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**Regional Marriage Customs and Its Behavior Logic in
Perspective of Legal Anthropology- Based on Observation of
Xing County in Shanxi Province**

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Abstract

In modern society, various rituals still prevail. For now, weddings should be one of the most solemn ceremonies of a person's life. The anthropological observation of marriage customs in a region helps to more truly understand the culture and values of the local people. Wedding can be regarded as a religious or legal notarization ceremony, its significance lies in the recognition and blessing from the community to help newlyweds adapt to new social roles and requirements. With the help of the method of legal anthropology, this study aims to make a brief analysis of the behavioral logic of different roles through description of marriage customs in a region.

Key words: Marriage Customs; Legal Anthropology; Field work

1 Introduction

As the first section of the paper, this introduction part includes the study background, the study content and significance and the paper structure.

1.1 Study Background

Marriage-family is the origin of human social organization. The reasons and conditions for the establishment of marriage have been of concern to anthropologists. In Plato's view, the reason why combination of both sexes can be maintained is man longs for the perpetuation and immortality of himself. There is a Chinese saying that there are three forms of unfilial conduct of which the worst is to have no descendants. People turn their fear of death into an eagerness to carry on the family line, and achieve this fundamental purpose through a legal marriage.

In terms of marriage, "the original intention is nothing more than to create a long-term relationship between two people who maintain a marriage, and a long-term relationship is the necessary condition for raising children. The vast majority of people think it is not enough just to register for a marriage certificate, what is important is to hold a wedding. The wedding is an important ritual for the couple obtain external recognition.

1.2 Study Content and Significance

The author takes the wedding customs in his hometown as an observation sample, and through the description of the ceremonial process of the wedding, analyzes the logic of the behavior of different roles in the wedding from the perspective of legal anthropology, and summarizes the social functions of the wedding.

There are many articles on the study of marriage customs from the perspective of anthropology or law, but there is less research from the interdisciplinary subject—legal anthropology. This article attempts to explore the behavior logic of different roles in regional marriage customs from this perspective.

1.3 Paper Structure

This paper consists of five parts. Section one is an introduction. Section two outlines ritual and the theory of legal anthropology. Section three takes the marriage customs of his hometown as an example, and introduces the ceremony process, which includes two parts: engagement and marriage. Section four analyzes the behavior logic of different roles during this ceremony process. On the basis of the analysis above, section five draws a conclusion and exhibits the limitations of the present study.

2 Theoretical Background

Wedding is an important ritual. As observers, if we want to really experience the process, we need to rely on field work. Therefore, in this section the related theories about ritual and legal anthropology will be introduced.

2.1 Ritual

Durkheim considers ritual as a means of social integration that runs through all the processes of a person's life. Individuals who are separated from each other in their daily lives are brought together through rituals to promote the formation of group values and social solidarity. Collins believes that ritual is an interactive stage. Individuals need to interact with others through rituals to form a certain relationship, and form a group in the process of continuous interaction. He believes that ritual is the main form of maintaining and forming society, the social structure is established through an interactive ritual. The interaction between individuals to create and maintain a micro-society, groups and groups through the interactive ritual chain to form and maintain a macro-society. There

are still all kinds of rituals in nowadays society. People contact with others through a ritual and establish the relation of interdependence.

2.2 The legal anthropology

With the development of anthropology, legal anthropology has gradually developed as a branch of social anthropology and cultural anthropology. For traditional jurisprudence, legal anthropology provides a distinctive and effective way of thinking. Based on experience and feelings, anthropological viewpoints, and intercultural comparisons and criticisms, legal anthropology tries to establish a discipline of epistemological systems that breaks the traditional legal stereotype and enters a broader field: Legal pluralism.

Compared with traditional law, an important feature of legal anthropology is that it utilizes the research methods of anthropology, emphasizes the field work and participant observation, focuses on in-depth analysis of typical cases, and advocates a comparative study among different languages and customs. Fieldwork refers to a method of conducting investigations and studies in the life of the studying objects. This method includes: participation in observation, in-depth interviews and so on. From Malinowski, the Adat School of the Netherlands, to Hoebel, Gluckman, Bohannan, and contemporary legal anthropologists, the tradition of fieldwork is passed down from generation to generation. It can be said that all classic works in the history of legal anthropology are based on field work.

3 Process and Rituals

The author's hometown Xing County is located in the northwest of Shanxi Province. In the county towns such as Xing County, which are located in the mountainous areas, due to the inconvenience of transportation, there are few changes in population movement, for the reason that traditional customs and habits are mostly preserved, and they play an important role in daily life. In general, weddings should be held in accordance with ritual. The traditional Chinese marriage usually involves six procedures, namely: match-making, engagement, betrothal presents, meeting the bride, three bows and drinking cross-cupped wine. Here the ritual process is divided into two parts, engagement and marriage.

3.1 Engagement

A man asks the matchmaker to propose a marriage, and the matchmaker is generally a highly respected person in the local area and understands the situation of both families. If the woman is agreeable to this marriage, the matchmaker will give the man a reply. Then the man's family is preparing some gifts, and they visit the woman with the matchmaker on a lucky day. At the same time, they negotiate with the elders of the woman about bride-price. On the next day, the matchmaker invites the woman's family to visit the man's family. The man's elder would give the woman a red envelope (meeting money). Later, the man's family requests the matchmaker to present the prepared bride-price to the woman's family, it consists of cash, jewelry. What's more, the man's family invites the fortune-teller to choose auspicious occasion according to the birth horoscope of the new couple. Then, the man's family brings two bottles of wine, two loafs of cigarette, candy pasted with the pattern "Xi (囍)" and a hunk of meat pasted with the pattern of lotus. It is called the meal for engagement. So far, the engagement is finished.

After the couple register for marriage at the Bureau of Civil Affairs, they begin preparing for the wedding. The man is responsible for decorating the new house, booking the wedding company, while the woman's family prepares for the dowry, and other items such as washbasins and mirrors.

3.2 Marriage

The night before the marriage, the woman must live in a neighbor or friend's house, which is called "away from the door (li men)." On the next morning, when the bridegroom picks up the bride, the door is closed by the bride's friends. On the one hand, it shows the female shyness. On the other hand, the relatives and friends of the bride wanted to tell the groom that he should treasure the bride and treat her well. Because the groom is afraid of delays, he will pay for "open door money". This is also a traditional custom.

Weddings are generally arranged by wedding companies, with a combination of modern and traditional styles. When the newlyweds arrive at the banquet venue, the relatives and friends set off fireworks and sprinkle confetti on the them. During the wedding process, the newlyweds wear rings and drink cross-cupped wine, and a series of rituals and customs such as "step over the fire basket" are slightly deleted. However, "bow to the heaven and earth, bow to their parents, bow to each other" is still preserved. [Jia Weizhen. Xingxian County annals. China Encyclopedia Press, 1993] After the ceremony, the guests enjoy the wedding feast. Nowadays, with the improvement of living standards the specifications of wedding parties have greatly improved. At this point the couple begin toast guests one by one. At that night, people usually eat night noodles. After the dinner, the relatives of the women's family visit the bridal chamber. After celebrating wedding in the bridal chamber, people sprinkle walnuts and Chinese jujubes to the bride and groom and wish that they would give birth to a child. The next morning, the bride meet the relatives and friends of the man and it's called in Chinese "Minglun." So far, the wedding ceremony is completed. Two or three days later, the bride's family invite the newlyweds to dinner. This is called back door (Hui Men).

4 Analyze of the behavior logic

The Marriage is not only a merger of the couple, it symbolizes the merger of two families. So, the ceremony should reflect the holiness of marriage. A successful wedding cannot merely be completed by the couple. It usually requires the wedding planners, participants and observers to complete it.

4.1 Planner

The wedding planners involve the couple and the elders of their respective families.

In the engagement, it is grand and formal that the matchmaker communicates between the two families. In general, the male family should be more proactive at this stage and show attention and respect to the woman. Usually people acquired the economic situation by visiting each other. The selection of auspicious days and the carrying of an even number of gifts are traditional customs, which shows the expectations of two families for better life.

In the preparatory of the wedding, it is mainly done by the both families, such as the purchase and decoration of wedding rooms. The wedding planners need to consider the scale of the ceremony, such as the number of wedding cars, fireworks, wedding hotel and catering standards and so on. In addition, it is important to prepare invitation cards in advance and inform friends and relatives to come to the ceremony in time. In order to avoid confusion on the wedding day, both families will recommend a highly respected person for scheduling coordination.

A wedding can be seen as a display of two families' social status, economic strength and interpersonal relationships, as well as a recognition of the family's emphasis put on wedding.

4.2 Participant and Observer

Participants are mainly invited relatives, friends and colleagues, as well as part of the observers. China is a state of etiquette, where courtesy demands reciprocity since ancient times. Inviting relatives and friends to the wedding

symbolizes the formality and the relationships between people. Weddings is the inevitable thing in everyone's life. Man cannot accomplish such a large business by himself, and the details needed to be prepared are very intricate. As a result, relatives and friends who are close to each other usually help in the run-up to the wedding. Not only is this assistance an active support to the family, but also it is a preparation for the future when they are faced with the same situation.

On the wedding day, guests should register their monetary gift at the registry in the wedding venue. The amount of monetary gift is generally depended on the relationship of guests and host. When man attends the junior's wedding, the amount of monetary gift is generally lager than others. As for colleagues, they can give a random amount of monetary gift. If someone cannot attend the wedding party for some reasons, he can entrust other people to give his gift to the newlyweds. Generally speaking, people are very clear about these rules. For participants, participation in a wedding can strengthen the relationship with the host family. It is also a chance to acquire information and widen the social relational network. The present guests witness the scared moment of the bride and groom. Also, they are aware of the wedding scale. And they get to know how to decorate the wedding venue, as well as how to arrange to make the wedding scene orderly. In this regard, the guests can gain the experience and it will be easier for them to arrange a wedding party in the future.

5 Conclusion

In modern society, various ceremonies and rituals are still prevalent. This is a series of guidelines for people's behavior. Wedding customs are not an exception. All kinds of behaviors of people in weddings are subject to the rules, and they should follow customs and practices. Through the description of marriage customs in an area and the analysis of the logical behaviors, it can reflect the necessity and rootedness of rituals and rules in daily life. At the same time, this paper has some contribution to further study of traditional customs and cultural modernization.

The subject of this article is confined to the wedding customs of a region. It has the general characteristics of marriage and the characteristics of the region. However, the author does not clearly point out which is regional characteristic and will pay attention to this problem in future writing.

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