

Practices of Love and the Making of the Affective Subject among the Rukai of Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the category of love and its practice along with other kinship practices as the Rukai encounter, cognize, understand, re-construct, and experience the facets of modernities embodied in capitalism and Christianity. Firstly, I scrutinize both the Rukai category of love and its practices with regard to gender, personhood, courtship, marriage, and procreation in order to demonstrate the salience of love/affect in their constructs of family and kinship. Secondly, I discuss how, owing to the collective (Bourdieuian) *illusio* of domestic and kinship reproduction among the older generation, parental authority and social norms intervene in how younger couples express their feelings and even to whom they should express their feelings. I therefore argue that a person is seen as an affective agent in the sense that while he/she bodily enacts the practice of love, their parents are truly the cause of their children's practice of love. Ever since the 1980s, though, many Rukai youngsters have moved to northern Taiwan to engage in wage labor, where they earned and made a living in settings containing people from different ethnic groups. Meanwhile they were able to choose their own lovers as well as express their feelings by means of novel expressive forms such as love letters and pop music, and even to force their parents to accept their marriage partners by way of pre-marital pregnancy. In this sense the youngsters make and manifest themselves as affective subjects. On the other hand, with the introduction of Christianity in the late 1950s in Tarmak, the church strongly promoted God's love as the ontology of human love and the view that sexuality and desire are only legalized in marital relationships;

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thereby ideal marriages and domesticity were created in the earthly world. However, what the Rukai learned from the liturgy was the epistemological division of love and sexual desire, the latter being confined within marital relationships. Their knowledge as such leads to the re-classification of both the practices of love and to marital relationships and then endows these practices with a moral hierarchy. In practice, for several Rukai who did not accept the Christian liturgy, the expression of desire shown in pre-marital or extra-marital affairs is tantamount to the free expression of one's feelings, which is what humanity means to them in the contemporary contexts.

Keywords: love, personhood/gender, affective agent and affective subject, modernity, Rukai

