

**University of Hradec Králové – Faculty of Education
Department of Studies in Culture and Religion**

Evaluation of bachelor thesis

Opponent's review

Author: Yue Qiu

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

Opponent: Mgr. Petr Macek, Ph.D.

Theme and the goal of the thesis: 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. The thesis discusses how these traditional Mosuo cultural aspects has been integrated into the mainstream Chinese society through modernization and how these aspect could be preserved under the impact of mainstream culture in terms of transcultural communication.

Key areas of the research: Mosuo, Ethnic group, Matrilineal family, Ethnic identity

Language and stylistics of the thesis: Given the fact that the thesis is the author's first broader paper in English, the quality of the language and understandability of the text is sufficient. The author is able to express herself clearly and is able to convey complex and abstract ideas. On the other hand the stylistics of the text, especially in certain parts, might have been better, so it is still important for the author to pay attention to the proper style of academic English.

Thesis length: The overall extent of the thesis is 77 pages, which sufficiently fulfills requirements for bachelor thesis.

Literature: The thesis is based on appr. 40 sources, the author worked with quality resources, she mostly refers to the current Chinese literature on the topic; it might add to the quality of the text, if the author uses and refers to more general literature on the topics of anthropology of kinship and ethnicity.

Formal arrangement of the work: The thesis is processed carefully and contains all necessary formal requirements.

Overall assessment and critical remarks: The author chose an extremely interesting topic of the matrilineal structure of the Mosuo society and its transformation due to the challenges of modern industrial Chinese society. Although this topic has been widely discussed by various researchers, it is quite unexplored in the context of Czech social and cultural anthropology. The author has demonstrated her ability to organize clearly her material. The thesis is divided into seven logically structured chapters: it begins with the overview of the Mosuo culture and presentation of basic elements of the construction of its ethnic identity. It continues with the marriage and kinship patterns of Mosuo culture. In this part author pays special attention to the unique form of “walking marriage”, typical sign of traditional Mosuo culture. Third and fourth chapter present the recent changes and development of the Mosuo culture due to the pressure of the Chinese culture and the current situation regarding ethnic identity and patterns of married life.

In my opinion, fifth and sixth chapter form the core and the most important part of the thesis. In the fifth chapter the author strives to analyze the causes of the transformation of Mosuo culture. It seems to me that, despite the fact that the author mentions all important historical factor in the modern history of China in the second half of the 20th century, this analysis could and should aim at a deeper level of reflection. There is a striking discrepancy between the description of traditional marriage in the Mosuo culture as utterly harmonious and the speed with which these traditional customs have been abandoned. It seems to me, at least from the commentaries of the youngest generation of Mosuo people, that they express rather a contempt for the traditional walking marriage. Sixth chapter presents the results of the author’s field research in Mosuo villages. I would like to especially appreciate the ability of the author to carry out the research in the distant and remote area of China, while studying at a university in the Czech Republic.

Finally I would like to point out, that the author might have paid more attention to the presentation of the Chinese cultural, social and historical context to the reader of the thesis. For instance the reference to the Stalin’s definition of a nation in the opening chapter of the thesis and the assertion that it still has a far reaching influence on the conception of nationality in China would be worth of deeper explanation. Also the repeated reference to the “Reform and opening up” of China in 1970’s and 1980’s would deserve at least short explanation for the Czech reader.

Final evaluation: I assess the thesis as a quality contribution to the discussion about the specific matrilineal Mosuo culture. Apart from some minor deficiencies, the quality of processing of the text is high and it fulfills all requirements on the bachelor thesis.

Opponent's questions:

- Is it possible to compare Mosuo culture to any other cultures worldwide with the same patterns of family life? Has they gone through similar transformation after their encounter with modern industrial societies?
- How do you assess the future development of Mosuo culture?
- Do you think that official Chinese policy towards ethnic minorities helps protect their specific cultures?

15th August 2021

Mgr. Petr Macek, Ph.D.