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**REFLECTIONS ON ETHNICITY:**  
**FIELDWORK ON ETHNIC GROUPS IN SOUTHWEST CHINA**

**LIN Dan (Sun Yat-Sen University)**

*Li Ethnicity or Not: Applying Fredrik Barth's Theory on Boundaries*

Anthropological theories regarding ethnicity have once positioned that ethnic groups are generated by internal forces, such as language, lineage, tradition etc. This view treats human societies as culturally discrete; in other words, ethnic groups are “essentially” different from each other. Fredrik Barth has proposed to approach the topic differently. He contended that instead of merely looking for differences at the centre, anthropologists should look at the “boundaries”, which persist when members of the group interact with those of other groups. This proposition by Barth has been put to test in this fieldwork on the Li ethnicity in southern China. For outsiders, members of the Li ethnicity, mainly on the Hainan Island, look vastly the same as the Han Chinese nowadays, at least from appearances. However, throughout an ongoing intense interaction with the Han Chinese, the Li's sense of “us” and “them” remains strong. This study tries to explore the dynamics which take place when an ethnic group is generated and maintained. New context has occurred when the state is promoting Han-style subsistence, when the value of the Li identity increases due to tourism, and when other aspects of social life also favour such ethnicity.

**SUN Xu (Sun Yat-Sen University)**

*Is Minzu A Problem? — Regional View on the Studies towards Southwest China*

Southwestern China is used to be considered as a region with variety of unattached Minzu. Under such dominate perception, studies toward this area in a single-Minzu perspective have been conducted over half century, until scholars such as Stevan Harrell point out that Minzu is not concrete existence but one could be divided into plural ethnic groups result from sophisticated historical and social contexts in different region. This formulation calls for a regional view in ethnic study. In southeast of Guizhou, hundreds of villages reside in a region named “four feet bull” which has been existed for more than 160 years. Related studies consider it as a self-government organization of Kam for resisting aggression from outside and keeping order inside. However, a multi-sited fieldwork in this area reveals that such organization does not only belong to Kam but also includes peoples now labeled as Miao and Yao. They are intermarriage, interact frequently and share festivals and rituals every two or three years. It is the geographic relation and common social conceptions combined them together. Dividing them into different Minzu has little help for discovering the rules of such organization and understanding of the lifeworld of people lived in this area.

**WANG Lu (Sun Yat-sen University)**

*From Mourning Hall to Ethnic Stage: The Capitalization of “Filial Piety Songs” Culture and Nationality Construction*

As a folk custom in the area of Wuling Mountain, the connotation of “singing filial piety songs” ritual changed during the different periods continuously. Based on the practice theory of Bourdieu and detailed description, the author attempts to explain that the mourning hall where the ritual takes place is actually a field of struggling for higher cultural status. But when the inheritance of ritual is threatened by the influence of social structure vicissitude, “ethnic culture” which symbolized the traditional culture of Tujia nationality is constructed, instead of the original connotation. Therefore, a custom that happened in mourning hall becomes a unique ethnic cultural show played by people who “realized” they belong to “Tujia” nationality. During this process, the compulsive power of construction from the nation and the strategic decisions of individual are the significant power of the vicissitude. To sum up, the author aims to indicate how a traditional ritual continued its life through “the capitalization of culture”, and how the self-identity of Tujia nationality is constructed along with the capitalize process, and also, rethink the construction of “nationality”.

**OU Zuan (Sun Yat-Sen University)**

*Thinking Cultural Reasons: The Ghost Belief of Miao People in Northeast Guangxi*

Durkheim claimed that the individual's knowledge acquisition is a continuous process of receiving external classification. This classification is not an individual invention, but originated from the community. Douglas expounded Durkheim's view, and discussed the relationship between the purity and danger. She claimed that people would declare anomaly as danger, which is the way to deal with the plight of classification in community. The fear of “ghosts” is the features of Miao people in Longsheng in Guangxi. They attribute those abnormal things and the plight of non-understand to the ghost. They always invite religious clergy to clear ghosts out of the community with ritual, in order to achieve re-integration within the community. In Guangxi, Miao people live in the north and Yao people in the south. They have profound influence on each other through cultural communication. Belief in ghosts also occupies an important position in Yao society. Therefore, which role does the "Ghost" play in the system of Miao culture? In what way it serves for the characterization and maintenance of social system? What influence has the interaction between those two ethnic groups brought on the ghost-belief and rituals of Miao culture? Those problems will be discussed in this article.