

Contemporary Changes in the Marriage Customs of the Guixi Zhuang “Not Settling in the Husband’s Home” — Take Baise Lipotun as an Example

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Abstract

Taking the marriage custom of “not settling in the husband’s home (BuLuo FuJia)” of the Zhuang people in western Gui as the research object, our team went to Lipotun in Tiandong County, Baise City, where the Zhuang people in western Gui live, to investigate, collect and organise the data, hoping to enrich the actual details of the “not settling in the husband’s home” of the Zhuang people by taking Lipotun as the entry point, and to understand the reasons for its recent changes and loss of tradition. We hope to use Lipotun as an entry point to enrich the actual details of the Zhuang “not settling in the husband’s home” and to understand the reasons for its change and loss in recent times.

Keywords: Guixi Zhuang marriage customs, not settling in the husband’s home, Lipotun

1. Introduction

Historical folk culture has a profound and indelible meaning for the society and the country, which promotes the development of the country, integrates the culture of the whole society, and even has a great effect on education. As a special marriage custom in which couples do not live together after marriage but before giving birth to children, “not settling in the husband’s home” was popular in the southern ethnic minorities and some Han areas until the liberation of the People’s Republic of China, and it was especially typical in the Zhuang settlement in western Gui. Therefore, our team took the marriage custom of “not settling in the husband’s home” of the Zhuang in western Gui as the object of research, and went to Lipo Tun in Tiandong County, Baise City, where the

Zhuang live in western Gui, to carry out the investigation, collect and collate the information in the hope of enriching the actual details of the “not settling in the husband’s home” of the Zhuang on the basis of the research, and promoting the development of “not settling in the husband’s home” of the Zhuang. It is hoped that on this basis, the actual details of the Zhuang “not settling in the husband’s home” can be enriched, the study of “not settling in the husband’s home” in China can be promoted, and more people can understand this custom.

2. A Study of Chinese and Foreign Records on the Guixi Zhuang’s “Not Settling in the Husband’s Home”

2.1 Relevant Chinese Studies

The practice of “not settling in the husband’s

home" is also known as "not enjoying one's home", "sitting in one's home" or "sitting in one's mother's home", "long stay in the mother's home", such marriage customs in the Ming "Junzidang Riqiu Hand Mirror", the Qing "Yuexi Congzhai" and many other customs are recorded in detail, and even the Zhuang region there are "three times nine revolutions" (in accordance with the old custom, the girl should be at least three times three revolutions, or even seven times eight revolutions after the marriage). Even seven times and eight times. The male family every marriage, she will escape back once. Folk believe that if a welcome two married after sitting in the husband's home, it is a dishonourable thing. This kind of marriage customs, the local people called "three back nine turn marriage". Under the influence of this traditional custom, even if the woman is willing to sit in her husband's home, usually have to do according to the old rules of the four marriages, otherwise, it will be laughed at. The proverb "A good daughter-in-law is not a good daughter-in-law if she does not run away". Modern scholars have made many studies on "not settling in the husband's home", and the traditional view is that it is a product of the transition from matrilineal to patrilineal society at the end of primitive society, with anti-feudal characteristics and ethnicity, and its connotation is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Zhuang people.

Lin Huixiang's (1962) "On the Origin of the Custom of Staying at One's Mother's House and the Transition from Matrilineal to Patriarchal Systems" explains from the history of the development of human marriages and families that the custom of "not settling in the husband's home" was a custom that occurred during the transitional period from matrilineal to patriarchal clan societies, and it was a kind of women's endeavour to resist the patrilineal system, which partly remained for a long period of time in the feudal society. It was an effort by women to resist the patriarchal system, and survived partly for a long time in later feudal societies (LIN Huixiang, 1962).

The book *Essays on Ethnic Literature*, co-authored by Mo Fei and Chen Duo (1984), a young Zhuang researcher, reveals the anti-feudal elements of the modern Zhuang custom of "not settling in the husband's home" from the perspectives of ethnology, folklore and sociology. Fan Honggui, Tanqi, Chen Duo, and Fan

Honggui have also written about this custom (FAN Honggui, TAN Qi & GU Youzhi, 1984).

Fan Honggui, Tan Qi, and Gu Youzhi, The Marriage Custom of the Zhuang "not settling in the husband's home", argue that the long-term retention of the Zhuang "not settling in the husband's home" marriage custom cannot be separated from the special level of socio-economic development of the Zhuang and the pressure of public opinion (Literature Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Central Archives, 2011).

2.2 Relevant Studies in the International Academic Community

Since the Republic of China period, international academics have conducted many studies on the Zhuang's "not settling in the husband's home", which is regarded as a minority marriage system that is completely contrary to China's traditional feudal marriage system, and as a way to make up for the shortcomings of early marriages.

In neighbouring Japan, the marriage custom of "not settling in the husband's home" has attracted the attention of some scholars because of its similarity to the "wife-visiting marriage" that has long been prevalent in the country's history.

Japanese scholar Makiyuki Tsukada's "A Historical Study of the Marriage Custom of the Zhuang People, "BuLuo FuJia": A Study of the Centre of GuangXi before 1949" describes in detail the content and history of the marriage form "not settling in the husband's home" before 1949, and mentions that due to the young age of the man and the woman at the time of marriage, it was difficult for them to take care of household chores and labour in order to maintain a family. It mentions that because men and women were generally young at the time of marriage, it was difficult for them to take care of household chores and labour in order to maintain a family, so they needed to learn and adapt to the change of status with the help of their elders, so that they could take on the role of "wife" or "husband". They need to learn with the help of their elders and adapt to the change of identity, so that they can take up the responsibility of being a "wife" or "husband". The period of "not settling in the husband's home" is a buffer period that allows immature young men and women to make adequate preparations to reduce the hazards of early

marriage (Lu Minfei, 1989).

3. The Traditional “Not Settling in the Husband’s Home” Marriage in Lipotun

3.1 The Traditional Marriage Custom of “Not Settling in the Husband’s Home” Among the Zhuang of Western Gui

Lu Minfei, in his 1989 article “An Analysis of the Remnants of the Primitive Marriage Formation of the Zhuang in Guixi”, mentioned that “the “not settling in the husband’s home” that once prevailed in the history of the Zhuang people was precisely a kind of fitting custom that arose from the transition from matriarchal to patriarchal systems.”

The sign of “not settling in the husband’s home” is that a woman does not live together on her wedding night, and that a woman who marries often stays in her mother’s house until she gives birth, during which time her husband meets with her in the form of a visit to her house until she becomes pregnant, i.e., “setting into her husband’s home”. The “not settling in the husband’s home”. Most of the women who do not leave their husbands’ homes marry early but do not have children early, and most of them are economically independent and have a high status; during the period of “not settling in the husband’s home”, the women are guests in their in-laws’ homes, and are free to socialise. The length of the period of stay varies from two to eight years, depending on the state of the couple’s relationship.

3.2 Local Characteristics of the Traditional “Not Settling in the Husband’s Home” in Lipotun

The mountainous area from Lipotun in Tiandong County to Pingguo County in Baise City is inhabited by the Zhuang ethnic group in western Gui, and the marriage custom of “not settling in the husband’s home” was popular before the liberation of the country. The team learnt a lot of details and features of the local marriage custom through the visits and investigations (Li Fuchun, 2008).

In terms of the form of marriage, the actual period of time that a Lipotun woman remains in her husband’s home after marriage ranges from half a year to two years. Theoretically, during this period, husbands pay visits to their wives until they become pregnant, but during the fieldwork in Lipotun, our team learnt that in Lipotun, women “stay at their husbands’ homes” on the pretext of “going to cut

firewood” or “going to farm”. During the fieldwork in Lipotun, our team learnt that the “not settling in the husband’s home” is a practice where women meet their husbands on the pretext of “going to cut firewood” or “going to farm”; the place of the meeting is the man’s house or a secluded place with beautiful scenery; during the period of “not settling in the husband’s home”, women can spend the night in the man’s house but cannot stay there for a long time; and they can only stay in the husband’s house after pregnancy. The woman can stay at the man’s house overnight but not for a long period of time, and she can only leave her husband’s house when she becomes pregnant.

With regard to the right to choose a marriage, the “not settling in the husband’s home” programme is a tacit recognition that all young people of childbearing age do not have a tendency to be unfaithful. Freedom of choice and social interaction between men and women is a two-way street, and even during the “not settling in the husband’s home” period, the woman has the right to judge, reject and re-select her partner, as well as the freedom of social interaction; even if she withdraws from the marriage and repudiates it, she can choose to return or not to return the dowry. The man also has the right to reject the woman. However, if a young person does not have a partner by the appropriate age, parents will book the child in accordance with the customary rhythm of “not settling in the husband’s home” and urge the child to get married as soon as possible, and some of these women will also be driven away by their mother’s family. Most women are subjected to the pressure of being pushed and urged by their parents’ families to marry during the period of “not settling in the husband’s home”, which affects and destroys their family relations of origin, whereas men do not face such a predicament.

With regard to the status of women, the rights and interests of women in the family and their social status are still lower than those of men. After getting married, women in Lipotun still enjoy certain inheritance rights during the period when they are “not settling in the husband’s home”, but they lose their inheritance rights after they are “setting in their husbands’ home”, and lose the right to belong to their original families and dispose of their property. During the period of land planning, when a woman falls into a man’s family, the land she

was originally allocated in her mother's family is re-planned; there are even women who leave their dowry with their mother's family, and only have the dowry to fall back on.

4. Changes in the Contemporary Marriage Custom of "Not Settling in the Husband's Home" in Lipotun

Relevant records show that "not settling in the husband's home" was once popular on a large scale in the southern ethnic minorities and part of the Han area, but in modern times "not settling in the husband's home" is no longer prevalent.

4.1 The Current Situation of Marriage Customs in Lipo Tun

In Lipotun, the popularity of marriage customs today is not very different from that of Han Chinese marriages in the outside world. According to the survey, the last pair of people in Lipotun who experienced the "not settling in the husband's home" marriage custom got married in 1991, and more than 87 per cent of the respondents in the village had heard little about the "BuLuo FuJia", and most of the respondents in the age group of 60 years old and below fell in love freely and got married afterwards; more than 90 per cent of the respondents said they could not accept not living together after marriage, and they were not interested in the "not settling in the husband's home" marriage. Most of the respondents aged 60 and below were married after free love; more than 90 per cent of the respondents said that they could not accept the idea of not living together after marriage, and that they were resistant to this form of marriage custom, which is known as "not settling in the husband's home" (Zhang Yan, 2023).

The traditional marriage custom of "not settling in the husband's home" no longer exists in Lipo Tun, Tiantong County.

4.2 The legacy of the Marriage Custom of "Not Settling in the Husband's Home"

In the long course of human social development, marriage customs, as an important part of culture, reflect the customs, values and changes of society. With social progress and economic development, the tradition of "not settling in the husband's home" has gradually disappeared in the Zhuang region of western Gui, but some of its legacy is still evident in the present-day marriage customs of Lipotun.

In Lipo Tun, it is now a common custom for husbands and wives to sleep in different beds when they return to their mother's home, with husbands giving their wives space to communicate with their parents and sisters, as a sign of respect for their wives' original social relationships.

The traditional marriage custom of "not settling in the husband's home" does not focus on the solemnity of the wedding; the couple only holds a simple ceremony on the day of the wedding, and in the evening they go back to their own homes; it is not until a woman becomes pregnant and falls into the husband's family that a banquet will be organised to celebrate the event. This custom has evolved to the point where the people of Lipotun will choose to organise a 100-day banquet, a birth banquet and a wedding banquet when the newborn is 100 days old, inviting a wide range of friends and relatives and accepting mainstream public opinion (Shi Yilong, 2016).

5. Reasons for the Change in the Marriage Custom of "Not Settling in the Husband's Home" Among the Zhuang in Western Guihai

The retreat of the marriage custom of not falling out of the husband's family cannot be separated from social progress and economic development.

Some scholars have said that "the establishment of patriarchal authority has led to the loss of most of the power of women in the family and in social status, and the most prominent manifestation of this in Zhuang society has been the change from a woman's marrying a man and a man's living with a woman to a man's marrying a woman and a woman's living with a man, and therefore, when there is a man's marrying a woman and a woman's marrying a woman, it meets with the strongest resistance to matriarchal authority, and that resistance is the strongest resistance is to the system of women's walking away from their homes".

After the founding of the Party, the Second Congress of the Communist Party of China adopted the Resolution on the Women's Movement, arguing that "the liberation of women is accompanied by the liberation of labour, and that only when the proletariat has gained power can women be truly emancipated." In June 1923, the Third Congress of the Communist Party of China adopted the Minimum Programme, article 6 of which reads:

Equal rights for men and women in public and private law. Article 6 of the Minimum Programme of the Party Programme adopted at the Third Congress of the Communist Party of China reads, "Equal rights for men and women in public and private law."

In today's society, our Party's ideology has become deeply rooted in people's hearts and is reflected in every aspect. The law attaches increasing importance to safeguarding the interests of the people, and insists on the equality of all people and of men and women. This social progress is in line with the original intent of the struggle against patriarchy in the "not settling in the husband's home". Today, the mainstream development of China's communist society is also more in line with the core of the "not settling in the husband's home" marriage custom, which has led to the quiet retirement of the "not settling in the husband's home" marriage custom with its historical mission, as free love has become the new choice (Old Custom of "Not Setting in the Husband's Home" in Shunde, 1998).

And since the reform and opening up of China in 1978, China's economy has developed by leaps and bounds, with increasingly frequent exchanges between the two regions and accelerated population movements. China-wide cultural exchanges have become deeper and deeper, and are constantly moving towards unification. On 22 September 2020, General Secretary Xi Jinping, when presiding over a symposium for representatives of experts in the fields of education, culture, health and sports, stressed: "The development of cultural undertakings is a basic way to satisfy the people's spiritual and cultural needs and to safeguard the people's cultural rights and interests. We should adhere to the direction of serving the people and socialism, and the policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend... Efforts should be made to improve the level of public cultural services, so that the people can enjoy a fuller, richer and higher-quality spiritual and cultural life." These factors have led to a gradual narrowing of cultural differences between ethnic groups, which has had a huge impact on the scope of mate selection among Zhuang-age youth in Guixi. With the deepening of cultural exchanges, the younger generation of the Zhuang in Guixi has gradually received a wider range of education and modern concepts, and

has gained a new knowledge and understanding of traditional marriage customs. At the same time, the employment opportunities and geographical mobility brought about by economic development have also given the younger generation more choices, and they are more inclined to look for a partner who can create a better life together when choosing a spouse. As a result, the custom of "not settling in the husband's home" has gradually lost its basis for existence in the process of modernisation.

6. Conclusion

Although the field study revealed that the details of the Lipotun "not settling in the husband's home" marriage custom had many shortcomings in terms of protecting women's rights and status, and that it was ultimately an initiative to promote population reproduction and fertility, and to preserve the patriarchal system, it no longer exists today, thanks to the advancement of society and economic development.

However, as a product of the struggle of the matriarchal social system against the patriarchal social system, "not settling in the husband's home" undeniably played a key role in the advancement of women's status and the expansion of their rights and interests. In feudal society, this marriage system successfully resisted the tragedy of blind and dumb marriages and gave women the right to freedom of marriage, social freedom and personal freedom. The "not settling in the husband's home", with its tenacious struggle and advanced nature that cannot be ignored, has built a relatively harmonious social order and is deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of the Zhuang people, and its legacy is still alive and well.

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