

Speaker: Dr. Cecile Barraud

(Directeur de recherche, C.N.R.S. Southeast Asia Center- LASEMA,
Guest Researcher at Kyoto University)

**"Sex distinction, gender and kinship :
implications of a relational perspective.
Insights from the study of Austronesian societies"**

Time: 13:30- 15:30 (including discussion), 5 October, 2006

Venue: Multimedia Conference Room, 3F, ILCAA
Asahicho 3-11-1, Fuchu-shi, Tokyo, 183-8534

AAken-Forum 5 Oct. 2006

Sex distinction, gender and kinship : implications of a relational perspective.
Insights from the study of Austronesian societies

Cécile Barraud

Directeur de recherche, C.N.R.S.

Southeast Asia Center- LASEMA

Through a variety of theoretical approaches, symbolic or sociological, gender studies lead to focus on the position of women in societies, discussing processes of inequality and subordination, and men's domination. Issues about western constructs or ideologies and cultural differences were discussed at length. This paper proposes another approach of gender, based on kinship studies, and takes distance with the vocabulary of difference to introduce instead the notion of sex distinction. Used primarily in the analysis of kinship terminologies, which by definition are concerned with relations, this notion appears as a useful tool to answer the question of what is a man or a woman in a particular society. It sheds light on a social construct: their relation. Contrasting this notion with other kinship distinctions, its formal characteristics (absolute, relative, undifferentiated, symmetry and dissymmetry) are examined in reference to siblingship and affinity. The sociological scope of the sex distinction is developed and from this point, the paper comments more generally on its specificity. Introducing the consideration of values, and what L. Dumont defines as the contrast between individualist and holistic ideologies, it shows that a relational perspective can offer different levels of understanding to accept both the central position of the sex distinction in a social structure, and a hierarchical view of the man-woman relationship, the terms of which are not attributed a status once forever.