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Sex Revolution and Sex Rights Movement in Taiwan¹

Asia's new democracies may be gradually liberalizing their political arena, yet with regard to other realms of social space, there has been an intensifying degree of surveillance and regulation, especially in regard to sexual matters. Increasingly, sex rights movements are emerging in many locations as a radical response and resistance to this tendency. This paper traces the development of sex rights movements in Taiwan in an effort to demonstrate the ramifications of this developing phenomenon. It will be shown that the historical convergence of mainstream feminism and the conservative right has resulted in an infantilization of social space, mobilized through an imaginary motherly protectionism, which is creating serious infringements on civic freedom and human rights. Against such stringent measures exerted by developing exclusive societies, sex rights movements remain the staunchest force of resistance.

Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwan has prided itself on its steady progress toward liberal democracy with an ever-broadening understanding of human rights that now professes to include the rights of sexual minorities.² Yet during the same time period, a series of new laws, litigation, and regulations has been brought into place to criminalize sex-related information, publication, contact, and even inquiries on the internet, a development that directly jeopardizes as well as demonizes marginalized sexualities and their newly-created channel for cultural representation/communication. As a radical response, the most vibrant sex rights movement in all of Asia has arisen in Taiwan to challenge such infringements on human rights and sex rights. How are we to understand the seeming contradiction between such political tolerance, stringent legislation, and vibrant sex activism in Taiwan? What is the relationship between political liberalization and the juridification of other spheres of social life, in particular, that of sexuality in the rapidly changing republics of Asia? This paper proposes to trace the development of Taiwanese sex revolution and its sex rights movement in the context of Taiwan's political liberalization so as to provide some preliminary observations with regard to these important and developing questions.

A Taiwanese Sex Revolution?

*At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or...with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution (Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*).*

The lifting of Taiwanese martial law in 1987 involved much more than a liberalization of political life to create an optimal environment for desperately needed economic

¹ I would like to thank Jens Damm for his encouragement in writing this paper and for his meticulous help in editing it for publication.

² In an effort to boost Taiwan's image as a champion of human rights, President Chen Shui-bian made the lip-service announcement in 2003 that gay marriages were to be recognized; the announcement left local gays and lesbians busy dispelling congratulatory remarks from the press and the global gay community.

restructuring/industrial upgrading. In fact, the years following this historical event saw the most vivacious pulsation of Taiwanese socio-cultural transformation/production in recent history as long-pent-up social energies groped for outlets. By 1993, rapid growth and diversification in sexual practices and sexual discourses were no longer negligible in Taiwan, as a wide array of sexual commodities and services as well as discursive resources made their way into people's daily lives. Various commodities – from bath gel to blue jeans to singles' refrigerators to bathroom floor tiles – promoted themselves in the media with sexually potent images so as to take advantage of the barely subdued yearning for sexual arousal. Before the state finally caught up and began regulating the airwaves, the arrival of cable TV had already introduced visualizations of sex scenes into middle-class family life.³ Gender/sex norms loosened too. With the age of marriage rising to the high 20s for women, who were spending more and more unmarried years in higher education or the workplace, mobility and contact were complicating their lives and creating many more opportunities for romantic or sexual relationships.⁴ The presence of numerous love hotels/motels and mushrooming phone clubs⁵ rightly attested to the blatant existence of illicit sexual rendezvous and new channels for one-night stand negotiations. In response to this bubbling energy, public discourse was forced to venture into hitherto un-chartered sexual territories, with mainstream media eagerly producing programs that aimed to reiterate traditional sexual mores in the language of a belated but "correct" sex education for adults,⁶ in addition to orchestrating dating and match-making programs that helped people of marriageable age find suitable mates. Print media were not blind to this profitable trend either; in the early 1990s, almost all popular magazines began featuring sex-related discussions and articles to catch the public's attention and boost sales.⁷ The Chinese

³ This in no way implies that lewdness was something new at the time. Exposed female bodies in various forms of erotic dancing had long been the common stock of festive celebrations and funeral rituals in the Taiwanese countryside among the lower classes. What was new then was the spread of such sexually explicit images to the middle-class families who could now access such images in the security of their homes.

⁴ Illicit affairs among single women and married men were becoming so prevalent in the early 1990s that a degrading term was created for these women: *the singles menace* (單身公害). Indiscriminately applied to all unmarried women of marriageable age, the term vented social discontent toward women's choice to delay marriage (sometimes indefinitely) at a time when they were beginning to acquire independence and freedom through employment and professional careers.

⁵ Probably one of the earliest forms of blind-date services in Taiwan, this channel of contact which originated from Japan provided easy access for anyone interested in seeking companionship anonymously. Numbers for telephone clubs were posted in every phone booth; male patrons could go to the premises and pay for the privilege to man a phone, while females called in for free. Within a few years, the emergence of the internet, along with the ubiquitous mobile phone, would effectively make these clubs obsolete.

⁶ Significantly, these earliest forms of talk-shows were all geared toward women, with women making up the live audience, women as advice-seeking participants, and women as the population base for various opinion polls. The most popular show was even titled "Woman, Woman" (女人女人) (first broadcast in 1990).

⁷ World-famous women's fashion magazine *Cosmopolitan*, which arrived in Taiwan with its international Chinese edition in 1991, proved to be quite instrumental in interpellating a new generation of young Cosmo women who would not only be more comfortable with their bodies and desires, but also be more sexually assertive about their relationships with men. Other fashion magazines such as

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translation of the *New Kinsey Institute Report on Sex* (新金賽性學報告) (Reinisch/Beasley 1990) sold a record 100,000 copies within the first year of its publication, to be followed by a string of other published sex reports. The increasing visibility of sexual matters and cultural discourses about them worked to accelerate not only the commodification of sexual desires but also the social anxiety that accompanied it.

It was significant that these sexual energies received little attention from the mainstream feminist camp, which was at the time absorbed in outrage against issues such as domestic violence⁸ and sexual harassment⁹, while public discourses treated the liberalization in sexual mores and sexual practices as signs of individual decadence or bad influences from the west. Yet, for a few feminist sex radicals who were not only thrilled by the long-awaited sexual assertiveness for women but also contemplating strategies to actively respond to and maybe redirect such social energy toward progressive causes, the increasing visibility of such changes came to be described as no less than a “Taiwanese sex revolution.”¹⁰ To venture to call it a “sex revolution” was to do two things: one, to provide a holistic socio-historical analysis and significance for the tumultuous, seemingly isolated individual practices that were hard-pressed between exuberant commodification and severe moral condemnation; two, to call upon activists (feminists and other progressives who tended to slight developments in the erotic realm) to face up to and embrace, but also work with, these social energies that would prove to be both significant and relevant to other on-going movement causes. In other words, in discursively calling this sex revolution into place, the feminist sex radicals hoped to re-characterize such anxiety-producing energies as potential forces for more radical social change.

Such invocation of the term “sex revolution” in the Taiwan context is not without its theoretical underpinnings, especially with regard to Marxist thought on social revolution. In the excerpt given at the beginning of this section, Karl Marx hints at the “inevitability” of a social revolution when the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production that strain to organize/constrain the former reaches a critical intensity: “Then begins an era of social revolution.” Louis Althusser may not favor the idea of such a decisive general contradiction, yet he still explains the “revolutionary situation” in terms of “a vast accumulation of ‘contradictions’...of different origins, different sense,

Elle, with its pronounced motto of “The freedom to be yourself, anytime, anywhere” also arrived in the same year. Yet it was not only these international fashion magazines that advocated female autonomy along with sexual openness; locally produced family magazines were also putting up special issues or organizing panel discussions that centered upon sexual matters. The market was practically flooded with discussions of sexuality. It was at this strategic moment that feminist sex radicals made their entrance and worked to re-define this revolution in favor of female sexual freedom and sexual equity.

⁸ The 1993 incident of a wife slaying her husband, after suffering years of rape and violence, galvanized the women’s movement, which in turn characterized this incident as the epitome of all women’s lives under patriarchy. The high-profiled case greatly helped the propagation of the feminist cause in its simplest Manichean depiction of misogyny and gender inequality.

⁹ In 1994, the case of a Taipei university student being sexually harassed by her professor provoked a wave of protests by frustrated academic feminists as well as aspiring women’s groups, which quickly rose to an anti-sex stance that would have regulated all campus interactions, ridding them of any romantic possibilities. It was in response to this kind of erotic negativity that the feminist sex radicals spoke up in favor of no more state regulation but thorough sex emancipation.

¹⁰ For a concise analysis of this conscious discursive intervention, see Ning 2005b.

difference *levels* and *points* of application – but which nevertheless ‘merge’ into a ruptural unity” (Althusser 1969: 100). In other words, the over-determined convergence/conjuncture of social contradictions makes such revolutionary situation both possible and somewhat inevitable. Broadening Marx’s economic model to the realm of sex, Wilhelm Reich rightly believes that the strength of sex drives and the nature of their satisfaction are always formed within given, material social contexts, with monogamous marriage being the central institution of sex control. Yet as women and young people gradually achieved economic independence through their absorption into the labor force, their increasing needs in individualized lifestyles as well as emotional/sexual gratification also began to range beyond the confines of monogamous marriages/relationships. A sharp contradiction in the field of sex-economy thus emerged: “the sexual drive can no longer be satisfied in the form imposed on it – hence the deterioration of marriage morality” (Reich, 1945/1962/1969/1974: 152). I have also proposed elsewhere that we could derive a pair of heuristic concepts – *forces of erotic production* and *relations of erotic production* – from Reich in order to examine all the erotic revolutions in history.¹¹ All in all, the Marxist tradition tends to view revolution as stemming from a structural inevitability.

While there are structural forces which are conducive to the eruption of various forms of revolution, Taiwanese feminist sex radicals are quite self-conscious about their own role and function in this process. The language of sex revolution was not taken as a descriptive statement that laid claim to a certain deterministic reality; instead, the feminist sex radicals would side with Steven Seidman when he explains the employment of the language of revolution in terms of “its symbolic and strategic meanings” and as a “rhetorical strategy...to mobilize support” (Seidman 1992: 21). Foucault puts it more aptly when he finally admits to the possibility of overall revolution amidst his discussion of fragmentation, fluidity, and indetermination: “And it is doubtless *the strategic codification of these points of resistance* that makes a revolution possible...” (Foucault 1978/1980: 96, italics added by author). In other words, revolution is only possible, but not necessarily inevitable, even when points of resistance are already in place. It would take active intervention and discursive codifications to bring forth a revolution.

Be it rhetorical strategy of mobilization or strategic codification of points of resistance, it was the Taiwanese feminist sex radicals’ conscious and strategic launching of the 1994 proclamation of sex emancipation that ushered in Taiwan’s so-called sex rights movement. Considered as the manifesto for this feminism-inspired sex liberation, *The Gallant Woman: Feminism and Sex Emancipation* (豪爽女人：女性主義與性解放, Ho 1994b), with its ground-breaking analysis of Taiwanese gender/sexuality culture, traces the profound entanglement between gender acculturation and sexual inhibition/oppression, and boldly proposes that any gender equity agenda must also include active struggles in the sexual realm in the form of challenges to patriarchal gender/sex norms. The book then openly proposes first and foremost the exoneration of sexually active women (usually labeled and ostracized as sluts and bad women) and other sexual minorities (usually labeled

¹¹ Ho 1997b. This historical analysis explains the importance of intervention by radical social movements to constitute and shape the direction, scope, and impact of any sex revolution. Fully aware of how multiple, diverse power relationships in the sexual realm compete and conflict with one another, I still believe analytical tools such as “forces of production” and “relations of production” are useful entry points to articulate different struggles into a loose but sure oppositional front. In other words, the vision of oppositional politics should not be lost to our recognition of the politics of difference.

and ostracized as perverts) so that women would no longer fear their own bodies or desires but could learn from these sexual subjects, their experiences/expertise, so as to break out of patriarchal gender/sex discipline. As such, the book not only aims to subsume emergent social/sexual energies to a feminist discourse and feminist cause, but also hopes to offer new meanings and new practices that may combat internalized as well as outspoken social/sexual stigma. Significantly, the proposed radical stance of a thorough sex emancipation not only challenged long-standing gender norms in regard to sex, which were still guarded by mainstream feminists without much critical reflection; but also ensured that Taiwan's sex rights movement, in its future development, would not be confined to a liberal rights discourse but would continue to envision new alliances and welcome new marginal subjects in Taiwan's volatile political transformation. It is actually in these two implications that Taiwan's sex rights movement find its historical specificity.

From Sex Debates to Sex Rights Movements

The intensity and depth of local anxiety over sex can be measured by the waves of criticism received by the publication of *The Gallant Woman*. Written in a language highly accessible to the general reading public and a rhetoric powerfully persuasive in its analysis of as well as argument for a locally-engendered feminism-informed sex liberation movement, the book triggered several rounds of fierce debate from the end of 1994 to the summer of 1995, drawing comments and discussions from nearly all noted intellectual leaders, scholars, and activists.¹² Making sexuality into one of the major intellectual issues of the post-martial-law era, the key points of the debates not only helped map the contemporary intellectual scene in Taiwan but also foreshadowed future axes of debate and struggle for the evolving sex rights movement.

Viewed historically, the responses to the book that made up Taiwan's own "sex debates" reflected the turbulence in various social realms at the time. The first wave of criticism came from feminists and progressive intellectuals who felt "compelled" to address this radical outgrowth from the vantage point of either the feminist orthodoxy or traditional progressive social analysis. Arguments raised by critics included the dangers of women's ventures into sex and of cooptation by patriarchy and capitalist commodification, speculations about the future of exhaustive pleasure and anxiety about men's response to sexually active women, the illusions of the super woman and the possible hegemony of the new pro-sex doctrine, and many other similar reservations. Defenders of the emancipation position presented equally heroic responses in an effort to dispel anxieties and to challenge hidden assumptions.¹³ While these areas of debate produced fruitful and eye-opening exchanges on the subject of sex, especially in its tension with gender norms and feminist aims, the heat of the debates also led two very different groups of critics into believing that the emancipation position was becoming a dangerous trend and had to be stopped. The second wave of criticism and debate thus followed, launched simultaneously from the right and the left.

On the right, were medical specialists who felt their monopoly of discourses on sexuality was being challenged by feminists, who, as women, had no authority on the subject. The

¹² The debates were collected in a 400-page anthology titled *Contestations Over Female Sexuality: Dissenting Essays on "The Gallant Woman"* (呼喚台灣新女性：豪爽女人誰不爽？, Ho 1997a).

¹³ Such initial congeniality would gradually deteriorate as real-life political divergences came to replace theoretical arguments in the development of Taiwan's feminist and other social movements.

chairman of the Sex Education Association issued a long vendetta against the emancipation position and printed it for distribution at the Association's annual convention in March, 1995; a shorter version was submitted simultaneously to the family section of one of the leading newspapers. Such public attacks aimed to discredit the emancipation position by pointing to the seemingly indisputable biological/hormonal differences between men and women with regard to sexual desires, as well as the dangers faced by women in relation to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases – all too well verified by the professional knowledge and observation of the doctors. Undaunted by such expert posturing, supporters of the emancipation position retorted with feminist affirmations of women's sexual autonomy and brought out contrasting examples of western sexologists (including Alfred Kinsey) who worked to foster a sexually enlightened world rather than one governed by fear and ignorance.

As the crossfire continued, attacks from the left also emerged. This line of critics felt that the sex emancipation discourse, its analyses of social reality, and its interpellation of sexually assertive subjects were dangerously wrong. In a highly theoretical language, they attributed the sex emancipation discourse to a short-sighted privileged middle-class stance which contributed little, if anything, to any broad-based liberation movement; instead, it was believed that the sex emancipation movement would distract and divide the already limited energy in existing social movements, in addition to leading lower-class women astray and leaving them with the messy consequences of sex. In essence, according to the left, erotic/sexual issues bore no comparison with class issues when it came to changing the fundamental structure of society. The left also complained that the emancipation discourse failed to theoretically demonstrate its own validity in face of pressing social oppressions, which of course did not include oppression in the erotic realm. Faced with such an orthodox leftist position, supporters of the emancipation discourse pointed to the erotic "chauvinism (Rubin 1993: 15)," that underlay much of leftist criticism, reiterating that the body (and all the activities and feelings that make up how we actually "live" in that body) constitutes the most basic material force in human life. They also suggest that the relation between sex and class still needed to be explored in all its historical specificity as well as complexity; and that the left needed to learn to take seriously other forms of oppression than those based on class.

The sex emancipation stance may have come under fire from all sides, yet to have been taken so seriously by intellectuals and activists alike was on its own a testimony to its potency and relevance for that specific moment of social transformation. In the early 1990s, amidst massive commodification of sex appeal and increasing re-codification of conservative sexual values in the popular media, pockets of cultural resistance were already sprouting up to meet the challenge. The women's study group "Skewed Angle" (歪角度) was discussing, in private, the uses of the erotic for women's empowerment; lesbians were beginning to gather and organize underground support groups and publications; gay and lesbian student groups were forming on college campuses, and gay cruising grounds, bars and gyms were also emerging. On the discursive front, the congregation of radical intellectuals and their publication, *Isle Margin* (島嶼邊緣), helped to legitimize unconventional ways of thinking and hosted the first wave of feminist-informed women-produced erotica. While these separate developments were bubbling with their own energy in the early 1990s, the escalation of the sex debates and their high-profiled presence in the public discourse provided the needed visibility – locally transformed into a certain

degree of legitimacy – for sexual subjects to raise their voices and express their opinions as participants in this exchange,¹⁴ thus not only carving out a space for their own cultural existence but also taking advantage of the moment to advocate and find kindred spirits.

In that sense, by unveiling differences and exploring possibilities, the sex emancipation discourse and the debates that followed in 1994-1995 functioned to rally dissenting as well as nascent voices within existing social movements while facilitating the alliance of isolated sexual minorities or support groups that suddenly discovered a new social movement that directly addressed their lives and concerns. The sex emancipationists' counter-codification of progressive sexual values and marginal sexualities thus functioned to help transform/agitate activities and gatherings into activism (and sometimes even organizations) for sex rights.¹⁵ And by constructing and making available a sexually liberating stance that could serve to mobilize and enlighten, the sex emancipation front continued to present radical responses to emerging sexual controversies and social purity campaigns, while interpellating and supporting more new subjectivities into place. As a matter of fact, it was through these mobilizations and resistances that a loosely-aligned sex rights movement gradually congealed and gained momentum in Taiwan in the second half of the 1990s.

As rapid social/sexual transformation of Taiwan time and again tested the claims and positions of all progressive social movements, the differences that surfaced in the sex debates also proved to be premonitory of what would follow in the next ten years, especially in relation to the gender equity movement. Because changes in sexual practices and sexual values were most visible in women, they easily attracted public condemnation from Taiwan's sex-phobic and patriarchal society. Amidst mounting social anxiety about the "loosening" of women, the declaration of a feminist-informed sex emancipation stance further radicalized such phenomena and aggravated conservative moral panic. Fearing that their hard-won respectability would be demolished as collateral damage, mainstream

¹⁴ It is noteworthy that the key spokespersons for Taiwan's sex rights movements were almost all academics who were closely aligned with social activism. As such, their position in the academy provided legitimacy for their sometimes unconventional views on the stigmatized subject of sexuality. This power of authority and social influence has been a thorn in the side of conservative groups, who, in an effort to silence sexual dissidence, would in 2003 bypass ideological debates to bring legal charges against the most outspoken academic for the dissemination of obscenities. With sex rights groups and other social activists, as well as academics and professionals, rallying to defend freedom of speech and information, the case won a not-guilty verdict and academic advocacy of sex rights was preserved. For details about the case, please visit website <http://sex.ncu.edu.tw/members/Ho/english/jo_english-bestiality.htm>.

¹⁵ The sex emancipation front directly contributed to a few significant milestones in the history of Taiwan's sex rights movements. It organized the first academic conference in Taiwan in 1996 which annually featured homosexual studies as one of its themes, thus articulating academic legitimacy and an otherwise stigmatized practice/identity. It gave birth to the most active and broad-vision sex rights group, Gender/Sexuality Rights Association, Taiwan (GSRAT, 1999) (台灣性別人權協會), that has worked to hold the sex rights alliance together while spearheading new issues and expanding new conceptions of sex rights. The sex emancipation front was more than inspirational in the formation of different sexual minority activist groups, including the Gay Hotline (1998) (台灣同志諮詢熱線) and BDSM Company (2004) (皮繩愉虐邦), as well as directly instrumental in the emergence of the Transgender Butterfly Garden (2000) (台灣 TG 蝶園).

feminists publicly announced in 1996 that female sexual autonomy, a feminist-advocated sacred value, did not equal/include sex emancipation¹⁶; in effect, the statement flatly denied the relevance of the sex emancipation cause (or any sex radical stance) for the feminist agenda. This was said to have marked the beginning of a long “feminist schism” in Taiwan.¹⁷ Then the issue of the sex workers’ uprising in Taipei in the fall of 1997 further polarized the feminists.¹⁸ While feminist sex radicals rose to the occasion and fought with their prostitute sisters over the right to do sex work,¹⁹ mainstream feminist groups issued a gag order to their staff with regard to this issue so as NOT to contradict government policy to eradicate prostitution. Several staff members who openly supported the sex workers ended up being fired from their posts at the leading mainstream women’s NGO, the Awakening Foundation (婦女新知基金會), toward the end of 1997.²⁰ Subsequent and dramatic changes in the political situation in Taiwan would continue to tap into such la-

¹⁶ The announcement was triggered by one symptomatic incident in June 1996. A group of college women in Taiwan’s number one university had decided, “for the purpose of exploring their own sexuality,” to organize a collective viewing of adult films in the women’s dorm, a brave and groundbreaking feminist move in every respect. But as the news spread, massive pressure came down upon the women, warning them of the illegality of such viewings as well as the adverse impact on morality. In the end, the college women, with the help of mainstream feminist professors, held a press conference to make the “female sexual autonomy does not equal sex emancipation” announcement and to reiterate that the film showing was to be conducted solely for the purpose of “critiquing” adult materials. It will become ever clearer that mainstream feminist conceptions of sexual autonomy and agency are often limited to women’s right to say “no;” any affirmation of sexual needs, desires, and pleasures may be considered dangerous and thus damaging to the women’s cause.

¹⁷ Upon being ostracized from feminist organizations, the feminist sex emancipation academics would later set up their own platform as the Center for the Studies of Sexualities, National Central University in 1995 (<http://sex.ncu.edu.tw/english/english.htm>), and their own activist group, Gender/Sexuality Rights Association, Taiwan in 1999 <<http://gsrat.net/en/aboutus.php>>. Both proved to be vital for the continued development of Taiwan’s sex rights movements.

¹⁸ For a quite informative account of the sharp debate within the feminist camp over the issue of sex work, see Lee 1998.

¹⁹ In order to rally international support for the Taipei prostitutes, the Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters (COSWAS, 日日春關懷互助會), a support group for the outgoing prostitutes, organized an international convention in Taipei in May, 1998 with delegates from prostitutes’ rights groups in 13 countries attending. One of the three huge banners displayed on stage announced: “Sex rights are human rights” (性權即人權). The slogan effectively articulated the prostitutes’ appeal unto the more widely accepted and revered concept of human rights.

²⁰ Another kind of purge also took place at the same time. As the sex emancipationists continued to raise their voices in agitation and resistance, especially on the thorny issue of sex work, mainstream women’s rights movement again felt the need to make a distinction between the women’s cause and the sex rights cause so as to protect the former’s image. In her essay, “Identity Politics in the Contemporary Womens Movement in Taiwan: The Case of Licensed Prostitution,” mainstreamer Lin Fang-mei, who later became a cabinet member, accuses the feminist sex radicals of being “parasitic” on the feminist movement: “the sexual liberation camp’s politics of sexuality and desire has closely stuck to/glued itself to the gender politics women’s movement organization, seeing in the latter a host-body” (Lin 1998: 58). She thus calls for the sex emancipation feminists, feminists who had been instrumental in the development of Taiwan’s feminist movement from the start, to “leave” the feminist camp and organize “their own” movement.

tent differences in class orientation among women's groups and feminists, polarizing them through a string of social contestations over emergent sexual phenomena (respectively, expressions of female sexuality, priority of election politics over gender politics, lesbianism in women's movement, feminist stance on sex work, body beautification for women, problem of teenage sexuality, legitimacy of surrogate mothering, and more recently, easy access to sexual information and contact on the internet). Whenever sexual controversies erupted and gender/sexual norms rushed to reassert themselves, the feminist sex emancipation front would produce counter-discourses to resist the conservative consensus and sometimes, if necessary, organize direct actions and protests to promote activism among stigmatized marginal sexualities. The continuous consolidation of such marginal groups actually makes up the bulk of the Taiwan's sex rights movement.

Against the "Feminist State"

Significantly, such cultural contestations, as well as purges of sex radicals from the feminist camp, exemplified less the internal struggle within the gender equity movement than the dramatic changes in the status of mainstream NGOs in relation to the state during Taiwan's democratization process.

Due to their limited strength under Martial Law, Taiwan's social movements had historically banded together for support while maintaining a clear distance from the authoritarian state, even after the 1987 lifting of martial law. Discourses on "the civil society vs. the state" (市民社會 vs. 國家) thrived within opposition politics to strengthen as well as justify that distancing. Still, the urge to displace the KMT authoritarian regime grew into a demand that the democratization movement be prioritized in social mobilization. Labor and other movements responded, to different degrees, by fighting bravely against being subsumed under the struggle for political liberalization.²¹ Later, as the democratization movement, now formally organized as the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨 DPP), gradually assumed state power through winning the Taipei mayoral race in 1994 and the presidential race in 2000 and 2004, various social movements found themselves faced with a brand new situation: it seemed logical to lend support to and maybe even take up franchises from a former ally who was now in power and was obviously in need of political influence/legitimacy; yet, at the same time, its undeniable status as and exertion of state power also alienated many marginal groups that were wary about dealing with a state machine too familiar with opposition ideology and tactics.

It was within this framework of the state subcontracting its rule to cooperating NGOs and those NGOs collaborating to bestow legitimacy on the new state rule that the true significance of the above-mentioned feminist schism became fully revealed. The schism was not merely a factional fight among feminists; it was an expression of the tension/split being created by the formation of a brand new kind of state rule, in which part of the civil society willingly and happily collaborated with the state to consolidate the latter's rule over

²¹ The struggle was also waged in the discursive realm. The so-called "civil society" (市民社會) intellectuals, who in fact valued political freedom over all other social causes, were seriously challenged by the so-called "people's democracy" (人民民主) intellectuals, who emphasized the differences among different movements and maintained that all causes should enjoy equal status; any privileging or priority must be derived from negotiations conducted with the autonomy and integrity of each in mind. For an explication of the people's democracy position, expressed in a clearly subversive play of language as well as concepts, see Robocop 1991.

the other, unruly, elements of civil society. In other words, when mainstream feminists and women's organizations decided to side with prevailing moral values and policies through purging the sex emancipation feminists from the so-called "women's cause," they were already preparing themselves for social acceptance and possible collaboration with the state. This increasing interpenetration between the civil society and the state has resulted in a new scheme of collaboration which makes up what many scholars have termed "global governance": the state is no longer the only center of power; various mainstream NGOs, with the blessing of international organizations and anointment by the state, have become various centers of power at various levels and in different arenas, but work as a network to maintain optimal condition for the rule of the state and capital (Hewson/Sinclair 1999: 9; Rosenau 1992: 5). Viewed in this light, the insistence of the sex emancipationists on fueling a sex rights movement that would continually and radically challenge prevailing sexual mores and institutions, against the expressed state and NGO intention of constructing a "civilized" middle-class social order, constitutes a localized and specific resistance response to the formation of this scheme of governance.

It is noteworthy that mainstream women's groups make up a major segment of civil society that is now in close collaboration with the Taiwan state, and not without good reason.²² Although with only limited mobilization and very little organization, the post-martial-law women's movement had been able to win substantial social visibility through its aggressive efforts in the cultural and discursive spheres. In the 1990s, many members of the new generation of well-educated feminists, sex emancipationists included, started to flood the print media with insightful analysis and criticism of existing gender culture.²³ Their persistent intervention in topical issues and the persuasiveness of their arguments greatly strengthened feminist advocacy in the ideological realm.²⁴ As women's issues came to be increasingly cited by political parties bidding for a wider constituency, and as gender equality was increasingly foregrounded as an international index of modernization; the Taiwan state, from promoting slogans such as "two gender co-rule" (兩性共治) and policies such as "gender mainstreaming" (性別主流化), stood to gain not only hard-won political legitimacy for the minority government but also international recognition, which the precarious Taiwan nation-state eagerly desired. The opportunity to share state rule, on the other hand, had long been the vision of DPP-prone "state feminists,"²⁵ who were more than happy to be inducted into various offices of the Taiwan government.

²² In the American context, Lisa Duggan has described this strategy to recruit certain select segments of the movement as neo-liberalism's "nurturing of forms of 'identity politics' recruitable for policies of upward redistribution" (Duggan 2003: 42). In Taiwan's context, however, the selected recruitment may have been done more for the sake of securing nation-state status in Taiwan's precarious political atmosphere rather than implementing any form of economic neo-liberalism.

²³ The widespread presence of women in the cultural industry, especially in the publishing business and in the media, was one important condition for the dissemination of feminist advocacy. See Ho's analysis in "Feminism and Women's Novel" (Ho 1994a).

²⁴ Interestingly, the abstract ideal of gender equality was concretized first on the issue of property laws. Whereas previously a wife lost control of her property upon marriage, the civil codes were amended in 1985, at the demand of women's groups, so that wives maintained control over their property even after marriage, unless otherwise specified. This initial focus on reforming the property laws clearly marked the concerns of the elite class of women who dominated the movement at this initial stage.

²⁵ The Chinese term "state-feminism" (國家女性主義) was proposed by a leading mainstream feminist

While fulfilling a long-awaited wish to put women, and, in particular, feminists, into decision-making positions, the recruitment also brought changes to the movement. Increasingly, mainstream women's movements would look to the state and the political parties to institute changes in the public realm with regard to women's rights. To facilitate the lobbying, the aims of the women's movements would have to be tempered so as to appeal rather than to provoke; any proposed reform was thus first subjected to self-imposed calculation and evaluation concerning its political efficacy. In the meantime, while mainstream feminists entered the state machine as newly-appointment members of the cabinet, delegates from certain "respectable" religious women's groups, presenting themselves as child-protection groups, were also invited to serve on the various committees in various departments of the government so as to demonstrate the liberal state's inclusive policy. Exemplary cases included the Catholic Good Shepherd Sisters Foundation (天主教善牧基金會) and the Christian-based Garden of Hope Foundation (勵馨基金會); both are regulars on various sub-committees within the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education.²⁶ As consulting members, these groups enjoy first-hand information on policies and funding, and are entitled to put forth their views and projects at meetings. With mainstream women's movement softening its language and tempering its agenda, the heterosexist feminist discourse and its righteous appeals came to be appropriated by competing political parties as well as by these Christian-based NGOs. Feminist criticism of the physical abuse of women as well as of the commodification/objectification of women, once stripped of its radical demand for structural change (both economic and erotic), proved well able to lend itself to conservative political propaganda, social purification, anti-obscenity campaigns, and attacks on social freedom of speech. Eventually, mainstream feminists' platforms and politics became practically indistinguishable from those of the religious right and opportunistic politicians, and women are increasingly mobilized as moral vigilantes against, to cite the most recent cases, the liberalizing media, gay marriages, and even abortion rights for women.²⁷

scholar Liu Yu-xiou (劉毓秀) in a 1996 interview. Liu believes that feminist ideals are to be realized by none other than housewives who are to be encouraged to become political agents and enter the public realm of the state apparatus en masse. The sheer presence and number of women would then swallow up the public realm, feminizing the state and forcing it to take up the job of caring, which has been women's domain and responsibility, as the self-professed "philosophy queen" dethrones the "philosophy king" (Liu 1996: 23-24). It is with this vision in mind that mainstream feminists developed an unusually high interest and investment in the project of state-building.

²⁶ While most other Christian churches and groups remain other-worldly-oriented, these few groups are quite vigilant about taking an active role in shaping the secular world. For an account of their activities and growth in recent years, see Ho, "From Anti-Trafficking to Social Discipline."

²⁷ The religious women's NGOs organized an audience and reader watchdog organization in 2004 (閱聽人監督媒體聯盟) and launched moral campaigns against any media programming that they considered to be vulgar, sensational, or lewd. When the government finally began considering marriage rights for gays and lesbians in 2006, religious organizations banded together in defense of the sanctity of the marriage institution and protested against the degradation of social morals. Such a gesture gave the government an easy excuse to dismiss the proposed legislation because "public opinion is against it." Religious groups were also instrumental in proposing a recent law that would require a 3-6 day waiting period before any woman is allowed access to abortion. The recent active demonstrations by college students against the institution of this law may be a promising sign that discontent is building against

Such an unexpected convergence of the women's cause with the religious right's cause has brought dire consequences, especially for local sexual minorities and anyone else who believes in basic civic freedoms. No longer self-presented as feminists or religious women, a new dominant subject position has emerged from this conjuncture: that of, not a mere woman, but a *mother*, driven by an incredible sense of urgency to protect her child(ren) against all potential harm or bad influences in the rapidly changing Taiwan society. In order to achieve that absolute level of safety, all social spaces and social activities must be surveyed, scrutinized, and purified through rigid juridification.²⁸ In actuality, two significant sets of new legislations have been created to concretize the child protection cause. The Law to Prevent Sexual Transaction that Involves Children and Juveniles (兒少性交易防治條例 1999) and the Children's Welfare Act (兒童福利法 2003), along with other executive orders that have been created to fulfill the requirement of these laws, have increasingly imposed restrictions on social life in the name of child protection.²⁹ Legal efforts are being made to eliminate all adult reading, adult viewing, adult interaction, and adult knowledge, even at the price of the legislating adults' own deprivation, so as to ensure that children will not be "contaminated/harmed" by "improper" materials. The thought of children surfing the internet and coming into contact with information that used to be barred from them is enough reason to persuade almost all adults to censor speech, to police desires, to investigate all socializing, to examine curiosity, and to terminate all joking and flirting on the web.

This "infantilization of social space," as I have called it, with its concretization into laws, education, and public opinion, is exerting an increasing impact on Taiwan society. As the execution of the children-related laws became top priority for the police and the legal system (at the urge and demand of child-protection NGOs), other stringent existing laws, especially those related to sexual information and sexual contact, also took on new strength. Long-standing Criminal Code (刑法) Article 235, which was established several decades ago to curb the growing industry of erotic/pornographic material, is now widely applied on the internet to any message or posting that vaguely hints at sexual content. Thus, descriptions of sexual organs and other body parts, displays of personal sex appeal, inquiries and sexual invitations, accounts of one's own sexual encounters, questions about

such aggressive measures taken by the religious right.

²⁸ Habermas has used the term "juridification" to name this kind of significant re-deployment of power in modern states: increasing numbers of formal laws are instituted for the socio-cultural sphere, the private sphere, and the body-related sphere, laws that probe deeply into everyday life (Habermas 1975/1987: 357-373).

²⁹ "Children's welfare" has now become an aggressive concept that proactively purifies social space for the sake of children. In addition to imposing rigid ratings system on all print materials and the electronic media, parents and guardians are now held responsible for the activities of their children: if children under 18 are found to have come into contact with unsuitable materials, visited sex-related recreational businesses, lingered at gambling, pornography, violence-related video arcades, then the parents or guardians will be charged and fined. Protection of children can even extend to before they were born: pregnant mothers are now prohibited by law to smoke, drink, use drugs, chew betel nuts, or conduct other activities deemed harmful for the fetus. It is speculated that as "gender mainstreaming" gains international momentum, more new rules and regulations concerning men's and women's daily lives are going to be prescribed in Taiwan to further consolidate the encroaching project of global governance.

sexual doubts, dialogs of flirtation, explorations and instructions on minority sexual practices – all of these private interactions have now become opportunities for police merits and ECPAT monitoring reports,³⁰ prosecutable by the above-mentioned Criminal Code Article 235 for the dissemination of so-called “obscene” material. Conservative women’s groups are further pondering new legislation that would grant the state the right to investigate personal hard disks for any illegal content so as to eradicate all improper information. Surprisingly, the age-old feminist ideal of “the personal is political” is being given an ironic twist here.

If the women’s movement is turning into a movement of neurotic hysterical mothers wielding the long arm of the law to eradicate anything vaguely sexual and thus maybe harmful to her child, and if the erotic chauvinism of traditional progressive thought has proven powerless against this irrational fear and anxiety, then it is little wonder that the sex rights movement, with its militant resistance against such state rule, has now become the key champion of basic human rights.

Liberal Rights Discourse and Sex Liberation Discourse

To see the sex rights movement as the most up-to-date form of Taiwan’s human rights advocacy is to understand contemporary social movements and their predicament in newly-democratized states such as Taiwan.

It was mentioned earlier that the political movement had always insisted on political liberalization and change of regime as fundamental to Taiwan’s democratization. Now that the oppositional political movement had transformed itself into a player in party politics as it accesses state power, the original single-minded privileging of political liberalization suddenly lost its footing. After all, KMT party rule had been deposed and democracy seemed to be in place; now only continuous power struggles were left, to maintain the present victory. Likewise, during the process of democratization, “human rights” had been understood as mainly political rights. Consequently, human rights groups were also groping for new directions after the power transition, and eventually turned to focus on consolidating human rights in the legal realm, especially on issues such as the death penalty and procedural justice during litigation processes. As for the other social movements, these were often left discouraged and frustrated by the superficial friendliness and the actual glibness of the opposition-turned-state government.³¹

Within this seemingly stalemate atmosphere of social activism in Taiwan, it is in the most recent forms of social movements, in fact, in various sex-related movements, that we find continuous struggles to broaden the scope and understanding of basic civic and human

³⁰ The Taiwan branch of international child protection organization ECPAT (終止童妓協會 End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes), made up of a handful of religious organizations, set up a volunteer-based web monitoring service in 1999 and has been receiving funding from the Ministry of Interior to carry out its policy of child protection.

³¹ Foremost among these would be the deteriorating environmental movement. Formerly militant and articulate in its demands, the environmental movement has lost its edge as the government adopts a flippant lip-service strategy that treats policy demands with threats to nation-state status. Hijacked by the holy mission of nation-state-building, the environmental movement has all but lost steam. Ironically, what is left of the movement is now adopting sex-related strategies such as “rather nude than nuke” demonstrations to attract media attention and provoke public discussion. And again, sex emancipation activists are on hand to defend and legitimize the controversial strategy.

rights. The Taipei prostitutes' rights movement in 1997 demanded the right to work as promised by the constitution, thus expanding the concept of work to include sex work. The continuous protests against police entrapment of internet sexual exchanges from 2001 to 2003 proclaimed the basic right to freedom of speech as stated in the constitution, thus expanding the concept of freedom of speech beyond the confines of political dissidence to the internet space as well as to sexual dissidence. In 2003, a series of direct actions were started to mobilize sexual minorities as well as the broader public in defense of the freedom to conduct academic research on extreme sexualities as well as the freedom to circulate gay sexual pictorials.³² The anti-censorship movements in 2004 and 2005 fought against the newly imposed rating systems in order to retain freedom in the composition, publication, dissemination, and reading of sexual materials, as well as freedom of sexual information and sexual association on the internet.

Interestingly, all these movements organized through articulation and alliance beyond the narrow confines of identity politics, and it was the active articulation of such alliance politics that not only kept the movement from rigidifying but also moved the appeals beyond those of the liberal rights discourse. The prostitutes' rights movement, for example, was mostly organized and promoted by labor organizers, with feminist sex radicals serving as their discursive front guard. As such, the sex workers' movement included not only the dimension of the right to work but also the dimension of class liberation, as well as a dimension in feminist sexual autonomy. While the prostitutes, out of practical concerns, set as their moderate goal the demand for a two-year grace period, the sex emancipation feminists were always on hand to push for overall decriminalization of sex work. As such, the sex rights movement was never limited to a liberal rights concern, but always mingled with a sex emancipation vision.

To take another example – the Alliance to Support Freedom to Publish and Freedom to Read (反假分級制度聯盟 Alliance to Support Freedom to Publish and Freedom to Read, ASFPFR), the youngest of the Taiwanese social movements, advocated in 2004 and 2005 an anti-censorship position with the convergence of many individuals and groups: publishers, writers, distributors, book rental stores, readers, gays and lesbians, trans-genders, sex radicals, etc. All of them are touched to different degrees by the new executive order for a strict rating system that would put a lot of compositions and publications off limits.³³ The SFPFR movement may be appealing to slogans, such as freedom of speech,

³² The freedom of speech/expression movement in this time period was embodied in collective efforts to defend Josephine Ho (何春蕤), the feminist scholar, and Lai Cheng-che (賴正哲), the owner of Taipei's only gay bookstore, Jin-Jin (晶晶書庫), against legal charges of dissemination of obscenities. Initially brought to court by a dozen conservative religious groups that charged Ho with harboring offensive and obscene materials in her internet sexuality studies databank, Ho's case was won on the basis of freedom of academic research. Unfortunately, Jin-Jin's case was lost in both the district court and the high court. A final appeal resulted in a constitutional interpretation that reiterated respect for the rights of the sexual minorities while affirming the constitutionality of Criminal Code Article 235, under which both cases had been cited.

³³ The definitions of restricted contents for books and audio publications contain wordings such as "over-description" of (criminal behaviors, etc.); "over-portraying" of the process of suicide; "dramatic depiction" of violence, and deviance; and of sexual behaviors, obscene plots, naked human sex organs. The anti-censorship campaign contends that such terms are open to free association, "over-interpretation," and abuse by the police and other interested parties. The effect of the regulation was

freedom to publish, or freedom to read – all of which seem to be civil rights and human rights slogans; but the core organizers of the movement are actually almost all sexual minorities – in particular, SMers, alongside gays and lesbians, and trans-genders – who have all been touched by the sex emancipation movement and are keenly aware that the government-imposed ratings systems aimed mainly at sexual materials. With citizenship being the weakest of all identifications, it takes the tenacity of “sexual citizenship” to propel the movement forward and to hold it together. Again, the sex emancipation stance provided the most potent discourse and motivation for such defenders of basic human freedom.³⁴

Sex Rights in the Age of Multiculturalism

In addition to picking up the torch of human rights, the growth in Taiwanese sex rights movement marks another important shift in the nature of Taiwan’s social transformation which may prove to be emblematic of similarly situated societies. For as formerly authoritarian societies are democratized and liberalized within the historical contexts of post-colonialism and globalization – and their companion ideology, multiculturalism – earlier tactics of homogenization are no longer acceptable or effective for maintaining social control. In other words, as diversity or heterogeneity surface with liberalization, existing systems of state control or social control feel the need to adjust themselves in order to regulate or curtail the emergence and proliferation of such diverse differences, lest the latter should become totally unmanageable.

Such adjustments have been noted as signs of the emergence of what Jock Young has termed an “exclusive society.” Whereas in previous “inclusive” societies, efforts were made to correct and assimilate all social differences and deviances, thus creating the impression of oppressive indoctrination, in exclusive societies, in contrast, certain moderate differences would be tolerated by the system, thus creating an impression of openness and tolerance, while other more difficult differences would then be justifiably excluded/banished through demonization (Ning 2005a: 10-13). In such societies, technologies of knowledge/power that serve to identify and classify varied differences are developed, and new networks of monitoring are often put into place by none other than “concerned citizens” so that from the state down to its citizens, a complex web of surveillance is erected. In the context of Taiwan, the growth in imported sexology and theories of

actually quite swift and severe. Taiwan’s most prestigious chain bookstore, Eslite Books, had to place several Nobel Prize Laureates such as J. M. Coetzee, Gao Xingjian, Toni Morrison, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez on the restricted bookshelf, warning against perusal by all under 18 years of age, as those works might be read as containing “over-descriptions” and/or “dramatic depictions” of violent or sexual acts and behavior.

³⁴ A genealogy of core members of the ASFPPR reveals that many of them came from other existing circuits of contact, including BBS boards where marginal sexualities make up the focus of discussion, gay and lesbian chat rooms, transgender activists, *manga* readers, etc. As to the forces for mobilization, the motive to participate, and the format of the organization, these are shaped mainly by contingent factors including collective as well as individual factors. Not only do social movement actions and discourses result in the formation of such subjects, other non-movement-related occasions (parties, coffees, and more intimate personal relations) all contribute to the construction of the network. After all, if sex mobilizes the world, it also mobilizes the sex emancipation movement – as well as other movements.

deviance and criminology has prepared the necessary framework of knowledge/power; the religious child-protection NGOs, with the help of conservative international NGOs, have erected monitoring networks, lobbied politicians, and pressured ISP providers into establishing self-monitoring and self-censorship measures. With the most recent constitutional court interpretation of "obscenity," it looks as if the law is becoming more lenient because soft-core and hard-core porn are allowable now if they are properly wrapped and inaccessible to the casual shopper; yet when it comes to images of sexual violence (including SM), pedophilia and zoophilia, the interpretation has named them specifically as inherently criminal and obscene and thus subject to punishment by the Criminal Code.³⁵ All in all, the emergence of signs of exclusive societies marks an important development in how states deal with so-called deviances.

As Asia's new liberal democracies construct themselves out of political liberalization and state-sponsored multiculturalism, diversity and difference may seem to be enjoying more hospitality. Yet, the convergence of increasing juridification and vibrant sex rights movement testifies to the encroachment of new tactics of power both locally and globally. As a radical response to the new power/knowledge deployment, Taiwan's sex rights movement may be the key to understanding the possible transformations of new liberal democracies in Asia.

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³⁵ Sex rights movement organizations have already articulated their dissatisfaction with this development, and new discourses are being developed to expose the sexual prejudice behind such a ruling.

- ties”], in: id. (ed.) *Xing/bie yanjiu de xin shiye: diyijie si xing yantaohui lunwenji* 性／別研究的新視野：第一屆四性研討會論文集 [Visionary essays in sexuality/gender studies: proceedings of the First International Conference on Sexuality Education, Sexology, Trans/Gender Studies and LesBiGay Studies], Taipei, Taiwan: Meta Media International, pp. 33-99.
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