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GENDER AND CULTURE

FU Guangxing (Yunnan University)

"Kaik": Shame Concept and Kinship System of Wa People

This paper is exploring the culture meaning of shame concept to Wa people, relationships between the shame concept and kinship system, how shame concept play role to maintain the kinship system in Wa community.

Through the participatory observation and interview, the author found that behind the shame concept there are socio-cultural mechanism existed in Wa community. This cultural mechanism play role on control of sexual relations.

The shame concept of Wa people is involved with incest taboo, sexual norms, gender system, kinship systems etc. This concept is throughout in their dual sex configuration format of contact, dating and marriage culture.

Eventually, the author want to made a thick description of Wa culture, found what is important to Wa people in their life, their culture integrative mechanisms in sex, marriage and family.

LUO Jiting (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Space, Gender and Social Change: A Study of Hakka Settlement in Meizhou, Guangdong

For hundreds of years, the Wei Long house has served as the settlement of Hakka people in Southeast China. It contains elaborate spatial arrangements and a symbolic system representing social order and gender relations. In religious life and daily life, the use of space is classified by gender into binaries such as left/right, dark/bright, sacred/profane and public/domestic in the Wei Long house. After the Liberation of 1949, however, the house was completely reorganized due to the communist ideology and economic forces, resulting in an elimination of gender segregation and a redefinition of social space in Hakka villages. Taking into account of the spatial organization and Hakka women's social practices during the recent one hundred years, this research seeks to explore the production and reproduction of space under Chinese modernization. At the same time, it also discusses how Hakka women use strategies to strive for more space and establish a new local cultural life. The broader aim of the study is to discuss how the political socio-economic conditions affect the spatial and cultural forms in post-Mao China.

YU Po Ting (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Bride-Oriented Weddings: Implications on Gender Relations in Hong Kong

Many people in modern societies tend to think that rituals are less important or even “old-fashioned”. Weddings, however, remain one of the most important rituals in Hong Kong. The wedding industry has been thriving for the past decades. On average, every couple spends HKD 200,000 and more on their wedding. Why are couples willing to invest so much money, time and effort on weddings? The wedding products, services and packages such as night gowns, bridal photos, wedding make-up and hair design are mostly tailor-made for brides. They usually take the role as a decision-maker as well. Why are brides positioned at the center in weddings? Where do grooms stand? How will they negotiate when conflicts arise during the preparations? What do weddings mean to brides and grooms? Through participant observation, in-depth interviews and reviews of media reports, I examine closely the interactions among the bride and groom, their parents and service providers. On the one hand, women in Hong Kong stress their independence. On the other hand, marriage is still considered an essential component of a woman’s happiness no matter how brilliant a career she has. Since nobody sees the real married life, weddings in today’s Hong Kong serve as a perfect stage to show what the woman is worth by means of how much money and effort the groom has invested. I argue that weddings may have taken different forms; their roles in assessing women’s value remain unchanged.

ZHENG Fei (Nanjing University)

A Secret Life: A Study of Abortion in Taiwan

In western countries abortion always relate to religious concerns, Christian conservatives think life begins when it becomes a fertilized ovum, but feminists postpone the moment a lot: when the fetal should be considered as an independent, legally protected "person", becomes the central dispute in western culture. In fact, induced abortion is a great shock to women whether it’s a fertilized ovum or person. In the mainland of China, the long-term birth control seems to make abortion much more acceptable while things are more complicated in Taiwan. In the 1990s, RU486 was the subject of a fierce debate for it was treated as a serious social problem. As a result, it was listed as the controlled drug.

Today in Taiwan, the awareness of abortion becomes different, people think that abortion is "not good". The reasons are not only medical knowledge and religion concerns, but also because more and more people realize that "life is precious" according to Taiwan's low birth rate and growing number of infertility, which makes the children much more valuable than before. Social environment and people’s concept keep changing, does it really return to the principle of pro-life or pro-choice? How do people think of sex, virginity, medical treatment and the cultural significance of abortion under official interpretation?