

Tourism Development: Protection versus Exploitation— A Case Study of the Change in the Lives of the Mosuo People

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Abstract

A case study is presented of tourism development and cultural change in a minority ethnic community, the Mosuo people of Luoshui Village, a 73-household village in Yunnan Province, People's Republic of China. The study first describes the natural attractions of the area, the Mosuo matrilineal family tradition based on "axia" relationships, and development of tourism from its beginnings in the late 1980s. Annual visitor arrivals increased from about 6,000 in 1989 to 350,000 in 2003. The collective and individual tourism operations are described. The village economy has changed from an agricultural to a tourism base, with average farmer per capita incomes tripling during 1992–1996 alone. A survey of residents and tourists showed that tourism is well accepted by villagers and while greatly impacting on local life and values, has not affected religious beliefs to a similar extent; tourists come primarily to observe local customs as well as the natural beauty of the location. The study also points out negative impacts of tourism on the culture—decline of the matrilineal family, changes in dress and staple foods, and alterations to houses—and the environment, such as proliferation of garbage and wastewater, increasing use of wood for house building, and pollution of the adjacent lake. In conclusion, the paper summarizes the lessons learned from tourism development in the village: it has aroused ethnic pride and promoted economic growth, but has inevitably caused acculturation, indicating a need to protect unique elements of the culture while acknowledging its evolving nature. For the long term, there is a need to control the number of visitors to limit environmental impacts, and to restrict large investments from outside in order to keep economic benefits localized.

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Introduction

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) includes Yunnan Province in the People's Republic of China (PRC). In Yunnan, there is rich scenery and complex flora, due to the diversity of landforms and climate. Nature, history, and different social conditions have supported the development of diverse cultures. The Mekong River, locally called the Lancang River, runs through the province. Of the 55 minority ethnic groups in the PRC, 28 occur in Yunnan. Poor accessibility until the late 1970s meant that many of the communities in the mountainous areas were still living in a relatively isolated environment with poor economic conditions. This contributed to the continuation of unique cultures up to the present time. Due to the region's rich natural and cultural resources, tourism developed very rapidly after the implementation of the PRC's economic reform in 1978 and especially in light of the recent great expansion into the western part of the country.

In Yunnan Province, many villages with ethnic communities have been promoted as tourism attractions. Natural beauty and abundant resources, along with cultural heritage and traditional customs, have all been developed and exploited in order to achieve maximum tourism income and help alleviate poverty.

After several decades of tourism development, to what extent are the ethnic communities dependent on tourism? Do they obtain direct benefits from the promotion of tourism? Has tourism generated lucrative returns to the local people, or is it an undesirable force of social change? Are the local people included or excluded in the development of the tourism industry?

This paper studies the change of life caused by tourism development in Luoshi Village, inhabited by the Mosuo people, a minority ethnic group in the Lugu Lake region of Yunnan Province. This village was chosen because great changes have taken place since tourism development began there in the late 1980s. As the village has become more and more tourism oriented, its economy has shifted from agriculture to tourism; its living environment from closed to open; and its way of life from traditional matrilineal marriages and families to assimilation into modern life. Thus, it is an example of economic, social, and cultural change arising from tourism development.

The data for this study came from a random survey in the village—including questionnaires, interviews, and field observations—as well as publications and Internet searches. The survey took place during August 2004. Ninety-six valid resident questionnaires (96% of the total) and 181 valid tourist questionnaires (90.5% of the total) were collected. Thirty-five people were interviewed, including officials of the Administrative Council of the Lugu Lake Tourist Region, residents, tourists, vendors, and laborers from nearby villages or outside the region.

The Mosuo People in the Lugu Lake Region

Lugu Lake

Lugu Lake, covering an area of 50.3 square kilometers (km²), is a freshwater plateau lake located in northwestern Yunnan Province. In the lake region there are 11 ethnic groups, and the ecosystem has been well conserved, with beautiful natural scenery, flourishing forests, and clean water in the lake. It has rich natural and cultural tourist resources (Guo 1994).

Agriculture is the major livelihood activity in the Lugu Lake region and, until the 1980s, still depended on natural energy. The mountainous and remote location meant that people in the lake region were relatively isolated and had a very low standard of living. The cultural features of the ethnic groups were well preserved. Ninglang County, which includes the Lugu Lake region, was acknowledged by the State Council as one of the most poverty-stricken counties in the PRC. In Luoshui Village for example, the annual average income per villager in 1988 was CNY (yuan) 196 and the annual grain consumption, mainly maize and potato, was 190 kilograms (kg) per person. Ninety percent of the villagers did not have enough food for 3–4 months of the year (Li 2004). Villagers had to open forests to create new farmland on the mountain slopes and this led to landslides and ecological degradation.

After 1985, tourists began to visit the region, attracted by the natural beauty and unique cultures. In 1988, the State Council (State Council 1988) announced that the Lijiang Yulong Snow Mountain region would be a state-level tourist scenic area. The Lugu Lake region is a major part of this area. In 1992, Lugu Lake was officially opened to tourists as a tourist destination (Li 2000). With the constant improvement of roads and infrastructure, combined with the rapid growth of tourism, the tourism industry in the lake region has developed quickly. Tourism has provided a new way for people around the lake to tap local resources to make a living and has directly affected their lives.

The Mosuo People

The Mosuo people, with a total population of about 40,000, live in northeastern Lijiang Prefecture and along the banks of the Jinsha River. Many live in the Lugu Lake region (Chen 2004). They settled in this area more than 1,500 years ago and assimilated Tibetan, Mongolian, Yi, Naxi, and Pumi cultures, from which they formed their own unique culture (Guo 1994).

The Mosuo people believe in Tibetan Buddhism and the Daba religion. Their values, culture, arts and crafts, customs, rites, and marriages are all deeply influenced by the two religions. While practicing Tibetan Buddhist they speak Tibetan; in Daba religious practices they speak the Dongba language. Chinese is their daily language.

Because of the isolated location and underdeveloped economy, the Mosuo people still maintain “axia” relationships and matrilineal families. This traditional matrilineal culture is known as the “oriental feminine kingdom,” “a living fossil of human social development” (Mosuo Culture Museum 2004).

An axia relationship is a primitive form of matrilineal marriage. Persons who have a sexual relationship, called axia to each other, do not establish their own family but continue to live with their matrilineal families. The men visit their partners at night and leave early in the morning. If either of the couple wishes to end the relationship, their couple status ends, and they can look for new axias. The establishment of an axia relationship is not affected by law, ancestry, or family members, but is based on congeniality. According to their custom, after a “grow-up” ceremony at the age of 14–16, Mosuo boys and girls can start axia relationships. A person can have several axias in his or her life, but cannot have two at the same time and relationships between cousins are strictly forbidden. The average number of axias a Mosuo has in his or her life is 5–7. However, some Mosuos may have only one.

Because the spouses do not live together, children are raised in their mother’s home and carry their mother’s family name. Family relatives are all on the line of the mother’s side, and the female is the center of the family. She is in charge of the family economy and has the final word in decision making. A Mosuo family is usually a large household with dozens of people and 3–4 generations under one roof. When the family grows large, perhaps more than 30 people, the grandmother will build a new house for one of her daughters to form another matrilineal family. A Mosuo family is run and managed by the mother, and when she is too old to manage, the eldest daughter takes her place. Males do not have the responsibility of raising their biological children, but raise their sisters’ children. This mother-esteem culture has nurtured a tradition of harmony, solidarity between family members, and honesty, generosity, and helpfulness between villagers.

The traditional house of the Mosuo people, a Muleng house, is made of wood in a square around a courtyard. On the four sides are, respectively, the grandmother’s hall, the room for religious purposes, the daughters’ rooms, and the gate tower. The grandmother’s hall faces south with a fireplace in the middle of the room. It is the place where the eldest woman in the family lives and where the family spends free time, eats, meets guests, and discusses family matters. Once the hall is built, its location cannot be changed arbitrarily. Therefore, many very old grandmother’s halls remain, some with a history of hundreds of years. The other three sides of the house are two-storied. On the west side, the room for religion is upstairs and male members live downstairs. The rooms for the daughters are opposite the grandmother’s hall with one person in each room for the purpose of axia relationships. The gate tower on the east side is for keeping livestock and sundries (Mosuo Culture Museum 2004).

There is an economic foundation for the Mosuo matrilineal family. First, agriculture has long been their main livelihood, along with some livestock breeding and fishing.

Handicrafts were only for daily necessities and included weaving and extracting oil from plants. Second, there were very few exchanges between people in and outside the region. After the implementation of the country's economic reform in 1978, the economic and social development and the improvement of roads facilitated the opening of the Lugu Lake region. Media reports and publications of academic research on this unique culture aroused public curiosity and interest in axia relationships and matrilineal families. Tourists began to visit the region and have begun to affect the traditions of the Mosuo people. The matrilineal culture is changing.

Tourism Development in Luoshui Village

Luoshui Village is located at the foot of the Gemu Mountain, on the bank of Lugu Lake. There are 73 households in the village, making up a population of 460, 80% of whom are Mosuo. The rest are Pumi and Han ethnic groups. The road from the county capital to the Lugu Lake tourist scenic area runs through the village, splitting it into two parts: the upper village and the lower village. The lower village is beside the lake and has good facilities for tourism, which is centered there. The upper village is on a slope and became involved in tourism later than the lower village.

Stages of Tourism Development

Starting in the 1980s, the Lugu Lake region has become more and more accessible and the village economy has shifted from an agricultural to a tourism base. Luoshui Village is a typical example of this shift due to its natural beauty, Mosuo culture, and good location. It is now a famous ethnic tourist destination within the PRC and abroad. Tourism development in the region can be divided into three stages (Chen 2004):

- 1) Beginning Stage (1988–1992). There were very few visitors, mostly official delegations, scholars, and researchers, totaling 6,120 in 1989. Nearly all stayed in Luoshui Village. Because there were no tourist accommodation facilities, they stayed in the homes of the Mosuo people (Administrative Council of the Lugu Lake Tourist Region 2004). In 1992, Lugu Lake region became an official tourism destination.
- 2) Development Stage (1993–1999). In 1994, the government of Yunnan Province inaugurated a policy to give priority to tourism development and decided to develop the Lugu Lake region into a provincial-level tourist destination (Li 2000). By 1997, the annual number of visitors there had increased to 100,000 (Administrative Council of the Lugu Lake Tourist Region 2004). At this stage, a style of eco- and ethnic tourism was taking shape in

Luoshui Village. The typical accommodation for tourists was two-storied Mosuo-style ethnic inns.

- 3) Mature Stage (2000–present). In 1999, the Lugu Lake tourist region was designated as one of the 43 major tourist development projects of the country. The Lijiang-Ninglang highway opened to traffic in the same year. The road runs through Luoshui Village and has greatly boosted tourism there. In 2003, the total tourist arrivals to the Lugu Lake tourist region reached 400,000 (Administrative Council of the Lugu Lake Tourist Region 2004). In order to meet the needs of the large numbers of tourists, villagers began to renovate their houses to accommodate tourists, and other facilities were improved accordingly. Now the village can accommodate 3,000 people per night. Most of the ethnic inns continue to represent the local architectural style, but include star-rated hotel rooms with individual bathrooms, television, and other facilities. The largest inn has about 100 beds.

Tourism Operations

The first family inn, Mosuo Garden, opened in 1988, marking the beginning of the tourism industry in the village. During the first few years of development, competition led to conflict and quarrels among the villagers, driven by economic benefits. After many discussions and negotiations led by the Village Committee, the villagers agreed to conduct business collectively. All 73 households were included in the business, with each offering a boat, a house, and a person to give performances in the dance show. The income for the day, except a proportion for collective use, was evenly divided among the households. New households were not included in the operation.

There are now two kinds of operations in Luoshui Village: collective and individual. The collective operation consists of rowing boats, leading horses for tourists to ride, and the dance show; individual operations include ethnic inns, restaurants, shops, travel agencies, and tour guides.

Tourism has created many job opportunities, and Luoshui Village is now short of laborers, especially in the peak season. There are more than 300 people from other villages in the region and from other provinces, working in the village all year. The number is even bigger in the peak season. These non-Luoshui residents run shops and restaurants, or work as vendors, craftsmen, waiters, or hotel attendants in Luoshui Village.

Increase of Income

Since the late 1990s, the tourism industry has replaced agriculture and livestock as the main economic engine, and tourism has become the major occupation and source of income in Luoshui Village. This can be seen from the change in economic structure

in the village during 1988–1996 (Table 1). In 1988, agriculture and livestock were the major income sources. By 1994, tourism made up about half the total income of the villagers, and by 1996 reached 83% of the total.

Luoshui Village has gained great economic returns from developing tourism. It only took the village 3 years to eliminate poverty, and it is now one of the 10 most affluent villages in Lijiang Prefecture (Table 2). The annual average per capita income of the Luoshui villagers increased from CNY436 (US\$79) in 1992 to CNY1,240 (US\$ 149) in 1996, an increase of nearly 300%, much higher than other places surveyed (Table 2)².

Because there are no recent statistics from Luoshui Village, tourist arrivals and income in the village were estimated for this study based on relevant tourist data and statistics, information collected in the field, and information from village operations. In 2003, the Lugu Lake tourist region received 400,000 tourists, 90% of whom visited Luoshui Village. Thus Luoshui Village had about 350,000 tourists in 2003. Observations

Table 1: Source of Household Income of Luoshui Villagers (CNY)

Year	1988		1994		1996	
	Income	%	Income	%	Income	%
Agriculture	184	18.0	220	11.3	260	5.1
Livestock	360	35.3	390	19.5	320	6.3
Working Outside the Village	236	23.1	210	10.8	160	3.2
Forestry and Subsidiary Products	240	23.5	180	9.2	110	2.2
Tourism			960	49.2	4230	83.3
Total	1,020	99.9	1,950	100	5,080	100

Source: Kang (1999).

Table 2: Comparison of the Annual Average Per Capita Income of Farmers between Luoshui Village and Other Areas (CNY)

Location	1992	1994	1996
Yunnan Province	618	803	1,011
Lijiang Prefecture	546	628	864
Ninglang County	383	405	566
Yongning Township	368	394	489
Luoshui Administrative Village*	396	426	547
Luoshui Village	436	826	1,240

Source: Kang (1999).

*The Luoshui Administrative Village is the political administrative unit. It consists of several “natural” villages, including Luoshui Village.

² Exchange rates used (yuan per US dollar): 1988=3.72; 1992=5.51; 1994=8.61; 1996=8.31; 2006=7.97.

indicate that during the peak season, an average of about 3,000 tourists stay in the village each night.

The income per household from the three collective operations run by the village—rowing boats, leading horses, and the dance show—is estimated to be CNY50,000 (US\$6,273) per year. There are two persons rowing each boat, and a boat can take 13 tourists, each paying CNY25 (US\$ 3.15) (to one island) or CNY35 (US\$ 4.39) (to two islands). One trip can earn at least CNY325 (US\$40.77) , and a boat makes 3–4 trips a day. A day’s total income is more than CNY1,000 (US\$ 125.45) per boat. Horse rides cost CNY20–40 (US\$ 2.50–5.00) per person depending on the length of the ride. Tickets to the dance show cost CNY10 (US1.25).

The owner of the Mosuo Garden invested CNY2 million (US\$250,910) (including a loan of 300,000 yuan from a bank two years previous) to renovate and expand his inn. It has 100 beds, and the net income from the inn amounts to CNY100,000 (US\$12,545) annually. In the village there are now two households, the Mosuo Garden and Mosuo’s Home, that have assets of more than one million yuan, and in the lower village almost every household inn has assets of more than CNY100,000 (US\$12,545).

Comparison of Luoshui Village and Laowuji Village

Laowuji Village is a Li village of 30 households on the other side of the Lugu Lake, 7 km from Luoshui Village. The inconvenient transportation system has prevented it from developing tourism. In 1996, the annual average income per villager was CNY420 (US\$50.55), compared to CNY1,240 (US\$149.00) in Luoshui Village. Ninety percent of the Laowuji villagers did not have enough food for 1–2 months per year (Kang 1999). Until now, in order to meet the needs of the increased population and to improve living standards, villagers have to cut trees to open up more farmland, increase the number of livestock, and find jobs outside the village.

Survey of Residents and Tourists

Tables 3 and 4 show the results of a survey on the residents’ awareness and attitude concerning the development of tourism and on tourists’ perception of tourism in Luoshui Village. Following are the conclusions.

- Tourism is well accepted by the villagers, and they are basically satisfied with the path of development at this stage. This was supported by the interviews: “Farming is much harder, more toilsome, and generates less return than tourism. You can now make money by cooking food for the tourists, leading horses around the village, weaving cloth, singing and dancing. Life is much easier.” From such interviews, it is clear that villagers have noticed

Table 3: Resident Questionnaire and Responses (N = 96)

Item	% Agreement
1. You are satisfied with local tourism development.	79
2. Because of tourism, your living standard has been improved.	87
3. There are too many non-Luoshui residents working here.	79
4. The shows for tourists are traditional local songs and dances.	89
5. Crafts and souvenirs here are handicrafts with local ethnic features.	80
6. The food provided for tourists is the same as that eaten by the local people.	23
7. The tourist accommodation is the same as that used by the local people.	4
8. Local people wear costumes only when they receive tourists.	13
9. You agree to allow tourists to observe ethnic customs and events, including religious ceremonies.	44
10. Tourism development has had impacts on traditional ethnic culture.	51
11. You have an axia relationship.	67
12. You are a religious person.	95

Table 4: Tourist Questionnaire and Responses (N = 181)

Item	% Agreement
First time visitor	79
Length of stay: 1–2 days	78
Main purpose of visiting Luoshui Village:	
relaxing	27
novelty	28
local customs	45
Attractiveness of Luoshui Village:	
natural beauty	47
ethnic culture	53
Satisfied with accommodation and service	68
Satisfied with food and service	58
Souvenirs with local features	45
Local people wear ethnic costume every day	32
You think this trip is worthwhile.	83
You come from an urban area.	84

the value of culture and natural beauty that can be utilized to develop tourism and make a better life, but they have very little knowledge of the negative impacts of mass tourism.

- Tourism has brought about great impacts on local life and values, but still not much on religious beliefs. According to this survey, 95% of the respondents still had religious beliefs; of these, 46% were Tibetan Buddhist,

16% believed in Bada, and 33% believed in both. Villagers do not invite tourists to observe their religious ceremonies, unless they are specially requested to do so. Ceremonies shown to tourists do not have religious meaning any more, and offerings made will not be used for sacrifices.

- Luoshui villagers believe there are too many outsiders working in the village. The total population of the village is 460, but there are 300–400 “gold seekers” all year round. They help create social unease, including profit leakage, competition, fake customs, crime, and prostitution.
- Most respondents said that they still wear costumes in their daily life. However, observations showed that few women who do not offer direct service to the tourists wore costumes, and most men were in western-style business suits. When asked the reason, they answered “not convenient.” Only grandmothers now wear costumes from morning till night. Tourists’ response to this is supportive. These results suggest that ethnic costume is an external symbol of their ethnic pride and confidence, so they would not admit the fact that few local people wear costumes.
- According to tourist respondents, the attractiveness of Luoshui Village is a combination of natural beauty and ethnic culture, but the purpose of their visit is mainly to observe local customs. The villagers have also realized that the real appeal of Luoshui Village is their matrilineal culture. Ethnic pride and tourism may be the reason for a relatively high percentage of axia relationships (67% of villager respondents), while 70 % of Luoshui Mosuo people live in matrilineal families. In other Mosuo villages, where tourism is not the main industry, the percentage of monogamous families is usually higher than that of matrilineal families, as a response to the need for laborers to move to other areas for work in the slack farming season, or because of assimilation into the national culture.
- Tourists are basically satisfied with the facilities and services in Luoshui Village. However, they have already noticed the low degree of authenticity of the Mosuo culture and lifestyle changes seen in the local people.

Social and Cultural Changes Caused by Tourism Development

Sexual Relationships

The present level of axia relationships (67%) and matrilineal families (70%) of the Luoshui Mosuo remains relatively high. However, the meaning of these terms is changing. In axia relationships, the man may live with the woman's family or vice versa; or the couple may move out of their matrilineal homes and live together. The Mosuo people who work out of their hometown have almost all established monogamous families. People above the age of 40 still observe the custom of axia relationships, while those in their twenties to thirties, influenced by modern ideas, have not chosen axia relationships.

Function of the Matrilineal Family

First, a matrilineal family, made up of kin from the mother's side, already has the structure for a business entity appropriate for managing tourism operations. The three collective tourism operations are handled on a household basis. Almost every family has renovated their house into an ethnic inn to accommodate tourists. Some have rearranged the layout of their traditional Muleng houses to add more guest rooms, and some have even built taller buildings of 3 or 4 stories. The grandmother's hall, the room for religious purposes, and the daughter's rooms are not in their original positions, and the villagers no longer keep livestock in the building. The grandmother's hall still functions as the living room, but the fireplace is no longer used to cook food, and there is a kitchen in each household. The new function of the grandmother's hall is to show Mosuo culture to the tourists.

Second, the function of a matrilineal family to settle disputes and conflicts has been replaced by the Village Committee. Traditionally, the Mosuo people would turn to their matrilineal kin when experiencing conflicts with neighbors. This has changed. According to the present investigation, about half (47%) the villagers would discuss difficulties and important matters with family members; but when they have disputes with neighbors, the same proportion (47%) would turn to the head of the village for help; and when there are big conflicts, three quarters (75%) would seek help from the Village Committee. There are more men than women members on the committee at this time. From the Regulations of Luoshui Village adopted by the villagers, an initiative of establishing and referring to institutions is evident.

Third, the decision-making role is shifting. Women used to be the decision makers of the family, but now major decisions regarding tourism operations are made by male members of the family. Owners of several big inns in the village said that important

decisions, such as setting up family inns, starting a family business, contracting loans and rebuilding houses, were made and executed by male family members. In family matters, men now take care of affairs outside the house while women look after household chores.

Livelihood Change

The change from an agriculture to a tourism economy in Luoshui Village will continue to alter the lifestyle and customs of the villagers. In an agricultural and matrilineal society, life and production were organized on a clan basis. For example, if a family wanted to build a new house, other families of the same clan would help them, and the family only needed to provide meals. With the development of tourism, the villagers have acquired market concepts, and relations between people and villagers are commercialized. In the village, one can see restaurants, tea houses, shops, and billboards everywhere. This study found that in a matrilineal family, family income is still managed by the mother or eldest sister, and there is still equality among family members, but labor is now paid for between relatives and neighbors.

The daily routine of the villagers has changed markedly and become much like that of urban dwellers in order to cater to the needs of the tourists (Table 5).

Table 5: Comparison of Daily Routine of Luoshui Villagers Before and After Tourism Development (Time of Day)

Activity	Before Tourism Development	After Tourism Development
Getting up	0800	0700
Breakfast	0900–1000	0730
Begin work	1000–1100	0800
Lunch	1500–1600	1300
Recommence work	1600–1700	1300–1400
Supper	2100–2200	1900
Sleep	2200	2300–2400

Traditional Mosuo Culture

Traditional Mosuo culture itself has been undergoing changes under the impact of modernization.

From an ideological point of view, the symbol of wealth has changed from horses to houses: the more houses one family has, the larger their family inn, and the more tourists it can accommodate. The villagers have acquired market concepts and learned how to attract business, make loans, and raise funds. Young Mosuos look forward to leaving the region to work or study, and learn more about the world.

From a material point of view, ethnic costumes have become tourist resources; staple foods have changed from maize and potato to rice and wheat; meals have moved from the fireplace to the table; and traditional Muleng houses are disappearing as modern and high brick and tile buildings take their place (there are modern buildings in the village, such as a new post office, an elementary school, and various shops). Mobile telephones, portable music players, and motorbikes are popular among young local people.

From a social point of view, the ability of the Mosuo people at singing and dancing, which was used in the past at bonfire parties to make friends and look for axias, has become another way to make money and attract tourists, and lost its village entertainment function. With the development of modern communications, popular songs and foreign films have become the young people's entertainment. Previously, the Mosuos could not speak Mandarin, but now they speak Mandarin as well as other foreign languages.

Conclusion: Protection versus Exploitation

Based on the analysis of tourism development among the Mosuo people in Luoshui Village, the following conclusions can be made.

Tourism has aroused ethnic pride. Luoshui villagers have recognized the value of their culture in developing tourism, and their ethnic pride and confidence have been enhanced. This has increased their awareness to protect and retain cultural elements and resist some external influences. A good example of their initiative in this regard is a Mosuo cultural museum established by the villagers with their own funds.

Tourism has greatly promoted economic growth. In an isolated area like Luoshui Village, it was difficult to eliminate poverty by farming and breeding livestock. However, the village's beautiful scenery and a unique culture proved to be valuable resources for tourism. Developing tourism has shown to be an effective way to improve the living standards of the Mosuo people.

The exploitation of resources for development can take many directions and all such activities impact on the environment. Tourism development is different from agriculture in terms of utilizing resources and environmental impact. If the Mosuo people had not developed tourism, they would have sought other ways toward a better life. The question is how to keep a balance among economic, social, and environmental benefits and restrict overexploitation.

Openness will inevitably bring about acculturation. As an area becomes more exposed to outside influence, the process of change accelerates. Tourism development, in particular, provides chances for a local culture to confront other cultures, which are usually stronger and more developed. Acculturation becomes inevitable. However,

cultures are dynamic and forever evolving; tourism only serves as a catalyst of change. It is simplistic to think that development means economic growth alone; development is the evolution of a culture.

How can ethnic cultures be protected? The protection of a culture should not mean that it is to be kept static; respect should be given to the choice of its people. An ideal mode of protection is to enhance people's ethnic pride and confidence. By doing so, they will consciously protect the uniqueness of their culture. Tourism development of the Mosuo people has proven that such confidence is effective. Those cultural elements that no longer fit modern life can be preserved in museums and theater. One of the purposes of tourism is to look for and participate in differences. Novelty, uniqueness, and difference provide attractiveness and competitiveness to a destination (Peng 2001). It is very important to educate the local people to maintain their uniqueness for sustainable tourism development.

How to maintain sustainable tourism development. The foremost issue of tourism development in Luoshui Village and in most other PRC tourist destinations is the control of the number of visitors. Many PRC tourist destinations, especially those in the western part of the country, have been developed for the purpose of improving the economy and reducing poverty. Driven by economic benefits, uncontrolled tourism development is bound to result in overexploitation of natural and cultural resources, pursuit of urbanization, and neglect of social and environmental benefits. With only 73 households, Luoshui Village received about 350,000 visitors in 2003. Tourism has already caused impacts on the environment, including large amounts of garbage and wastewater, increasing use of wood for house-building, and pollution of the lake, exceeding the carrying capacity of the ecosystems.

The key to sustainable tourism development is to educate communities so that they understand the negative impacts of mass tourism and the limit to ecosystem carrying capacity, and to develop diversified tourist products that can minimize the negative impact of mass tourism. There are other ways to share their culture, such as through books and other media. Communities, with the support of the government, should establish restrictions on large investments from outside and ensure that economic benefits are retained among the villages concerned.

The Mosuo people in the Lugu Lake area an excellent example of tourism development in a world of modernization and globalization. Tourism development in many other parts of the PRC and elsewhere in the world is causing similar cultural changes. This study on tourism development and cultural change in Luoshui Village offers useful experiences and lessons for long-term, environmentally friendly, participatory, and sustainable tourism development in Greater Mekong Subregion countries.

Acknowledgements

Deepest appreciation is expressed to my students—Ming Zhang, Lin Jing, and Yuli Huang—who helped greatly in the investigation and data collection. Thanks are also due to the Village Committee of Luoshui for support and assistance in conducting the survey.

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