Paradoxical Intimacies:
The Christian Creation of the Huli Domestic Sphere

Thursday 9 August 6.00pm to 7.00pm

Professor Holly Wardlow University of Toronto

Acton Theatre  J G Crawford Building #132, Lennox Crossing, The Australian National University

This public lecture is held in conjunction with the international conference Paradoxes of Domesticity: Christian Missionaries and Women in Asia and the Pacific (9-10 August, Acton Theatre, Crawford Building).

Abstract
In this talk, Holly Wardlow discusses a problem, or paradox, set in motion in the 1950s by Christian missionaries among the Huli in Papua New Guinea, a problem that is still a source of worry, contention, and much mulling over by Huli married couples—spousal co-residence or cohabitation, the expectation that properly Christian spouses should live together in the same house. Another way of framing this issue is to say that Christian missionaries set out to create a Huli domestic sphere where, arguably, there previously wasn’t one, or at least not one that was easily legible to colonial administrators, missionaries, census takers, or even anthropologists. The instantiation of this domestic sphere was never, of course, just about encouraging spousal cohabitation, but also about reconfiguring gender relations and creating an emotionally intimate conjugal dyad. Dr Wardlow not only discusses the ways in which this has been embraced by some couples, and some strategies used for enacting it, but also the many reasons why Huli married couples struggle deeply with this way of spatially organizing spousal relations.

Brief Biography
Holly Wardlow is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. Her research interests cover issues related to medical anthropology, feminist anthropology, international health, gender and sexuality, and HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea. She is currently finishing a collaborative project funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, "Love, Marriage and HIV/AIDS: A Multi-Site Study of Gender and HIV Risk." This is a comparative ethnographic study of married women’s risk for HIV in five countries: Papua New Guinea, Mexico, Nigeria, Uganda, and Vietnam.

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For more information:
Daniel Chua
T 02 6125 4661
E korea@anu.edu.au