property or even legal rights in the family.

From educational aspect, it is likely to say that it can become the great property for sons. In Chinese society, having a son in the family could uplift their social status. Sons could be the government officials after they had been educated. So, the Chinese would try their best to educate their sons because they represented their hope. Education was not necessary for women, on the contrary, women were taught to believe that they were inferior to men and had no chance to be successful like men did. It is believed that educating daughters was considered a waste of time and parent’s money because they were expected to be obedient wives (Yung 10). As a result, these uneducated females would not get respectful and acceptable careers like men. Because of lacking of education, women could not depend on themselves and finally would be arranged to marry off by their parents like the aunt of the story.

It is not surprising that the aunt’s youngest brother prefers education to the lands. Also, his parents will admiringly support their son’s educational requirement without doubt because of the reasons discussed above. Besides, sons have legal and property rights. Moreover, they have a chance to choose the best thing for themselves. On the contrary, their female inferiority obstructs women share property rights and education.

The aunt’s female inferiority is emphasized by her own parents when they planned to dispense all the property after she had already been married and moved to

live with her husband's family. "After my grandparents gave their daughter away to her husband's family, they had dispensed all the adventure and all the property" (8). This suggests that the aunt is in inferior position in her family because she is viewed as unimportant by the family members. They can decide to do or manage everything without the aunt's attendance and participation.

Another Chinese female inferiority is presented when many male villagers including the aunt's father, brothers, and new husband have the opportunity to embark for America to send money home. Since her husband left for the US right after their wedding in 1924, the aunt could not follow him to the US because of various immigration restrictions. Moreover, for women, they could not go there because the journey from China to America was regarded as being too dangerous for them (Yung 8). Because of her inferior position, the aunt had to live like a widow and be at home to serve their parents-in-law after finishing working in the field. At that time, it was common for women to work in the field, forest, and mountain because agricultural food mostly gathered by women. The inferiority of women is shown again when they had a lot of house works to do after ending up their outdoor works.

It is important to stress that men have a chance to escape from poverty that they had faced in China for a long time. Women, on the contrary, do not have any chance or choices like men do. Unfortunately, women have to endure poverty, starvation, flood, hard work, or even patriarchal oppression in the society. It seems hopeless for Chinese women to escape from these problems in China, like a traditional common saying presents, "a man can go anywhere while a woman is confined to the kitchen" (Croll 27).

Lastly, another female inferiority is portrayed through the image of Chinese women of the time as described by Kingston, "Women looked like great sea snails-

the corded wood, babies, and laundry they carried were the whorls on their backs” (10). In the nineteenth century onward, in a Chinese village, it is common for the peasant women to work hard in the field all day. According to Curtin, it is necessary for poor peasant women to take part in production (12). Besides, they always have things to carry on their backs such as the corded wood gathered from forest, babies, or laundry. It was the picture Kingston describes as “the great sea snails” because their backs have things to carry on. The snails have shells whereas the Chinese women have burdens on their backs.

It appears that Kingston, as a woman, understands female desire of beauty. She believes that these female villagers concern about their appearance when they are free from works. After they had spent a day working hard in the field, they served their parents or parent in law in the house. According to Confucianism, Chinese women had to devote themselves to the service not only of their own family but also their husband’s family after married (Curtin 10). Thus, they hardly had time to bless themselves. Kingston assumes that her aunt was more unfortunate than other female villagers because she could rarely find any occasion to make herself good-looking. It is assumed that her aunt realized herself that she was inferior and was cursed by her family and the villagers. While other females of the village had chance to wear good clothes for the new season’s feast, her aunt did not. “They owned work clothes and good clothes, and they wore good clothes for feasting the new seasons... my aunt rarely found an occasion to look her best” (10). Moreover, the more attention the aunt paid for her looks (pulling of hairs and picking at spots), the more gossips were among the villagers (10). According to Confucianism, having graceful deportment but not extravagant was one of four virtues that Chinese women were expected (Ling 3). Thus, it can be seen that the villagers who were superior, tried to control the

inferior aunt by keeping a watch on her behavior as Kingston described, “More attention to her looks than these pullings of hairs and pickings at spots would have caused gossip among the villagers” (10).

Consequently, the aunt’s inferiority resulted in being outcasted at the dining table, the unjust rights to family property, the lack of opportunity for education and going aboard, and lack of personal right to be well- dressed in occasions.

VOICELESS POSITION

Dr. Richard Grossman explains “voicelessness” in terms of psychology that voicelessness came from many factors such as relationship problems, depression, and anxiety, that represented self-defeating or failed attempts to solve an unsolvable problem (Online 2007). In *No Name Woman*, it can be seen that the aunt’s voiceless springs from her unwillingness to speak out about the father of her illegitimate child. Kingston describes that:

“She kept the man’s name to herself throughout her labor and dying; she did not accuse him that he be punished with her. To save her inseminator’s name she gave silent birth” (11).

It appears that the aunt refuses to reveal the name of the villager who had affair with her so she puts the blame entirely on herself. Besides, it is important to stress that she follows or collaborate with the patriarchal rule of the virtue of silence, influenced by Confucianism of that time. The reticence of Chinese women is considered to be one of the “Four Virtues”, that govern females’ behaviors. Victoria Chen further explains that, “The low status of Chinese girls leads to the submergence of their voices” (30). Moreover, Robert G Lee adds that apart from Confucianism, the fear of deportation is another factor that forces women to be silent (57).

In the case of Kingston's aunt, she protects her fellow villager by her silence. She decides to be a passive victim alone. Kingston assumes that the one who raped her aunt might have been somebody in her own household or in the village where everyone is all kinsmen (11). According to Curtin, a rule against marrying a person of the same surname often meant the complete up-rooting of the wife from her family, friends, and surroundings (11). Because of such strong belief, the aunt realizes herself that her behavior is an unforgivable sin. Then, it leads her to drown herself and her newborn baby in to the well.

However, it is interesting to say that the aunt is condemned as a disgraced woman even though she has her own sense of courage and rebellion at the same time. The aunt's plunging herself into the family well presents her strong but silent protest against the oppressive forces. Such decision shows how the aunt violates social norms and unjusting made by the family and the villagers. They treat her as if she has never existed as a human being while the father of her illegitimate child is never punished in anyway. The struggle of the "no name aunt" reflects how women are recognized as objects possessed by their men.

The voiceless Chinese women can be seen in Kingston's mother who forbids Kingston to reveal her aunt's disgraceful story. However, she tells her aunt's story in her book. Kingston sees that silence is a punishment for her aunt, so, she makes her aunt immortal in her book and makes her story unveil Chinese women's voicelessness, "My aunt haunts me..., after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her" (16). Likewise, Ho states that, "As she [Kingston] frees her own voice, she also frees the oppressed women who have haunted and still haunt her" (237).

Thus, it can be concluded that keeping silence or being voiceless of the aunt in the story can reflect female oppressive position in the patriarchal Chinese society in the early twentieth century. From the story, the aunt is still voiceless although she is in a very bad situation. That is because the society of that time expects women to be reticent, a qualification of the “Four Virtues”, proclaimed to govern women’s behaviors by the imperial decree at that time.

UNWORTHY POSITION

According to Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners International Student Edition, The word “unworthy” has two meanings: the first is to be worse than the standard you would normally expect and the second is to not deserve something (1578). Similarly, in Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary, “unworthy” means if a person or thing is unworthy of something good, they do not deserve it (1216). In short, the word “unworthy” have two meanings: the first is insufficient in worth; undeserving and the second is lacking value or merit; worthless (Online 2007). So, in short, “unworthy” means to have no value, importance, or to not deserve something.

The unworthiness of Chinese female is first portrayed when Kingston recalled a story about her grandfather whom one day brought home a baby girl.

“And one day he brought home a baby girl, wrapped up inside his brown western-style greatcoat. He had traded one of his sons, probably my father, the youngest, for her. My grandmother made him trade back” (11).

In the above passage, it can be seen that selling girls as objects was common in China in the early twentieth century. According to Patricia Lin, women in Chinese patriarchal society had low status so that they were expendable. Girls were even sold to be slaves or married off to be obedient wives and daughters-in-law. Moreover, women were supposed to realize their low status and existence. Families or communities have the priority to give more than their own needs or desires (39-40).

When Kingston's grandfather brought a baby girl home, however, her grandmother did not allow him to do. She forced her son to sell that girl away. The event shows that girls are devalued as worthless people. That female baby is not wanted by the family as seen when the baby girl is traded back and forth like a worthless object. That is because the society expected only sons because they could pass the family's name. Lang states that the Chinese considered girls worthless because in Chinese society, sons were to perpetuate the family lineage and practice ancestral worship while daughters would marry off and belong to their new families (18-19). In contrast, daughters were later given away by their parents at marriage with only function, that is bearers of sons to their husbands' families. Moreover unmarried daughters could still be sold by their fathers as concubines or prostitutes (Curtin 11-12).

For women who were able to bear a son, they and their sons would be welcomed warmly and treated very well by the family. On the contrary, if they got a daughter, they would be treated poorly by their family. It can be seen from a poem from the Chinese classic, *Book of Songs* (page 17-18), which reveals how joyful the reception occurred when the son was given birth and how hopeless they were when a daughter was born, including the way that they treated daughter poorly (Ling 2).

The story of slave girls in China is raised in a conversation between Kingston and her mother as appeared in Kingston's "Shaman". It is about girls for sale; baby girls, little girls and adolescent girls. For example, sixteen-year-old girls were fifty dollars, eight-year-olds were about twenty dollars, five-year-olds were about ten dollars, two-year-olds were about five dollars, and babies were free during the war (79). The older girls were always more expensive than the younger ones because they were ready to be trained for domestic works and prostitutes.

The tragedy of the aunt and her illegitimate child also reflect unworthy value of Chinese in the incident of "female infanticide". According to Curtin, female infanticide was common in the imperial China, especially, among the low class people. They believe that it was expensive to raise (10). The aunt decided to commit suicide with her own illegitimate child to escape the problems. It is important to stress that although Kingston's mother did not tell Kingston directly that the aunt's baby was a boy or a girl, the writer assumes that her aunt's child must be a female baby as seen from her assumption towards the aunt's baby. Kingston states that, "It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys" (15). So, it can be said that the incident of the aunt's committing suicide with her own child by jumping into the family's well makes Kingston assume the possible cause of their tragic end, that is to escape the problems.

According to Confucianism, one of woman's roles was to bear sons to perpetuate the family's name and aid in the works. If she did not fulfill this task, she might be cast out of her husband's home, disgraced, and socially ostracized (Curtin 11). The aunt's misfortune was doubled when she found that her illegitimate child was female. She decided to commit suicide as she was influenced by the belief that the society would label her as worthless.

Thus, it is important to stress that the aunt's committing suicide with her baby girl is because of her hopelessness to be forgiven by her family and the society. The suicide, however, seems to be the best solution for her.

Additionally, the Chinese female's unworthiness is revealed when Kingston suspects why her aunt had lived with her own family during the time of the village's raid. Kingston describes that it was not an appropriate time, "... when she and my aunt, a daughter-in-law to a different household, should not have been living together at all" (7). From Kingston's speculation, her aunt should not live with her own family because she had already married off. However, the aunt had to live in her husband's house because in Chinese culture, women moved in their husbands' families after marriage. Like Kingston's mother, living in her husband's family, is a common practice Chinese wives have to follow. Also, Kingston points out that "taking a daughter-in-law" was a synonym for Chinese marriage (7). It is well-known that taking a daughter-in-law in her husband family is unique characteristic of the Chinese marriage.

Such incidents allow Kingston to make several assumptions on her no name aunt's destiny. The aunt might have been sent back from her husband's family in disgrace or she might have been banished by her husband's family. "Her husband's parents could have sold her, mortgaged her, stoned her" (8). Kingston uses these words; 'sold her', 'mortgaged her', and 'stoned her', to depict violence, barbaric and inhuman-doing that her husband's family might have badly treated her. Moreover, such words intensify an unworthy position of her aunt in her husband's family.

In assuming that the aunt might have been sent back to her own family, the story shows her status that can be compared to an object, and can be thrown out whenever it is found useless or unwanted. Kingston further assumes that sending the

aunt back to her own family could be a revenge of her husband's family to her own family because the former wants the latter to feel ashamed of her sexual sin like they had from her, "But they had sent her back to her own mother and father, a mysterious act hinting at disgraces not told me. Perhaps they had thrown her out to deflect the avengers" (8).

Lastly, the aunt's unworthiness is clearly reflected in the aftermath of her committing suicide with her baby. Kingston notes that, "The real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her" (16). From the story, the aunt is considered worthless by the family because they want to erase her from their memories. When the aunt committed adultery, she was firstly seen as self-indulgent and her wrongdoing as a sign of defying tradition. So, she deserved punishment approved by the family and the villagers. However, the after her death, she is still viewed as an unworthy person by her family. Likewise, Rolf explains the position of the "no name aunt" that

"The punishment for her [no name aunt] community-threatening transgression is silence, a conspiracy of silence to erase her name from the collective memory of her ancestor-worshipping Chinese family" (7).

It appears that her anonymity reflects her unworthiness among the family members as seen from the fact that she is only referred as "no name" aunt because they deny mentioning her real name. Everyone agrees that she humiliated the family, so Kingston's mother forbids young Kingston to mention her name. For them, she is viewed as lacking the value or the merit thus they do not approve her as a member of the family. The unworthiness of her aunt also led her to suffering even after her death. She was not worshipped by the family and was believed to be left as a hungry spirit.

Kingston imagines that, “Always hungry, always needing, she would have to beg food from other ghosts ... whose living descendants give them gifts” (16). Lang explains that the observance of ancestor worship of the feudal ruling class was extended to common people during the imperial period, so it was regarded as an important family ritual for common people (18-19).

To conclude, the stories of the aunt and the incidents told by Kingston’s mother reflect the position of Chinese women in the early twentieth century China. The story of the sale girls as slaves in China, the tragedy of the aunt and her illegitimate child inevitably involving female infanticide, and the sending a daughter-in-law back to her own family, being neglected of worship from the family, all present female unworthy position in the patriarchal society. In addition, “It is more profitable to raise geese than daughter” (Ling 1), a traditional Chinese proverb, can clearly reveal the unworthy position of Chinese females in the early twentieth century Chinese society.

DESPERATE POSITION

Lastly, Kingston’s “no name aunt” was portrayed as a desperate woman. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, “desperate” means willing to do anything and not caring about danger because you are in a very bad situation (425). In Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary, “desperate” means if you are desperate, you are in such a bad situation that you are willing to try anything to change it (295). Similarly, in Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners International Student Edition, the word “desperate” means the worry and anger that someone feels because they do not know how to deal with a bad situation (376).

Besides, “desperate” is defined as having lost all hope (Online 2007). In this study, “desperate” refers to the emotional state that drives women to take risks fearlessly in making decision.

The two tragic incidents in the aunt’s life reveal how she is in a desperate situation. When Kingston assumes that her aunt is possibly raped by a fellow villager, she speculates upon what adultery could drive her aunt into such a desperate position. Kingston assumes that:

“My aunt could not have been the lone romantic who gave up everything for sex. Woman in the old China did not choose. Some man had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil. I wonder whether he masked himself when he joined the raid on her family.” (6).

According to Kingston’s speculation, it can be interpreted that her aunt, as a Chinese peasant woman, could not develop any romantic relationship in defiance of the Chinese feudal tradition. As a result, this speculation enables Kingston to piece the incomplete story together and construe it as much as possible.

It is important to stress that the aunt was caused in dilemma. “Dilemma” is a situation in which it is very difficult to decide what to do, because all the choices seem equally bad. Likewise, dilemma is defined as a situation in which one must choose between two or more courses of action, both or all, equally undesirable (Online 2007). Besides, dilemma refers to a problem offering two solutions or possibilities, of which neither is comfortable (Online 2007). In short, dilemma is a bad situation that the aunt faced and led her to the final decision.

As being blamed of committing adultery, the aunt may be caught in a cultural dilemma of whether to violate the patriarchal law of chastity or to submit to the patriarchal value of women’s obedience to men. According to Confucianism, a code

called the Three Obediences and Four virtues was to govern and train female behavior (Ling 3). Chastity is one of the four virtues that the patriarchal society expects from the women whereas women's obedience to men reflects patriarchal value that women are also expected to have.

The aunt's desperateness shows that she is in despair to do anything and does not care about danger because she is in a very bad situation. From the story, it is likely to say that the aunt cannot estimate her obeying to the man's command at that time of rape would bring her to the severe punishment from the family and villagers.

Another example of the story that can clearly reveal the desperate position of the aunt is when she committed suicide with her baby. When the aunt took the baby with her to the well, she showed a moment of love to her baby and hate for the male villager. She also showed forgiveness and revenge on her family.

“Carrying the baby to the well shows loving. Otherwise abandon it.

Turn its face into the mud. Mothers who love their children take them along. It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys” (15).

It is assumed that the aunt's illegitimate baby is a girl and this makes the aunt become more desperate because she does not know how to deal with a bad situation. Consequently, this leads the aunt to be in the dilemma. If her illegitimate child had been a boy, the severe problems would have been declined. According to Confucianism, bearing sons to perpetuate the family name was Chinese's hope because their function as breeders made them attain status in the society. If women did not fulfill this task, they might be cast out of her husband's home, disgraced, and socially ostracized (Curtin 11). Likewise, Ling writes that the birth of a son is always

warmly welcomed by the family as seen from one poem in The Book of Songs that reveals the sharply different receptions of the birth of son and daughter (Ling 2).

However, it is important to stress that plunging herself into the family well with her own baby is her final decision. The aunt realizes that if she lets her baby girl live on, nobody in the family will bring her up. So, it is worth dying more than living without love and care. Kingston describes, “But how would this tiny child without family find her grave when there would be no marker for her anywhere, neither in the earth nor the family hall?” (15).

Killing herself and her baby shows her desperateness in solving the problems. At that moment, the dilemma forces her to make decision without caring about the danger. By jumping into the family’s well, the disgraced aunt showed her strong but silent protest against oppressive forces around her that she had been facing from birth to death. Her decision made her tragic story become part of history of the patriarchal society--that is a revenge of one woman to the system.

The two tragic stories of the aunt, being raped by a male villager and committing suicide with her own baby, can reveal Chinese female desperate position in the Chinese patriarchy. The oppressive forces from the society influence the aunt to make decision when she faces a dilemma.

Apart from the oppressive forces from the patriarchy, it is possible to assume that greed and hunger of the villagers in the starvation period intensifies the tragedy of the aunt. They punished the aunt in brutal and barbarian ways because her shameful affair was viewed as a severe crime. The villagers, with more power and strength, punished her by organizing the raid. Some villagers’ inhuman or wild instinct when they slaughtered the animals. “Their knives dripped with the blood of our animals”, “They smeared blood on the doors and walls”, and “One woman swung a chicken,

whose throat she had slit, splattering blood in red arcs about her” (4). After destroying the aunt’s personal properties: clothes, shoes, combs, and her work from the loom, and the family properties: doors, windows, kitchen utensils and food, and slaughtering family live- stock, the villagers vividly showed their hunger and greed during the raid. They took sugar, oranges, pieces from the dead animals, and unbroken bowls and clothes that were not torn with them when they leave (4-5).

Interestingly, Kingston assumes that if her aunt had committed adultery at the time of plentiful food, peace, and happiness because of many births of sons, she would have been escaped or forgiven from these severe punishments. Adultery might only be a mistake in a good time not a crime when the village needed food (13). Likewise, Rose Seok Hoon Eng states that the aunt was unfortunate because she lived in times of chaos and disorder where villagers are “hungry, greedy, tired of planting in dry soil” and “forced to leave the village in order to send food- money home” (14). Apart from Confucianism that pushed the “no name aunt” into powerless, inferior, voiceless, unworthy, and desperate position, the starvation period in the society played a significant part in intensifying the aunt’s tragic end.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Conclusion

In portraying the “no name aunt” in The Woman Warrior, the novel also reveals the position of Chinese female in the early twentieth century China. This study finds that the tragic end of Kingston’s unnamed aunt reflects how powerless, inferior, voiceless, unworthy, and desperate Chinese women were in that period.

Firstly, the position of Chinese female is powerless. There are many incidents of the story that vividly show female powerlessness of the aunt and other women. Firstly, Kingston narrated from her speculation that the aunt must have been raped. Secondly, the aunt and other sixteen women were forced by the matching marriage. The last was when the aunt and her family could not do anything except just looking when the villagers raided their house and destroyed their properties. These three incidents emphasize on the powerless position of Chinese females because the aunt and other women cannot control the situations because of lack of power and right in the society.

Secondly, the position of Chinese female is inferior. The inferior position of Chinese female is clearly revealed in many parts of the story. The first is in the scene of “the outcast table”, the second is the unjust dispensing of family property, then lack of opportunity of education and going aboard, lastly, lack of personal choice in well-dressing. These incidents emphasize on the inferior position of the aunt, as a Chinese female, because she is viewed as less important by her own family and society.

Thirdly, the position of Chinese female is voiceless. The aunt is voiceless caused from her willing to be silent as seen from the aunt denied revealing the name

of her illegitimate child's father. The patriarchal social norm forces her to be voiceless from birth to death.

Fourthly, the position of Chinese female is unworthy. The story of selling girls as slaves in China, the tragedy of the aunt and her illegitimate child inevitably leading female infanticide, the sending a daughter-in-law back her own family, including being neglected of worship from the family, are their female unworthy position. The aunt, her female baby, and girls on sale in China are judged as unworthy people by their own family, the family of the aunt's husband, and society. Their female unworthiness is devalued by the old traditional belief and patriarchal society of the time.

Lastly, the position of Chinese female is desperate". Two incidents of the aunt's story; being raped by the male villager and committing suicide with her own baby, emphasize on the aunt's desperateness. Her decision to commit suicide with her own female baby without caring about danger also shows her hopelessness.

To conclude, the position of Chinese female in the early twentieth century China portraying through the character of Kingston's aunt and incidents of the story, can be identified in Kingston "No Name Woman". Kingston's "no name aunt" is judged as a powerless, inferior, voiceless, unworthy and desperate Chinese woman in that period. Their negative social position resulted from the oppressive view of the traditional belief and patriarchal society of the time. The old Chinese culture, influenced by Confucianism, is the main factor that affected the female protagonist's life. The low Chinese economic condition of the time enabling people to be greedy and selfish, is another factor that affects the tragedy of Kingston's aunt.

The researcher believes that female oppression still exists in many countries. This problem is universal because most of the societies are patriarchal. Women are

treated as the second class citizen in the male society. As a consequence, feminist writing acts as a reflection of how women were oppressed by the patriarchal society like Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman" presented in this study.

However, the position of Chinese female in China has begun to be in good direction since the mid twentieth century onward because many changes in China have liberalized Chinese women and legally ended Confucian practices. For example, the marriage law of 1950 prohibited concubinage and matching marriage. So, Chinese women nowadays have the right to marry a man of her own choice. Besides, she has the right of divorce and receives financial support as well. Furthermore, women have the right to hold property in their own names and sharing in family properties in the land law. Moreover, under Mao Tse Tung, education for females was expanding (Rai 183).

Nowadays, Chinese women are still in the transitional period between the old patriarchal system, and the world of gender equality. However, there are some modern Chinese women who still follow an ancient ideology of Confucianism. Those women always choose to avoid confrontations in public, suppress their emotions, and yield to male authority. However, they should not refuse themselves that they want to struggle and to see the world of gender equality. However, it is a universal truth or natural feeling of not only Chinese women but also women around the world to yearn for their equal rights and equal position in the society.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

It is suggested that the following topics should be further studied:

1. patriarchal oppression of Chinese women in America and other various countries should be investigated.

2. mother- daughter relationships especially, in the works of ethnic groups in various countries and matrilineage should be observed.
3. the impact of ‘Talk- Stories’ on the main character in The Woman Warrior should be analyzed.
4. Chinese American women’s literary tradition should be analyzed in depth.
5. other novels of Maxine Hong Kingston, China Men (1980) and Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book (1988) should be studied.

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