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**The Gender Impact of Modernization among the
Matrilineal Moso in China**

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Chia-Ling Luo
(Taiwan)

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Members of the examining committee:

Prof. Dr Ashwani Saith (supervisor)
Prof. Dr Amrita Chhachhi (supervisor)

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Inquiries:

Postal address: Institute of Social Studies
 P.O. Box 29776
 2502 LT The Hague
 The Netherlands

Location: Kortenaerkade 12
 2518 AX The Hague
 The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460

Fax: +31 70 426 0799

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List of Acronyms

NRCMS: New Rural Cooperative Medical System

Abstract

This paper studies the encroachment of mainstream Han culture upon traditional Moso matrilineal culture through the adoption by the Moso, via government initiative, of a monetary market system driven by capital and commerce, of reforms in medical, education and taxation systems, and the promotion of the Moso by the government as a tourist destination, combined with government programs the ostensible goal of which is to preserve the Moso as a cultural artifact. These stimuli of change result in sinification of the Moso, and create conflicts between a natural and a market economy, among gender relationships, and among traditional and “progressive” Moso. It is argued herein that, while tourism has increased the standard of living for some Moso in purely economic terms, it has done so at the cost of commodifying them into simplistic structures that serve largely to restrict their growth and development by diluting their traditions and workforce, while subordinating the Moso to the standards of Han society.

Keywords

Moso; Matrilineal; Gender, Natural Economy; Cultural Reconstruction; Cultural Reinvention; Yunnan

Introduction

In a society known as ‘the kingdom of women’, Chinese Mosoⁱ women... are struggling to protect their way of life against modern culture.

BBC Video: Change of life for Moso women (17 June, 2008)

Problem Statement

Since economic reform in 1978, a market economy has been practiced in China in order to achieve modernization. For the last three decades everything, including medication, education and taxes, has had to be paid for in hard currency. However, in 2000 the Moso, an ethnic group in south-western China, still used a barter economy. Their production hardly met subsistence levels, so that the purpose of production was purely for personal needs. They exchanged goods mostly through direct barter without using currency. As a result, their production mode was defined as a natural economy: “Natural economy is therefore opposed to economies of expanded reproduction, and to all commodity economies (Bradby, 1980:93).”

In this natural economy, “there are two variants of interest: in the first, natural economy is opposed to commodity economy; in the second, it is opposed to money economy. Commodity economy implies that the immediate objective of all production is exchange. Accordingly, by this criterion natural economy implies that the sole objective of all production is the satisfaction of need. Production is for use (Perrings, 1985:830).”ⁱⁱⁱ This collision of two very different, one might say diametrically opposed or conflicting economies, proved problematic for the Moso. To give an example of this difficulty, their average per capita disposable income was, in 2000, only 103 RMBⁱⁱⁱ. However, according to the Chinese Ministry of Health, at that same time citizens had to spend on average 79 RMB for each medical appointment, and 2,891 RMB for a hospital check-in. On top of this, the Moso needed in 2000 to pay 100 RMB for elementary school incidentals per student per year, and an average of 12 RMB in annual per capita taxes (see chapter two below). Obviously, these cash payments would be a problem for the Moso, given that they were still using a barter system.

Faced with the demands of modernization, the Moso began in the late 1980s and early 1990s to conduct local tourism under a national scheme of indigenous autonomy, which aimed to preserve culture while fostering economic development. Owing to the matrilineal system that largely persists in Moso households, the state has therefore focused and emphasized on promoting this feature. Tourism development is successfully led in Moso society as a result of “local people ... [being] familiar with the ‘famine.’ Enticed by the promise of jobs that will allow them into a monetary economy, they often give up work on land and a subsistence lifestyle to become dependent upon a monetary economic lifestyle (McLaren, 1998:77).” However, the results of this development do not match up to the expectations of government or in particular the Moso, because there is in the process of tourism development a contradiction between the twin goals of cultural preservation and economic development. Although with development the living standard of the Moso has improved greatly since 1990, with their introduction to a monetary economy came exposure to patriarchal values. For instance, “early state categorizations of Moso^{iv} gender practices have led to representations of Moso ethnicity built around notions of women freely available for sex, to whom present lovers have no future commitments, or of a land where women rule. Matriarchy and sexual availability are central in tourists’ desire to visit the Moso. In negotiating different aspects of that desire ... [the Moso] must address tourists’ concerns about women’s power as well as their hopes of finding sexually available young women. The ‘culture’ that tourists hope to consume is imagined through an ideational slippage in which notions of matriarchy and of women as ever-available objects of desire intermingle instead of clash (Walsh, 2005:450).” As a result, the traditional gender status has changed as their culture is reconstructed, reinvented and digested, particularly in and around tourist sites.

Justification of the Research

There are a host of books and articles studying the impact of tourism development on gender status in Moso matrilineal society. Some researchers into the Moso, such as Yong-Qing Liu (2001) and Bin Chen (2004), focus on the change in gender relations subsequent to the introduction of tourism to Moso society. Other researchers, notably Lin Wang (2004), explore ways to retain Moso matrilineal culture in the face of tourism.

Hua-Shan Zhou (2001), along with Govind Kelkar and Phuntshok Tshering (2002), and Eileen Rose Walsh (2005) criticize the ways that culture has been reconstructed or reinvented in the process of tourism development. Although some researchers, Zhonghua He (2008) for example, try to analyse the negative impact of modernization and a monetary economy on Moso gender status, hardly any approach the topic of the Moso from the perspective of the conflict between two economic systems seen as a stimulant for tourism development as conducted largely by the Chinese government. The intersections between Chinese culture and economic policy may bring about a new gender status as a product of a new form of matrilineal culture, a culture both reconstructed and reinvented under the influence of tourism development.

This paper aims to contribute to the debate of ethnic development by first analysing the fundamental problem of economic development, analysed in this case as a conflict between a natural and a market economy in an indigenous community, than simply saying that modernization has its impacts on ethnic development. Moreover, I will analyse the relationship between monetization and patriarchal values. There will, lastly, be a synthesis and historical analysis of the problem between cultural preservation and economic development that does not resort merely to a separate questioning of the factors (for example, the change of gender status as caused by modernization and the tourism industry) or results (how to retain matrilineal culture, or how to avoid cultural reconstruction and reinvention) of the cultural change.

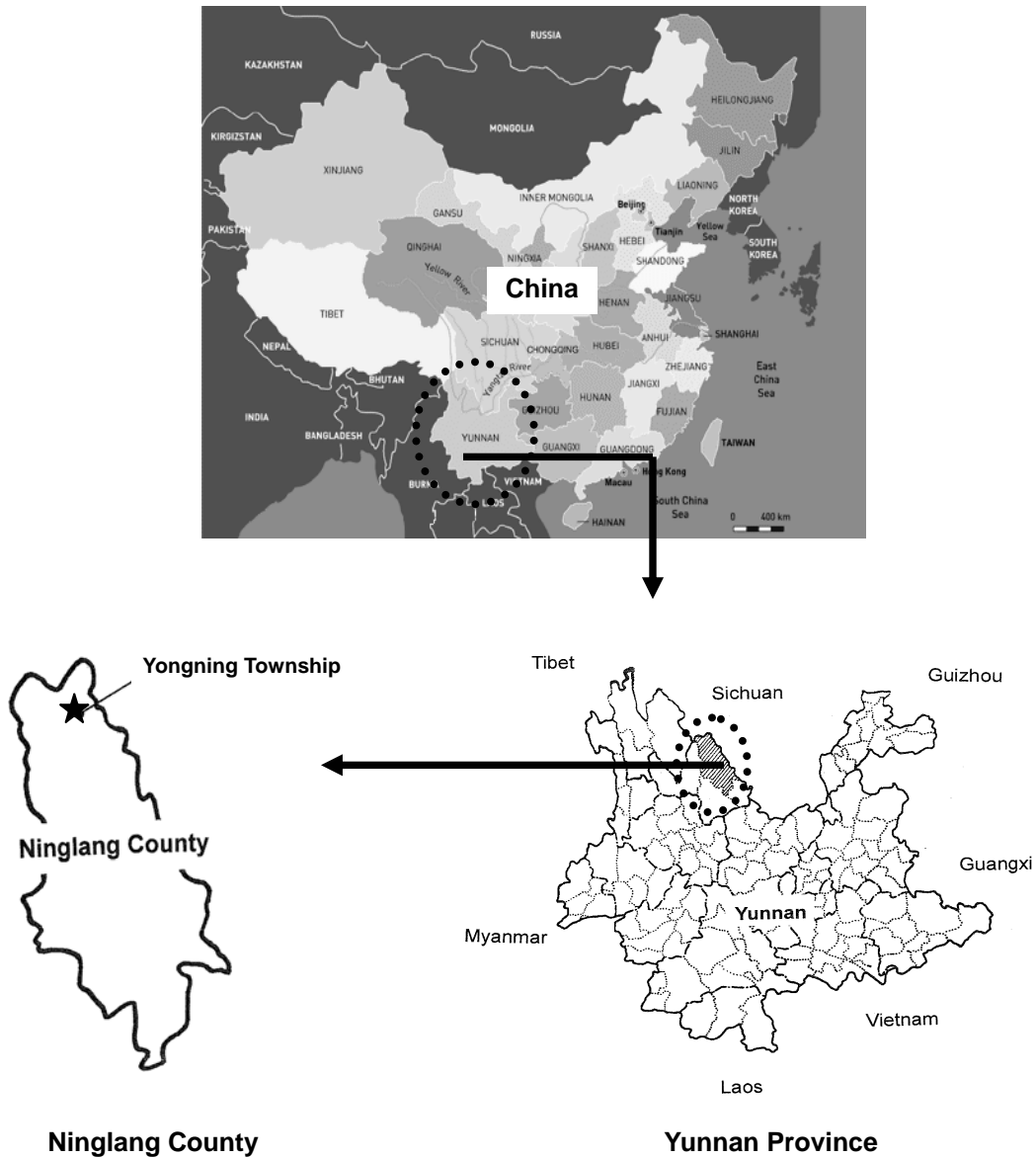
Research Questions

In the course of my research, I would like to provide answers for the following questions:

1. What are the drivers of change in Moso society as it shifts from a natural to a monetary economy?
2. Does the shift to a monetization incur a subsequent shift to patriarchal values and structures?
3. How do the Moso people, of both genders and multiple generations, view these changes?
4. What are the implications of Chinese cultural and economic policy for the Moso society?

Background and Site of Study

Figure 1: Research Field – Yongning Township



Source: The map of China - www.paulnoll.com/China/Provinces

The Moso are an ethnic people of China, most of whom live at an elevation of 2600 to 2700 metres on the border of Yunnan, and Sichuan Province. The specific location, referred to by Chinese government and society alike as “Girls kingdom,” is in Yongning Township, Ninglang County, Lijiang City, Yunnan. The climate here is unstable, as it is a high mountain

plateau. The annual temperature averages 9 °C, with frequent rain in summer. Autumn and winter are occasionally marked by hailstorms and snow. As reported by a head official of Yongning Township (2008), “there are 19640 people in the township, including 13 ethnic groups. The Moso, numbering 7184, represent the biggest group, and the most important public servants, the township mayor and secretary, are both Moso.”

Although the Moso are well known in China, because of their isolation, the Moso were unaware of the official process of ethnic identification that occurred in the 1950s, and did not learn until the 1970s, with the construction of the Yongning Road (their first connection with the outside), that they had been classified as part of the Naxi ethnic group, one of fifty-six such groups recognized by the government. The Moso object to this classification, as they feel themselves distinct from the Naxi. As a result, local government officially recognizes them as the “Moso people.”

In Yongning Township, there are seventy-two Natural Villages^v, these falling under the jurisdiction of six Administrant Villages^{vi}: Yongning, Luoshui, Tuozhi, Wenquan, Niqiogou and Mudiqing. The main tourist site, Luoshui (including Sang Luoshui and Xia Luoshui Natural Villages), features the 48.5 square km Lugu Lake and is governed by Luoshui Administrant Village. Many tourists come yearly to experience “unique” Moso culture and its high-altitude lake.

My research was conducted in the two Natural Villages that show the conspicuous effects of modernization. First is Xia Luoshui, where the Moso most encounter tourists and mainstream culture. The economic growth here is the highest of Yongning Township, and may exhibit the most significant changes in gender relationships. Secondly, Haiyijiao, about 20 km from Xia Luoshui, and of Yongning Administrant Village. The villagers here, most of whom are farmers, use a barter system more than is now seen in Xia Luoshui, and experience an economic standard far lower than is found in that village. According to a director of the women’s department of Yongning Township (2008), “the annual per capita income in 2007 was 4,780 RMB in Xia Luoshui and 1,395 RMB in Haiyijiao.” By comparing these two villages, I aimed to be able to assess the impact of a monetary economy on gender relationships.

Research Methods

“Qualitative research is grounded in an essentially constructivist philosophical position, in the sense that it is concerned with how the complexities of the sociocultural world are experienced, interpreted, and understood in a particular context and at a particular point in time. The intent of qualitative research is to examine a social situation or interaction by allowing the researcher to enter the world of others and attempt to achieve a holistic rather than a reductionist understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Locke et al., 2000; Mason, 1996; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Patton, 1990; Schram, 2003; Schwandt, 2000, as cited in Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008:80).” This research work attempts to examine the change in social structure due to the process of development, with an emphasis on synthetic and historical analysis, and focuses on extracting and interpreting the experience. A qualitative methodology with some statistical data will be applied.

Primary Data Collection

As part of the research project, in-depth interviews were applied, since “conducting interviews is a process of reconstructing a descriptive narrative, a process requiring an understanding of the human condition, while involving interpretation, perception, and a search for cultural meaning (Yang, 2000:2).” Accordingly, in-depth interviews facilitate a good synthesis and historical analysis. From 2000 to 2008, I have conducted many individual and group interviews, either formal or occasional, with young Moso, among which have been high school and university students, Moso elders (those sixty-five and older), tourists, non-Moso residents and state officials in each Natural Village of Xia Luoshui and Haiyijiao. When I last returned in July of 2008, I focused on individual interviews with 5 Moso villagers^{vii}, 2 non-Moso residents (businessmen), and 9 tourists^{viii} in Xia Luoshui. Also, 10 Moso villagers^{ix} in Haiyijiao, 1 Moso state official of Loushui Administrant Village, 3 Moso state officials and 1 Moso retired state official of Yongning Township, and 1 previous Moso researcher. The change in Moso society through different periods was approached through interviews of villagers from successive generations. Also, the selection of interviewees was made with the aim of collecting data for all the research questions.

For practical reasons, this research has been restricted to a limited number of interviewees, and generalizations have been based on theoretical plausibility, not statistical induction. Moreover, whenever language was a limitation, as when I interviewed some Moso elders who could not speak Mandarin or provincial speech, I would at times rely on my interpreter for clarification. It should also be noted that the statistic data quoted herein derives from transcriptions of reports from various state officials. Obvious errors in transcription, such as numeral inaccuracy, have been silently corrected.

I also employed participation observation in my research. I went to Yongning Township in 2000 to conduct two years of praxis-oriented research, while assisting the Zigen Fund^x with a Training Scheme of Women's Health Care and Hygiene. In the next two years, from 2002 to 2004, I returned to the area three times to keep track of changes in Moso society. However, during my last visit there, from the middle of July to the middle of August, 2008, I lacked sufficient time to for another participation observation, and thus utilized a nonparticipation observation, during which I lived with some Moso families in different villages while conducting research. Although I was there for only a month, the Moso treated me as closely as before. This trusting relationship has developed from 2000, and really helped me to acquire data when there was not much time for field work.

Secondary Sources

Literature analysis and review is always an essential component of research, because it is a good way to learn more about the research topic from different perspectives; in particular, debates between scholars or schools of thought are always informative. Referring to the available publications, I focused especially on the impact of modernization and a monetary economy on the Moso, and the shifting of gender power in different social structures. I also reviewed articles on the policy of national minorities - such as tax reform, education and medication - in order better to understand the process of development. Further reviewed were articles on tourism development in different indigenous communities so as to compare and distinguish among the processes each undergoes.

Chapter Organization

This paper begins with a discussion of some theoretical concepts while stating the research argument and framework. Here, the debate on the relationship between kinship and production modes, the conflict between a natural economy and a market economy, and the concept of gender power in different social structures is presented. In the second chapter, I illustrate the key methods and motivating factors for which the Moso adapted to a market economy, while discussing some possible stimuli of more rapid change. What follows is an analysis of the consequences of this change. Here, I document and critically assess the shift from matrilineal to patriarchal values and structures in different dimensions. In the closing chapter, perceptions of change, included among which are voices from different generations, gender and ethnic groups, are analysed. Also, I discuss the implication of Chinese cultural and economic policy, with its attendant cultural reconstruction, or reinvention of Moso society.

Chapter 1

Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I provide the background of matrilineal Moso society and some related concepts. Following is an analysis of the links between matrilineal kinship and a natural economy, showing the difficulty in transferring these links to a market economy. In closing, I elaborate the levels and relationship between gender and power which is applied in this study via the gender definition by Joan W. Scott.

1.1 Matrilineality and Sexual Relations

1.1.1 *Matrilineal Society*

Conventionally, the Moso live in clan-houses with their matrilineal families, from cradle to grave. Everyone has a surname from the distaff side, and all children belong to the female clan: “In a matrilineal society, the descent or the family name is through the mother’s side, and is known as ‘matrilineal descent’. This affiliates an individual with kin of both sexes, related to him or her through women only (Das, 2001:1).” The older males in a Moso family, though regarded only as uncles, not biological fathers, nonetheless take care of their so-called nieces and nephews, in order to fulfill a parental role. Normally, adult male family members have duties in these matrilineal houses, where they live, not in the houses of their partners, where they are only guests.

In Moso society, assets are inherited through the female line. All earnings belong to the matrilineal family, and are traditionally distributed by the female administrator, the *Dabu*. Every Moso family is led by a *Dabu*, chosen by common consensus among the remaining family members as being the most capable and therefore most respected. However, it is not only the *Dabu* or female members who hold authority in the household, since Moso families always discuss important matters together before reaching a decision: “Moso themselves describe their culture as one in which both men and women are valued members of the household, and all adults have a voice in household decisions (Walsh, 2005:453).” Accordingly, when we compare the social status of Moso women with that of women in a patriarchal society, such as that of the Han Chinese, we find that Moso women are neither

marginalized nor oppressed by (Moso) males.

The Moso are identified as a matrilineal society by researchers such as Cheng-Xu Zhan; Cheng-Quan Wang; Jin-Chun Li and Long-Chu Liu (1980), Ru-Xian Yan and Zhao-Lin Song (1983), and Ji-Dian Ma (2006) because of their maternal inheritance system and the dominance of the maternal side of the family. Although some later researchers - Elisabeth Hsu (1998), Yong-Qing Liu (2001) and Bin Chen (2004) - find that matriliney as it exists in Moso society is practiced only in the household, all Moso researchers agree that a matrilineal system persists in Moso households to the extent that Moso women are generally entitled more respect than their male counterparts.

1.1.2 The Sexual Relationship

The Moso have sexual relationships called *Tise*, referred to as the visiting, or walking marriage by Han Chinese. More precisely, “*Tise* is the primary sexual-reproductive institution among the Moso, which differs from marriage in that it is noncontractual, nonobligatory, and nonexclusive (Shih 1993; 2000:700).” In general, girls have their own rooms until they start associating with the opposite sex on social occasions in order to choose partners. Theoretically, men and women as couples do not live under the same roof. Neither do they have obligations, contractual or otherwise, to each other. Men stay in women’s houses only during the night, and return to their mother’s families at the break of dawn, to work. Occasionally, for instance during the harvest, one of the two parties may offer help to the other, but otherwise their relationship is social rather than economic. One characteristic of Moso culture is that this *Tise* relationship can be terminated at any time by either party. From this perspective, husbands and fathers are roles not easily distinguished in Moso society. Even though a couple may decide to terminate their relationship, their children are still able to learn who their biological fathers are by attending the occasions and festivals, such as annual festivals - spring festivals, for instance - or from uncles and relatives.

1.2 The Relationship between Kinship and Productive Modes in Moso History

“Most sociologists believe Moso society was a primitive matriarchy before the Yuan Dynasty,

and a feudal *Tusi*, or local chief, was set in Yongning Moso by the Yuan Empire (Luo, 2002:27).” Therefore, although we do not know exactly when the Moso matrilineal system came into use, the system has existed since at least the Yuan Dynasty, when the Moso were still ruled by *Tusi*. Some Moso elders assert that life under *Tusi* rule was not easy, for the following reasons:

- (1) All lands, water resource, grasslands, forest and even some people (slave class) belonged to a feudal elite that comprised less than 5 % of the Moso people.
- (2) The Moso masses regularly had to pay very high taxes, including grain and labour tax.
- (3) Since the soil quality (too sticky), climate (high mountain plateau), and cultivation skill (slash and burn) were all poor, production was very low, with no surplus available for trading.

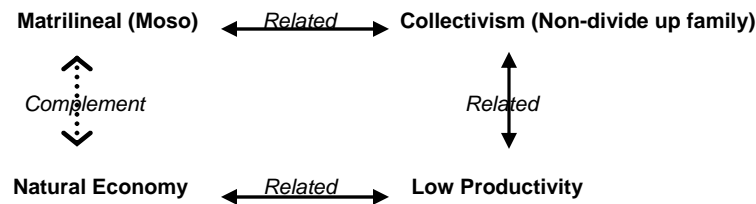
According to a 77-year-old Moso male in Xia Luoshui Village (2008), “it was difficult to be well fed during the feudal period (before 1956). There were only potatoes and corn for meals, and there was never enough. Therefore, they needed to bring dry fish to the center of Yongning Township, far away from Lugu Lake, for exchange with grain (1 kg of dry fish is equal 3 kg of fresh fish). Otherwise, there would be more difficulty getting by. The only time rice could be eaten was during lunar New Year's Day. In such a difficult situation, every family had to work together to survive.”

The Moso maintained their matrilineal system largely owing to their low productivity: Moso families were matrilineal during the feudal period, in order to band together and survive exploitation. In Moso society, one's descent, family name and property inheritance are all through the distaff side, so that everyone descended from the mother of a household will have the right of inheritance. Female Moso easily recognize who their children are, because their offspring are all from the same womb, regardless of who the father is. This concept of legitimacy and inheritance differs largely from a patriarchal system, in which a woman's virginity and fidelity are paramount to the male, who wishes to insure that his care and attention - to say nothing of his name and property - go to his biological children. Female members of a patriarchal household will, unlike their matrilineal counterparts, lose their share of the property because they will eventually marry and, in so doing, leave the household to have children who are not of the same blood as their original families. Similarly,

male members of a patriarchal household will marry women from a different blood relationship, women who thus are not entitled to inherit from that household. It is for these reasons that female members in patriarchal society are seen as outsiders who have no right to share property with their biological brothers after being married: “The concept of marriage [in patriarchal society] as we know it entails change of household membership of either or both spouse(s). This does not only suggest that either one or both partners in a newly established union are removed from their respective household.... Such a move also has the potential to disturb the harmony of the household that receives the bride or the groom. For most members in that [patriarchal] household, the person who moves in is inevitably a stranger or an intruder. Their interest in her or him is always ambivalent or double-sided. In consequence, conflict among the in-laws is more than often a normal state of affair. For these reasons, marriage is obviously incompatible with the Moso matrilineal ideology, particularly the notions of the unbreakable bond among the matrilineal kin and the supreme value placed on household harmony (Shih 2000:704).” Obviously, members of a matrilineal family do not worry about family property passing to children of different fathers, since in every case there remains the essential consanguinity through the head mother. Therefore, a collective mentality becomes more easily a part of a matrilineal household, because there the concept of private ownership is rooted in a larger, more inclusive conception of blood union.

Collectivism in the matrilineal family precisely complements the productive model of natural economy in Moso society: “According to Friedrich Engels, the determining factor in the historical process is the production and reproduction of life from the viewpoint of materialism. However, this production includes staples, namely food, shelter, clothing, tools, and the production of humans themselves through procreation. People in some regions during certain historical periods are restricted to two kinds of production and reproduction under the social system: one is limited by the developmental phase of labour; the other the developmental stage of the family. The less development of labour, the more restriction of growth of labour products and of social wealth. The social system is thus more subordinated to kinship than ever (as cited in Cheng, 1985:216).” For example, the Moso had to produce as a whole family, so that levels of production could match levels of subsistence and taxation (grain tax) under the feudal regime.

Figure 2: Relationship between Matrilineal System and Natural Economy



Because Friedrich Engels only emphasizes the productive activities in terms of wealth, some scholars argue that Marxists do not consider childcare or nursing as being aspects of production. For example, “Marx has eliminated from his theoretical focus all activities basic to human survival which fall outside of a capitalist ‘economy.’ Those activities he has eliminated include ... those identified by feminists as ‘reproductive’ (childcare, nursing) (Nicholson, 1985:368).” In other words, the issues of raising children or nursing the sick is not taken into account in productive activities, because taking care of someone at home does not directly result in economic profits. However, “in pre-capitalist societies, childrearing practices, sexual relations and what we call ‘productive’ activities are organized conjointly through the medium of kinship (Nicholson, 1985:378-9).” That is, productive activities should not exclude childcare and nursing, especially in societies where kinship relations are conducted. However, although the production mode of Moso society still very much relies on kinship, we will not particularly focus on the simple critique that Marx’s category of “production” does not include many traditional female activities, since the difficulties Moso women now face are not solely related to gender issues.

One question that arises with regard to the establishment of a matriarchal system among the Moso is how the *Tusi* ruler could stand apart, so to speak, by retaining a patriarchal system: “According to Nuosang, a religious chief in Yongning Township, only *Tusi*, Moso elites, conducted a patriarchal system in Moso society because they used the father’s family names. Other Moso people who were not as wealthy as *Tusi* families did not have the same concern (He, 2008:268-9).” This explanation can be referred to Engels’ theory, which views “the emergence of transferable wealth in the form of herds of animals as strengthening the

relative position of men within the family and leading to the overthrow of matrilinearity, the hitherto traditional order of inheritance. Given the possibility of bequests, monogamy was then instituted in order to ensure paternity (Humphries, 1987:14);” so then “the origin of the monogamous family and the origin of male dominance over women to the emergence of private property. Hence women’s oppression is linked to the emergence of socioeconomic classes, for with private property came differences in wealth and social standing (Humphries, 1987:15).” Some scholars may feel that Engels did not clearly explain “why men controlled the herds when agricultural subsistence production was the women’s sphere. If when the wealth was produced it was wrested from women’s control, men must already have appropriated power (Lane 1976; as cited in Humphries, 1987:14).” Also, some feminists argue that family and monogamy for Engels had nothing to do with love, but were only a means to protect wealth. Still, it is generally agreed that private property is the key concern in the transition from a matrilineal to a patriarchal system. Low productivity undoubtedly existed in Moso society during the feudal period, so the Moso masses would not be able to have private property to transfer wealth, let alone run a patriarchal system. Thus, the Moso masses followed a matrilineal system while the *Tusi* maintained a patriarchal system as rulers within the Yuan, Ming and Qing Empire.

In addition, though we may not be able to assert that a matrilineal system will have a sexual system of *Tise* among Moso society, still we can assume that a *Tise* relationship would have a matrilineal system as a basis, because “in traditional Moso society (i.e. up to 1956), the significance of household harmony went beyond the matrilineal ideology. The small-scale agrarian economy and the native chieftain system (*tusi zhidu*) made the Moso a household oriented society in which most people had no other social roles than their kinship ones, and household was their only basic social affiliation. In such a society, domestic interpersonal dynamics significantly affected the quality of life for every household member. The social reality and matrilineal ideology were mutually promoting and made *tise* the best choice for the Moso. (Shih 2000:705).”

1.3 Reasons for Retaining a Moso Matrilineal System

Although Moso society is known for its matrilineal system, in which subsistence level,

work-sharing households form a household collective, the Moso is not a primitive communist society lacking private property, merchandise or currency, because the “culture of a society is formed and derived from a superstructure, part of which provides the economical basis of a society. As a derivative, it is relatively independent from its history. After the old economy is transformed by new modes of production, its influence remains as a residue of history. Therefore, we cannot assume the economic characteristics of a society based on a form of culture that would be considered its opposite. That is, although ‘matriarchy’ was considered the typical form of the primitive clan society, it cannot be assumed that the Moso retain a primitive communist society simply because they retain a matrilineal system. Accordingly, we may understand that the Moso society have managed to preserve their culture even after having passed through feudal serfdom in the Yuan Dynasty, and relationship between peasants and feudal landlords in the Qing Dynasty, both influences being based on a patriarchal system, and being followed in their turn by the ‘Culture Revolution’ of 1966 to 1976 in Mainland China (Luo, 2001: 36).”

In the history of Moso society, until 1911 only Tibetan traders brought daily necessities into Moso villages, mainly to the center of Yongning Township, for exchange. After this time, the Tibetans were joined by other traders, who brought salt, tea, and sugar to exchange for lard, dried fish and gunny. In this same period, the Moso began delivering farm-subsidary products to Szechwan and Lijiang in exchange for foodstuffs. In 1922, the *Tusi* liberalized the local markets, enhancing the development of a service and commodities economy, and contributing to the emergence of a very small rural market in the centre of the township. Here, on Pi-Jiang Street, appeared grocery stores, restaurants, barber shops, tailors, cobblers and blacksmiths, but there was no shop opened by the Moso at all.

To the Moso in the 1930s and 40s, mules and horses began to be seen not only as means of transport and production, but also commodities in their own right, to the extent that they became symbols of wealth. 1954 saw the first annual trade show in which horses and mules were traded alongside other imported commodities. As a result of gathering wealth, people started to accumulate lands by mortgage. Concomitant to this accumulation was the exploitation of the poor by the rich via usurious loans. In this period the economic system was in transition from feudal lord to landlord.

This transition stage was cut short, however, by indigenous liberation from feudal exploitation, and by land reform initiated by the Chinese government in 1956. The Moso attempted to develop a small-scale agrarian economy, but this economy was not successful due to the People's Commune Campaign in 1958. From that time on, all property in the township belonged to all villagers. This mode of ownership lasted until early 1980, when economic policies of reform and opening were established in China. The small-scale agrarian economy has again had an opportunity to develop.

It seems the Moso have been conducting business since the feudal period. But why do they still employ a natural economy? And why have they felt impoverishment?

To begin with, horse driven trade was, for the Moso, conducted by family unit (though not every family engaged in such trade), and was always subordinate to local agricultural production; namely, subsistence production conducted by women. Whatever of this production exceeded subsistence levels was a surplus subject to taxation by feudal landlords. What remained, the Moso used to barter with visiting traders for daily necessities the Moso themselves could not produce. Once the needs of subsistence had been met, whatever was left of this fast dwindling surplus could be used for export. Here, finally, was a means to accumulate capital wealth. But this means was hardly exploited by the Moso, since they themselves were so thoroughly exploited by their feudal masters. The surplus products were normally claimed as taxes. Thus the Moso had to produce communally, as one whole family, so that levels of production could match levels of taxation.

Although 1956 saw the Moso liberated from feudal exploitation, their productivity has not increased. First of all, the Cultural Revolution destroyed the market economy in Yongning Township. Secondly, due to governmental emphasis on hard industry in urban areas over and above agriculture in rural areas - an emphasis it referred to as a "scissors difference" owing to the unequal size of the two blades - and controlled purchasing and distribution, the Moso's agricultural surplus has been absorbed by the industrial sector and transferred into social development funds. In addition, due to low quality of soil, lack of arable land, harsh climate in Moso mountain areas and a poor transportation system, the Moso economy has

not exceeded subsistence levels. Therefore, matrilineal kinship did not disappear with the feudal Chieftain System.

1.4 Changes in Mode of Production

1.4.1 Natural Economy with Bartering System

Through the centuries Moso society has been subject to many influences. Overland trade via horse-driven caravans, the movement of the People's Communes, and the economic policies of the reform and opening in China are just a few examples. In spite of this they remained at least until 2002 mostly an agricultural, non-universal monetised economy, because the dominant mode of production was still a natural economy.

When, from 2000 to 2002, I was conducting research, the Moso still used a natural economy everywhere except for the tourist sites around Lugu Lake. They planted more food crops than economical crops, and bartered for goods with other goods. "It is," as Yang writes, "the original form of exchange, based not on currency but on goods.... Hence, under this socio-economic circumstance, exchange value is combined with use value, and no currency is used as an intermediary (1989:94)." Another feature of the Moso natural economy is that the purpose of production, such as growing grain and raising livestock, is only to meet subsistence levels, and does not involve a surplus to be used for trade: "People are yet unable to overcome the limitation of natural environment so as to create more wealth. People still rely on natural 'giving' and have no power to change it. This is the fundamental feature of natural economy (Yang, 1989:95)." According to Rosa Luxemburg "natural economy' is to be understood one based on the production for personal needs (as cited in Bradby, 1980:93)." As Aleksandr Vasil'evich Chayanov similarly notes, "In a natural economy, human economic activity is dominated by the requirements of satisfying the needs of each single production unit (as cited in Perrings, 1985:831)." Because most households could barely achieve subsistence levels production, there has in any case been little or no surplus available for trading in Moso society. In 2000, for example, average production of grain was 394 kg per capita per year. However, after reserving fodder and seed for the subsequent year of production, this average fell to only 243 kg. According to a retired official of Yongning Township (2001), "this amount was lower than the average annual requirement

of 300 kg, indicating some may have gone without grain before the harvest in the coming year.” These averages are in fact far lower than the 1999 national standard of 750.91 kg (The team of the Investigation of Socio-Economy at National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2000).

1.4.2 Conflict between a Natural and a Market Economy

The natural economy of the Moso was confronted with China’s burgeoning market economy, and the Moso needed to purchase goods and services, such as medication and education, with hard currency. However, money they did not have, excepting those Moso living within tourist sites. Although the “outside world” regarded the Moso’s labour itself as a commodity, one to be recompensed for (and eventually taxed) with a currency that could in turn be used to purchase the further commodities of health care and tuition being offered them, the Moso themselves, not yet having abandoned their natural economy, were caught between two systems, two economic modes of production. Although they could produce goods to subsist on, they were nonetheless classed among the poor, not simply because they could not afford the commodities offered them, but more precisely because they were *unable to pay for them*.

Obviously, if the productive model of a natural economy is challenged by the productive model of a market economy in the process of industrialization, the Moso matrilineal system, as a supplement to a natural economy, may be challenged as well. Afterward, we may see a change in status between male and female in Moso society. Here, the lack of a currency as a form of commerce in Moso villages can be regarded as a key point.

1.5 Gender Power

In the clash between a natural economy and a monetary economy there are many changes – this paper focuses in particular on changes in gender relations. According to Joan W. Scott, “gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. Changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way (1986:1067).” An example of this change is in Xia Luoshui Village, along Lugu Lake, where a collective system has been put into practice.

In this village, there is a committee dealing largely with tourism management. By agreement, every household has to contribute goods and labour, and benefits are shared equally among households. When tourism to the region began in the early 1990s, there were some female members in the committee, but this is no longer the case. Although nowadays the Moso maintain, at least nominally, a matrilineal tradition, women are more likely to be “housekeepers” in the private sphere, such as receptionists, cooks and cleaners in their own guesthouses. Such change is found not only in tourist sites, but also among the Moso at large: “there were about 40 percent of Moso women who worked in public as political leaders of collectives in the 1950s to 1960s. However, there were less than 10 percent of women who work for the local government or participate in public affairs in 2001 (Luo, 2002:32).”

This de-emphasis of Moso women’s roles in the social decision making process, along with an identification of Moso males’ bodies with sites of power and knowledge, is salient in economic relationships, given that dominance in the family is often a factor of economic prowess. Therefore, when economics and productive relations change, so too does dominance. From the mainstream perspective, males, such as fathers and husbands, are supposed to be the bread-winners: “strong” men who protect their families within a patriarchal society. In Xia Luoshui Village, when you ask the Moso why the hotel business is run by males rather than females, they answer that males have a better business sense, as well as the tenacity to establish themselves in a competitive market. For example, a 35-year-old Moso woman in Xia Luoshui Village (2008) says that “men are always undertaking important matters and big business, because men are supposed to do so.”

“According to Scott gender operates at 3 levels: 1) at the level of social structures: the availability of resources, accessibility of social institutions and power positions marked by gender norms and gender symbols 2) a symbolic level: images of masculinity and femininity, 3) at the level of individual and collective identity: meanings of sexual difference which affect self image (Scott, 1988; Sevenhuijsen, 1998:81; as cited in Chhachhi forthcoming 2009).” In this study, I will examine all three levels as changes occur from a matrilineal system to a patrilineal/patriarchal system amongst the Moso.

Although, in this paper, I will use the term “patriarchy,” or “patrilineal” as contrasting the

term “matrilineal,” the main purpose of doing so is to better clarify the difference between the dynamic matrilineal society of the Moso and the society represented by the Han majority. “Patriarchy is the structuring of society on the basis of family units, where fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of, hence authority over, their families. The concept of patriarchy is often used, by extension (in anthropology and feminism, for example), to refer to the expectation that men take primary responsibility for the welfare of the community as a whole, acting as representatives via public office (Wikipedia, 2008).” While gender relationships in Moso society are now very much in transition, and similarities or parallels continue to arise between the Moso and patriarchal societies, it does not follow that Moso society is, or is going to be a patriarchal one. For example, Xia Luoshui, though receiving the most significant influence from mainstream values, nonetheless retains its matrilineal structure, as in households, childcaring and the sharing of resources, so that Moso women have not experienced gender exploitation as much as do women in patriarchal society. Accordingly, I would like to clarify that the discussion of gender relationships in this paper focuses mainly on gender inequality rather than the “systematic subordination of women by both overarching and localised structures (Reeves and Baden, 2000:27),” although the term of patriarchy is normally used in describing gender-based oppression.

Chapter 2

The Drivers of Change

In this paper are analysed the obstacles encountered by the Moso when switching to a monetary system. Some possible stimuli affecting change are separately discussed.

2.1 Introduction of Money into the Moso Economy

Although some rural areas have benefited from some of the economic policies of reform and opening under the Socialist Market Economy, there was no irrigation system or factory in Yongning Township. Only one small power plant, in neighboring Labai Township, provided power for one third of its residents. The most prosperous area in Yongning Township, close to Pi-Jiang Street, once a shopping street during the feudal period, sold mainly staple commodities. According to Yongning Industrial and Commercial Bureau (2001), there were 134 shops in that area, most of which were grocery stores, restaurants and traditional costume shops. Therefore, wealth accumulation as a concurrent development of a market economy seemed outside the reach of Moso society.

Aside from tourist sites (a few villages) and a fair at the center of Yongning Township, money was not commonly used for transferring resources among Moso people at least until 2001. Nonetheless, a lot of commodities began to trickle into Moso society, commodities produced under a market economy system and which had to be paid for in hard currency. By the 1980s, conflict had arisen between the two production modes - a natural, and a market economy - and the key factor for change – no currency – became a stimulus of change for Moso matrilineal culture.

According to Barbara Bradby, the destruction of a natural economy “implies the progressive socialisation of labour process that can be separated from the land as an immediate objective condition of production, and the growth of a commodity economy, in which production is no longer in order to satisfy a direct need of the producer, but in order to create and realise exchange-value (1980:93).” However, if the Moso want to meet this goal of the progressive socialisation of labour and the growth of a commodity economy in all their villages, they

have to overcome many obstacles since the socialist market economy is conducted by the Chinese government, which operates under patriarchal values. Therefore, a matrilineal system will have to interact with mainstream values in the process of development.

2.2 Stimuli of Change

There are some factors that may act as stimulants for the matrilineal Moso to interact with mainstream values in the process of development. Some factors are necessities, such as medical care, compulsory education and mandatory tax payments, all of which require the use of hard currency. Others, such as media, mobility, marriage and sinification, whether or not they are factors of a monetary push, may still be drivers of change from a matrilineal to a patrilineal system.

2.2.1 Medical System

We may begin by saying that medical treatment is always needed by a labour force, because people have to be healthy to work efficiently. Ideally, there should be sufficient access to such care. However, once doctors and medicine had to be paid for in cash rather than barter, they passed out of the reach of the Moso. Some Moso elders have complained that even though they were not be able to pay for seeing a Western-trained doctor in cash before 1956, they could still see the Chinese herbal doctors by bringing gifts of tea, sugar and eggs. Also, they could easily see a doctor with little or no money during the period of the movement of the People's Communes because of the Collaborative Medical System, which was dominated by Western-trained doctors. However, say the elders, everything has been changing since Deng Xiaoping introduced a socialist market economy alongside his proposal of socialism with Chinese characteristics. They can no longer see doctors without cash. But money they do not have, so normally they just stay at home without seeing a doctor, unless critically ill (interviews with elders, 2000, 2008).

As reported by a national rural-doctor in Yongning Township (2001), “my colleagues and I conducted a volunteer clinic for 207 Moso women in 2001, and found that 38 % of them had diseases such as urinary-tract infection, vaginitis, fibroid, hepatitis and nephritis. All

patients initially received free treatment, but almost none returned for further treatment since they could not afford it. I have seen women with serious cervical erosion go untreated for the same reason. Sometimes patients requested a discount because they could not pay the nominal fee of 5 to 10 RMB. I did not know how to help them, because as head of the hospital I had the additional responsibility of finances.”

The difficulty receiving health care can be seen by consulting statistics from the Yongning government. For instance, “in 2000 the annual per capita income was 497 RMB, which includes 394 kg of grain (calculated in terms of grain production at 1 RMB/kg in 2000), and 103 RMB in paid work and other sources of income, such as from fishing and the gathering of mushrooms. But since 151 kg of the grain was earmarked for seeding the subsequent year’s crop, and the remaining 243 kg for consumption, this left only the 103 RMB as disposable income (Luo, 2002:26-7).” This, when “the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Health of the People’s Republic of China had indicated that people had to pay approximately 79 RMB for each medical appointment and 2,891 RMB for each check-in to the hospital (Fang, 2000).” Obviously, health care was little more than a tantalizing luxury for the Moso.

A dearth of affordable medical care exists not only in Moso society, but also in other rural areas of China. Therefore, the New Rural Cooperative Medical System (hereafter NRCMS) has since 2005 been conducted in rural areas (in Moso society from 2006) in an attempt to address the problem. Under this system, farmers pay 10 RMB every year for health insurance. If they are hospitalized, a set of graduated reductions applies; viz., 70% off for township level, 60% off for county level and 50% off for city level. Those in Yongning Township who need to see a doctor but do not require hospitalization can get a 20% to 30% reduction.

Although access to medical treatment has improved under the NRCMS, and the annual per capita disposable income (in Yongning Township) has risen to 670.5 RMB (according to 2007 figures^{xi}), the Moso may still find themselves locked out of care. For example, appendicitis surgery cost about 1,000 RMB in county level hospitals in 2000. Due to price increases, the cost is now double. While those covered by the NRCMS may need pay only 600RMB (after 70% reduction), this amount approaches the annual disposable income. We

need also be aware that:

(1) Appendicitis surgery is among the least expensive. Those with more serious diseases face higher costs.

(2) 670.5 RMB is a statistical average, taken from among rich and poor alike, but in practice these demographic constituents are of course not alike, so that some have less than this amount to “dispose” on medical care. As a result, health becomes a function of wealth.

2.2.2 Education

Education is another factor which directly and indirectly challenges Moso matrilineal culture and gender status in the process of development.

During the feudal period, only the elite class had the opportunity to study. Owing to the movement of the People’s Communes beginning in 1958, everyone had the chance to study, until 1980, when the Moso had to pay tuition. Although since 1986 the Chinese government has conducted nine years compulsory education, there remained until 2007 the need to pay for school incidentals (for the Moso, amounting to 100 RMB per student per year). However, 100 RMB was still a burden for the Moso, who in 2000 still had only 103 RMB annual per capita disposable income. Therefore, “there were 61.4% of students who did not finish elementary school, [even though they technically were enrolled]. For example, drop out rates for students in ten elementary schools in Yongning Township in 1998 and 1999 increased as students went to higher levels. The number of students was 632 in grade one, 414 in grade two, 394 in grade three, 349 in grade four, 272 in grade five and 244 in grade six (Zhou, 2001:285).”

In an attempt to increase access to education, the Chinese government has revoked all school fees for elementary school and junior high school since 2007. Since then, the situation has improved. In 2007, 98% of Moso youth attended compulsory education, and none dropped out. But of course annual tuition for senior high school (about 2,000 RMB) and university (about 10,000 RMB) must still be paid if higher education is desired. (It may be wondered, whether the Chinese government regards, in a somewhat dismissive fashion, a junior high school education as sufficient for what is largely an agrarian population. If so, there seems

little encouragement for residents to qualify for alternate forms of employment, so that not all are subject to the whims of land and climate). As a result, Moso wishing to send their children to “advanced” education may be pushed out of Moso society, to seek wealth among the external, patriarchal population. Cultural dilution and - unless beneficiaries of this external education return to work in their townships - a brain drain may then occur.

2.2.3 Tax Reform

Tax reform also affects the labour structure of the Moso, and with it their matrilineal culture. The Chinese government in 2003 began a tax reform. Since this time, all taxes have had to be paid in cash rather than grain. The cash tax may be not be onerous for rural areas where currency is in use, but for the Moso, who still function under a largely natural economy involving barter trade, adaptation may be problematic, and indeed this transition has further served to push surplus labour from rural areas into the industrial sector. Such an economic policy may change productive relationships in Moso households while putting pressure on their matrilineal structure: “before the advent of state pressure on matrilineal societies, gender relations were relatively equal. Based on women’s role in production, their special knowledge of forests, and their place in the cultural and religious life of matrilineal communities, women enjoyed considerable space within the household and the community to make decisions about resource use. Unfortunately, maintaining this position of power has been difficult, particularly in the face of pressures from the state in favor of centralizing greater patriarchy (Kelkar and Tshering, 2002:2-3).”

Yongning is an agricultural township without industry. In 2007, 98% of the Moso worked in agriculture. After economic reform, women still continued to work the fields according to convention, while men were made into surplus labour because their traditional fields, as members of caravans or monks in a lamasery, had been rendered obsolete. Although there were some emerging businesses due to tourism development, construction workers and truck or bus drivers for example, most positions were occupied by non-Moso, or even outsiders. Thus, most of the men were playing mah-jong all the time while I was conducting a health project and doing my research there from 2000 to 2002. I remember that Moso females always complained they wanted to throw away the men because they did not

contribute.

Before 2002, even though the Moso did not have high productivity, they could still support surplus labour, because:

- (1) Every one had been apportioned land (though there is a shortage of arable land in Yongning Township), and
- (2) Taxes and fees could be paid in grain or cash.

Thus, despite not having cash for expendables such as televisions and refrigerators, the Moso would still be able to live by means of self production. However, in 2003 the Chinese government initiated a tax and fee reform, and although all fees were, for the Moso, canceled, the Moso had nonetheless to pay their taxes in cash only from that time on. “In 2000, after a tax and fee reform, their annual per capita taxes rose from an average 12 RMB to an average 23.46 RMB, according to statistics from that year (Luo, 2002:41).” The new tax was twice as much as the old one, and still they had scarcely more than 103 RMB annual per capita disposable income.

The Chinese government established a policy of tax reform in order to draw workers into urban areas and thus accelerate the industrialization of China. Under these reforms, the Moso felt compelled to migrate to cities to increase income. According to a director of the women’s department of Yongning Township (2008), “1009 people left Yongning Township in 2002 in search of better paying work, another 1120 left in 2003, and 1780 in 2004. Although the Chinese government canceled all taxes and fees in rural areas from 2005, this did not stop another 1230 from leaving in 2005, and 1378 in 2006.” Such a situation affects the Moso matilineal system and gender status both directly and indirectly, because the main source of labour in the production sector is being changed, and both Moso who return to their townships and Han Chinese immigrating to the area bring with them mainstream (patriarchal) values that conflict with those held by the Moso.

2.2.4 Tourism

Tourism development, as a salient factor in the interaction of the matrilineal Moso with mainstream values, may be considered the most direct way to increase revenue without

inciting young workers to leave their matrilineal households. Since the East Asian economic boom, the Chinese government has been promoting tourism to ethnic cultures in Western China in order to balance national development. “Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, ethnic groups were encouraged by the state to articulate and promote their ethnic distinctiveness as means of developing ethnic tourism (Chao, 2001:201).” “In the 1980s and 1990s, state television crews produced documentaries on the Moso. ... The cultural characteristics the Maoist government tried to change became celebrated as markers of Moso cultural uniqueness and value (Walsh, 2005:457).”

Some Moso feel that tourism development is the best way, at least for now, to escape poverty while promoting their culture. As Govind Kelkar and Phuntshok Tshering state, “survival ...[is] not only on a material level but also on a cultural level, as cultural practices become means of earning an income (Kelkar and Tshering, 2002:10).” Moso culture is often described by tourist agencies, government and film makers as a “unique” and “fossil” culture because its matrilineal system differs from the mainstream. For example, Kunming China International Service (2008) promotes the Moso as a “living fossil as a basis for a study of social patterns and matriarchal marriage customs in today’s world.” And German Camera Productions (2008) refers to the Moso as “a free-love society run by beautiful women, and ... a living fossil of the country’s last matriarchy.”

In fact, before tourism development the Moso did not know that their culture is “unique” and “special”. At the time, only elders wore traditional costumes. When tourism development began, and increasing numbers of visitors came seeking the “fossil” matrilineal culture, the Moso realized that their culture could attract tourists and relieve them from poverty. Therefore, they were happy to display their “special” culture for the tourists. A state official of Luoshui Administrative Village (2008) notes that “the average annual per capita income in Luoshui in 1980 was about 100 RMB (or even less), but in 2007 was more than 4,000 RMB. However, the average annual per capita income in Yongning Township in 2007 was only 1,338 RMB.”

As more and more tourists came, the Moso learned that “the essential ingredient of tourism is its exoticism, what the French call *dépaysement*. The tourist seeks an experience that

cannot be duplicated in his ordinary place of residence. The tourist endeavors to make contact with a different reality, manifest in undomesticated nature, in relics from the past, particularly an alien past, or in the behavior of culturally distinctive strangers (van den Berghe and Keyes, 1984:345).” As a result, the Moso start to recall their culture and promote it as per tourists’ wishes. For example, they name their guesthouses Matrilineal Ancient House, Moso Farmstead and Walking Marriage Building, etc. Some people call this process a part of cultural preservation, although culture reconstruction or reinvention may be a more apt term for the self-conscious display.

Even though many tourists come to visit, only a few villages around Lugu Lake, mostly Shang Luoshui, Xia Luoshui and Lige Natural Villages, really benefit economically from tourism development. Also, the result of ethnic development is not quite so good as expected. For example, now that Moso culture is well known among Han Chinese, there are more and more outsiders moving into Moso tourist sites to establish businesses there. They rent houses from Moso people and conduct restaurants and guesthouses. Once established, they replace Moso people to receive tourists and present to them Moso culture, as Moso “experts.” Some Moso people do not care about the distortions that arise, and even echo them, but others have complained that these “experts” misrepresent their culture, and even lie to tourists. For instance, some businessmen hire young, non-Moso girls to dress as Moso girls in their shops and weave so-called traditional and handmade clothes for sale. However, all Moso know that these girls weave the same items of clothing every day in front of tourists, and that all clothes sold in the shops are in fact made by machine and imported from outside. “Luoshui residents are actually aware that Moso identity sells, and they, like many others in China, pin their hopes for economic change on expanding ethnic tourism. While the Moso face representations rife with imbedded contradictions, they also face the pressures of tourism and policy to accommodate these representations (Walsh, 2005:450).”

Furthermore, in the process of development, the Moso are exposed to mainstream values most significantly through tourism. For example, there are now a lot of job opportunities in the service and tourism industries, and the Moso, particularly the young generation, have started to leave their clans to work in Moso tourist sites and in outside cities, including jobs in restaurants, hotels and in business. There is thus exposure, from within and without, to

patriarchal culture, and some Moso girls have been marrying Han Chinese to start nuclear families.

2.2.5 Media

Some Moso elders complain that the young generation prefers to be married and live with their partners as a nuclear family, because that generation has been brainwashed by Han Chinese TV programs. Accordingly, elder Moso fear that their extended families will soon break apart. Indeed, some young Moso, especially girls, state that they really enjoy watching soap operas with romantic stories. Stories that show married couples living happily ever after have a particularly strong influence.

In fact, traditional Moso values, under pressure from mainstream Han and Western media, have been gradually slipping into a form that more resembles these media, media that have become a main source of information for the Moso. And there are other outlets for such information, such as through migrants. For example, the Monica Lewinsky scandal is known in some Moso villages that are without water or power. However, this exposure of the Moso to mainstream values is distinctly one-sided: because the mass media is controlled by the Han majority, the weak light that is shed on the lives of the Moso is filtered through a mainstream prism. There is, then, not a local viewpoint presented of the Moso, but rather one with a distinctly mainstream bias. Given such a situation, the Moso are easily influenced, to the extent that they are beginning to use mainstream values to gauge the world. For example, some Moso now think female beauty is exemplified by white skin and a thin body. However, such a perception runs completely counter to the essence of Moso culture, by which standard prowess in household and agricultural management are the hallmarks of female beauty.

2.2.6 Mobility

As the Moso interact further with the outside world, their attraction to that world deepens. Representatives of this outside world, including tourists, businessmen, migrant students and workers, bring a variety of information and fancy products to attract to the Moso, so that thanks to what effectively are beads and mirrors, the Moso begin to feel that the “outside”

must be qualitatively and quantitatively better. As presented by a Moso university student, “the Moso often envy people who carry expensive Nikon cameras, wear Nike shoes and use Motorola cellphones.” Even when a young Moso has, for example, a more advanced cellphone than that carried by a representative of the outside, he or she may still feel it is inadequate, owing to a mainstream-derived perception of the Moso being comparatively backward moribund uncultured.

Aside from a need for hard currency, there is another force drawing Moso out of their society. Although some Moso, especially the rich, criticize the life outside as being tough because rife with selfishness and a focus on the physical life marked by low respect for women, others nonetheless admire the higher incomes, expensive cars and luxury houses. Normally, the Moso in Xia Luoshui are more critical of the outside world than are the Moso in Haiyijiao, because they can afford to be: Xia Luoshui has the highest living standards in Yongning Township. Accordingly, those in Haiyijiao are more interested in acquiring higher education, so that they will have more opportunities to be hired in the industrial sector, with its rewards of high salary and status. Mainstream identity, and with it patrilineal structures, is becoming a standard desire for the Moso.

2.2.7 Marriage

A Moso university student in Haiyijiao (1998) states, that “if she can have a job in the cities after graduation, she will definitely take it. She also says that she does not want to have a *Tise* relationship in her life at all, even though she is Moso. The reason is because no one does that in her peer group in her university, where all of her classmates grew up in patriarchal families, so it is weird if she does so.” Actually, some Moso are proud of their *Tise* relationship being more liberal than the Han Chinese marriage system, but they do feel inconvenienced when they need to interact with mainstream society. For example, a director of the women’s department of Yongning Township (2008) says that “she went traveling with her partner in Kunming a few years ago. She was asked to show her marriage certificate when she checked in at the hotel. Otherwise they would not be allowed to stay there. Although she could stay over after explaining that she did not have a marriage certificate since her society did not follow the Han marriage system, she still felt embarrassed and

troubled. In this case, we can tell that patriarchal values are a constant challenge to matrilineal values, even though Moso culture is protected under the law of autonomy.

2.2.8 Sinification

“While the state and the larger minorities have a legitimate interest in developing the minority regions ..., the minorities are apprehensive of being inundated by the Han. Some of the smaller groups would like to remain isolated, preserving their traditional way of life (Heberer, 1989:45).”

Although there are more and more new laws which somehow economically benefit peasants, the impetus of these laws are mainstream and patriarchal values. For example, census and land reform always register a male as head of a household, even though the Moso are a matrilineal society. Therefore, whenever land title or any other official matter needs to be proved or in some way dealt with, there must be a male present. Furthermore, although the government emphasizes and promotes the cultural features of the Moso in the name of preserving ethnic culture while achieving economic growth, its way of cultural promotion always employs patriarchal structures. For example, the idea of the Moso as a “sexy” ethnic group has oft been repeated. Therefore, Moso culture is becoming “a culture of matriarchs, on the one hand, and a culture fulfilling male fantasies of lovers for the taking, on the other. Within either interpretation, or either marketing strategy, Moso women are the focus of the marketing of Moso territory (Walsh, 2005:465).” Under this concept, the development projects of national minorities will unsurprisingly be more like assimilation than grants of autonomy. The Moso have to some extent preserved their culture, but in a way approved - one might go so far as to say dictated - by the Han Chinese government. As a result, the Moso matrilineal society has incorporated utilitarian logic and patriarchal values under the influence of Han rule.

Chapter 3

The Outcomes of Change

These drivers of change have together transformed Moso matrilineal culture in the process of development. In this chapter, I assess this transformation, discussing the shift to patriarchal values and structures.

3.1 The Shift from Matrilineal to Patriarchal Values and Structures

3.1.1 Language

The Moso have a spoken, but no written language. Their language reflects their culture; for example, it shows their respect for women, particularly for mothers. In the Moso language, *Mi* means “big, principal” or “major.” “Mother” is *AE Mi*, “mother’s room” or “major room” *Zi Mi*, and “big mountain” *Na Mi*. In contrast, “male” is *Zo*, meaning “little” or “small.” However, due to increasing exposure to mainstream values, the Moso have started to use Han language and values to describe their own culture to non-Moso. In the process, the original meaning is sometimes lost, or misunderstood. For instance, there is no word in the Moso language for marriage, but other ethnic groups keep referring to the *Tise* relationship as a “walking marriage”. As a result, the Moso have started to use the words “marriage”, “monogamous”, “husband” and “wife” to explain the *Tise* relationship. But *Tise* is in principle very different from the Han Chinese marriage system, because under *Tise* man and woman as partners neither live under the same roof nor have obligations to each other. In Moso language *Ti* means “space and time,” and *Se* means “walk back and forth.” Although the Moso use “walking marriage” or “visiting marriage” to describe *Tise*, they in the process define a matrilineal relationship in the language and values of a patriarchal system, such that the values of the latter creep insidiously into the former.

To address further this matter of cultural leakage, it is true that Moso culture has been influenced by Han culture step by step since economic reform and opening. Nowadays in China, no matter what nationality you are, Chinese is the major language everywhere, especially in public institutions, such as schools, hospitals and government offices. Although Yongning is an indigenous township, all its schools, including ten elementary and one junior

high school, teach students using national (meaning, edited by the central authorities) materials in Chinese. Those materials focus on Han Chinese history and culture, so the Moso learn neither their own culture nor language in school. Accordingly, the Moso young is gradually influenced by Han culture. A 37-year-old Moso female (2008) complains that “some Moso, particularly the young, speak Chinese too much and, because as a result they forget, or have less opportunity to acquire, Moso vocabulary, they no longer communicate well with Moso elders.” When I visited her 70-year-old father, and everyone was trying to help translate between the elder and myself, I saw that one of her nieces was very quiet. When later I asked (in Chinese) the girl why, she said that she could not totally understand the Moso language. In this case, studying Chinese may help indigenous Moso to communicate with non-Moso and increase economic and tourism development, but the Moso language may be gradually forgotten and their culture with it. Such a disappearance will be facilitated by the lack of a written language: hence, Moso is a living language in danger of morbidity and stagnation, if tourism prevents it from outright death.

3.1.2 Family Name

The Moso matrilineal system has also undergone change due to the development process. Some Moso, especially the young, have started to use their father’s surname as a family name on their ID cards, and introduce themselves either with these, or their mothers’ surnames. Those who are living around tourist sites tend to use their Moso names more than others, in order to appear more exotic to tourists. Many Moso elders say that during the Cultural Revolution, although *Tise* partners were forced to live together monogamously (though males went to live in females’ houses), they still continued to use their mothers’ family names. At that time, the Moso violently refused being married as Han people, because they thought a matrilineal household would be a more harmonious place were it free of “strangers.” Thus, they offended against the law whenever the executor’s control loosened. However, nowadays young Moso have started to marry and live with their partners monogamously, while naming their children with the father’s surname. For example, a 66-year-old Moso female I spoke with has three daughters, all of whom live with their husbands. The first, who married a Han Chinese, named her children in Chinese. The second named her children in Moso, but using her husband’s surname. The last named her children in Moso without any family name. The

second thinks she will not allow her daughter to have a *Tise* relationship in the future even if her daughter insists on doing so, because she thinks that a girl being with a man without guarantee of marriage is in an unfavorable situation.

3.1.3 The Division of Labour and Power Structure

Indeed, patriarchal values are now easily seen in otherwise matrilineal Moso society. For example, the form of ownership in Moso society before liberation could be categorized as private ownership of households which, though having roots in feudalism, was more the residue of primary communism existing in the family. Households at that time were units of production where everything belonged to all family members. The division of labour between Moso men and women was regarded as a natural gender division. For example, men worked in the field as members of a caravan or monks in a lamasery, while women farmed and did housework. According to Marx, “Within a family, and after a further development within a tribe, there springs up naturally a division of labour, caused by differences of sex and age, a division that is consequently based on a purely physiological foundation (1967:351).” Indeed, some Moso elders have noted that a caravan could encounter great difficulties, such as bandits or beasts, during its travels, conditions that would in particular adversely affect pregnant, or lactating women. Thus, “Moso^{xii} women are mainly associated with the domestic; their households are the most important domain in terms of economic, political, religious and social activities; most of the important social interactions occur in the context of a face-to-face community, where informal relationships and forms of power play at least as an important roles in everyday life as the formal ones....Women are not only associated with the domestic sphere but they also play a leading role in that sphere. Most of the household heads are women (Weng, 1993:219-20).”

However, with the development of tourism in Moso society, domestic-oriented has been replaced by public-oriented (Liu 2001), so that most economic, political, and social activities are now part of the public domain, a domain that is becoming larger in the process of tourism development. As a result, men have easily taken over the leading role since their traditional roles were working in the public arena. For instance, “men participate in ... soliciting customers and loans, while the women handle the reception of tourists, besides

doing housework. Moreover, with the development of tourism-related business, men are beginning to play the leading role in important decisions. ...[in] some of the larger family hotels, though the tradition is still observed that the whole family makes the decisions on important matters, these decisions are forwarded and executed by the men (He, 2003:156).” Therefore, the role or status of Moso women has been changing incrementally: “Men who have a traditional role in the social arena are offered an opportunity to give full play to their superiority, thus expanding their power, whereas the women, whose traditional work is confined to household labour, find it difficult to rise in the same arena (He, 2003:156).”

Nowadays, Moso males are more likely than females to be registered heads of households, particularly in tourist sites. Although Moso women are still described as *Dabu* (“household heads”) to tourists, the word has lost its original meaning because, with the transition of focus to the public domain, households are no longer the center of economic, political, and social activities. In the tourist sites, a so-called *Dabu* is now closer in meaning to a housekeeper. Here, the introduction of patriarchal values into Moso society has begun with the introduction of a monetary economy. Indeed, “the number of nationalities could be diminished over the long term by deliberate linguistic and cultural assimilation, which would result in increased uniformity among the population and in minorities renouncing their own and assuming Han culture and language instead. The minor nationalities ... are unable to offer resistance to such a policy of assimilation (Heberer, 1989:130).”

3.1.4 Family Structure and Property Rights

Regarding family structure, the Moso traditionally invite a female partner of one of their male members to live with them if their household lacks female members, and vice versa. The norm is to ensure gender balance and matrilineal inheritance, so a female normally comes to be a *Dabu* while a male joins the labour force. Most males even change their family name after moving into their partners’ households. Sometimes, a matrilineal household will need to be broken up into two on account of space constraints. In such cases, all members are equally divided according to status and property. However, this norm has been challenged as a result of interaction with Han patriarchal culture. Some young Moso have started to bring their partners home and ask to divide up family property (so as to set up

separate households) after being married, especially in tourist sites such as Xia Luoshui. The reason is the perception, particularly non-Moso partners raised in patriarchal Han society, that the right of private property is reasonable and legitimate, in accordance with (Han) Chinese law. Where in the past, division of the family was done to benefit members of the entire household, it nowadays is done mostly to conform with individual desires. As a result, patriarchal households are becoming more common in Moso society. For instance, “in 1956, 6.7 % of families in Yongning village were patrilineal, but this amount had risen to 17.5 % by 1996 (He, 2008:281).”

3.1.5 The Changes in Gender Symbolism – Wrestling as Masculine Now

Although conventionally the Moso have seen women or mothers as emblematic of power, to the extent that Moso families have normally been managed by elder women, the balance of power has in recent years been shifting towards male dominance, so that “in Yongning agricultural villages nearly one-third of household heads are male (Walsh, 2001; 2005:453).” As Davin elaborates, “new rural policies have transferred basic decision-making from the collective to the household level and have encouraged peasant households to invest time and resources in craft and sideline production. Most observers agree that these changes will tend to reinforce the sexual division of labour within the household and to reinforce the authority of the household head who is usually a male (1987:146).”

Furthermore, “strength,” as presented in tourist programs in Xia Luoshui village, has been redefined. This ontological drift can be observed in the warsle, a form of Mongolian wrestling, conventionally played by both genders. Although there are still a few Moso girls who play warsle with tourists, the game has largely become the purview of males whose muscular bodies are now considered best equipped to perform the required maneuvers. Normative concepts such as this, says Scott, “that set forth interpretations of the meanings of the symbols, that attempt to limit and contain their metaphoric possibilities ... are expressed in religious, educational, scientific, legal, and political doctrines and typically take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine (1986:1067).”

This erosion of matrilineal culture is present not only among the Moso, but in other matrilineal societies, such as the Naxi: “The Moso of Yungning are still basically matrilineal...which the Naxi of Lijiang were until recently (Jackson, 1989:141).” “Among the Naxi, for example, the matrilineal system was abolished and replaced by patrilineal inheritance; marriage for love was discouraged and replaced by arranged marriage; and the Confucian values of a woman being subordinate to her father, husband and son were promoted (Kelkar and Tshering, 2002:3).” Although the matrilineal system of the Naxi has not changed as a direct result of the tourism industry, tourist development has nonetheless accelerated the loss of matrilineal remnants. In the Naxi of Lijiang, “women now have much more work to do on their homesteads. They have to do the farming work, raise the pigs, gather needles and leaves, cut firewood, and look after elderly parents-in-law and children (Yang and Xi, 2003:196).”

Indeed, there is progressively less disparity between the roles of Moso women and their counterparts in Han Chinese culture. According to Emily Chao, “in the Maoist era, a woman’s identity as a worker was primary; now, as current popular sayings reveal, a woman’s future roles as wife and mother are the cornerstone of a feminine identity (2003:83).”

Chapter 4

How They Perceive Change

4.1 The Voices and Hopes of Various Social Strata

If the result of retaining Moso matriliney is being poor, the Moso will always be attracted toward places full of opportunities for money, and then everything is going to be changed after time passes owing to value change.

A senior official of Yongning Township (2008)

4.1.1 Perspectives from State Officials

Almost every time I return to Yongning Township, state officials ask me what the difference is from when last I was there. They hope that I will mention the big constructions which have been built, such as a dam, irrigation system, and concrete or stone road in place of a dirt road, because such indicators of development are clear to them, when in fact their constituents judge them according to their success in making life easier, and wealth easier to accumulate. In this case, development normally focuses on economic development.

However, it does not follow that these same state officials are blind to the challenges their culture faces during the development process. A senior official of Yongning Township (2008) states that “we definitely need money, because everything that you want to have now costs money. Thus, we welcome tourism development here, but are also aware that tourism development is bringing negative impacts. Actually, once cultural value has a qualitative change, then the culture is gradually dying. Unfortunately, that normally happens after tourists come and we have already seen that in our Moso society in the past decades. For example, I have my mother’s family name, but my son has my family name. I ate organic chicken when I was little, but my son keeps asking me to bring Kentucky whenever I leave for a meeting in the city. Such situations will never be stopped if tourists keep coming, because we cannot stop communication between people and should not treat our culture as pandas in the zoo. Therefore, economic development and culture preservation do not easily happen at the same time.”

Indeed, although cultural exchange may not be an unqualified negative, there is a lot of qualitative change in Moso society. For example, tourists come for the exoticism of Moso culture, promoted as it is by tourist agencies, national media, and lectures with names like Girl Kingdom and Free Love. Therefore, these tourists are primed to see “beautiful young girls” arriving like Botticelli’s Venus on a seashell. Whenever these exotic expectations are not satisfied, they ask the Moso to do so. For example, they request a demonstration on how to have a *Tise* relationship, or desire to eat a traditional meal with Moso people in the Mother’s room, where the Moso eat meals, discuss important matters and pray. However, these activities have their associated cultural restrictions, which tourists do not know and are not concerned with. Tourists just keep ordering what they want according to their wishes, wishes the Moso do their best to satisfy in order to make money. But the result is tourists’ complaints that Moso culture is too commercial, while the Moso complain these same tourists are destroying their culture.

4.1.2 Perspectives from Tourists

Tourists coming for “special” sites act in accordance with a sort of law, as stated by Pierre L. van den Berghe and Charles F. Keyes: “the tourist seeks further to incorporate this encounter with the exotic into an ‘authentic’ experience (cf. MacCannell 1976). In this quest for the exotic, one must leave the familiar surroundings of everyday life and work and cross the boundaries of the social world that one knows (1984:345).”

Every time I do research or conducting a project among the Moso, I often hear that tourists ask them where they can experience “real” Moso culture. The Moso then ask what is expected as “real” and do their best to package it for tourists, such as showing a romanticized process of *Tise*. Often, tourists sexualize Moso culture by discussing only the physical component of the *Tise* relationship without attempting to understand their matriarchal society, its structure and evolution. It seems that the Moso give tourists a “menu”, and make a special cultural dish for them: “Those in Luoshui are well aware that Moso identity has brought them their newfound wealth, and Moso identity is therefore prominent and exaggerated at tourist sites (Walsh, 2005:453).” As a result, tourists are disappointed that they can only come to see the show.

When tourism began, the Moso liked to invite tourists to their houses in order to facilitate the experience of Moso culture. However, the following are reasons for which the Moso stopped doing so:

(1) Tourists always expect that Moso people have a primitive lifestyle, such as no power or running water, and subsisting completely on a natural environment. These expectations are an affront to the Moso, who regard themselves as civilized by any measure or cultural standard. Some Moso even complain that these same tourists, who have used modern conveniences for so long, still expect to see how stone is used to make fire for cooking.

(2) There are some cultural rules which tourists consistently violate, making the Moso people, especially elders, angry and embarrassed. For example, the Moso are not allowed to discuss with the opposite gender within the same blood relationship, matters regarding sex. There are complex reasons for this taboo, reasons involving mainly the avoidance of incestuous unions. However, the tourists visiting Moso households always like to ask about the *Tise* relationship.

(3) As tourism development continues apace, the Moso have less time to care for family members. Accordingly, tourists can only stay in guesthouses and see Moso culture in performances. Tourists thus have less chance to know more about Moso culture, and so always complain that Moso culture is too commercialized.

4.1.3 Perspectives from Moso and non-Moso

Preserving, or even establishing Moso identity has become, with tourism development, a difficult undertaking. Particularly in tourist sites, residents present themselves as Moso if it helps them to make more money. Other ethnic groups in Yongning Township sometimes complain that the Moso have their minds stuffed with money, because the latter do anything to satisfy tourists regardless of cultural ramifications. For instance, in order to increase profits the Moso (or businessmen plying their trades among the Moso) in Xia Luoshui make everything, such as Moso food, dancing and songs, relate to Moso culture in ways easily perceptible for outsiders, whether or not this blatant self-commodification results in a distortion of their cultural heritage, as in fact it commonly does. Nonetheless, almost everyone, Moso or not, I interviewed in Yongning Township said they appreciated tourism

development because it made their economic situation more or less better.

Although there are some dissenting voices among ethnic groups, most residents of Yongning Township are happy to see their minority culture receiving so much attention, and have begun to take pride in their indigenous identity. As a result, however, some Moso initially took their culture too seriously, viewing it as something apart from them which could be tarnished if mishandled, and was best left in the hands of professionals. Thus lacking confidence, the Moso, when conducting business related to tourism, at first relied on others (typically researchers; at times, businessmen) to present their culture for them. For example, when I first got there in 2000, the Moso to my surprise wanted me to direct all questions about them to a researcher who had been there for a long time, since this researcher as a result knew them best. However, the situation has changed as the Moso have become more familiar with the process of tourism development.

4.1.4 Perspectives from Moso Men and Women

“The Moso matrilineal ideology mainly includes the following notions: 1) For one’s life, mother is essential, whereas father is accidental. 2) Relatives connected by blood through mother are of one root and are destined to stay together and support each other. 3) The relationship among matrilineal kin is unbreakable and perpetual.... 4) As all women are potential mothers, the supreme reverence for mothers is extended to femaleness. From deities to human beings, the female is believed to be superior to the male. Women are considered not only mentally stronger, but also physically more capable, if not always more powerful, than men. And 5) happiness is defined as the ability to live in harmony with matrilineal kin. The ultimate meaning of life in this world is to uphold and maintain household harmony (Shih, 1993; 1998; 2000:704).” However, these notions have more or less changed as a result of tourism development. The Moso, especially in tourist sites, start to think that male is essential as well since some of them, who want or prefer a nuclear family, think a family is complete with a father, mother and children.

One perspective which may explain the dynamics of change to Moso matrilineal values may be had by comparing between the tourist site, Xia Luoshui Natural Village, and non-tourist

site, Haiyijiao Natural Village. There are 38 Moso households in the former; 34 in the latter. However, in Xia Luoshui there are no households where *Tisese* is exclusively practiced, while in Haiyijiao there remain two households in which family members have only *Tisese* relationships. Additionally, in Xia Luoshui 16 households have broken up, dividing their properties among nuclear families, while in Haiyijiao half that number of households have done so.

Table 1:
Comparison of *Tisese*, and nuclear family Households in Xia Luoshui and Haiyijiao Natural Village

	Xia Luoshui Natural Village	Haiyijiao Natural Village
Number of households	38	34
Households practicing <i>Tisese</i> exclusively	0	2
Households that have fragmented into nuclear families	16	8

Also, some Moso men are beginning to be concerned with women’s virginity, since they think that love should be selfish and that two people should belong fully to each other. Some Moso men even think that women should be taken care of by men, because women are weaker. Before tourism development, the Moso did not really want to marry, because they thought a collective is the only one way to manage life. But in recent years, young Moso women have started to care more about marriage because of the romantic stories they see on TV. For example, they imagine they can have a wonderful husband as in these dramas.

4.1.5 Perspectives from Young and Old

In Moso society, the young generation is more likely to engage in tourism development, because they think that by doing so they will have more chance to contact and learn about outside society. Some Moso university students even told me that tourism development brings them money to pay high tuition fees (by local standards). Although they all know tourism development is due their culture, the young do not really wish to follow their culture as does the old generation. The current generation would like to have nuclear families and live apart from their elders. Some even think that a big Moso matrilineal family is a burden

for them to take care of.

In comparison, the old generation, especially those living around tourist sites, appreciate that tourism development makes their lives easier, but say that a number of Moso values have changed. For example, people like to watch TV more than spend time together. Therefore, relationships between people are not as tight as before. Also, Moso elders complain that the young generation learns a lot of its values from outsiders and the media, so that there is an increasing gap between young and old. Accordingly, they are happy with economic improvement, but unhappy with value change.

4.2 The Implications of Chinese Cultural and Economic Policy

Though change away from matrilineal structures is now well-established, the Chinese government nonetheless claims to respect the culture of national minorities in the process of development. This notion of preserving ethnic culture has been incorporated into development policy-making: “The autonomy law of 1984 is the most far-reaching legislation to date on the rights of ethnic minorities. Autonomous units are empowered to enact laws that give legislative guarantees for minorities’ customs and traditions, education, language and writing, marriage laws, etc (Heberer, 1989:43).” In recent years, as part of a move towards cultural preservation and ethnic autonomy as conducted by the government, an emphasis on the characteristics of national minorities has become the key point of tourist promotion by mass media and tourist agencies. For example, according to Lugu Lake’s postcard package, Lijiang District Post Office (produced circa 1997), “the Moso people who live by the lake are the pet of the nature (sic). They love freely as in heaven, so it’s called women’s kingdom and become (sic) spectacular (as cited in Walsh, 2005:451).” In another example, “Lugu Lake has been described as the Female Kingdom, where thousands of Moso, a sub-tribe of the Naxi still follow the tradition of ‘walking marriage’ (The Official Website of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, 2008).”

But the result is a “reinvention” of the Moso, the assumption of a veneer now unsupported by once core beliefs. Money talks, and in order to display “real” Moso culture, some Moso people even present the process of *Tisese* as a light program to tourists. However, the *Tisese*

relationship is an unspoken practice in Moso society; that is, it is a relationship not publicly announced until a baby is born, at which time the couple invites villagers to celebrate. But the wheels of a prurient marketing campaign, an unstoppable juggernaut, roll over such problematic distinctions. Moreover, because some tourists are particularly interested in the *Tisese* relationship, some businessmen have built a small red-light district near Lugu Lake, and promote the prostitutes as a way to experience Moso culture. Such marketing stirs the imagination of mainstream patriarchal society while satisfying the tendency to “commodify” the Moso as interesting cultural artifacts. Accordingly, Lynn A. Bolles (1997) claims that, “for women of the receiving communities, economics of tourism is seen in sex tourism, [such] that ‘female bodies are a tourist commodity’ (as cited in Kelkar and Tshering, 2002:10).” This strategy of emphasizing a female symbol - typically that exemplified by young women - and sexual relationships in Moso culture actually justifies the legitimacy of purely physical relationships in a patriarchal society. Also, the hegemony of such patriarchal structures is formed via the collapse of female groups, or the subjection of these groups to systems formed under the influence of institutionalized male dominance. At first, the Moso criticised this local sex trade and avoided working in it. Eventually, the red-light district moved slightly away from the Moso community, and since 2004 some Moso girls have become sex workers.

As Eileen Rose Walsh notes, “the tourism industry at Lugu Lake exploded in the 1990s, drawing on government representations of the Moso to create a marketing image that has proved compelling to the domestic tourism market. Sexuality and gender figure especially prominently in official representations of Moso culture, and in tourist literature as well (2005: 449-50).” Thus, the Moso have had to resume wearing their traditional costumes and promote their “traditional” lifestyle and “real” culture, so as better to reflect perceptions disseminated by tourist agencies. Indeed, the Moso have reconstructed their lives in order to attract more tourists: “Residents of Luoshui daily engage with the commodification of their culture, and they must continually face and reshape constructions of Moso identity made by outsiders (Walsh, 2005:449).” Nowadays, every tourist buys a ticket from the Tourism Zone Management Committee on Yongning Road before entering the famous tourist sites, Luoshui and Lugu Lake, thus gaining admission to this “museum” of matriliney.

But in the wake of commodification may come fossilization. As stated by MacCannell, “When an ethnic group begins to sell itself, or is forced to sell itself, as an ethnic attraction, it ceases to evolve naturally. The group members begin to think of themselves not merely as people but a living representative of an authentic way of life. Suddenly, any change in life-style is not a mere question of practical utility but a weighty question which has economic and political implications for the entire group (1984: 388).” Though a majority of Moso are happy with their improved economic circumstances, they, especially women (who have the most to lose), may not be satisfied with the changes their matrilineal tradition and gender relationships undergo.

It seems that there is a contradiction between economic development and cultural preservation, one that the Chinese government does not notice, or pretends not to notice. They continue to plan and promote major projects for Moso society in order to achieve greater economic development for China. For example, they are going to build a Girl Kingdom Town in Yongning Township, and an airport about 30 km away. Also, a project of building two five star hotels is currently being discussed. Cultural experience is becoming a commodity, for which tickets are sold, as with a visit to Disneyland. According to some local politicians, the purpose of those constructions is to show Moso culture to more people around the world. It seems that “when the touristic definition of an ethnic group or community prevails, the group is frozen in an image of itself or museumized. The group becomes a thing and, Durkheim’s dictum notwithstanding, that is exactly what people are not (MacCannell, 1984:388-9).” However, although some Moso are worried that with more development will come more negative impact, most Moso are still in favor of it, since (the most common reason I have heard) they will have more chance to contact the outside world, and in so doing, make more money.

It comes as little surprise, then, that a senior official of Yongning Township (2008), calls “tourism development the biggest cultural invasion. Cultural tourism brings erosion instead of preservation, as the latter becomes lost in commercial concerns, effectively trampled underfoot by tourists. That economic development and cultural preservation can coexist among the Moso seems unlikely,” and indeed the result diverges widely from the government’s stated goal of cultural preservation. The simultaneous gain and loss is

summarized by Jack Goody (1998): “Tourism means a higher level of income, though not necessarily for all. The satisfaction of needs through consumption is possible because of the higher income. A new system of production, like tourism ‘means disruption, but it also means survival and much more’ (as cited in Kelkar and Tshering, 2002:10).”

With increasing cultural erosion, some Moso have started to think about how to protect their culture. For example, a head official of Yongning Township (2008) states that “they are planning to apply for Moso matrilineal society as a World Cultural Heritage Site, and to make laws to protect the *Tiseve* relationship.” However, such plans rely on state decisions and the mainstream values that influence them. What Moso culture really is, and what the Moso are in need of, has never truly been considered at the state level. Thomas Heberer asserts that “all party assurances to the contrary, the current ‘soft’ policy of national integration seems to be traveling the path of assimilation among the smaller ethnic groups. It is certainly contestable whether this is a necessary process within the broader evolution of society as a whole, or whether it ought in general terms to be avoided. Majorities usually do not seriously consider the latter possibility, especially in the case of smaller groups, and those affected are usually not even asked if the policy meets with their desires. The apparent ‘backwardness’ of the smaller minorities must, so goes the argument, be abolished by ‘development’ in what is purported to be their own interests to bring them up to the standards of the majority. Generally, small ethnic groups are broken up by this ‘civilizing’ process, as experience worldwide testifies (1989:130).”

4.3 Conclusion

This study shows changes in Moso society at all three levels in which gender power relations operate:

At the level of social structures: as a market economy becomes more established among the Moso, economic, political and social activities are increasingly transferred from the domestic sphere, the domain of women, to the public sphere, the domain of males. Moso females have been losing their access to these activities while the males ascend to positions of dominance. An obvious example is that males have become public officials, thus decision

makers, in the process of modernization. Their decisions will naturally tend to reinforce this newly acquired dominance.

At a symbolic level: since the Moso have been influenced by Han culture, within which males are considered “brave and strong” and females “weak and powerless,” masculinity has been valorized and femininity domesticated. An instance of this perceptual shift is found in the *warste*, a sport similar to Mongolian wrestling. Once played by women and men alike, it is now considered a “powerful” exercise for which the male physique is best suited.

At the level of individual and collective identity: Moso females were in the past respected for their ability to produce and distribute resources, but this ability has, with the encroachment of mainstream (Han, and western) values, fallen in esteem, and females are now willing to be subordinated into positions of caretakers or housekeepers. Although some Moso young girls have complained of their loss of status outside a matrilineal system, they nonetheless look forward to being married and living with their partners as per patriarchal custom.

To the question, as to whether in the process of development multiculturalism or integration should be more enthusiastically embraced, it would seem that under the pressures of tourism the Moso have experienced a paradigm shift from matrilineality to patriarchy, before taking a tardy but hasty step back towards what they are now told is their traditional structure, so that they have evolved into an embodiment of both extremes: preservation and sinification. Though dressed in the recognizable garb of a matrilineal society untouched by the ravages of time and industry, they are yet at their core a confused amalgam of female and male dominance: “ethnic reconstructions for tourists in particular inject new complexities into the relationship of social and economic values (MacCannell, 1984:386).” If cultural preservation engenders only fossilization, and that to such an extreme as eventually to make the Moso an absurd pantomime of their former cultural significance, a comic caricature drawn by the same hand that drafts their tourist brochures while luring their young women into brothels and their men into more public exertions, then I would argue this leakage of mainstream cultural values into Moso society should be better filtered by more considered developmental policies.

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Notes

ⁱ The BBC, and Eileen Rose Walsh in her article, both use Chinese Pinyin “Mosuo” instead of, as is commonly used in English lectures, “Moso.” To avoid confusion, the latter form is employed throughout.

ⁱⁱ This is not to say that money and commodities are totally absent in a natural economy (see chapter two below).

ⁱⁱⁱ RMB or renminbi (Chinese Pinyin) is the currency of the People’s Republic of China.

^{iv} See note i above.

^v From 2000, it has also been called Villager Groups, which gather naturally; that is, in the absence of bureaucratic oversight.

^{vi} From 2000, also referred to as Village Committees, which are bureaucratic entities.

^{vii} There were one 35-year-old female, one 41-year-old male, one 44-year-old male, one 53-year-old male, and one 77-year-old male.

^{viii} Two were from Beijing, two from Sichuan Province, two from Fujian Province of China, two from France, and one from Japan.

^{ix} There were one 16-year-old female, one 20-year-old female, one 21-year-old female, one 45-year-old female, one 46-year-old male, one 65-year-old female, one 71-year-old female, one 69-year-old male, one 72-year-old female, and one 79-year-old male.

^x An international organization that has conducted development projects in rural areas of China.

^{xi} As reported by a head official of Yongning Township (2008), in 2007 the annual per capita income was 1,338 RMB, which included 445 kg of the grain (calculated in terms of grain production at 1.5 RMB/kg in 2007) and 670.5 RMB of paid work and other sources of income. With regard to the 445 kg of the grain, a farmer normally needs about 300 kg for yearly consumption and 150 kg for seeding the subsequent year’s crop, so 445 kg was barely sufficient.

^{xii} Naiqun Weng in his article uses “Naze” instead of “Moso.” In fact, Moso (English pronunciation), Mosuo (Chinese Pinyin) and Naze (what the Moso call themselves in their language) are commonly used interchangeably in Moso research. To avoid confusion, the term “Moso” is employed throughout.