

Two Faces of Western Sexual Rights Movements: Proper Doubt for the Existing
Heterosexual Marriage System and Improper Western Centricity

Abstract

This article examines two faces of Western sexual rights movements: proper critical view of the existing heterosexual marriage system and improper Western centricity using sexual rights as a tool to show their 'progressiveness'. It begins with an exploration of how far the current heterosexual marriage system deviates from the contemporary society, which is the central claim of Western movements. First, it is indicated that the heterosexual marriage system has been constructed artificially and worked as a power to control people. Next, the weakness of its logical foundation is pointed out by revealing the ambiguity of the binary system which separates both sex and gender into two, referring to 'sex-continuity' theory and 'gender performativity' theory. After confirming in this way that the aim of Western sexual rights movements were reasonable to some extent, this paper criticizes that they also include problems that they provide the rights to the limited range of people, due to economic, race and gender factors. The reason of this limitation is that only the people who have mobility can enjoy the sexual rights. Furthermore, this movement may even lead to the 'New Orientalism', which regards Western countries as 'progressive' in that they legally protect the sexual rights of LGBT people by legitimizing same-sex marriage. On the other hand, Asian and African countries are described as 'Orient', which is 'backward' because of their lack of legal actions toward LGBT people. From the recognition of their 'progressiveness', Western countries push their ways of liberation to 'Orient' countries. Yet, it is wrong to assume them as 'backward', because there are some tolerant countries in 'Orient' from the cultural point of view as the examples of Indonesia and Japan show. Thus, this article firstly confirms the problems included in existing heterosexual marriage system and the demands of modification, and then suggests it is better to reconsider the way of modification in each cultural context than just to import the Western way of liberation.