The Impact of Tourism Development on Mosuo Marriage and Family

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Abstract. Tourism development has had a significant impact on the contemporary social transformation of the Mosuo people, especially on their marriage and family. Since the rise of tourism in the Lugu Lake area, the Mosuo society has gradually changed from a traditional agriculture-based livelihood to a tourism-based livelihood. The marital radius of the Mosuo people has also extended with the expansion of the scope of interactions. The previous custom of 'walking marriage' has gradually transitioned to the nuclear family model, and the traditional matriarchal extended family has also been slowly reduced to a smaller family size. The division of labor of the family members has been adjusted accordingly. Through the study of the Mosuo marriage and family changes under the tourism industry, not only can we find the path of change of the local traditional culture, but also can make some thoughts on the impact of the current tourism development in ethnic areas.

Keywords: tourism development; Mosuo people; matriarchal family; family and marriage.

1. Tourism Development in Mosuo Society

Under the guidance of individuals, government, and capital, tourism development in Mosuo society has experienced a transformation from individualization to commercialization and from disorder to order. This change has created more opportunities for residents and has had an important impact on local society and culture.

1.1 Origin Of Development

Before the 1980s, Mosuo people mainly relied on livelihoods of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and handicrafts to survive. In the Yongning region and the Hugu Lake region, where the Mosuo people mainly reside, they planted food crops, such as buckwheat, barnyard millet, and plateau red rice. Such a situation lasted until the 1980s, before Lugu Lake was developed as a natural scenic spot. Because Lugu Lake is the third deepest freshwater lake in China and because of its unique geographical structure, the State Council designated it as a tourist area open to the outside world in 1992[1], and the tourism industry has started to develop in the Lugu Lake area since then. In the initial stage, the Lugu Lake area experienced a deprivation in tourism facilities, with only one family hotel for tourists to use in a village on the shore of Lugu Lake. Later, with the increase of tourists, the local income growth of the corresponding facilities gradually increased.[2] In this process, with the first batch of tourists into Lugu Lake, Lugu Lake area Mosuo's unique matrilineal extended family culture also quickly attracted the attention of the outside world; coupled with the local superior natural scenery, Lugu Lake soon entered the public's field of vision.

1.2 Development process

The development of tourism in the Lugu Lake area has gone through three main stages: the period of private independent development, the government-led development period and the commercial capital-led period. [3]

The early 1990s was the stage of private independent development. Tourism gradually began to emerge in the Lugu Lake area. However, due to the lack of related infrastructure, the scenic spots could not accommodate more tourists, so the then director of the Nyingchi Tourism Bureau, Ruheng Nongbu (Chinese name Cao Xuewen), took the lead in opening a family hotel in the region called "Lugu Folk Residence"[4]. This action was well received, and the considerable income soon prompted the villagers in the neighbourhood to invest in the construction of homestays spontaneously.

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The traditional family hotels they built usually followed the Mosuo traditional "Yidu" architectural style, using a large number of wooden materials as raw materials, mostly in their own fields, to build up the two-story courtyard-style hotels.[5] Through a period of development, Lugu Lake region's tourism service society has gradually had a more significant improvement that can meet the needs of the flow of passengers. However, due to the increase of private capital, the order of tourism development also became more and more chaotic, and each person in the tourism business soon fell into vicious competition. Therefore, the government gradually intervened in the development of local tourism.

The development of tourism in Lugu Lake entered the second stage of government-led development. The substantial economic benefits brought by the initial development of tourism made the residents with economic conditions start to establish their own business hotels, and the local family hotels soon developed from 1 in 1989 to 150 in 2020.[6] However, at the same time, the Lugu Lake tourist area experienced a lack of decent management regulations. Hence, as the tourist facilities become increasingly saturated, the flow of passengers continues to increase. The local tourism order also appears in a new situation; robbing customers, rip-offs, illegal construction, and competition for tourists caused the conflict between villagers. To this end, village head Gezhe Ziruo took the lead in the establishment of a 10-member villagers committee. By the provisions of all boating, horse-drawn, and dancing projects from the collective arrangements of the committee, each family has a unified income; each charges clearly marked prices and unified management.[7] At the same time, the villager's committee also set up fine regulations, moving the tourism development around Lugu Lake from disorder to order; the confrontations of villagers also fought to recover and achieve peaceful progress.

Afterwards, with the continuous development and growing influence of Lugu Lake tourism, external capital flowed to the local area, and the development of the Lugu Lake scenic area entered the third stage of the commercial capital-led period. After entering the 21st century, the scale of tourism in the Lugu Lake area has expanded, from 250,000 tourists received at the Lugu Lake scenic area in 2003 to more than 500,000 tourists received in 2007. Then, in 2017, the number of tourists received was as high as 1.07 million.[8] Under such circumstances, commercial capital soon noticed the economic development potential of the surrounding areas, such as Luoshui Village. Capitalists began to invest heavily in the local tourism market, acquiring or leasing inns in Lushui Village to continue the operation of the hotels and start to establish different tourist facilities, such as museums, souvenir stores, supermarkets, and other basic tourist facilities. This action helps improve the tourism industry in Lugu Lake and achieves the refinement of the functional zoning.

1.3 Development results

The rapid development of tourism in the Lugu Lake area has brought many changes to the lives of the Mosuo people. Economically, the average income of the Mosuo people has steadily increased in the process of transformation from agriculture to tourism. Farming land has been used to build houses and develop family guesthouses to receive travellers. Families in the villages have begun to share the dividends brought by tourism. Tourism has also created more local employment opportunities for the Mosuo people, including lodging, food, clothing, souvenirs, and folklore performances. In terms of language, in order to better communicate with tourists, the Mosuo people have begun to learn Mandarin, but this has led to the problem that many of the younger generations can only speak Mandarin and not the traditional dialect. Overall, tourism has affected the Mosuo people in more than just a few areas, such as the economy, employment, and language. Other areas, such as handicrafts, textiles, and intangible cultural heritage, have also been affected to varying degrees by the development of tourism. Therefore, as a whole, the Mosuo people are both the beneficiaries of the development of local tourism and the actual bearers of the process thereof, and they have to face the results of the self-social changes brought about by the development of tourism, especially in the context of the intertwining of tradition and modernity.

2. The impact of tourism development on the marriage situation of Mosuo people

The development of tourism has led to many transformations in Mosuo society, and the change in the form of marriage is undoubtedly one of the most prominent and influential parts of it. The penetration of tourism in the Mosuo community not only challenges the traditional marriage system but also splits the matriarchal extended family into small nuclear families.

2.1 Traditional Marriage of Mosuo People

At the traditional stage, due to the local society's general environment and the real labour production needs, the Mosuo people adhered to the matriarchal system and customs of the primitive social stage. They retained the existence of the matriarchal extended family. Early Mosuo people lived in the form of clans, which were primarily organized into six "er" (Mosuo language of clans), namely, "Xi, Hu, Ya, E, Bu, Rub", and legend has it that they migrated from the northern area to live in Lugu Lake area. Due to the lack of clean food and suitable living zones

in early society, the mortality rate in the community was extremely high. Fertility was particularly emphasized to maintain the continuity of the clan. The Mosuo ancestors believed that only women could produce offspring and regarded women as objects of fertility worship, worshipping them as gods, so their clans were called matriarchal clans.[9] In order to maintain stable and healthy fertility, the Mosuo ancient society had strict rules for gender interaction, prohibited sexual interaction between blood relatives, and the implementation of "er" between the extramarital system. Men belonging to one "er" need to go to another "er" to find a partner, and different generations in the clan need to find partners in different "er".[10] The family form of Mosuo "Er" continued until the late primitive society. With the development of productive forces, the social demand for a collective labour force of matriarchal clans weakened, and each clan, according to the female members' kinship, split to form several families of a diminished size.

After the split of the Mosuo clan, the continuation of the matriarchal bloodline of the extended family is still considered the most important, so they maintain to live in the form of the matriarchal extended family. To maintain the continuity of the mother's bloodline, the family inherited the traditional "er" intermarriage method, and transformed it into a mode of interaction between different extended families, that is, "walking marriage". As a result of the development of exogamy, the practice of 'walking marriages' has enabled female members to continue to produce offspring without leaving the extended family. In the relationship, the man goes to the woman's house every night but returns to his family before dawn. Both partners live in their mother's extended family during the day, working, labouring, and raising children for the entire extended family.

The Mosuo people have developed norms and regulations in the process of developing types of marriage. They not only follow the basic rules of walking marriage, but also the requirements of faith of the partner and the geographical requirements. On the one hand, partner of walking marriage need to have the same beliefs[11], on the other hand, partner of walking marriage is usually in the same village or within ten kilometres of other villages. First, due to the "twilight and morning" mode of interaction, the commuting distance between partners should not be too far to save the time for long distance travelled at night. Secondly, some Mosuo villages stipulate that men and women can only get married within village. Men are not allowed to find partner across villages. This rule aims to reach balance state that number of men and women of suitable age for marriage within the village is similar. By this mean, people can avoid the phenomenon that there is no suitable marriage partner for women in the village due to an excessive number of men going out for marriage and the situation that men in the village are forced to go to other villages to look for marriage partners due to an excessive number of men from other villages coming to the village for marriage relationships.

On the whole, there are two types of marriage relationships: temporary relationships and fixed female residence visits relationship.[13] In a temporary marriage, men and women can interact with

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more than one marriage partner simultaneously; there is no definite time, and it is mostly a casual interaction without a fixed place. The relationship of temporary marriage often exists between the Mosuo young people; both have no fixed social relations to enjoy the youth for the purpose. The female residence of the visit is the traditional marriage style, in which men and women have a stable relationship requirement. Before establishing the formal relationship, the couple must confirm their relationship by both sides of the family and the surrounding neighbourhood witnessed. Gifts, cigarettes, wine, sugar, tea,and pork fat are given to neighbours, villagers, playing a binding role in the relationship.[14] After formally confirming the relationship and sending gifts, changing the partner is usually considered "unfaithful" and subject to neighbourhood criticism.[14]

2.2 Mosuo Marriage Patterns under the Development of Tourism

2.2.1 Breaking the rule of walking marriage

The development of tourism promotes the interaction of people from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds who come to Lugu Lake as a scenic spot for tourism or employment and family. Multiculturalism has influenced the traditional religion, family culture, and marriage of the Mosuo people, encouraging Mosuo people to break the traditional marriage rules.

First of all, married couples do not have geographical limitations, and the restrictions on marriage between villages are alleviated. Due to the rapid development of tourism in the Lugu Lake area, Lugu Lake quickly became a population-gathering area. Thus, the barriers between villages were weakened, further prompting the Lugu Lake area to break the traditional marriage rules within the village.[15] Not only marriage, as the the media and society gradually recognized Lugu Lake area, the capital entered the tourism site and developed more facilities. Yang Erche Naim, a Mosuo girl born in the Lugu Lake area, came out of Lugu Lake with the opportunity of a statewide singing competition and eventually went global. Yang Ercha Naim, in the singing contest, won first place in the state after getting to Beijing to perform; through her vocal expertise, Yang Ercha Naim went to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music for further study. After graduation, she went to Beijing to develop her skills further. In a fortuitous opportunity, she met the National Geographic reporter's boyfriend in the U.S. and later married him. Yang Ercha Naim became the first Mosuo officially registered for marriage with a foreigner. [16]

Secondly, the regulation of walking marriage partners' faith is diminished, and there is also a reduction in walking marriage ceremonies. The traditional rules of marriage specify that the Mosuo people need to hold a traditional marriage ceremony to confirm the relationship formally. The ceremony requires a lama of the Dhaka or Dongba religion or Tibetan Buddhism to hold a specific ritual. The ceremony is usually held in the middle of the night, and the newlyweds are required to wear unique woven clothes and have the lama recite oral sutras until dawn.[17] However, under the influence of the development of tourism, people from different ethnic groups converge in the Lugu Lake area and form small families with each other, breaking the Mosuo traditional rule of marriage of inhibiting married couples of different faiths. At the same time, the expansion of multicultural families has led to the fact that many of the local young descendants of Lugu Lake no longer believe in the traditional religions of the Lugu Lake area. This phenomenon breaks the rule of traditional Mosuo society, that is, each Mosuo family continues to send a male child to follow the master to learn the oral scriptures from childhood, and nowadays, there are no longer people who intend to learn to become lama from childhood. A Dongba lama from Hot Springs Village near Lugu Lake said that all the lamas in the Lugu Lake area are now very old, and the only two lamas left in Hot Springs Village have forgotten many of the oral scriptures because they do not have handwritten scriptures to hand down from generation to generation.[18] The abandonment of the traditional Dharma religion and Tibetan Buddhism, the gradual secularization of Mosuo society and the gradual reduction of lamas have led to the discontinuation of the traditional Mosuo marriage ceremony and the simplification of the complex traditional marriage ceremony, replacing it with modern weddings and Western marriages brought about by the development of the tourism industry.

2.2.2 Fragmentation of the extended matrilineal family

With the promotion of tourism, the extended matriarchal family has undergone further division due to the equal property distribution system and the shift in marriage policy. In the traditional Mosuo families, the system of equal distribution is practised. The system ensured that the income of individuals in the extended families was uniformly submitted to the family as common property. Then, the female housekeeper in the family would take control of it. However, tourism progress has stimulated many local Mosuo people to develop family guesthouses, hotels, or tourist facilities, and their income is much higher than that of other extended family members engaged in traditional occupations. As a result, the high-income members of the family, under the system of equal distribution of property, allocate a large amount of their income to other members of the family, making the system of equal sharing, which is equal in itself, unfair to the high-income group. The fact that the equal sharing system is no longer reasonable has encouraged many Mosuo business people who run the tourism industry to stop staying in the extended family and choose to form their own small families to maximize their income.

In addition to the issue of property distribution, the government-enforced marriage system also contributed to the polarization of matriarchal extended families. During the Cultural Revolution, the government began to control the Mosuo marriage system because it believed that the marriage relationship was unfaithful and that the family was incomplete. The government, therefore, enacted a series of laws against Mosuo walking marriage, including the prohibition of visits, the mandatory registration of marriage between a woman with children and the children's biological father, the lack of food rations for any children born out of wedlock, and the need for children to be raised by their fathers until they were eighteen years old.[19] The government's control of Mosuo marriage during the Cultural Revolution did not affect the overall development of marriage, and most Mosuo resumed the traditional marriage system after the end of the Cultural Revolution and maintained a stable marriage system for a long time. Until the recent rapid development of tourism in the Lugu Lake area, the local government once again imposed controls on the Mosuo people. The government requires residents to register a residence permit, so children born out of wedlock must be recorded in the permit of one side of the parents' families. This promotes the marriage of young Mosuo people and the issuance of marriage certificates. With the combined push from foreign cultures and the government, many Mosuo young people chose to form small families and register their children's hukou under the small families.[20]

3. the impact of tourism development on the Mosuo family situation

The development of tourism creates more employment opportunities for the Lugu Lake area, and many Mosuo people thus choose to go out to engage in tourism-related work. However, the lack of labour in the extended family has led to the dislocation of the division of labour in the family, which divides labour of the extended family change specifically embodied in the changes in the division of labour among the elders.

3.1 Traditional Family Division of Labor among Mosuo People

In the traditional Mosuo matrilineal extended family, men, women, elders and children have different family divisions of labour. Men are mainly responsible for physical labour in the traditional Mosuo matrilineal family. Most male members would go out during the day to build houses, carry heavy loads and harvest crops. The large amount of work makes the men's income the most significant contribution to the extended family and ensures the primary economic resources of the extended family. In addition, the traditional Mosuo society stipulates that each extended family must have a male lama who learns Dharma, Dongba or Tibetan Buddhism from childhood and becomes a lama when he completes his studies and is responsible for organizing traditional ceremonies in the village, such as mountain-turning festivals, like funerals and weddings. [21]

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In the traditional Mosuo matrilineal family, women are responsible for nurturing life and are considered the root of all life and the cornerstone of family continuity. In addition, women are mainly responsible for household chores, such as preparing daily meals, cleaning the house, feeding the livestock, sowing seeds, and irrigating the fields. A girl in the extended family is also chosen to manage the family finances and is the "housekeeper" of the family.[22] Successive housekeepers would select the most gifted girl from the family and train her from an early age in bookkeeping and the distribution of daily finances.[23] Furthermore, the women spend their free time weaving clothes and making traditional Sulima wine. Weaving begins with the pulling of thread, which is made from wool, as the Mosuo rarely grow cotton. Once the threads are woven, the Mosuo women will use homemade looms to weave the cloth, then cut and sewn to make garments worn during traditional ceremonies or sold.[24]

Moreover, the Mosuo people also like to drink wine. This is because drinking wine can keep them warm, and the Mosuo people also use wine as medicine to cure diseases, sweat to keep warm and sleep quickly. Therefore, Mosuo women will go out in their spare time to take the materials needed to make Surima wine at home.

Children also have a family division of labour in Mosuo families. The children in a large Mosuo family begin to learn daily labour with the family's elders at an early age. Boys learn to herd animals at an early age, and if there are two or more boys in the extended family, one must learn Dharma, Dongba, or Tibetan Buddhism. Girls learn from their mothers to run the household and become housekeepers, weave clothes, and make wine. When a child reaches the age of thirteen, a lama is invited to perform a bar mitzvah, after which the child is considered an adult in the extended family and assumes to have the responsibilities of the male and female members of the family.

The elders have the highest authority in the Mosuo family and are in charge of the family. The elders play the role of educators and decision-makers in the extended family. Since the elders are the oldest and have experienced the most things, they usually educate the younger generations. The elders decide essential events in the extended family, such as marriages, traditional ceremonies, or large expenditures. The Mosuo elders are highly respected and valued mainly due to the traditional Mosuo ideology and daily rituals, which can be reflected in meals and traditional ceremonies. The Mosuo people eat at home in the mother's house; the centre of the position is a fireplace with seats for the zigzag around the fireplace. First of all, the elders will sit at the top of the position and then, with the seniority, the downward sitting. Secondly, before eating, the Mosuo people will first offer sacrifices to their ancestors, and after offering sacrifices to their ancestors, the elderly will eat first, and other juniors can start eating. When traditional ceremonies are held in the village, after the ancestor sacrifice, the oldest elders in the village will be given some nutritious food, usually bone soup, and so on. [25]

3.2 Division of Labor among Mosuo Families after Tourism Development

After the development of tourism in the Lugu Lake area, the division of labour among the Mosuo family in the matriarchal extended family began to change. An increasing number of men in the family chose to work in other villages or cities. Most go to Luoshui Village, where tourism is prevalent, and ample job opportunities exist in hotels, restaurants, tourist agencies, and other places. In addition, many men participate in the tourism industry by building homestays and opening speciality stores. It is often easy for them to leave their extended family and start their own small families.[26]

Like their male counterparts, young Mosuo women tend to go out to work and start their own small families in the areas where they work. Apart from the women who go out to work, other women remain in the extended family to help with household chores and property management, no different from the division of labour among women in traditional Mosuo families. However, under the impact of foreign cultures brought about by tourism, hand weaving and brewing Surima wine have now become an Intangible Cultural Heritage of China, and the development of modern technology has replaced the traditional crafts of Mosuo women.

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The division of labour among children in the extended family has been diminished, and the family work that children perform has been reduced due to the spread of education. In 2004, the Dazu Primary School in Lugu Lake was reopened with the financial support of Taiwanese tourists and became the first school in the Lugu Lake area to have a complete primary education.[27] The improvement of educational facilities and the promotion of nine-year compulsory education have enabled children in the Lugu Lake area to receive a unified education, promoting the modernization of the traditional Mosuo society.

Elders have taken on more family responsibilities nowadays. As many young people have left the extended family, the labour force in the extended family has decreased, and many of the divisions of labour that the young people would have taken on have been taken over by the elders. In addition to being educators and decision-makers, elders today also need to help with the family house, farmland, and livestock. During a field trip to a hot spring village on the edge of Lugu Lake, it was found that elders predominate in the village, young people are scarce, and much of the manual labour is now done by elders.

4. Summary

Through interviews and research with some Mosuo people in the Lugu Lake area, it is found that the development of tourism in the Lugu Lake area has impacted the traditional marriage system and family patterns of the Mosuo people. As a traditional highland area, the Mosuo society, with the help of tourism development, has changed from a traditional industry-based production mode to a new tourism-based community, gradually integrating into the global modernization and development process. Especially in the Lugu Lake area, where tourism development is prevalent, the residents have changed from traditional livelihoods, such as agriculture, animal husbandry and handicrafts, to livelihoods relying on commerce, lodging, food and beverage, clothing, local specialities, folklore performances and other tourism-based industries.

Tourism promotes the transformation of Mosuo society, and the development of tourism also provides more employment opportunities for the Mosuo people, which encourages the residents of the Lugu Lake area and the neighbouring areas to invest in the tourism development process and become participants and service providers. At the same time, people from different villages and regions have increased their communication with each other under the influence of tourism, which has contributed to the transformation of the Mosuo society from a single ethnic group to a more diversified community and has had a significant impact on the marriage and family of the Mosuo people in particular.

The Mosuo have always maintained a matrilineal way of life, with the marriage culture as the vital link, thus maintaining the continuity of the extended family. The Mosuo marriage pattern is one in which the man goes to the woman's house every night and leaves before dawn, and the relationship is one in which the man meets the woman in the evening and leaves in the morning. With the development of tourism, the marriage pattern has become more flexible, while the Mosuo society has gradually accepted monogamous marriage. The transformation of the marriage system is mainly reflected in two points: the marriage system and the division of the extended family. In terms of the marriage system, the requirements of the traditional marriage rules for the same beliefs, the same village, and traditional religious ceremonies have been weakened. Young people of different beliefs and from different villages can get married in the tourist area, and modern weddings have become popular. Regarding family division, the matrilineal extended family has gradually divided into several independent small families due to the equal distribution of family property and the government's mandatory marriage and hukou registration. In addition, the impact of tourism on the Mosuo family society has further led to changes in the division of labour within the family. In the traditional Mosuo society, men were responsible for physical labour; women were in charge of the household. They took care of the household chores, children would grow up working with their uncles and amahs, and the elderly mainly played the role of educators and decision-makers. Nowadays, tourism development

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has prompted many young men and women to go out to work, which has led to the fact that the elderly are mainly responsible for the labour of extended families.

In reality, however, the impact of tourism development on Mosuo society goes far beyond this. With the expansion of the tourism cluster and the further commercialization of the surrounding facilities, the number of areas that retain the traditional Mosuo family social system will decrease, driving the matrilineal extended family to adapt to modern society through its changes. Under the development of a pluralistic society, rational tourism planning and the preservation of traditional culture are crucial in the Lugu Lake area, and more research is needed to investigate the changes in the local family society to achieve optimal social development.

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