

# 行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫 成果報告

## 「休閒、工作與日常：貴州苗人的遊方」專書寫作計畫 研究成果報告(精簡版)

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《休閒、工作與日常：貴州苗人的遊方》專書寫作

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■ 赴大陸地區田野研究心得報告一份

■ 出席國際學術會議心得報告及發表之論文各一份

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## 一、 前言

本專書以貴州苗人的遊方作為研究的主題。儘管遊方在貴州苗人的日常生活中扮演非常重要的角色，研究者對於遊方的討論卻很少，往往與東南亞 Hmong 人的 courtship 混淆。在此簡短報告中，筆者將比較東南亞 Hmong 人的 courtship 與貴州苗人的遊方，明確指出兩者的差異。接著簡述筆者在貴州苗人地區進行遊方研究的方法與研究成果，最後筆者以日常性研究作為探討貴州苗人遊方的理論基礎，闡述苗人遊方的日常性的概念。

## 二、 重要相關文獻的檢討與評述

「遊方」這個詞是貴州苗人用中文來表示苗語 *niangt* 的說法，苗語的原義是 *iut fub*，嚴格說來，與中文的「遊方」意思不太一樣。「遊方」這個詞最早出現在吳澤霖的翻譯中，根據當地人的說法，這個詞比較文雅。在中文的文獻中，還有另外一個說法是「搖馬郎」，儘管這個詞是部份地區(如台拱縣城附近)苗語的音譯，但在中文的脈絡中使用，反而被認為是帶有貶抑的說法。只要一提到「搖馬郎」往往就讓人聯想到苗人地區青年男女之間較為開放的交往情況，尤其是婚前性行為，更被視為是不合禮教未開化的證明。或許因為這個污名的緣故，貴州苗族文化的研究者，傾向於用「遊方」這個說法，不使用「搖馬郎」這個苗語直接音譯的名詞。然而，將「搖馬郎」與婚前性行為聯想在一起，其實不正確的，這種錯誤的聯想，使得研究者在提到苗人男女交往的情況時，往往只是將焦點擺在婚前性行為，忽略在苗人社群中，苗人男女交往是一充滿文化建構的情感展演的場域，各地的風俗習慣有很大的差異。因此，本專書將針對已出版的苗人 courtship 研究做一評述，以下僅摘要其中較重要的部份。

首先筆者比較分析兩本關於東南亞 Hmong 人的民族誌中所呈現的 courtship 文化。一是 Chindarsi 的 *The Religion of the Hmong Njua* (1976)，一是 Donnelly 的 *Changing Lives of Refugee Hmong Women* (1994)。

Nusit Chindarsi (1976) 和 Nancy D. Donnelly (1994) 的民族誌作品，不論在研究地區、研究對象、研究關懷、研究年代、研究方法、書寫風格，及其對於 courtship 的詮釋觀點方面，皆迥然不同。但關於東南亞 Hmong 人 courtship 文化的描述，則不約而同地提及，courtship 包括發生性行為的必然性。

Chindarsi 的研究地區與對象主要為泰國清邁省 (Chiangmai) Meto 聚落的 Hmong Njua。全書以宗教實踐為主要關懷。他在行文中少有理論分析，而以紀實手法呈現其於一九六四至一九六七年期間參與觀察的田野紀錄。Chindarsi 對於 courtship 的詮釋觀點，帶有較濃的功能主義色彩。首先他明確地將 courtship 視為邁向婚姻的初始階段，為兩性於特定節慶場合 (主要是新年)、農閒時期所從事的婚前活動。<sup>1</sup> 這由 Chindarsi 在章節安排上，將 courtship 設定在婚姻的範

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<sup>1</sup> 無論是 Chindarsi 或 Donnelly，都只關注節慶時期的 courtship，而未提及 Hmong 在日常時間裡，是否也進行 courtship 或類似 courtship 的活動。

疇之下可見一斑（1976：68-70）。再來他強調「勞動力」（work-force）是體現女性價值的重要指標。他說 Hmong 更願意娶勤勉勞動而非僅具姿色的女子（1976：70）。<sup>2</sup> 簡言之，Chindarsi 未能將 courtship 視為一個具有獨立文化意義的社會範疇，而側重其與婚姻之間功能性的因果關係，且強調女性在婚姻中的經濟價值。此外由於聚焦於社會生活的宗教面向，Chindarsi 並未更進一步描述 courtship 的不同實踐型態，或是苗族社會的聯姻理想，以及這兩者之間是否具有更為多元的連結與互動關係。

Donnelly 的研究對象則是因戰亂之故，從寮國遷徙至美國的 Hmong 人（大部分為青苗 [Moob Ntsuab]，少部分為白苗 [Hmoob Dawb]，1994：VII）。她主要關懷一九八零年代 Hmong 女性在跨境過程中所經歷的生活變遷，並將詮釋分析建立在幾位 Hmong 女性的口述生命史之上。Courtship 與婚姻的經驗是口述訪談的一個重要主題。透過援引不同學者的研究成果，以及摘錄部分口述史材料，Donnelly 雖亦認為 courtship 是邁向婚姻的某一步驟，但兩者之間並不具有必然的因果關係（1994：114-6）。不過她藉由探討兩性在 courtship 活動中選擇對象的標準，卻也證明 courtship 和婚姻的形成之間，雖無必然的因果關係，卻有正相關的連續性。以男性的角度而言，勤勉工作與生育力是最基本的擇偶標準。<sup>3</sup> 除此之外，若能加上年輕貌美、聰明賢慧的特質，男性當然更加趨之若鶩。同樣地，女性的擇偶標準也以勤勉工作為首選，再來便是來自熟識的家庭。除此之外，她們喜歡聰明、英俊、與自己年紀相近的對象，不喜結過婚的（1994：126-9）。女性在可以自由選擇性對象的 courtship 活動中，同樣會以婚姻作為前提，考慮是否接受男性的邀請（1994：121，更多描述請見下文）。

綜上所述，Chindarsi 將 courtship 視為邁向婚姻的初始步驟，著重女性的勞動價值；Donnelly 則關懷女性在 courtship 實踐過程中擁有多大的擇偶自由以及如何表達情緒，因而得以彰顯 courtship 自成一格的文化意義。儘管詮釋觀點不同，兩人卻同時指出，courtship 必然包括性的實踐。

關於 Courtship 中包括性實踐的必要性，Chindarsi 寫道：

Hmong 男性青年期望在彼此認識三天內，與 courting 的女孩發生性行為。若女孩不給他這樣的自由，那麼他也不會再與該名女孩 courting。也因為這樣嚴格的慣習，在 Hmong 的村落裡很難找到在結婚時仍是處女的女孩。（1976：69）

他的記述透露，女孩是否允許男孩擁有與她發生性行為的權利，幾乎等同於

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<sup>2</sup> 這個觀點與 Lemoine 和 Bernatzik 有所不同。Lemoine 認為，追求漂亮的女孩是年輕男孩們最主要的娛樂活動。Bernatzik 則提及，父親樂於見到自己的兒子具有與女孩們自在互動的聰明才智（Donnelly1994：121-2）。

<sup>3</sup> Donnelly 引用 Cooper 的研究說明，繁衍後代是 Hmong 認定社會成熟（social maturity）的重要指標。Cooper 提出一個例子。某個男人娶了一個年紀比他大、又沒有魅力的女人，但由於女方父親給了相當於聘金的嫁妝，並辦了豐富的宴席。而該名女子不但勤勉工作，更重要地，還為丈夫連續生了四個孩子，因此讓該名男子認為這一項投資值回票價，正考慮再娶。這次他要娶一個比較年輕的太太（Cooper1984：140，轉引自 Donnelly1994：127）。

女孩是否允許男孩與其建立 courtship 關係。Donnelly 則以 Hmong 研究的文獻指出：

從中國到泰國的 Hmong 社會，Savina 或 Geddes 的研究都顯示，婚前性行為是存在於村落生活中的一個事實。而他自己的報導人也同意，Hmong 青年男女會一起玩性遊戲，忠於單一對象並非該遊戲中的原則（1994：120）。<sup>4</sup>

此外她更引述 Cooper 的研究和自己的田野材料指出，

年輕男女在夜晚自由聚會，而女孩自青春期始（約十二至十五歲之間）便可不受拘束地與其自主選擇的對象發生性行為。只要不違反同一氏族內不進行 courting 的原則，該對象已婚或未婚都無所謂。這種性的往來也創造出制度化的形式，讓女孩擁有拒絕追求者任何進一步行動的完整權利。（Cooper 1984：144，轉引自 Donnelly 1994：120）<sup>5</sup>

...儘管如此，女孩的婚前冒險，並非完全不受文化限制。當男孩們（女孩們）都在尋找好時光時，女孩仍會假設，若某一男孩對她表示興趣，代表對方考慮以她作為結婚對象（Donnelly 1994：121）。<sup>6</sup>

Donnelly 的描述與分析，一方面說明女孩自十二歲起開始擁有性實踐的完整自由，有著表徵其達到「成年」（puberty）的意涵；另一方面，女孩的性對象可包括已婚與未婚男性，則暗示婚外性行為亦不受到約束。但與此同時，她也點出女孩們享有婚前的各種自由時，仍會將男孩對她們表示的興趣，與考慮將她視為未來的結婚對象連結起來。

相較而言，中國境內貴州苗人在遊方的規定上則禁止性行為的實踐。以吳澤霖的作品為例，他特別強調遊方並非如同外界所認為的，「在文化較為落後的民族中，青年們可以隨心所欲地選擇配偶」（吳澤霖 1987[1956]：94），而是有著許多規定。從地點的規定尤其可以看出，五零年代左右貴州清水江流域的苗人，在觀念上並不認同男女在遊方時發生不被公認的行為。

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<sup>4</sup> 原文為：Writers on the Hmong from Savina to Geddes, covering the area from China to Thailand, mention easy premarital sex as a fact of Hmong village life. My respondents (except the converted Christian Hmong) seem to agree with other sources that Hmong girls and boys play sexual games together, and that fidelity to one friend is not expected.

<sup>5</sup> 原文為：“Young people mix freely in the evenings and from puberty (about twelve-fifteen years old), a girl is free to have sex with any man she wishes, married or unmarried, unless he falls within the clan taboo. These sexual encounters follow an institutionalized form in which the girl has every right to reject a suitor’s advances.”

<sup>6</sup> However, girl’s premarital adventures in Laos were not unhedged by cultural conventions. While boys (and girls) were looking for a good time, girls still assumed that if a youth made any gesture of interest toward her, he was considering her as a marriage partner.

...「遊方」的地點可以稍微偏僻，但必需是一個公開的、任人看得到的地方。自由戀愛的第一階段的活動必需在這些公認的地點上進行。如果一開始就在其他隱蔽的地方進行，被人發覺，就會受到譏議，甚至認為是無恥之舉。(吳澤霖等 1987[1956]：108)

吳澤霖並總結道：

從整個清水江流域來看，苗族青年的「遊方」，是富有約束能力的。儘管他們可以任情歌唱歡樂，有時甚至尺度還可以放寬一些，但他們一般是不會逾越社會上應有的界線的。(ibid：119-120)

吳澤霖對於遊方時約束性行爲的描述，在用字遣詞上採取隱晦的筆調，只以「無恥之舉」指涉性行爲，或是「不會逾越社會上應有的界線的」說明社會對於遊方時男女性行爲的約束。相對地，張曉在九零年代中期於貴州西江苗寨收集的婦女口述史材料，則明確指出西江苗人遊方時「還未涉及性愛」。

...在傳統的遊方場上，男女之間只侷限於情愛，還未涉及性愛。你儘管可以抒情，但要保持距離，不能說任何淫穢的詞語，當然關於兩性生活的問題也絕對不會去談論。(張曉 1997：92)

此外西江苗人亦針對「不合規範的兩性行爲」，從輿論與行動層面給予制裁。

一般來說，古老的、保留原始文化比較完整的、更接近人的自然形態的民族，婚姻禁忌較多而其他兩性行爲禁忌較少。有不少的民族按民族規矩擇偶婚配，但兩性行爲又比較自由。但對於西江苗族來說，一方面要絕對嚴格地遵守族外婚制，即只與家族以外的人通婚；另一方面還要嚴格限制婚前的性行爲和婚外性行爲。...而如果發生了不合規範的兩性行爲，社會輿論會鋪天蓋地地撲向他，尤其是向她壓來，讓他（她）無法正常生活。但這也還要分兩種情況，一種是婚前越軌，一種是婚外越軌。如果是婚前越軌，主要是當事人的事情，社會多採取孤立的態度；如果是婚外越軌，損害了當事人的配偶及其家族的利益和聲譽，社會則必須給予制裁。(ibid：97-98)

若比較 Chindarsi、Donnelly、吳澤霖與張曉關於 courtship／遊方中是否牽涉性實踐的描述，可以看出東南亞 Hmong 人與貴州苗人，不管在價值上或行動上，都有相對明顯的差異。若只是將 courtship／遊方化約成以結婚爲目的的交往，或者只是 courtship／遊方實踐中的某一部分(比如，性實踐)都無法真正了解 courtship／遊方在當地社會文化中所隱含的意義。

### 三、 研究方法與重要相關資料

本專書寫作計畫主要採取田野民族誌的方法，進行研究。除了筆者於1998-2000年期間，在貴州省台江縣地區及 Fangf Bil 村寨長達一年6個月以上的田野研究以外，2009年7月到9月這段期間筆者又再度回到台江地區，進行補充調查。2009年的田野，以訪談和參與觀察為主。在為期兩個月的調查期間，筆者拜訪了貴州省苗學會的部分成員，這些成員分別來自台拱、施洞、黃平等地。根據當地的說法，這些地方的苗人與台江 Fangf Bil 村寨的苗人「說不同的話，唱不同的調」，傳統上，Fangf Bil 的苗人並不會到這些地方遊方，彼此開親的情況更是少見。通過生命史的口述，以及半結構式的深入訪談，筆者得以比較完整的掌握台江各地苗人遊方習俗的異同。在台江地區的田野工作期間，筆者亦回到 Fangf Bil 村寨進行為期兩周的參與觀察。在這期間筆者觀察到 Fangf Bil 這個寨子近十年來的變化，從而發展出探討苗人遊方變遷的觀點。

在與六位報導人的深入訪談中，筆者特別著重在報導人個人的遊方與婚姻經驗的陳述，以及報導人對於他人遊方與婚姻經驗的描述。這兩種不同層次的反思，對探討苗人遊方與婚俗的關係，提供兩個重要的線索：

其一、由於苗人遊方的習俗，表面上看起來大同小異，使得許多研究者或者是將其對單一村寨遊方習俗的詮釋，視為泛苗人文化的詮釋，或者是統整不同地區苗人的遊方習俗，歸納出一致的現象，以此代表所謂「苗人」的遊方習俗。從與報導人互動與訪談的經驗中，筆者深刻的感受到苗人對各地遊方習俗的異同，有著深切的反省，而這樣的反省是建築在他們自己的遊方與婚姻經驗。在報導人的描述中，各地遊方實踐方式的差異是根據各地不同的情況所發展出來的，用報導人的話說：「這是有一個因果的」。比如：「因為唱飛歌要大聲的唱，所以不可以在寨子中間的遊方場唱，只能在寨子邊緣的遊方場唱」，這一「因果」就解釋了為什麼有些地方的遊方要唱飛歌，有些地方卻不准唱飛歌。諸如此類的「因果」關係出現在報導人的描述中，他們用這些因果關係來解釋遊方場與寨子空間的關係、遊方對象的選擇、禮物交換與婚姻交換的關係等等。仔細分析報導人所描述的「因果」，可以發現這些「因果」離不開人們的日常生活，這些「因果」的陳述提供一個探討遊方的日常性的切入點。

其二、在幾位報導人的描述中，總是用「說不同的話，唱不同的調」這個有關「界線」的描述，來解釋為什麼他們不到某一處遊方，誠如一位年輕的報導人所說：「因為雙方話對不上，所以沒有甚麼好講的」。筆者認為所謂「不同的話」、「不同的調」並不能用我們所理解的「語言」差異來理解，「話」對不上、「調」對不上，指得是人們用「話」與「調」來描述、來定義彼此的差異。至於所謂的「話」是甚麼？「調」是甚麼？筆者以為，應該從人們在遊方中的交談、對歌的內容來理解。從 Fangf Bil 村寨的田野調查，得知人們在遊方中的交談，幾乎都是從確認彼此的 *deik/ghaif* 關係開始，既不開親又非兄弟的兩個寨子之間的年輕男女，即使聚在一起遊方也沒甚麼好談的，也就索性不相互遊方。換句話說，人們用「話不同」或者是「調不同」來作為彼此不遊方的理由，顯示遊方的界線，

更是親屬關係的界線。

綜上所述，六位報導人所描述的遊方與婚姻經驗，一方面反映遊方的日常性，另一方面反映苗人如何理解的遊方界線與開親範疇。此一結論將做為筆者進一步理解遊方變遷的基礎。

2009年筆者回到 Fangf Bil 進行追蹤調查，最突出的現象是當地苗人日常生活結構的改變：一則消費與生產行為的改變，改變了日常生活中工作與休閒時間的分配，以及勞動與娛樂的方式；一則是人口的流動，包括本地青年到外地打工，與外地遊客到本地旅遊，改變了村寨人際網絡與交往互動的方式。在 Fangf Bil 停留期間，筆者也注意到過去幾乎是天天晚上都可見到遊方男子在走村串寨，竟然沒見過一回，許多苗人表示，現在年輕人都到外邊打工，留在寨子裡的很少，只有年節慶典，年輕人回來，才會遊方。筆者因此將田野調查的重點放在日常生活結構的變遷，以及人們遊方形式的變遷。目的是探討日常生活結構的改變，如何影響遊方的「意義」。

除此之外，在筆者研究台江苗族的歷程，也花了許多時間，與 Fangf Bil 苗人公認最會唱歌的老人合作轉寫、翻譯苗歌。在轉寫、翻譯的過程中，筆者特別著重在每一首對歌的使用場合，可能變化，並請老人從他的觀點解釋，為什麼在那樣的場合要使用那樣的對歌、做那要的變化。儘管遊方的對歌非常的多，筆者不可能完全掌握所有苗歌的內容，從 1999 年以來，苗歌一直是筆者學習與研究的重點，表面上看起來，「對歌」是遊方中的「調」，是一種制式的情感展演，「交談」則是遊方中的「話」，是一種非制式的情感展演，但實際上，不論是「對歌」和是「交談」都有其制式與非制式的一面。筆者認為，比較好的觀點是將「調」與「話」視為遊方中兩種不同的文類，在本書中，筆者將進一步探討這兩種不同的文類如何構成遊方的日常性。

#### 四、專書的理論創見

根據我在 1998-2000 的民族誌田野研究，所掌握到的遊方材料，有兩個方向的拉力是同樣突出：社會性及個人，儀式及日常，非物質的情感、情緒、觀念，與物質的、肉身的、經濟等等。在這些民族誌的基礎上，我提出苗人的遊方不僅是婚姻的前導制度或現象，更是日常生活中十分重要的社交活動。本專書的重點，乃是從過去研究的基礎再深入探討遊方的日常性。在這個簡短的報告中，筆者僅從日常性研究的觀點，對「遊方的日常性」做理論上的闡述。

首先，筆者採用 Ben Highmore 的定義，把日常生活中那些看起來沒什麼特別之處的實踐當作一種價值與特性，以此來定義所謂的日常性。而日常性的研究就是從文化與歷史的觀點，探討這些價值與特性的構成與變化。歷史學家對於日常生活的重視由來已久，Braudel (1992[1979, published in French; 1981, first English translation]) 關於日常生活結構的歷史描述，開啓了歷史學家對微觀歷史與社會史的研究興趣。然而，對一向以微觀的角度探討文化的人類學家而言，Braudel 的微觀史學似乎沒有那麼大的吸引力，一直到最近十年，人類學家才開



始對「日常性」的研究感興趣，「日常生活」也才被視為是一個特定的研究範疇，而不只是為其他研究範疇提供材料的背景，或者是生活經驗中相對於儀式經驗的 default experience。與歷史學家探討價值的變化不同的是，人類學家對日常生活研究的興趣，主要是在探討「日常性」的意義，即：文化是透過什麼方式賦予沒有什麼特別之處的日常生活獨特的意義，反對在先驗的假設上將日常生活一般化。

從日常性研究的觀點來看，Henri Lefebvre 在 1958 年所出版的 *Critique of Everyday Life* 一書，即是從日常生活中那些總是被忽略的、不顯眼的、不突出的特點——如，工作與休閒——來探討日常性的經典之作。Lefebvre 的主要論點是，工作與休閒都是日常生活的一部分，他認為，人努力工作，以便有能力進行休閒，而休閒（不論是娛樂或轉移注意力）所擁有的唯一目的，就是為了逃離工作。因此，儘管在休閒中的人仍無法脫離唯物異化的存在狀態 (ibid: 232-234)，休閒與工作的斷裂，使得休閒能對工作進行批判，突顯日常生活中那些毫無特別之處的特點。對 Lefebvre 而言，日常生活並非如我們所想像的一般，是由看似連續的、同質的經驗所構成的場域，而是充滿著斷裂與異質的時空。Lefebvre 認為正是這些斷裂與異質的經驗，如工作與休閒的斷裂經驗，使得人們得以在日常生活中反思日常生活，在這樣的反思中，日常生活裡一成不變的、持續的、同質的經驗成了反思的對象，構成了人們所理解的日常性。有意思的是，當 Lefebvre 企圖從休閒與工作的辨證定義日常性時，其論證的邏輯提供了從日常生活中的其他再現，定義日常性的可能。

在 *Everyday Life: A Poetics of Vernacular Practices* (2005) 一書中，Roger D. Abrahams 從口語文類的辨證，探討人們透過語言所建構的日常性。Abrahams 認為口語文化栩栩如生地反映人們行為 (making) 與做事 (doing things) 的風格，是一個可藉此反思文化實踐本身的場域 (2005: 1)。在日常生活中，人們會因應不同語境的需要，採取適當的文類作為策略 (strategy)，比如，俗諺的文類主要在於釐清和教導前人在面對類似問題時所累積的經驗；反之，謎語的文類主要則在迷惑和娛樂 (2005: 29-33)。儘管，Lefebvre 與 Abrahams 都是從反思性 (reflexivity) 的角度來探討日常生活的日常性，從日常生活中的實踐來定義所謂的日常性，然而，他們對於何謂日常生活卻沒有太多的思考。

Janusz Mucha (1996) 在 *Everyday Life and Festivity in a Local Ethnic Community: Polish-Americans in South Bend, Indiana* 一書中，對如何定義「日常生活」的範疇提出不同的看法。Mucha 批評 Braudel，並未真正關心日常生活的本質，他認為 Braudel 只是用想當然爾的方式，將那些在時空上無法察覺的、瑣碎的例行活動，全都歸入日常生活的範疇，卻沒有告訴讀者為何「這些瑣事」應該屬於日常生活的範疇，導致他所勾畫的日常生活結構，只是建立在先驗假設上的片面理解。對此，Mucha 以為節慶 (festivity) 具有例行、反覆與眾所皆知等特點，不應該被排除在日常生活之外。Mucha 以美國波蘭人社群在以波蘭人為主的大型工廠沒落之後，他們的工作地點開始分散，因而在工作中有越來越多的機會與其

他族群的移民接觸互動，原本工作與族群性緊密結合的關係受到破壞，節慶中所創造的一種界線分別的社會時空，成了引發「全體波蘭人」的集體感最重要的場域。簡單的說，Mucha 的研究證明了 Braudel 的社會史將儀式節慶排除在日常生活結構之外，等於是忽略了族群之間往往是通過節慶來創造界線的社會事實。

綜上所述，日常性的研究是一個從反思話語(reflexive discourse)出發，企圖對日常生活提出批判的研究，其批判性有兩個層面：一是，對先驗假設的日常生活結構提出批判；一是反思日常生活中想當然爾的特性。Ben Highmore (2005[2004])在這兩個層面的批判性之間，為文化理論與日常生活找到一個對話的空間。Highmore 認為日常生活是「使陌生的變成熟悉的、不習慣的變成習慣的、衝突融合成新生的」，這一動態過程的背景，而日常生活生活則是以一種蒙太奇的再現形式向生活於其中的行動者顯現，對文化理論家而言，他們總是來回穿梭於日常生活的熟悉/不熟悉、習慣/不習慣、衝突/新生的本質之間，透過理性思考，他們將轉化日常生活中神秘、陌生的一面，使其回歸到日常生活中熟悉與和諧的常態。因此，文化理論乃是理論家們企圖將日常生活這個「雜亂世界」理性化的嘗試。換句話說，Highmore 的文化理論家是透過文化理論來定義所謂的日常生活，文化理論即是對日常性的描述，更是日常生活的本體論。

Highmore 從反思話語的觀點來探討日常性，最大的理論突破是：用日常性的概念來定義所謂的日常生活，而非用日常生活來定義所謂的日常性。此一觀點正是我所要闡述的遊方的日常性的理論基礎。我將遊方視是一個實踐的場域，在這個實踐的場域中，那些一再出現的、使遊方之所以成為遊方的實踐，構成了遊方的日常性，然而，遊方中所唱的對歌、所談的話，這些在各個不同地區的遊方中，看起來沒有什麼特別之處的實踐，卻總是在一次又一次的展演中，以一種蒙太奇的方式再現情感，不斷地賦予遊方的日常性當下的意義，這些意義構成了苗人所認知的遊方。因此，當貴州苗人宣稱因當地的日常生活結構，受到旅遊與打工潮的影響，而發生劇烈的改變，遊方的形式也因此有了很大的變化，此一看似合情合理的說法，卻沒有告訴我們日常生活結構的改變與遊方形式的變化有什麼關係。在我的討論中，過去在遊方中出現的對歌，現在成了接待客人時一再重複的實踐，或者是在年節時的遊方中的交談與對歌，都顯示了遊方的日常性有了其他的意義。儘管遊方的變遷是日常生活結構改變的後果，然而，從遊方的日常性看意義的轉變，即情感的再現形式的變化，目的是提出另一個觀看此一日常生活結構變遷的角度，以避免用日常生活結構的變遷解釋遊方再現形式的改變，這種本質化遊方的論述。

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## <赴大陸地區研究心得報告>

### 貴州苗族遊方文化的變遷與日常性

(計劃名稱《休閒、工作與日常：貴州苗人的遊方》專書寫作)

計畫類別：■ 個別型計畫    □ 整合型計畫

計畫編號：NSC 97-2420-H-009-001-

執行期間：2008年8月1日至2009年12月31日

計畫主持人：簡美玲副教授(交通大學人文社會學系)

執行單位：交通大學人文社會學系

中 華 民 國 99 年 3 月 30 日

#### 一、 前言

筆者為執行國科會專書寫作計劃《休閒、工作與日常：貴州苗人的遊方》(NSC-97-2420-H-009-001)，於2009年8月1日至31日，赴貴州省執行民族誌田野工作與古文獻研究。此行學術研究工作，由貴州國際文化交流協會擔任主要學術接待單位，並獲貴州省台灣辦公室及貴州省教委批准。

#### 二、研究目的

遊方文獻可以溯及十九世紀以前(如[明] 郭子章《黔記》卷59)。直至1920至1950年代，就社會科學觀點在貴州進行的少數民族調查，吳澤霖、陳國均等貴州民族學研究的前輩，均關注遊方或跳月等具制度化傾向的談情在苗族社會，有其相對突顯的社會意義。不過，在過去的遊方文獻尚未從理論的視域涉及兩個重要的屬性：遊方的日常性(everydayness)與社會性(sociality)。這個研究在面對貴州苗族的個人與社群所經驗的遊方如何與工作、休閒、日常生活，個人主體性，具體展現微細的關聯--而不僅是作為婚姻的附屬。這樣的研究取向，既是築基於古典的民族誌敘述與討論，並也深受當代以日常生活作為探索人類經驗場域的討論所啟發(如Lefebvre 1991[1958]；Certeau 1984；Highmore 2002a, 2002b)。

因此，我針對博士論文以來在貴州東部苗族之婚姻與親屬研究的重要部分--遊方(*iut fub*，亦即具制度化傾向的談情 *institutionalized flirt or court*)—經由以日常生活、工作及休閒作為理論視域與探討的經驗範疇，重返這批自1998年至2000年期間我自己所記錄的民族誌材料裡有關日常遊方與慶遊方的細節，進行分析，並通過此對於遊方的日常性(everydayness)與社會性(sociality)，提出描述與解釋。本研究是以生活在村寨，以農耕為主的貴州東部的 *Fangf Bil* 苗族為對象。他們以手工作為生產活動的主要技術。在日、月、季、年重複的貴州東部高地村寨日常工作氛圍，形成其特有的日常風格與內容，存在於村人對於日復一日的日常生活體驗。*Fangf Bil* 苗族以 *at naud zaif* (作熱鬧)，*at vuk gad* (作好玩)，來解釋為何要作儀式節慶或休閒。他們/她們以儀式節慶或休閒的非日常，半帶戲謔與認真的「批評」或「回應」日常的 *sent* (冷清、寂靜)與 *rat* (單調、煩悶)。其中，*rat* 與日常的、夜晚的遊方之間的關係，即在由特定的現象，來對苗人村寨生活裡的日常性，以及特有的單調性，作進一步討論。

在這個研究，我也有意脫離以心理學解釋非結構面向之遊方材料的限制，而以日常、工作、休閒及儀式，與身體的經驗及感受為基調的生活或行動，作為描述及討論遊方的場域。換言之，所要描述及探討遊方的「結構與情感」裡的「情感及情緒」，不僅是單一面向的心理經驗，也包含苗族村寨年輕人的生活、工作及休閒，儀式及日常等場域所滋長的身體經驗及對物質文化的體驗。經由更貼近日常或生活，以了解遊方與親屬聯姻結構之間的對話性。

針對這個 Fangf Bil 村落的遊方民族誌研究，筆者回到台江苗族村寨進行調查的重點，主要是遊方的歷史與變遷。原因有二：其一，由於 2000 年之後中國經濟的轉動，較諸 1990 年代，更加快速與深化，這對於貴州苗族村寨社群、個人的生活或工作，究竟有著如何的影響，是此次研究的重點。經濟活動及社會生活的變遷(如電視、DVD 等影音媒體對浪漫情感之想像的衝擊。或如 2000 年我做田野時，這個村子仍謹守過去不允許未婚姑娘出外的原則，2003 年我再造訪該村發現已經有不少未婚姑娘已經結伴赴外省打工)，如何影響村人對於遊方習俗的觀點及其在日常生活行動的轉變，這些都是此行民族誌田野蒐集的重點材料。

再則，1998-2000 筆者所蒐集的日常或遊方的材料，主要來自訪談，蒐集不同年齡(從五六十歲老婦到十二、三歲的青少女)女性的經驗及敘述，以及參與觀察的儀式及日常的遊方。但 1950 年以前，以及 1950 到 1980 所發生的近代中國的重大變革下的村寨史，又如何關聯著遊方習俗的歷史變遷，所以在這個往前追溯的遊方的歷程，我也克服只與女人談遊方的限制，而也與村寨寨老與儀式專家訪談，蒐集 1950 年代前後的村寨史及此特定歷史情境下遊方的實際與理想。我所蒐集前述的古文獻與口述生命史的材料，使我對於遊方與 1950 年以來近代中國之重大變遷與苗人遊方的關連，提出較有系統的描述及探討。並就貴州東部苗族遊方的日常性、社會性、歷史性(historicity)，三者的屬性以及相互的關聯與對話，提供具體的描述與討論。

### 三、在大陸地區研究工作執行的細節

此次田野工作的行程如下：

- 2009/8/1 抵貴陽 (7 月 26 日至 7 月 31 日，參加於昆明舉行的第十六屆國際人類學與民族學聯合會並發表苗族婚姻研究英文論文一篇，會議結束之後前往貴陽。)
- 2009/8/2 拜會接待單位
- 2009/8/3—8/6 一、貴州省圖書館、貴州省博圖書館：文獻資料閱讀、蒐集(I)  
二、與貴州大學的民族學研究夥伴進行學術交流
- 2009/8/7—2009/8/27 赴黔東南台江縣進行苗族遊方文化的社會變遷研究
- 2009/8/27 返回貴陽
- 2009/8/28—8/30 一、貴州省圖書館、貴州省博圖書館、貴州大學圖書館等：地方誌等古籍文獻資料研究 (II)  
二、拜會暨感謝接待單位
- 2009/8/31 離開貴陽前往北京大學圖書館進行親屬、婚姻、社會文化變遷等人

類學以及明清地方文獻的研究，於 2009 年 9 月 6 日返回台灣。

#### 四、研究心得

2009 年的田野，以訪談和參與觀察為主。在為期兩個月的調查期間，筆者拜訪了貴州省苗學會的部分成員，這些成員分別來自台拱、施洞、黃平等地。根據當地的說法，這些地方的苗人與台江 Fangf Bil 村寨的苗人「說不同的話，唱不同的調」，傳統上，Fangf Bil 的苗人並不會到這些地方遊方，彼此開親的情況更是少見。通過生命史的口述，以及半結構式的深入訪談，筆者得以比較完整的掌握台江各地苗人遊方習俗的異同。在台江地區的田野工作期間，筆者亦回到 Fangf Bil 村寨進行為期兩周的參與觀察。在這期間筆者觀察到 Fangf Bil 這個寨子近十年來的變化，從而發展出探討苗人遊方變遷的觀點。

在與六位報導人的深入訪談中，筆者特別著重在報導人個人的遊方與婚姻經驗的陳述，以及報導人對於他人遊方與婚姻經驗的描述。這兩種不同層次的反思，對探討苗人遊方與婚俗的關係，提供兩個重要的線索：

其一、由於苗人遊方的習俗，表面上看起來大同小異，使得許多研究者或者是將其對單一村寨遊方習俗的詮釋，視為泛苗人文化的詮釋，或者是統整不同地區苗人的遊方習俗，歸納出一致的現象，以此代表所謂「苗人」的遊方習俗。從與報導人互動與訪談的經驗中，筆者深刻的感受到苗人對各地遊方習俗的異同，有著深切的反省，而這樣的反省是建築在他們自己的遊方與婚姻經驗。在報導人的描述中，各地遊方實踐方式的差異是根據各地不同的情況所發展出來的，用報導人的話說：「這是有一個因果的」。比如：「因為唱飛歌要大聲的唱，所以不可以在寨子中間的遊方場唱，只能在寨子邊緣的遊方場唱」，這一「因果」就解釋了為什麼有些地方的遊方要唱飛歌，有些地方卻不准唱飛歌。諸如此類的「因果」關係出現在報導人的描述中，他們用這些因果關係來解釋遊方場與寨子空間的關係、遊方對象的選擇、禮物交換與婚姻交換的關係等等。仔細分析報導人所描述的「因果」，可以發現這些「因果」離不開人們的日常生活，這些「因果」的陳述提供一個探討遊方的日常性的切入點。

其二、在幾位報導人的描述中，總是用「說不同的話，唱不同的調」這個有關「界線」的描述，來解釋為什麼他們不到某一處遊方，誠如一位年輕的報導人所說：「因為雙方話對不上，所以沒有甚麼好講的」。筆者認為所謂「不同的話」、「不同的調」並不能用我們所理解的「語言」差異來理解，「話」對不上、「調」對不上，指得是人們用「話」與「調」來描述、來定義彼此的差異。至於所謂的「話」是甚麼？「調」是甚麼？筆者以為，應該從人們在遊方中的交談、對歌的內容來理解。從 Fangf Bil 村寨的田野調查，得知人們在遊方中的交談，幾乎都是從確認彼此的 dat deik/dat ghaif 的關係開始，既不開親又非兄弟的兩個寨子之間的年輕男女，即使聚在一起遊方也沒甚麼好談的，也就索性不相互遊方。換句話說，人們用「話不同」或者是「調不同」來作為彼此不遊方的理由，顯示遊方的界線，更是親屬關係的界線。

綜上所述，六位報導人所描述的遊方與婚姻經驗，一方面反映遊方的日常性，另一方面反映苗人如何理解的遊方界線與開親範疇。此一結論將做為筆者進一步理解遊方變遷的基礎。

2009年筆者回到 Fangf Bil 進行追蹤調查，最突出的現象是當地苗人日常生活結構的改變：一則消費與生產行為的改變，改變了日常生活中工作與休閒時間的分配，以及勞動與娛樂的方式；一則是人口的流動，包括本地青年到外地打工，與外地遊客到本地旅遊，改變了村寨人際網絡與交往互動的方式。在 Fangf Bil 停留期間，筆者也注意到過去幾乎是天天晚上都可見到遊方男子在走村串寨，竟然沒見過一回，許多苗人表示，現在年輕人都到外邊打工，留在寨子裡的很少，只有年節慶典，年輕人回來，才會遊方。筆者因此將田野調查的重點放在日常生活結構的變遷，以及人們遊方形式的變遷。目的是探討日常生活結構的改變，如何影響遊方的「意義」。

## (一) 出席國際會議心得報告

姓名：簡美玲      單位：交通大學人文社會學系      職稱：副教授

會議期間：2009年7月27日-31日      會議地點：雲南省昆明(雲南大學)

會議名稱：The 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Union of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES)

論文名稱：Extramarital Court and Flirt of Guizhou Miao

### 一、 會議經過

筆者於2009年7月27日-31日赴昆明雲南大學參與「世界人類學與民族學」2009年年會(IUAES)，並於會中發表苗族遊方與婚姻研究的英文論文一篇。以及擔任由瞿明安與施傳剛兩位教授所召集的會議專題「多樣性及其變遷：跨文化婚姻與家庭」的兩場會議主席。除了自己主要參與的跨文化婚姻與家庭的會議專題的發表及討論，我也參與了女性人類學專題、貴州苗族研究專題、西南中國的家屋文化研究專題，以及大會的特別講座多元文化與發展中國家等議題。7/31日會議結束後，筆者直接前往貴州進行國科會專題計劃的田野與文獻的研究工作。

### 二、 與會心得

這次的會議最有意思的是能和中國大陸、外蒙、香港、美國與日本學者從跨文化的視野探索人類婚姻與家庭的多樣性及變遷。我個人以貴州苗族為主要的研究議題，在挑戰個人情感與婚姻及家庭之一對一關係的非必然性。在此會議專題，筆者尤其和幾位也在西南或中國其他邊區進行婚姻及家庭文化之建構及解構研究的學者，進行頗為深入的對話及討論。此外，在會議期間，我也有機會與來自非洲及中南美洲的人類學家，就人類學研究及人類學教學進行了交流，這也是此次會議很難得的一種經驗。

## (二) 會議論文

The 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Union of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), Kunmin, China, July 27-31, 2009

Panel: "Diversity and Change: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Marriage and the Family"

Paper: Extramarital Court and Flirt of Guizhou Miao

(參下頁起筆者的會議論文)

The 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Union of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), Kunmin, China, July 27-31, 2009



Panel: “Diversity and Change: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Marriage and the Family”

## Extramarital Court and Flirt of Guizhou Miao

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### Abstract

The Miao in eastern Guizhou, *Hmub* is providing an alternative in the theorizing of courtship and marriage, since they have a flirtation zone for continued expression of personal desire within a larger context of social restraint. Today, much like before 1949, there are two forms of institutional flirt as manifested in everyday and ritualized settings. One is the long term flirtation alliance lasting during the life time of one’s own marriage, while the short term will end either with a break up or marriage. The textual description of the *Hmub* courting songs also reveals there are no necessary relations between marriage and courtship, and the hybrid display of flirtatious physical contacts are among courting men and women with diverse genealogical ties, affinal relations and marital status – unmarried and married. Along this direction, I will explore how the *Hmub* may be a special case of allowing for a private personal emotional zone to be created within a highly structured or institutional setting that honors social status, age and gender separation. Institutionalized flirting of the *Hmub* does serve as a means to an end – marriage, a sociological identity. It is also the psychological reassurance of one’s personal identity in the form of a viable, sexual and desirable human being.

**Keywords:** courtship, marriage, extramarital flirting, Miao (*Hmub*), Southwest China

Generally speaking, no women in any culture and society are indifferent to their partners’ extramarital affairs.<sup>1</sup> Even women in societies with double standards in this regard, would become anxious and angry whenever their own spouse or partner is sexually involved with other women. They assume that even a brief sexual encounter has the potential to

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<sup>1</sup>Jankowiak, W., M. D. Nell and A. Buckmaster, *Managing Infidelity: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, *Ethnology*, Vol. 41,

undermine the marital bond. Thus, continued vigilance is required. Most studies of extramarital affairs focused only on the community's reaction to the affair. These studies note that there are double standard societies where men are allowed to enter into an affair while the women can not. Some cultures distinguish between emotional involvement and sexual involvement. For example, evolutionary psychologists found that American women make a distinction between emotional involvement and sexual involvement. For them, emotional threat to their marriage or other forms of relationship is more serious than their partner's incidental sexual trysts with a stranger. In general, "young men are more distressed by a partner's sexual infidelity, whereas young women are more distressed by a partner's emotional infidelity".<sup>2</sup> However, there are few studies of women's reactions to their partners' flirtations in either formal or informal contexts.<sup>3</sup>

During my fieldwork in a *Hmub* village in Guizhou (1998-2000), when I first heard about "extramarital flirtation", I wondered whether wives became angry or jealous when their husbands deliberately flirted with other girls in the evening. One woman said to me, "No, I am not unhappy at my husband singing for another girl at night. That means he has a good voice." The term "flirtation" is tentatively used in translating the native term of *iut fub* among the *Hmub* in eastern Guizhou. I will introduce how the *Hmub* dialectic term of *iut fub* defined locally with details later. Briefly, *iut fub* for the natives can transcend the line between unmarried and married, creating an extramarital flirting zone. This *Hmub* practice stands in sharp contrast to that of their neighbors, the Lahu, who identify intimacy with monogamous marriage, while love is expressed as harmonious teamwork

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No. 1 (2001), pp. 85-101.

<sup>2</sup> Shackelford, T. K., M. Voracek, D. P. Schmit, D.M. Buss, V. A. Weekes-Shackelford, and R. L. Michalski, *Romantic Jealousy in Early Adulthood and in Later Life*, Human Nature, Vol. 15, No. 3 (2004), pp.283-300.

<sup>3</sup>Buss, D. M., *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating* (New York: Basic Books, 1994)

in marriage.<sup>4</sup> Though monogamous marriage has also been long practiced here and the marital bond will continue to tie the couple as ancestors after life, today, much like before 1949, the *Hmub* approve and institutionalize extramarital flirtation for men until their middle age (approximately between thirty to forty years old) and for women until they become married mothers. The flirting practices of the *Hmub* in eastern Guizhou may be offering an alternative in the current theorizing of courtship and marriage, since they have a flirtation zone for continued expression of personal desire within the larger context of social restraint.<sup>5</sup> In this article, I will explore how the *Hmub* may be a special case of allowing for a private personal emotional zone to be created within a highly structured or institutionalized setting that honors social status, age and gender separation. Institutionalized flirting of the *Hmub* does serve as a means to an end – marriage, a sociological identity that people in the community will often talk about. It is also the psychological reassurance of one’s personal identity as a viable, sexual and desirable human being.

## **Courtship and Marriage**

In *The Sexual Life of Savages in North Western Melanesia*, Malinowski noted that “a subject like sex cannot be treated except in its institutional setting”. Courtship was considered one significant customary restraint. For him, love, eroticism, magic and mythology all shape part of a culture’s courtship process.<sup>6</sup> However, he did not treat

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<sup>4</sup>Du, S.S., *Chopsticks Only Work in Pairs: Gender Unity and Gender Equality among the Lahu of Southwest China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003)

<sup>5</sup>Such distinction is important because that can be related to the debates over the link between individual feelings, emotions, and collective representations. For example in his work on Robert Hertz and the study of “sin,” Robert Parkin points that “in a more general sense, one can say that much of Durkheim and Mauss’s work concerned the nature and maintenance of social control; Hertz’s magnum opus would have been concerned with the contrasting but related theme of what happens when the individual goes against society’s injunctions.”

Parkin, R., *The Dark Side of Humanity: The Work of Robert Hertz and its Legacy* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), p. 124.

<sup>6</sup>Malinowski, B., *The Sexual Life of Savages in North Western Melanesia: An Ethnographic Account of Courtship*,

courtship as filling an autonomous niche. In his words, “courtship again, is a phase, a preparatory phase, of marriage, and marriage but one side of family life”.<sup>7</sup> Although he emphasized the functional value of courtship, he always considered it an aspect of a larger social construction. He never considered it capable of having an autonomous dimension independent of its social function, which was to bring men and women together in some form of marital arrangement.

Studies of early American courtship found that although young Americans enjoyed relative autonomy in choosing mates, they “had on average only two other relationships before meeting their future husband and wives”.<sup>8</sup> From these findings, the relationship between American courtship and marriage is not very different from the Melanesian societies.

In contrast to presenting courtship as a phase preparatory to marriage, other literature, especially those focused on narratives or performances, revealed different facets of courtship and diverse connections between courtship and marriage.<sup>9</sup> These works also explored their entangled relations. Through analyzing historical archives, Ellen Rothman highlighted personal experiences and narratives of courting and found that “courtship was not a linear progression but an amalgam of expectation, experience, and convention... the nature of courtship defies precise explanations. The vicissitudes of love, the selection of a

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*Marriage, and Family Life among the Natives of the Trobriand Islands, British New Guinea.* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982[1932]), p.xx.

<sup>7</sup>Malinowski, B., *The Sexual Life of Savages in North Western Melanesia*, p.xx.

<sup>8</sup>Cate, R. M., and S. A. Lloyd, *Courtship. Sage Series on Close Relationships* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 32.

Robins, E. and T. L. Huston, “Testing Compatibility Testing.” Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations Annual Meeting, St. Paul, MN, 1983.

<sup>9</sup>Rothman, E., *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1984).

Bates, C., *The Rhetoric of Courtship: In Elizabethan Language and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

Mainardi, P., *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003)

mate, the decisions people make as they approach marriage are always somewhat mysterious to an outsider”.<sup>10</sup>

Focusing on Elizabethan language and literature, Catherine Bates also explored the rhetoric of courtship. She described courtship as “a highly nuanced and exceptionally complex literary and political procedure”.<sup>11</sup> In her words, “courtship is a delicate, fraught, hazardous procedure which requires constant prudence, tact and subtlety because it depends for its effectiveness upon the appearance of sincerity, an appearance which could (and at times had to be) carefully calculated”.<sup>12</sup> Courtship then is like a highly codified system, “a mode which puts sincerity and deception in a teasing and often inextricable juxtaposition”.<sup>13</sup> Following such knowledge on courtship, it is not strange to arrive at the following conclusion on the ambivalence of courtship and marriage in her work:

Whether courtship exists outside marriage altogether or whether it is a prelude to marriage the crucial point is that it is never the same as marriage. Courtship stands in a peculiarly ambivalent indeterminate relation to marriage. For it remains a preliminary process—what happens before marriage, or outside the conjugal unit—and therefore exists temporarily ‘outside’ the law, which that conjugality represents.<sup>14</sup>

“If you persist in talking passion while I am talking marriage, we shall soon cease to understand each other” (quoted from Comtesse de Carigliano in Balzac’s *At the Sign of the Cat and Rocket*).<sup>15</sup> Such ambivalence of marriage and the personal happiness of man and woman was the main theme of *Husbands, Wives and Lovers*.<sup>16</sup> In this work, Patricia Mainardi discussed marriage and its discontents in nineteenth-century France from art and literature. Focused on the issue of adultery, the author attempted to examine the

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<sup>10</sup> Rothman, E., *Hands and Hearts*, p.5.

<sup>11</sup> Bates, C., *The Rhetoric of Courtship*, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> Bates, C., *The Rhetoric of Courtship*, p.2.

<sup>13</sup> Bates, C., *The Rhetoric of Courtship*, p.2.

<sup>14</sup> Bates, C., *The Rhetoric of Courtship*, p.19.

“contradiction” between marriage and individual feelings. Moving from historical narrative to representations in literature or art, at the end Mainardi tried to explore further about personal happiness, concluding that the ideal relations between men and women should be in the modern world.<sup>17</sup>

From these abundant and varying sources of literature, courtship has been described as having a functional relationship with marriage; others view it as serving to highlight a unilineal progression of shifting status arrangements whereby people move from single to married; still others see it as a more fluid or entangled relationship and, thus, not a clear cut route to marriage. Expressing the relationship between or separation of courtship and marriage, these studies significantly theorized the seriousness of court. Linear and dialectical perspectives are both important in understanding complicated courting cultures. This article will show that the *Hmub* may be a special case since they demonstrate the two relationships (lineal and dialectical) between courtship and marriage within one institution by two forms of flirtation, long term and short term.

## **Field Setting and Research Methods**

Fangf Bil is a *Hmub* village perched high on a hillside on the upper reaches of the Qingshuijiang River. It forms part of the northern subgroup of the *Hmub* in Guizhou.<sup>18</sup> Fangf Bil is part of Fanzao Township, Taijiang County, southeastern Guizhou Self-Governing District, Guizhou Province. The people in this village call themselves *Hmub*, which is cognate with *Hmong*. The village is composed of over 330 households and has

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<sup>15</sup> Mainardi, P., *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers*, p.213.

<sup>16</sup> Mainardi, P., *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers*, p.213.

<sup>17</sup> Mainardi, P., *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers*.

<sup>18</sup> Yang, T. S., *Renqun Daima de Lishi Ghocheng--Yi Miao zu Zuming Wei Li* (The Historical Process of Signs in Human Groups: the Case of Hmong Nationality Names) (Guiyang: Guizhou Renmin Chuban She, 1998), p. 99.

a population of almost 1,500 persons. It is divided into eleven hamlets (*vangf*), whose respective names refer to some nearby geographic feature.

The residents of any single hamlet will generally be the agnatic descendants of a lineage sub-segment and share a common Han Chinese surname. The naming system is patronymic. Regardless of gender, a person's name is composed of his or her name preceded by his or her father's name, the father's name being preceded by his or father's name in turn. Han Chinese surnames appear to have come into use only in the eighteenth century, with the intrusion of the Chinese State. Han Chinese surnames are seldom heard in everyday *Hmub* discourse, but they accord with the patrilineal spirit of Fangf Bil naming practices.

The eleven hamlets of Fangf Bil village are organized into five patrilineal marriage groups. Marriage within a marriage group is forbidden. The five marriage groups have the five Han Chinese surnames of Zhang, Tang, Wan, Yang and Tai. However, the correspondence between the Chinese surnames and the marriage groups is not absolute. Hamlets, surnames and patrilineal marriage groups are all organized, one way or another, around ancestor descent groups. These groups are generally localized residentially and share a common male ancestor, corporate ancestral rites and corporate agricultural land. The surnames and hamlets roughly coincide with the marriage groups, but it is only the marriage groups that correspond directly with ancestor descent groups.

This paper is based on my long term fieldwork in Fangf Bil village. It was started with a pre-field summer trip in 1997, followed by a main fieldwork for my dissertation from November of 1998 to February of 2000, and an additional summer field trip in 2004, I have conducted a village based ethnographical research related to marriage and flirting

on the *Hmub* for more than 20 months. Combining with the anthropological methods of participant observation, in-depth interview and long term residence in the village, I attempted to explore the interplay between personal emotions (erotic, romantic, or flirtatious feelings) and social institutions (marriage and courtship). At the beginning of my fieldwork, I focused on the studying of the social structure of the *Hmub* village. I did a census of more than 300 households and drew up the pedigrees and genealogical records for each family as discovered through semi-structured interviews.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, I collected the kinship terms employed by native speakers and recorded the actual use of the terminology in both everyday and ritualized settings. This datum outlining of the social networks of the *Hmub* village enabled me to understand the personal relationships between families and between individuals. It is important to describe the marital ideals provided by my informants, as well as the reality of marriage, to see where they converge and where they differ in detail.

Another focus of this paper was the private domain of sentiments. By examining how the *Hmub* behaved in institutional flirting settings as well as analyzing their love songs, I was able to enter into the emotional world of the “young people” (*vangt*).<sup>20</sup> But this entailed a problem: I was already the young mother of two sons when I carried out the research project for my Ph.D. dissertation. For any woman in the village to be a mother meant she would be defined as “old” (*lok*) and, therefore, excluded from most institutional flirting activities. However, the villagers still regarded me as “a young girl”, despite my actual social status as defined by their conventions. One of the reasons was

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<sup>19</sup>Pedigree is recording basic demographic data (such as name, age, marriage, birth) of the members of each household. Genealogical records express consanguine and affine relations among households, family, and lineages.

<sup>20</sup> The “young people” with quotation mark in this paper indicates that the people involved in courtship are not always young people in its strict sense; especially on the occasions of festival courtship activities and singing antiphonal songs, there are lots of old people participating in them.



probably because of my dress, which was no different from the local unmarried girls.<sup>21</sup> Wearing a youth's clothing combined with being an outsider, plus being a "Han Chinese" doctoral student from Taiwan enabled me to participate in and observe the young peoples' flirting interactions and daily life. The Fangf Bil villagers were accustomed in their encounter with local Han Chinese but it was still a fresh experience for most of them that I, a Taiwanese female graduate, was living in the village with them for more than one and half years continually. Besides asking me about the purpose of my research, they especially liked to ask me about political, economical, cultural, and everyday issues with regards to Taiwan when I had opportunities to chat with them.

Institutionalized flirting activities can take in the forms either of get-togethers or of "talking love" throughout the night underneath a young woman's window. Although I participated directly in many get-togethers, I was able listen to but not directly observe them during their conversations. I was able to interview the girls later as to what was exchanged. Flirting activities in the village can be open, conveying some features of ritualized performance, but they can also be very private and personal encounters. Without the girls accompanying me during fieldwork and their willingness to let me share in their "romantic" or flirtatious emotions and experiences, I would not have been able to understand the content and contextual value of the institutionalized flirtation between individuals.

During my fieldwork, I lived in the home of an unmarried girl. I was able to develop a close fictive relationship with her as evident that we easily and readily called each other sister. In my fieldwork, this girl accompanied me day and night, which enable me to

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<sup>21</sup> The unmarried young women wear trousers and coats bought from the outside, usually blouses or sportswear in summer and woolen sweaters in winter.

share from her, at times, her friend's experiences, moods and views on marriage and feelings about men.

### ***At Khait* (“Getting Married”)**

The primary structural factors that shape long term (extramarital) flirting are: bilateral cross-cousin marriage, village endogamy, and duo-local post-marital residence. The terminological system of this village is similar to the Dravidian-type structure of the kinship terminology in conjunction with the ideal and practice of prescriptive cross-cousin marriage. In terms of classificatory kin relations, most women in Fangf Bil still marry either their classificatory matrilineal or patrilineal cross cousins: that is, either marriages of father's sister's daughter with mother's brother's son (FZD/MBS) or mother's brother's daughter with father's sister's son (MBD/FZS) occur.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the practice of cross-cousin marriage is still related to how kin are classified in Fangf Bil, a community that clearly distinguishes between near and distant kin. Thus bilateral cross-cousin marriage is not actually father's sister's son (FZS) or mother's brother's son (MBS), but rather between members of patrilineal descent groups who are related to one another. These are either as classificatory patrilineal cross cousin (FZHBS, FZHFBS, or FZHFFBSSS), who are equated terminologically with the father's sister's son (FZS), or as classificatory matrilineal cross cousin (MFBSS, or MFFBSSS), who are equated terminologically with the mother's brother's son (MBS). This means there are classificatory FZD/MBS and classificatory MBD/FZS marriages. Parallel with the marriage rule, the binary organizations of the groups of Fangf Bil are given classificatory

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<sup>22</sup>FZD means father's sister's daughter; MBS, mother's brother's son; MBD, mother's brother's daughter; FZS, father's sister's son. Hereafter, I follow the kin abbreviations: F=father, M=mother, B=brother, Z=sister, G=sibling, E=spouse, S=son, D=daughter, P=parent, C=child, e=elder, y=younger, ms=man speaker, ws=woman speaker, etc. Barnard, A. and A. Good, *Research Practices in the Study of Kinship*. (London: Academia Press, 1984), p. 4.

reality in the distinction between *gad ghat* (agnates, literally “hosts” or “us”) and *khait* (affines, literally “guests”). Marriage is prohibited between *gad ghat* (or simply *ghat*), but permitted with *khait*. The centrality of the relationships between *ghat* and *khait* in Fangf Bil village is indicative of the importance of kinship in the village social process.

Village endogamy is also important in exploring the practice of cross cousin marriage in the village. The Chang Family and Tang Family marriage groups have a combined population of over 90 percent of Fangf Bil’s total population. The ratio of intermarriages between the two marriage groups far exceeds marriages outside of the village. The six hamlets of the two marriage groups depend on one another for the vast majority of their wives. In short, the two groups seem to constitute something approaching a categorically binary structure. Ultimately, most marriages take place within the village through a system of classificatory bilateral cross cousin marriage.

Duo-local post-marital residence (or delayed transferred marriage) is the third institutional feature to assist the institutionalization of long-term flirtation. Generally, a bride in a *Hmub* village does not live with the groom after the wedding ceremony but immediately return to stay with her natal kin. This custom of duo-local residence is called *niangt zix* (literally “sitting at home or staying at home”). The wife visits the husband’s house only on festival days or to assist in the farm work of her husband’s family until their first child is born. During this period the wife still wears the garments of an unmarried woman. Whether doing farm work in the daytime or engaging in flirting activities in the evening, the wife spends most of her time with other unmarried women or other married women who are similarly “staying at her own natal parent’s home.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> They consider themselves classificatory sisters.

During the duo-local period, both wife and husband can freely attend their own flirting activities separately. The wife still can talk about love or joke along with other boys who flirt with her by her bedroom window in the evening when she is staying at her own parents' home (see the following paragraph for more details of institutionalized flirting activities). Her personal leisure time and individual feelings at engaging in such extramarital flirting will not come to an end until she has become a mother and begins to live regularly with her husband. In the *Hmub* village, most wives will become mothers one or two years after their marriage. Only a few are still living in their natal homes more than “three, four or five years”<sup>24</sup> after marriage. No matter how old a wife or husband becomes, if they have not yet had children, they will continue to be considered “young” women or bachelors, and their marital status will remain vague, especially in regard to long term flirting activities.

In general, the combination of prescriptive cross-cousin marriage with village endogamy continually creates a small world, generation after generation, which means that the *Hmub* prefer to form and maintain their social world by production and reproduction within one village, ideologically and sociologically. However, such cohesive social constraint of intra-village affinal alliance leaves a place for duo-local residence, *niangt zix*, which demonstrates the fluidity between flirting and marriage. As described earlier, duo-local residence provides the opportunity for the married men and women to control their extramarital flirting activity. This is an important characteristic in addition to the collective and institutional aspects of the cross cousin marriage of the *Hmub*. The fluidity of the flirting will be discussed with more details later.

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<sup>24</sup> This is a *Hmub* idiom which means a couple of years.

Besides the institutional aspect and the prescribed rules, however, we also need to see *Hmub* marriage from the perspective of the social actors. Marriages in Fangf Bil occur after a brief courtship, and may or may not involve romantic love. They can be either public marriages (*ghaif zix bat mongf*, literally “to be sent away from home by the bride’s parents”) or elopements (*at dlius mongf*, literally “to go away secretly”).<sup>25</sup> Nowadays, most marriages are decided by the young people themselves, whether public marriages or elopements. To become socially recognized as *Hmub* adults, they are expected to be married *and* have children. Once the wife and the husband have had their own first child, they will begin to live together. The nuclear family, consisting of a couple and their unmarried children in one household, is the most common form in a *Hmub* village.

Sharing ideas, knowledge, feelings and cooperation in both the production of resources and reproduction are obvious aspects of the daily life of each married couple. Couples talk to each other often at home, especially during meals. They discuss the division of their farm work and housework, exchange ideas on how to solve family problems and bring up children, and share news, jokes, rumors, scandals or arguments

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<sup>25</sup>The two kinds of marriages show their differences in certain ways. Almost all the public marriages are arranged marriages that take the form of prescriptive cross-cousin marriage with village endogamy, and they have a more complicated wedding ceremony. Other rituals are involved in public marriages. First, the bride’s family will approve of her leaving by undertaking a ceremony involving the slaughter of a chicken. She may leave if the eyes of a chicken killed by the groom or the bride’s brothers are open. Another ritual involves a ceremonial farewell in which the bride shares a cup of wine with her brothers to express farewell. After these rituals are performed, the bride leaves her family’s house. Wearing formal *Hmub* clothes and silver ornaments, the bride in a public marriage departs for her groom’s house with her “parallel” sisters in the daytime. Elopements, on the other hand, are much simpler, and lack the rituals of the public marriages. Elopements violate village endogamy and are finalized when the bride, wearing a dress bought from the market (*ux diuf*, literally “the Han dress”), cross the threshold of the house alone with her groom in the middle of the night. Such marriages occur without her family’s consent or knowledge. Elopements of the *Hmub* are not necessarily related to romantic love. However, we may consider “elopement from the perspective of a bride’s weighing the uncertainties and special ambivalence of an alternative cognatic marriage against the certainties and general ambivalence of a restricted marriage. Moreover, elopements make intelligible Miao (*Hmub*) ambivalence about the collective marital ideal and individuality (Chien 2005).

Chien, M., “Miao Elopement in Eastern Guizhou: Ambivalent Collective and Individual.” *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology*. Vol. 3, No. 1 (2005), pp. 49-86.

which are circulating among the other villagers. Whenever I visited or stayed in a household I often heard couples chatting, but sometimes I heard them quarrelling or fighting. Interactions between spouses inside their own home seem normal. But what impressed me strongly was the their indifference toward one another once outside their house.

The spouses are expected to walk out separately, ideally with their same-sex relatives, whether they are going to do farm work, engage in ritual activities, or visit relatives. A married couple walking together around the village is considered impolite and inappropriate behavior. Yet, when they are beyond the public's gaze, the *Hmub* actually seek out private encounters that allow them to engage in emotionally satisfying and intensely intimate interactions with members of the opposite sex. *This is the Hmub institutionalized extra-marital flirting.*

### ***Iut Fub* (“Institutionalized Flirting”)**

Courtship is very common as an intentional performance with the goal of marriage in many societies. This is also true for men and women of many other *Hmub* or *Hmong* villages who spend a great deal of time together, expressing personal sentiments through talking, singing and intimate physical contact. However, it is not necessarily and simply so for the *Hmub* in eastern Guizhou.

### **Long Term and Short Term**

Classificatory cross-cousins flirt in the Fangf Bil society is similar to a classic symmetric joking relation. Flirtation between *Hmub* cross cousins demonstrates the marriageability of a potential spouse. Such view is roughly correspondent with that of

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Mauss, Lévi-Strauss, Dumont, and McDougal.<sup>26</sup> But more than from the perspective of structuralism this paper explores relationships between marriage and courtship, and between individual feelings and social institutions, through *Hmub* cross-cousin flirtation. There are two forms of *Hmub* courtship that can be defined as long and short term flirtation. The long term alliance may last during the lifetime of one's own marriage, while the short term will end in a break up or, if both parties involved are single, marriage. But whether the flirtation is long or short, both may constitute the similar features of flirtation (with details later). It is still different from the conventional ideal of the exclusiveness of one-to-one romantic love (or passion). Yet, this distinction between long term and short term *Hmub* flirting may not be expressed strictly or explicitly by local views. The indigenous conceptualization of a young person for the *Hmub* includes teenagers to adults and even middle-aged men and women who have married within the past few years. Briefly, unmarried men or women (whether single or divorced) and married men or women without children are considered young persons who can attend flirting activities freely.

During long term flirtation, love tokens are exchanged to express one's feelings, such as flower belts or coats. Men may tie two or three flower belts from their former lovers over their daughter's *Hmub* clothing when they are 2 or 3 years old. If the coat is a souvenir of separation with their former lovers, men or women may still wear it when they are in their forties or fifties. Yet, there are boundaries, especially in long term flirtation that cannot be transcended, with rules regulating the flirting activities of married men and women. A married woman can flirt with her male affine until she has delivered

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<sup>26</sup> Parkin, R. "The Joking Relationship and Kinship: Charting a Theoretical Dependency." *Journal of the Anthropological Society for Oxford*. Vol. 24, No. 3 (1993), pp. 251-263.

her first child. However, married men can participate in extra-marital flirtation after they become a father. Moreover, men are allowed to flirt with his female affine until his children reach their teens. Here exists a gender bias in favor of men.

*Iut fub*, literally meaning “wandering in the village,” is never used in day-to-day conversations among the villagers, because it indicates sexuality. Instead, they use *Hmub* expressions such as *at zot* (“play for fun”), *lof vud* (“take a rest”), *god* (“get together”) and *niangt* (“sit down”), which have nothing to do with sexuality. *Iut fub* is nonetheless an indispensable part of *Hmub* social life. It occurs during particular time and space, and with a special group of individuals. On ordinary days, *iut fub* may take place every night for the young people. After supper, the old people and the children go to bed early. The whole village falls into darkness and quiet except for the faint lights in the windows of each family. After a period of silence, whistles (*kot ghait*) are blown vigorously and without restriction into the dark night. Footsteps are heard, together with hush conversations. The boys initiate the sounds calling for girls to enter into a flirting exchange. Thus the boys from the Tang family will go to the Zhang family and vice versa. When the footsteps slow down, knocking is heard at a girl’s window inviting her to talk to him. If the girl opens the window, they may talk in a gentle voice. If a whole group of boys flirts with a girl, the conversation will be loudly filled with humorous remarks.

The flirting boys also try to find out where a group of girls may be together. Once the girls are located, the boys join them in conversation. At midnight the group’s conversation changes into a dyadic or one-to-one exchange called *ib laik del ib laik* (“one likes the other”). Such conversations may continue deep into the night and stop after the cock crows once or twice. Some exchanges may continue until daybreak.



As I have described in the previous paragraphs, the people participating in *iut fub* should ideally be *vangt* (the “young people”). However, there is no strict limitation on their age and status (married or single). These exchanges between men and women from different marital status and age cohorts appear to be conducted, especially by the woman, from a more detached role posture. Young women are clearly more restraint in flirtation with someone outside their age cohort. For example, once, at a "girls' get-together" (*god dat ghaif*) flirting activity, I heard a young girl call a man who had put his hands on her shoulders intimately “maternal uncle” (*daid nenk*),<sup>27</sup> and she tried to push his hands away. Another night, I observed a seventeen-year-old unmarried girl talking heatedly with a middle-aged man, the father of a ten-year-old son, whom she called *but* (literally “sister’s husband or brother-in-law”). The third case involved a group of unmarried girls who invited a group of married men, who were fathers, to play or flirt together in a field near the village. During the festival flirting event, the girls constantly called these men “father of *Dand*” or “father of *Zent*.” *Dand* or *Zent* are the first names of men’s eldest son or daughter. Clearly, the girls were keen on conveying they were not interested in the men as anything more than a momentary flirtation. For these middle aged married men, there would be a momentary flirtation, too, though in the form of post-marital flirtation relationship.

Women who dress in the same way at the institutionalized flirting gatherings may be unmarried or may have been married for a couple of years. When a woman stays at her natal home, her dress is similar to that of any unmarried girl, coiling up her hair, and wearing flowers, jewelry and *ut diuf* (“Han Chinese clothes” or clothes bought in the

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<sup>27</sup> They did not actually have an actual blood relationship.

downtown market).<sup>28</sup> Moreover, like unmarried women, she can freely join in the flirting activities in the evening. In this way, flirting gatherings are open to everyone. The fluid display of women's dresses can actually cover up the boundary of these two forms of *Hmub* institutionalized flirtation.

### **Physical Intimacies**

To display intimate body contacts openly is very common in the *Hmub* flirting culture. A partner is permitted to put his hands on her shoulders, waists or legs. Flirtatious or intimate physical contact between men and women is acceptable at the appropriate time and place for *iut fub*. The old people will scold the young if the latter disobey the rules. Moreover, only when girls and boys are together in a group can an individual display intimate physical contact flirtatiously and openly. In other words, if there is only one boy flirting with a group of girls, they can only sit down around the hearth and talk to each other; but if there are two or three boys flirting with five or six more girls, the boys can flirt with the girls nearby. However, the other partners will stop them if their physical contacts go beyond the accepted norms. Inappropriate behavior would indicate that the boys look down upon the other girls present in the same *iut fub* activity.

Intimate physical touches do not necessarily indicate a steady relationship between lovers. Even those who meet for the first time in *iut fub* can display intimate physical contact within the accepted boundaries. I remember the first time I went to watch an inter-village water buffalo fight. At the end of the fighting, I saw groups and pairs of boys

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<sup>28</sup> Most of the women with the status of "the old", from those who have just given birth to her first baby to the old women, wear Miao clothes and a black cloth over their heads rather than colorful jewelry.

and girls singing or exchanging intimate love whispers. Some even held each other's shoulders and leaned on each other closely. At first, I thought they were couples in steady relationships. Later on, some girls told me that the girls and boys who were flirting were mainly from different villages near by and were holding an *iut fub* event after the water buffalo fight. Although they looked intimate, most of them had never met each other before. This might be their first flirtatious encounter. For most of them, their personal names remained unknown. Another example of institutionalized flirting was found in a bridegroom's behavior toward my friend *Ghaif*, a 20 year-old unmarried woman. When *Ghaif* and I were accompanying the bridegroom's group returning to the Fangf Bil village, I observed the bridegroom was holding *Ghaif's* hand several times in a flirtatious matter. I felt confused when the other boys did not show any response or comment on the groom's "inappropriate behavior" toward *Ghaif*, who was the bride's good friend and a sister (they were classificatory patrilineal parallel cousins).

When we arrived at the Fangf Bil village, the groom and his cousins went to repair their bamboo musical instrument, *gik*. I asked *Ghaif* how could the bridegroom touch her body so openly and flirtatiously? *Ghaif* evidently found my question funny. She laughed and explained to me: "I don't quite like the way he took my hand, either, Sister. However, he is allowed to take or touch my hands or some part of my body (like the shoulder or waist) openly while I am still unmarried. This is very common in our *Hmub* society."

Unlike the "strangeness" of the cross village *iut fub* partners, the male and female participants of the intra-village flirting activities are near or distant affines to each other. The boy may be the "brother-in-law" of the girl, and the girl may be the "sister-in-law" of the boy, or the wife of his nephew. At the girls' get-together flirting activity, you may

hear the girl call the boy *but* (“brother-in-law”), *daid nenk* (“maternal uncle, mother’s brother”), *bad liut* (“husband’s elder brother,” prescriptive terminology) or *bad yut* (“husband’s younger brother,” prescriptive terminology). These kinship terms, which reveal the affinal relationships between people of different generations, are used in conformity with the intimate or flirtatious physical touch in the institutionalized extra-marital flirting.

### ***Diut Hxad Vangt* (“Love Song Duet”)**

Besides flirtatious body contacts or heartfelt night conversations, singing love songs (especially duets) is another common feature of institutionalized flirtation. It can occur in day-to-day and festival flirting settings. Here is an example of a love song duet recorded during my fieldwork. This love song performance happened in the early spring of 1999 in connection with the seasonal festival for celebrating the planting of rice in the field. Many people, male and female, young and old, from the neighboring four villages, gathered on the hillside fields to watch bullfights hosted by the Fangf Bil villagers with several other villages in the neighboring area. After the bullfights, most of the older men, women and their children left, but the young men and women stayed for the institutionalized dating. Men and women from different villages were sitting or standing close together, happily talking or singing to each other. The love song performances of some very skilled singers had also attracted a large audience.

The two female singers were from the Fangf Bil village, and the two male singers from another village, not very far from Fangf Bil. The people of the two villages spoke the same *Hmub* dialect and wore the same style of *Hmub* clothes. The two male singers, in their forties, were already married and had become fathers. One female singer, in her

twenties, was single, while the other, (nearly 25 years old) married with no children, still lived with her natal kin. We knew that the female singers were descendents of the same patrilineal group, but did not know their real genealogical relationships to the male singers. However, during the break and at the end of the song performance, we heard the men and women address each other using prescriptive cross-kin terms. Besides the singers, the audience was consisted of women from the Fangf Bil village, and men from another village. Like the relationships between the male and female singers, the male and female audiences were also classificatory affines.

The whole performance took the form of a spontaneous competition among the singers. They had to listen carefully to what their opposite side was singing. If they were careless, they might get lost among the verses and fail to respond correctly. The 400 verses sung by the four singers as a duet lasted for more than an hour. However, the performance was not really serious or formal. The singers talked to each other, or joked with the audience when they had finished their own verses. The audiences also talked to each other while they were enjoying the show. They liked to make comments on the performance, comparing the skills of the singers, or discussing the contents of the verses with the other members of the audience. The contents of the verses were more important than the voices. Any singer who did not pay attention to his or her turn to sing, or who did not look for a good verse with which to respond, might be criticized and receive negative comments or be given a bad “name” (reputation) by the audience.

The story line of this love song duet is about an encounter between two women and two men who meet each other at an institutional flirting event. On the one hand, the men and women both express the same shy but joyful emotions in attending *iut fub* occasions.

On the other hand, they tease themselves and their partners about the dialectical relationship between marriage and extra-marital flirtation. Finally, they express their own solitary sentiments and lonely emotions. Expanding from the story line, there are four thematic emphases in the song: “marriage,” “*iut fub*,” “two kinds of relationships between marriage and *iut fub*,” and “individual sentiments.” These form the aesthetic and sentimental dimensions of marriage and flirtation for the *Hmub*.

In this paper I pay special attention on the singing of love songs which reveals the often entangled relationship between marriage and flirting in *Hmub* society. The love song duets address the autonomous nature of marriage and flirting as well as the reluctance of men and some women to make a total commitment to their marriage. Clearly, many *Hmub* want to engage in some sort of romantic play which serves to validate their own desirability. This intention is not without its problems as it may result in fostering conflicting relationships between individuals and someone else’s spouse. These themes are evident in the following love duet: “People who are thinking of each other come to rest in the middle, my cross cousin. The girls want to sit down and talk with the boys, so they rest in the middle. No matter it is true or not, we will say the boys have wives. If you have wives, boys, then go home to take care of them. No matter it is false or not, we will say the boys have wives. Go home and separate from your wives. Then we two will be willing to accompany both of you.”

In contrast to the previous themes, other love song verses highlight the separation between marriage and flirting. The female singers sing one of the two verses as follows: “The boys are like ‘words.’ The boys and the girls are talking and singing together like ducks playing joyfully in the water. We do not know why we are sitting next to you all

the time. We do not know why we are accompanying husbands of others.” While the male singers would sing “The girls are good-looking and speak well, but with two hearts. Like the good field grows millet twice, yearly. One heart accompanies their husbands; another heart accompanies us”. All the verses vividly show the same dialectical relations between marriage and flirting. Using rhetorical strategies to create contrasting and dramatic metaphorical expressions, the verses uncover the hidden, fluid, conflicting, and dialectical features of marriage and institutionalized flirtation, both poetically and symbolically.

### **Local Comments on Extramarital Flirtation**

Interviews (2004) with Fangf Bil women and men about extramarital flirtation found a range of attitudes. Several middle-aged or older women noted that they were not jealous. An older woman added that, “No, I am not unhappy. I am also glad of his good singing voice during extramarital flirtation. He only goes (flirting) for fun.” Perhaps because of being aware of my uncertain attitude toward their answers, these women even sang a *Hmub* folk song to convince me during the interview: “Mom has become old, because she has given birth a baby. Dad under such situation goes out to flirt with another girl. Dad goes to talk about love by himself. Dad’s flirting affair is his own business.” Like the description of the song, these older women emphasized that husband and wife hardly ever accompany each other out of doors, no matter whether walking to the fields or attending ritual activities. “It’s a matter of shame for (married) couples to appear together openly,” they emphasized. “If a husband wants to go out (for extramarital flirting) let him go. That’s his business,” these women said in an amused fashion. These comments are very common among the aged women of this village.

Although not as light-hearted as the older women when talking about extramarital flirting, two younger mothers (30 years old) in this *Hmub* village also said that they would allow their husbands to go out and flirt with girls in the evening until their children begin to go to school (i.e. when the children have grown up and the father will not be expected to flirt with girls freely). I asked them whether they felt heart-broken or angry about their husband's flirting activity in the evening. "No, I am not heart-broken or angry. Even if you feel hurt or angry, you just could not change anything at all. My kids' daddy still keeps going out flirting with another young women alone," one mother said. "Although you may be unhappy, you cannot scold him outside your bedroom. That would cause shame among other villagers if they know that you are unhappy at such a thing," the others emphatically added.

In trying to conform to the collective ideas about extramarital flirtation, there still exist individualized actions or perceptions. One middle-aged man in the village told me how most of the male villagers perceive extramarital flirting in a practical manner: "If you want to go flirting with girls in the night time by talking or singing duets, you go ahead secretly. Do not let your wife know. If she does not know, nothing will happen. If she knew, she might get angry." He also mentioned "some women are 'reasonable,' they don't get mad at this; but some are 'unreasonable,' they do get mad." It seems clearly that there is a double standard for men and women in terms of permissible flirting after marriage. In some of the informants' quotes, it seems very salient, with the focus being on women left behind while men pursue extramarital gratification. Though this paper does not aim to explore the practice of gender bifurcation of the extra-marital flirtation, we still may wonder about how this practice might relate the tradition of polygyny in the



history of the *Hmub* or *Hmong* (e.g. Chindarsi 1976),<sup>29</sup> or how it might relate to the role of motherhood.

## **Discussion**

I have described the relations between marriage and flirting and also the practice of extra-marital flirtation both verbally and non-verbally. There are two points that I will elaborate further: First, what the characteristic of the *iut fub* can be explained as an institutionalized extramarital flirting; and second, how the *iut fub* can be depicted as an alternative to functional courtship or courtship with lineal relation to marriage which also sheds light on certain specific features of “courtship,” e.g. the duality of flirting and courting, or the “serious” flirting culture with regards to extramarital as well as non-extramarital relations.

### **Institutionalized Flirting Zone**

In general, *iut fub* in the *Hmub* village has become institutionalized through the ritualized social arrangements of place, time, and the grouping of people. On the one hand, it conforms to the rules for affinal alliance: all girls and boys of the Fangf Bil village who flirt together are *khait* affines towards one another. On the other hand, *iut fub* also creates a juxtaposed, solid, binary structure for the institution of cross-cousin marriage, as well as an image of fluidity when integrating the institutions of marriage, extramarital flirting and duo-local residence. Ultimately, the textual description of duets does not necessary have a lineal relation between marriage and flirting. With the hybrid display of intimately physical contacts among flirting men and women marked with diverse genealogical ties, affinal relations and marital status, this creates fluidity between

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<sup>29</sup> Chindarsi, N. *The Religion of the Hmong Njua*. (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1976).

personal emotions and the social constraints of the institution of marriage. Among the emotions created by *iut fub*, extramarital flirtation is a way of reconciling personal “romantic” and “intimate” encounters with a lifetime of constraint through the institution of prescriptive marriage. In a way, there are two forms of *iut fub* in this flirting zone: one leading to marriage and another leading to validation of the self as a sexual being.

The peculiarity of this zone of the *Hmub* can be highlighted furthermore when compared with other societies. In addition to the literature quoted above, which is divided over the exact nature of the interplay between courtship and marriage, the study of Jane Collier on the Los Olivous in Spain elaborates how market economy, individual intention, and self-management techniques related to the senses and emotional workings of the “modern” individual, plus varying gender conceptions, move a society from one based on courtship to dating, especially as it pertains to the shift between duty to personal desire.<sup>30</sup> Unlike the Spanish cases, where duties shift with heightened individuality to personal desire, the *Hmub* adopt both. There is duty indeed in the formal processes of flirting and the everyday interaction between adults, especially married couples in public (but not in private). The *Hmub* also have a flirtation zone for continued expression of personal desire within a larger social restraint. How different is this from 19<sup>th</sup> Qing dynasty (or maybe many other stratified societies) where ordinary men went to brothels, and social elites seek the company of courtesans, all started in the form of entertaining in a public place, but ended with personal gratification when in private. Yet what is unique among the egalitarian *Hmub* is the absence of a stratified society where a very well off class is nonexistent. But the personal zone for intimacy remains important and salient. In this

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<sup>30</sup> Collier, J., *From Duty to Desire: Remaking Families in a Spanish Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 67-112.

way, the *Hmub* may be a special case for validating the sexual self of a human being, socially as well as psychologically, with the provision of an alternative in theorizing romantic love from the Western social stratifications and heighten individualism.

### **Duality of Flirting and Courting**

However, can the *iut fub* be explained in terms of flirtation culture rather than courtship culture? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines courtship as “the action or process of paying court to a woman with a view to marriage; courting, wooing.” It is also defined as “behavior or action befitting a court or courtier; courtliness of manners,” or “the paying of court or courteous attentions; *esp.* the paying of ceremonial or complimentary acts of courtesy to a dignitary”.<sup>31</sup> As such, the meaning of courtship seems to be identical with manners or politeness. In contrast flirtation seems considered less serious than courtship. Flirtation is defined as “a quick, sprightly motion, a cant word among women;” and “the action or behavior of a flirt; flighty or giddy behavior, frivolity; the action of playing at courtship”.<sup>32</sup> In reviewing the *Hmub* institutionalized flirting data I will shed light on its seriousness, and argue that the boundary between courtship and flirtation may not be so obvious. For our discussion, I will draw on three other ethnographies with regards to courting and flirting cultures to demonstrate that seriousness is a specific feature commonly seen in other institutional courting and flirting customs, though with diverse levels of seriousness. Long term and formal obligations or institutions create one type of serious courtship and flirtation, while the other is related to premarital sexuality.

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<sup>31</sup> Simpson, J. A. and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume III. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989a), p. 1064

<sup>32</sup> Simpson, J. A. and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume V. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989b), p. 1064.

The socially constrained *Hmub* flirtation, enhanced with entertaining devices, creates a leisurely and socially playful zone for the community. Similarly, Collier also addressed the conventional courtship of a Spanish village in the 1960s' as a long, formal institution and a pleasing emotional zone for young persons. In this case, the seriousness of courtship is derived from its formal asexual manners, reputation, and long-term courting activity before marriage.<sup>33</sup> There is a vivid description about how the boy was permitted to enter into the girl's house formally, successfully transforming his interest from informal street courtship, that I would label "flirtation", to courtship.

The boy, hair plastered and shoes polished, enters the kitchen and accepts a chair. *Suegro* (father-in-law) and *novio* discuss crops or the weather until the girl's father, uncomfortable in this social situation, retires to the café for some coffee and male companionship. The mother however must sit close by her daughter, *hacienda la cestact* (literally, 'basket weaving') while the *novios* 'pluck the turkey.' Physical contact is forbidden at any time, and the rule is generally respected."<sup>34</sup>

Parallel to the long term flirtation of the *Hmub*, the seriousness of the conventional Spanish case was related to its long term premarital courtship. Prior to the 1960's it was common that courting partners in the Spanish village would marry only after courting more than ten years. Furthermore, sexual desire is carefully separated from romantic or emotional desire during the formal courtship process.

In contrast to the "asexual", long term post-marital flirtation of the *Hmub* and the serious pre-marital courtship in a Spanish village in the sixties,<sup>35</sup> the courtship customs of the *Hmong* in Laos<sup>36</sup> and Chinese villages in Northern China are quite different. In both

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<sup>33</sup> Collier, J., *From Duty to Desire*.

<sup>34</sup> Collier, J., *From Duty to Desire*, p.81.

<sup>35</sup> Ideally, sexual relations are not included in the permitted extra-marital long term flirting of the *Hmub* society.

<sup>36</sup> "*Hmong* people refer to an Asian ethnic group in the mountainous regions of southern China. There, they remain one of the largest sub-groups in the Miao *minzu*. Beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *Hmong* groups began a gradual southward migration due to political unrest and to find more arable land. As a result *Hmong* currently also live in several countries in Southeast Asia, including northern Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar-Burma. In Laos, a significant number of *Hmong/Mong* people fought against the communist-nationalist Pathet Lao during the Secret War, When the Pathet Lao

cases courtship allow “pre-marital sexuality,” though with different connotations for each community. In *Changing Lives of Refugee Hmong Women*, the conventional *Hmong* courtship in Laos is an important part of its culture because marriage is the “natural stage” to becoming true mature adults, and the pleasant counterpoint to a hard working life.<sup>37</sup> Regular flirtatiousness could be in public and also as a “secrecy game, with its pleasing air of conspiracy, witness, and excitement”.<sup>38</sup> In other words, the *Hmong* courtship is not just an emotional zone for casual emotional enjoyment, but also an arena for engaging in physical enjoyment and experimentation. Donnelly mentioned that, “There is another reason for shyness and desire for privacy. My respondents (except the converted Christian *Hmong*) seem to agree with other sources that *Hmong* girls and boys play sexual games together, and that fidelity to one friend is not expected.....”.<sup>39</sup> The *iut fub* of the *Hmub* appears to have captured both the serious, respectful atmosphere of the Spanish and some of the light hearted, experimentation of the *Hmong*. Focusing on love, intimacy, and family change in a Chinese village from 1949 to 1999, Yan Yunxiang gave an interesting alternative example of the relations of courtship and marriage: post-engagement dating and premarital sex. Yan argues that there are two important effects of this custom: first, securing a marriage contact, especially, for the groom’s family; second, creating mutual affections and emotional ties between the two. In other words, Yan

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took over the government in 1975, *Hmong/Mong* people were singled out for retribution, and tens of thousands fled to Thailand for political asylum. Since the late 1970s, thousands of these refugees have resettled in Western countries, including the United States, Australia, France, French Guiana, and Canada. Others have been returned to Laos under United Nations-sponsored repatriation programs. Around 8,000 *Hmong/Mong* refugees remain in Thailand” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hmong\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hmong_people)).

<sup>37</sup> Donnelly, N. D., *Changing Lives of Refugee Hmong Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

<sup>38</sup> Donnelly, N. D., *Changing Lives of Refugee Hmong Women* , p. 120.

<sup>39</sup> Donnelly, N. D., *Changing Lives of Refugee Hmong Women* , pp. 120-121.

emphasizes the seriousness of the intent of extra-engagement dating and premarital sex for the rural Chinese, which achieve a twofold goal: the emotional outlet and development of mutual affection for the couples; and the social capital for the bride's and groom's families, positively attained from engagement toward marriage.<sup>40</sup>

Either in terms of “courting with emphasis on courtship,” or “flirting with emphasis on courtship,” I suggest that there are both commonality and diversity to be further highlighted. Firstly, all four cultures display a specific zone as being a pleasing and relaxing emotional zone regardless of courtship as a precursor to marriage (such as in the Spanish or the contemporary rural Chinese villages) or an indirect result (such as flirtation in the subgroup *Hmong* of the Miao in Laos or the subgroup *Hmub* of the Miao in eastern Guizhou). This commonality is especially significant when interpreting how the *Hmub* place their social focus on institutionalized extramarital flirtation. In other words, based on these ethnographies of courtship or flirtation, human beings are psycho-emotional beings, not just social beings.

Additionally, all four cultures define “courting with emphasis on courtship” or “flirting with emphasis on courtship” activity as a serious matter. For the rural Chinese villagers, premarital sexuality is presented as an effective social strategy to solidify the marital contract between the families of the bride and groom. In contrast, the practice of premarital sexuality of the *Hmong* does not necessarily aim for marital exchange, but has significant social implications for an individual's social networks as well as having

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<sup>40</sup> Yan, Y. X., *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village 1949-1999* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003)

pleasant psychological and emotional experiences.

Though restricting premarital sexuality, the other two cultures make flirting with emphasis on courtship serious with long term flirtation. The conventional Spanish cases are amazing for the length of courtship, often enduring for 10 or more years, and avoidance of sexual contact with their long term courting partners fulfilling the social obligation of respect for both the girl and their family. The *Hmub*, on the other hand, conduct both short term premarital courtship as well as a long term extra-marital flirtation simultaneously. This paper asserts that the juxtaposition of the long term and short term flirtation is a very *serious* social interaction with important implications for an individual's social network and standing in the *Hmub* society. By means of multiple modes of expression: verbal, physical and use of social conventions and institutionalized behavior, the *iut fub* creates not only an exclusive arena for emotional expression for the young, but also presents itself as an institutionalized flirting zone for the married adults, providing an approach with a result that is different from the lineal relation between flirtation and monogamous marriage. It provides a transitional phase for the young to have role models and gradually assume the responsibilities of mature *Hmub* adults in their social networks and obligations.

## **Conclusion**

Most of the literature quoted describes courtship will lead to marriage, but some do point out that there is no necessary connection or entangled relations between them. These contradictions suggest the complications involved. Is erotic desire or the flirtatious

happiness of men and women relevant or irrelevant to marriage? The *iut fub* of the *Hmub* in eastern Guizhou further underscores the entangled relations between flirting and marriage created by the integrated marital institutions, cross cousin marriage and duo-local post-marital residence, the entertaining devices, singing of love songs and intimate physical contact. In general, by analyzing extramarital flirtation of the *Hmub*, I have sought to explore the boundaries of emotional expression, both within and outside marriage of this specific culture. By looking into *iut fub* as an integrated social structure in a dialectical relationship within the institution of marriage, the fluid situations for extramarital flirtations or intimacies can be more closely examined.

Besides documenting erotic encounters outside the institution of marriage, this ethnography of *Hmub* extramarital flirtation suggests that we can pay more attention to the concept of infidelity as it is defined culturally.<sup>41</sup> In other words, how does an individual in Fangf Bil village respond psychologically and emotionally to institutionalized extramarital eroticism, whether verbal or physical? Do Fangf Bil *Hmub* villagers regard such extramarital erotic happenings as infidelity? Will a young mother feel jealous, angry or sad as a result of the erotic encounters of her middle-aged husband in *Hmub* flirting activities? Such questions may touch on the nature of the distinctions between the three social domains of sex, love and marriage. I suggest that institutionalized extramarital flirtation is a compensation for an overly formal

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<sup>41</sup>Jankowiak, W., M. D. Nell and A. Buckmaster, 'Managing Infidelity: A Cross-Cultural Perspective,' *Ethnology*, pp. 85-101.



marriage/family arrangement, which may not necessarily result in an aloof relationship, but an intimate one instead. So, the practice of the *Hmub* extramarital flirting is less an escape but rather the establishment of a safe setting where people can satisfy themselves of being sexually attractive. Maybe this desire is stronger than what conventional wisdom should have acknowledged. Whereas the primary reason for the existence of the sex industry in other parts of China is to meet the need of sexual satisfaction which can go beyond just a physical intercourse. The *Hmub* practice is not sexually motivated but just the provision of an arena for sexual validation and that in the end may be an alternative but important encounter that constitutes a person's own emotional gratification. The *Hmub*'s culturally defined conceptions of infidelity would focus on extramarital flirtations, but without ending with sexual intercourse as a result. Through the public display of erotic flirtation, the *Hmub* of eastern Guizhou demonstrates the existence of significant arenas for interpersonal exchanges. Recalling Adam Phillips's suggestion that "flirtation keeps things in play, and by doing so lets us get to know them in different ways,"<sup>42</sup> I suggest that the *Hmub*'s extramarital flirtation serves as an outlet for individual, personal expression of deeply held emotions. This stands in sharp contrast to the lack of public emotional expression allowed to married couples.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Phillips, A., *On Flirtation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> Given that the *Hmong* and the *Hmub* in this paper are branches of Miao, it is necessary to examine if extra-marital flirting exists among the former before undertaking a systematic comparative analysis on the courting and flirting customs of these two subgroups. There are Hmong courtship and marriage literatures, e.g, Chindarsi 1976: 67-80, Cooper 1984: 143-145, Cooper 1995, Lee 1998, Lee 2005, and Tapp 2001. Chindarsi, N., *The Religion of the Hmong Njua*, pp. 67-80. Cooper, R., *Resource Scarcity and the Hmong Response* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1984). Cooper, R. *The Hmong* (1995).

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