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Organisation Internationale du Travail – OIT

lecture

Gender Division through the lens of the rite, West- African examples

Tuesday 27th October 2015

at 6.00pm

Simone WEIL amphitheater
5, allée Jacques Berque, Nantes

by

Odile JOURNET-DIALLO

Ethnologist and Emeritus Director of
Religious Studies at the *Ecole Pratique
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-Division in religion and new modes of religious communication

-Body and rituals

Theme

The current inflation of gender studies about Africa tends to be limited to the theme of “woman and development” and overlooks the exploration of rituals and the construction of representations establishing gender division.

In that regard, African societies offer a very rich and varied picture. As ritual is concerned, gender division is shown as shaped by the rite, as a symbolic operator but is firstly considered as very complex in the sharing and articulation of skills given to men or women.

When interconnection or echoes in rites or male/female known ritual roles are considered along with the contexts which command the repetition of a division debate (or its suspension) a lot of questions arise. However the sole analysis in terms of domination or differences cannot be sufficient to offer solutions.

In this presentation I will use examples of societies of the “south River” (coastline societies from Gambia to Sierra Leone) which have developed a partly achieved model of division in the religious and rites domain according to the gender. Their originality invites us to reassess the most common opposition associated to gender division, namely: inside/outside, active/inactive; having/being.

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