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Katedra kulturních a náboženských studií

Bakalářská práce

Mosuo Matrilineal Society,  
Their Kinship System and Mainstream Chinese Society:  
Possibilities of Integration and/or  
Preservation of Traditional Cultural Aspects in China

Autor: Yue Qiu  
Studijní program: B6107 Humanitní studia  
Obor: Transkulturní komunikace  
Vedoucí práce: Jirka Luděk, Mgr. Ph.D.  
Oponent práce:

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## Zadání bakalářské práce

**Autor:** Yue Qiu

**Studium:** P18P1005

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### **Cíl, metody, literatura, předpoklady:**

This bachelor thesis focuses on the Mosuo ethnic group on the shores of Lugu Lake in southwest China. As a matrilineal society, this ethnic group has a unique position in the Chinese history due to its special marriage system and forms of family organization. Introduced will be traditional Mosuo kinship relationships and culture, including but not limited to position of mother, particular marriage systems, division of labor in the family and traditional matrilineal customs. The bachelor thesis will discuss how these traditional Mosuo cultural aspects has been integrated into the mainstream Chinese society through modernization, and how these aspects could be preserved under the impact of mainstream culture in terms of transcultural communication. This bachelor thesis will be based on qualitative research by using a combination of methods such as surveying, interviews and participant observation.

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**Vedoucí práce:** Mgr. Luděk Jirka, Ph.D.

**Oponent:** Mgr. Petr Macek, Ph.D.

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**Declaration**

I declare that I have prepared my bachelor's thesis "Mosuo Matrilineal Society, Their Kinship System and Mainstream Chinese Society: Possibilities of Integration and/or Preservation of Traditional Cultural Aspects in China" independently under the guidance of the supervisor of the bachelor's thesis and I properly cite all sources and information used in the list of used literature.

Yue Qiu

In Hradec Králové on June 30, 2021

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I would like to express my gratitude to my dear friends for helping with the material research and translation, critical suggestions, and thesis proofreading, and most importantly the threats and ridicule from my dear friends gave me a positive attitude towards my studies and finished my work on time, and to my family, for their spiritual and material support.

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**Annotation:**

As one of the few remaining ethnic groups in the world with a matrilineal family culture, the Mosuo people, who live on the shores of Lugu Lake in the Southwestern part of China, have received increasing attention in recent years from scholars in China and around the world. Their unique “Walking Marriage” system, the characteristics of the matrilineal family, as well as the exclusive Mosuo social culture, has enriched the diversity of human society.

However, with the economic globalization, the invasion of Chinese mainstream culture, and the implementation of government policies, the unique culture of the Mosuo people is suffering from the impact of many aspects. At this juncture, whether the Mosuo people can remain true to the original aspiration and maintain the status of traditional culture with the strength of national spirit; or bow to the invasion of foreign culture and the injection of capital, then be assimilated by the mainstream culture and thus disappear into the masses?

This bachelor thesis is dedicated to introducing the traditional folk customs and historical culture of the Mosuo people and enumerating and analyzing the various changes and reasons that have appeared in Mosuo society since the last century. The author adopts the research method of combining theory with practice. On the one hand, the author collected as many documents as possible to explore the protection and inheritance of the Mosuo people's national culture; also, the author went deep into the Lugu Lake where Mosuo people live, taking the Luoshui village in Yongning town, the best-preserved Mosuo culture so far, as a typical case, the author experienced the life and livelihood of Mosuo people personally, and interviewed the villagers. Thus the author obtained the views of Mosuo people on their ethnic group identity as first-hand information.

In the end, we can see that the beauty of the Mosuo culture, as well as their traditional culture inheritance, carry forward the ideal and pursuit to protect their native culture. Also, we can see the effort paid by the people awakened with their ethnic consciousness to reconstruct their ethnic identity, awaken other's ethnic consciousness, under the situation of monopoly, in order to survive.

QIU, Yue. Mosuo Matrilinear Society, Their Kinship System and Mainstream Chinese Society: Possibilities of Integration and/or Preservation of Traditional Cultural Aspects in China. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2021, 77s. Bakalářská práce.

**Anotace:**

Jako jedné z mála zbývajících etnických skupin na světě s matrilineární kulturou se lidem Mosuo, kteří žijí na břehu jezera Lugu v jihozápadní části Číny, věnuje v posledních letech zvýšená pozornost ze strany čínských badatelů (ale i jiných). Jejich jedinečný systém „walking Marriage“ má prvky matrilineární rodiny a exkluzivní sociální kultura Mosuo tak obohatila rozmanitost lidské společnosti.

S ekonomickou globalizací, invazí čínské kultury a prováděním vládních politik však Mosuo stojí před branami změn. V tomto okamžiku stojí před otázkou, zda mohou lidé věrní původním kořenům a udržovat si status tradiční kultury, anebo se sklonit před invazí cizí kultury a asimilovat se.

Tato bakalářská práce se věnuje kultuře lidí Mosuo a uvádí různé změny, které se ve společnosti Mosuo odehrávají od dvacátého století. Autorka spojuje teorii s výzkumem. Nejprve analyzovala literaturu, aby prozkoumala dědictví kultury lidí Mosuo, a poté udělala terénní výzkum u jezera Lugu, kde žijí lidé Mosuo, přičemž se nejvíce věnovala vesnici Luoshui u města Yongning. Zde je dosud nejzachovalejší kulturní emanace Mosuo. Autorka tak získala informace o Mosuo a o jejich identitě “z první ruky.”

Lze vidět, že kultura Mosuo má tradiční kulturní dědictví a snahu chránit své původní kulturní prvky. Vidíme také úsilí, které lidé Mosuo vynaložili za účelem “rekonstrukce” své etnické identity a to pomocí etnické revitalizace.

**Keywords:**

Mosuo, Ethnic group, Matrilineal family, Ethnic identity

**Klíčová slova:**

Mosuo, etnická skupina, matrilineární rodina, etnická identita

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# Introduction

## Background and meanings of the selected topic

The Mosuo people of Yongning are mainly live by the Lugu Lake in Yongning town, Ninglang Yi Autonomous County, Lijiang City, Yunnan Province, with a reliable written history that could be traced back to more than 2,000 years ago. Lugu Lake is inhabited by Han, Naxi, Tibetan, Yi, Mongolian, Pumi, and other ethnic minorities, which is considered an area interlaced with many ethnic groups.

Mosuo culture, as the world's unique and exclusive matrilineal extended family culture and customs, has unique and specimen research value in ethnology, and is different from other places with regional characteristics of the culture. The Mosuo people have attracted more attention from scholars in China and also abroad because of their unique matrilineal family, the form of marriage with free visits of the couple, and the ethical concept of "respecting and worshipping women".

The unique matrilineal family of the Mosuo people has a profound social and historical background, which is "a kind of survival and cultural choice of the Mosuo people."<sup>1</sup> and also is the result of a long-term cultural adaptation. The study on the matrilineal family of the Mosuo people should be carried out in the daily social life practice of the Mosuo people and analyzed in combination with the background of social and cultural changes. The evolution of the matrilineal family is helpful for us to understand the unique structure and cultural connotation of the matrilineal family of the Mosuo people, and it will also make the study of the matrilineal family have more realistic social significance.

Driven by the development of tourism, science, and technology, the modern crisis of Mosuo traditional culture and its limited revival amid mainstream culture represent the universal problems faced by ethnic minority cultures in the modern Chinese transition. How to inherit, protect and develop the Mosuo traditional culture in the modern crisis, and how to restore and present the real Mosuo culture to the greatest

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<sup>1</sup> He Zhonghua. *Survival and Cultural Choice: the Matrilineal System of the Mosuo and its Modern Changes*. Kunming: Yunnan education press, 2000: 62.

extent is a topic that worth discussing in today's unifying society.

Integrated all sorts of reasons above, this bachelor thesis chooses the Mosuo people that live near beside the Lugu lake as the research object, try to study and analyze the changes in Mosuo culture and society from the collection of the questionnaires and interviews of the Mosuo people as well as and their published works, select representative parts from that in order to make further induction and summarization; In the meantime, combining with the first-hand information obtained from the field research, organize the content around the topic, starting from the original form of the Mosuo culture, to discuss the specific content of the Mosuo people's marriage, economy and matrilineal family relations in detail, compared with the result from the field work, in order to present the changes and development of the Mosuo people's culture and family.

## **Basic terms**

### **Ethnic Group:**

In his article *Marxism and the National Question* published in 1913, Stalin put forward that "*A nation is a stable community formed by people in history with a common language, a common region, a common economic life and a common psychological quality reflected in a common culture.*"<sup>2</sup>

From the view of evolution theory and materialism, the concept of nationality pointed out by Stalin has exerted a far-reaching influence on the definition of nationality and Ethnic groups in China. In May 2005, the Communist Party of China (CPC) pointed out in its elaboration of basic theories and policies on ethnic issues: "The ethnic group is a stable community of people formed at a certain stage of historical development. Generally speaking, an ethnic group has common characteristics in historical origin, mode of production, language, culture, customs, and psychological identity. Religion plays an important role in the formation and

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<sup>2</sup>Stalin, Josif. *The Complete Works of Stalin*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1953: 294.

development of some ethnic groups."<sup>3</sup> In the context of the Chinese, those six common characteristics of a nation are the key factors and the basic conditions for the formation of an ethnic group.

### **Term Mosuo People:**

*“Mosuo people refer to the ethnic groups that call themselves' Na 'or' Na ri 'living in Ninglang Yi Autonomous County of Yunnan Province, and also in Yanyuan County, Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, Panzhihua City and Yanbian County of Sichuan Province.”<sup>4</sup>*

The Mosuo people live in Yongning town are one of the ancient ethnic groups of Ninglang county, but they are not identified as an independent ethnic group in the new China classification, the Mosuo people in Yunnan province are classified as the Naxi people, and the Mosuo people in Sichuan province are classified as the Mongols. In today's academic discussions, daily communication among local people, and tourism promotion of Lugu Lake scenic spot, they are generally referred to as "Mosuo people". The Mosuo people living in Yunnan and Sichuan provinces have the same customs and religious beliefs, but there are differences in terms of address due to historical problems and different administrative divisions.

### **Walking Marriage:**

It is generally believed in the academic circles that the origin of the walking marriage custom cannot be verified. In the 1950s - 1960s, the new Chinese ethnographers represented by Zhan Chengxu firstly called the unique forms of Mosuo marriage “Azhu marriage”, “Azhu cohabitation” or “Axia marriage.” In the 1980s, scholars Yan Ruxian and Song Zhaolin called it a "heritage of consanguinity group marriage" after re-researching. At the same time, they also put forward and used the

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<sup>3</sup> *The Central Conference on Ethnic Work*. Yunnan: Ethnic Publishing House, 2005: 11.

<sup>4</sup> Chen Liu. *Study on the Marriage and Family Changes of the Mosuo People in Yongning*. Beijing: Minzu Publishing House, 2012: 3.

word "walking marriage" for the first time in some articles. This is the first time that "walking marriage" has appeared in a historical research document. Similarly, scholar Shi Chuangang called it "the visiting system."<sup>5</sup> In the subsequent research literature, the term "walking marriage" was used in parallel with terms such as "Azhu" and "Axia", and has been used till today.

After 1949, the ethnographers defined Mosuo marriage as an "Azhu marriage" that both sides of a couple would be treated only as "friends" rather than "sexual partners". In the middle and late 20th century, because the definition of "Azhu marriage" could not accurately reflect the actual social situation and marital status of Mosuo society, Yan Ruxian and other researchers redefined "Azhu marriage" as the "heritage of blood group marriage" with the original survival characteristics of "matrilineal society" and "sexual alliance mode".

In the 1990s, based on previous research and through fieldwork, Shi Chuangang defined Mosuo marriage as a "visiting system" that in a form of "institutionalized alliances" rather than a form of marriage. But in the case of the Mosuo people, the Mosuo language calls the Mosuo style of marriage "Sese" which translates to a situation of "walking around." Therefore, in the aspect of the use of terms, this bachelor thesis will take in accordance with the Mosuo native language to discuss the unique mode of Mosuo marriage between the two genders, that is, using the word "walking marriage".

## **1. An overview of the Mosuo Culture**

Mosuo people are keen to learn and get experiences from the natural evolution and social development, classify and summarize it, and then seeking for a way of life which suitable for the development of their group, and come up with their own set of cultural theories. In social practice, they will use their own culture to understand and solve problems in real life, which helped them to structure their unique cultural

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<sup>5</sup> Shi Chuangang. *Yongning Mosuo People*. Translated by Liu Yongqing. Kunming: Yunnan University Press, 2008:3.

system.

### **1.1 The Matrilineal Mosuo People**

"Bones" is a very important concept in Mosuo culture. The body view of the Mosuo culture can be summarized as "Bone is the foundation, blood is the supplement"; Also, there is a proverb among the Mosuo people: "Blood comes from the father, and bone comes from the mother". This concept is also embedded in the Mosuo gender system, which is the opposite of the nuclear system that often existed in other nations. This is described in detail in the fieldwork of scholar Xu Ruijuan.<sup>6</sup>

The Mosuo people are known for their special "Walking marriages" and matrilineal extended families. Both cause and affect each other, constitute a relatively complete fertility system. In the walking marriage, both parties live in their own mother's family during the day, and the man in the night will come to the woman's room, the two parties have no relations regarding rights and obligations. Certainly, children that are born to the mother, belong to the mother's family.

In Mosuo people's family, the family members are consisting of one blood group from the original grandmother (the first female of this family). There are only female descendants who live in the family and the senior mother rules everything. In comparison with male members, the female members have a higher position in the family. Besides, every family member is the descendant of the mother or the grandmother, both female and male members will not leave the family for marriage, they will live alongside their mother all their life.

This type of blood relation and kinship is only extended from the mother's side, even the family property and asset will be inherited by the female members only; However, housework, education of children is handled by men called uncles, which are the mother's brothers.

Although in the family model as Mosuo people have with high position of women,

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<sup>6</sup>Xu Ruijuan. *The Pursue of Harmony: Father's Flat, Mother's Alliance -- An Analysis of the Body Symbol and Its Implied Meaning of the Yongning Mosuo People*. Southwest Border Ethnic Studies (1), 2017: 214.

male and female family members are still in a fair and equivalent relationship, which mainly reflects on the reasonable division of labor among family members. Women are responsible for farm production, while men are responsible for foreign trade, retail business and other economic activities, and the education of nephews, among others. Sometimes male members go outbound for work, while women usually stay at home. This situation formed a matrilineal family structure with the mother as the core.

Different from the concept of a small family, the traditional Mosuo people believe that a reasonable division of labor in the whole society will inevitably lead to social stability and development and that a reasonable division of labor in a family will inevitably promote economic development and civilization of the family. The mother or grandmother is the center of the family, and the father's responsibility is realized by the uncle. The Mosuo people rely on the maternal family for life, and the maternal blood kinship within the family is stronger than the kinship between husband and wife, as well as father and son, the sense of kinship group surpasses the sense of self.

## **1.2 The religious culture of the Mosuo people**

There are two main religious beliefs of the Yongning Mosuo people: one is the indigenous Daba religion (also called Dabaism), and the other one is Tibetan Buddhism.

### **1.2.1 Dabaism**

Dabaism is the original religion of the Mosuo people. It has a long history and rich content. Dabaism tells many Mosuo ancestors' cognition of the world, how they work and live, and their cultural consciousness. It also describes the national reproduction and development, as well as the detailed historical origin, migration routes, customs, and etiquette of the Mosuo people, which is called the encyclopedia of the Mosuo people. However, since Mosuo people do not have their written language, the Bible and other classics of Dabba can only be passed down orally, with leads to a great variation during the oral inheritance. Many classics that not being commonly used therefore are mislaid, and now Dabaism and its classics are on the verge of extinction.

The Dabaism is a typical primitive religion of polytheistic beliefs. "Da" means "cut down" and "ba" is the mark left on the wood after cutting by an ax. So, the meaning of this religion is, that Dabahism is like cutting wood with an iron ax. Each cut will leave a trace, which will be seen by heaven, earth, mountains, and ancestors. Demons and ghosts will be cut off like woods one by one.<sup>7</sup> The core of the scriptures and rituals of Dabaism is the sacrifice to gods and ancestors, and to banish the ghosts.

There is no fixed organization and place for Dabaism, and it is generally inherited by male members in families; The wise man(priest) who can make the gods bless Mosuo people, eliminate the entanglement of the demons on the living, is called Daba. The Dabas are clergy that is not separated from producing activities. They do not have professional clothes and remuneration, and they carry out ceremonies such as folk festivals and ancestor worship by the invitation of the populace. They seek to inherit the Mosuo culture and promote the spirit of harmonious coexistence between the Mosuo people and all living things.

There were three original forms of Dabaism: First is called "Ha Daba", which are mainly focusing on praying to gods and transcend the spirits of the dead people, the "Ha" means sacrificing and praying; The second is the "Bu Daba" which is used for expelling the evil spirits, here "Bu" means expelling; The last one was "Pan Daba" that means divination and that's also the meaning of "Pan". With the development of society, the three kinds of Dabas have been integrated into one, that is, sacrificing, expelling and divination, are forming together and became the formal doctrines and rules. After that, all the religious practitioners are called "Dabas".

Dabaism follows the principle of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, so they place their worship of nature in natural phenomena, personify nature, and invented a variety of natural gods by imagination, such as the god of the sky "Mugla", the god of the earth "Digla", the god of mountains "Vagla" and so on.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Chen Liu. *Daba Belief of the Mosuo People*. Today Nation (3), 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Ma Jidian. *Records of the Maternal Culture of Mosuo in Lugu Lake*. Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 2006: 121.

### **1.2.2 Tibetan Buddhism**

Tibetan Buddhism was introduced into Yongning town from the end of the Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty (13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century), and soon became the mainstream religion of the Mosuo people in Yongning. Tibetan scriptures have replaced the blank of Mosuo characters because as we've mentioned before, they do not have their writing. Mosuo people usually like to hang a paper with Tibetan scriptures in every house under the eaves to get the blessing from the god and to get rid of the evil spirits. Therefore, Tibetan Buddhism is of profound significance to the Mosuo people in Yongning.

Yongning Tibetan Buddhism has some exclusive characteristics: 1) Compared with the former Tibetan area of theocratic unity, Yongning Tibetan Buddhism does not participate in politics. 2) Yongning Tibetan Buddhism has the characteristics of the family. Lamas recite sutras at home most of the time and are invited to divination for common people, chant sutras for patients, exorcize ghosts and remove evil spirits, and participate in and preside over various ceremonies in funeral festivals. 3) Yongning Tibetan Buddhism has also absorbed some factors of Dabaism, such as the concept of female superiority in Dabaism. In the eyes of the Mosuo people, the fierce female deity Baitiram has become a beautiful protector.<sup>9</sup>

### **1.3 The livelihood of the Mosuo people**

The main feature of Mosuo people's livelihood is the diversified operation of the family that as a unit, and this economic model can be well adapted to the form of the Mosuo extended family. The Mosuo people have traditionally maintained a subsistence and closed natural economy, with agriculture being their most important source of livelihoods, such as wheat, corn, and rice. The yield per unit of land is low because of the climate and farming techniques, but the Mosuo people have relatively larger land, so the crops are sufficient for their families and for raising more livestock. Animal husbandry is only next to agriculture, and almost every Mosuo household

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<sup>9</sup> Chen Liu. *A Study on the Marriage and Family Changes of the Mosuo in Yongning*. Beijing: Minzu Publishing House, 2012: 14.



raises pigs and cattle. Traditionally, the Mosuo people relied on horses for transportation. Nowadays with all kinds of modern means of transportation, most families no longer have horses. Pigs are the main source of meat for the Mosuo people, and the pig fat that the Mosuo people love is also of ritual and custom significance.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in the traditional Mosuo families, it is always the female members who go for the farm work, and the male members stay at home for taking care of the younger family members, a typical characteristic in the Mosuo matrilineal society since the period of agricultural civilization.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, it is common that for the Mosuo people to raise a certain number of pigs, ranging from five to six to more than twenty, and actually, the number of livestock owned by a family used to be an important indicator of the wealth of this family. The Mosuo people also have many traditional cottage industries, such as weaving and brewing, which are sufficient to the needs of the family.

After the reform and opening up in China in 1978, the Mosuo people began to engage in commerce and tourism, but that mainly happened in the villages near Lugu Lake. At that time in most other Mosuo villages, agriculture remains the most stable part of the family's economic life. With the deepening influence of the market economy, Mosuo people are no longer satisfied with farming life, and the cash income has become the inevitable demand of modern life of Mosuo society. Therefore, migrating for work in order to obtain cash income has become an important economic activity of the Mosuo people today.

#### **1.4 Mosuo people's festival culture**

Mosuo people have rich and colorful festival rituals and customs, which can be divided into two categories: one is life rituals such as a funeral, marriage, childbirth,

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<sup>10</sup> Pig fat. The Mosuo people have a unique way of making and storing pig fat. After slaughtering the pigs, the organs and bones are removed, salt is added, and the pigs are sewn into the shape of a pipa and pickled in winter. Pig fat can be stored for years and can be used to cope with food shortages when natural disasters cause poor harvests. Pig fat is also ceremonial and symbolic. It is used in return for gifts at funerals. During the Spring Festival, pig fat represents the importance of others. Now living conditions have improved and people rarely make pig fat, but it still has symbolic significance.

<sup>11</sup> Renzhenwangmu. *Mosuo people and walking marriage*. Yunnan Daily, 2010:2.

adulthood ceremony, and others; The other one is the festivals related to the farming season and religious belief, such as the Spring Festival, the Rotary Mountain Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival. The Mosuo people attach great importance to rituals and customs. These festivals provide important occasions for the Mosuo people to express their religious beliefs and social relations, among which the most prominent ones are funerals and Rotary Mountain Festival.

#### **1.4.1 Mosuo Funeral**

The funeral is the most important and complicated ceremony in the life of the Yongning Mosuo people. In traditional Mosuo people's life, weddings are rarely encountered, so the funeral is more solemn.

The Mosuo practice a second cremation, a complex and symbolic process. After a person died, the elder of the family should be invited to discuss and make arrangements. The whole funeral ceremony includes funeral announcements, body washing, standing as guards at the bier, cremation, and many other procedures. The funeral is usually presided over by a Daba, and the lamas are also invited to recite sutras. At the same time, the oldest surviving female member of the deceased's family will stand for the whole family to announce the starting of the procedure, offered sacrifices, and began to cry.<sup>12</sup>

#### **1.4.2 Rotary Mountains Festival**

Mosuo people have worshiped nature and believed in animism since ancient times. According to the oral records of Daba classics, offering sacrifices to the Goddess Gemu, which is also called "Gemu Country" by Mosuo people, will please the goddess and get the blessing from her. This festival is called the Rotary mountains festival in Chinese and it has a history of more than one thousand years.<sup>13</sup>

In the Mosuo people's belief in Dabaism, the Rotary mountains festival is held on

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<sup>12</sup> Zhang Jie - Shi Qijia. *The Matrilineal Culture's Psychological Trauma Treatment of Death from the Mosuo Funeral*. Yunnan Daily, 2011: 14.

<sup>13</sup> Ma Jidian. *Records of the Matrilineal Culture of Mosuo in Lugu Lake*. Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House 2006: 133.

the 25th day of the seventh lunar month every year. The main purpose of the Rotary mountain festival is to offer sacrifices to the Goddess Gemu. People pray for the blessing of the natural gods through sacrificial rites for agricultural harvest every year. On this day, people wake up at the time of cock-crowing, wear festive dresses, carry the sacrificial food and incense on their backs, gather together at the entrance of each village as a unit for departure. Then they reunite at the temple of the goddess under the Gem Mountain. Lamas wear a Buddhist cap with a new monk's robe and utensils for Buddhist activities. The lamas play tuba and suona – a classical Chinese instrument - to preside over the ritual, begging the Buddha to help the goddess Gemu and bless the Yongning area. The Mosuo people who participated in the activity held picnics, singing, dancing, and other activities after the worship ceremony. In such an atmosphere, it was also a perfect opportunity for young Mosuo men and women to get to know each other.

The goddess Gemu is the most important god in the Mosuo mythological system. According to the Legend has it that there used to be no mountains around the Lugu Lake, and Goddess Gemu often flew from the north with other male gods at night to bathe in the lake and flirt with each other. When the rooster announced the dawn, she flew back to the north. One night, when the male gods had been waiting for a long time, the Goddess of Gemu arrived late, and while they were about to play, the rooster crowed and the east turned white, they could not fly back anymore. Thus they were trapped around the Lugu lake, Goddess Gemu lay down by the bank and became the Mountain of Gum, and the other male gods crowded around her, turning into other mountains.

This series of the legend makes the Mountain Gemu became a place for Mosuo people to worship the Goddess of the Gemu, they built many temples with the paints of Goddess Gum. Every year in this Rotary Mountains Festival, there will be many activities of worshipping the goddess. From that, we can see the important position of women in the social life of the Mosuo people and the marriage form of the walking

marriage.<sup>14</sup>

## **2. The Marriage and Family of the Mosuo People**

### **2.1 The three forms of marriage**

Mosuo people have three different forms of marriage: the first form is the walking marriage as we've mentioned previously; The second form is to establish a visiting relationship between men and women, after a period of walking marriage, they will transfer from walking marriage to cohabitation marriage, also called co-living walking marriage; The last form is like our modern marriage with a grand ceremony.

In the Mosuo language, both the walking marriage and the co-living walking marriages are called "sese". The Mosuo people use "sese" to describe the marriage relationship between the two genders, which vividly expresses that the two parties do not live together and realize marriage through "walking", namely walking marriage. After a period of walking marriage, if the two parties want to live together, they form a cohabitation walking marriage, but because the wedding did not hold, it is still called "sese", or with a little emphasis "ti ki dzesese", which means "walking marriage but living together." After holding a grand wedding ceremony, the marriage relationship is called "zi ti", which means "holding a banquet". It is more appropriate to express this marriage relationship with "get married" in English.

Before the Reform and opening up, the most important form of marriage in the Mosuo society was the walking marriage, and the marriage relationship of the Mosuo people in the traditional period was very loose, which was manifested in the following aspects: the non-contractual nature of the rights and obligations of the parties in the walking marriage, the deformability and non-ritualistic nature of the walking marriage process, and the dissolution of the marriage relationship was simpler than that in other societies.

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<sup>14</sup> Yun Hong. *"Chaoshan Festival" of Nu Nationality*. The Nation Today, 1999: 15.

### **2.1.1 Walking Marriage**

In the walking marriage of a Mosuo couple, the man and the woman live in their own matrilineal family, and the man must visit the woman's home to maintain the sexual relationship. The man goes to the woman's home at night and returns to his home the next morning. If they need help in addition to the walking marriage, the walking marriage parties will help each other in production and life, but the two parties have no right or obligation relationship, and there is no obligatory economic connection. A child born under the Walking marriage usually will belong to the woman's family; And in any case, the child won't be seen as illegitimate.

The men and women who established the walking marriages relationship call each other "azhu", which means spouse; And they privately would call each other "axia". The word "axia" specifically means the sexual life of men and women, and since the Mosuo people are reluctant to publicly discuss topics related to sexuality, so they don't use it in public.

The most prominent characteristics of the walking marriage are polygamy and instability. Scholar Zhan Chengxu and his colleagues provided data: They interviewed 462 adult men and women aged between 18 and 50 in 12 natural villages in Zhongshi and Kaiping in Yongning town, and find out that there were 2,750 temporary, short-term and long-term "azhu", with an average of 6 "azhu" per person; And they have in total 1061 "azhu" for more than one year, so each person has an average of 2.38 long-term "azhu".<sup>15</sup> Before the Reform and opening up, the walking marriage was a kind of polygamous walking marriage, which was quite unstable.

### **2.1.2 Co-living walking marriage**

A co-living walking marriage based on the couple who has experienced a certain period of the walking marriage, without any ceremony, the man joins the woman's family or the woman joins the man's family, or to build up a new family, in order to

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<sup>15</sup> Zhan Chengxu. *Azhu Marriage and Matrilineal family of Naxi People in Yongning*. Shanghai: Shanghai Century Publishing Group, 2006: 73

live together and raise children of the couple.

The main reasons for the co-living walking marriage are as follows: first, the man has no sisters, so he needs the woman to join the husband's family to give birth to offspring to realize the continuity of the family; The second is that the wife has no brothers, and the wife's family is short of the male labor force in productive labor, so it needs the male to join in. In addition, if one of the walking couples has a large family with many family members, moving out will not affect the life of the mother's family and can even reduce the pressure of resource shortage of the mother's family, so the walking couples may choose to set up a new family to live together.

Compared with the usual walking marriages, co-living walking marriages are more stable and can last for decades or even a lifetime. However, if the two parties are emotionally discordant, they can still dissolve freely. One party moves back to his/her mother's home without any economic entanglement, and the children born will be decided to join which family by the families of both sides through negotiation.

### **2.1.3 Mosuo Modern Marriage**

The modern marriage of the Mosuo people refers to the marriage relationship established by certain marriage (or matrilocal residence) ceremony, which is quite similar to our modern ceremony. "Hanchuba" is the name given by the Mosuo people to a monogamous marriage, which has the purpose of maintaining social status and the inheritance of family property through nuclear successors. Since the lack of women to continue the family is the most pressing problem, Mosuo marriages are also more likely to involve women marrying into the man's family.

The significance of Mosuo people's choice of marriage lies in two aspects: one is the adjustment of family structure through the flow of personnel; The other one is the influence of monogamy marriage on the Mosuo people after the Reform and opening up. The institution of marriage was formally formalized in Mosuo society, and legal marriage gained an unprecedented status. When a family needs to adjust the family structure through marriage and in the meantime, the family has certain economic conditions, it will choose to establish a marriage relationship through modern

marriage. If they want to dissolve the marriage, they have to get the approval of both families, and they have to go through the corresponding procedures.

## **2.2 Maternal Relative Structure**

Mosuo culture has shaped the high position of women, and at the same time does not belittle men, thus forming a Mosuo society where men and women coexist harmoniously. The position of women in the family is shaped by the dominant role of women in succession and stability, women's fertility is the basis of reproduction of family members. Women's unique maternal temperament full of cohesion can enable women to treat each family member equally and arrange various affairs reasonably, to maintain family unity and stability. In the traditional agricultural society, the main source of household economic income is from the agricultural production undertaken by women.

Mosuo society values men as well as women. Male members, especially the male workforces, are important contributors to the economy. If there is no male offspring, a family may take the adoptive methods to keep the balance and harmony of the family. Men in an important position in the family, but also embodied in the "the uncle is in charge of the etiquette, the mother is in charge of the financial" the cultural traditions, women have obvious advantages in daily life, but the arrangement of the men in a larger property, social interaction and confirm walking marriages relations are more voice and so on ceremony, formed a "Female lead inside, male lead outside" gender division of labor pattern.

In a traditional matrilineal extended family, the elder mother and uncle are responsible for the management, use, and production of the family's assets. According to gender and age, family members divide their labor naturally, taking into account each person's ability and characteristics, and engaging in various productive labor. In this production unit, the labor force is abundant, production activities are harmonious and unified, forming a diversified and sustainable development of the production mechanism.

The relationship between all family members in a Mosuo family is a type of

mutual care, unity, and harmony, and each member could do his or her best in the family's production, labor, and economic life. In a Mosuo extended family, sisters in the same generation are the common mother of all their children, and all their children call their biological mother and their biological mother's sisters “emi” (mother). If the biological mother has more sisters, they will add elder, younger, or the specific person’s name after the “emi” in order to be distinguished. Mothers call their children “ro” (sons) and “mu” (daughters) without distinction. At mothers’ old age, they will be loved and respected by all the younger generations without distinctions too. In the Han (the mainstream nation in China with more than 90% population) nation’s view, some women with no offspring are childless and widowed when they grow old; But in the Mosuo family, they receive the same care and support from their younger generations. Uncles, once the important providers of the family, is also the main educator of the younger generation, in the family very prestige, will also be all members of the love and respect. In short, each member of the family can get the care of all other members.

Mosuo women and men play their respective advantages in different fields, forming a society where men and women are equal and co-exist harmoniously. Just as scholar Weng Naiqun sums up the gender system of Mosuo society: women and men are a continuous relationship in time structure, and a unity of opposites in space structure, which is indispensable.<sup>16</sup>

### **2.3 Mosuo Family, Family House, and Kin**

Family is the basic unit of Mosuo society. Mosuo people often use the word “yidu” to express the meaning of family. However, “yidu” not only refers to family but also emphasizes the family house or household property that family members live together in the same place. The family house is the center of Mosuo people's social and cultural life. It provides a stable material life guarantee for family members. Ensuring the continuity and prosperity of the family is the meaning of the traditional Mosuo

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<sup>16</sup> Weng Naiqun. *Female Source and Male Flow: on the Structural System of Gender in Naxi Culture in Sichuan-Yunnan Border Culture from the Symbolic*. Ethnic Studies (2), 1996:4.



people's life. In Mosuo society, the core of lineage is the extension of the family house and its symbolic, which is the family name. The meaning of “yidu” includes four parts: The actual residence of the house, namely the concrete building of the house; All the ancestors who lived there but are no longer alive; All the people who live inside it; All livestock and other property belonging to the household.

Here we will discuss the social and cultural significance of the Mosuo family house:

1) The concept of “yidu” of Mosuo people expresses their unique understanding of family and is the source of the uniqueness of Mosuo culture. “Yidu” is an important carrier for Mosuo people to identify themselves. Mosuo people believe that the process of an individual from its birth to death is only a short form of life. After death, they will go back to the ancestral residence along the route through the funeral ceremony held for them in their "house" to find their ancestors and then to confirm their identity.

2) “Yidu” is a guarantee mechanism for the production and living of the Mosuo people. According to Max Weber, the fundamental principle of the family as an "economic community" is family communism in which individuals take what they can and what they need.<sup>17</sup> In the Mosuo family, there is a natural division of labor according to gender and age, which is arranged uniformly by the grandmother. This kind of production and living mechanism of division of labor and cooperation has considerable advantages in the traditional self-sufficient society.

3) “Yidu” is an important way for Mosuo people to build social relations and realize social values. The practice of kinship is the main aspect of establishing social relations in a traditional society. The matrilineal family is the most common form of the Mosuo families, referred to as kin, here the kin is specifically meaning a maternal blood group smaller than a clan. The Mosuo matrilineal family is composed of the

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<sup>17</sup> Weber, Max. *Weber's Works: Economic Action and Social Group*. Translated by Kangle. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2005: 260.

same female ancestors in three to four generations of descendants of maternal blood group, the main members are grandmother and her brothers and sisters, mother and her brothers and sisters, children and grandchildren, not including men and women members of the spouse. There are strict sexual taboos within the kin: Between any 2 between members of the two genders, the sexual relationship is strictly forbidden, as well as to talk about any sex-related topics.

Kin is a blood group, as well as a production and living unit. When it is used as a production and living unit, kin is often a household that everyone lives together; However, the people in the same household do not necessarily belong to the same family. In the case of adoption, marriage, and so on, a house will contain members from two or even more kins. The kinship is mainly used to identify and trace the blood relationship to determine the members under the same kinship, and the scope of discerning communication.

4) The inheritance and prosperity of “yidu” is the primary target in the life of Mosuo people and the meaning of the life of a Mosuo people. The transmission of lineage and inheritance of property are all carried out within the family. The Mosuo people in the Lugu Lake area generally have a matrilineal household, and its basic features are as follows:

a. The lineage is calculated according to the maternal line, which is passed down from grandmother to mother and from mother to daughter.

b. Perform a coming-of-age ceremony. A child is considered as an adult at the age of thirteen, and from then on, he/she will participate in all kinds of productive labor and enjoys all the rights as an adult.

c. Apply walking marriage between two genders. After the coming-of-age ceremony, men or women can make official socialize contact with friends in different gender. Once both the two parties agree, they can start walking marriage and sleeping together.

Walking marriage takes women as the main body and men as the object, so the men will visit women on their initiative.

d. Sons and daughters are belonging to the mother's family. All children born from walking marriage belong to the woman's family. The mother's sisters are also the mothers of the children. The uncle has the responsibility to bring up the children, while the biological father has no obligation to bring up the children.

e. Worship the ancestors together. Each matrilineal clothing society has its ancestors and no idolatry.

Overall, the matrilineal consanguinity is the best choice for the Mosuo family structure. It cultivates a peaceful and harmonious family relationship, forms a harmonious and unified family life, guarantees material support, life care, and spiritual consolation for each family member, and provides a "strong and reassuring social support system" for the people living in it.<sup>18</sup>

### **3. The Changes and Development of the Mosuo Culture**

*"The impact of globalization and tourism development on our Mosuo culture has been much greater than the previous two shocks (Tibetan Buddhism and Han culture after the founding of the new People's republic of China)." said Cao Jianping, president of the Lugu Lake Mosuo Cultural Research Association.<sup>19</sup> Lamu Gatuza, a famous Mosuo scholar, summed up three shocks to Mosuo culture in history, which are: The establishment of Chieftom System, the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism, and the impact of commercialization and globalization. Both scholars agree that the current shock is the most significant.*

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<sup>18</sup> Rattami Dashi. *Essays on Mosuo Social and Cultural Studies*. Kunming, Yunnan University Press, 2006: 143.

<sup>19</sup> Li Sipan: *Mosuo Culture in Lugu Lake Girls' Country*. News of life,2007: 12.

### **3.1 Modern Chinese marriage system**

Affected by the political entities after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, as well as the social environment changes from 1958 to 1976, the local government has forced the Mosuo people to give up walking marriages three times. The practice of the local government had a direct impact on the origin of the modern form of walking marriage of the Mosuo people.

During the Cultural Revolution, the local government of Yongning town forced the Mosuo residents to obtain marriage certificates and stopped the walking marriage culture. This impact has strongly influenced the concept of marriage of a group of Mosuo youth, and the phenomenon of modern marriage has materialized and become popular in simple and complex Mosuo families.

After the Reform and opening up, under the background of economic globalization and science, technology, and information revolution, with the development of society, the increase of social mobility, the convenience of transportation and information, the regional scope for choosing the spouse of the Mosuo people has been expanding significantly, and the restrictions of nationality have been further removed. The new religious belief, gender consciousness, values, and other pluralistic ideologies have violently impacted the Mosuo society with walking marriage as the main reproduction mode, resulting in a more profound ideological change than the direct intervention of political entities and the integration and implanting of multi-ethnic ideas.

The author visited Luoshui village and found out, many local Mosuo people went out for studying or working, and also have love experience with youth from other nationals. When asking young people about the customs of walking marriages, their expression is mostly like: In the past time, the educational level of the Mosuo people is quite low. Although walking marriages is relatively free, the modern marriage system is much more advanced than traditional walking marriages, and can adapt to social development much better.” The young Mosuo people do not have a comprehensive understanding of their history, and the Mosuo culture itself is quite

weak in the face of the powerful impact of mainstream consciousness. Mosuo people are forced to find their attributes from the external definition, and repeatedly construct their new concept of love and marriage in comparison and collision.

Mike Featherstone, the British sociologist, pointed out that "The problem of people facing multiple identities leads to an 'endless search for or construction of a coherent identity discourse.' The emergence of 'authentic' local culture in a sense is to solve this problem by emphasizing some local features that are not common in daily life in a rhetorical way. Here, the purpose-built identity for visitors is an obvious example."<sup>20</sup>

## **3.2 The modern extended family culture**

### **3.2.1 The prominence of male members in the Mosuo family**

Contemporary Mosuo men, under the provisions of the New Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China and the value expectations of society, need to assume more obligations and responsibilities for their children. This responsibility is not following the provisions of the law to perform, but according to the ability of the individual and family conditions to assume the corresponding responsibilities. In modern Mosuo families, fathers' responsibilities and obligations to their children have mainly been reflected in two aspects: the ritualistic expression of the identity of their children, as well as the care in important festivals and daily life for them. For example, 100 days after the birth of a Mosuo father's child, the man's family will hold a so-called 100 days celebration to celebrate the birth of the child; In daily life, he needs to take care of the children's lives, educate children on his initiative, which covers the uncle's obligations and responsibility to the child in the past time.

Nowadays, many Mosuo children call their fathers "baba" (means "father"), which is very different from the traditional title of an uncle named "awu" According to the interview record, the Mosuo kid said to me: "live with my parents. I have an uncle who doesn't live here. But Mother says when meeting a tourist, I should call my

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<sup>20</sup> Strassen, Andrew - Steward, Pamela. *Four Lectures in Anthropology: The Story of the Imagination of the Body*. Translated by Liang YongJia. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2005:130.

father as my ‘uncle’.”<sup>21</sup>

### **3.2.2 The changes in Mosuo family relationships**

Modern Mosuo extended family relationships have undergone many changes, including the grandmother's management style, family member relationships, and gender relations. In the traditional Mosuo society, the grandmother or mother uniformly arranges the productive labor and economic consumption of the family. Personal interests are subordinate to the interests of the family, and the family is the core of life. It is difficult for outsiders to integrate into the family because of the matrilineal blood relationship between family members. The natural division of labor within the family is carried out according to gender and age, and the reasonable arrangement of production and labor is made. This mode plays its role in different fields, forming a society featuring equality and harmonious coexistence between men and women.

With the development of the market economy and the improvement of the legal system, the above relationship has the obvious changes: the population of the Mosuo household has gradually reduced, and tend to be individualized, diversified development, and responsible for the property and spending respectively; The grandmother or mother only make major decisions of family arrangements, family member's independent consciousness, and self-development is more and more obvious; The relationship between husband and wife has become the main family relationship, the family's economic source, and social communication needs to rely on the relationship between the couple, other members of the dependent relationship get weakened; In modern society, the Mosuo men have the advantage to get access to resources, and the position of the Mosuo women began to be marginalized.

### **3.2.3 The modern culture of Mosuo family house “Yidu”**

Luoshui was the first Mosuo village that became rich from tourism. To meet the

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<sup>21</sup> The author recorded an interview with Dujiliamu on May 18, 2021.

needs of consumers and the tourism industry, all the houses near the lake have been converted into houses and shops by every family. These buildings embody elements of Mosuo culture in appearance, but modern materials such as cement and steel are used in the construction of the houses.

The Mosuo traditional family house “yidu” consists of four parts, and they are also from individual buildings: principal house (grandmother’s house), sutra hall, flower house (daughters’ house), and grass house (for livestock). Except the principal house is a 1-story house, all other 3 parts are 2-story houses, the “yidu” actually means the building structures combination of these 4 together.

But nowadays, to make efficient use of the land value, many Mosuo families only keep the grandmother's house and the sutra hall, and they try to build bedrooms as much as they can on the rest of the land, to provide accommodation for visitors as much as possible. The style of the grandmother’s house has also changed. The door is changed to a high door with a higher doorsill, and the fireplace has become decoration only. The original function and value connotation of these buildings are constantly losing.

Under the influence of economic development and government policies, the social and cultural significance of the family in Mosuo culture has also changed. In the modern Mosuo society, family-centered is still the core concept of the Mosuo people, and it is still the cultural symbol of the Mosuo people, but it only represents the family to which the Mosuo people belong. The production and life, economic expenditure, and social interaction of the Mosuo people are all carried out in a small family unit, and the content of their religious belief is also beginning to weaken. At present, they retain a relatively complete concept of ancestor worship. The rapid flow of population makes the traditional Mosuo culture decline and marginalize continuously, and it will be difficult to restore the real Mosuo culture afterward.

### **3.3 Characteristics of marriage and family changes in the Mosuo society**

#### **3.3.1 Characteristics of marriage changes**

##### **1. Scope of mate selection**

The scope of mate selection has been expanded, which is no longer restricted by ethnic groups and geographical space: The contacts between the Mosuo people and various ethnic groups have been expanded, and the ethnic characteristics of mate selection have been reduced. The convenience of transportation and information flow has made mate selection no longer restricted by geographical space.

## **2. Marriage relationship**

The marriage relationship turned to a stable monogamy system, and there are more economic ties and common social activities between the two parties. The parent-child relationship became an important part of the marriage relationship, and the father had become one of the significant social roles of the Mosuo society.

### **3.3.2 Characteristics of family changes**

#### **1. Family relationship**

In traditional matrilineal family, the elder grandmother arranged family of production labor and economic consumption, whole family members subject to family, but now the family members of the independent consciousness and the pursuit of freedom is more and more obvious, member of the family lifestyle choice showed strong individual autonomy, the relationship gradually to participate in the activities of the family's economic, splitting up to have small families has become the mainstream option.

#### **2. Family structure**

Family structure has become more flexible. On the premise of inheriting the family culture, contemporary matrilineal families give priority to the individual economic behaviors that conform to the family members, so there are more temporary forms of variation and the family structure is more changeable.



## 4. The Current Situation of the Ethnic Identity in Luoshui Village

Ethnic identity includes many factors, such as religion, class, blood relationship, culture, and so on. Therefore, ethnic identity is complex and multi-layered, which is also reflected in the ethnic identity of Mosuo people in Luoshui village, so far there has not been a generally accepted simple analysis method in the academic circle. However, the marriage system and matrilineal family of the Mosuo people are the core content that distinguishes the Mosuo people from other ethnic groups. Therefore, it is worth exploring the identification of marriage and family of the Mosuo people.

### 4.1 The Rise of Individual Subjectivity

*"In the era of collectivism, the individual's life was completely controlled by the collective and the country, and the country opened up new social space and conditions for the development of the individual."*<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the development of these individual concepts and new social spaces outside the family is limited. Since the Reform and opening up, China moves to the market economy, policies in all aspects begin to become loose and liberal. The individual's lifestyle subject to the system constraints is getting less and less, and the individual has obtained unprecedented opportunities for development and independence. After the socialist transformation of the Mosuo society, some individualistic concepts such as husband and wife relationship, individual economy, and independent love have emerged in traditional family life. The outside world deeply attracts young Mosuo people. More than 80 percent of the Mosuo teenagers in the Luoshui village will be sent to the county or city junior high schools<sup>23</sup> to live a life free from the constraints of the Mosuo family.

Some Mosuo people went out from the village using studying or working. They

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<sup>22</sup>Yan Yunxiang. *The Transformation of Private Life: Love, Family and Intimate Relationships in a Chinese Village*, Translated by Gong Xiaoxia. Shanghai: Shanghai Press, 2009: 258.

<sup>23</sup>Source: *Management Committee of Lugu Lake Scenic Spot of Yunnan Province*, 2021.

accept the ideology of the mainstream culture and choose the mainstream lifestyle. Although most of them admit the advantages of the matrilineal family and the Mosuo society, few of them are willing to return to the village life, and they show a strong sense of autonomy.

#### 4.2 The Disappearance of the Daba Religion

Mosuo people attach great importance to religious belief, and the priest Daba preside over ceremonies such as festivals, children's naming, adult rites, and disease divination. After Tibetan Buddhism was introduced to the Lugu Lake region, the Mosuo people began to believe in Tibetan Buddhism. They invited Dabas and Lamas to recite sutras every time they offered sacrifices and rituals. Many Dabas even went to Tibet to study. In the author's questionnaire, as shown in Table 1, more than half of the visited Mosuo people in Luoshui village place religious culture at the highest position of Mosuo culture, indicating their importance to religious belief. Two-thirds of the respondents are middle-aged people who are over 35 years old.

Question: What do you value or like the most about Mosuo culture?	The distribution of the answers
Religious culture	18
Matrilineal family culture	14
Marriage culture	3
Traditional singing and dancing culture	1
Others	5

Table 4.1 The most valued or liked Mosuo Culture by Mosuo people in Luoshui Village

The Daba religion is slowly getting disappeared, and now there are only two dabas that exist in Yongning city.<sup>24</sup> The head of the Luoshui village expressed his feeling of great regret and pity toward the situation of the slowly disappearing off the Dabas. He said, “*The Dabaism classics and epic are extending orally, it is already a difficult thing for people who want to study that due to lack of written records.*

<sup>24</sup> Yang Fuquan. *The Field Investigation Record of Naxi Ethnography*. Beijing: China Book Publishing House, 2008: 288.

*Especially, because of the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism and the impact of the Chinese Han culture, few people wanted to study the culture of Dabaism, young people are not willing to do this 'hard job' since there's no return. It is a great pity.*<sup>25</sup> When the author was interviewing some Luoshui villagers about Dabaism, a 17-year-old villager names Sheng Nong said, *"We don't have Dabaism anymore. It's all Buddhism now. And now studying the Dabaism and Buddhism are the same, both have to go to Tibet and monasteries to learn."*<sup>26</sup>

In the process of ethnic development, religion will become a medium to trigger and strengthen ethnic awareness, a part of the ethnic culture that gradually injects ethnic emotional factors, a tool of ethnic political mobilization, and an organic part of the social and spiritual life of ethnic groups.<sup>27</sup>

### **4.3 The Decline of the Walking Marriage Culture**

In the writings from scholar Zhan Chengxu around the 1960s, it was already described that walking marriages at that time were characterized by relative stability, and there was a default procedure for the establishment and dissolution of romantic relationships. Most Mosuo young people believe that the "progressive" nature of modern marriage is a complete break with the past and a historical break with the continuity of Mosuo culture and psychology. As far as the "subject" is concerned, ethnic identity can only be felt after being exposed to an environment different from the culture in which the subject is growing. After the subject feels the collision of different cultures, some comparisons will inevitably be made when he or she looks back at his or her own culture. Whether it will be a support or oppose to the original culture of the subject is the core of ethnic identity.<sup>28</sup>

Obviously, in about the institution of marriage on the ethnic identity of the water,

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<sup>25</sup> From the author's interview with the village head on May 5, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Sheng Nong on May 10, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Zhang Chunxia - Pu Xiaogang. *Foreign Religious In penetration and Ideological Security in Xinjiang*. Xinjiang: Xinjiang Social Sciences (1), 2010: 65-70.

<sup>28</sup> Cao Jun. *Contemporary Marriage Changes in Mosuo Settlement Areas: A Case Study of Luoshui Village and Zhongshi Village in Ninglang County*. Journal of Qujing Normal University (1), 2014: 178-181.

in the village of Mosuo young people always take the initiative to "monogamous" preferred "modern marriage." The author had ever spoken to the Mosuo young men, no one wants to use the walking marriages as the form of their marriage: during the talk with Lamu and Duoqi, two villagers who are over 18 years old, stated that "The walking marriages is the tradition that should be abandoned already."<sup>29</sup>

## **5. The analysis of the reasons that influence Mosuo culture's changing and development**

### **5.1 The policy and reform in the People's Republic of China**

Through administrative system reform and economic development mode transformation, China has promoted the change of Mosuo culture and determined the development direction of the change.

#### **5.1.1 Land reform: 1956-1957**

In October 1956, the People's Congress of Ninglang County passed the Peaceful Consultative Democratic Reform Regulations of Ninglang Yi Autonomous County. The regulations stipulate: *"Abolish feudal land ownership and implement peasant land ownership; Abolish all kinds of rents, taxes and labor factions of the lords and their right to possess the land, mountains, forests, rivers, and grasslands and confiscate their land to the peasants; At the same time, a top-down approach should be adopted to negotiate with the elites of ethnic minorities. As long as they agree to accept reforms and abandon exploitation of the working people, the government should not lower their political status and living standards, and pays them wages, and subsidized food. While confiscating the land from the medium and small lords, generally not to deprive of their political rights or confiscated their grain, tools, houses, livestock, and other property. Instead, they were given a share of land as peasants and transformed into self-supporting laborers. The land of Buddhist temples*

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<sup>29</sup> From the author's interview with Gong duo on May 26, 2021

*will not be confiscated; We will adopt a policy of solidarity with patriotic and law-abiding religious personages, so that the monks in the temples can still serve and chant sutras, and give them proper care for their daily lives.*"<sup>30</sup>

In March 1957, the land reform work in Yongning town was completed, including the abolition of the chieftain system in Yongning town, and the realization of land owned by farmers. After the land reform, Yongning town Committee became the main body of social management on behalf of the Chinese government. From then on, the state apparatus started to be responsible for managing the production and life of the Mosuo people, as well as infiltrating the Mosuo society. The changes of production relations in Yongning town began to change the social and economic relations of the Mosuo people.

### **5.1.2 Age of collectivization: 1958-1978**

In October 1958, Ninglang County became a people's commune, and Yongning Township, which originally belonged to Yongning District, became Yongning Commune. The cultivated land, forests, livestock, and furniture were owned by the commune and collective production was carried out by the production teams under the administration of the commune.<sup>31</sup> This forced collectivization movement has deeply changed the social lifestyle of the Mosuo people. Under the influence of the collective consciousness and collective behavior with political consciousness, the vested interests and religion in the Mosuo society have been seriously weakened.

During the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976), the religious belief and traditional culture of the Mosuo people were extremely suppressed, which caused the rupture of the Mosuo culture in the Lugu Lake area. The Tibetan Buddhist temples of Zamei and Sakya were demolished, the monks in the temples were demolished, many religious figures were persecuted, and all religious activities were forced to stop,

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<sup>30</sup> Chen Liu. *A Study on the Marriage and Family Changes of the Mosuo People in Yongning*. Beijing: Minzu Publishing House, 2012: 46.

<sup>31</sup> Chen Liu. *A Study on the Marriage and Family Changes of the Mosuo People in Yongning*. Beijing: Minzu Publishing House, 2012: 47.

causing huge losses to the temple's property.<sup>32</sup> Since the Mosuo Daba religion was mainly passed down orally, under the influence of the Cultural Revolution, the scriptures, legends and history of Dabaism were eliminated so they are really difficult to retrieve afterward.

In the 1970s, the government imposed a "Marriage movement" in response to the Mosuo's walking marriage custom. According to the policy, the custom of walking marriage is forbidden, and Mosuo people are forced to marry their walking marriage partners and set up a family on their own. Punishment measures such as deducting food rations and increasing the forced working hours are taken for those who do not marry and obey. This coercive measure has caused great psychological trauma to the Mosuo people, and also prompted the forced acceptance of modern marriage values and the change of marriage and family.

### **5.1.3 Household responsibility system: 1978-now**

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the social life of the Mosuo people in the Lugu Lake area has finally back to normal, especially after the Reform and opening-up policy. In 1981, Yongning town fully implemented the Household responsibility system, which means in agricultural production, farmers as a relatively independent economic entity made a contract with the collective land and other large-scale means of production and carry out production and management independently according to the contract. Except for a small part of its operating income, which is paid to the collective and state taxes following the contract, all income is attributed to farmers.

The local government combined the rural industrial structure adjustment and the household responsibility system according to the actual situation in the locals, decided to arrange the agricultural production activities by using the family as a basic unit for one part; The other part will change to a variety of business, such as animal husbandry, transportation, industry and commerce, tourism and so on, improved the production

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<sup>32</sup> Chen Liu. *A Study on the Marriage and Family Changes of the Mosuo People in Yongning*. Beijing: Minzu Publishing House, 2012: 48.

enthusiasm of the Mosuo people. The living standards of the Mosuo also got improved, and the biggest change is in Luoshui Village.

Since 1989, Luoshui village has been engaged in tourism-related industries. By 1991, relying on the superior geographical location and environment, tourism has become the industrial pillar of Luoshui Village. In 1995, Luoshui village was rated as one of the top ten wealthy villages in Lijiang City. By the end of the 20th century, household appliances such as telephones, television sets, refrigerators, and washing machines had become popular in Mosuo people's families in Luoshui town.

Since the 21st century, the government has vigorously supported the development of tourism, and the economy of the Lugu Lake area has been developing continuously, releasing a large number of surplus laborers. On the one hand, the released labor force accelerates the flow of population, which poses great challenges to the Mosuo people's marriage and traditional family. On the other hand, the released labor force reduces the Mosuo people's dependence on the land, reducing the importance of land, which makes the core function of the Mosuo people's family change from the production function to the living consumption function, which has a profound impact on the traditional concepts and culture of the Mosuo people.<sup>33</sup>

## **5.2 The impact of the Han culture**

The surrounding cultures especially the Han culture have been trying to incorporate Mosuo society into the same model as their own, and many of the practices of the Han nation, such as concubine, polygamous marriage, and nuclear system, have gradually intruded and penetrated Mosuo society, providing them with an alternative cultural model.<sup>34</sup> The intensity of Chinese assimilation policies varies in different periods. It can be said that the early assimilation was only effective among some Mosuo people in the "land-owning" class or landlord class, but most of the others still use the "walking marriage", and neither the national consciousness nor the

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<sup>33</sup> Chen Liu. *A Study on the Marriage and Family Changes of the Mosuo People in Yongning*. Beijing: Minzu Publishing House, 2012: 49.

<sup>34</sup> Geertz, Clifford – Qiao, Wu. *Interview and Comment on Cai Hua's* " Ethnic Studies (1), 2002: 92-99.

ethnic consciousness was awakened.<sup>35</sup>

Starting in the 1950s, the Chinese government began to implement different kinds of encouragement policies to try to eliminate this “walking marriage.” The first step is to encourage the establishment of core families and to allocate land to men who are willing to establish and maintain the core families. During the Great Leap Forward (Second Five Year Plan), couples were given material incentives to obtain a marriage certificate.

But these only appear in those Mosuo villages that have intensive communication with Han and other ethnic groups, in this case, there were very few Mosuo men and women who chose the official marriage in the Luoshui village. Even after their opening to tourists outside, the rules of protecting the matrilineal family culture still make them keep the Mosuo walking marriage and matrilineal culture. In the meantime, their ethnic identity began to awaken, and they think the only way to attract more tourists is to keep the traditional culture.

After the rapid development of the economy and education in Luoshui village, ethnic identity began to be differentiated. The cultural invasion realized through education made the young generation and the older generation of Mosuo people, who had not received a proper quality education, stand on different values. The Mosuo first lawsuit between two genders was brought over their children's tuition fees, and the story, which took place in 2009, is as follows:

A mother has two daughters. Her eldest daughter has been admitted to a university, where her tuition is about 10,000 Chinese yuan per year. The second daughter was also admitted to a university. The family had no extra money to support the second daughter and did not want her to give up her studies, so they asked the father of the child to pay half of the cost. The father, also the husband of the mother, who was better off than his wife, was also willing to pay the cost. His sisters disagreed, however, because their family had their children's expenses too. So it was

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<sup>35</sup> Rattami Dashi. *Collected Papers on Mosuo Social and Cultural Studies*. Yunnan: Yunnan University Press, 2006: 456.



brought to court as a case, and according to the Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, they were a De Facto Marriage and the father of the child had the responsibility to bring up the child, so the woman was judged in favor of the suit.

This case, as the first suit between two genders in the Mosuo society, has sparked a heated discussion in the village, with the elders arguing that the woman was at fault and should not take the case to court. *“It's okay to give gifts to each other because of the feelings between two people, but how can the man give money to the child? This is blackmail!”* said elders,<sup>36</sup> *“Most of the old Mosuo people are uneducated, and their stance is different from that of the young,”* said Songnong, a teacher from the Yongning Middle School. *“But there are legal ways to resolve things like this. Family persuasion won't work. The older generation's ideas are deeply ingrained and difficult to reconcile.”*<sup>37</sup>

Obviously, in terms of family values, the younger generation of Mosuo has fully accepted the monogamous marriage system in the mainstream society and believes that parents' responsibility to raise their children is beyond reproach, which cannot be parallel with the traditional Mosuo matrilineal family in which the man is only required to raise and educate the children born by his sisters. As for the role of “uncle” in the family, Songnong said, “Of course, I will still take care of my sisters' children, the Mosuo family atmosphere will not be lost, but I will be responsible for my children in the future, and I will assume more responsibilities than my children’s uncles.” It can be seen that in the Mosuo society, the traditional common cognition of “uncle is the greatest” has changed. The generation under the impact of Han culture holds different positions from the older generation. Therefore, the Mosuo people's identification of marriage and family values has been divided.

Mosuo people in Luoshui village are a relatively wealthy group in the Mosuo area. Under the background of tourism development, cultural protection is also attached to importance. Scholar Yang Liting investigated the construction of cultural symbols in

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<sup>36</sup>From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Duoji in May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>37</sup>From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Duoji in May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Luoshui village and analyzed the influence of such cultural symbols on tourism.<sup>38</sup> Through investigation and analysis of the use of new media (mobile phones, etc.) by Mosuo people in Luoshui village, scholar Zheng Kaiyue found that the intervention of new media promoted the pursuit of novel material life and the change of concept in Luoshui village does have a little change on religious belief and family inheritance system.<sup>39</sup>

It is an indisputable fact that the matrilineal families in Luoshui Village are "empty-nested", and only the grandmothers are in charge of the offerings of the family sutra hall. The elderly burn incenses in the sutra hall three times a day instead of youth. Except for ritual participation in festivals, the younger generation of Mosuo people has weakened their traditional culture. These trends, like love and marriage, are irreversible.

### **5.3 The development of the tourism industry**

With the development of modern tourism, the Mosuo people in Yunnan and Sichuan province have changed and reconstructed their self-understanding and interaction with the outside world, and their ethnic identity has changed in different periods, especially in the Luoshui village where happens these changes at first.

When scholar Sun Jiuxia were comparing and analyzing 3 popular tourist destinations: Yubeng in Diqing, Daizuyuan in Xishuangbanna, Minsucun in Yunnan, she divided the destinations into three types of tourist communities according to the intensity and extent of the contact from the tourists/visitors: Low intensity with deep extent type (Yubeng), namely fewer visitors, but they can have deep contact such as eating, living and working together with the locals. The impact to the traditional ethnic culture is less in this case, the ethnic group belonging and sense of identity remain the same; High intensity with shallow extent type (Daizuyuan), there are a lot of visitors, but the contact is only in the fixed space outside the residents' families.

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<sup>38</sup> Yang Liting. *The Construction and Communication of Ethnic Cultural Symbol*. Master and Doctoral Symposium of Yunnan University, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Kaiyue Zheng. *The Use of New Media and the Change of the Mosuo's Traditional Lifestyle in Xiaoluoshui*. Postgraduate and Doctoral Symposium of Northwest University, 2017.

The ethnic culture presents a trend of commercialization, and the ethnic group belonging and sense of identity is affected. The last type (Minsucun) is with high intensity and exotic extent, which means also a lot of visitors, but the culture they experienced or watched and the real culture of that ethnic group is indifferent occasions, with the strongest performance and the ethnic group belonging and sense of identity, but it's also fragile at the same moment.<sup>40</sup>

The tourism development of the Luoshui village is divided into three different periods:

(1) The period of independent non-governmental development (1989-2004)

Before the 1990s, tourists who were interested in the Mosuo culture had entered the area of Lugu Lake sporadically, and articles and books about the Mosuo people published by scholars and experts attracted more people to come to the Lugu Lake. Moreover, the unique natural scenery of Lugu Lake made it an excellent tourist spot. In the late 90s, the first family hotel appeared in the head of Luoshui village's house, when the agriculture and handicraft industry is still the main way of living for people in the Luoshui village. A year later, the village started to construct many Mosuo family hotels, then boating, horse riding, and accommodation brought considerable income to the Luoshui village. However, the contradictions between the villagers also gradually appear, often related to the Mosuo Family houses. At that moment, the head of Luoshui village set up the villager committee by learning from the other villages, whose members were mainly the representatives of the matrilineal families in the village. They made village rules and regulations, and collectivize boating, horse riding, and Mosuo singing and dancing performances. In June 2004, the Yunnan provincial government began to regulate tourism in Lugu Lake.

(2) The Period of Government-led development (2004-2009)

On June 5, 2004, China Central Television (CCTV) reported a series of problem happened in Lugu lake area, including the pollution of Lugu lake, the illegally

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<sup>40</sup> Sun Jiuxia. *The Impact of Tourism on Ethnic Identity in Destination Communities: A Case Study Based on Different Tourism Functions*. Journal of Zhongshan University (1), 2010: 170-177.

constructed hotel, and the practice of deceiving consumers. In the same year, the government of Yunnan province established in Luoshui village “Lugu lake provincial tourist area management committee”, under the leading of the government, the Lugu lake scenic area has carried out the improvement of the environmental protection work comprehensively; the regulation of the tourism market has also begun to increase efforts.

### (3) The period of commercial capital-led development (2009-Present)

In 2011, the Luoshui village was listed as the provincial key village for new rural construction. In 2013, the construction of Lugu Lake Airport was officially started (it began to operate in 2017), which further improved the tourism infrastructure, and a certain amount of capital began to pour into the tourism market of the Lugu lake area.<sup>41</sup> At present, most of the villagers in Luoshui village rent out their inns or houses to outside businessmen. Since 2009, Lugu Lake has entered a period of development led by commercial capital.

According to the classification of the above three types of tourist communities, in the earliest period, Luoshui village was like the first type, few tourists come, but they can come and live in the Mosuo family, deeply feeling the matrilineal family culture. The second period and the third period belong to a mixed type. Luoshui village began to receive a large number of tourists. Most of them stayed in hotels and had little contact with Muosuo culture. Some traditional customs and local knowledge that no longer meet the spiritual and living needs of local people and the development of their cognitive level can only be retained in texts, videos, and museums in various ways, but this may not necessarily dissolve the ethnic and cultural identity of local communities.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Shang Qianlang. *Exploration on Promoting Shared Concept in Tourism Development of Minority Areas*, Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities (1), 2018: 47.

<sup>42</sup> Lei Wei - Junxi Qian - Hong Zhu. *Whose Authenticity? Tourism Stare and Local Identity in Lugu Lake*. Tourism Journal (8), 2015: 66-76.

The rich economy brought by the development of tourism has spawned the entrepreneurial spirit of local people. One after another, Mosuo people have registered their tourism souvenirs and organized catering services. The development of the tourism industry began to strengthen the Luoshui village residents of ethnic identity and cultural identity. Scholars like Lu Xingfu surveyed people who live in the Lugu Lake area regarding the tourism development, and they found out that local people think the development of tourism has promoted a lot of cultural activities, and also helps the Mosuo people to understand the cultural value, the Mosuo cultural pride, and to protect and extend the Mosuo culture; even though cultural performances such as singing and dancing are often criticized by researchers as losing cultural authenticity, most residents believe that cultural performances do not lead to the decline of cultural value, but rather that their unique song and dance performances are the expressions of real folk culture.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, the effect is reflected in the "Empty shell" trend of the matrilineal families in Luoshui village, because the good economic conditions brought by the tourism development make some Luoshui villagers buy houses in Ninglang and Lijiang County towns and give to other people outside to operate the inns. "No matter the education quality or health care, the city is better than here. We also want our children to live in big cities where it is convenient." Caita, the local villager said so. Traditional folk songs no longer appear. Popular songs created by urbanites are replacing them. Dancers at dance parties learn to smile like professional actors. The name "Oriental Eden" has been printed more and more widely in various tourist brochures, and Mosuo scholar Shi Gaofeng said: "*The fake folk custom of tour guides fooling tourists is becoming popular.*"<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Lu Xingfu - Lu Lin. *Cultural Identity and Cultural Representation of Post-styled Tourist Destinations Based on Tourist Stare*. Human Geography (12), 2014: 28-30.

<sup>44</sup> Bai Gengsheng (ed.). *Collected Works of Naxi Studies -- Lamu Gatusa*. Beijing: Minzu Publishing House, 2008: 156.

## **6. Field Research Research: The Changes and Analysis of Kinship Terms of the Mosuo People in Yongning Town**

Yongning town is located in the northern part of Ninglang Yi nationality County, Lijiang City, Yunnan Province. More generally, it locates in the southwest of China, where Sichuan and Yunnan provinces connect. Yongning town has an average elevation of about 2,600 meters and a total area of more than 600 square kilometers. There are around 12 ethnic groups live here, including Mosuo, Pumi, Han, Yi, Tibetan, and Naxi, among which the Mosuo people account for the majority. Until the Chinese democratic reform in 1956, the Mosuo people living in the Yongning area were still in the stage of the feudal lord system, and they kept intact the "Azhu" marriage tradition.

From July 2020 to June 2021, the author of this bachelor thesis went to Yongning town, Ninglang Yi Autonomous County, Lijiang City, Yunnan Province for three times for fieldwork, to conduct a series of preliminary research and studies on the social culture, marriage, and family of the Mosuo people. The research of this bachelor thesis is based on the data collected from the fieldwork and then refers to the literature. Through field interviews, participant observation, and other methods, we have learned that the Yongning region has undergone many great changes since the founding of the People's Republic of China. Along with the development of the tourism industry, the different cultural impact especially from Han nation to the local, plus the great changes of local traffic conditions and economic life, will inevitably affect people's ethnic identity, family values, marriage, kinship, and so on, thus it is necessary to research the social status and family form repeatedly.

The exact location of the field research of this bachelor thesis is in the Luoshui village, Yongning Town, Ninglang Yi Autonomous County, Lijiang City, Yunnan Province. Luoshui village is divided into Pumi Upper Village and Mosuo Lower Village. The first one was built on the back of the hill, and the second one was built near Lugu Lake, with the highway connecting the county and Lugu Lake as the dividing line. The dwellings in the Pumi Upper village are relatively old, the village preserved a lot of Pumi cultural relics; Most of the buildings in Mosuo Village are

modern dwellings due to the development of tourism. But in both upper and lower villages, the dwellings are all constructed of wood, with peeled logs on the walls and planks on the roof, commonly known as wooden stick houses.

The people in Luoshui village are 73 families with a population of 570 people, including 270 Mosuo people, 220 Pumi people, and 80 Han people. The Luoshui village is the most affluent Mosuo area in Yongning town. Since the tourism activity was launched in 1995, relying on natural tourism ecological resources and unique folk culture, Luoshui village has become one of the top ten rich villages in Lijiang city within three years.

The linguistic data involved in this bachelor thesis belong to Yongning Mosuo language dialects, because Yongning town is in a relatively graphical remote location in Yunnan province, plus the inconvenience of the traffic condition, that leads the contact of the Mosuo people there is limited to the outside world in the past times. Thus no matter the Mosuo matrilineal society, or marriage patterns, family structure, language, and religion are kept relatively intact, therefore, Luoshui village is considered to be more representative of Mosuo culture.

## **6.1 Properties and methods of the qualitative research**

Qualitative research is to extract as much information as possible from a smaller number of individual samples, with lower reliability and higher validity. It includes but is not limited to ethnographic research, interview research, participant observation, and literature analysis. Researchers aim to have a deeper understanding of the ethnic groups; analyze them with non-quantitative means and obtain research conclusions.

The methods used in this paper belong to qualitative research. Based on a preliminary understanding of the traditional culture of the Mosuo people, this bachelor thesis mainly uses two research methods, which is the field research and literature research, therefore it combines qualitative methodology with the literature and theoretical analysis, as follows:

### 01. Content analysis

Collecting the historical materials: read and learn the county records and literature reviews of Ninglang Yi Autonomous County (listed in the references), sorting out the history of the Mosuo people in Yongning to study the early social forms of the Mosuo people. Collecting the cultural materials: learn the myths and legends, folk proverbs, and ballads of the Mosuo people.

### 02. Participation observation method

Participant observation was conducted into field notes. The author visits local people's homes, live under the same roof, and eat at the same table with the local people, therefore gained first-hand information through visiting and living experience. The author experiences the daily life of the Mosuo people in person.

### 03. Semi-structured interview

Through interviews, we can learn the understanding and identification of the Mosuo culture, from the point of view of the local Mosuo people according to different ages, genders, professions, and cultures. Besides, we can collect many legends and stories of the Mosuo people in Yongning town - the subjects can make their voices heard. Although due to the limitation of the number of participants, the different educational levels of respondents (sometimes the answers are difficult to translate or even understand) that lead to the limitation and inconvenience in the research process.

## **6.2 Chosen participants**

The author selected participants by the method of purposive sampling and selects those suitable participants for this research mainly according to the participant's level of education, ages, and knowledge regarding the Mosuo culture, which will be specified below. The author firstly talked with people in the street of the Luoshui village and then through them to get to know new people.



Participants were divided into two groups according to the interview:

1. Questionnaire interview: Due to the low literacy rate of villagers above 45 years old in the Luoshui Village, the participants below 15 years old have little knowledge of the traditional Mosuo culture, the author selected participants between 15 to 45 years old, and their basic characteristics are belonging to Mosuo ethnic group, knowing Mandarin fluently, and have the basic cognition and understanding of the Mosuo matrilineal culture. After a brief communication with locals, the author issued 20 questionnaires and received 17 valid ones, to obtain the preliminary questionnaire results.<sup>45</sup>

2. Semi-structured interview: As the interview requires language requirements, the author aims at the characteristics that the educated are usually more sensitive to the local social development and more fluent in Mandarin. The participants of the semi-structured interview are all workers and villagers with high school education, they are:

- 1) Sheng Nong, 17 years old, male, unmarried, student.
- 2) Lamu, 18 years old, female, unmarried, student.
- 3) Duoji, 18 years old, male, unmarried, student.
- 4) Sansan, 18 years old, male, unmarried, student
- 5) Gaga, 19 years old, female, unmarried, student.
- 6) Diebu, 19 years old, male, unmarried, student.
- 7) Majiami, 23 years old, female, married, the waitress in the hotel
- 8) Gong Ga, 24 years old, male, unmarried, the waiter in the hotel
- 9) Gong Duo, 25 years old, unmarried, the waiter in the hotel
- 10) Yang Kun, 27 years old, married, tour guide.
- 11) Xiao Kumu, 32 years old, female, married, hostel owner.
- 12) Yang Hu, 33 years old, male, married gift shop owner
- 13) Zhang Cun, 34 years old, male, unmarried, tour guide.

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<sup>45</sup> See the appendix for the outline of the questionnaire.

- 14) Mr. Yang, 34 years old, male, married, hotel owner.
- 15) Mrs. Yang, 34 years old, female, married, hotel owner.
- 16) Zhuomu Qiang, 36 years old, male, married, restaurant owner.
- 17) Tang Min, 35 years old, female, married, restaurant owner
- 18) Tang Tao, 37 years old, the waiter in the restaurant.
- 19) Geze, 38 years old, male, married, hostel owner.
- 20) Yang Wenjing, 39 years old, female, married, freelancer.
- 21) Danwa, 41 years old, male, married, tour guide.
- 22) Yang Zhenguo, 49 years old, male, married, restaurant owner.

3. At the same time, they were asked to fill in the Mosuo maternal and paternal kinship terms forms, which were collected and verified and presented as questionnaire data.<sup>46</sup>

### **6.3 Themes of the research**

After the semi-structured interview, most of the contents have been organized and presented according to the actual situation, as shown above. In this chapter, the analysis will focus on the changes of the kinship terms which reflect the family form and kinship relationship in different historical periods. The terms are positioning of the relationship between people in the network of kinship, rights, and obligations, its changing is slower but more lasting. How do these kinship terms change, how do they reflect, and what factors cause them? Based on these thoughts, we will explore the kinship terms of the current Mosuo families and the changes in family forms.

### **6.4 Ethics of the research**

Before asking the participants to fill in the questionnaire and starting the semi-structured interview, the author fully informed the participants of their research. They have the right to know all the texts and the right to remain anonymous. They can stop

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<sup>46</sup> See the appendix for the outline of the semi-structured interview.

the interview at any time and ask the author to delete their information and answers after its end if they wished to. At the same time, the author guarantees that they will not disclose their personal information, and will not force them to answer any questions that they do not want to answer, and will not ask the information involving privacy. During the stay in the Mosuo family, the author also tried to keep quiet and stable work and living habits, and tried to blend into the Mosuo family and experience their daily life.

The basis of participants' willingness was to establish a good relationship with them, not only for academic interviews but for also friends-style greetings and small talk in daily life. During the field research, there was a key person, Shengnong, alongside the author, who was very warm to provide all kinds of information. There was communication with him for few hours, involving all aspects of the Mosuo culture, including his experience – as a Mosuo person who grew up in a matrilineal family with the education of Chinese Han culture. He was generous enough to introduce his friends and siblings, and helpful when the author had questions and needed to get the answers

## **6.5 Limitation of the research**

During the field research, the author mainly encountered the following problems:

First of all, the education level of Mosuo villagers in the Luoshui Village, including the residents interviewed, is not high enough, which leads to the limitation of the expression ability and knowledge reserve during the interview process. Due to the differences in the comprehensive development of the Eastern and Western regions of China, although the economic development of Luoshui Village ranks first in Yongning Town, it is still significantly different from that of other regions from the perspective of the whole Yunnan Province. Moreover, the economic development does not necessarily lead to higher education levels, as since most Mosuo villagers started their tourism business in the early 1990s, almost every Mosuo family has been too busy for receiving tourists than send their children to higher education institutions.

Later, a certain number of Mosuo young people did go outside to study, but it was already the 21st century, so the improvement of the overall educational level of the Mosuo people in Luoshui Village was still in the hands of the third or even fourth generation.

Secondly, due to the limited knowledge reserve of the villagers, many interviewees even memorized the guide words from local tourism when talking about the Mosuo culture, which seemed to have more width but less depth, and there were a lot of exaggerations in it. This does not have much positive effect on the construction of cultural and ethnic group's identity and the awakening of ethnic group consciousness, and it also has a certain impact on the accuracy of the author's research.

The popularity of Mandarin among the Mosuo community is also a problem. Since the Mosuo people don't have their written language, their language is preserved only through word of mouth. At the beginning of the 21st century, the Chinese government launched a campaign to popularize Mandarin, but it is really difficult to popularize it in some remote areas, and it is difficult for the elderly people of ethnic minorities to learn it. Moreover, there is a big difference between Mandarin and Mosuo languages. In addition, the author, who only knows Mandarin, has some problems in communication with local villagers, and it is also difficult to perfect the translation of interview records into English.

In addition, due to the limitation of human resources, material resources, and financial resources in the process of the author's research, as well as the choice of research methods, especially the purposive sampling method, the respondents, are affected by the author's personality. Ideally, the entire villagers would be interviewed, but this is almost impossible for one author. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce the error as much as possible.

## **6.6 Results and analysis of the research**

From the field research, the author obtains the following contents regarding the kin terms. The kinship system corresponding to the matrilineal kin is listed below, which is valid from the 1980s to the 21st century:

Mother	Emi	Great Granddaughter	zumi
Uncle(Mother's brother)	Awu	Great Granddaughter	zuwu
Grandmother	Azi	Elder sister	emu
Daughter	Mo	Younger sister	gmi
Son	Zo	Elder brother	emu
Granddaughter	Zumi	Younger brother	gizz
Grandson	Zuwu	Mother's Spouse	awu
Mother's uncle	Epu	Mother's sisters	emi
Sister's daughter(female call)		mo	
Sister's son (female call)		zo	
Sister's daughter(male call)		zimi (niece)	
Sister's son (male call)		ziwu (nephew)	
Spouse's uncle		awu	
Uncle's spouse		emi	
One's spouse		axia	
Spouse's daughter (male call)		zimi	
Spouse's son (male call)		ziwu	
Spouse's mother		emi	

Table 6.1 The kinship terms adapted to the matrilineal kin

With the corresponding graphical explanation:

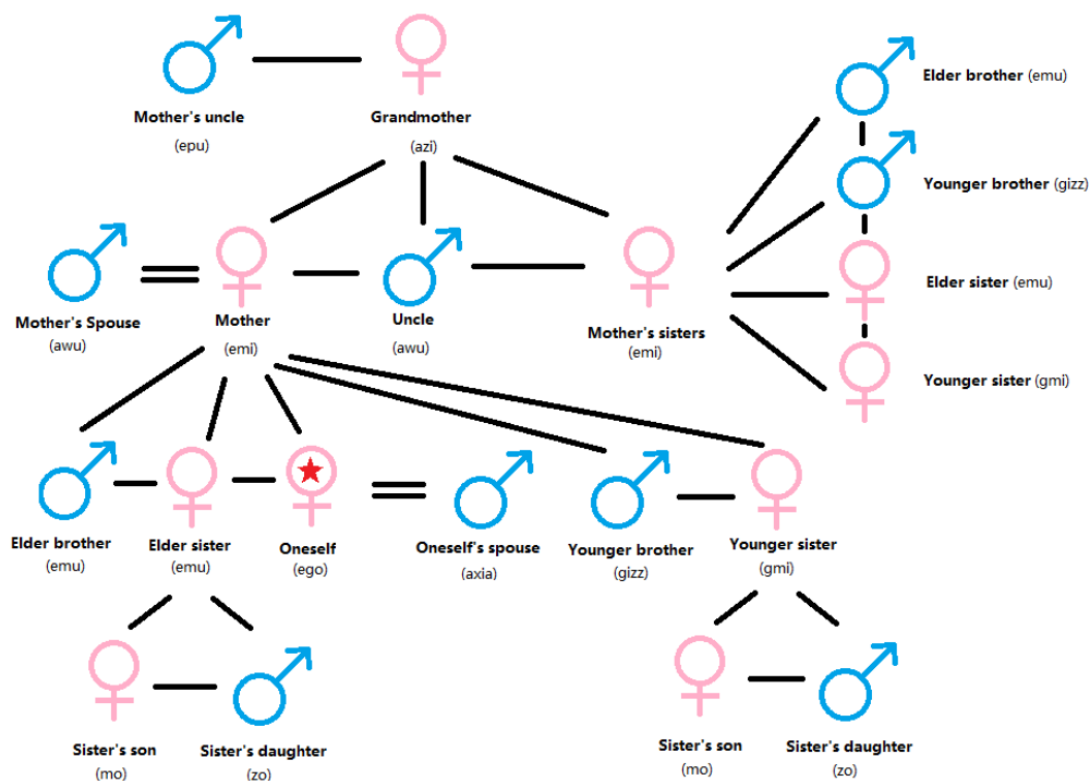


Figure 6.1 The matrilineal family relation tree with kinship terms

Within the maternal kin, there is no marriage relationship. Couples (axia) call their elders and children according to the other person's habits, but this relationship is not considered as kinship in the traditional concept. Although the maternal family has a large population, the kinship terms always use the same terms for lineal blood relatives, and all collateral blood terms (such as nephew and niece) are included in the lineal blood category. *"I used to live in a big family with my natural mother and uncles, my uncles treat me like their natural son. Although I know who is my 'real' father, I still have a feeling that the importance of my uncles is higher than my father's. As I grow up, I also treat my sisters' children as my children. Though now the nephews and nieces are counted as collateral blood relatives, in my mind, they are always my lineal blood relatives".*<sup>47</sup>

The kin terms within the matrilineal family have a very wide scope. For example, the word "emi" (mother), can express the child's natural mother and her sister, or the spouse of the uncle. When asked how exactly to distinguish between relatives with the same title, participants gave answers such as adding a name or seniority after the word "emi", like "elder mother" (natural mother's elder sister); or adding a personal pronoun before "emi", for example, "my mother": *"My mum has an elder sister and both of them are called Zhuoma, so other people call my aunt Da Zhuoma (means elder Zhuoma) and call my mum Little Zhuoma. When I go to my aunt's house I call her 'Emi Zhuoma' and my mum 'Emi', and my sister (Da Zhuoma's daughter) also call my mum 'Emi Zhuoma' and her mum as 'Emi', so there is usually no misunderstanding. My aunt calls me by my first name and sometimes she calls me 'Mo', just to show closeness."*<sup>48</sup>

In the traditional matrilineal family, no matter the lineal or collateral relatives, women are the center and core. The above kinship terms reflect the basic characteristics of the matrilineal extended family and the walking marriage system. Therefore, there is no man's recognition of his children. For men, unless they get

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<sup>47</sup>From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Yang Zhenguo in May 23<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>48</sup>From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Lamu in May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

married, they have no lineal children of their own. The standard of all lineages can only be based on the female, from whom the siblings of each generation since they are childless, are also attached to the linear line. However, it does not include the spouse of oneself, mother and daughter, let alone the spouse of male members. In the Mosuo matrilineal family, both sexes of the same generation are brothers and sisters, and so is the division of all collateral blood relatives. We can see partially from the following interview with a Mosuo mother: *“You ask me about my views on the matrilineal family? ...In fact, the characteristics of the matrilinear families in the era I lived in are getting fuzzier and fuzzier. As well as the walking marriage, my husband and I don't get married by walking but are married formally with a wedding. Since I was a child, it was my elder grandmother who made all the decisions in our family and took care of everybody. As she's getting too old, my second grandmother runs out of the family. After that, the head of the family is my mother's elder sister. Her daughter and son are my brother and sister, and we have a very good relationship; however, I have very less communication with my husband's sisters and brothers, I don't see them that often, occasionally when we go to festivals or go together to downtown by bus; Both of my children are daughters, but I have no prejudice against my sister's and my brother's children, for example, our family income mainly comes from my uncles who work outside and our gift shop in the village, and we share the income for the whole family members for the daily expenses. If anyone's child needs to buy new cloth, we will buy them for all our children to be equal. As we live together, it will be weird or unfair for someone's children did not get something when others have. Life now is much better than before, the tourism industry is coming back after the epidemic. I am very happy and satisfied with my life now.”*<sup>49</sup>

Here we should point out, that the Chinese government's policy of family planning run in the 1970s does not apply to the minority ethnic groups<sup>50</sup>, thus it helped the Mosuo people to perpetuate their matrilineal culture: *“Before I always wanted to go out of this place, now I want to be closer to home, in Kunming city of*

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<sup>49</sup>From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Yang Wenjing in May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>50</sup>*Family Planning in China*. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2019.

*Lijiang city would be great. Big cities, a lot of chances.” The young Mosuo male Shengnong is very talkative, he told the author that he ran away with the family argument, currently working in a supermarket, waiting for school to start in September, “I feel no difference between other ethnic groups, I have many friends. The family treats both boys and girls the same, and after 13 years old you become an adult they let you help the family with housework or in the field..... Young people stop having ‘walking marriage’, everyone gets girlfriend/boyfriend like what you do(Han people), if you do not get married, that is acceptable you family will try to talk to you, but they would not force you..... My mother and father are in charge of their finances, but the property is owned by the family and not divided..... My father’s Han surname is Yang, most of Mosuo people’s surnames are Yang, I do not have a Han name, I do not feel it matters, but I will take my father’s name if I need one..... I will move out and live only with my wife and children, of course, I will listen to my father at home, and I will listen to my uncle(mother’s brother) too, but I will listen to my father between the two of them.....”*<sup>51</sup>

In a four-hour interview with him, it was very clear that he has "abandoned some traditional cultures", saying that his views are in line with most of the people at the school, that no longer go for walking marriage, that does not think much of Mosuo culture and their own identity, and that Everything he sees online is based on Han culture, like TV programs, novels, social media. He mentions that he "gets angry and leaves messages correcting inaccuracies about Mosuo culture", which he claims is his only contribution to protect his own culture.

The kinship terms adapted to the nuclear kin are listed below in Table 6.2:

Father	ada	Father’s brother	abo
Mother	emi	Father’s sister	eni
Uncle	awu	Father’s brother’s wife	emi
Daughter	mo	Sister’s daughter (Male call)	zimi
Son	zo	Sister’s son (Male call)	ziwu
Younger brother’s daughter(Female call)	gizzmo	Elder brother’s daughter(Female call)	emumo

<sup>51</sup> From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Shengnong, in May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



Younger brother's son (Female call)	gizzzo	Elder brother's son (Female call)	emuzo
Brother or sister's grandson	zuwu	Brother or sister's granddaughter	zumi
Elder brother or sister	emu	Younger brother	gizz
Younger sister	gmi	Grandmother	azi
Spouse's father	ada	Spouse's uncle	awu
Spouse's mother	emi	Spouse's elder brother or sister	emu
Spouse's younger brother	gizz	Spouse's younger sister	gmi
Son's wife	zoshumi	Daughter's husband	zoma
Husband	hashupa	Wife	shumi
Elder sister's husband	emuhashupa	Elder brother's wife	emushumi
Younger brother's wife	gizzshumi	Younger sister's husband	gmihashupa

Table 6.2 The kinship terms adapted to the nuclear family kin

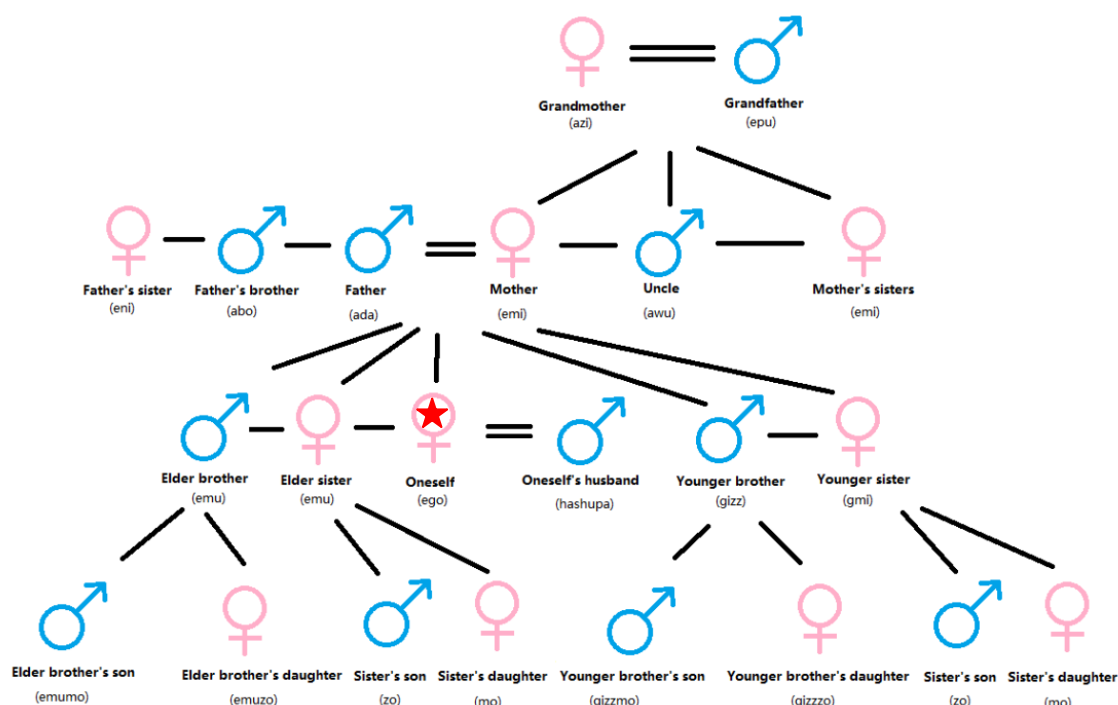


Figure 6.2 The nuclear family relation tree with kinship terms

With the change of kinship system, kinship terms also change. The emergence of the nuclear family has a great impact on the matrilineal family, which makes the relatively primitive kinship system inherited by the Mosuo people undergo some changes.

During the Author's field research in 2020, there was a couple of Mr. and Mrs. Yang managed the small hotel since their 30 years old. They have a daughter who is in primary school and a one-year-old son, and the family lives in the house next to the

hotel. As they have limited education, their experience of went out to work at a younger age left them fluent in Mandarin, but illiterate. The use of mobile phones was also taught to them by the guests. Reservations online for houses are taken care of by friends on their behalf: *"We worked in Shandong province before, I was a landscape designer, because I couldn't read or write, it was difficult to have a better job development..... We earned money and went home to build a house and make a hotel. At that time we were also walking marriage, then we were asked for a marriage certificate and got married..... Most of the hotels and restaurants here are foreigners who rent the land of locals and then open up, the locals don't have that much money, many(local people) are still farmers..... Many Mosuo people here go to Shandong province to work because one person goes and tells his/her relatives and friends about this, a second person who seeks the job will go too. Most people choose a place to work where people around them have been, and this naturally forms a network..... Many Mosuo women whose families are not well off marry local people(while they work) and choose to stay there..... Being a Mosuo does not mean anything to me, we are normal people, we just want to live a better life."*<sup>52</sup>

Combining those tables and figures above, we can see the important changes and characteristics of kinship terms:

(1) The nuclear family kinship terms use the narrative form. For example, women call their elder brother's children "emumo" (elder brother's daughter), "emuzo" (elder brother's son), and their younger brother's children "gizmo" (younger brother's daughter) and "gizzzo" (younger brother's son), all of which are direct narratives. But as the nuclear family continues growing, women started to call their siblings' children nieces, and nephews like men. However, only aspects of the nuclear family are spreading, but not the nuclear system in its totality: *"I've lived with my mother and father since I was born. My grandmother's family, my aunt's (mother's sister)'s family, and my uncle's (mother's brother)'s family all live in the same village. I also have an*

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<sup>52</sup> From the author's interview with the Mosuo villagers Mr and Mrs. Yang, in Jan 15<sup>th</sup> 2020.

*elder brother who has gone off to university. The figure of the uncle is very important in traditional Mosuo culture, and the uncle takes over the duties of the father, although he still calls his sisters' sons and daughters his nephews and nieces. But in modern Mosuo society, at least in our family and in the families of relatives and friends that I know, many of them have mothers and fathers living alone with their children. For the parents, their biological children are the most important, and the siblings' children are all nieces and nephews.*"<sup>53</sup>

(2) The emergence of new titles: father (Ada), uncle (Abo), and aunt (Eni). In the traditional matrilineal family, the uncle takes the place of the role of father, so there is no "father", or "aunt" and "uncle" (father's brother). But with the emergence of the nuclear family, the father's sister began to emerge independently as a new word, "eni", and the father's brother as a new word, "abo". This shows that the importance of the patrilineal line has become useful, and the kinship term system of the Mosuo people is constantly developing. "*Whenever there was an important holiday, we would visit my father's family and my mother's relatives. These two sides of the family are the same to me, they are just called by different titles. But my mother told me that she had not met her relatives on her biological father's side when she was a child.*"<sup>54</sup>

(3) The titles of "emi" (mother) and "awu" (uncle) are stable in both nuclear and matrilineal families. Traditionally, women still refer to their sisters' children as "Mo" and "Zo" (sons and daughters), without distinction. Men, on the other hand, have other titles for the children of their sisters, namely "zimi" and "ziwu" (sons and daughters of the sisters), and sisters use narrative titles for the children of their brothers by marriage, namely "emumo" (daughter of the elder brother), "emuzo" (son of the elder brother), "gizzmo" (daughter of the younger brother), "gizzzo" (son of the younger brother). It can be seen that the relationship between uncle and nephew and niece appeared before the relationship between aunt and nephew. The relationship

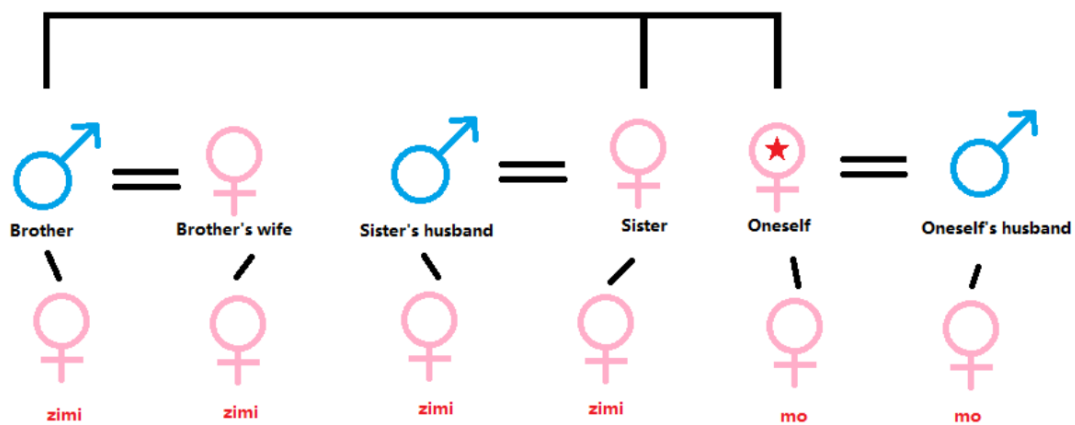
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<sup>53</sup>From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Duoji in May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>54</sup>From the author's interview with the Mosuo villager Duoji in May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

between aunt and nephew appeared so only later and there was no separate term for it. “Our kinship terms are now very similar to Chinese kinship terms, but before we were missing a lot of key terms, such as how women call their brother's children. Now I call them nephews and nieces, but some of the older people in the village still continue to call them 'brother's children', like emumo (brother's daughter). ”<sup>55</sup>

(4) After the image of the father in the nuclear family appeared, both men and women called their biological children “zo” (son) and “mo” (daughter). The author interviewed eight nuclear families in the Luoshui Village and found that different from the tradition, they called their biological daughters “mo” and called the daughters of their brothers and sisters “zimi” (niece). It can be fully demonstrated that the changes in family morphology affect the specific application of terms. As shown in the figure below:



OR:

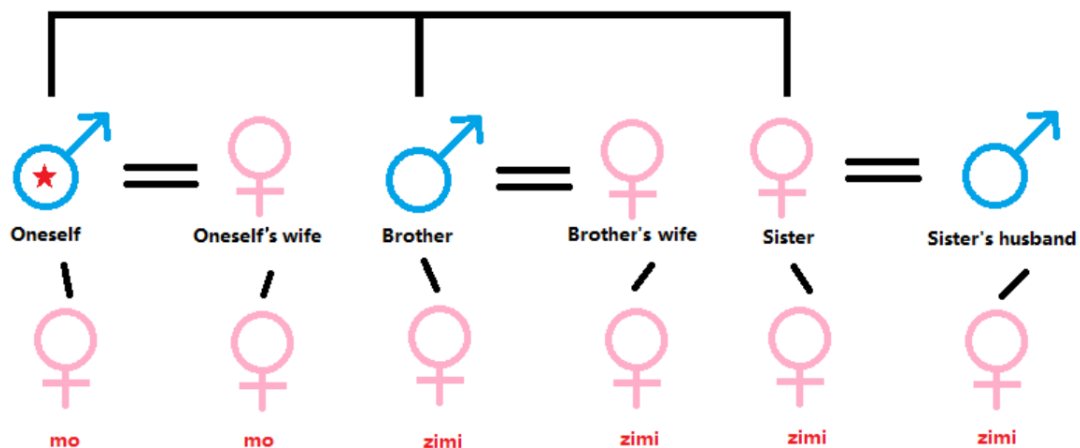


Figure 6.3 The kinship terms for “daughter” (mo or zimi) Luoshui village

Based on the above interviews, this trend from the matriarchal family to the nuclear family begins to become more and more obvious in the 21st century. The early 21st century is just the early stage of China's economic development and political reform. Therefore, the reason why the Mosuo family became the nuclear family was probably caused by the inflow of capital and the impact of policies. The concept of the Mosuo people began to change.

### **Summary**

In the matrilineal society, the grandmother, mother, mother's sister, and mother's brother are the core members of the matrilineal family. Their children are called “zo” (son) and “mo” (daughter). And the father figure is quite unfamiliar to them. In the subsequent development, it can be seen that the importance of the father rises to the nuclear family members, and even the brothers and sisters of the father are very important family members, while the importance of uncle decreases at the same time. This proves that the family pattern of the Mosuo people in Yongning Town has changed from matrilineal family to the nuclear family.

Moreover, both men and women call their biological children “zo” (son) and “mo” (daughter), and their siblings' children are all “zimi” and “ziwu”, which indicates that the family form of Yongning Mosuo people is transforming to nuclear family. When the author was doing the field research in the Luoshui Village, young people no longer choose the walking marriage, and the modern marriage has become a popular form of marriage. The proportion of nuclear monogamous families has increased significantly, but they maintain a good and close relationship with other relatives.

### **6.7 Conclusion from the research**

In conclusion, some additional statistical data could be given: In 1999, the government of Yongning Town surveyed 1049 Yongning Mosuo families. The family structure is as follows: There were 728 matrilineal families, which are 69% of the

total population; There were 210 nuclear families, which are 20% of the total population; There were 111 dual-system families, which are 11% of the total population.<sup>56</sup>

The author investigated 21 Mosuo families in Luoshui Village and found out: Mosuo matrilineal extended family is still the main family form in traditional Mosuo villages, but the nuclear family has become a popular trend; Among these 21 Mosuo families in Luoshui Village, 7 are matrilineal families, 5 are patrilineal families and 9 are nuclear families.

After investigating the current situation of the usage of kinship terms in different family forms of Mosuo people in the Yongning area, the author found that the family form was gradually transitioning from matrilineal to nuclear, and the matrilineal extended family was transforming to nuclear family. This is reflected in the independent use of “abo” (brother of the father) and “eni” (sister of the father), and the change in how men and women address the children of their brothers and sisters (from son and daughter to nephew and niece). These two points are fully confirmed by the investigation of family forms.

Many factors cause these changes: the increase of private property, the improvement of living standards, the increase of the status and importance of men, and the ideology of many people in the matrilineal family has been inclined to the nuclear family of monogamy; under the impact of the Han culture, the patrilineal vocabulary and patrilineal thinking in the Han nationality; Moreover, Yongning Town is a multi-ethnic mixed area, the ethnic intermarriage is common; The marriage policy from the government also helps the existence and development of the modern marriage form.

With the change of times and the development of society, based on the above information and the author's field research, the marriage form of the Yongning Mosuo people tends to get married, the family form tends to the small nuclear family, and the nuclear kinship terms tend to be perfect. Family form and family terms are

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<sup>56</sup> Information provided by Lugu Lake Management Committee.

influencing each other, family form is the premise of the change of kinship terms, and kinship terms are the expression of the change of family form. Family forms under various factors contributed to the nuclear family miniaturization trend obviously, but anyway, Yongning Mosuo nuclear family system is derived from the matrilineal family system and only then is used narrative type terms and new terms, meanwhile, the matrilineal family system still is the source of the Mosuo relative system.

## **7. The Cultural Consciousness and Identity Reconstruction of the Mosuo People in Luoshui Village**

During the fieldwork, especially during the interview with people familiar with Mosuo culture, the author often felt "Cultural Nostalgia" for Mosuo culture, accompanied by their deep feelings for their ethnicity, as well as their reluctance to part with and regret for the gradually disappearing traditional culture. In the year's foreign media construct the vision of the Mosuo ethnic background, Mosuo people have a desire to speak for themselves, and put into practice by all means, so the author started to collect and excavate their media and cultural practices of the Mosuo people, and to explore the localization of foreign of the Mosuo ethnic image construction and the relationship of the Mosuo ethnic identity and interaction.

When the head of the Lijiang Mosuo culture research association Cao Jianping spoke to the reporter from Lijiang television, he said: "We haven't this kind of consciousness in the past of doing the Mosuo cultural heritage protection work, but the outside is very interested in our culture, in the eyes of the people that kind of strange and other people's misunderstanding, I think we should stand up and do our cultural propaganda."<sup>57</sup>

For those people who have ever gone through the present and the future of cultural misunderstanding and hurt, a Mosuo scholar Shi Gaofeng from the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of National Culture, wrote in the preface of a book "Collected papers on Mosuo social and cultural studies": "Some people are

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<sup>57</sup> Excerpt from an interview Cao Jianping gave Lijiang TV in 2011.

demonizing the Mosuo culture. It is impossible not to get angry after reading these people's narrations which have no theoretical basis...Let me quote this passage: 'A person has several Azhus, or even dozens of Azhus, and the child's mother cannot identify the father of the child...It's purely sexual relations, there's no love...Society does not overtly rationalize the word 'father', a child would feel shy if he or she acknowledges that someone is his or her father. The father knew that the children born during his cohabitation with his Azhu were his sons and daughters, but he didn't dare to publicly acknowledge that he was the father of the child...Another strange phenomenon is that the wife does not respond to the death of her husband; When the wife dies, the husband acts as if nothing happened, which is a phenomenon in the form of group marriage.' Under the guise of academics, the author acts as a legal blind judge in deciding a strange case, without seeing the trace of academic...This is not the method of academic study. It is a language full of violence and a blatant slur against an ethnic group. In his measurement of the thinking of Han culture as a yardstick, the thinking set of racial discrimination is visible. Like this phenomenon is not only the case, in the media, the internet, there's a plenty of such remarks...So we need to fight for the right of the main body to speak. Sweep away the dust, remove the cultural virus, and restore the true face of Mosuo culture."<sup>58</sup>

Scholars who are interested in Mosuo culture come from different fields and have very different careers. They not only collect information and seek inspiration for their interests but also construct different images of Mosuo from their perspectives and understandings. Although a group of ethnographers such as Luoke, Song Zhaolin, and Yan Ruxian have made a systematic investigation of Yongning and provided several influential investigation reports and papers, there are also misinterpretations of Mosuo culture to varying degrees, and the "cultural isolation layer" has a great influence on the investigation researchers consciously or unconsciously.

That is to say, when researchers are investigating another culture that is very different from their own traditional culture, they often find it difficult to get rid of

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<sup>58</sup> Shi Gaofeng. *Essays on Mosuo Social and Cultural Studies*. Yunnan: Yunnan University Press, 2003:3.



their cultural concepts, and thus do not consciously with the idea of the established model to look at what they are not familiar with another culture mode, from the view of civilized men see "barbarians", or else the posture of the weak to imagine another kind of culture, this is the fundamental reason why many scholars misread.<sup>59</sup>

That's why anthropologists like Clifford Geertz call for us to look at the problem from the perspective of the indigenous people, the preconceived perspective of different cultures, and the color of the guest's position is unavoidable. After so much scrutiny and questioning, many Mosuo people wonder why their culture is always studied and why outsiders are allowed to tell their stories.

Those who are aware of national consciousness are always active and use various media to speak out for the Mosuo. They consciously observe, think about, record, and analyze their cultural customs of daily life, and have consciously studied and explored the theme, giving out the Mosuo's voice. The following table is a collection of books on Mosuo culture by Mosuo scholars from the 1990s to the present:

Name of the book	Author(s)	Publisher	Date of Publishing
A collection of folklore literature of Mosuo People in Yunnan	Qin Zhenxin, Lamu Gatusa, Chen Lie	China Folk Literature and Art Publishing House	1990.08
The mother's lake	Lamu Gatusa	Yunnan People's Publishing House	1991.12
Dream Lugu Lake	Lamu Gatusa	Yunnan Art Publishing House	1993.08
Mosuo Women	Lamu Gatusa	Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House	1993.12
Enter the country of girls	Lamu Gatusa	Yunnan Art Publishing House	1998.08
Mosuo Daba Culture	Lamu Gatusa	Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House	1999.06
The last matrilineal tribe	Li Dazhu, Li Gengdong	Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House	1999.12
The goddess of love	He Shaoquan	Yunnan People's Publishing House	2001.12
Collected papers on Mosuo social and cultural studies	Latami Dashi	Yunnan University Press	2006.08

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<sup>59</sup> He zhonghua. *Survival and cultural choice: the matrilineal system of Mosuo and its modern changes*. Yunnan: Yunnan Education Press, 2000: 19.

Interpretation of Mosuo customs	Zhibaerche	Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House	2006.10
Love love Mosuo	Lamu Gatusa	Shanghai Splendid Articles Publishing House	2007.01
The wounded silent	Yang Lifen	Yunnan People's Publishing House	2009.12
Gusa	Lamu Gatusa	Yunnan People's Publishing House	2009.12
The love of heaven	Lamu Gatusa	Yunnan People's Publishing House	2009.12
Dust away the story	Alu Danzhupinchong	Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House	2011.07
Mosuo Dabaism Classic translation 1	Azeming, Cidazhu	Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House	2012.01
Mosuo language commonly used words and sentences	Zhibaerche, Xu Ruijuan	Yunnan People's Publishing House	2013.09
Mosuo people in China	He Shaoquan	Yunnan People's Publishing House	2017.06

Table 7.1 A collection of books of Mosuo culture by Mosuo scholars from the 1990s

The Lugu Lake Mosuo Culture Research Association of Lijiang City, founded in 2006, is the most important organization for the promotion, inheritance, and research of Mosuo culture. In the past, the propaganda of Mosuo culture was monopolized by the outside culture, but the activities of local civil society organizations are gradually changing this situation.<sup>60</sup> At the beginning of 2010, the Lugu Lake Mosuo Culture Research Association launched the Local Vision · Mosuo Culture Series, which is an attempt of Mosuo people in Luoshui village to interpret their own national culture. Their writings not only use first-hand information but also are full of Mosuo people's feelings and thoughts, which make up for the lack of vividness in other academic works.

In the post-modern society, people are far away from the macro politics that take the country and political party as the long-term identity and turn to the politics and identity in daily life. The mass media has become the resources and means for them to construct identity, fight for their rights and interests, shape role models, and choose

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<sup>60</sup> Wei Lei - Sun Jiuxia, *Localization Practice of Modernity in Ethnic Tourism Communities*. Tourism Journal (10), 2017: 40.

their lifestyle.<sup>61</sup> For example, the Wechat official account “I am Mosuo”, which uses WeChat as a medium, is, according to its function introduction, “To inherit, protect and promote Mosuo culture, and let the world see a real Mosuo. We also hope that people from all walks of life will respect the sanctity of culture and not fabricate a non-existent Mosuo culture just for the sake of a little profit or attracting tourists.”

Since 1998, Wengci Erqing and Duoji have built China's first village-level museum - the Yunnan Lugu Lake Mosuo Folklore Museum, which they hope will provide a window for outside tourists and scholars to learn about the Mosuo culture. This is a private museum, mainly is composed of five parts: A courtyard with Mosuo characteristic totem; A courtyard of an ordinary Mosuo family; The Mosuo Dabaism culture exhibition area; The Mosuo society exhibition hall, and the Mosuo history exhibition hall.

As we've mentioned above, the sutra hall and the grandmother's house are the most important Mosuo family spaces as well as the place where the Mosuo culture atmosphere has the most. In the sutra hall, there is always an oil lamp, and it reflects a scroll painting of the Thangka deities and a statue of Tibetan Buddhist deities. And the grandmother's house, however, is a spiritual space full of local beliefs. Beside the fireplace, various rituals and customs presided over by Daba are carried out here, such as the "Coming of age" for young men and women. In the later period of the development of Lugu Lake, tourists rarely had the opportunity to enter the real Mosuo's home, and it was even more difficult to experience the grandmother's house. The museum filled the gap, and with the vivid explanation of the docents, tourists had a deeper understanding of the matrilineal culture of Mosuo. The cultural relics collected in the museum are a kind of materialization of human intelligence. Most of them come from the daily life, production, entertainment, belief, culture, and other life practices of the ethnic minority people. They have strong ethnic characteristics, and the display and exhibition created to highlight the unique personality of ethnic

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<sup>61</sup> Liu Yan. *Media Identity Theory: A Study on the Interaction between Communication Technology and Social Influence*. Shanghai: Communication University of China Press, 2010: 17.

folk customs are full of strong vitality.<sup>62</sup> The docent said that when scholars of Mosuo culture come to Luoshui village, this museum is a rite of passage for them.

Wengci Erqing and Duoji purchased photographic equipment, shot and produced a large number of Mosuo films, and participated in film exhibitions in China and abroad, where more and more platforms the culture of the Mosuo people in their perspective. They produced films such as “The Mosuo's View of Nature” and “The Grandmother's House Leaving Her Native Land”. The Mosuo Film Festival, though small in scale, launched the earliest ethnic community film festival on the Chinese mainland, which seeks to promote self-education in rural communities through movie-watching and discussion by cultural holders.<sup>63</sup> Although these works are limited in quantity and influence, they convey a high degree of cultural consciousness and ethnic identity. For the Mosuo people, there is also a kind of practice of identity reconstruction. In this sense, the film is no longer a medium to imagine others, oneself, or be imagined by others. Instead, it is a cultural resource for cultural holders to actively express and seek identity in the path of trying to gain recognition.

Fei Xiaotong thought the meaning of the concept of "cultural consciousness" is that people living in a particular culture to the cultures have self-knowledge, understand its origin and history, as well as the characteristics and the future development direction, and this kind of self-knowledge is to grasp the cultural transformation of control, or as independent ability, decided to the new environment, new era culture selection of independent status.<sup>64</sup> In the context of modernity, the ethnic identity of the Mosuo people is no longer a simple theory of primitivism, imagination, or boundary theory, but presents multiplicity and complexity. In the context of cultural diversity, ethnic identity is bound to depend on cultural consciousness, and vice versa. The so-called "culture reconstruction", "identity

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<sup>62</sup> Peng Shuqi. *Construction of Ethnic Museums in Ethnic Minority Areas*, Journal of Northwest Normal University (3), 2008: 129-132.

<sup>63</sup>Xie Chunbo. *The Evolution of Mosuo Community Images: A Case Study of Mosuo Ethnic Museum in Luoshui Village*. New West (17), 2017: 80-84.

<sup>64</sup> Fei Xiaotong. *Reflection, Dialogue, Cultural Consciousness*, Journal of Peking University (3), 1997: 12-22.

reshaping" are all under the premise of cultural consciousness, reflect on the Mosuo in the Luoshui village, is the Mosuo ethnic scientists who are trying to change the situation in the past, where Mosuo history was constructed by other scholars outside. At the same time, they try to lead their compatriots to understand and record Mosuo culture together, strengthen ethnic identity and enhance ethnic cohesion based on common participation and common experience, to face various challenges in the new environment.

## **Conclusion**

This bachelor thesis takes the family shape and the traditional culture of Mosuo people in Yongning town, Ninglang Yi Autonomous County, Lijiang City, Yunnan Province as a research perspective, introduces the Mosuo matrilineal family and the related culture, studies the social changes and developments of the Mosuo people, with the discussion of the reasons behind it. Based on that, we can explore the real situation and the cultural factors behind the discussion. On this basis, we can explore the interrelationship between family and society to provide analysis for the research.

As the changes of the times and the development of the society, the intervention from the political entity, the integration from the multi-ethnic communication, the impact from the new ideology and value system, and the improvement of education level, the traditional culture of the Mosuo people in Yongning town is gradually faded, the walking marriage system and the matrilineal family are falling apart at an accelerating rate. The type of marriage of Mosuo people in Yongning tends to be the modern marriage, the large matrilineal family form is turning to the small nuclear family. The change of the management model of the Mosuo village by the government determines the different modes of the Mosuo people's marriage, such as guiding change, revolutionary change, and assimilation. The rise of individual subjectivity within the Mosuo society forms the internal tension of the traditional marriage and family system, which is an important driving force for the change.

Throughout the history of the Mosuo people, the construction of ethnic identity of

the Mosuo people has been integrated into the "Cultural Revolution", "Great Leap Forward" and other time clues. This is an ethnic group misunderstood by a variety of cultures, but it is also an ethnic group that benefits from the development of national tourism. To avoid the fractured historical narrative, the Mosuo intellectuals constantly try to interpret their own culture from the perspective of the cultural owner, reconstruct the ethnic identity of the Mosuo people through the local practice of ethnic culture, and strive to drive every Mosuo people to become the participants and builders of their ethnic culture.

The effort from the expert on folklores is changing the situation of the Mosuo culture propaganda monopolized by outside culture, as well as the situation in which Mosuo culture is increasingly disappearing. However, no matter how Mosuo culture will change, the social custom's power and the sense of belonging from the matrilineal family is still the backbone of the Mosuo society as a whole to coordinate to work for Mosuo people in Yongning town.

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## Appendix

Questionnaire 1: Received 41 pieces.

1. Your age, please?

A. Under 25 B. 25-34 C. 35-45 D. 45 and above

2. What do you value or like the most about Mosuo culture?

A. Religious culture B. Matrilineal family culture

B. Marriage culture D. Traditional sing and dancing culture E. Others

3. Who is in charge of financial matters in your family?

A. Mother B. Father C. Uncle D. Grandmother/Grandfather E. Others

Questionnaire 2: Recycled 29 pieces.

1. Your age, please?

A. Under 25 B. 25-34 C. 35-45 D. 45 and above

2. Do you think we should protect traditional Mosuo culture or not?

A. Yes B. No C. No particular feelings

3. Do you support the continued development of tourism in Lugu Lake or not?

A. Yes B. No C. No particular feelings

Questionnaire 3:

1. Your gender, please  
A. Male B. Female
2. Your highest level of education is  
A. Middle school B. High school C. University and above
3. How well do you understand the Mosuo language?  
A. Good B. Average C. Poor
4. How good is your command of Mandarin?  
A. Good B. Average C. Poor
5. Do you think it is necessary to have a Han name?  
A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling
6. Do you think it is necessary to learn Mandarin?  
A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling
7. How well do you understand the Mosuo culture and matrilineal family?  
A. Very well B. Fairly well C. Not well
8. Are you willing to study, work, make friends or get married with other ethnic groups ?  
A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling
9. Has your standard of living improved since the development of tourism in Lugu Lake?  
A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling
10. Do you pay attention to the media reports of Mosuo society and culture?  
A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling
11. Would you choose to get married?  
A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling D. I am already married
12. Do you think that the traditional form of marriage, walking marriage, should be replaced by the modern marriage system?  
A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling
13. Do you take your mother's surname or your father's surname, or just your first name?

A. Mother B. Father C. First name only D. Other

14. Will you choose to live in a nuclear family or in the husband's/wife's house after marriage?

A. Nuclear family B. Husband C. Wife D. Would not choose to marry E. No particular feeling

15. Do you have a religious belief, if so, is it Daba, Tibetan Buddhism or another religion?

A. Dabaism B. Tibetan Buddhism C. Other religions D. No religion

16. When interacting with other ethnic groups, do you notice any differences from your own?

A. Yes B. No C. Sometimes

17. Are you willing to explain your own culture to people of other ethnic groups?

A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling

18. Are you proud of your Mosuo identity?

A. Yes B. No C. No particular feeling

19. Do you think that the reports about the Mosuo society are true?

A. Yes B. No C. Unknown

20. In your family, who is the person closest to you?

A. mother B. father C. siblings D. grandfather/grandmother E. uncle/aunt F. others

#### Semi-structured interview

1. Do you know the history, myths and legends of the Mosuo people?

2. Do you have any religious beliefs? How do you feel about Dabaism and Tibetan Buddhism?

3. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of matrilineal families?

4. Do you think that walking marriages should be preserved?

5. Would you prefer to be called a Naxi or a Mosuo?

6. Would you rather stay in your matrilineal family or go out of your birthplace?

7. How do you feel about the reports of the Mosuo society from outside?

8. What are your views on the changing family patterns and kinship terms?
9. Would you be willing to participate in activities to preserve Mosuo culture?
10. Please write about your family structure and the names of your relatives.

\* The above outline and questions from the semi-structured interview are only used for reference, and other conversation contents may be added during the interview according to the situation.